

A POLITICAL  
HISTORY OF  
THE GAMBIA  
1816-1994

ARNOLD HUGHES  
DAVID PERFECT

# **A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE GAMBIA, 1816–1994**



**ROCHESTER STUDIES in  
AFRICAN HISTORY and the DIASPORA**

Toyin Falola, Senior Editor  
The Frances Higginbotham Nalle Centennial Professor in History  
University of Texas at Austin

(ISSN: 1092-5228)

A complete list of titles in the Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora, in order of publication, may be found at the end of this book.

**A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE GAMBIA,  
1816–1994**

---

*Arnold Hughes and David Perfect*



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

Copyright © 2006 Arnold Hughes and David Perfect

*All rights reserved.* Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2006

University of Rochester Press  
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA  
www.urpress.com  
and Boydell & Brewer Limited  
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK  
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN: 1-58046-230-8

ISSN: 1092-5228

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Hughes, Arnold.

A political history of The Gambia, 1816-1994 / Arnold Hughes and David Perfect.

p. cm. — (Rochester studies in African history and the diaspora, ISSN 1092-5228 ; v. 26)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58046-230-8 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Gambia—Politics and government. I. Perfect, David, 1960- II. Title. III. Series.

DT509.5.H84 2006

966.51'02-dc22

2006016874

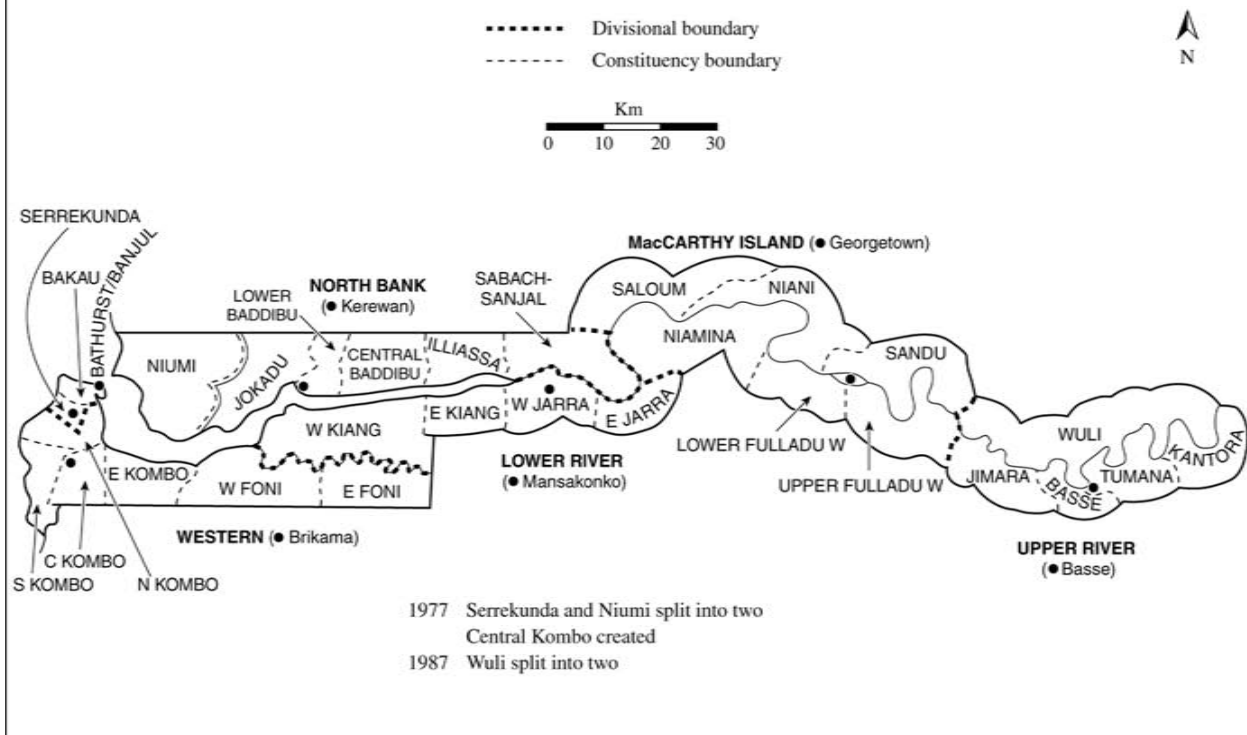
A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.  
Printed in the United States of America.

*This book is dedicated to the memory of Deyda Hydera*

# THE GAMBIA

## Divisional and constituency boundaries



**Map.** The Gambia: Divisional and Constituency Boundaries

# CONTENTS

---

List of Tables	ix
List of Interviewees	x
Acknowledgments	xiii
Abbreviations	xv
Introduction	1
<b>1</b> Social and Economic Setting	6
<b>2</b> Constitutional Change in The Gambia, 1816–1994	41
<b>3</b> Merchants and Recaptives: The Origins of Modern Politics, 1816–86	55
<b>4</b> Patrician Politics in the Era of the Forsters, 1886–1941	78
<b>5</b> The Establishment of Party Politics, 1941–59	107
<b>6</b> The “Green Uprising”: The Emergence of the People’s Progressive Party, 1959–65	134
<b>7</b> Electoral Politics, 1965–81	160
<b>8</b> Radical and Insurrectionary Political Challenges, 1965–81	198
<b>9</b> Electoral Politics, 1981–94	221
<b>10</b> The Gambia’s External Relations, 1965–94	251
<b>11</b> The 1994 Coup and the Jawara Legacy	280
Appendix A: Major Constitutional Changes, 1816–1994	295
Appendix B: Legislative Council Election Results, 1947–54	298
Appendix C: General Election and By-Election Results, 1960–93	301



Appendix D: Presidential Election Results, 1982–92	334
Appendix E: Republic Referendum Results, 1970	345
Appendix F: Primary Sources	347
Appendix G: Newspapers and Magazines Consulted	351
Notes	353
Bibliography	485
Index	513

# TABLES

---

1.1	Population of the Crown Colony, 1819–1901	8
1.2	Population of Gambia, 1911–63	9
1.3	Population by Local Government Area, 1963–93	9
1.4	Population of the Crown Colony by Ethnic Group, 1881–1901	11
1.5	Population of Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary by Ethnic Group, 1911–63	12
1.6	Population of the Protectorate by Ethnic Group, 1911–63	13
1.7	Population of The Gambia by Ethnic Group, 1963–93	14
1.8	Non-Gambian African Population of The Gambia, 1963–93	23
1.9	Population of Bathurst/Banjul by Religious Belief, 1881–1993	26

# INTERVIEWEES

---

(all in Bathurst/Banjul unless stated)

## **Arnold Hughes**

- Sanjally Bojang: February 1972; April 1992 (*both Kembuje, The Gambia*)
- Assan M. Camara: March 1987; January 1997; November 1997; December 1997; December 1999
- Bakary B. Dabo: July 1995; May 1996; June 1996  
(*all Birmingham, England*)
- Sheriff M. Dibba: April 1977; March 1984; May 1992
- Rev. John C. Faye: April 1975
- Kebba W. Foon: September 1973; April 1977
- John R. Forster: February 1972
- Ibrahima M. Garba-Jahumpa: April 1977
- Sam Goddard: February 1977; April 1977
- Paul Gore: February 1992 (*Woodbridge, England*)
- Ibrahima Jallow: August 1997; November 1997  
(*both Birmingham, England*)
- Antouman (“Antoine”) Jatta: April 1977
- Sir Dawda K. Jawara: August 1998 (*Haywards Heath, England*)
- Melvin B. Jones: April 1975; March 1984
- M. B. (“Tex”) Khan: October 1981
- Lamin M’Boge: September 1973
- Pierre S. N’Jie: March 1972; August 1973; September 1973; March 1977; April 1982
- Henry Oliver: September 1973 (*Bakau, The Gambia*)
- Femi Peters: November 1997; December 1997
- Halifa Sallah: April 1992 (*Bakotu, The Gambia*)
- Braimah Sanyang: May 1992
- Bakary K. Sidibeh: September 1973
- Sheriff S. Sisay: September 1973
- Kenneth G. S. Smith: August 1985 (*Sherborne, England*)
- Ba M. Tarawale: March 1972; April 1972; May 1992  
(*Bathurst/Banjul*); December 1999 (*Latrikunda*)
- Andrew Winter: August 1994

Sir Percy Wyn-Harris: April 1974 (*Woodbridge, England*)

**David Perfect**

Alieu E. Cham-Joof: May 1984

Rev. Roderick N. Coote: November 1997 (*by post*)

Rev. John C. Faye: June 1984; September 1984

Ibrahima M. Garba-Jahumpa: June 1984

Sam Goddard: April 1992

Femi Peters: August 1984

**Fatma Denton**

Sir Dawda K. Jawara: March 1996 (*Haywards Heath, England*)

Mbai M'Bengue: August 1996 (*Dakar, Senegal*)



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

In the course of the researching of this book, the authors have reason to be grateful to a great many individuals, non-Gambian as well as Gambian. The list is too long to mention every person by name, but our gratitude to all those who assisted us through personal recollections, analytical observations, and access to documentation in their possession, remains.

Two non-Gambians deserve particular mention: Professor David Gamble, formerly of California State University, San Francisco, and the doyen of Gambian studies, whose monumental multivolume bibliography of *The Gambia* has to be the starting point of any serious research on The Gambia, also made available a number of difficult-to-obtain newspaper cuttings and other documents relating to Gambian politics from the early post-World War II period in his possession. Henry Oliver, whose long career in the Gambian colonial administration culminated in the post of senior commissioner, offered invaluable insights into official thinking and the means of contacting other former British administrators, as well as being a generous and entertaining host.

Among the many Gambians, again two names stand out: the late Joseph (“Uncle Joe”) Cates and Baboucar (“Ba”) Tarawale. Indeed, it can be truthfully said that without the help of these two gentlemen, the research could never have started, let alone progress. Joe Cates provided affordable and hospitable accommodation to one of the authors in 1972, when he first visited The Gambia, and provided him with a range of invaluable contacts for extending his research. Both authors stayed with him on numerous subsequent occasions. Among these contacts was Ba Tarawale, a leading political journalist and former activist in the People’s Progressive Party. Ba, more than any other individual, provided a wealth of information and understanding of the intricacies of Gambian politics from the late 1950s to the closing period of our research.

Our indebtedness to numerous other Gambians is partly revealed from our noted acknowledgments, but has to include a far greater number of individuals who in various ways furthered our investigations and offered us hospitality and friendship. Political activists of all political coloring, journalists, lawyers, civil servants, trade union leaders, and archivists, are among the many Gambians who advanced our understanding of Gambian politics and made our research visits to The Gambia pleasurable as well as instructive. We would also like to acknowledge our indebtedness to the pioneering scholarship of Dr. Florence Mahoney, herself

descended from the Liberated African community in Banjul, for our analysis of nineteenth-century political history in Chapters 3 and 4. It is a matter of regret to us that her doctoral thesis, "Government and Opinion in the Gambia 1816–1901," remains unpublished.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance of two of our former colleagues and friends. The late Professor Douglas Rimmer, formerly Director of the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, generously provided very useful comments on Chapter 1 despite increasing ill health at the time. Our fellow analyst of Gambian politics, Dr. John Wiseman, formerly of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, engaged in many debates with both authors. Tragically, John died in 2002 before he could comment on the final drafts of the book; but his widow, Gill, greatly assisted our research by offering us John's substantial collection of modern Gambian newspapers and other West African magazines. We would also like to thank the two (Gambian) academic readers of the book, who provided very helpful comments on the penultimate draft. The University of Rochester Press deserves our particular gratitude for agreeing to publish such a lengthy work, as do the three members of its editorial staff, Suzanne Guiod, Sue Smith, and Katie Hurley, for dealing so patiently and efficiently with our many queries. Our thanks go as well to Harry Buglass of the University of Birmingham for drawing the map of The Gambia. Furthermore, the research for the book could not have been undertaken without the continued and generous financial support of the University of Birmingham and its Centre of West African Studies. Despite our indebtedness to all these individuals, any errors or shortcomings are solely the responsibility of the authors.

Finally, on a more personal note, we would like to thank our respective wives, Diana (Hughes) and Jill (Perfect), who have had to live with all things Gambian for more years than they would care to remember.

# ABBREVIATIONS

---

AA	Administrative Areas
ACR	<i>Africa Contemporary Record</i>
AFPRC	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
AMRC	Assets Management and Recovery Commission
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Re-orientation and Construction
ARPS	Aborigines' Rights Protection Society
AT	<i>The African Times</i>
BanCC	Banjul City Council
BATC	Bathurst Advisory Town Council
BBM	Black Brotherhood Movement
BCC	Bathurst City Council
BO	<i>The Bathurst Observer and West African Gazette</i>
BTC	Bathurst Town Council
BTU	Bathurst Trade Union
BUDC	Bathurst Urban District Council
BYMS	Bathurst Young Muslims Society
CCYC	Central Council of Youth Clubs
CFAO	Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale
CILSS	Comité permanent inter-états de la lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel
CO	Colonial Office
CRD	Central River Division
DCA	Democratic Congress Alliance
DO	Dominion Office
EEC	European Economic Community
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
Ex. Co.	Executive Council
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FO	Foreign Office
GA	Gambian National Archives
GATU	Gambia Amalgamated Trade Union



GBA	Gambia Bar Association
GCDB	Gambia Commercial and Development Bank
GCP	Gambia Congress Party
GCU	Gambia Cooperatives Union
<i>GD</i>	<i>The Gambia Daily</i>
GDP	Gambia Democratic Party
<i>GE</i>	<i>The Gambia Echo</i>
GFCMA	Gambia Farmers' Co-operative Marketing Association
<i>GG</i>	<i>The Gambia Gazette</i>
GLU	Gambia Labour Union
GMC	Gambia Muslim Congress
GMDA	Gambia Medical and Dental Association
GNA	Gambian National Army
GNAssocn	Gambia Native Association
<i>GNB</i>	<i>The Gambia News Bulletin</i>
GNDU	Gambia Native Defensive Union
GNG	Gambian National Gendarmerie
GNL	Gambia National League
GNP	Gambia National Party
GNU	Gambia National Union
GNYC	Gambia National Youth Council
<i>GO</i>	<i>The Gambia Outlook and Senegambian Reporter</i>
GPP	Gambia People's Party
GRC	Gambia Representative Committee
GSRP	Gambia Socialist Revolutionary Party
GTU	Gambia Teachers' Union
GUSRWP	Gambia Underground Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party
<i>GW</i>	<i>The Gambia Weekly</i>
GWC	Gambia Workers' Confederation
GWU	Gambia Workers' Union
HDI	Human Development Index
HIID	Harvard Institute of International Development
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICS	Institute of Commonwealth Studies
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITUC-NW	International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers
IUP	Irish University Press
KNMF	Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Foundation
KSV	Kent Street Vous
LAI	League Against Imperialism
Leg. Co.	Legislative Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LRD	Lower River Division

LRDept	Labour Research Department
MBE	Member of the British Empire
MBHS	Methodist Boys' High School
MCC	Manchester Chamber of Commerce
MDMU	Motor Drivers' and Mechanics' Union
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MFDC	Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance
MID	MacCarthy Island Division
MOJA-G	Movement for Justice in Africa–The Gambia
MOJA-L	Movement for Justice in Africa–Liberia
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NBD	North Bank Division
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
NCP	National Convention Party
NCSL	National Council of Sierra Leone
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
NLP	National Liberation Party
NSS	National Security Service
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OBE	Order of the British Empire
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
OMVG	L'organisation pour la mise en valeur de la fleuve gambienne
OUP	Oxford University Press
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde
PDOIS	People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PDS	Parti Démocratique du Sénégal
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PPA	People's Progressive Alliance
PPCA	Parliamentary Papers Colonies Africa
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PPS	Protectorate People's Society
PRO	Public Record Office
ProtPP	Protectorate People's Party
PSD	Programme for Sustained Development
PWD	Public Works Department
RDP	Rural Development Project
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
RPA	Bathurst Ratepayers' Association
SA	Senegalese National Archives
SAC	Structural Adjustment Credit
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SAS	Special Air Service

SDR	Special Drawing Rights
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLWN	<i>Sierra Leone Weekly News</i>
SP	Sessional Paper
TSG	Tactical Support Group
UAC	United Africa Company
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDP	United Democratic Party
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
UP	United Party
URD	Upper River Division
WA	<i>West Africa</i>
WASU	West African Students Union
WAYL	West African Youth League
WBHS	Wesleyan Boys' High School
WD	Western Division
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
WO	<i>Weekend Observer</i>

# INTRODUCTION

---

This is the first full-length account of the modern political history of The Gambia, covering the period from the establishment of the British settlement of Bathurst on St. Mary's Island (site of the modern capital, Banjul) on the estuary of the River Gambia in 1816, to the overthrow of the elected government of President Sir Dawda Jawara in an army coup in July 1994. During this long period, British colonial rule gradually spread up river to form the British Protectorate of Gambia. Initially disputed over with the French, this territory subsequently was contested by African political movements seeking a transfer of power to an elected Gambian parliament. This was achieved with Gambian independence in February 1965.

Following independence, Gambians refuted the claims of skeptics, British as well as African, that such a small state could not long survive the economic challenges of statehood without being absorbed by its larger neighbor, Senegal; or only surviving as a client-state of its former rulers. Adroit political leadership kept the Senegalese at bay, even during the crisis years of the early 1980s, and established an uncommonly harmonious and unexpectedly equal relationship with Britain.

Doubts were also expressed about the political skills of the country's newly elected and inexperienced political leaders. Yet here too, The Gambia came to acquire a reputation both for political stability and an unusually democratic system of government. Credit for this enviable state of affairs goes as much to Gambians themselves as to their leaders. Gambian politics has been characterized by a lack of extremism: relations with the British were seldom rancorous and those between rival political parties conducted within a shared system of political beliefs that repudiated the systematic use of violence in pursuit of political objectives; or authoritarianism to maintain those objectives when once in power.

Likewise, no doubt reflecting their country's smallness, Gambians have escaped the pretensions and extravagant posturings of larger African countries in their external relations. Instead, a low-key realism and pragmatism has informed foreign policy decision making.

For some three decades, this smallest of mainland African states overcame the all-too-familiar fate of ethnic conflict and authoritarian regimes, civilian or military, of most other African countries. Ironically, it was as late as 1994, when the rest of Africa was successfully moving away from single-party or military rule, that

The Gambia itself succumbed to an army coup. Even when this happened, the country avoided bloodshed and maintained its territorial unity.

Modern forms of political activity among Gambians go back over a century and a half. Initially this was confined both geographically and socially to Western-educated elements among the African populace of the small Crown Colony on St Mary's Island, on the estuary of the River Gambia. The first of these, strictly speaking, were not Gambians (not that there were any "Gambians" at this time), but "Liberated Africans" or "Recaptives" from Sierra Leone and other locations in West Africa, who themselves, or their immediate forebears, were rescued from slavery by the Royal Navy and settled in Freetown or Bathurst.

Gradually acquiring prominence in commerce and the educational and religious institutions established by the British, as well as entering government employment, these individuals came to form a distinct political community. Their relations among themselves or with the European mercantile community and British colonial administration defined the structure and objectives of the wider African political community for some fifty years.

Political positions were often fluid rather than determined by race. The "Liberated African" leaders often worked together with the British and the European merchants in pursuit of shared commercial and political objectives: usually with respect to meeting the challenges from the French. At other times, of significance for later political developments, they clashed with merchants and administrators on the one hand, and among themselves on the other.

Episodic political organization around issues of the period gradually evolved into more permanent organizations. Such embryonic political associations were fluid and headed by socially and economically prominent individuals. An essentially elitist and personalist system of African representation emerged by the late nineteenth century, the forerunner of the more formal political system of the twentieth century. Such political brokers sought to speak for the growing African political community, while at the same time promoting their own interests. The personalization of power would remain a feature of postcolonial Gambian politics, particularly following the adoption of a republic in 1970.

Over time, the British conceded a right of representation on the territory's Legislative Council to representatives of the educated African community. For some sixty years, the conservative Forster family, father and son, monopolized this representation, although not always as compliant allies of the administration. Nevertheless, personal and political rivalries led to challenges to this familial domination, as well as to the limited and non-elective system of representation.

During the interwar years, wider political currents were felt—the pan-African claims of the National Congress of British West Africa and the remoter Garvey Movement, even Marxist socialism—but there was little support for such radical ideas among the essentially parochial Gambian political class. Even the leading radical voice of these years, the journalist-nationalist, Edward Small, spent most of his time in local factional fighting or seeking to ameliorate rather than overthrow British rule.

The Gambia's constitutional advance followed that of the other British West African dependencies and direct elected representation for the territory was only obtained after World War II. Only then could the various political pressure groups take the form of political parties. Initially, these were confined practically, as well as constitutionally, to the Colony proper, and the larger hinterland, or Protectorate, did not emerge politically until the end of the 1950s, when the British conceded direct territorial elections. For this reason, this book does not attempt any detailed reconstruction of politics within the Protectorate area before this period.

Three small and highly personalized political parties, the United Party, the Gambia Democratic Party, and the Gambia Muslim Congress, came into being in Bathurst in the 1950s, but proved unable to retain their political domination once the provincial masses were enfranchised and set up their own political party. The Protectorate People's Party (subsequently People's Progressive Party [PPP]), under the leadership of Dawda Jawara, emerged as the largest political organization during the general elections of 1960 and 1962 and was accepted by the British as their successors.

The post-independence era witnessed a steady consolidation of the PPP's power, as it repositioned itself politically as a national rather than as a Protectorate party and effectively used newly-available state patronage to undermine rival parties. Although The Gambia became a republic, following a second referendum in 1970, Jawara resisted the pressure to use this position and overwhelming electoral victories in subsequent decades to create either a dictatorship or a one-party state. Even so, as executive president, he came to wield considerable power in determining government policy and political appointments; while the PPP's permanent parliamentary majority led to a *de facto* if not *de jure* one party form of government, depicted as "one-party dominant" rule elsewhere in Africa.

From 1966 to 1994, the PPP effectively destroyed its old rivals—most notably the United Party—and resisted challenges from break-away parties set up by former vice presidents: the National Convention Party led by Sheriff Dibba in the mid-1970s and the Gambia People's Party, formed by Assan Musa Camara in the 1980s. Political divisions in Gambian politics have always been based predominantly on personal and factional interests, with very little ideological differences between rival leaders and parties. Regional-ethnic divisions tended to fade after independence as the PPP strove to replace its former Mandinka-Protectorate position with a more national outlook, embracing the former Colony and Protectorate areas and all ethnic groups. This and a middle-of-the-road position on major political and economic issues enabled the ruling party to marginalize rival parties, which found it difficult to offer a credible or original alternative political agenda.

The only distinct alternative ideological position came from a few small and marginal urban political groups espousing versions of Marxist or radical Pan-Africanist critiques of PPP policy and its conduct of government; but it was only in July–August 1981, when elements of these teamed-up with disaffected paramilitary policemen to stage a coup, that Jawara and the PPP were seriously threatened.

Even so, rapid Senegalese military intervention put down the insurrection and restored the Government to power.

Yet the political longevity of the Jawara government, in itself, continued to cause dissatisfaction, leading critics to claim that it clung to office by electoral malpractices, even if it avoided authoritarian rule. More seriously, it was accused of tolerating, if not promoting, persistent corruption on the part of senior politicians and public officials. The failure to deal firmly with frequent exposures of corruption both undermined the legitimacy of the administration and impeded its efforts at economic and social development. As elsewhere in Africa during these years, government and leadership survival rested less on broader ideological appeals than on the self-interest of an array of powerbrokers, who delivered electoral victory in return for political and economic patronage. Some of this patronage was redistributed at local level, but too much ended up with politicians and their cronies in the business community.

These criticisms eroded popular support for Jawara and the PPP during their second insurrectionary crisis in July 1994, and provided the dissident soldiers who seized power with the justification for their actions. In consequence, the overthrow of president and government was a rapid and bloodless event, neither opposed within The Gambia itself, nor by its previous protector, Senegal. The international community's response to the illegal removal of the Jawara government was also limited; public condemnation and a period of economic sanctions, rather than military intervention, were all that the exiled Jawara was granted. Three decades of multiparty democracy—however flawed—was replaced by an authoritarian military regime and elected parliamentary government gave way to a self-appointed army junta.

The research on which this book is based spans three decades of visits to The Gambia by the authors, providing an unusual depth of time to their investigations. Political events were observed at first hand and numerous interviews were held with representatives of all political interests. Additionally, extensive research was carried out at the Gambian National Archives. These archives hold a considerable collection of original official correspondence and reports from the colonial period; together with more limited material from the independence period. The irregular runs of local newspapers held by the archives were also consulted, as were documents at the Gambia National Library and various government ministries. Limited material was also consulted in the Senegalese National Archives in Dakar.

The authors have also consulted British colonial and postcolonial records at the National Archives (Public Record Office) in Kew, London. This holds the surviving correspondence between the Gambian government and the Colonial Office and its successor bodies (currently the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), as well as a host of other official reports. Documents up to the start of the closed period, 1976, were examined. Gambian and other newspaper holdings of the British Newspaper Library at Colindale, North London, yielded valuable additional information.

Research was also undertaken in a number of academic libraries in Britain. The Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, the primary repository for Gambian

documents in Britain, holds many published and unpublished documents on The Gambia. The School of African and Oriental Studies at the University of London has a smaller Gambian collection, but also holds the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. The latter contains the correspondence between European missionaries in Gambia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the society's headquarters in London, and other useful material. The John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester and the University of Birmingham Library, including the holdings of its Centre of West African Studies, have been further important sources of information. Rhodes House Library, University of Oxford, holds a number of personal records of former colonial officials in the Gambian government. These were supplemented by interviews and correspondence with several retired British colonial officials in Britain and The Gambia. Finally, the archives of the Labour Research Department in London contain files that are relevant to Gambian political developments between World Wars I and II.



# 1

---

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SETTING**

Chapter 1 provides the socioeconomic context to the political events analyzed in subsequent chapters. A physical description of The Gambia is provided first, followed by a review of the available demographic data and a description of the major ethnic groups of the country. Religious beliefs, educational development, and the labor force are then examined from a historical perspective. Finally, the structure of the economy is outlined and its prosperity (or otherwise) assessed chronologically.

### **Physical Description**

The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa, having a total area of approximately 11,000 square kilometers (4,361 square miles). It consists of strips of land about 10 kilometers wide (about 6 miles) either side of the River Gambia (one of the most navigable rivers in West Africa) and extends 470 kilometers (292 miles) into the interior of Africa from the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>1</sup> A former British colony, it was known as either “Gambia” or “the Gambia” until independence in 1965; to avoid confusion, we have used the former term when referring *exclusively* to the colonial period. The Gambia’s northern, eastern, and southern borders, which are all shared with Senegal, were defined by a wide-ranging Anglo-French Convention of 1889 and demarcated between 1891 and 1905 (its eastern border was slightly modified in 1976).<sup>2</sup>

The 1889 treaty with France considerably expanded the size of Gambia. The British Crown Colony consisted of a few scattered settlements along the River Gambia with an estimated total area of only 110 square kilometers (69 square miles). St. Mary’s Island at the mouth of the river, on which the capital, Bathurst (now Banjul) was located, was purchased in 1816; MacCarthy Island, 241 kilometers (150 miles) up river, was acquired in 1823; the “Ceded Mile,” a tract of land on the north bank of the river 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) in breadth and 58 kilometers (36 miles) in length, was ceded in 1826 (and extended in 1832); British Kombo

(which was later called Kombo St. Mary), an area of 40 square kilometers (25 square miles) to the west of Bathurst was ceded in 1840 (and extended in 1853); Albreda, a trading post on the north bank of the river, was exchanged by France in 1857; and a few other districts were annexed in the 1880s.<sup>3</sup> These settlements were later termed “the Colony” to distinguish them from “the Protectorate,” the land acquired under the 1889 Convention that, until independence, was administered quite differently. The first Protectorate Ordinance was passed in 1894 and between 1895 and 1902, all the settlements other than St. Mary’s Island were placed under the Protectorate system of administration (although technically remaining part of the Colony). Kombo St. Mary was transferred back to the Colony for administrative purposes in 1946.<sup>4</sup>

Dense mangrove swamps line the banks of the River Gambia for the first 150 kilometers upstream, although in some places the mangrove has been cleared for rice cultivation. Behind the swamps are areas of savannah called “banto faros,” which are slightly higher areas above river level. These remain arid in the dry season and swampy during the rainy season. The dry season lasts between November and June; the rains usually begin in late June and end in mid-October. On average, 85 percent of the annual rainfall (in Banjul) falls between July and September. The soil further up river is light and sandy and is suitable for groundnuts.<sup>5</sup>

## **Administrative Areas**

The newly established Protectorate was subdivided into two administrative areas (covering the North Bank and the South Bank of the River Gambia) in 1893, with a third (Kombo) added in 1895. The incorporation of new territory within the Colony in 1902 led to a reorganization of the administrative boundaries, so that by 1906, there were five Provinces: North Bank, MacCarthy Island, South Bank, Upper River, and Kombo-Foni (or Fogni). Each was administered by a provincial commissioner (who was initially known as a “travelling commissioner”).<sup>6</sup> These were renamed Divisions after World War II. Even though the formal distinction between the Colony and the Protectorate was abolished at independence, divisional commissioners continued to administer the former protectorate areas. There were four Divisions at independence—Lower River Division (LRD), MacCarthy Island Division (MID), Upper River Division (URD), and Western Division (WD). A fifth Division, North Bank Division (NBD), was created out of that part of LRD located on the North Bank of the River Gambia in 1968, and MID was renamed Central River Division in the 1990s. In the early 1960s, seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) were established: Bathurst; Brikama (which covered WD and Kombo St. Mary); Georgetown (which covered Georgetown itself and the parts of MID on the south bank of the River Gambia); Kuntaur (the north bank of MID); Kerewan (the north bank of LRD); Mansakonko (the south bank of LRD); and Basse (the whole of URD). By the early 1970s, an eighth LGA had been created through the creation

of Kombo St. Mary LGA (later renamed Kanifing Urban District Council); Georgetown was renamed Janjangbureh in 1995.<sup>7</sup>

## Demographic Context

During the nineteenth century, the population of the Crown Colony probably never exceeded 15,000 (table 1.1). In most years, the majority of its population lived in Bathurst. After 1871, the population of MacCarthy Island and British Kombo was in decline and Bathurst accounted for two-fifths of the Colony's population in both 1881 and 1891; in 1901, in part because of the temporary presence of troops from Sierra Leone, it comprised as much as two-thirds of it.<sup>8</sup> Table 1.2 shows the population of Gambia at successive census dates between 1901 and 1963 (the last census to be carried out before independence).

The population of the Protectorate was undoubtedly underestimated in 1901 and probably also in 1911, but overestimated in 1921, and the population of Bathurst in 1944 was temporarily increased by a large number of migrant workers from the Protectorate.<sup>9</sup> As table 1.2 also shows, the Protectorate always had a far larger population than the Colony and accounted for four-fifths of the national population in 1963.

Table 1.3 shows the population nationally and by LGA at each census date since 1963. Population growth since the 1970s has been particularly striking and, with an estimated population density of 111 people per square kilometer in 1995, The Gambia is now one of the more densely populated countries in Africa.<sup>10</sup> Table 1.3 also demonstrates that the distribution of the population between the eight LGAs

**Table 1.1.** Population of the Crown Colony, 1819–1901

	1819	1833	1839	1851	1871	1881	1891	1901
Bathurst	704	2,825	3,514	4,262	4,591	6,138	6,239	8,807 <sup>2</sup>
MacCarthy Island	n/a	841	1,162 <sup>1</sup>	1,171	1,263	908	906	797
Ceded Mile	n/a	n/a	n/a	206	3,917	4,047	4,207	2,211
British Kombo	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,246	4,419	3,057	1,705	1,641
Other	–	–	–	54 <sup>2</sup>	–	–	1,209 <sup>3</sup>	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>3,666</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>6,939</b>	<b>14,190</b>	<b>14,150</b>	<b>14,266</b>	<b>13,456</b>

<sup>1</sup>1836 "census"; Kuczynski's estimate of the population at this time was 1,600.

<sup>2</sup>Population of Cape St. Mary.

<sup>3</sup>Combined population of Tendabah, Bai, Kansala, and Bajana, which were added to the Colony in the 1880s.

Sources: R. R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) vol. 1, 318–28; and [Colonial Office], *Census of the British Empire 1901* (London: HMSO, 1906), 139.

**Table 1.2.** Population of Gambia, 1911–63

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1944	1951	1963
<i>Colony</i>	13,456	7,700 <sup>1</sup>	9,227	14,370	21,152	27,297	40,017
Bathurst	8,807	7,700	9,227	14,370	21,152	19,602	27,809
Kombo St. Mary	1,641	1,963 <sup>2</sup>	n/a	n/a	7,597 <sup>2</sup>	7,695	12,208
<i>Protectorate</i>	76,948	138,401 <sup>2</sup>	201,303	185,150	199,357 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	275,469
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,404</b>	<b>146,101</b>	<b>210,530</b>	<b>199,520</b>	<b>220,509</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>315,486</b>

<sup>1</sup>Kuczynski (328) gives a figure of 13,157 for the population of the Colony; this included the areas which had been placed under the Protectorate administration.

<sup>2</sup>Included within Protectorate total.

<sup>3</sup>Annual estimate of the Protectorate.

Sources: Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, vol. 1, 318–31; 776; David P. Gamble, *Contributions to a Socio-Economic Survey of the Gambia* (London: Colonial Office Research Department, 1949), 25–27; K. C. Zachariah and Julien Condé, *Migration in West Africa: Demographic Aspects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), Table 17.

**Table 1.3.** Population by Local Government Area, 1963–93

LGA	1963	%	1973	%	1983	%	1993	%
Bathurst/Banjul	27,809	9	39,179	8	44,188	6	42,326	4
Basse	58,049	18	86,167	17	111,388	16	155,059	15
Brikama	55,393	18	91,013	18	137,245	20	234,917	23
Georgetown <sup>1</sup>	35,752	11	54,232	11	68,410	10	88,247	9
Kerewan	63,045	20	93,388	19	112,225	16	156,462	15
Kombo St. Mary/ Kanifing	12,208	4	39,404	8	101,504	15	228,214	22
Kuntaur	29,003	9	47,669	10	57,594	8	67,774	7
Mansakonko	34,227	11	42,447	9	55,263	8	65,146	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>315,486</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>493,499</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>687,817</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,038,145</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup>Renamed Janjangbureh in 1995.

Sources: [Gambia Government], *Population Databank 1995* (Banjul: National Population Commission Secretariat, 1996), Table 1.2.

has changed since 1963, with the growth of Kanifing (the former Kombo St. Mary) being particularly striking. A major reason for this was large-scale immigration from neighboring African countries; in 1993, non-Gambians accounted for 20 percent of its population. Mainly as a result of the growth of Kanifing, 37 percent of the population was urbanized by 1993, compared with only 23 percent in 1973.<sup>11</sup>

## Ethnic Groups<sup>12</sup>

As later chapters will show, the politicization of ethnicity has been an important factor in Gambian politics, and in African politics more generally. It is therefore important to examine the major ethnic groups of The Gambia in some detail and, in this section, the available qualitative and quantitative census data are used to examine the characteristics of the ten Gambian ethnic groups separately identified in the 1993 census. We seek to assess each group's share of the national population, its geographical location, its typical occupations, and its typical religious beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

Although each ethnic group is shown separately, it is important to note that intermarriage between ethnic groups has been common in The Gambia over the past couple of centuries and many Gambians perhaps more properly should be described as being of mixed ethnic origin. Additionally, further interethnic blurring has occurred as a result of cultural assimilation among various peoples, with minority groups adopting the language and customs of dominant groups. For example, there has been Jola acculturation to Mandinka in LRD, and Wolof has been adopted as a *lingua franca* in the urban areas around Banjul (as it has in urban areas in Senegal). As noted in later chapters, several prominent politicians were among those who were "Wolofized" through long residence in or near the capital.<sup>14</sup> Finally, most Gambian ethnic groups have historically had a similar social structure—the caste system—which has also moderated differences between them.<sup>15</sup>

### Nineteenth Century

Because the first attempt to record the ethnic composition of the Colony's population was not made until 1881, it is not possible to provide firm evidence of the ethnic breakdown in the early years of the settlement. As table 1.4 shows, the most numerous ethnic groups in the late nineteenth century were the Wolof and the Mandinka and, whereas the former predominated in Bathurst, the latter comprised the bulk of the population in the rest of the Colony. It is also evident that former slaves, who were known to contemporaries as "Liberated Africans," and their descendants, formed the second largest group of Bathurst's population in the 1880s and 1890s. However, there were fewer Liberated Africans in other parts of the Colony.

### Colonial Period

Tables 1.5 and 1.6 show the population of the constituent parts of the Colony and the Protectorate at various dates between 1911 and 1963. Table 1.5 reveals that the Wolof remained the largest numerical group within Bathurst until independence and that the Aku were the second largest group until 1963 when they were overtaken by the Mandinka. In contrast, the Mandinka and the Jola between them comprised over half of the total population of Kombo St. Mary in 1951; at independence, the Mandinka alone accounted for more than one-quarter of its total

**Table 1.4.** Population of the Crown Colony by Ethnic Group, 1881–1901

	1881		1891		1901	
	Bathurst	Other Colony	Bathurst	Other Colony	Bathurst	Other Colony
Natives of British Gambia	2,875 <sup>1</sup>	2,158 <sup>1</sup>	4,072 <sup>2</sup>	1,517 <sup>2</sup>	n/a	n/a
Natives of Sierra Leone/Liberated Africans	824 <sup>3</sup>	133 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wolof	829 <sup>4</sup>	277 <sup>4</sup>	n/a	n/a	3,666	818
Mandinka	189	3,333	412	2,347	350	2,066
Jola	757 <sup>5</sup>	1,430 <sup>5</sup>	650	1,502	493	638
Serere	n/a <sup>5</sup>	n/a	593	1,072	715	301
Fula	35	258	210	496	176	202
Aku	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	819	99
Ibo	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	294	58
Manjago	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	83	30
Bambara	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	33	48
Other Africans	470	406 <sup>6</sup>	240	1,092	1,847	375
West Indians	59	12	n/a	n/a	3	3
Europeans	100	5	62	1	217	4
Other Non-Africans	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	111	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,138</b>	<b>8,012</b>	<b>6,239</b>	<b>8,027</b>	<b>8,807</b>	<b>4,649</b>

<sup>1</sup>This probably mainly consists of Wolof born in the Crown Colony and the descendants of Liberated Africans.

<sup>2</sup>This probably mainly consists of Colony-born Wolof, Liberated Africans, and “Natives of Sierra Leone” and their descendants.

<sup>3</sup>Presumably excludes the descendants of Liberated Africans.

<sup>4</sup>Probably consists of Wolof born outside of the colony only.

<sup>5</sup>Includes Serere, who were not separately identified in 1881.

<sup>6</sup>Includes 106 “Bathurst people” in British Kombo.

*Sources:* [Gambia Government], *Detailed Account of the Census of the Population of the British Settlement on the River Gambia, taken on the 4th April 1881* (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1881). This can be found in CO 87/117, Gouldsbury to Rowe, September 9, 1881. [Gambia Government], *A Report of 1891 Census by WC Cates Acting Registrar*. This can be found in CO 87/139, Llewelyn to Secretary of State, July 21, 1891. [Colonial Office], *Colony of the Gambia, Census 1901, Report of the Superintendent*. (London: HMSO, 1902). This can be found in CO 87/163, Denton to Chamberlain, June 24, 1901.

population. Kombo St. Mary also had a sizeable Wolof population, but very few Aku lived there.

Despite the obvious inconsistencies of the data, table 1.6 shows clearly that the Mandinka remained the most numerous ethnic group in the Protectorate throughout the colonial period and that the other major groups were the Fula and the Wolof.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1.5.** Population of Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary by Ethnic Group, 1911–63

	1911	1921	1944	1951		1963	
	B	B	B	B	KSM	B	KSM
Wolof	3,705	3,069	10,130	9,544	1,237	11,311	1,723
Mandinka	269	425	2,412	1,801	2,314	3,338	3,319
Jola	423	571	1,710	1,351	1,620	1,422	1,431
Aku	749	592	2,564	2,552	131	2,515	202
Fula	228	262	1,063	1,018	893	1,021	1,006
Serere	579	563	1,075	951	405	732	493
Manjago	128	158	n/a	n/a	n/a	502	203
Serahuli	84	162	n/a	n/a	n/a	344	248
Bambara	61	189	n/a	n/a	n/a	181	218
Tukulor	n/a	97	n/a	n/a	n/a	110	28
Ibo	357	275	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other African	797	2,335 <sup>1</sup>	1,924	1,993	943	6,014	3,191
European and other non-African	320 <sup>2</sup>	529 <sup>3</sup>	274 <sup>4</sup>	392 <sup>5</sup>	152 <sup>6</sup>	319 <sup>7</sup>	146 <sup>8</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,700</b>	<b>9,227</b>	<b>21,152</b>	<b>19,602</b>	<b>7,695</b>	<b>27,809</b>	<b>12,208</b>

<sup>1</sup>Includes 1,215 “mixed tribe” population.

<sup>2</sup>Consists of 107 British and 213 other Europeans. Original census return gives a figure of 230 Europeans, but this is a misprint.

<sup>3</sup>Consists of 362 Europeans, 91 Arabs, 54 Syrians, and 22 West Indians.

<sup>4</sup>Consists of 101 Europeans and 173 Syrians and Lebanese.

<sup>5</sup>Consists of 230 Europeans and 162 Syrians and Lebanese.

<sup>6</sup>Consists of 113 Europeans and 39 Syrians and Lebanese.

<sup>7</sup>Consists of 197 British, 52 Asians, and 70 other non-Africans.

<sup>8</sup>Consists of 130 British and 16 other non-Africans.

Sources: [Colonial Office], *Report and Summary of the Census of the Gambia 1911*. London: HMSO, 1911. This can be found in CO 87/186, Denton to Secretary of State, June 27, 1911. [Gambia Government], *Report and Summary of the Census of the Gambia* (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1921), Table 3; *Report of the Census Commissioner for Bathurst, 1944* (Sessional Paper no. 2 of 1945) (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1945); *Report of the Census Commissioner for the Colony — 1951* (Sessional Paper no. 4 of 1952) (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1952), Table 5; *Report on the Census of Population of the Gambia Taken on 17th/18th April 1963 by H. A. Oliver* (Sessional Paper no. 13 of 1965) (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1965), Tables 34 and 105.

## Post-Independence

Table 1.7 shows the ethnic composition of The Gambia at each census date between 1963 and 1993. It is evident that the rank order of the first six ethnic groups has remained unchanged since independence; however, the Mandinka share of the national population has fallen significantly. This is partly due to the faster population growth of other Gambian ethnic groups and partly due to the

**Table 1.6.** Population of the Protectorate by Ethnic Group, 1911–63

	1911		1931		1946 <sup>1</sup>		1963	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mandinka	71,070	51	85,640	46	99,206	43	122,150	44
Fula	27,118	20	22,273	12	51,542	23	40,696	15
Wolof	22,367	16	25,864	14	31,714	14	27,771	10
Serahuli	4,535	3	12,316	7	13,093	6	20,726	8
Jola	9,540	7	19,410	10	20,636	9	19,193	7
Tukulor	n/a	n/a	11,653	6	n/a	n/a	4,493	2
Serere	1,036	1	n/a	n/a	2,084	1	3,033	1
Bambara	943	1	3,261	2	5,047	2	1,177	... <sup>2</sup>
Manjago	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,059	... <sup>2</sup>	1,030	... <sup>2</sup>
Aku	559	... <sup>2</sup>	786	... <sup>2</sup>	680	... <sup>2</sup>	257	... <sup>2</sup>
Other African	1,233	1	3,947	2	3,053	1	34,791	13
Non-African	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	152	... <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>138,401</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>185,150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>228,114</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>275,469</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup>Annual estimate of the Protectorate.

<sup>2</sup>Fewer than 0.5 percent.

Sources: [Colonial Office], *Census Report, 1911*; [Colonial Office], *Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of the Gambia, 1931* (Colonial Reports no. 1572) (London: HMSO, 1932); Gamble, *Socio-Economic Survey*, 27, Table II (for 1946); [Gambia Government], *Census Report, 1963*, Table 12.

growth of the non-Gambian African population since 1983. The ethnic groups which are separately identified in table 1.7 are described below.<sup>17</sup>

### Mandinka

The Mandinka first moved into Gambia in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries as the Mali Empire expanded. They were certainly fully established on both banks of the River Gambia when the first European explorers (from Portugal) arrived in the fifteenth century and by 1800, they provided the ruling class (and most of the inhabitants) of all bar one of the fifteen kingdoms below the Barrakunda Falls.<sup>18</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the region was subject to considerable unrest in the second half of the nineteenth century; nevertheless, despite these upheavals, the Mandinka still accounted for 49 percent of the total population of Gambia in 1911. They then comprised the bulk of the population in the North Bank and South Bank Provinces of the Protectorate and were the most numerous group in all bar one of the other three Protectorate Provinces.<sup>19</sup> However, even though Mandinka from the Kombo had been among the earliest African inhabitants of Bathurst, they made up only 3 percent of its population in 1911 (see table 1.5).<sup>20</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, their share of



**Table 1.7.** Population of The Gambia by Ethnic Group, 1963–93

	1963		1973		1983		1993	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Gambians:</i>								
Mandinka	128,807	41	186,241	38	251,997	37	353,840	34
Fula/Tukolor	47,354 <sup>1</sup>	15	79,994	16	117,092	17	168,284	16
Wolof	40,805	13	69,291	14	84,404	12	130,546	13
Jola	22,046	7	41,988	9	64,494	9	95,262	9
Serahuli	21,318	7	38,478	8	51,137	7	79,690	8
Serere	4,258	1	9,229	2	15,551	2	24,710	2
Manjago	1,735	1	5,596	1	10,741	2	16,550 <sup>2</sup>	2
Bambara	1,576	.. <sup>3</sup>	1,722	.. <sup>3</sup>	3,035	.. <sup>3</sup>	7,458 <sup>2</sup>	1
Aku	2,974	1	4,386	1	5,032	1	6,194	1
Other Gambian	9,058	3	3,791	1	20,376	3	13,601	1
<i>Total Gambian</i>	<i>279,931</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>440,716</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>623,859</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>896,135</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Non-Gambians:</i>								
African	34,938	11	50,843	10	58,273	8	130,634	13
Non-African	617	.. <sup>3</sup>	1,159	.. <sup>3</sup>	2,523	.. <sup>3</sup>	3,484	.. <sup>3</sup>
Not stated	n/a	n/a	781	.. <sup>3</sup>	3,162	.. <sup>3</sup>	7,892	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>315,486</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>493,499</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>687,817</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,038,145</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup>The Tukolor were reclassified as Fula in 1973. In 1963, the Fula population was 42,723 and the Tukolor population was 4,631.

<sup>2</sup>Additional data supplied by Central Statistics Department from census tables.

<sup>3</sup>Fewer than 0.5 percent.

Sources: [Gambia Government], *Census Report, 1963*, Table 10; [Gambia Government], *Population Databank*, Tables 1.4 and 4.16.

the population declined slightly, although, as shown in table 1.7, they still comprised 41 percent of the total population in 1963 (46 percent of the Gambian population). By 1993, these figures had fallen to 34 and 39 percent, respectively.

In 1963, 48 percent of the Mandinka population lived in LRD. This was clearly the Mandinka heartland; Mandinka accounted for 76 percent of the total population of Mansakonko LGA (which consisted of the Kiang and Jarra districts) and 58 percent of that of Kerewan LGA (which consisted of the Baddibu, Niumi, and Jokadu districts). The Mandinka were also the most numerous ethnic group in all the other LGAs except Bathurst. However, after independence, the center of the Mandinka population began to shift westward. By 1983, there were more Mandinka living in Brikama LGA than in any other LGA and by 1993, the WD had become the main centre of the Mandinka population; 26 percent of the

Mandinka lived in Brikama and a further 16 percent in Kanifing. This compared with only 14 and 3 percent, respectively, in 1963. Although the Mandinka were still the predominant group in four LGAs (Brikama, Kanifing, Kerewan, and Mansakonko), they had been overtaken by the Fula in Georgetown and Kuntaur (in the latter, they were also now outnumbered by the Wolof) and by the Serahuli in Basse. Moreover, only in Mansakonko did they now form an absolute majority of the population. Nevertheless, because they comprised at least one-quarter of the *Gambian* population of all LGAs, they could justifiably claim to be the most “national” of the various ethnic groups.

Precolonial Mandinka society was organized on the basis of a caste system and, even since independence, caste has remained an important arbiter of social status. The highest caste (“foro”) contained freeborn members of a lineage; the middle caste (“nyamalo”) consisted of people carrying out specialist functions, for example as smiths, leatherworkers, potters, or praise singers; and the lowest caste consisted of slaves (“jongo”).<sup>21</sup>

Until independence, almost all Mandinka lived in the rural areas; as late as 1963, 95 percent lived in the Protectorate. More recently, they have moved into the urbanized areas of Banjul and Kanifing where 21 percent lived in 1993. Since the late nineteenth century, male Mandinka in the rural areas have mainly grown groundnuts (it is thought that, by the late nineteenth century, they were responsible for three-quarters of the total groundnut production) and female Mandinka have generally cultivated rice. The few Mandinka who lived in Bathurst before the 1960s tended to be poorly educated and employed in semiskilled and unskilled jobs. More recently, the Mandinka have moved up the occupational hierarchy and those in employment in the Banjul area are particularly likely to be employed in the public sector.<sup>22</sup>

Most Mandinka were animist until at least the 1860s, but, following the Soninke-Marabout Wars, many had converted to Islam by the 1890s and virtually all had done so by the 1920s. There have never been many Mandinka Christians, although their number have included The Gambia’s first prime minister and president, Sir Dawda Jawara (who later reverted to Islam) and Edward Singhateh, one of the leaders of the 1994 military coup.<sup>23</sup>

### **Fula and Tukolor<sup>24</sup>**

There has apparently been a Fula presence in The Gambia since at least the seventeenth century and by the nineteenth century, the various Fula subgroups, together with the closely related Tukolor, accounted for a substantial proportion of the population of the Mandinka kingdoms.<sup>25</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, a famous Fula leader, Musa Molloh, established a Fula kingdom north of the river centered on Fuladu and in 1911, when they made up one-fifth of the population of the Protectorate (see table 1.6), they resided mainly in the North Bank and Upper River Provinces.<sup>26</sup> During the next fifty years, the estimated Fula population fluctuated, but by 1963, the Fula and the Tukolor between them comprised 15 percent of the total population. Their share of the national population remained

broadly the same over the next three decades, so that in 1993, they comprised 16 percent of the total, and 19 percent of the Gambian, population (see table 1.7).

In 1963, well over half the Fula population lived either in Basse or in Georgetown LGAs, whereas 86 percent of the Tukulor lived in Kuntaur; 96 percent of their combined population lived in the Protectorate. Since independence, the Fula/Tukulor have become more evenly distributed across the country, although, in 1993, they were still more likely to live in Basse and Georgetown than elsewhere; they now accounted for at least one-tenth of the Gambian population in all LGAs except Banjul. Moreover, they are now the most numerous ethnic group in both Georgetown and Kuntaur.

Until the nineteenth century, most Fula were pastoralists who tended the cattle of their Mandinka overlords in return for pasturage. Some Fula subgroups did take up farming in the nineteenth century and, in the view of Swindell, by the 1970s, the Fula were as heavily involved in groundnut cultivation as other Gambian ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the Fula are still associated with cattle breeding and even in the 1980s, the wealth of a Fula was measured by the number of cattle he or she owned. Urban Fula, at least until the 1950s, appear to have been mainly employed as petty traders or as unskilled workers.<sup>27</sup>

Some Fula subgroups, as well as the Tukulor, were strongly Islamized by the 1860s, but others remained animist well into the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> There have never been many Fula Christians, in part because a concerted effort by Wesleyan Methodists in the 1830s to convert them to Christianity proved a complete failure. An Anglican attempt to proselytize among the Fula by the building of a mission station and a school at Kristikunda in URD in 1940 was probably only a little more successful.<sup>29</sup>

## **Wolof**

Like the Mandinka, the Wolof were firmly established in Gambia by the fifteenth century. They entered the Gambia Valley from Senegal, where they continue to be the most numerous ethnic group, and established a kingdom in Saloum (or Salum), which, by 1800, was the only non-Mandinka kingdom below the Barrakunda Falls; however, there were relatively few Wolof in any of the Mandinka kingdoms until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Some Wolof from the interior may have later migrated to Bathurst. Meanwhile, in the 1820s, a substantial number of Wolof moved directly to Bathurst from Gorée and St. Louis in the French colony of Senegal. They were sent there by their European employers and Mulatto slave owners to work as artisans on the construction of the town, or as domestic servants, and tended originally to live in an area of North Bathurst, known as Joloff Town until the 1960s. It is probable that in the early days of the settlement on St. Mary's Island, they formed the majority of its African population.<sup>31</sup> There appears to have been little contact between the Gorée Wolof of Bathurst and the Wolof of the interior, who formed distinct communities at least until the 1960s.<sup>32</sup> In the early twentieth century, the Wolof comprised nearly half of Bathurst's population; they also made up 16 percent of the Protectorate's population in 1911 (see table 1.6).

The number of Wolof living in the Protectorate increased relatively slowly up to independence, so that by 1963 they accounted for only 10 percent of its population. Most of these lived in the Sabach Sanjal district of Kerewan LGA, in the Saloum districts of Kuntaur LGA, and in Georgetown LGA. In contrast, the Wolof formed easily the most numerous ethnic group in Bathurst, comprising 41 percent of its total population and an absolute majority of Gambians. By 1993, this picture had changed in several respects. Only 7 percent of the Wolof lived in Banjul, compared with 28 percent in Bathurst in 1963, and the Wolof now barely outnumbered the Mandinka in the capital. Almost one-third of the Wolof lived in Kerewan LGA—as they had in 1963.

Male Wolof in the rural areas have tended to be groundnut farmers since the end of the nineteenth century, and female Wolof have tended to grow food crops. Wolof farmers in the 1990s were more likely to be defined as “large export oriented” farmers, than as “small export oriented” or “subsistence” farmers (although it should be emphasized that all Gambian farmers are fairly small scale in comparison with commercial farmers elsewhere in West Africa).<sup>33</sup> Bathurst Wolof were often employed as skilled manual workers (artisans) or traders in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries and, even in the mid-1950s, they were often artisans, drivers, mechanics, and clerks. However, thanks to improved education, they began to move into higher level civil service posts and the professions in greater numbers after World War II, a process that has continued.<sup>34</sup>

Since the end of the nineteenth century, most rural Wolof have been Muslims.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it is probable that most Wolof in modern Banjul are Muslims; however, there has also been a significant Christian Wolof community in the capital since the earliest years of the settlement on St. Mary’s Island. Some of the Wolof immigrants from Gorée were converted to Christianity by Wesleyan missionaries and formed the nucleus (and the lay leadership) of the Methodist Church in the 1830s and 1840s; for example, the first two African assistant missionaries of the Wesleyan church, John Cupidon and Pierre Sallah, were both Wolof ex-slaves from Gorée.<sup>36</sup> However, after the establishment of a permanent Roman Catholic mission in Bathurst in 1849 (see below), many Wolof converted to Catholicism, particularly after 1860, and Wolof Catholics came to outnumber their Protestant counterparts. Certainly by the mid-twentieth century, most Wolof Christians were Catholic.<sup>37</sup>

## **Jola**

The Jola, who are generally considered to have been resident in The Gambia for longer than any other major ethnic group, have been the most numerous ethnic group south of the River Gambia and in the Casamance area of Senegal for several centuries.<sup>38</sup> In 1911, when they comprised 7 percent of the national population (see table 1.5), they lived mainly in small and isolated communal groups in the forests and swamps of the southern districts of Kombo-Foni Province;

a minority also settled in Bathurst. Indeed, a key feature of Jola society at least until independence was its fragmentary nature.<sup>39</sup> The Jola remained concentrated in the Kombos and Fonis up to independence; as late as 1963, 55 percent of all Jola lived in either Eastern or Western Foni, and a further 27 percent lived in Eastern or Western Kombo. This meant that 83 percent of the Jola lived in the Brikama LGA. There were smaller Jola communities in Bathurst and Kanifing, but few Jola lived elsewhere in Gambia. The number of Jola living in Kanifing LGA increased from 1,400 in 1963, to more than 35,000 in 1993; this meant that by 1993, more than one-third of all Jola lived in the area. However, the majority (58 percent) of Jola still lived in Brikama LGA.

Jola living in the rural areas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to grow rice and millet, rather than groundnuts, and also collected palm kernels for export; while urban Jola were mainly employed as unskilled laborers as late as the 1950s.<sup>40</sup> Unlike most other riverine peoples, the Jola were very slow to convert to Islam in the nineteenth century and many remained animist as late as the 1960s. Most Jola are now Muslims, with a minority being Roman Catholic.<sup>41</sup>

## **Serahuli**

The Serahuli, who may be of mixed Mandinka, Tuareg, and Fula origin, are popularly believed to have been the main inhabitants of the ancient empire of Ghana (which flourished between the eighth and eleventh centuries AD). After the decline of the Ghana empire, some Serahuli moved to Gambia. A further migration of Serahuli into Gambia occurred in the mid-nineteenth century. As early as the 1840s, Serahuli were growing groundnuts as “strange farmers” for Mandinka landlords in the upper river and they also served as mercenaries during the Soninke–Marabout wars; they were also successful long-distance traders in the pre-colonial period.<sup>42</sup> By 1911, they made up 3 percent of the total population of Gambia, being resident mainly in Upper River Province.

Over the next fifty years, the recorded Serahuli population increased more rapidly than that of most other ethnic groups, so that, like the Jola, they accounted for 7 percent of the total population in 1963. Again like the Jola, they were also heavily concentrated within one LGA; 82 percent lived in Basse LGA. Indeed, the Serahuli were the most numerous group in three districts within this LGA: Kantora, Basse, and Jimara. Most other Serahuli lived in Georgetown LGA. Few lived in Bathurst or Kombo St. Mary before independence. In the first three decades after independence, the pattern of Serahuli settlement changed in some respects; nevertheless, even in 1993, nearly three-quarters of all Serahuli lived in Basse. Most others lived in Kanifing.

It is probable that most Serahuli in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were farmers, although some urbanized Serahuli were prominent in commerce, including more recently in international trade in diamonds and clothing.<sup>43</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, almost all have been Muslims. The Serahuli also have

been the least willing of the major Gambian ethnic groups to adopt Christian or Western education.<sup>44</sup>

### **Serere**

The Serere (or Serer) have been present in The Gambia for many centuries, although they comprise a higher share of the population of Senegal, where they constituted 15 percent of the population in 1988.<sup>45</sup> In the early nineteenth century, most Serere lived north of the river in the kingdom of Saloum, but in 1863, an estimated 2,000 fled to the Crown Colony to escape from the fighting in the interior and eventually settled in Bathurst and British Kombo.<sup>46</sup> In 1901, they formed the third largest ethnic group in Bathurst after the Wolof and the Aku, and in 1911, one third of all Serere in the Colony lived in the capital. However, in 1963, only 17 percent of Serere lived in Bathurst and the majority resided in Kerewan LGA. Since 1963, the center of the Serere population has shifted again; just over one-third lived in Kerewan and just under a third in Kanifing in 1993.

Traditionally either engaged in farming or fishing, male Serere in the rural areas of The Gambia and Senegal tend now to grow groundnuts, and female Serere produce millet and vegetables. Certainly in the nineteenth century (and probably for much of the twentieth), male Serere in Bathurst tended to be employed as unskilled laborers.<sup>47</sup>

During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the majority of Gambian Serere remained animist, but in recent decades, most have become Muslim. Christianity has never made much headway amongst Gambian Serere, unlike in Senegal, where a significant minority became Roman Catholic during the colonial period. Indeed, a concerted effort by the Methodist Church to convert the Serere in Bathurst in the 1870s proved abortive.<sup>48</sup>

### **Manjago**

The Manjago, who account for about one-tenth of the population of modern Guinea-Bissau (where they are called Mandjack, Mandyako, or Manjaco) apparently arrived in Gambia from Portuguese territory to the south in the late nineteenth century; in 1911, 128 of them lived in Bathurst (see table 1.5).<sup>49</sup> In 1963, there were 1,700 Manjago in Gambia, one-third of whom lived in Bathurst and over the next two decades, the Manjago population grew rapidly to reach nearly 11,000 by 1983 and more than 16,000 by 1993. Since independence, the Manjago population has mainly resided in Brikama LGA.

Relatively little is known about the history of the Manjago in The Gambia. It would appear that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were often employed as sailors around Bathurst. There is little available information on their main occupations in more recent periods (although some are palm-wine tappers in the Kombos). However, it is known that most are Christian and their educational levels are higher than average.<sup>50</sup>

## **Bambara**

The Bambara, who are the most numerous ethnic group in Mali, comprising about 30 percent of its population, have been present in The Gambia since the early nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> In 1911, nearly a thousand Bambara lived in the Protectorate and there was also a small Bambara community in Bathurst (see tables 1.5 and 1.6). The number of Bambara living in the Protectorate increased rapidly until after World War II, before apparently declining sharply by 1963; this decline was probably largely due to a reclassification of many Bambara as Malians. After independence, the Bambara population increased slowly until 1983 and then more than doubled up to 1993, probably in part due to a reclassification of some Malians as Gambian Bambara. In both 1963 and 1973, the majority of Bambara lived in Basse LGA. However, in 1983 and 1993, they were most likely to live in Kerewan LGA. It is likely that most Bambara in the Protectorate are farmers, whereas those living in the capital have traditionally been employed in low-status laboring jobs.<sup>52</sup> Probably almost all are Muslims.

## **Aku, Ibo, and Liberated Africans**

The Aku form a quite distinctive group within Gambian society. Like the Creoles of Sierra Leone, they are mainly descended from African slaves who were liberated by the British naval squadron after the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1807. These former slaves, who were known to contemporaries as Liberated Africans (and to later commentators as "Recaptives"), were usually first taken to Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.<sup>53</sup> A handful was transferred from Freetown to Bathurst as early as 1818 and a few more were sent there in the 1820s at the request of the mercantile community in Bathurst. However, most immigration occurred between 1832 (after Lieutenant Governor Rendall had urged the secretary of state for the colonies to allow the transfer of a large body of Liberated Africans) and 1838 (when Lieutenant Governor Mackie prohibited it). Despite this prohibition, the transfer of Liberated Africans continued until 1843, when the Liberated African Department in Bathurst was closed down, by which time between three and five thousand Liberated Africans had been transferred to Gambia.<sup>54</sup> By the 1840s, these formed a significant proportion of Bathurst's population; for example, in 1841, the estimated 1,400 Liberated Africans in Bathurst comprised two-fifths of its total population.<sup>55</sup>

The Liberated Africans in Gambia were of diverse ethnic origin. Although it is not possible to provide precise figures, it is probable that most were Yoruba from modern Western Nigeria who, as in Sierra Leone, were called Aku. Ibo from Eastern Nigeria may have formed the second largest group; there were also people from Grand/Little Popo in what is now Togo, Moco from Cameroon, "Congos," and Hausa from Northern Nigeria.<sup>56</sup> When the first detailed assessment of the ethnic origin of the Colony's population was made in 1901, the Aku, followed by the Ibo, comprised the largest proportion of the descendants of the Liberated

Africans (see table 1.4). Indeed, by 1911, the term *Aku* was apparently being used in the census to cover all the descendants of the Liberated Africans except the *Ibo*, as well as freeborn immigrants from Sierra Leone and possibly the children of *Wolof* Protestants and of mixed *Aku/Wolof* parents.<sup>57</sup>

Both the 1911 and 1921 census returns showed that the *Aku* and the *Ibo* remained the most important groups within Creole society in Bathurst. The data presented in table 1.5 suggest that the *Aku* community in Bathurst grew substantially in the 1920s and 1930s, but it is possible that those of *Ibo* descent were classified as *Aku* in 1944, thereby accounting for at least part of the increase; there may also have been a change in the classification of immigrants from Sierra Leone.<sup>58</sup> After World War II, the *Aku* population increased slowly so that by 1983, they comprised only 0.7 percent of the national population, a proportion that fell further to 0.6 percent in 1993.

During the 1830s, official policy was to place as many Liberated African immigrants as possible on MacCarthy Island, although a settlement was also established in the Ceded Mile at this time and in British Kombo in the 1850s and 1860s. The settlement in the Ceded Mile did not survive for long (its inhabitants soon moved to Bathurst), but the Liberated African community on MacCarthy Island survived until a few years after the withdrawal of its military garrison in 1866. However, by the 1870s, all Liberated African communities outside Bathurst were in decline and, as shown in table 1.4, more than four out of five Liberated Africans and Sierra Leonean immigrants lived in the capital in 1881.<sup>59</sup> Even after the establishment of the Protectorate, the *Aku* and *Ibo* largely continued to reside in Bathurst; in 1911, for example, most *Aku*, and all *Ibo*, lived in the capital.

Over the next fifty years, the number of *Aku* who resided in the Protectorate remained very low; in 1963, 85 percent of the *Aku* population lived in Bathurst and a further 7 percent in Kombo St. Mary. Only 8 percent of the *Aku* were found in the Protectorate and these made up a mere 0.1 percent of its total population. Over the next two decades, the *Aku* population increasingly shifted from Banjul to Kanifing, although even in 1983, 48 percent of the *Aku* still lived in the capital. In 1993, 57 percent of the *Aku* population lived in Kanifing and only 30 percent in Banjul.

The first Liberated African settlers in Gambia tended to succumb to the hostile climate, and the survivors often remained illiterate, unemployed, and destitute.<sup>60</sup> Gradually, however, Liberated Africans and their descendants became better educated. By the 1860s, they were “amongst the foremost traders in the river Gambia” and were well represented in government service; by the 1870s, a few had become merchants and by 1911, they were said to comprise the majority of the educated class.<sup>61</sup> During the next fifty years, the *Aku* strengthened their position in the civil service and also supplied most African merchants and professionals. At independence, many senior civil servants were *Aku* and they have continued to be well represented in the senior ranks of the civil service.<sup>62</sup> Even in 1993, the *Aku* population had much higher educational levels than other ethnic groups; only 9 percent had had no formal education.<sup>63</sup>



A contemporary account suggested that in the 1860s, the majority of Aku (narrowly defined, i.e., those of Yoruba origin) and almost all Ibo living in The Gambia were Christian. Most of these would have been Protestant (mainly Methodist, but also Anglican); there appear never to have been many Aku Catholics. A minority of Aku were Muslim (popularly known as “Aku Marabouts”).<sup>64</sup> The religious complexion of the Aku community (more broadly defined) remained broadly similar for more than a century. Most Aku were Methodist and accounted for almost all the leading lay members of the Wesleyan Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth century—but a minority continued to be Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

### **Non-Gambian Africans**

There has been a sizeable foreign African population in the Gambia Valley since the 1840s, when “strange farmers” from Senegal and other French territory moved into the area to grow groundnuts on a sharecropping basis.<sup>66</sup> The presence of strange farmers remained an important feature of Gambian rural society thereafter, although their numbers fluctuated considerably. For example, there were 16,000 strange farmers from French and Portuguese territory in Gambia in 1945, but only 7,000 in 1948. A Farmers’ Survey carried out in the mid-1970s, estimated that there were about 25,000 Guinean, Senegalese, and Malian strange farmers in The Gambia, but a 1990 survey found that there were less than 2,000 non-Gambian strange farmers in the country.<sup>67</sup>

Non-Gambian Africans have also moved to Bathurst in considerable numbers since the late nineteenth century. The first to arrive were probably Creoles from Sierra Leone who came to Bathurst initially to trade and then, from the 1870s onward, to seek clerical employment with the Gambian government.<sup>68</sup> As noted, many were eventually absorbed into the Aku community. The number of Sierra Leoneans in The Gambia declined after World War II and by the 1970s, Gambians were more likely to live in Sierra Leone than vice versa.<sup>69</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, and perhaps particularly between World Wars I and II, Senegalese and other immigrants from French and Portuguese territory traveled to Bathurst during the trade season to load groundnuts.<sup>70</sup>

Table 1.8 shows that the total of non-Gambian Africans rose gradually until 1983, before more than doubling to 131,000 in 1993, when, as shown in table 1.7, they comprised 13 percent of the population. This was a particularly high proportion, which reflected the economic and political problems of its neighbors. Not surprisingly, the majority of foreign nationals in The Gambia are from neighboring Senegal. In the mid-1970s, there were nearly twice as many Gambians living in Senegal as Senegalese living in Gambia, but by the 1990s, the situation was very different.<sup>71</sup> By 1993, over half of all non-Gambians lived in either Kanifing or Brikama. Non-Gambian Africans were also much more likely to be employed in the “informal sector” of the economy than in the “formal” private sector or the public sector.<sup>72</sup>

**Table 1.8.** Non-Gambian African Population of The Gambia, 1963–93

	Senegal	Guinea [Conakry]	Guinea- Bissau <sup>a</sup>	Mali	Sierra Leone	Mauritania	Other	Total
1963	21,498	5,257	4,689	1,911	730	585	268	34,938
1973	25,309	10,137	6,817	5,467	436	1,883	794	50,843
1983	32,385	12,599	5,626	4,295	517	1,828	1,023	58,273
1993	81,567	27,797	8,488	6,370	1,605	2,243	2,564	130,634

Sources: [Gambia Government], *Census Report, 1963*, Table 10; [Gambia Government], *Population Databank*, Table 4.16.

Note: Data are for country of nationality.

<sup>a</sup>Portuguese Guinea in 1963 and 1973.

## Europeans

Ever since the foundation of Bathurst, there has been a small, but influential, European population. The first civilian settlers were a group of British merchants who moved to Gambia from Gorée soon after the French had reoccupied their trading post in 1817.<sup>73</sup> By 1823, there were forty-five Europeans (including military officers) on St. Mary's Island and there were usually thirty to fifty resident Europeans in Bathurst during the nineteenth century (few lived outside the town). Most Europeans in the Colony at any one time were British, although following the abandonment of Albreda, there was also a small, but significant, French commercial community in Bathurst from 1860 when the first French firm (Maurel Frères) was set up in the town. In the first half of the twentieth century, the number of Europeans on St. Mary's Island increased, reaching 261 in 1939; in 1963, the British population of Gambia was 412. By 1983, the non-African population exceeded 2,500. Many of these would have been Asians or Americans; the European share is unknown, although they perhaps still comprised the majority of non-African expatriates.<sup>74</sup>

Most European residents in the nineteenth century were either officials or merchants (a handful were missionaries). No clear-cut distinction was made between the two groups; owing to a shortage of manpower, merchants were often required to take on official positions.<sup>75</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, about one-third of all Europeans were officials and by the 1990s, most were probably employed either by the central government or by aid agencies on contract work.<sup>76</sup>

## Mulattos

For most of the nineteenth century, there was also a distinctive Mulatto community in Bathurst. A total of 135 Mulattos was recorded as living on St. Mary's Island in 1824 and 116 in the 1901 census. Mulattos were the product of relationships between European men and African (mainly Wolof) women (known as "senoras" or "signaras") and, as in Senegal, there were important social distinctions between

them. At one end of the social scale were the offspring of British officials and merchants who were often educated in Europe, became merchants themselves, and lived alongside Europeans (often in Portuguese Town in North Bathurst). At the other end were the descendants of early Portuguese traders who were generally employed as artisans, sailors, and domestic servants. The Mulatto community “disappeared” after 1901; some Mulattos were absorbed into the European community; others were no doubt reclassified as Wolof.<sup>77</sup>

### **West Indians**

In the later nineteenth century, there was also a small, but politically important, West Indian community in Bathurst; for example, there were fifty-nine West Indians living in Bathurst in 1881 (see table 1.4). Some were officials, but most were probably engaged in commerce or the professions; many West Indian settlers may originally have served in one of the West Indian regiments stationed at different times in Gambia.<sup>78</sup> By 1901, most had died or left Gambia.

### **Lebanese**

Finally, the first Lebanese (or, strictly speaking, Syrian) immigrants arrived in Gambia (and Senegal) around 1900; there were fourteen Syrians in Bathurst in 1901 and fifty-four in 1921.<sup>79</sup> Like other Lebanese in West Africa, they found work initially as small-scale retailers in the Colony and Protectorate. Again as elsewhere in West Africa, later generations also concentrated on commerce with some families (notably the Madis) being extremely successful. The Lebanese community (which is now fully integrated into Gambian society) remains heavily involved in commerce and in tourism.<sup>80</sup> With the exception of the Madi family, Lebanese in The Gambia have avoided public engagement in politics.

## **Religion**

The Gambia is now an overwhelmingly Islamic country; 95 percent of the population was Muslim in both 1983 and 1993.<sup>81</sup> However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the religious composition of the population was very different. Moreover, for much of the period under review, there were marked differences between the religious composition of Bathurst and of the Protectorate. These distinctions were of considerable political significance and so are examined in some detail.

In 1800, the great majority of people living along the River Gambia were animist. Islam had been introduced into the riverine region in the fourteenth century and, in the early 1800s, there were small Muslim communities in almost all the kingdoms. However, they suffered discrimination from the majority animist population, being prohibited from owning land or holding the highest offices of state.

In the late 1840s, the underlying tensions between stricter Muslims (who were collectively known as Marabouts) and animists or laxer Muslims (known as Soninkes) led to conflict in the south bank kingdom of Kombo. More significantly, in 1861, Maba (or Ma Bah) Diakhou (or Jaakhu), a Fula Torodo who had been initiated into the Tijaniyya brotherhood around 1850, launched a successful Muslim jihad (holy war) against the Soninke ruling class in the kingdom of Baddibu. The conflict spread rapidly to other parts of the river and by the mid-1870s, the Soninkes had been defeated.<sup>82</sup>

Muslims were thereafter in the ascendancy in most of the area, which was to become the Protectorate in 1894 and by the early 1900s, accounted for four out of five persons in the Protectorate. Almost all the rest were animists (or “pagans” as they were described in the census returns); there were very few Christians in the Protectorate. This situation remained largely unchanged by the early 1930s. By the 1950s, Muslims accounted for nine-tenths of the population of the Protectorate, but sizeable animist communities remained, notably in the Foni region.<sup>83</sup> However, by 1993, only 800 people admitted to being followers of “traditional” religions. The decline of traditional religions was thus more complete in The Gambia than in some other countries in West Africa; for example, around 40 percent of the population in Cameroon and Liberia still adhered to traditional religions in the 1990s.<sup>84</sup>

Christianity was never well established in the Protectorate, but in Bathurst, the situation was very different. Its origins in The Gambia may be traced to the arrival of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionary, John Morgan, in February 1821.<sup>85</sup> It was initially intended that the Wesleyan mission should be based at Mandinari in the Kombo, but this station was abandoned in 1822 and thereafter Bathurst remained the focus of Wesleyan attention.<sup>86</sup> The earliest Wesleyan missionaries (and their families) suffered a very high mortality rate, but recorded church membership rose from approximately forty in 1830 to 250 by the end of 1834 and 559 by 1837. In 1837, 70 percent of Wesleyans lived in Bathurst and the remainder on MacCarthy Island, where a mission station had been successfully established in 1832. By 1841, a total of 634 “natives” in the colony were said to profess the Christian religion.<sup>87</sup> Almost all of these would have been Methodist. Although an Anglican chaplain had first been appointed in 1820, Anglicanism had made little headway thereafter; a Catholic mission established on St. Mary’s Island in 1823 was quickly abandoned and a permanent mission was not established in Bathurst until 1849.<sup>88</sup>

During the 1860s, however, the composition of the Christian population began to change as Roman Catholic missionary endeavors became more effective. When the first religious census was taken in 1871, Methodists accounted for 67 percent of the Crown Colony’s Christians, Catholics for 24 percent, and Anglicans for 9 percent. According to Administrator Anton, who conducted the census, almost all Anglicans and Catholics then lived in Bathurst, whereas Methodists were scattered throughout the settlement; in fact, the majority of full members of the Methodist Church were resident in Bathurst. By the 1890s, there were an estimated 1,500

**Table 1.9.** Population of Bathurst/Banjul by Religious Belief, 1881–1993

	1881	1901	1911	1921	1931	1944	1951	1983	1993
<i>Christian</i> <sup>1</sup>	3,078	3,229	3,288	3,948	4,681	4,995	5,172	4,590	3,026
Anglican	751	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,119	1,030	1,074	n/a	n/a
Methodist	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,477	1,479	1,695	n/a	n/a
Roman Catholic	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,064	2,486	2,383	n/a	n/a
<i>Muslim</i>	1,894	4,192 <sup>2</sup>	3,957	4,928	9,291	15,866	14,219	38,932	38,662
<i>Traditional</i>	1,166	1,386 <sup>2</sup>	455	351	398	291	211	22	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,138</b>	<b>8,807</b>	<b>7,700</b>	<b>9,227</b>	<b>14,370</b>	<b>21,152</b>	<b>19,602</b>	<b>44,188<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>42,326<sup>3</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes other Christians, who were not separately identified.

<sup>2</sup> Probably artificially high figures because of the presence of the Expeditionary force in Bathurst (which would not have affected the Christian community to the same extent).

<sup>3</sup> Includes other religions and not stated.

*Sources:* As for tables 1.4 and 1.5; see also [Gambia Government], *Report and Summary of the Census of the Gambia* (Bathurst: Government Printer, 1932). Data for 1983 and 1993 were supplied to the authors by the Central Statistics Department, Banjul. These supplement data in [Gambia Government], *Population Databank*, Table 1.6.

Catholics in Gambia and, as table 1.9 shows, by 1931, Catholics easily outnumbered Methodists in Bathurst.<sup>89</sup>

The number of Muslims in Bathurst began to increase during the 1860s and 1870s as refugees from the conflict in the riverine kingdoms fled to the town; by 1881, they comprised 31 percent of its population.<sup>90</sup> There were more Muslims than Christians living in Bathurst in 1901 and by 1911, they formed an absolute majority of its population. Christianity was now largely confined to the capital; whereas one in five Christians resident in the Colony had lived outside Bathurst in 1881, less than one in ten did so in 1901.<sup>91</sup>

As table 1.9 shows, during the twentieth century, the capital increasingly became a “Muslim” town. Muslims accounted for three-quarters of the population in 1944 and for more than nine-tenths in 1993. Christians still accounted for 43 percent of the population of Bathurst in 1911, but by 1944, their share had fallen to one-quarter and by 1993 to less than one-tenth. Catholics accounted for almost half of the town’s Christian population, Methodists for one-third, and Anglicans for the remainder, a quite different pattern from the nineteenth century. Catholics also made up three-quarters of the Christian population of Kombo St. Mary at this time.<sup>92</sup> Religious belief was not recorded in either the 1963 or 1973 censuses (although one author estimated the Christian population to be 10,000, of whom 8,000 were Catholic, in 1970), but the recorded Christian population was 25,000 in 1983 and 42,000 in 1993. Most Gambian Christians were Catholic; at the end of 1996, the estimated Catholic population was just under 30,000. There were also an estimated 1,500 Anglicans, and most of the remainder were presumably Methodist. Whereas in the colonial period, most Christians lived in Bathurst, fewer than one in ten lived in Banjul in 1993; nearly half lived in Kanifing and one-third in Brikama LGA.<sup>93</sup>

## Education, Health, and Poverty

### Education

As noted, the first permanent missionaries in The Gambia were Wesleyan Methodists who were therefore also the first to set up schools; by 1841, there were 268 pupils in their three elementary schools in Bathurst, the Ceded Mile, and MacCarthy Island.<sup>94</sup> Catholic and Anglican elementary schools were founded in Bathurst by 1870, but at least until the 1920s, the Wesleyan school rolls were usually the highest and the Anglican rolls the lowest. In 1918, for example, there were 592 pupils on the rolls of the three Wesleyan schools in Bathurst and Georgetown (MacCarthy Island); 538 pupils on the rolls of the three Catholic schools, and 235 on the Anglican roll.<sup>95</sup> Until 1903, when the “Mohammedan School” opened in Bathurst, no schools provided a Koranic education; a handful of Muslims did, however, attend one or other of the Protestant mission schools. The Mohammedan School, which was managed by a Board of Management of Muslim notables, possessed 108 pupils in 1918.<sup>96</sup> There was only one secondary school in Bathurst before the 1920s, the Wesleyan (Methodist) Boys’ High School (WBHS). The WBHS was founded in 1879 to train native missionary agents and to educate the sons of Liberated African entrepreneurs. It originally had 15 pupils, which had increased to 39 by 1918 and to 140 by 1955. By 1930, there were four secondary schools in Bathurst: two were Methodist and two were Roman Catholic.<sup>97</sup>

Bathurst’s elementary schools were administered by the missions until 1945 when they were taken over by the Gambian government and converted into primary schools under the Director of Education. The Baldwin Report of 1951 recommended that the four small mission secondary schools be merged into one nondenominational government school. But it was not until 1959 that the two Wesleyan secondary schools in Bathurst finally formed the nucleus of the government-run Gambia High School; the two Catholic secondary schools retained a separate existence. By 1960, enrolment in Bathurst’s twelve government primary schools and three private elementary schools exceeded 3,700 (compared with 1,698 for the six mission elementary schools in 1938), and combined enrolment in the four secondary schools in Bathurst was 622 (compared with 197 in these schools in 1938).<sup>98</sup>

As discussed, the Christian missions concentrated their resources on Bathurst. This meant that Protectorate education was almost entirely neglected and even as late as 1918, the only elementary schools outside Bathurst were one Wesleyan and one Catholic school in Georgetown on MacCarthy Island. The situation had improved slightly by 1938, when there were six elementary mission schools outside Bathurst and, as noted, an Anglican mission school was also established at Kristikunda in 1940. Meanwhile, a government school, Armitage School, had been established at Georgetown in 1927 (following the closure of the Catholic school). It originally provided Koranic teaching and an elementary education in agriculture and (like the Bo School in Sierra Leone) was deliberately designed to

cater for the sons and near relatives of Protectorate chiefs. It later became a secondary school and adopted an academic curriculum.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, educational provision in the rural areas remained very limited. After World War II, the situation improved and by 1960, the thirty-seven village primary schools in the Protectorate were attended by 2,200 pupils. Even so, only 5 percent of the school-age population of the Protectorate attended school, compared with 85 percent of the school-age population of Bathurst and 47 percent of that of Kombo St. Mary. Moreover, at independence in 1965, 86 percent of the secondary school places were in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary.<sup>100</sup>

Because educational provision remained so poor before World War II, it is not surprising that the proportion of the population that could claim to be educated remained very low, even in Bathurst. Sixteen percent of the population of Bathurst was recorded as having a “good” education in 1921, and even in 1951, only 27 percent of Bathurst’s population was literate in English. Although a higher proportion of the Christian than Muslim population was literate in English, the number of educated Muslims was certainly increasing by the 1950s; for example, 87 out of 140 pupils at the WBHS in 1955 were Muslim. The extent of literacy in Bathurst also compared very favorably with the Protectorate, where only 345 people—a mere 0.2 percent of the Protectorate’s population—claimed literacy in English in 1945.<sup>101</sup> Although it is likely that literacy levels had improved by independence, the overall picture of a relatively poorly educated population (particularly in the Protectorate) remained valid by comparison with other West African countries.<sup>102</sup>

After independence, the Gambian government devoted considerable resources to improving educational provision with the ultimate goal of achieving universal primary education. The number of pupils attending primary schools rose from 11,500 in 1964–65 to 26,000 in 1976–77, and 113,000 in 1994–95. There were also 32,000 secondary school pupils in 1994–95, compared with only 3,000 at the end of 1964. In the same period, the number of schools increased from 99 to 257 and the number of teachers from 956 to 3,370. The gross primary enrolment rate (the percentage of the relevant age group enrolled in primary school) also increased from approximately 21 percent in 1964–65 to 53 percent in 1980 and 73 percent in 1993, and the secondary enrolment rate rose from 11–19 percent between 1980 and 1993. However, the adult literacy rate remained as low as 36 percent in 1992.<sup>103</sup> Significant progress has been made since independence in improving the position of groups in society which had fared poorly before independence; for example, the female gross primary enrolment increased from 15 percent in 1970 to 61 percent in 1993. Nevertheless, some of the historic imbalances of the educational system, notably the advantages enjoyed by Banjul over the rest of the country and by men over women, have still to be rectified. The adult male literacy rate in 1995 (53 percent) was more than twice as high as the female rate (25 percent), whereas both primary and secondary enrolment rates were higher for boys than girls. Moreover, a number of studies have revealed that literacy rates and enrolment rates remain higher in urban areas than in rural areas.<sup>104</sup>

## Health

As noted, the dry season in The Gambia lasts between November and June and the rainy season between the end of June and late October. Until World War II, the dry and wet seasons could equally have been termed the “healthy” and “sickly” seasons; St. Mary’s Island was subject to seasonal flooding, which provided ideal conditions for the spread of malaria. There were also periodic epidemics of yellow fever (the last one as recently as 1934) and cholera, which gave the colony its unflattering reputation for high mortality.<sup>105</sup> As late as 1944, the American president, Franklin Roosevelt, could comment about Gambia at a press conference that “Disease is rampant, absolutely. It’s a terrible place for disease.”<sup>106</sup>

After World War II, government expenditure on health began to increase, but the overall health of the population remained poor. For example, as late as 1960, the estimated life expectancy at birth was still only thirty-two years.<sup>107</sup> After independence, the government made a determined effort to improve the health of the population; for example, between 1963–64 and 1976–77, actual recurrent expenditure on health more than doubled in real terms. Although no new general hospitals were built to complement the Royal Victoria Hospital in Banjul and Bansang Hospital in MID, the number of health centers increased from eight in 1964 to twenty-three in 1991. As a result of greater emphasis being placed on providing health services in the rural areas, 406 village health services had also been established by 1991.<sup>108</sup>

By 1996, life expectancy at birth had increased to fifty-three years, a substantial improvement on the situation in 1960, and the infant mortality rate fell from 185 to 79 per 1,000 live births between 1970 and 1996. The 1996 rates compared with sub-Saharan averages of 52 and 91, respectively.<sup>109</sup> An estimated 76 percent of the population had access to safe water in 1995, but only 34 percent had access to sanitation. Compared with sub-Saharan Africa averages, a higher proportion had access to safe water, but a lower proportion to sanitation. Moreover, as in the case of education provision, significant differences remained between the urban and rural areas, for example, in terms of access to safe water.<sup>110</sup>

## Poverty

It was not until the early 1990s that attempts were made systematically to measure the extent of poverty in The Gambia. The first comprehensive assessment, the 1992–93 Household Economic Survey, found that 15 percent of Gambians could be classified as “extremely poor”; their annual mean income was below the food poverty line. An additional 18 percent were “poor”; their annual income was between the food poverty line and the overall poverty line. More than one in five (23 percent) of those living in rural areas were extremely poor, compared with only 9 percent of those in “other urban” areas and 5 percent of those in Greater Banjul. A more recent survey, the 1998 National Household Poverty Survey, reported that poverty had increased in the 1990s, with 51 percent of persons being classified as “extremely poor.” Again, those living in rural areas were much more likely to be in poverty than their urban counterparts.<sup>111</sup>



In 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Human Development Index (HDI). This seeks to compare the record of countries according to three components: life expectancy at birth; educational attainment, which comprises adult literacy and a combined primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolment ratio; and income (as measured by real gross domestic product per capita). The Gambia ranked second from last out of 164 countries in 1990; in 1995, by which time the measurement of the HDI had been refined, The Gambia ranked 161st out of 174 countries.<sup>112</sup>

## **Labor Force**

Bathurst's permanent labor force in the nineteenth century consisted mainly of skilled and unskilled manual workers, traders, shopkeepers, and domestic servants. Virtually no native Gambians were employed in professional occupations and relatively few in clerical work.<sup>113</sup> There was also a seasonal labor force of unskilled laborers, who migrated to Bathurst from up river each year to load groundnuts onto ocean-going vessels.<sup>114</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, skilled manual workers accounted for one-third of the urban labor force; unskilled laborers for between one-fifth and one-sixth of the labor force (except in the unusual circumstances of 1944, when the proportion rose to one-third); and about one person in seven was in commerce. Clerical work gradually assumed a more important role, so that, by 1951, it accounted for 9 percent of the urban labor force, but even in the 1950s, there were still very few Gambian professionals.<sup>115</sup> There was also a seasonal labor force that, as noted, included many temporary migrants from neighboring French and Portuguese colonies, as well as Gambians from up river, during the 1930s.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, outside Bathurst, most economically active people were farmers.

More recent data on the industrial and occupational structure of employment are available from the 1983 and 1993 censuses, and from a series of household and labor force surveys. Agriculture remained the single most important source of employment even in 1993 accounting for 51 percent of the economically active population; two-thirds of economically active women, but only two-fifths of economically active men, worked in this industry. The other main sources of employment were wholesale and retail trade and community, social, and personal services. Not surprisingly, Gambians were most likely to work as crop producers or as skilled agricultural workers in 1993; this occupational category accounted for half the total, and nearly three-quarters of the rural, economically active population. The urban population was most likely to be employed as service and market sales workers. Only 2 percent of the population was employed as legislators, managers, or professionals; three-quarters of those in these high-level occupations were men.<sup>117</sup>

It is probable that before World War II, the majority of employed Gambians in the urban areas worked in the private rather than the public sector.<sup>118</sup> However,

during and after the war, the government assumed an enlarged role as an employer and by the 1960s, at least two-thirds of employment in “larger” establishments was either in central or local government or in public corporations (parastatals). This proportion had risen to three-quarters by 1973. Between 1975–76 and 1985–86, the number of civil servant posts nearly doubled and by 1983, four out of five employed persons worked in the public sector.<sup>119</sup> However, following the retrenchment of approximately 3,000 permanent and temporary civil servants in 1986, the public sector share of employment had fallen to 64 percent by December 1986.<sup>120</sup> During the late 1980s and early 1990s, total civil service employment increased again to reach 10,700 in 1993–94, which was similar to the pre-1986 retrenchment level. The public sector was now similar in size to the formal private sector, although much smaller than the informal private sector. The development of The Gambia as a holiday destination, which is described below, meant that by the late 1980s, an estimated 7,000 Gambians were employed in services directly or indirectly linked to tourism.<sup>121</sup>

## **Structure of the Economy**

Throughout the colonial period, Gambia, like other West African colonies, depended on the proceeds of international trade.<sup>122</sup> Until World War II, the greater part of government revenue was provided by customs receipts. These were generated by duties imposed on manufactured goods, clothing, and foodstuffs imported from Europe by trading companies and, to a lesser extent, by a duty (which was first imposed in 1863) on the principal export crop, the groundnut. Other sources of revenue, such as fines and licenses, were usually of much lesser importance and there was no income tax in the colony until 1940.<sup>123</sup> After World War II, development expenditure was largely financed by grants or loans from the British government. However, at independence, nearly two-thirds of domestic revenue (total revenue excluding foreign grants) was derived from taxes on international trade. Indeed, until 1988–89, international trade almost always accounted for at least 60 percent, and often more than 70 percent, of domestic revenue.<sup>124</sup> This pattern apparently changed after the introduction of a national sales tax in 1988; the share of domestic revenue provided by international trade declined to only 43 percent by 1989–90, a similar proportion to that in other West African states. However, as Basu and Gemmell have pointed out, the sales tax on imports is in effect a tax on international trade; taking that into account, international trade continued to account for the major proportion of total revenue in the 1990s.<sup>125</sup>

### **Main Trading Partners**

Gambia’s main trading partners before World War I were France, which took three-quarters of its exports, and Great Britain, which supplied three-fifths of its

imports. Britain replaced France as the main recipient of Gambian exports during World War I.<sup>126</sup> It retained this position as The Gambia's main trading partner up to independence, when the United Kingdom took three fifths of Gambian exports and supplied more than a third of its imports. Trade links with Sierra Leone had been important between the 1880s and World War II, but by independence, *recorded* trade with other African states was negligible (although, as discussed below, there was also a thriving contraband trade).<sup>127</sup> Britain remained The Gambia's most important trading partner until 1979, when the Netherlands took the lead as the main recipient of Gambian exports for the first time.<sup>128</sup>

### **Imports and Exports before Independence**

Between the mid-1840s and independence, the groundnut generally was the principal export item; indeed, its dominance was so great that the country was described as a "classic monoculture" as late as the 1960s.<sup>129</sup> However, in the early years of the settlement on St. Mary's Island, gum, beeswax, and hides and skins were the leading exports, and the most important imports included rum and spirits, guns, and gunpowder. Gum exports declined rapidly after the 1830s, and beeswax and hides and skins were superseded by the groundnut in the 1840s and never regained their former importance.<sup>130</sup> Meanwhile, although groundnuts had been grown for food in Gambia for centuries, they were not exported at all until 1830 and only in small quantities before 1837. The United States, which imported groundnuts for food, provided the initial market for groundnuts, before its market for Senegambian groundnuts was closed by the imposition of a substantial tariff in 1842. More significantly, France began to import groundnuts in increasing quantities in the early 1840s, particularly to make soap. There was no equivalent demand from Britain, which preferred to import palm oil from the Niger Delta to manufacture soap. Nevertheless, the demand from France was sufficient to ensure that the export value of groundnuts rose rapidly. By 1844, they accounted for 64 percent of export value and, by 1857, for 83 percent. Thereafter, in most years before 1900, groundnuts accounted for between 70 and 90 percent of export value. Since 1848, France had been the recipient of the greater part of the Gambian groundnut crop, a status it was to retain until World War I, when it was replaced by Britain.<sup>131</sup>

Until the establishment of the Protectorate in the 1890s, the greater part of the Gambian crop came from areas that were neither under British rule nor British protection. Moreover, a substantial proportion of the crop was produced not by Gambian farmers, but rather by "strange farmers" from the interior of Africa.<sup>132</sup> Groundnuts were exchanged by barter for goods imported from Europe, which indirectly increased the government's tax revenue. But the increasing emphasis on groundnuts was not wholly beneficial, because foodstuffs were often neglected. Imports of "foreign" rice rose steadily after 1857 and there were periodic food crises.<sup>133</sup> Other imports in the second half of the nineteenth century included cotton manufactured goods, which made up one-quarter of import value by the

1850s; tobacco; guns and gunpowder (particularly during the religious wars of the 1860s); and kola nuts. The kola nut was an acceptable substitute for alcohol for Muslims and so the trade increased markedly after the Muslim jihad of the 1860s. Kola nuts were imported from Sierra Leone, not from Europe, and the trade was dominated by Liberated African entrepreneurs rather than by European mercantile firms.<sup>134</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominance of the groundnut (which was grown mainly on the north bank of the river and in upper river areas) became even more pronounced. In 1909, the hydrogenation process was perfected, which meant that cheaper liquid oil could be substituted for oleo in the production of margarine. This led to a huge increase in demand for Gambian nuts. Consequently, whereas the record export volume before 1910 had been 35,805 tons in 1900, export volume averaged over 60,000 tons between 1910 and 1938. The world market price fluctuated sharply, but in most years before World War II, groundnuts made up over 90 percent (and frequently as much as 98 percent) of export value (if re-exports and exports of specie and bullion are excluded). The export of hides and skins was significant during World War I, but less so after 1920, and apart from groundnuts, only palm kernel exports were worth more than £10,000 a year between the wars (and not again after 1929).<sup>135</sup>

After World War II, the British government (through the Colonial Development Corporation) attempted to provide an additional source of export income for Gambia, but the Wallikunda rice project and especially the infamous Yundum egg scheme were disastrous failures. Attempts to exploit ilmenite and oil resources in the mid-1950s were equally unsuccessful. The export value of palm kernels did rise significantly after the war, reaching a record total of £124,000 in 1958, but even then it made up only 3 percent of exports. Groundnuts continued to dominate external trade and in most years before independence made up at least 90 percent of exports and were therefore virtually the only source of foreign exchange earnings.<sup>136</sup>

### **Imports and Exports after Independence**

After independence, the composition of imports and exports remained similar for nearly two decades, with groundnut products accounting for 90 percent or more of the value of domestic exports virtually each year until the late 1970s and again in 1983–84.<sup>137</sup> Thereafter, however, the groundnut's share of domestic exports declined sharply to only 63 percent in 1991–92 and an estimated 51 percent in 1994–95. In part, this was due to a gradual diversification into exports other than groundnuts; other exports—principally fish and fish products, cotton products, and horticultural products—were worth Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 7.0 million in 1991–92, compared with only SDR 3.6 million in 1983–84, and after declining in the next two years, were valued at an estimated SDR 7.3 million in 1994–95. More importantly, however, the value of groundnut exports fell sharply from a peak of SDR 31.7 million in 1983–84 (when output reached 151,000 tons) to a low

point of SDR 8.5 million in 1985–86 (when output was only 75,000 tons), recovered somewhat over the next few years to reach SDR 12.9 million in 1989–90, before falling again to an estimated SDR 7.6 million in 1994–95.<sup>138</sup> The collapse of the groundnut sector in the mid-1980s was caused by a combination of factors. These included prolonged drought; parasite infestation; lower soil fertility (which to some extent was in turn due to the poor performance of the government parastatal, the Gambia Cooperatives Union (GCU), which had a monopoly on the supply of seed and fertilizer to farmers); and overtaxation, which discouraged farmers from growing export crops. World prices were also falling in the early 1980s. The partial recovery of the second half of the 1980s has been attributed to the subsidizing of the producer price at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); once this was removed in 1989–90, groundnut production fell sharply from 133,000 tons in 1989–90 to 76,000 tons a year later. Production continued to decline during the 1990s, falling to a new low of only 46,000 tons in 1996.<sup>139</sup>

As late as 1974–75, groundnuts accounted for 78 percent of the value of total exports. Recorded and estimated re-exports (and adjustments) accounted for a further 19 percent. Since World War II, there had been a substantial (but officially not quantified) contraband re-export trade with Senegal and other Francophone colonies, which involved the trans-shipment of rice, flour, and other consumer goods that had been imported into Banjul. By the mid-1960s, the contraband trade between The Gambia and Senegal was estimated to be worth about \$2 million, or 15 percent of Gambian imports. During the 1970s and 1980s, the re-export trade grew in importance; by 1982–83, re-exports accounted for 62 percent of total exports.<sup>140</sup>

Reforms undertaken as part of the Economic Recovery Programme (which is analyzed in the next section), such as the introduction of a flexible exchange rate system in 1986, the removal of trade and exchange restrictions and major cuts in import tariffs, provided a further impetus to the re-export trade, because costs of importing goods into the West African region were now much lower via Banjul than through other locations. Economic and political problems in other countries (e.g., Sierra Leone and Liberia) also improved Banjul's relative position. Thus re-exports accounted for 88 percent of exports in 1992–93, before falling to an estimated 82 percent in 1994–95. The downturn in re-exports occurred mainly for political reasons; in August 1993, Senegal tightened border controls (as it had after the collapse of the Senegambia Confederation in 1989) and suspended repurchases of the CFA franc and in January 1994, the CFA franc was devalued by 50 percent, which contributed to a weakening of demand for imports, including via The Gambia. Political uncertainty in The Gambia, following the July 1994 coup, caused further difficulties for the re-export sector.<sup>141</sup>

The decline of the groundnut sector meant that by 1990–91, it contributed only 14 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Re-exports contributed a further 30 percent. But the main source of foreign exchange was now tourism; travel income contributed 49 percent of foreign exchange earnings in that year.<sup>142</sup> The total number of foreign tourists rose from fewer than 1,000 in 1967–68 to nearly 50,000

by 1982–83 and then increased rapidly to reach almost 102,000 in 1988–89. The total again exceeded 100,000 in 1990–91, but then fell back to the levels of the mid-1980s. Following the overthrow of the civilian government in July 1994, nine out of ten tour operators withdrew from the country and the number of tourists fell from 78,000 in 1993–94 to only 45,000 in 1994–95. Consequently, travel income fell by nearly two-thirds. However, the downturn proved short-lived; in 1995–96, the number of tourists increased to 77,000.<sup>143</sup>

## **Economic Trends**

### **Before Independence**

In the early years of the settlement on St. Mary's Island, the colony's revenue and expenditure were very low and revenue might not have exceeded £5,000 before 1835.<sup>144</sup> As noted, import duties comprised the greater part of government revenue, but the Colonial Office did not allow the Gambian government to impose duties on goods imported by French traders (who had been based at Albrede since 1817). These traders were not allowed to trade further up river than James Island, but they ignored the prohibition and goods imported legally into Gambia from Gorée were subsequently smuggled up river. The effect of this contraband trade was to reduce legitimate trade and therefore both customs duties and government revenue.<sup>145</sup>

The establishment of the groundnut trade in the 1840s meant that merchants could now import a greater volume of goods into the colony for onward sale by their agents to farmers up river. Consequently, government revenue increased and exceeded £10,000 for the first time in 1851. However, in the 1850s, French traders began to buy groundnuts with cash (the five franc piece remained legal tender until the 1920s) and because imports of specie and bullion were not subject to duty, customs revenue was reduced and total revenue fell from more than £17,000 in 1856 to £14,000 in 1860. In response, and after much debate in official circles, an export tax of three farthings per bushel (about five shillings per ton) was imposed on groundnuts in 1863.<sup>146</sup> Revenue subsequently rose to an average of £22,000 in the 1870s, but as the colony's expenditure, which was consumed largely by the salaries and pensions of officials, increased faster, budget deficits became the norm. There were budget deficits in all but three years between 1849 and 1865 (including every year between 1859 and 1865) and in five out of eight years between 1869 and 1876 and a Parliamentary Grant was required between 1860 and 1871 to defray expenses.<sup>147</sup> Surpluses were achieved between 1877 and 1883, but there were five more consecutive deficits after 1884. In 1887, total revenue was the lowest since 1852, due to a combination of a poor groundnut crop and a very low market price.<sup>148</sup>

After its separation from Sierra Leone in 1888, Gambia enjoyed a period of fiscal prosperity that lasted until World War I. The buoyant groundnut export

market meant that total revenue increased significantly after 1900 and averaged £95,000 between 1910 and 1914 (compared with a then record £49,000 in 1900). Expenditure also rose, although salaries and pensions still consumed a substantial proportion of the expenditure.<sup>149</sup> During World War I, the high value of the groundnut crop boosted export earnings and, although imports were restricted by a lack of available shipping in 1914–15 (which reduced customs revenue), there were surpluses each year between 1915 and 1920. Consequently, reserves reached nearly £329,000 by 1920 (or double the colony's expenditure in that year). But the restriction of imports also helped to double the cost of living in Bathurst between 1914 and 1920.<sup>150</sup>

Groundnut exports were worth a record £2,322,000 in 1920, a boom year in the colony, and export value remained high throughout the 1920s.<sup>151</sup> Consequently, except in 1921 and 1925, gross revenue always exceeded £200,000 during the decade. But the colony did not benefit fully from the favorable export market. In January 1922, the Gambian government was forced to demonetize the five franc piece, which had dropped considerably in value by the end of World War I, and to bear the full cost of doing so. Expenditure in 1922 was no less than £430,000 (a figure not to be exceeded until 1944) and the budget deficit in that year was £226,000 (which was not surpassed until 1956). Reserves fell to just under £100,000 in 1922 and proposed development projects, such as the drainage of part of the swamp at Half Die (situated at the southern end of Bathurst), were therefore either postponed or cancelled.<sup>152</sup> World groundnut prices fell to an average of only £8 per ton between 1930 and 1934, thereby reducing the value of groundnut exports and thus government revenue. The Gambian government responded by making retrenchments to balance the budget, but this was only achieved at a cost of increased urban unemployment.<sup>153</sup>

A surplus was achieved on the recurrent budget each year between 1940 and 1947 (except in 1944, when there was a very small deficit). The volume of groundnut exports, which were affected by a lack of shipping and a shortage of strange farmers, was low throughout the war and their value did not reach prewar levels until 1945. Import restrictions also reduced revenue from indirect taxation, although part of the shortfall was met by the introduction of income tax in 1940.<sup>154</sup> As in World War I, inflation was fuelled by import restrictions (and not checked by ineffective price controls) and the consumer price index of Bathurst more than doubled between 1940 and June 1942, before falling slightly in the second half of the war.<sup>155</sup> Unlike during World War I, wartime conditions also increased employment. Whereas there were perhaps only 2,000 waged workers in Bathurst in 1940, the War Department and allied concerns employed close to 20,000 in the capital and surrounding areas in 1942 (although wage employment did fall after the threat of an invasion from Vichy-controlled Senegal was lifted in late 1942).<sup>156</sup>

Groundnut exports were worth more than £2 million for the first time in 1948. They were valued at £3.56 million in 1952 and at more than £3 million in five out of eight years between 1955 and 1962, despite a falling world price. Despite the

high value of exports, there were budget deficits in most years between 1948 and 1965 as expenditures increased.<sup>157</sup> Much of this expenditure was directed toward medical and social services. Thus the Medical and Health Department's budget rose from £56,000 in 1945 to £154,000 in 1958, and the Education Department's budget increased from less than £30,000 in 1948 to over £124,000 in 1958.<sup>158</sup> By 1961, the budgetary situation was so unfavorable that the Gambian government had to apply for "grant-in-aid" from the British government, and between 1962 and 1964, the recurrent budget was subsidized by a total of £1.5 million. As part of the deal, the British government reserved the right to scrutinize the draft estimates and to insist on economies; for example, 700 employees of the Marine and Public Works Departments were laid off in 1964.<sup>159</sup>

### **After Independence**

Despite its vulnerable state in 1965, the Gambian economy performed reasonably well in the first decade after independence, particularly in the early 1970s. A combination of high output and high world prices resulted in record groundnut export receipts, which in turn produced large foreign exchange reserves (equivalent to ten months of imports in 1974–75) and meant that foreign debt remained low. Moreover, the recurrent budget was usually in surplus. During this period, aggregate real income increased substantially and average per capita income rose. Inflation (as measured by the consumer price index for the low income group in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary) remained low until 1971, before increasing between 1972 and 1974; urban unemployment may also have started to rise around 1972.<sup>160</sup>

After 1974–75, the overall economic situation began to deteriorate. This was in part caused by external developments. The world oil crisis of 1973 sharply raised the foreign exchange cost of fuel (the increase in world oil prices in 1979 had a similar effect) and thus increased the cost of imports, which in turn fueled inflation in the urban areas.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, the onset of the prolonged Sahelian drought in the early 1970s affected production both of food and export crops and resulted in increasing imports of staple foodstuffs. As discussed, world groundnut prices also declined in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, thereby further reducing the value of exports. Inappropriate government policies were also to blame. Following the introduction of the first Five Year Plan in 1975, government expenditure on development projects, many of which made little net contribution to national income, increased dramatically. Civil service employment also expanded significantly in the 1970s, with most of the parastatals established in the 1970s making substantial losses between 1979 and 1982.<sup>162</sup> In addition, the exchange rate became overvalued, which boosted the demand for imports and damaged exports. Finally, large-scale public sector corruption, including the Rural Development Project I scandal and large-scale theft in the GCU, also undoubtedly contributed to economic decline.<sup>163</sup>

Radelet has shown that until the early 1980s, The Gambia was protected from many of the adverse economic trends noted. This was due in part to the foreign



exchange reserves it had built up by the mid-1970s, but mainly resulted from substantial foreign grants and loans after 1975; between 1975 and 1985, The Gambia received one of the highest levels of per capita foreign aid in Africa.<sup>164</sup> However, by 1983, international donors began to withdraw their support as The Gambia fell into arrears on its debt service obligations, which in turn further reduced foreign exchange reserves. The government was forced to negotiate a stand-by agreement with the IMF in 1984; the dalasi was devalued by 25 percent to boost exports, but the economy continued to deteriorate. By mid-1985, foreign exchange reserves had fallen to the equivalent of two weeks of imports as foreign debts and external arrears mounted rapidly; inflation had risen sharply since 1984, shortages of basic commodities, such as fuel and rice, were commonplace, agricultural production was falling, and real per capita income was declining. Arrears to the IMF and other international creditors were also rising rapidly. When it became apparent that the government could not meet its obligations, the IMF cancelled its stand-by agreement. Because foreign donors made it clear that they would not bail the country out in the absence of IMF support, the government was forced to act. Consequently, in June 1985, the minister of finance, Sheriff Sisay, assembled a task force consisting of senior Gambian officials and two expatriate advisers to develop a reform program to halt the deterioration of the economy and lay the foundations for sustained economic growth. He then successfully persuaded President Jawara and the cabinet to endorse the program.<sup>165</sup>

Although there was no IMF input into its design, the four-year Economic Recovery Programme (ERP), was in many ways a typical example of the IMF's structural adjustment program in Africa.<sup>166</sup> Its key objectives were to reform the exchange rate by devaluing the dalasi; revitalize the agricultural sector through changes in pricing policies and other means; promote other productive sectors, such as tourism and fisheries; reduce the size of the civil service; improve the performance of the parastatal sector; cut the budget deficit through monetary and fiscal policies; reorientate the public investment program from new capital projects to rehabilitation and reconstruction; and reschedule and refinance the country's external debt.<sup>167</sup>

To achieve these objectives, a series of measures were enacted between 1985 and 1989. These measures have been analyzed in detail by McPherson and Radelet and other members of the Harvard Institute of International Development (HIID) team, which acted as consultants to Ministry of Finance staff between 1985 and 1992. Consequently, only the key reforms are outlined here. These included the floating of the dalasi in January 1986; the signing of performance contracts in 1987 with major parastatals; job cuts in the civil service in 1986 and a wage freeze until 1989; increased taxes on petroleum and rice; the raising of public transport and electricity prices; and a range of measures to improve agricultural production, including a sharp (but temporary) increase in the producer price for groundnuts in 1986, reforms to the groundnut marketing system, and the ending of the Groundnut Produce Marketing Board's monopoly on the export of groundnut products in 1990.<sup>168</sup>

The Gambia proved more willing than most African countries to fulfill the requirements of the IMF's structural adjustment program.<sup>169</sup> As the HIID study shows, some reforms were more successful than others. Nevertheless, by 1989, The Gambia had experienced an impressive economic recovery; the government budget deficit had been reduced, the annual inflation rate, which had risen sharply in the first stages of ERP to 56.6 percent in 1986, had fallen to 8.3 percent by 1989 (the lowest figure since 1981), agricultural production and exports had increased, and foreign exchange reserves had been built up. The confidence of foreign donors had also been restored and the external debt service arrears had been eliminated. One estimate is that real wages in the rural sector increased by 7 percent owing to the introduction of the subsidy on groundnuts. However, the economic recovery was achieved at a price. The real wages of civil servants and others on fixed incomes had fallen; many of the 3,000 civil servants who had been laid off remained unemployed or at least underemployed, and a quarter of all men aged 20–24 were unemployed in 1993.<sup>170</sup> Expenditures on social services, agriculture, and public works were cut significantly and were about half of their pre-ERP levels in real terms in 1988–89.<sup>171</sup>

These side effects notwithstanding, the ERP was generally judged a success by most external commentators, although with some reservations.<sup>172</sup> However, it was recognized by the Gambian government that the program had not even begun to remove the underlying constraints on sustained growth. The aim of the Programme for Sustained Development (PSD), which was adopted in December 1990, with the blessing of the IMF, was therefore to accelerate improvements in the living standards of the population by achieving a faster and sustained rate of economic growth. In many respects, the PSD sought to reinforce reforms begun under the ERP. For example, further fiscal reforms designed to increase tax revenue were introduced, and performance contracts were drawn up or extended with four parastatals, whereas others were leased or sold off to the private sector. But in addition, the PSD sought to address the social dimensions of adjustment and to alleviate institutional and human resource constraints.<sup>173</sup>

These were ambitious aims and, in the view of Hughes and Cooke, the record of the PSD up to the 1994 coup was mixed. On the positive side, the overall balance of payments remained in surplus because of the continued growth of the re-export trade until 1993–94; inflation remained low and foreign exchange generated by tourism was at higher levels than in the 1980s. Revenue and profits also increased in the parastatals where performance contracts had been drawn up. On the other hand, groundnut exports declined after 1989–90 and the overall value of domestic exports was also lower than in the late 1980s. The fall in the value of re-exports in 1993–94, owing to the tightening of the Senegalese border restrictions and the devaluation of the CFA franc, also reduced foreign exchange earnings.<sup>174</sup>

Notwithstanding the real achievements of the Gambian government's economic recovery policies, its failure to root out mismanagement in the public sector, together with continuing hardship arising from the implementation of its policies,

bred discontent and undermined its authority, providing a motive for disaffected elements within the Gambian armed forces to stage a successful coup in July 1994.

### **Summary**

The key characteristics of Gambian society, in respect of ethnic and religious diversity and disparity of social development, and the principal features of the economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—with its uneven development as between Colony and Protectorate, general impoverishment and a heavy reliance on a vulnerable monocrop export trade in groundnuts—are set out in some detail, because, as later chapters reveal, these factors affected the course and nature of Gambian politics.

# 2

---

## **CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE GAMBIA, 1816–1994**

This chapter briefly describes the constitutional evolution of The Gambia between 1816 (the date of the foundation of Bathurst) and 1994; key events are analyzed in detail in subsequent chapters. The constitutional status of The Gambia is discussed first. The Gambia was a British colony between 1821 and its achievement of independence in 1965. It became a republic in 1970, but remains within the Commonwealth. The machinery of government is then considered. After 1843, this consisted of the typical colonial instruments of an Executive and a Legislative Council. The former functioned until 1963 and the latter until 1960.

During the colonial period, the Legislative Council enacted laws that affected both the Colony and the Protectorate; however, the two parts of Gambia were administered locally in very different ways. Because developments in the Protectorate had very little impact on politics at a national level, this is not a major focus of the book, but we nevertheless briefly discuss the process by which the Protectorate was governed.

In July 1994, the civilian government was overthrown by a military coup and the House of Representatives was abolished; it was eventually replaced by a National Assembly under a new constitution in 1997. For ease of reference, the constitutional changes described here are summarized in Appendix A.

### **The Constitutional Status of The Gambia, 1816–1994**

The origins of modern Gambia can be traced to April 1816 when an expeditionary force from Gorée under Captain Alexander Grant took possession of Banjul Island, renamed it St. Mary's, and established a settlement.<sup>1</sup> Named Bathurst after the secretary of state for the colonies, Earl Bathurst, this was not the first settlement on the River Gambia. A British garrison had been established as early as 1661 at James Island, some 25 miles from the river mouth, but was abandoned

(not for the first time) in 1779.<sup>2</sup> The “Company of Merchants trading to Africa,” which had administered James Island between 1750 and 1766, had regained nominal control over the area in 1783, but had made no attempt to reoccupy the fort after 1788 and was not involved in the new venture.<sup>3</sup> The initiative had in fact been taken by Earl Bathurst, who had been persuaded that the suppression of the slave trade and the development of “legitimate” trade, could only be achieved if a British force were to control the river. Grant had therefore been sent by Sir Charles MacCarthy (the Governor of Sierra Leone) to build a new fort and, having concluded that the restoration of Fort James was impractical, obtained the right to occupy Banjul Island for an annual payment to the owner, the King of Kombo, of 103 bars of iron.<sup>4</sup>

The new settlement was in theory the dual responsibility of Parliament and the Company of Merchants until 1821, when an Act of Parliament divested the company of all its powers, both in Gambia and the Gold Coast. This followed criticism of its administration in the House of Commons.<sup>5</sup> Colonial rule thus resumed in Gambia after 38 years, James Island, together with St. Louis and other coastal trading bases in Senegal, having formed the grandiosely termed Province of Senegambia between 1765 and 1783.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Gambia was not yet a full Crown Colony; along with the British forts on the Gold Coast, it was placed under the overall jurisdiction of the governor-general of Sierra Leone.<sup>7</sup> Local authority was wielded at first by the commandant of the garrison and then from 1829 by a lieutenant governor. This arrangement was very unpopular in Bathurst, but it was not until June 1843 that the administrative connection between Gambia and Sierra Leone was broken. Gambia thus became an independent Crown Colony with its own governor (who was answerable to the secretary of state for the colonies), Executive Council, and Legislative Council.

However, in February 1866, the administration of the British Settlements in West Africa (Gambia, Gold Coast, Lagos, and Sierra Leone) was centralized. The governor of Sierra Leone became governor-in-chief of the settlements and, in the other colonies, administrators (answerable to the governor-in-chief) were appointed and Executive Councils were abolished.<sup>8</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, the colony consisted solely of Bathurst, the area immediately around it and a few scattered settlements up river. British policy sought to avoid costly entanglements in the war-torn politics of the Gambian hinterland, save when the interests of the colony were directly threatened. Occasional military expeditions were launched, but these were intended to mitigate the effects of the wars between non-Islamic “Soninke” states and expansionist, jihadist Muslim or “Marabout” invaders up river, rather than to acquire additional territory. Indeed, when various local rulers offered to cede their territory to the colony in exchange for military protection, they were refused. Subsidies to interior rulers and mediation between the warring factions were the preferred options.<sup>9</sup>

In July 1874, the West African Settlements were divided into two; Gambia remained under Sierra Leone jurisdiction, and Lagos was placed under the Gold Coast.<sup>10</sup> Lagos was finally established as an independent crown colony in 1886 and,

in November 1888, Gambia was separated from Sierra Leone for the final time, although it was not until 1900 that the head of government was upgraded from an administrator to a governor.<sup>11</sup> One reason for the reestablishment of Gambian “independence” was to make it easier for the Gambian government to resist French pressure in the region. This had increased since the 1870s, when Britain and France failed to achieve the exchange of Gambia for French territory.<sup>12</sup>

During the 1880s, the French adopted a forward policy in West Africa and began to confront militarily the jihadist states. Local pressure in the Gambian colony and a revision of imperial policy in Britain in response to French encroachment in the interior led to Britain also adopting a policy of direct intervention and territorial acquisition. The governor of the West African Settlements, Sir Samuel Rowe, was compelled to travel up river during a visit to Gambia to establish treaties with the rulers of the south bank states of Foni and Kiang in 1887.<sup>13</sup> However, it was not until August 1889 that a formal agreement was entered into with the French to partition the Senegambian region, as part of a wider colonial settlement which also affected the three other British colonies of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos.

At the outset of the negotiations, the British government remained willing to cede Gambia to France in exchange for concessions elsewhere, but it soon became clear that the French were not interested in acquiring the territory. Eventually Gambia’s boundaries were fixed at ten kilometers (six miles) north and south of the River Gambia as far up river as Yarbutenda.<sup>14</sup> This Anglo-French Convention fixed the colony’s borders in principle, although it took another decade of careful boundary demarcation and the military defeat of remaining jihadist leaders, such as Fodi Sillah and Fodi Kabba, before the boundaries were finalized (although ownership of some border villages was not resolved until the 1970s). As noted in Chapter 1, a Protectorate was subsequently declared over the newly acquired territory, with the first Protectorate Ordinance being promulgated in 1894.<sup>15</sup>

In the early 1900s, negotiations over exchange were revived, but again to no avail.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, the Colonial Office did not pay much attention to the constitutional position of Gambia in the first half of the twentieth century, although, in 1939, the Dufferin Committee did recommend consideration of the establishment of a federation between Gambia and Sierra Leone.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, the Committee on Smaller Territories established by the Attlee government proposed in 1951 that certain “Island” and “City” states should not be permitted to progress toward self-government like larger territories. They should instead maintain a permanent link with the United Kingdom and be administered locally by a state council. The report was welcomed by Governor Percy Wyn-Harris of Gambia (who remained a firm advocate of what he termed the “Channel Islands option”), but not by most other colonial governors, and was effectively shelved after Attlee’s defeat in the 1951 British election.<sup>18</sup>

In 1955, the conservative government took up the issue of small dependent territories once again. The secretary of state proposed the development of a new concept of statehood; a state could be self-governing domestically, but dependent

on the United Kingdom for defense and foreign policy. It would also be represented in the House of Commons. The idea of “full integration,” which was first applied to Malta, was taken up by one of the Gambian political parties, the Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC), but fell into disfavor after its eventual rejection by the Maltese political parties in 1958.<sup>19</sup> By 1960, another option—that Gambia and Sierra Leone might form a federation—had also been effectively abandoned because of the distance between the two countries, Sierra Leone’s financial difficulties, and a lack of enthusiasm for the suggestion except from a few Creoles in Freetown.<sup>20</sup>

Because the Colonial Office still considered that independence was out of the question for Gambia, only one other option, that Gambia be joined in association with Senegal, remained. This course of action was also favored by the Foreign Office, by Governor Sir Edward Windley of Gambia, and by President Senghor of Senegal.<sup>21</sup> To facilitate the negotiations (and in accord with the recent precedent of British Somaliland), the Colonial Office believed that Gambia might need to proceed to independence even if only for a few days; indeed, in December 1962, Duncan Sandys, the secretary of state for the colonies, stated in the House of Commons that if a satisfactory basis for association with Senegal could be worked out, then independence would be granted to Gambia.<sup>22</sup> A United Nations team of experts arrived in Bathurst in October 1963 to examine the question of association; its report, which was submitted in April 1964, recommended that a Senegambia Federation be established. However, after discussions between the Senegalese and Gambian governments in May, only a loose association was actually implemented.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, even though the British government had made association a precondition for Gambian independence, it permitted the constitutional process to continue. A conference in London in July 1964 agreed a post-independence constitution and the colony achieved independence within the Commonwealth (as The Gambia) in February 1965 with D. K. (later Sir Dawda) Jawara as prime minister.<sup>24</sup>

Nine months after independence, Jawara organized a referendum to decide whether The Gambia should become a republic. This was required; similarly to the Sierra Leone constitution of 1961, the monarchical form of government was protected under an “entrenched” provision of the 1964 constitution. Entrenched provisions in the Gambian constitution could only be amended if supported by two-thirds of the elected members of Parliament (MPs) and confirmed by a two-thirds majority in a subsequent referendum.<sup>25</sup> Most participants in the referendum supported the establishment of a republic, but the government failed by fewer than 800 votes to achieve the required two-thirds majority. To the surprise of many observers, Jawara accepted his defeat graciously and, when he tried again in April 1970, the constitutional change was approved.<sup>26</sup>

Jawara, as the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives, automatically became the country’s first president and replaced Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. A vice president was also appointed to lead government business in the House of Representatives. At first, the presidency was decided by a simple majority of directly elected MPs (who were obliged to declare their preference

at the time of their own election). However, between 1982 and 1992, a separate presidential election was held at the same time as the parliamentary election, although this was not a constitutional requirement. No limitations were placed on the number of terms a president could serve. Presidential elections were held in 1982, 1987, and 1992; all were won by Jawara.<sup>27</sup>

In July 1994, the Jawara government was overthrown in a military coup by a small group of Gambian National Army (GNA) officers led by Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh. These officers subsequently termed themselves the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council. The GNA had been gradually built up in the 1980s, following an attempt in July 1981 by a group of radical civilians and disaffected members of the paramilitary Field Force to overthrow the state. This putsch had been defeated after armed Senegalese intervention on behalf of the legitimate government. However, in 1994, there was minimal internal resistance to the coup (there were no reported casualties) and no external intervention on behalf of the Jawara government. This was partly because the Senegambia Confederation, which had been established between The Gambia and Senegal in 1982 to promote closer cooperation between the two countries, had been wound up in December 1989.<sup>28</sup> Direct military rule continued until 1996 when a new constitution was introduced; the first presidential election conducted under the new constitution was won by Jammeh in September 1996. His newly created political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Re-orientation and Construction, subsequently won the first election to the new National Assembly in January 1997. Jammeh went on to win a further presidential election in October 2001 and, at the time of writing, remains president.<sup>29</sup>

## **The Machinery of Government in the Colonial Period**

The Letters Patent of June 1843, which established Gambia as a separate colony, also provided it with the now customary structures of government, an Executive and a Legislative Council. In 1791, Canada became the first colony in which the undifferentiated governor's advisory council, which contained both official and unofficial members, had been abolished and replaced by two separate councils with differing functions. A similar process had been adopted in several West Indian colonies and in Ceylon in the 1830s and 1840s, although not in Sierra Leone, where the advisory council established in 1811 remained in operation until 1863. Moreover, in a number of newly established colonies after 1820, an Executive and a Legislative Council had been provided from the outset and Gambia duly fitted into this pattern.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Executive Council: 1843–1963**

The function of the Gambian Executive Council (as described in the Letters Patent) was "to advise and assist the Governor . . . in the administration of the



Government.” A governor was required to consult with his councilors over the performance of all his official duties unless government service would be materially prejudiced by consultation; he considered the matter to be too unimportant to merit consideration; or the issue was so urgent that there was insufficient time to convene a meeting. A governor did not have to abide by the advice he received, but if he acted against the opinions of the Executive Council, he was required to inform the Colonial Office.<sup>31</sup>

The Royal Instructions given to the first governor, Commander Henry Seagram, laid down the composition of the Executive Council, which held its inaugural meeting in October 1843. Apart from the governor, it was to contain two other officials, the colonial secretary and the collector of customs. A fourth official member, the queen’s advocate, was added in 1845. No unofficial members were appointed initially, but a British merchant, Thomas Brown, was added to the council in 1853; he served again on the council in his official capacity as acting queen’s advocate or acting chief justice in the 1860s.<sup>32</sup> As noted, the Gambian Executive Council was abolished on the establishment of the West African Settlements in 1866; it was not restored until 1888 when Gambia once more became an independent Crown Colony. The reconstituted Executive Council at first comprised only official members, although unusually for West Africa in this period, it did have one unofficial member (James Topp) between 1890 and 1896. However, the experiment was not considered a success by Administrator Llewelyn (or the Colonial Office) and after Topp’s enforced retirement, no other unofficials were appointed to the Executive Council.<sup>33</sup> By the mid-1930s, the idea that an unofficial could serve on the council was considered an absurdity by the Gambian government (although not by the Nigerian government).<sup>34</sup>

In 1942, following an initiative by Governor Burns of the Gold Coast, African unofficials were appointed to the Executive Councils of the Gold Coast and Nigeria; Governor Stevenson of Sierra Leone reluctantly followed suit in 1943. Governor H. R. R. (later Sir Hilary) Blood of Gambia supported the idea in principle, but argued that there were no suitable candidates.<sup>35</sup> His successor, Andrew (later Sir Andrew) Wright, adopted a more positive approach. On his recommendation, three African unofficials, E. F. Small, the winner of the first direct election to the Legislative Council, Seyfu (Chief) Tamba Jammeh and J. C. (later Rev. J. C.) Faye, were appointed to the Council in November 1947.<sup>36</sup> After the second Legislative Council election of October 1951, Wright’s successor, Percy (later Sir Percy) Wyn-Harris, added a fourth unofficial to the Executive Council (there were also six officials, plus the governor) and appointed two of these, Faye and I. M. Garba-Jahumpa, to be “members of the government.” They were permitted to offer advice to the governor on a range of selected subjects, but were not granted specific portfolios. Garba-Jahumpa remained a “member of the government” during the life of the constitution, but Faye was dismissed in 1953.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to the third election to the Legislative Council in 1954, a new constitution was introduced by Wyn-Harris. This was based on the recommendations of a Consultative Committee, which met six times in April and May 1953.<sup>38</sup> There were

now to be at least six unofficial members of the Executive Council, who should be appointed after consultation with the Legislative Council. Two of these were also to be offered specific portfolios and termed “ministers.” However, as they were required to work with Advisory Committees (which were to include the European heads of departments), they were not to receive full ministerial responsibility.<sup>39</sup> After the 1954 election, the three elected candidates in Bathurst, P. S. N’Jie, Faye, and Garba-Jahumpa, were appointed to ministerial posts and four others (including two Protectorate Chiefs) joined the Executive Council. Faye and Garba-Jahumpa retained their portfolios until 1960, but P. S. N’Jie was dismissed in January 1956 and was not replaced.<sup>40</sup>

Following a series of constitutional conferences in 1958–59, a new constitution was drawn up in September 1959 and introduced after the first national general election of May 1960. The Executive Council now consisted of the governor (Sir Edward Windley, who had succeeded Wyn-Harris in 1958); four officials and six ministers (who no longer depended on Advisory Committees). Four ministers—D. K. Jawara, A. B. N’Jie, H. O. Semega-Janneh, and Seyfu Omar M’Baki—were granted portfolios, and the other two posts were offered to S. S. Sisay and P. S. N’Jie; when the latter declined the invitation, he was replaced by Andrew Camara.<sup>41</sup> Despite not being a member of the Executive Council at the time, Windley selected P. S. N’Jie to be Gambia’s first chief minister in March 1961; this entitled him to advise the governor on the selection of ministers and the allocation of portfolios. In protest at P. S. N’Jie’s appointment, Jawara, Sisay, and A. B. N’Jie all resigned from the council.<sup>42</sup> Because the Executive Council was now no longer representative of the outcome of the 1960 election, Windley was forced to convene a fresh constitutional conference in Bathurst in May 1961. This paved the way for a second constitutional conference in London in July, when it was agreed that the next election should be held by May 1962 and that, after it, a premier (who would take over the responsibility for selecting ministers) should be appointed. In addition, the number of ministers should be increased to eight and the official membership reduced to two.<sup>43</sup>

In October 1963, Gambia progressed to the next constitutional stage, full internal self-government. As was customary, the Executive Council was abolished and replaced by a cabinet headed by a prime minister. Unusually, the cabinet retained European representation until as late as 1968 in the form of the attorney general, Phillip (later Sir Phillip) Bridges.<sup>44</sup> When The Gambia became a republic in 1970, President Jawara took charge of the cabinet, which remained small by African standards; for example, the cabinet appointed after the 1992 election contained only fourteen members.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Legislative Council: 1843–1960**

The function of the Legislative Council, as laid down in the Letters Patent, was “to make and establish all such laws, institutions and ordinances as may from time to time be necessary for the peace, order, and good government of our subjects and

others within the said present or future settlements in the River Gambia and in its dependencies."<sup>46</sup> In practice, the powers of the Legislative Council were restricted by a number of clauses in the Royal Instructions given to the governor on his appointment. The most important of these were that the council could enact no law or ordinance that had not previously been proposed by the governor; could pass no ordinance that would have the effect of diminishing the revenue that would accrue to the crown; and could not pass legislation designed either to increase or to decrease the salaries of public officers. Finally, the crown reserved to itself the right to disallow any law or ordinance passed by the council.<sup>47</sup>

The original members of the Legislative Council, which met for the first time in November 1843, were the governor (who presided over council meetings); the colonial secretary (who presided in his absence); the chief justice; and the officer commanding the troops. On the instructions of the secretary of state for the colonies, and in keeping with the precedent of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, the Legislative Council also contained unofficial representation from the outset, through a prominent British merchant, William Henry Goddard. Two other merchants, Richard Lloyd and Thomas Brown, were added to the council in 1847 and 1850, respectively.<sup>48</sup> Africans were appointed to the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone Legislative Councils from their establishment in 1850 and 1863, respectively, but there were no African members of the Gambian Legislative Council until the 1880s. Indeed, Africans were even represented on the Legislative Council of Lagos (which had only been established as a colony as recently as 1861) before that of Gambia.<sup>49</sup>

After the establishment of the West African Settlements in 1866, the Legislative Council was downgraded in Gambia as on the Gold Coast. Its membership was cut from eleven to three, these being the administrator, the collector of customs, and a magistrate (Thomas Brown, the sole unofficial).<sup>50</sup> It was not until 1883 that a second unofficial was appointed. This was J. D. Richards, a merchant, who thus became the first African member of the council.<sup>51</sup> Two other commercial men, S. J. Forster (an African merchant) and H. H. Lee (the agent of J. F. Hutton, a Manchester magnate) were appointed in 1886 and 1887, respectively. However, in 1889, the council was reconstituted with unofficial representation being cut to two (Forster and H. C. Goddard, the agent of the Bathurst Trading Company). At first, no time limit was placed on their term of service, but in 1895, the secretary of state decreed that unofficials in West Africa should henceforth be appointed for renewable five-year terms. After a process of consultation, both men were reappointed in November 1895 and again in November 1900.<sup>52</sup>

Goddard resigned from the council in January 1905 before completing his second term.<sup>53</sup> Forster was reappointed that November, but died in October 1906. His successor was another African merchant, Samuel Horton Jones; in March 1907, Samuel Forster (the son of the late councilor) became the second African member. The younger Forster, who was a barrister, was the first African professional to serve as an unofficial member of the council.<sup>54</sup> Henri Staub, the agent of the French firm, *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale*, had (like Jones) been

appointed in June 1906; he thus became the first Frenchman to serve on the council. He was reappointed in 1911, but after his death in December 1912, the number of unofficials was cut to three (one European and two Africans). Jones was replaced by an African medical practitioner, Dr. Thomas Bishop, in 1916; consequently, for the first time since 1843, mercantile interests were not represented on the council.<sup>55</sup>

Forster was reappointed for further terms in 1917 and 1922, but Bishop's appointment lapsed after November 1921. He was succeeded in March 1922 by Ousman Jeng, a prominent Wolof trader, who thus became the first Muslim member of the council (and the first Muslim "commoner" to sit on any legislative council in West Africa).<sup>56</sup> The Bathurst Chamber of Commerce (which, although originally open to African merchants, was an exclusively European organization) was also permitted to nominate one of its members to the council; its choice was William Yare, the agent of the Bathurst Trading Company.<sup>57</sup> All three were reappointed in 1927; Forster was also persuaded to accept a sixth term in 1932, but Jeng and Yare were replaced by Sheikh Omar Fye, another Wolof Muslim trader, and James Howie, the manager of the Bank of British West Africa, respectively.<sup>58</sup> A year later, in May 1933, unofficial representation rose to four, the highest total since 1912. There were three Africans, Forster, Fye, and Forster's nephew, W. D. Carrol, another barrister. Carrol was nominated (unanimously) by the members of the Bathurst Urban District Council (BUDC), a partially elected body established in 1930 as the first organ of municipal government in Gambia.<sup>59</sup> Forster and Fye were reappointed once again in 1937; in May 1938, Carrol retained his seat on the nomination of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC), which replaced the BUDC in 1935.<sup>60</sup>

Forster died in 1940 and Carrol in 1941 before completing their terms of service; the BATC chose E. F. Small, a journalist and political leader, to replace him, and Forster was succeeded by Small's brother-in-law, J. A. Mahoney, a commercial clerk. Both took their seats for five-year terms in January 1942; Fye was reappointed for two more years in March 1942.<sup>61</sup> The Gambian government now considered that the time was ripe for the concession of the franchise, which had been granted to the other three West African colonies in the 1920s. One member should be directly elected to the council and one Protectorate chief should be appointed by the governor, and the BATC should lose its right to nominate a councilor and the Muslim community its special representation.<sup>62</sup> The secretary of state gave his formal consent in October 1943, but owing to a series of delays, it was not until November 1946 that the revised constitution was finally drawn up and the first direct election did not take place until November 1947. The electorate consisted of British subjects or natives of the Protectorate resident in Bathurst or Kombo St. Mary aged 25 or over; the Protectorate was entirely excluded from the process. No property, income, or literacy qualifications were imposed on voters, which in this respect placed Gambia ahead of its sister colonies in West Africa.<sup>63</sup>

Shortly before the 1947 election, the secretary of state conceded the principle of an unofficial majority, an important milestone which placed Gambia ahead of

Sierra Leone, where Creole opposition to the 1947 Stevenson Constitution meant that an official majority was retained until 1951.<sup>64</sup> The number of unofficials was increased to seven (compared with six officials) and the governor lost his original (although not casting) vote. The Protectorate secured unofficial representation for the first time (by three chiefs and the headmaster of an Anglican mission school, J. C. Faye), but unlike in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (or in Sierra Leone as proposed by Governor Stevenson), all its members were nominated and not indirectly elected.<sup>65</sup> The other unofficials were the elected member (E. F. Small); the member for commerce, the United Africa Company's manager, C. L. Page; and A. W. M'Bye, a trader, who represented the Muslim community (because a Christian had won the election).<sup>66</sup>

The second election to the Legislative Council in October 1951 was conducted under a new constitution introduced by Wright's successor, Percy Wyn-Harris. This increased the number of elected members to three, two for Bathurst and one for Kombo St. Mary, and also allowed for the appointment of a Gambian as vice president of the Legislative Council. The successful candidates in Bathurst were Faye and I. M. Garba-Jahumpa, who was a school teacher at the time; Henry Madi, a Gambian businessman of Lebanese extraction, was victorious in Kombo St. Mary. J. A. Mahoney (the former unofficial member) was appointed vice president of the council.<sup>67</sup>

These constitutional reforms were modest, but the second Wyn-Harris Constitution of 1954 was more radical. The number of unofficials was increased to sixteen, of whom three were to be directly elected in a multimember constituency in Bathurst and one in Kombo St. Mary and seven were to be indirectly elected by the Conference of Protectorate Chiefs or the (Protectorate) Divisional Councils. These eleven councilors would then act as an electoral college to select three others from a panel submitted jointly by the Bathurst Town Council and the Kombo Rural Authority. The remaining two members were to be a "well-known citizen" and a person "skilled in commerce," who would be nominated by the governor after consultation with the Legislative Council. A speaker would also be appointed, thereby allowing the governor finally to withdraw from the council. The Bathurst poll was headed by a relative newcomer, politically, P. S. N'Jie (a barrister), with Faye and Garba-Jahumpa also being returned. Madi won again in Kombo St. Mary.<sup>68</sup> This was the last election to the Legislative Council, which ceased to exist when the Windley Constitution came into operation in May 1960. It was replaced by the House of Representatives.

### **Administration of the Protectorate**

Financial and manpower constraints (of the twelve commissioners who were appointed between 1893 and 1903, three died of illness, two were killed, and one was invalided out of the service) meant that, particularly initially, the British relied heavily on appointed African district and village chiefs to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Protectorate.<sup>69</sup> A number of existing indigenous kingdoms retained

their boundaries as administrative districts and loyal traditional leaders remained as district chiefs. Jihadist states were overthrown, which allowed a number of pre-Islamic ruling families (Soninkes) to reestablish their authority under British hegemony, although this did not prevent a continuing expansion of Islam itself.<sup>70</sup> With only two “travelling commissioners” at first for the whole of the Protectorate and little desire to achieve more than the establishment of law and order, imperial rule was “felt very little if at all in many regions of the old Mandingo states . . . and to a considerable extent administration of the river states during the first ten years of the Protectorate remained under the control of Africans.”<sup>71</sup> Although the slave trade in the Protectorate was abolished in 1894, local slavery was not abolished fully until the 1930s, because the British could not afford to antagonize slave-holding local chiefly allies.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to these considerations, the Protectorate remained isolated from national political life because there was little economic and social development before the 1950s. Protectorate society was deliberately insulated from the new political activities in Bathurst and the Colony; the chiefs, and their senior advisers were regarded, as elsewhere in British Africa at this time, as the authentic voice of the rural majority. Reforms began in the early 1930s under Governor H. R. Palmer, regarded as one of the major architects of the policy of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria where he had previously served as lieutenant governor. Native Administration Ordinances, which created Native Authorities and Treasuries, but left these controlled by local chiefs, under the overall direction of divisional commissioners (whose number varied between four and five), were intended to start the process of modernizing local government in the interior.<sup>73</sup>

Although our knowledge of the dynamics of local Protectorate politics between the 1930s and 1950s remains fragmentary, it is evident that the same chiefly families (and, in some cases, the same individuals) tended to remain in power in their localities.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, elective politics was not introduced until the constitutional reforms of the 1950s, when the impact of social and economic changes up river brought about a growth in the number of partially educated young men, eager to challenge both the dominance of traditional elites in the Protectorate and urban-biased political movements in the capital city claiming to speak for the whole of Gambia. Even then, the annual Chiefs’ Conference with the governor, which had begun in 1944, together with the nomination of some chiefs to the Legislative Council, as indicated, remained the major means of transmitting rural “opinion” to government.<sup>75</sup>

### **Political Assemblies: 1960–94**

As noted, the Legislative Council was abolished in 1960 and replaced by the House of Representatives. Initially, it met three or four times a year, but later, according to Wiseman, it met up to eight times a year, with sittings lasting up to

eight days. It was responsible for the enactment of legislation. Even though, as Wiseman has pointed out, government bills were invariably accepted by the House, it performed an important function as a forum for political debate and for the representation of constituency interests. It certainly played a more important role than most other postcolonial African legislatures.<sup>76</sup>

As constituted in 1960, the House of Representatives consisted of thirty-four MPs (twenty-seven elected and seven nominated), plus a speaker. Nineteen were elected by universal suffrage in single-member constituencies by those aged 21 or over and the other eight were selected by the Chiefs' Conference. The Protectorate now possessed the majority of elected seats (twelve out of nineteen), but it remained underrepresented in terms of population. All its MPs had either been born or appeared on the electoral register in the Protectorate or were recognized as being from Protectorate families.<sup>77</sup> In theory, all MPs were supposed to speak English "well enough to take part in the proceedings of the House" (this remained a requirement subsequently).<sup>78</sup>

Some alterations to this structure were agreed at the constitutional conference held in London in July 1961 and implemented after the 1962 election. The number of directly elected members was increased from nineteen to thirty-two; all the additional seats were granted to the Protectorate, with the Colony's representation remaining unaltered at seven, but the geographical restrictions on where candidates could stand were dropped, thereby permitting Bathurst parties to campaign openly in the rural areas. The chiefs were marginalized by their representation being halved; there was to be only one *ex officio* member (the attorney general) and up to two nominated members, and neither they, nor the speaker, were to be given voting rights.<sup>79</sup> The amendments to the constitution agreed at the 1964 constitutional conference in London did not alter the composition of the House. However, the new constitution did allow for the appointment of a Constituency Boundaries Commission, which would be required to ensure, as far as was reasonably practicable, that each constituency should have an equal number of inhabitants. The commission could, however, depart from numerical equality to ensure adequate representation for sparsely populated rural areas and could also take account of the means of communication, existing geographical areas and the boundaries of administrative areas.<sup>80</sup>

Relatively few changes were made to the structure and composition of the House after independence, prior to the military coup of 1994. In 1966, the number of Bathurst constituencies was reduced to three and the existing Jarra and Kombo constituencies were further sub-divided. The number of elected seats remained the same until 1977, when three additional constituencies were granted to Serrekunda (Serekunda), the Kombos, and Niumi. One more seat was created in 1987 with the division of Wuli into two constituencies. The lack of large-scale creation of constituencies meant that an MP represented about 28,000 constituents in 1993, compared with only about 10,000 in 1966.<sup>81</sup> All MPs were still elected in single-member constituencies by the first-past-the-post system (a movement to proportional representation having never been seriously considered); the voting age remained 21.<sup>82</sup>

The representation of the chiefs increased by one to five in 1982 (and remained at five at the time of the coup); the chiefs continued to be elected from among themselves, but after 1962, they had little power. However, the number of nominated members rose more dramatically from two in 1962 to eight in 1992. According to Wiseman, President Jawara used nomination to increase the number of women (the first of whom was appointed as early as 1968), Christians, and professionals in the House; a trade union leader was also added to the House in 1987. The government did not, however, use nomination as a means to increase its voting power, because nominated members were denied any voting rights.<sup>83</sup> As noted, since the establishment of the republic in 1970, the Leader of the House had been the vice president, because the president was not a member; after the 1992 election, there was speculation that the post of vice president might be abolished and a prime minister once more appointed, but this did not materialize before the coup.<sup>84</sup>

Seven general elections took place in The Gambia between 1960 and 1992. The People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Jawara won most seats in the 1960 election, but not an overall majority; however, it achieved a comfortable overall majority in all subsequent elections after 1962. Even so, opposition parties retained a continuous presence in the House until the coup. In the 1992 election, the PPP won twenty-five seats; the leading opposition party (the National Convention Party) won six seats and the Gambia People's Party two seats. Three Independents were also elected. Although there were two by-elections in 1993, party representation in the House remained unchanged at the time of the coup.<sup>85</sup> Following the coup, the House of Representatives was abolished; it was replaced by the National Assembly in 1997.<sup>86</sup>

### **Senegambia Confederation: 1982–89**

As noted, the Senegambia Confederation operated between 1982 and 1989. The confederal parliamentary institutions consisted of a confederal executive, with the Senegalese president, Abdou Diouf, as president and Jawara as vice president; a Confederal Assembly with sixty members, of whom twenty were Gambians; a nine-member Council of Ministers (four of whom were Gambians), and a confederal secretariat. The members of the Confederal Assembly were indirectly elected by the elected representatives of the Senegalese and Gambian national Parliaments.<sup>87</sup>

## **Summary**

Initially a small British trading settlement under the jurisdiction of Sierra Leone, The Gambia became an independent British colony for the second (and final) time in 1888 and eventually, in 1965, an independent nation. During the colonial period, Gambia was governed through typical administrative bodies, an Executive Council, and a Legislative Council, the composition of which changed, as



European officials were gradually replaced by Gambian unofficial and elected members. In 1960, the Legislative Council was succeeded by the House of Representatives; changes to its structure and composition, prior to its sudden, unexpected, demise in 1994, are summarized. Later chapters indicate how the nature of domestic politics has often been shaped by these wider constitutional and institutional developments.

# 3

---

## **MERCHANTS AND RECAPTIVES**

### **THE ORIGINS OF MODERN POLITICS, 1816–86**

The essence of politics in Gambia during the greater part of the nineteenth century was the interaction between three different interest groups: the officials of the Gambian government; the resident British merchants; and the politically conscious portion of the African population of Bathurst, which consisted largely of Liberated Africans (Recaptives) and their descendants and freeborn Africans from other parts of West Africa. These were not independent political actors, because domestic politics was affected by the views of the Colonial Office, and the opinion of the Sierra Leonean government was also relevant before 1843 and again after 1866.

Until the 1860s, Africans played only a peripheral role in local politics, which was dominated by merchants and officials. The merchants were generally very influential; indeed, in the mid-1860s, they were described as “the ruling power” of Gambia.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, however, their influence was in decline. In contrast, Bathurst’s African population had improved its relative position. This was recognized when a prominent Aku, J. D. Richards, was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1883.

### **Politics in the Sierra Leone Era: 1816–43**

#### **Administration by Commandants: 1816–29**

The settlement at St. Mary’s had originally been founded as a military post to suppress the slave trade and at first its administration was the sole responsibility of the commandant of the fort, Captain Alexander Grant. Grant was himself answerable to Governor Charles MacCarthy of Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup> However, as noted in Chapter 1, a civilian population was soon established by the transfer of a dozen or so merchants of British origin from Gorée, following the resumption of French rule

in 1817, and from Sierra Leone. Most of these merchants headed small (and frequently unsuccessful) family firms that they ran themselves from Africa. A good example of a (successful) family firm was the one started by Thomas Chown, a former naval captain who remained in Bathurst until his death in 1845; the family business was then taken over by his son, also Thomas, and subsequently by his grandson, Thomas C. Chown. Other merchants who settled in the settlement in its early years included Edward and Richard Lloyd, former military officers who had been stationed at Gorée in the early years of the century; Charles Grant, a cousin of Alexander Grant who arrived from Sierra Leone in 1819; and W. H. Goddard, who moved to Bathurst from Gorée in 1819.<sup>3</sup> There was also one larger commission house, Forster and Smith, which was to develop extensive trading interests in West Africa by supplying goods on credit to individual correspondents. Its agent in Bathurst, William Forster (the younger brother of the firm's senior partner, Matthew Forster), who moved to Bathurst in 1817, appears to have been the political leader of the mercantile community until his death in 1849. Mercantile policies, which were presented as a unanimous expression of opinion, were apparently decided at meetings in his house.<sup>4</sup>

The British merchants had been accustomed at Gorée to shaping government policy in conjunction with the military commandant. They therefore welcomed the decision by Governor MacCarthy, during a visit to Bathurst in 1818, to devolve legislative, executive, and judicial powers to the new settlement. MacCarthy established a Settlement Court, composed of the commandant and five merchants, which was empowered to pass regulations for the peace, welfare, and good government of the settlement (subject to his disallowance) and to authorize the collection of revenue and its expenditure. MacCarthy also created a formal judicial structure; the Court of Police and Equity was empowered to try minor civil cases, and the Settlement Court was permitted to deal with appeals from the lower court and also to try criminal cases.<sup>5</sup>

In conjunction with the commandant, the merchants used their executive powers to authorize the construction of public buildings in the town, including Government House, the gaol and the barracks, and the clearing and draining of a large part of Bathurst.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, when Gambia and the Gold Coast were formally placed under the authority of Sierra Leone in 1821, all local customs and regulations were repealed; in practice, this meant that the Settlement Court was abolished, leaving Gambia without any judicial or legislative machinery. Some limited magisterial powers were subsequently restored, with the justices of the peace being drawn from the ranks of the merchants, but all important cases had to await the infrequent visitations of the chief justice of Sierra Leone.<sup>7</sup> The legislative and executive powers of the Settlement Court were not restored at all, even though, at the instigation of the merchants, a parliamentary commissioner, Major James Rowan, recommended in 1827 that Gambia be granted a council to make regulations on trade and internal affairs. In contrast, in 1828, the Colonial Office agreed to hand over control of the Gold Coast forts to a committee of three London merchants, which included Matthew Forster.<sup>8</sup>

Gambian merchants resented the loss of formal legislative and executive powers after 1821, because they could no longer exercise control over revenue and expenditure; it also made it harder for them to resist undesirable government policies.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in practice, merchants and officials tended to share the same goals, particularly in matters of commerce; there was a common awareness that the prosperity of the settlement entirely depended on trade. One key demand of the merchants was that they and their agents should be able to trade up river in safety. It was for this purpose that Grant purchased an island (which he renamed MacCarthy Island) in 1823 and established a small garrison on it. The "Ceded Mile" was also acquired from the King of Barra in 1826 for commercial reasons; the king had demanded custom duties from all trading vessels that entered the river and had disrupted trade in other ways.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately for the merchants, the commandants were not free agents and on several occasions, their endeavors to promote commerce were frustrated by the Colonial Office. In 1824, Major Alexander Findlay, Grant's successor, was prevented from taking action against French vessels, which had taken advantage of the establishment of a trading post at Albreda to smuggle contraband goods up river beyond James Island. Findlay had responded to persistent complaints by the merchants by prohibiting all French vessels from entering the river unless they paid import duties at Bathurst. The secretary of state for the colonies decided, however, that this would be in violation of the Treaty of Paris (which had brought the Napoleonic Wars to an end) and repudiated Findlay's action; it was not until 1848 that decisive action was taken to curb smuggling by French traders.<sup>11</sup> The Colonial Office also proved reluctant after 1826 to sanction the annexation of further territory, as the merchants demanded, because this might lead to unwanted commitments and expenditure. One treaty signed by Governor Campbell of Sierra Leone in 1827, which would have resulted in the annexation of land at Brikama, was allowed to remain a dead letter; another, signed by the acting lieutenant governor, William Hutton, and the King of Wuli in 1829, was repudiated by the secretary of state for the colonies.<sup>12</sup>

### **Administration by Lieutenant Governors: 1829–43**

The commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Findlay, was appointed as the first lieutenant governor of Gambia in 1829, but, in February 1830, he was promoted to the same post in Sierra Leone. He was succeeded by the first civilian lieutenant governor, George Rendall, a former acting chief justice of Sierra Leone.<sup>13</sup> Rendall was very sympathetic to the merchants, being particularly anxious to promote trade, and the decision to transfer Liberated Africans from Sierra Leone, discussed in Chapter 1, was taken partly for commercial reasons.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the merchants remained discontented because of their lack of legislative and judicial powers. In 1834, they protested against the anomaly of having to accept inappropriate legislation from Sierra Leone and demanded the establishment of a Legislative Council; they also called for a separate Gambian

judiciary. Rendall supported this petition, but the secretary of state still rejected it. In 1840, another lieutenant governor pointed out the difficulties caused by the colony's lack of legislative power, but again to no avail.<sup>15</sup> A year later, however, Dr. Robert Madden was sent by Parliament to examine the condition of all British possessions in West Africa. He recommended that Gambia should become independent of Sierra Leone and that the crown should resume direct control of the Gold Coast forts; both recommendations were subsequently endorsed by a Parliamentary Select Committee, which met in the summer of 1842 and in June 1843, Gambia became a separate Crown Colony.<sup>16</sup>

The merchants involved in the Gambian trade could claim some of the credit for this decision. Matthew Forster, the senior partner of Forster and Smith who had been the member of parliament (MP) for Berwick-on-Tweed since 1841, was a leading member of the Parliamentary Select Committee and one of the most persuasive witnesses who was called to give evidence. John Hughes, a Mulatto merchant resident in Bathurst, also gave evidence to the Committee.<sup>17</sup> The officials of the Gambian government also welcomed the severance of the connection with Sierra Leone, but in other respects, the relationship between merchants and officials had deteriorated markedly since the death of Rendall from yellow fever in September 1837.<sup>18</sup>

The merchants, who could count among their number the wealthiest and most experienced members of Bathurst society, had expected to have some say in the selection of the new lieutenant governor.<sup>19</sup> They were therefore most displeased when the position was offered to an individual who had been involved in the Gambian trade in the early 1820s, but had failed in business and had returned to Britain. They duly remonstrated with Lord Glenelg, the secretary of state, apparently successfully, for the appointment was eventually cancelled. The position was then offered in September 1838 to Major William Mackie and again the merchants objected; Mackie had once been employed as a clerk by a Bathurst merchant and the mercantile community presumably objected to the fact that one of their former employees would now head the administration.<sup>20</sup> The merchants soon had further grounds for complaint. Mackie first ignored their advice in the construction of a market house (which promptly collapsed) and then made a disastrous attempt to drain the island, which left the town inundated for three days. This led to an outbreak of fever to which Mackie himself fell victim in February 1839.<sup>21</sup>

The post of lieutenant governor then passed (on an acting basis) to the acting colonial secretary, Thomas Ingram, who was even more unpopular with the merchants. Ingram had apparently been an "insolvent trader" before entering government service in 1835 in the comparatively lowly guise of clerk of customs and of the Police Court; he owed his rapid rise to the high death toll among officials during the yellow fever outbreak of 1837.<sup>22</sup> According to the later account of Governor MacDonnell, Ingram had agreed, prior to Mackie taking office, that he would never assume the administration of the colony without the consent of the merchants. But after Mackie's death, he promptly took over the government on

the grounds that, as (acting) colonial secretary, he was the most senior official. In 1840, he secured confirmation of his position as colonial secretary, whereas the recently appointed queen's advocate, Richard Pine, who shared the merchants' distrust of Ingram, was dismissed from government service.<sup>23</sup>

In April 1840, Captain H. V. (later Sir Henry) Huntley was appointed the substantive lieutenant governor. The merchants were pleased that Huntley endorsed their criticisms of the Sierra Leonean connection, but in other respects they were unhappy with his decisions. Huntley was accused of pursuing an "uncertain and fluctuating policy" toward the chiefs of the interior and of wasting the colonial revenue, particularly on "an injudicious and . . . unnecessary" attempt to improve Government House.<sup>24</sup> The merchants were critical of any perceived misuse of government funds; as noted in Chapter 1, the duty they paid on imported goods remained the major source of government revenue.<sup>25</sup>

Ingram again assumed the administration after Huntley's promotion to the post of lieutenant governor of Prince Edward Island in 1841. This so incensed the merchants (whom Ingram, perhaps not surprisingly, declined to consult over policy matters) that in 1842, they sent one of their number, John Hughes, to London to outline their views to the secretary of state. Hughes presented a petition to Lord Stanley in which the merchants called for the appointment of officials of integrity and specifically attacked Ingram. Shortly afterward, the merchants accused Ingram of exerting official pressure in the courts through his brother, Alexander, who was an assistant judge. They also called for the removal of John Mantell, who had been appointed queen's advocate in succession to Pine despite apparently being without legal qualifications; Mantell was another of Ingram's allies.<sup>26</sup>

Some of these petitions were signed not only by the European and Mulatto merchants, but also by a number of African clerks and traders. This was of some significance; prior to 1842, Africans had apparently not participated in the political process. However, it should be noted that these men were mainly employed by the merchants and may even have been instructed to sign. The petitions were in any case rejected by the secretary of state, an indication of the limitations to the merchants' influence, and Ingram and Mantell remained in office.<sup>27</sup>

Even after the establishment of the independent Crown Colony in 1843, relations between Ingram and the merchants remained difficult; indeed, it was not until Ingram had been dismissed as colonial secretary in 1849 that they began to improve. The merchants predictably objected to Mantell's promotion to chief justice in 1847 and also disliked the fact that Ingram frequently assumed control of the administration in the mid-1840s in the absence of the substantive postholder. For his part, in May 1844, Ingram was driven to complain to the secretary of state that three merchants were the instigators of "a party highly inimical to the Authorities at the Gambia."<sup>28</sup> The three were Charles Grant, the long-established merchant; James Finden, who had been trading at Portendick since the 1830s; and Thomas Brown. Brown, who was to remain a key figure in Gambian politics for the next three decades, arrived in Bathurst in 1829 at the age of 18 to work as a clerk for Forster and Smith (initially combining this role with employment in

government service). In the early 1840s, he worked as the agent of Thomas Hutton of Watling Street, but when the latter abandoned the coastal trade (after 1843), he established his own firm, Thomas Brown & Co.<sup>29</sup>

### **Interest Group Politics in an “Independent” Gambia: 1843–66**

The creation of Gambia as an independent Crown Colony in 1843 automatically increased the theoretical powers of the British merchants. The establishment of a Legislative Council, on which they were represented from the outset, meant that for the first time since 1821, they had a forum in which to discuss government policies. It also allowed them to debate and vote on the annual budget estimates. Their periodic representation on the Executive Council was a further source of influence. In contrast, as noted in Chapter 2, no Africans served on the Legislative Council until the 1880s, even though the Madden Report had recommended that “one or two of the respectable class of coloured residents” should be appointed to it.<sup>30</sup> This exacerbated the political weakness of the Liberated Africans and meant that their most effective weapon remained the sympathy of the colonial governor. In practice, as we shall see, some governors were to prove more sympathetic to their cause than others. Between 1843 and 1847, there were three different governors (all of whom were naval officers); because the first two rapidly succumbed to the climate, only the last of these, Commander Charles Fitzgerald, remained in office long enough to have any impact on domestic politics.<sup>31</sup> Fitzgerald appears to have been popular with Liberated Africans, probably because he made a determined attempt to complete the draining of Bathurst and thereby prevent the flooding which was so detrimental to the health of the poorer inhabitants of the town. In 1846, he imported granite blocks from England to construct a lock with sluice gates at the Malfa Creek, but before the project could be completed, he left office.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Governor MacDonnell: The Merchants’ Ally**

Fitzgerald was succeeded in October 1847 by Richard MacDonnell, the first civilian governor, who had been appointed chief justice in 1843 when aged only twenty-eight.<sup>33</sup> MacDonnell immediately abandoned the Malfa Lock project on the grounds that the colony possessed insufficient funds to complete such an expensive project. The decision, which may have been taken after pressure from the British merchants, was strongly resented by the African population, particularly as MacDonnell continued to spend money on making alterations to Government House. In 1849, the rains were heavy and when these resulted in the flooding of the greater part of Bathurst, a petition protesting against MacDonnell’s administration and calling for his removal from office, which was signed by 139 of the self-proclaimed “principal Black Inhabitants” of Bathurst, was dispatched to the secretary of state, Earl Grey.

The petition was organized by a “Committee of the Black Inhabitants,” which was headed by Providence Doyery, a Liberated African Anglican convert, and Reme Lome. Its other members included Daniel Prophet, a clerk of Egba (a Yoruba subgroup) origin who had signed one of the anti-Ingram petitions of 1842, and John Bocock, a Liberated African trader originally from Popo in modern Togo. The petition, which received no support from the British merchants, was dismissed by MacDonnell, who claimed that it had been instigated by the disgraced Thomas Ingram. The governor also argued that many of the petitioners were ignorant of its contents, and others had been forced to sign by the headmen of a despotic (friendly) society based in the Soldier Town area of the town. Not surprisingly, the petition was subsequently rejected by the secretary of state.<sup>34</sup>

The friendly societies were to adopt a political role again in the 1860s and it is therefore necessary to describe their origins. The first such society had been established in 1842 by Thomas Reffles (or Reffell), a Liberated African of Ibo origin. A former soldier, Reffles apparently was sent to Bathurst in 1821 at the age of twenty-six by Governor MacCarthy of Sierra Leone to help with the construction of a clock. He remained in Gambia thereafter, was wounded while fighting in the Barra War of 1829 (for which he was granted a pension in 1838), and was probably involved in trading with Freetown in the 1830s and 1840s.

According to Joseph Reffles (his son), the Ibo Society was founded on the initiative of a Wesleyan missionary (presumably William Fox). Fox was approached by a group of European magistrates, who were concerned by the misconduct of the Liberated Africans who were transferred to Bathurst during the 1830s, without adequate provision being made for their welfare; because they lacked alternative means of making a living, many of them apparently turned to crime. At a meeting of Wesleyan church leaders in 1842, it was agreed that a “Workmen’s Club” should be founded to assist unemployed Liberated Africans and Reffles had led the way by forming a society for his fellow Ibo.<sup>35</sup> Once the benefits of the Ibo society had been demonstrated, Yoruba Recaptives followed suit and established their own societies (as they had in Freetown); around 1850, a Protestant Wolof shipwright named Senegal Fye established a “Shipwrights’ Society,” which catered for carpenters and masons, as well as shipwrights. The principal function of most societies appears to have been to ensure that their members could afford their burial expenses. The headmen also exercised a degree of social control over the members.<sup>36</sup>

Governor MacDonnell left office in 1852 with an enhanced reputation. He remained popular with the British merchants because he adopted an aggressive policy to protect their commercial interests against the predatory actions of hostile tribes. He was, for example, publicly thanked by the merchants for leading a successful expedition against the people of Kunnong and Bambako who had been attacking trading posts. He was also the first administrator since Findlay to take decisive action against the French traders at Albreda. In 1848, he enforced a blockade to prevent smuggling; as a consequence, trade from Albreda was reduced by a quarter by 1852.<sup>37</sup> MacDonnell was, however, much less popular with



Liberated Africans. Beside abandoning the Malfa Lock project and failing to take adequate measures to prevent the floods of 1849, he also introduced a Rates Ordinance of 3 to 4 percent per annum on property in 1850. Although merchants and Africans alike were required to pay this tax, in relative terms the burden was much greater on the latter. Not surprisingly, Liberated Africans condemned the ordinance prior to its introduction.<sup>38</sup> As indicated, they were also to call for its repeal in 1862.

### **Governor O'Connor: The Promotion of Liberated African Interests**

When MacDonnell's designated successor, A. E. (later Sir Arthur) Kennedy, was promoted to the post of governor of Sierra Leone without ever having set foot in Bathurst, the position was offered to Colonel L. S. O'Connor of the First West India Regiment.<sup>39</sup> At first, O'Connor followed the policies of his predecessor and British merchants continued to exercise a great deal of influence. Indeed, in 1853, he appointed Thomas Brown to the Executive Council.<sup>40</sup> The mercantile members were equally effective on the Legislative Council and it was their pressure that persuaded O'Connor (who had previously declared that he intended to remain neutral) to intervene in the civil war in the Kombo.<sup>41</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Mandinka were divided into two groups, the Soninkes and the Marabouts. The former were animists, or Muslims who failed to observe Islamic practices, most notably by consuming alcohol; in practice, they consisted of the rulers and aristocracies of the kingdoms and their followers. The latter, members of the Tijani Islamic confraternity, were often traders and clerics and strictly avoided alcohol. They were excluded from land ownership and offices of state in all Mandinka states; additionally, Marabouts were often given the poorest land by the Soninke rulers and were heavily taxed. These grievances eventually persuaded the Marabout-dominated town of Sabajy (or Sabaji, modern Sukuta) to rebel against their Soninke king, the Mansa Kombo, in the late 1840s.<sup>42</sup>

The beginning of the civil war in the Kombo alarmed both MacDonnell and the British merchants, who favored the Soninke party in the Kombo. This was partly because any political instability was likely to threaten the production of groundnuts (now the colony's main export crop) from the Kombo. Moreover, Lieutenant Governor Huntley had purchased a portion of Upper Kombo in 1840 (it became British Kombo) and merchants (and officials) had acquired large plots of land there, which might be threatened by instability; furthermore, the Mansa Kombo had promised to cede more land if Sabajy (Sabiji) were to be destroyed. MacDonnell had requested permission to intervene in 1852, but the Colonial Office denied his request. Nevertheless, spurred on by the merchants, O'Connor marched into Sabajy in May 1853 and completely destroyed the town. He then signed a treaty with the Mansa Kombo, who duly ceded Sabajy and other parts of Upper Kombo to the British.<sup>43</sup>

Although the British merchants pushed O'Connor into action in 1853, they were dismayed by the consequences. Because O'Connor attacked Sabajy without

prior consultation with the Colonial Office, the secretary of state refused to foot the bill and the cost had to be met from the colony's revenue. To make matters worse, O'Connor attempted to distribute the newly acquired crown land to Liberated Africans and African small farmers, rather than allowing the merchants to purchase even larger plots. He then tried in 1856 to ban the sale of gunpowder, a source of lucrative trade, along the river.<sup>44</sup>

The merchants were able to use their influence to prevent the implementation of both these policies. However, their attempts to resist other undesirable government actions were less successful. First, they were not able to prevent the signing of the Anglo-French Convention in March 1857. Under its terms, Britain was ceded Albreda, in return for renouncing all rights to participate in the gum trade at Portendick. There had been virtually no trade with Portendick for a decade and so the merchants were willing to give up their trading rights. However, in addition, French ships had been granted free and legal access to the river above James Island, thereby permitting them to establish businesses in Bathurst for the first time. The British merchants, who feared the prospect of additional competition, protested strongly through their three representatives in the Legislative Council in August 1858, all of whom actually resigned over the issue. But the governor, who was a convinced free trader, strongly endorsed the agreement, which gave the Gambian government the right to charge customs duties on French ships for the first time.<sup>45</sup>

Second, they were unable to prevent O'Connor pushing two bills, which sought to protect the interests of Liberated African artisans against their mercantile employers, through the Legislative Council. The "truck" system, by which merchants had paid their employees partly in cash and partly in goods, which they valued well above the normal retail price in Bathurst, was abolished in 1856.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, certain clauses in the Grumetta Act, which had allowed magistrates (who were usually merchants) to impose punishments (including hard labor) on artisans who refused to work for wages offered by employers, were repealed in 1858. Both bills were strongly opposed by the merchants and two of their number actually resigned from the magisterial bench in protest.<sup>47</sup>

According to a later account, O'Connor introduced the two bills as a result of a meeting he had with Harry Finden in 1856. A Liberated African Methodist church member who had received no formal education and was virtually illiterate, Finden apparently succeeded Thomas Reffles as leader of the Ibo community in Bathurst after Reffles' death in 1849. He was the owner of a "grog" shop in Bathurst and was also involved in the riverine trade; he appears to have been reasonably successful in these ventures, for in 1870, he was said to be the owner of property worth an estimated £350 and to have total assets of £600.<sup>48</sup>

### **Governor D'Arcy: The Rule of the "Great Mercantile Interest"**

O'Connor was succeeded in 1859 by another army officer, Colonel G. A. K. D'Arcy, under whom the merchants were to regain their influence. Indeed, by the mid-1860s,

the “great mercantile interest” was said to have become the ruling power in the colony, and in 1869, Thomas Brown was described as having acquired “an influence which in a peculiar mixture of antagonistic races might prove dangerous.”<sup>49</sup> Two factors help to explain these developments. First, because the colony was in severe financial straits—there was a budget deficit every year between 1859 and 1865—the governor could not afford to antagonize the main providers of revenue, the merchants.<sup>50</sup> Second, the governor could not rely on a secure majority in the Legislative Council. Whereas he was at odds with some of his long-serving senior officials, who were sympathetic to the merchants’ cause, the three unofficial members of the council, Thomas Brown, W. H. Goddard, and Thomas F. Quin, a long-serving former government official turned merchant who had joined the council in 1860, tended to work together. D’Arcy could not even be certain of control over the Executive Council. This was dominated by Brown, who had been appointed acting queen’s advocate in 1861, because of a lack of officials following a yellow fever outbreak in 1859, and was to retain an official position until 1866. He was therefore an *ex officio* member of the Executive Council.<sup>51</sup> The result was the passing of a series of ordinances which strengthened the position of the merchants at the expense of both the Liberated African community and the French business houses which, as noted in Chapter 1, had begun to move into Bathurst since 1860.<sup>52</sup>

First, the burden of taxation was shifted away from the merchants. In 1861, a tax was imposed on the importation of kola nuts for the first time. This fell squarely on Liberated African traders who controlled the trade with Freetown. In 1863, the *ad valorem* duty of 4 percent on all duties was abolished. It was replaced by an export duty on groundnuts and hides, which fell principally on French merchants, who by offering cash for groundnuts (whereas British merchants continued to use a complicated credit system), had hitherto avoided paying import duties. Finally, in 1865, a new tariff, which had been drawn up by Thomas Brown in his guise as acting queen’s advocate, introduced heavier duties on commodities (such as sugar) that were imported by the French houses and those (like kola nuts and palm wine), that were controlled by Liberated Africans. A license was also imposed on retailers of spirits, who were again mainly Liberated Africans.<sup>53</sup>

Second, the various attempts made by Governor D’Arcy to uphold the interests of Liberated Africans were resisted. In 1862–63, for example, the merchants prevented any amendments being made to the 1850 Rates Ordinance. A large group of African petitioners, headed by Harry Finden, had argued that because only British merchants derived any advantage from the ordinance (the districts in which they resided acquired street lamps and were now patrolled by policemen), they should pay more for their privileges. D’Arcy sympathized with the petitioners, but the merchants did not and they were able to persuade the Legislative Council to reject D’Arcy’s attempt to repeal the ordinance in 1863. Similarly, in 1865, strong mercantile opposition forced Governor D’Arcy to withdraw a proposed Bankruptcy Bill. Under the existing legislation, debtors could be imprisoned without trial even where there was no evidence of fraud or misappropriation. Consequently, Africans trading up river for European merchants were sometimes jailed for making losses

on their trading account. The measure was not finally passed until 1873 and then only after the Colonial Office pressured the administration.<sup>54</sup>

Third, the merchants persuaded D'Arcy to pass the Friendly Societies Ordinance in June 1865. In 1864, the headmen of the societies had imposed a boycott on the Colonial Surgeon, Dr. W. H. Sherwood. Sherwood, who was widely considered to be racist, a drunkard, and incompetent, illegally seized a hearse from a society to bury a white sailor. For several months afterward, Sherwood was unable to find any carpenter or mason who would carry out any work for him. Similar action was taken in January 1865 against the Liberated African gaoler, John Campbell, who was accused of being too pro-European. These actions provoked Thomas Brown, in his role as a magistrate, to impose a heavy fine on the carpenter who had refused to work for Campbell. Brown then persuaded D'Arcy to introduce an ordinance into the Legislative Council that required the registration of all societies and permitted a magistrate regularly to investigate their subscription books. This ordinance was clearly designed to destroy the power of their headmen. The merchants (and Chief Justice Mantell) considered that the bill did not go far enough, because it did not outlaw strikes, and voted against it. Nevertheless, it was passed by the council and became law in September. The headmen of both the ethnic societies and the craft societies, led by Harry Finden, protested to the secretary of state for the colonies, but to no avail.<sup>55</sup>

The policies D'Arcy initially adopted, which included placing Finden in command of a large detachment of African troops during the Baddibu War of 1861 and provisionally selecting Thomas Johnson as one of the first two African magistrates, were welcomed by Liberated Africans.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, as late as 1864, a large number of them signed a petition to the secretary of state calling for D'Arcy's term of office as governor to be extended and generally extolling his virtues.<sup>57</sup> But by 1865, the Liberated African community increasingly resented the governor's pro-merchant stance. Matters reached a climax that December, when the French Consul in Bathurst informed D'Arcy that a plot had been hatched by Finden to kill all the Europeans in the town. D'Arcy took various precautionary measures, although he did not follow the advice of Hastings Kneller, the collector of customs, and declare martial law. His actions were fully supported by the executive councilors, including Brown. However, the other two unofficial members of the Legislative Council, Quin and Goddard, were skeptical about the rumors of a plot and martial law was not in fact declared.<sup>58</sup>

## **Politics under the West African Settlements: 1866–86**

### **Establishment of the Settlements**

At this critical juncture in Gambian public life, the political balance in Bathurst was altered by developments in London. In July 1864, following a disastrous war between the Gold Coast government and the Asante, C. B. Adderley, the

Conservative MP for Staffordshire North, had proposed that another Parliamentary Select Committee be established to examine the condition of the West African colonies. Adderley, who considered the colonies to be a drain on imperial resources, hoped to achieve a British withdrawal from the Gold Coast and perhaps also from the other colonies.<sup>59</sup> The Colonial Office, which was anxious to ensure that the Select Committee made its recommendations on the basis of up-to-date information, commissioned Colonel H. St. George Ord (the governor of Bermuda) to provide the necessary evidence. However, contrary to Adderley's hopes, the Ord Report did not recommend withdrawal from any of the settlements, but suggested that they should be placed under one centralized administration as a way of saving money.<sup>60</sup>

This recommendation was unpopular with the merchants (who had of course welcomed Gambian independence from Sierra Leone in 1843) and they petitioned the secretary of state for the colonies against the restoration of the link with Freetown. In contrast, the Liberated African community welcomed centralization as a means to curb mercantile power. In particular, it was thought that an independent governor-in-chief would be more likely to administer justice impartially than a pro-merchant chief justice like Mantell.<sup>61</sup> Unlike in 1842, the merchants had no powerful allies on the Parliamentary Select Committee and they also failed to put forward their case effectively.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, their views were ignored and in February 1866, the West African Settlements were established. The post of governor was abolished and replaced by that of an administrator; the Executive Council was abolished and the Legislative Council downgraded, with only one unofficial (Brown) being retained. D'Arcy initially served as administrator, before being succeeded by Rear Admiral Charles Patey in October 1866.<sup>63</sup>

### **Patey Administration: 1866–69**

The avowed intention of the new administrator was to check "a reckless expenditure" and thereby to reduce the colony's growing budget deficit.<sup>64</sup> This aim could only be achieved by firm action against the merchants. In 1867, Patey brought a case against Brown for an infringement of customs regulations, but the case was dismissed. Two years later, he ordered an investigation into the operation of the Customs House. This found that merchants had often avoided paying duty on goods because of the "gross errors" in the account books of the collector of customs (Hastings Kneller); procedures were subsequently tightened.<sup>65</sup> Customs revenue increased, but the merchants, who were already resentful that Patey preferred to follow the advice of the first writer, Henry Fowler, rather than consult the Legislative Council and had also abolished the right of merchants to serve as magistrates, were further alienated from his government.<sup>66</sup>

Matters were brought to a head in 1869 by a cholera epidemic that killed over 1,100 Africans in Bathurst alone.<sup>67</sup> The merchants blamed Patey for failing to take adequate precautions to prevent cholera reaching the town, arguing that this was due to his "parsimonious economy." They were also critical of the measures

he had subsequently adopted and urged the Colonial Office to remove both him and Fowler. Some Liberated Africans, including Finden, who were alarmed by Patey's alleged ill treatment of prisoners, supported their petition.<sup>68</sup> However, others were unwilling to join forces with the merchants over any issue and offered their support to Patey. This second group included Thomas Reffles' son, Joseph, who was to become a key figure in the resistance to the cession of Gambia in 1870.

Joseph Reffles served as barracks sergeant and clerk in the Ordnance Department in Bathurst for six years before he was dismissed from the service. He then found employment trading up river for Thomas Brown. But he was an unsuccessful trader and Brown fired him for incurring losses. He was then employed by William Goddard, the agent of Forster and Smith, but again incurred losses and was dismissed. Despite these setbacks, Reffles' abilities were recognized by prominent Liberated Africans who raised sufficient funds to enable him to travel to London in 1865 to acquire a legal training. Their aim was that he should be able to defend their interests in Gambian courts. Reffles returned to Bathurst in 1867 and applied to be admitted to the Sierra Leone bar as a practicing attorney and advocate, but his request was rejected. He then took advantage of an ordinance permitting him to act as a legal agent for clients on their written authority, but this ordinance was repealed in December 1867 by Kneller, who was then acting administrator; according to Reffles, Kneller acted at the instigation of his former employer, Thomas Brown. Reffles returned to London in 1868, presumably to acquire more legal training, and remained there until 1870. Under the circumstances, it was not surprising that Reffles bore a grievance against both the merchants and their allies among the officials.<sup>69</sup>

Predictably, the merchants' petition against Patey and Fowler was dismissed by Earl Granville, the secretary of state for the colonies, who soon afterward promoted Patey to the post of governor of St. Helena and also praised Fowler for his actions during the epidemic. In contrast, the officials who had sided with the merchants over the affair, such as Kneller and Dr. J. H. Jeans, the colonial surgeon, were punished. The former was forced to resign, and the latter was dismissed.<sup>70</sup> The administration then passed on an acting basis to Major Alexander Bravo, the police magistrate of Sierra Leone, who was in office when news of the proposed cession of Gambia to France broke in 1870.<sup>71</sup>

## **Resistance to Cession: 1870–76**

In 1870–71, and again in 1875–76, domestic political issues were temporarily superseded by the issue of the proposed transfer of Gambia to France. The course of events has been examined in detail elsewhere, especially by Hargreaves; our focus is on the opposition to exchange from two separate quarters, the British merchants and the Liberated Africans.<sup>72</sup>

Although, as early as March 1866, the French government had proposed that Gambia be exchanged for corresponding French territory, it was not until February 1870 that the British government finally decided to accept the offer. This was not because the Colonial Office was anxious to retain Gambia; on the contrary, it wished to be rid of a settlement in severe financial difficulties, particularly because the situation was unlikely to improve in the near future. The problem was that the British government was unable to find any corresponding French territory it actually wanted; it did not desire the three French settlements on the Ivory Coast, Grand Bassam, Assinie, and Dabou, that were originally offered, nor Gabon (added by France to the equation in 1867). But in 1869, the Colonial Office was persuaded by the governor-in-chief of the West African Settlements, Sir Arthur Kennedy, that an acceptable price for Gambia would be the renunciation by France of any claim to the disputed Mellacourie region north of Freetown. This offer was put to the French government in 1870.<sup>73</sup>

### **First Attempt: 1870–71**

The British proposal was accepted in principle by France at the end of March and, as Hargreaves puts it, “All seemed clear for a rapid conclusion.”<sup>74</sup> However, when news of the impending deal broke, it was fiercely opposed by merchants and Liberated Africans alike. Their resistance was effective, since it helped delay the process to such an extent that in July 1870, the secretary of state for the colonies in the liberal government, the Earl of Kimberley, was forced to announce that it would not be possible to proceed in the current Parliamentary Session. Since Kimberley subsequently decided that the idea of exchange was inappropriate, this effectively ended the matter until the return of a Conservative government in 1874.<sup>75</sup>

During 1870, all four British business houses in Bathurst publicly announced their opposition to exchange. The first to do was the firm headed by Thomas Quin; in January 1870, he declared that he viewed the proposal “with horror.”<sup>76</sup> The three other firms (Forster and Smith, Thomas Brown and Co., and the Chown family firm) did not declare their hand until July, perhaps because they were carefully preparing support for their cause in advance. At the beginning of July, Brown persuaded the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to protest against exchange; later that month, Forster and Smith organized a memorial supported by forty-one other London merchants, manufacturers, and traders. The merchants’ principal argument was that exchange would force them to abandon the Gambian trade, because the French authorities would pressure them to leave. In support of their arguments, they cited French policy in Gorée after the resumption of colonial rule in 1817 as an indication of what was likely to happen.<sup>77</sup>

The merchants also demanded compensation for the loss of capital, property, and trade goods, if they were forced to give up the trade and set out in detail what this would cost.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Governor Kennedy was convinced that their real aim in stirring up opposition to exchange was not to prevent it going ahead, but rather to force up the price. Hargreaves argues that “there is much evidence to support

his interpretation"; in particular, Thomas Brown stated in the Legislative Council in May 1870 that he did not object to the transfer, "provided equitable terms" were arranged. In contrast, Mahoney considers that the merchants' opposition was genuine and it should be noted that the Liberated African community subsequently thanked Brown and Quin (although not the Chowns or Forster and Smith) for their "untiring efforts" to prevent the transfer from proceeding.<sup>79</sup>

If the motives of at least some of the merchants were ambiguous, there is no reason to suppose that the opposition of Liberated Africans to exchange was anything other than genuine. Their initial response was in April 1870, when a petition signed by over 500 traders, mechanics, and other black inhabitants was dispatched to Kennedy for onward transmission to the secretary of state. A second petition was sent at the end of May and a third, which contained 120 signatures, was sent to Queen Victoria in October. All prominent Liberated Africans who were not in government employment appear to have opposed exchange. Indeed, Administrator Bravo commented that the petitioners represented "whatever intelligence, respectability, property or feeling there may be in the natives of these settlements."<sup>80</sup>

The April petition was headed by Harry Finden, although Governor Kennedy believed that it was drawn up by William Chase Walcott, a controversial lawyer originally from Barbados who had recently arrived from Sierra Leone; Kennedy had a very low opinion of Walcott, who had recently been in prison in Freetown, and this increased his hostility to the opponents of cession.<sup>81</sup> Finden, together with eight other members of the Liberated African community, John Bocock, Daniel Prophet, John T. Barber, Abraham Goddard, Providence Joof, Charles Pignard, Joseph D. Richards, Samuel J. Forster, and a leading member of the small West Indian community in Bathurst, Thomas King, headed a deputation to Governor Kennedy in May.

These men, together with Reffles, who was probably still in London at the time, can be regarded as the leaders of the Liberated African opposition to exchange. All except Joof, a shipwright, and Pignard, who was probably also an artisan, were engaged in commerce and trade. Judging by their estimated assets, most were reasonably successful; King (who had headed the list of petitioners calling for D'Arcy's period of office to be extended in 1864) was generally considered the wealthiest of the non-European merchants with property of an estimated value of £2,500 and total assets of an estimated £4,000. Two members of the group, Bocock and Prophet, were veteran leaders of the local community, having signed the petition against Governor MacDonnell in 1849; all were Protestants (Wesleyan Methodists, except for Barber and King, who were Anglicans) and at least three—Finden, Bocock, and Barber—were Liberated Africans. The leaders also represented the range of ethnic groups within the Liberated African community; by origin, Richards and Goddard were Aku, Forster and Finden were Ibo, Prophet an Egba, Bocock a Popo, and Joof a Wolof.<sup>82</sup>

Two members of this group, Richards and Forster (whose early career is described in Chapter 5), were to remain prominent politically for the next thirty years. A Methodist, whose parents were Liberated Africans of Aku origin, Richards



was born in Freetown in December 1843, but moved with his mother (a prosperous kola nut trader) to Gambia as a child and attended the Wesleyan School in Bathurst. Since at least 1864, he had been active in the riverine trade and he may also have become involved in the kola nut trade with Freetown (which was to be his main commercial activity in later years). He was clearly successful; by 1870, he was said to be the owner of a property worth £500 and to possess total assets of £800. Indeed, along with Thomas King, he was described as a “merchant” rather than as a “trader” in the April 1870 petition, a sign of his enhanced status.<sup>83</sup>

The majority of the people who signed the petitions were Protestants (mainly Methodists), but a few Roman Catholics and a larger number of Muslims also supported the campaign. It may be assumed that many of the artisans and mechanics who added their names were instructed to do so by the headmen of societies; indeed, one of the leaders of the anti-cession campaign, Providence Joof, was the leader of the Carpenters and Shipwrights’ Society, which had been at the forefront of the protests against the Friendly Societies Ordinance of 1865.<sup>84</sup>

One significant feature of the Liberated African opposition to exchange was that it united the “Gambian” and “Sierra Leonean” wings of the Liberated African community. In April 1868, Governor Kennedy of Sierra Leone introduced competitive examinations for junior clerical posts in the civil service throughout British West Africa, thereby enabling Africans to apply for promotion in any colony. Because Sierra Leoneans tended to be much better educated than the locally born inhabitants of the other three colonies, they began to fill the available posts in increasing numbers, including in Gambia. This caused great resentment in Bathurst and in 1871, a petition, which criticized the influx of Sierra Leoneans and argued that clerical posts in Bathurst should be reserved for Gambians, was addressed to Kennedy (a similar petition to Governor Hennessy of Sierra Leone called for the dismissal of these Sierra Leoneans and their replacement by Gambians). The 1871 petition was headed by Reffles and apparently drawn up by Walcott; it was also signed by Forster, among many others. However, it would appear that Finden, Barber, Richards, and King were all satisfied by the appointments and refused to sign the petition, which was ignored by the Colonial Office.<sup>85</sup>

The Liberated Africans, unlike the British merchants, were primarily worried about the threat posed by French colonial rule to their way of life. As evidence, they cited the military system of government practiced in the neighboring French colonies of Gorée and St. Louis. It was feared that the French would not respect the property rights of Liberated Africans, nor allow them to practice their Protestant religion. So great was their concern that many of them were prepared to sell their property and leave the colony; alternatively, they were ready to accept increased taxation if this would ensure the continuation of British administration.<sup>86</sup>

## **Second Attempt: 1875–76**

The threat to withdraw from Gambia was of course never put to the test; negotiations with France were broken off in July 1870. It was not until the Conservatives

regained power at Westminster in February 1874 that the issue resurfaced on the political agenda. In April 1874, the French government proposed that both the Ivory Coast and the Mellacourie should be exchanged for Gambia. Although this was an improved offer on that of 1870, the new secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Carnarvon, still held out for more; in July 1875, he instead proposed that France should renounce all political influence between the borders of Gabon in the south and “the northern limit of the existing French possessions.” This would have been accepted by the French, but before the issue could be discussed by Parliament, it was announced (erroneously) that negotiations had been completed; Carnarvon was forced into a denial and to announce in the House of Lords that nothing would be done until the next parliamentary session in February 1876. During the period between parliamentary sessions, opposition to cession revived both in Britain and Gambia. This weakened Carnarvon’s resolve, which collapsed entirely in March when it appeared possible that he might be accused of having misled Parliament. He therefore abruptly broke off negotiations.<sup>87</sup>

Since 1870, the Gambian trade had been in decline. One of the four British firms, Forster and Smith, had been taken over by an American company, Lintott and Spink, probably following the death of W. H. Goddard in 1873. Of the remainder, only the Chowns seem to have been doing much trade; indeed in 1874, Thomas Brown began negotiating the sale of his business and property to a French house.<sup>88</sup> The administrator, C. H. Kortright, predicted that there would be little opposition to cession from the merchants, but in fact all the British firms resisted the proposal. Brown led the way in a letter to Carnarvon in September 1875 and subsequently sent further letters of protest. In addition, with the assistance of the Manchester merchant, James F. Hutton of Hutton & Co., he persuaded the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to raise formal objections once again. He also organized a further petition from Bathurst in February 1876. Brown’s son, David, together with Quin and Thomas C. Chown, also served as a member of the newly formed Gambia Committee, which sent a deputation to Carnarvon in February 1876 to condemn cession and Chown protested separately in a letter to the secretary of state. Only Lintott and Spink stayed aloof, although its agent in Bathurst, James Topp, did sign the petition of February 1876.<sup>89</sup>

Once again the British merchants emphasized that French rule would discriminate against their trading interests. Brown, for example, pointed out, as an indicator of French intentions, that the merchants of Senegal were currently seeking the imposition of discriminatory tariffs on British goods. Other arguments were added in 1876, including the threat to the Protestant religion and (by Chown) the adverse impact that cession would have on the Liberated African population. It seems unlikely, given the vehemence of the opposition, that the merchants were simply interested in maximizing their compensation and so their protests should probably be accepted as genuine.<sup>90</sup>

Liberated African hostility to cession was also as strong as in 1870. The first protest petition, drawn up in October 1875, received 152 signatures; a second in

December 1875 attracted over 500 names; and the third (sponsored by Thomas Brown) in February 1876 over 100. The first two petitions were both headed by J. D. Richards. Richards probably supplanted Finden as leader of the campaign partly because of his literacy and partly because, contrary to the opinion of the Gambian government, his commercial interests were continuing to expand (he imported goods worth £1,817 in 1875) and he was now one of the wealthiest men in Bathurst.<sup>91</sup> He became secretary of the Gambia Native Association (GNAssoc), a newly established committee of traders and shopkeepers which coordinated the resistance in 1875–76. Its other committee members were Finden, Barber, and Forster, the leaders of the 1870 resistance; George N. Shyngle, a Sierra Leonean who was one of the wealthier Liberated African entrepreneurs; and H. G. Dodgin, the leader of the Liberated African traders on MacCarthy Island. It will be noted that, once again, the campaign united “Gambians” and “Sierra Leoneans.”<sup>92</sup> Joseph Reffles, the other key figure in 1870, was not active in 1875–76; his wife had recently died and he had become a lay preacher in the Methodist Church. He later became embroiled in a bitter public quarrel with one of the European missionaries in Gambia, Rev. George Adcock, but was not prominent politically thereafter. He died in 1886.<sup>93</sup>

Rank-and-file petitioners were mainly employed as artisans, traders, or clerks, although the signatories of the second petition included headmen of settlements in the Kombo.<sup>94</sup> Most were Wesleyan Methodists (as were five of the six GNAssoc committee members) and, unlike in 1870, the European leaders of the local Wesleyan Church actively supported the protests. Rev. Adcock signed the October 1875 petition and may even have chaired the meeting to draw it up, and all three missionaries later wrote to the general secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to urge the Missionary Committee to oppose cession.<sup>95</sup>

The petitioners of October, like those of 1870, emphasized their firm attachment to British government and a corresponding aversion to French military rule, especially as demonstrated at St. Louis and Gorée; it was argued that French rule would “materially interfere with their social and religious rights.”<sup>96</sup> They also argued that transfer would threaten their property rights and once again expressed their willingness to accept additional taxation to avoid transfer to France. The December 1875 petition was more comprehensive. It compared the advantages of Gambia with the French settlements with which it was to be transferred and, not surprisingly, concluded that Gambia was of greater intrinsic value than all of them put together. It also emphasized the value of Bathurst’s public buildings, houses, and merchants’ stores and pointed out that the employment prospects of clerks and artisans would be adversely affected by cession because they could not speak French. Finally, the petition noted that Liberated African entrepreneurs involved in the Freetown trade (such as Richards, who specialized in the kola trade) would also suffer, because the steamboat service between Bathurst and Freetown would cease to operate.<sup>97</sup>

The abandonment of the negotiations in March 1876 was by no means the final chapter of the story. Lord Salisbury, Carnarvon’s successor at the Colonial Office,

would have liked to reopen negotiations in 1879–80, but the idea was resisted by his own more cautious officials; in any case, a Liberal government returned to office in March 1880. There was further discussion within the British government in 1883 and again in 1888, but no firm proposals were put forward.<sup>98</sup> Even after the boundary of Gambia was settled in 1889, the possibility of territorial exchange remained; indeed, three further overtures were made by the French government between 1904 and 1911, but all came to nothing.<sup>99</sup>

### **Toward African Political Representation: Domestic Politics, 1870–86**

Three separate, but interconnected, themes shaped the course of internal Gambian politics in the 1870s and early 1880s. First, during the early 1870s, there was a realignment of political forces with merchants and Liberated Africans, who had been mutually antagonistic under Governor D'Arcy, adopting a united front on most political issues. Second, despite their key role in preventing cession, the political influence of the merchants gradually declined, so that, by the 1880s, they ceased to be an independent force in local politics. Third, the Liberated African community, its confidence increased by the part it had played in the campaign against cession, completed the process of establishing an independent political identity and achieved representation on the Legislative Council. These three themes are examined in turn.

#### **Relations between Merchants and Liberated Africans**

Although the rapprochement between the mercantile and the Liberated African community had begun under Administrator Patey, the process was accelerated by the campaign against cession, which “bridged the gap created by racial antipathy” in the 1860s.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, after 1870, the political interests of the two groups were very similar. The merchants opposed the idea of the West African Settlements from the outset and their hostility to rule from Sierra Leone was strengthened during the 1870s. Liberated Africans, who had originally favored centralization, now turned against it because of the role played by the governor-in-chief, Sir Arthur Kennedy, in trying to force through cession. Kennedy was regarded as the villain of the piece, not only because he had been the main advocate of exchange, but also because he had adopted a highly dismissive attitude toward the legitimate objections of the Liberated African community; it may also have been known that he had tried to revive the issue in 1871.<sup>101</sup> Both groups also resented Kennedy’s apparently deliberate attempt “to make things difficult in the Gambia” by withdrawing the small garrison and blocking the purchase of either a gunboat or an armed steamer. Kennedy also exacted an annual subsidy for the cost of a new mail boat service, which was better suited to the needs of Freetown than of Bathurst.<sup>102</sup>

Merchants and Liberated Africans were also critical of the Gambian government, which was headed by a considerable number of administrators and acting administrators between 1869 and 1877.<sup>103</sup> Successive administrators were condemned for wasting money on unnecessary items, such as repairs to Government House, while more important matters, such as the drainage of Bathurst, were neglected. There was also irritation that heavy expenditure was incurred without the sanction of the Legislative Council and large sums of money were then voted retrospectively to pay for it.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, there was a general belief that the civil establishment was over-staffed and could be reduced (and salaries cut) without any corresponding loss of efficiency. Brown and Quin even suggested in August 1869 that, in view of the heavy expenditure on the establishment, it might be desirable to replace the crown colony system of government with a consular system similar to that practiced since 1849 in the Bights of Biafra and Benin; as Dike points out, this system served the interests of British merchants well. Subsequently, Brown and Quin appear to have modified their view; they argued, in September 1870, that the civil establishment should be retained, but at reduced levels. Certain prominent members of the Liberated African community (including Reffles and Finden) endorsed the revised proposal although, unlike Brown and Quin, they stressed the necessity for the retention of a chief magistrate, an indication of continued concern about mercantile "justice."<sup>105</sup>

### **Decline of the British Merchants and the Rise of the Gambia Native Association**

Although the British merchants (particularly Brown) continued to voice their opinions on a range of subjects, they were much less effective in achieving their aims in the 1870s than in the 1860s. By the end of 1873, Brown was the sole remaining resident British merchant; W. H. Goddard had died, and Thomas Quin and Thomas C. Chown had retired to England.<sup>106</sup> Brown remained on the Legislative Council, but his views were often disregarded by the administrators (some of whom clearly regarded him with disdain) and because, unlike in the D'Arcy era, official members now supported government policy, he was invariably outvoted. In addition, he was sometimes absent from the colony for long periods, which also weakened his influence.<sup>107</sup> In May 1874, his political influence in Bathurst was further reduced, when he was forced to resign from the Legislative Council over his role in the Mrs. Anna Evans scandal. Acting on behalf of the latter, Brown had in the previous year accused his old enemy (and fellow council member), Henry Fowler, the First Writer, of administering noxious drugs to Mrs. Evans to procure a miscarriage of a child of whom he was the father; the colonial surgeon, Thomas H. Spilsbury, was accused of supplying the drugs for the purpose. Both actions were criminal offences at the time. However, after an investigation, the queen's advocate, D. P. Chalmers, concluded that it was doubtful that a conviction could be secured in either case and the matter was dropped.

Despite the secretary of state's evident disapproval of his general conduct, Fowler was promoted to the post of receiver general in Bermuda, whereas Brown

lost his seat on the council. Thereafter, although he remained in Bathurst until his death from bronchitis at the age of seventy in December 1881, he did not serve on the council again except for a brief period in 1879 when he was acting chief magistrate.<sup>108</sup> He was succeeded in 1875 by Henry Helm, a naturalized Prussian who acted as agent for the Chowns and later for the French firm, C. A. Verminck, but Helm was no more successful.<sup>109</sup>

The decline of the British merchants did have one important side effect; it smoothed the way for the Liberated African community to assume a more important role in local politics. This opportunity was seized by the GNAssocn, the organization established to oppose cession in 1875–76. In 1877, the colony acquired a new substantive administrator, Dr. Valesius S. Gouldsbury, when the nominal holder of the post, Dr. Samuel (later Sir Samuel) Rowe, was finally promoted to the post of governor of Sierra Leone.<sup>110</sup> Gouldsbury, like Patey a decade before, came into office determined to reduce expenditure, which had risen from £16,662 in 1871 to £21,489 in 1876.<sup>111</sup> This resulted in a large budget deficit.

Gouldsbury (like Patey before him) soon found that his attempts to raise revenue and cut expenditure made him unpopular, both with the European merchants and the wider Liberated African community. He alienated the merchants by tightening up the laws and regulations of trade, which he claimed were being abused, and by raising the customs tariff on certain commodities in 1878. This was despite the vehement objections of James Topp (who had succeeded Helm as the unofficial member of the Legislative Council in April 1876) and other merchants (including Brown).<sup>112</sup> He angered the Liberated Africans by his cost-cutting measures. Public works were curtailed, the streets of Bathurst were not cleaned and the drains were not repaired, and no satisfactory steps were taken to prevent the encroachment of the sea. In the poor sanitary conditions that prevailed, it was not surprising that there was an outbreak of fever in October 1878 that resulted in the deaths of several Europeans and Africans. Liberated Africans blamed the colonial engineer, J. C. Bauer, for his “culpable neglect” and “great ignorance” in permitting such a state of affairs and even sent a petition to the Colonial Office, which called for a board of inquiry into the Engineering Department. Gouldsbury was also widely criticized for defending Bauer, who was said to be his right hand man.<sup>113</sup>

Gouldsbury’s other policies were no more popular. These included the passing of an ordinance to abolish the right to a trial by jury when traders were accused by their employers (the merchants) of fraud; this meant that cases were to be tried before the chief magistrate and two assessors, because the merchants considered that no jury in Bathurst would convict.<sup>114</sup> Gouldsbury’s unpopularity was demonstrated by articles both in the *African Times* and the *Bathurst Observer and West Africa Gazette*; the latter had been established as Bathurst’s first substantive newspaper in 1883 by W. C. Walcott (the alleged author of the Finden anti-cession petition of April 1870).<sup>115</sup>

Liberated African opposition in Bathurst to Gouldsbury was led by the GNAssocn. Four of its leading members signed the anti-Bauer petition of 1878.<sup>116</sup> The GNAssocn itself presented an anti-government memorial to the governor-in-chief, Samuel Rowe, during one of Rowe’s rare visits to Bathurst in 1879 and sent

other memorials to the secretary of state for the colonies (for example, to protest against the abolition of trial by jury). The association was by now headed by Jeremiah D. Jones, a shopkeeper and trader originally from Sierra Leone. Jones was a controversial figure in Bathurst, having incurred the wrath of the European merchants by running up large debts with them, failing to pay his bills, and then escaping justice (as they saw it) in the courts; he was also said to use dubious tactics to ensure support for his anti-government petitions.<sup>117</sup> However, the GNAssocn did not possess a monopoly on public opinion; at least two leading African traders, S. J. Forster and J. D. Cole (as well as the major European merchants), apparently refused to sign the petition against Bauer in 1878.<sup>118</sup> These internal differences within the Liberated African community were to reemerge in the 1880s over the appointment of a second unofficial member of the Legislative Council.

### **Legislative Council Representation**

As early as May 1873, the secretary of state for the colonies, the Earl of Kimberley, informed a deputation from the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (which included other interested parties such as Thomas Quin and T. C. Chown) that he would be pleased to see greater mercantile representation on the various West African Legislative Councils. Nothing concrete had resulted in Gambia, primarily because the official view was that there were very few eligible candidates, a decision that may not have displeased Liberated African opinion.<sup>119</sup>

In 1878, William McArthur, the MP for Lambeth (and a member of the Gambia Committee in 1876), persuaded the secretary of state to direct that a second unofficial be appointed. A naturalized Swedish merchant, Peter A. Bowman, was duly selected on Gouldsbury's recommendation, but for unknown reasons did not take his seat. Because the administrator was unable (or unwilling) to find an alternative candidate, James Topp remained the sole unofficial councillor.<sup>120</sup> There the matter rested until July 1882, when Gouldsbury received a deputation of Bathurst merchants. The merchants criticized several aspects of the governor's policy and also called for the appointment of more unofficial members of the council, one of whom should be an African. Gouldsbury was willing to comply with this request, not apparently through any desire to promote Liberated Africans per se, but rather to find "a foil" to Topp, who frequently attacked government actions and policy (including Gouldsbury's own pioneering expedition to explore the River Gambia to its source in 1881).<sup>121</sup>

In November 1882, Gouldsbury recommended to the secretary of state that the former secretary of the GNAssocn, J. D. Richards, be appointed to the council. This suggestion was accepted and, after a delay for technical reasons, Richards took his seat in March 1883. The selection was perhaps surprising, given that Richards previously joined the attacks on Gouldsbury's protégé, Bauer. More recently, however, Richards had apparently avoided taking sides too overtly over the abolition of the jury trial in fraud cases.<sup>122</sup> The appointment met with a mixed reaction in Bathurst. On the one hand, the GNAssocn, which had previously been critical of Gouldsbury,

complimented him on the choice of Richards, whom it claimed enjoyed “the confidence and esteem of the community.” On the other hand, W. C. Walcott, editor of the *Bathurst Observer*, condemned the choice. He claimed that Gouldsbury persuaded Richards to stand surety for Bauer when the latter was appointed acting collector and treasurer in 1882, following the death of the colonial secretary, W. H. Berkeley; his reward was his appointment to the council. Walcott also named a number of candidates (including S. J. Forster and Harry Finden) whom he considered more deserving of the appointment because they were wealthier than Richards.<sup>123</sup>

If Gouldsbury hoped that Richards would prove a more compliant member of the Legislative Council than Topp, he was soon disillusioned. In practice, the two unofficial members disagreed over only one major issue, taxation. Richards, as the chief importer of kola nuts into Bathurst, consistently opposed any rise in customs duties on that commodity, whereas Topp equally determinedly resisted any increase in the duty on spirits (which he mainly imported).<sup>124</sup> Generally speaking, however, the two men acted in concert and neither hesitated to attack the government. Both criticized excessive expenditure on certain items in the estimates of 1883 and 1884; condemned the Tariff Ordinance of 1883; and objected to its repeal in 1886. In addition, Richards opposed the removal of restrictions on foreign ships trading in the River Gambia in 1885, which so irritated Gouldsbury’s successor, Captain C. A. Moloney, that he accused him of putting the sectional interests of the small African ship owners before those of the wider community.<sup>125</sup>

By 1886, therefore, the Gambian government was so concerned with the opposition of Topp and Richards that it was looking to ways to strengthen its position on the council. The response of the new administrator, Captain J. S. Hay, was to make two further appointments, one official and one unofficial, S. J. Forster. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Forster’s elevation was to mark the beginning of a political dynasty, since there was to be a Forster on the Legislative Council for the next fifty-four years.

## Summary

The key political groups in Gambia in the nineteenth century were the Gambian government, the British merchants, and the Liberated African community. Until the 1860s, the merchants, who were the main providers of the colony’s revenue and highly influential on the Legislative Council, were generally the dominant force in local politics; and were able to ensure that most decisions made by the government met with their approval. In contrast, the Liberated African community remained weak and politically ineffective until the 1870s, when largely as a result of the successful campaign against cession, it increased its political authority, while the power of the merchants began to decline. In 1883, this development received official recognition when the first Gambian African was appointed to the Legislative Council.



# 4

---

## **PATRICIAN POLITICS IN THE ERA OF THE FORSTERS, 1886–1941**

Gambian politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may be characterized as conforming to a “patrician” model. It was dominated by a handful of educated Aku and Wolof who lived in Bathurst. This political elite was linked in a clientelist relationship with a larger number of Aku and Wolof in the Colony, but the Protectorate was largely excluded from the political process. The elite was by no means homogenous, but was divided into factions which were drawn up on the basis of personal and family connections, social and religious status, political ambition, and ethnic identity.<sup>1</sup> The rivalry between these factions was the essence of politics, particularly after World War I.

The Forster family headed the dominant faction throughout this period. The first Samuel John Forster was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1886 and remained a member of it until his death in 1906. One of his sons, also called Samuel John, filled the vacancy and continued to serve until his death in 1940. The younger Forster was assisted by a network of relatives, friends, and clients, the most important of whom was his nephew, W. Davidson Carrol. Carrol was expected to become his political heir, but his untimely death in 1941 brought the Forster political dynasty to a close. This enabled the main rival faction in Bathurst politics, headed by Edward Francis Small, to secure representation on the Legislative Council for the first time.

### **The Rise of the Forsters: 1886–1900**

Samuel J. Forster was born in Bathurst, probably in the 1830s or 1840s. His father was a freeborn Ibo trader who traveled to Freetown from Nigeria with two of his brothers to make a living and had then moved on to Gambia. A Wesleyan Methodist (either by birth or conversion), S. J. Forster worked as a clerk in the Commissariat Department in Bathurst in the 1860s before resigning to concentrate

on commerce. He specialized in trading in rice and, thanks to family connections in the interior, he prospered; by 1875, he was said to be the owner of a house and land worth some £300, which made him one of the wealthiest men in Bathurst.<sup>2</sup> As indicated in Chapter 3, he was a leading opponent of cession in the mid-1870s, but does not appear to have been involved in the Gambia Native Association (GN Assocn) in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

Given his wealth (by the mid-1880s, he was importing clothing and other goods from Europe) and political moderation, Administrator Gouldsbury might have been expected to appoint him as the first African member of the Legislative Council in 1883, but as noted earlier, he was passed over in favor of J. D. Richards. Gouldsbury's successor, C. A. Moloney, however, appointed Forster as a justice of the peace in 1884, a sign of official favor. Forster had earlier earned the plaudits of the Gambian government, but incurred criticism from a part of the Liberated African community, by signing the petition from the merchants which called for the abolition of jury trial when traders were arrested for debt. A year later, he was appointed a deputy sheriff and in 1886, he was finally added to the Legislative Council by Moloney's successor, J. S. Hay. Administrator Hay described Forster as "highly respected and esteemed by the community, he is very intelligent and thoroughly conversant with native affairs."<sup>3</sup> No doubt he also calculated that Forster would prove more willing than either Richards or James Topp to support government policy on the council.

### **Legislative Council Politics: 1888–1900**

Two years after Forster's appointment, in November 1888, the administrative ties between Gambia and Sierra Leone were severed for the final time. Unlike in 1843, the decision was taken by the Colonial Office, rather than by Parliament. Gambia was coming under increasing threat from French expansion in the 1880s and it was considered that the colony required the presence of an administrator able to take immediate decisions without having to consult the governor-in-chief in Freetown in advance. There was a growing realization that the centralized system caused delays and these were likely to be exacerbated if, as anticipated, the mail service between Bathurst and Freetown became less regular. The Colonial Office was also aware that the linkage with Sierra Leone had been criticized by both the mercantile community in Bathurst and by merchants involved in the West Africa trade in England. Similar protests had helped to bring about the independence of Lagos from the Gold Coast in 1886 and no doubt helped to sway opinion on this occasion also.<sup>4</sup>

One important consequence of Gambian independence was that it provided an opportunity for the Gambian government to reconstitute the Legislative Council. In January 1887, H. H. Lee, the agent of the Manchester merchant, J. F. Hutton (who had taken over the business of the late Thomas Brown), had become the third unofficial member of the council. As noted in Chapter 3, Hutton played an important role in resisting cession in the mid-1870s and subsequently served as

president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and as the member of Parliament for Manchester North. He remained an influential figure in British politics and was able to persuade the secretary of state for the colonies that the English merchant houses needed to be directly represented on the Gambia council. Administrator Hay disagreed (although he had no other objection to Lee), but was overruled by the Colonial Office.<sup>5</sup>

Lee's appointment meant that the council now had five official members and four unofficials. However, in 1888, the death of the collector of customs and the abolition of the post of queen's advocate meant that the official majority was lost. This was considered unsatisfactory by the government and so the new administrator, Gilbert T. Carter, proposed that Lee (who had in the meantime been appointed to an official position) should not be replaced and that Richards should be removed. Carter objected to the latter's attacks on government policy, particularly over the proposed withdrawal of the subsidy to the company running the mail service. Richards, who depended for his commercial success on the maintenance of a regular steamer service with Freetown, helped to organize the opposition in Bathurst to the proposal and had also persuaded the merchants of Liverpool to join the protest. Carter also disapproved of Richards' close links with J. D. Jones (the former leader of the GNAssocn), whom he described as "a dishonest agitator." Above all, he resented the criticisms Richards had made about the standard of conduct of European officials in West Africa. These arguments were accepted by the secretary of state and Richards left the council in December 1888.<sup>6</sup>

Carter had a higher opinion of Forster and Topp, both of whom generally endorsed government policy in recent years (including the mail subsidy). He awarded the former the lucrative contract to supply the government with provisions, and he rewarded the latter by appointing him postmaster in November 1888 (and in March 1890 persuaded the secretary of state to appoint him to the Executive Council as an its "unofficial" member).<sup>7</sup> Because Topp could no longer serve on the Legislative Council in his unofficial capacity, Carter appointed Henry Charles Goddard, the agent of the Bathurst Trading Company, to fill the vacancy in January 1889. Goddard was a member of the small Mulatto community, but seems generally to have been regarded as a European.<sup>8</sup>

R. B. Llewelyn (who became administrator in 1890) shared Carter's faith in Forster and regularly asked him (and/or Goddard) to attend the Executive Council as an "extraordinary" member. Both men were present in February 1894 when the Executive Council discussed the question of groundnut duty and again in December 1894 when it considered the proposed imposition of a yard tax in the Protectorate. Forster was also invited in November 1895 to give his views on a recent disturbance in Bathurst against the Frontier Police.<sup>9</sup> When Forster was made a justice of the peace in 1884, one Bathurst correspondent of the *African Times* had complained that Forster was too willing to support any and every government measure, whatever the public interest.<sup>10</sup> But his actions both in the Legislative Council and outside it showed that this was unfair. His stance was in

fact not dissimilar to that of Sir Samuel Lewis in Sierra Leone, the most famous African legislative councilor of the day. Lewis believed that unofficial members should give the government “frank support” whenever they could honestly do so, but should reserve “the right to criticize government policy whenever they considered it necessary.”<sup>11</sup> Like Lewis, Forster was quick to denounce unnecessary expenditure, particularly on the salaries of officials; in 1894, he even opposed a proposed salary increase for Llewelyn, an action an official deemed tantamount to a vote of censure in the administrator.<sup>12</sup>

Forster was also ready to defend the commercial interests of the merchants to the hilt. For example, in 1894, both unofficials declared their opposition to the proposed establishment of a government wharf in Bathurst; they expressed irritation that the mercantile community had not been consulted in advance of the purchase of the site and argued that the expenditure on it had been exorbitant. Similarly, they objected to the Customs Tariff Ordinance of 1896 and, after Forster had received a petition from the leading African and European merchants against the bill, opposed its reenactment in 1898.<sup>13</sup> Finally, according to Grey-Johnson, Forster used his position as the interim editor of a newly established (but short-lived) Gambian newspaper, *The Gambia Intelligencer*, to criticize the Gambian government, particularly with regard to its actions in the Protectorate.<sup>14</sup>

### **1895 and 1900 Legislative Council “Elections”**

It appears that Forster was an effective spokesman for the merchants. Whether he was also considered an effective representative of Liberated African interests is harder to ascertain.<sup>15</sup> The only clues to his standing in the African community were provided by two indirect elections to the Legislative Council in 1895 and 1900.

In March 1895, the secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Ripon, issued a circular dispatch to the governors of the four West African territories in which he stated that unofficial members should henceforth be appointed for renewable five-year terms. Unofficial members had previously only been appointed for fixed terms in Lagos Colony (since 1886).<sup>16</sup> The Sierra Leone Executive Council decided that the existing African unofficial members, Samuel (soon to be Sir Samuel) Lewis and Theophilus Bishop should be retained.<sup>17</sup>

The response of the Gambian Executive Council was mixed. The nominated “unofficial” member, James Topp, argued that an election should be held to choose the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, but Llewelyn and his officials considered this too radical a solution. Instead, Llewelyn invited the special jurors, magistrates, and “professional men” of the colony confidentially to nominate three candidates for the council; they were given only a day to respond. In total, ninety-one confidential circulars were issued, with sixty-nine being returned. Goddard and Richards each gained forty-nine votes to head the poll; Forster and Edmund Thomas, an Aku merchant originally from Sierra Leone, who had been resident in Bathurst since the early 1870s, each received thirty-four

votes. No one else gained more than eight votes. It is probably reasonable to assume that Goddard's candidature was endorsed by most European (and probably some African) merchants. Moreover, the fact that Richards polled more votes than Forster no doubt indicated that the Liberated African community was somewhat dissatisfied with Forster's performance as a councillor.<sup>18</sup>

The outcome of the consultative exercise was embarrassing for Llewelyn who, like his predecessor, had a low opinion of Richards regarding him as "bumptious" and "conceited" and of being "extremely suspicious even for a native of every act of the Government." In 1892, Llewelyn refused to increase the executive powers of the Board of Health (established in 1887) because he feared that Richards could use these powers to strengthen his authority within the African community.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, he had no desire to have a "troublesome member" on the Legislative Council. Consequently, he ignored the outcome of the "election" and persuaded the secretary of state that Goddard (whom he considered "immeasurably the most intelligent man here") and Forster (whom he termed "agreeable . . . with no extreme views or fads") should be reappointed for further five-year terms, a decision that took effect in November 1895. There seems to have been no public protest against the exclusion of Richards, perhaps because not even the Executive Council was informed that he had received more support than Forster.<sup>20</sup> Soon afterward, in April 1896, Topp (whom Llewelyn no longer trusted) ceased to be the "unofficial" member of the Executive Council; he was not replaced and it appears from the minutes that neither Forster nor Goddard were subsequently invited to attend the Executive Council as "extraordinary" members.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1900, Forster and Goddard's terms of service expired. Acting Administrator H. M. Brandford Griffith decided to follow the precedent set by Llewelyn in 1895 and issued fifty-seven circulars to the leading members of the community, with each person being asked to put forward three nominations. Fifty ballots were returned and Goddard again headed the poll, this time with forty-two votes. Richards gained thirty-three votes, Forster thirty-two, and Thomas sixteen; Zachariah T. Gibson, a solicitor originally from Freetown, received six votes. Nine others received four nominations or fewer. Goddard was duly returned to the council, but despite once again outpolling Forster, Richards was passed over. Griffith described Forster as "much more useful than Mr. Richards would be" (albeit not very active); in contrast, he considered Richards to be "faddy" and "a stumbling block" who was likely to oppose all measures introduced by the government, without being able to suggest any practical alternatives.<sup>22</sup>

It also appears that on this occasion (and perhaps also in 1895), Richards' prospects were harmed by his connections with Freetown. In the 1890s, there was growing prejudice against Creoles in West Africa, particularly in the Gold Coast. In one celebrated case, Dr. J. F. Easmon, the chief medical officer of the Gold Coast, was subjected to sustained criticism by the local African population for being a Sierra Leonean and, indirectly, this led to his dismissal in 1897. Sierra Leoneans were also excluded from the Gold Coast Legislative Council as a matter of policy. Before his appointment as treasurer of Gambia in 1894, Griffith, who

was the son of a former governor of the Gold Coast, Sir William Brandford Griffith, had spent most of his career in the Gold Coast and it is likely that he shared the anti-Creole prejudice of many Gold Coast officials. It is therefore significant that even though he had spent most of his childhood and all his adult life in Bathurst, Richards was described as more or less representing the “Sierra Leonean portion of the community in Bathurst” by Griffith because of his commercial and family connections with Freetown. In contrast, despite being of Ibo descent, Forster was considered to represent the “Gambian portion” of the local community.<sup>23</sup> Whether either man would have approved of their categorization is not known, although it should be noted that Forster had signed the 1871 petition that criticized the influx of Sierra Leoneans into Bathurst, but Richards had apparently refused to do so.<sup>24</sup>

### **Unchallenged Forster Dominance: 1900–20**

Despite increasing infirmity, Forster was reappointed to the council by Governor Sir George Denton in November 1905. The local community was not consulted in advance, nor was it to be again over subsequent appointments until the 1920s. Forster did not complete his term; in June 1906, he left Bathurst for the Canary Islands to try to recover his health, but died at Las Palmas that October. On Forster’s departure from Gambia, Denton invited Samuel Horton Jones, an Anglican merchant originally from Sierra Leone who had lived in Bathurst since 1874, to represent African commercial interests (an indication that Denton did not share the anti-Creole prejudice of Griffith). Forster’s old rival, J. D. Richards, was not considered for the position, having retired from business in 1900; he remained a leading member of the Aku community until his death in November 1917.<sup>25</sup> A month after Jones’ selection, Denton appointed Forster’s second son (also Samuel John) on a provisional basis. This appointment, which was formally confirmed in March 1907, marked the beginning of the longest unbroken spell of an African on any colonial Legislative Council; the second Forster served for thirty-three years, until his death in July 1940.<sup>26</sup>

### **Legislative Council Politics: 1900–20**

Samuel Forster, the younger, was born in June 1873. He was educated at the Wesleyan Boys’ High School (WBHS) in Bathurst and the C. M. S. Grammar School in Freetown, before traveling to Rhyl in North Wales in 1889 to attend Epworth College. It was at this time highly unusual for Gambians (unlike Sierra Leoneans) to be educated in Britain and this clearly demonstrated the wealth of the Forster family. He then attended the Liverpool Institute before going up to Merton College, Oxford, in 1893, to read law. He graduated in 1896 and two years later became the first Gambian (excluding the Bathurst-born resident of Lagos, J. E. Shyngle) to qualify as a barrister at the Inner Temple. He returned to

Bathurst in 1899 to practice both as a barrister and a solicitor, and in March 1901, his talents (and family background) were recognized by his appointment as acting colonial registrar and public prosecutor. Governor Denton was very satisfied by his performance although, because Forster was an African native of Bathurst and “much mixed up in the internal politics of the place,” he would not recommend his substantive appointment as colonial registrar. Nevertheless, in the circumstances, it was no surprise when Denton appointed him to the Legislative Council for a five-year term in succession to his father.<sup>27</sup>

During his first term of service, Forster adopted a low-key approach, although (like his father before him) he was sometimes critical of government expenditure plans.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps inevitably he was reappointed to the council in March 1912 by Governor Sir Henry Galway, who had only been in Bathurst a few months and claimed to be in no position to make any other recommendation. Besides, Galway had been informed that Forster was “the leading member of the native community of Bathurst” and that no one else could take his place.<sup>29</sup> Soon after his reappointment, Forster demonstrated his independence of government by attacking certain clauses of the Rates and Public Health Ordinances. The Rates Ordinance (which amended an earlier ordinance of 1891) imposed a 5 percent rate on every lot valued at £5 or over; Forster called for the retention of the previous 3 percent rate and the continuation of the system whereby lots valued at less than £5 were excluded. He was supported by the two European unofficial members of the council, but the official majority was invoked to ensure the bill’s safe passage at the cost of only a minor concession. The official majority was also used to defeat opposition led by Forster to the Public Health Ordinance.<sup>30</sup>

Forster’s willingness to support popular grievances (albeit unsuccessfully) was doubtless appreciated by Bathurst’s African population and his prestige was further strengthened when he founded the Reform Club for “upper-level elite” (patrician) Aku in 1911. Forster became the first president of the club, a position he was to hold for virtually the rest of his life. It is probable that the Committee of Gentlemen, an informal organization established around this time (and certainly by 1917) over which Forster also presided, was made up of Reform Club members.<sup>31</sup>

S. H. Jones was reappointed to the Legislative Council in 1911, but was not active in the opposition to the two ordinances. This may have been because his health was poor and at the end of his second term in May 1916, he left the council. He was succeeded in the following November by another Sierra Leonean, Dr. Thomas Bishop, who had been in medical practice in Bathurst since 1904 and had been active in public affairs.<sup>32</sup> Even though the secretary of state had previously stated that an unofficial member should serve three terms only in cases of necessity, Forster was reappointed by Galway’s successor, Sir Edward Cameron, in March 1917.<sup>33</sup> His predominance seemed assured for the foreseeable future, but by 1920 his position was under threat from a new quarter. The challenge was posed by E. F. Small, who was to become not only Forster’s most dogged opponent, but also Gambia’s most famous proto-nationalist. His background is now considered.

## **E. F. Small and the Congress Movement: 1920–28**

### **Small's Entrance into Politics**

Edward Francis Small was born in Bathurst, probably in January 1890.<sup>34</sup> His father, John W. Small, was an Aku tailor, who had perhaps inherited the family business from his father (a Sierra Leonean) in the 1870s. J. W. Small built up a successful enterprise; by the mid-1880s, he was doing sufficiently well to advertise as a “general tailor and outfitter” in the *Bathurst Observer* and by the early 1900s, he was considered one of the leading artisans of Bathurst. He was also by now a prominent lay member of the Methodist Church in Bathurst.<sup>35</sup> However, E. F. Small's mother was not Ellen Small (J. W. Small's wife), but Annie Eliza Thomas, a Jola, who apparently worked as a “basket woman” (petty trader) in the town. Thus, he was illegitimate.<sup>36</sup>

After initial education at the Wesleyan Day School in Bathurst, E. F. Small, who was thought to be of above-average intelligence, received a government scholarship, thus enabling him to attend the WBHS in Freetown for two years. But unlike the younger Forster, for example, he was unable to go on to higher education and instead started work in Freetown in 1910. Possibly because his father had died, he returned to Bathurst in January 1912 to work as a cost clerk in the Public Works Department (PWD). But that October, he resigned from government service after an application for promotion was refused. He then worked until 1915 for the French firm, Maurel et Prom, before resigning and accepting a substantial cut in salary to become a teacher at the WBHS in Bathurst.<sup>37</sup> It was around this time that he decided to enter the church. It is clear that his talents were already widely recognized, for the leading lay members of the Wesleyan Church (including Forster) offered in January 1916 to raise the money to enable him to train for holy orders.<sup>38</sup> The Rev. P. S. Toye, the European chairman of the Wesleyan mission, was also impressed by Small's abilities and agreed that he should be appointed as a mission agent on a probationary basis. He was therefore sent to a Methodist mission station at Ballanghar in MacCarthy Island Province.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately for Small, early in 1918, he became involved in an acrimonious dispute with James Walker, a European trader based in the town. The incident was initially a trivial one. Small ordered the bell of the mission chapel at Ballanghar to be tolled to herald the Watchnight service on New Year's Eve; this disturbed Walker's sleep and the two men eventually came to blows. However, it became more serious when Small subsequently denounced the province's (European) commissioner, J. L. McCallum, who sided with Walker. McCallum thereupon insisted on Small's removal from the town and when his stance was upheld by both the administration in Bathurst and the Wesleyan authorities, Small was withdrawn from Ballanghar and sent to another mission station at Sukuta in the Kombo. All might have been well if Small had apologized but, resentful of the treatment he had received, he attacked the clerical authorities and was eventually dismissed



from mission employment. This ended his hopes of a career in the church, and his overt criticism of government officials meant that he could not expect to regain a position in the civil service. Small's conduct was also condemned by the leading African lay and clerical members of the Methodist Church, including Forster, a fact that Small may never have forgiven.<sup>40</sup>

Small then found employment at Kaur, a trading depot on the River Gambia, as a trader for one of his previous employers, Maurel et Prom. But he was discontented and in early 1919, founded the Gambia Native Defensive Union (GNDU) at Kaur to expose "blatant flaws in the administration of the Central Government."<sup>41</sup> Small became its secretary; among its other known members were Benjamin J. George, a former clerk in the Treasury Department, who probably now worked as a commission agent; Cyril J. D. Richards, the son of the former legislative councilor, J. D. Richards; and Samuel S. Davis, who was employed as a trader by the Bathurst Trading Company. It is probable that other members of the GNDU included the ill-fated Ebenezer MacCarthy (another trader at Kaur) and Henry M. Jones, the son of the former councilor, Samuel Horton Jones, who was now running the family business on his father's behalf. The GNDU members were thus mainly educated Aku from Bathurst who were involved in commerce; most were probably in their late twenties or early thirties. Moreover, Small was not the only one nursing a grievance; George, for example, had recently been dismissed from government service for refusing to work in the Protectorate. Indeed, it may have been his sacking that provided the catalyst for the establishment of the GNDU.<sup>42</sup>

This connection between an individual's alleged mistreatment by the colonial authorities and subsequent political radicalism was far from uncommon in West Africa. For example, the "father of Nigerian nationalism," Herbert Macaulay, resigned from government service in Lagos in 1892 over what he considered to be racial injustice, and Thomas Hutton-Mills, the first president of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), was dismissed as a government clerk in the Gold Coast in 1886. Another early leader of the NCBWA, the Nigerian doctor and journalist, Dr. R. A. Savage, was radicalized by the loss of his position as medical officer to the Cape Coast Castle when the post came under the control of the Gold Coast government in 1913.<sup>43</sup>

### **Establishment of Gambia Section**

The GNDU would, in all probability, have remained in obscurity had it not been for developments elsewhere in British West Africa. In 1914, Savage and the prominent Gold Coast lawyer and journalist, J. E. Casely-Hayford, invited some of the leading figures in Accra, Freetown, and Lagos to consider the desirability of holding a conference of educated West Africans. No contact seems to have been made either with Forster or with anyone else in Bathurst.<sup>44</sup> The scheme was put on ice at the outbreak of World War I, but was revived in 1917 and by the end of 1918, preparations had reached an advanced stage, particularly in Freetown and

Accra. Because the conference organizers deemed it essential that all four colonies be represented, Casely-Hayford and Professor Orishatukeh Faduma, a leading member of the Sierra Leone conference committee, asked Isaac J. Roberts, an Aku solicitor in Bathurst, in late 1918 to drum up support. Roberts did little about it, but when Small heard about the proposed conference, he converted the GNDU into its Gambia committee in October 1919. He also launched an appeal so that a Gambian delegation could be sent. More than £100 was raised, which was sufficient to enable one Gambian to attend. Forster provided the largest contribution of ten guineas and Small, as secretary of the conference committee, was the obvious delegate. He therefore resigned from his job and traveled to Accra where the conference took place in March 1920.<sup>45</sup>

The most important of the eighty-three resolutions adopted at Accra called for the concession of the franchise. It was resolved that half the seats on Legislative Councils should be reserved for Africans. Moreover, these should be directly elected by the people and no longer nominated by colonial governors. The conference also resolved itself into a permanent NCBWA to be composed of the committees that had already been established in the four colonies. Consequently, on his return to Bathurst in May 1920, Small converted the conference committee into the Congress' Gambia Section.<sup>46</sup> Most members of the branch were Aku and Christians, although a handful were Wolof and/or Muslims. They were mainly drawn from the "lower-level" elite, being employed as clerks, artisans, or traders by mercantile firms. A few civil servants attended meetings, but were probably put under pressure not to do so and stronger sanctions may have been taken against active members.<sup>47</sup> As far as can be ascertained, the branch's entire membership was drawn from Bathurst and, like the other Congress committees, had only tenuous links with the Protectorate. Indeed, just as a section of the Gold Coast chiefs led by Nana Ofori Atta I supported the rival Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS) in opposition to the Congress, so Gambian Protectorate chiefs apparently repudiated any connection with the Bathurst branch in January 1921.<sup>48</sup>

At first the Gambia Section was directed by two separate bodies, a "Working Committee," which was dominated by Small (the overall branch secretary) and other former GNDU activists, such as George and Cyril Richards, and a "General Committee," which Forster chaired. The General Committee almost certainly included other members of the patrician elite, such as the former unofficial member of the Legislative Council, Thomas Bishop, M. J. R. Pratt (a barrister from Sierra Leone) and the Aku merchant, Edmund Thomas (one of the unsuccessful candidates in the 1895 and 1900 Legislative Council "elections"). The two committees were soon at odds over both the tactics and the policies which the branch adopted. The inevitable conflict between the two factions was precipitated when Small called a "mass" (public) meeting in the town to endorse the resolutions of the Accra Conference without consulting Forster. This alarmed the latter who feared a more "populist" approach to politics might threaten the control he had hitherto exercised over community affairs. Forster was also concerned about the implications of the main Accra resolution, the demand for the franchise; he seems

to have feared that in any election in Bathurst, the minority Christian community would be swamped by the majority Muslim population.<sup>49</sup>

Because it appeared that he could not control the Congress from within, Forster decided to resign from the branch and attack it from without. He remained a staunch opponent of the Congress thereafter. Bishop also resigned and so, in all probability, did Pratt and many other patricians.<sup>50</sup> This lowered the Congress' prestige and removed many of its wealthiest supporters; moreover, it meant that the Gambian government, which had initially recognized that the Congress contained most of the leading figures of Bathurst society, quickly turned against it. The Gambian branch was not alone in being opposed by an influential conservative elite. The Lagos Committee was opposed by the Reform Club, whose members (led by a barrister, Sir Kitoyi Ajasa) were "drawn from the well-to-do and intellectual middle-class crust of Lagos." The Gold Coast patrician elite tended to support the Congress, although not exclusively so; a section of it favored the ARPS. In contrast, with few exceptions, the Sierra Leonean elite strongly supported the Congress and these exceptions stayed aloof, rather than actively opposing it.<sup>51</sup>

In the longer term, the defection of Forster and his colleagues proved very damaging to the Congress, but its immediate effect was to strengthen the hand of Small and his more radical colleagues. Consequently, in July 1920, Small and Henry Jones were selected at a meeting of the branch's Executive Committee (which replaced the earlier General and Working Committees) to represent Gambia as part of a Congress delegation to London. This choice was then apparently "unanimously agreed" at a mass meeting and the two delegates traveled to London in August.<sup>52</sup> Small did not return to Bathurst until early 1922, but in the meantime the branch was apparently controlled by his associates.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, despite the loss of the patrician elite, the branch's finances remained healthy and it was claimed in July 1920 that it had cash funds of £580. One-third of this sum was provided by the solicitor, I. J. Roberts (who remained loyal to the Congress despite his high social status); another third was raised from the Muslim community of Bathurst; the Christian community provided only £80.<sup>54</sup>

Given the dominance of the branch's leadership by Christians, the extent of the support of the Muslim community at this time may seem surprising. In fact, as constituted in June 1920, the branch did include a few prominent Muslim members, among them three traders, Ousman N'Jie, the son of Gormack N'Jie, a former Almami (Imam) of Bathurst; Saloum N'Jai; and Ousman Jeng. Omar B. Jallow, the secretary of the Almami's Advisory Committee in the early 1920s, and Omar Sowe (a future Almami) were probably also supporters.<sup>55</sup> The Congress also attracted the tacit support of the Muslim spiritual hierarchy, headed by the aged Almami of Bathurst, Momadu N'Jai, who personally contributed £10 toward the cost of sending Small and Jones to England in 1920. Although the Almami was apparently regretting his generosity by 1921, he nevertheless sent three of his leading advisers to attend a Congress meeting in June 1921 as his official representatives.<sup>56</sup>

The most important of these early Muslim supporters for the Congress was Ousman Jeng, who was to become the first prominent Muslim politician in Gambia. Jeng was born in Bathurst in 1881. He was a Wolof and probably also a Tijani (a member of one of the three main Muslim Sufi brotherhoods in West Africa). It is likely that he was among the minority of Muslims who were educated in the mission schools in Bathurst in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; he was said to be able to speak and write English fluently. By 1920, he was working as a trader for S. H. Jones at Salikene in the Baddibu district of the North Bank.<sup>57</sup> Although initially not on the Executive Committee of the Gambia Section, he apparently served as branch treasurer for a short period between 1920 and 1922.<sup>58</sup>

### **1922 Legislative Council “Election”**

Despite the defection of Forster, the position of the Gambia Section appeared promising at the beginning of 1921. By the end of 1922, matters were very different. First, Governor Captain C. H. (later Sir Cecil) Armitage reappointed S. J. Forster to the council for a fourth term in March 1922, even though his predecessor, Sir Edward Cameron, who was apparently angered by Forster's failure to attend the official Peace Celebrations to mark the end of World War I, had given him to understand that he could not expect further nomination. But Armitage considered him the only articulate and useful unofficial member of the council. He also described him as the “most enlightened native member of the community,” presumably because of his steadfast opposition to the Congress, and was therefore unwilling to lose his services.<sup>59</sup>

Second, and perhaps more importantly, Bathurst's Muslims in large part turned against the Congress following the appointment of Ousman Jeng as the first Muslim member of the Legislative Council in March 1922. The catalyst for this important moment in Gambian politics was the appointment of Armitage as governor in December 1920. Armitage had been chief commissioner of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast where he was known as a strong advocate of chiefly institutions.<sup>60</sup> He was determined to bolster chieftaincy in Gambia and decided that when Bishop's term on the Legislative Council expired in November 1921, he should be replaced by a Muslim Chief. However, unlike in the Gold Coast, where chiefs had been represented on the Legislative Council since 1916, or Nigeria, where they served on the Nigerian Council, there was no Gambian chief with sufficient education to be able to participate effectively.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, Armitage decided to appoint a member of Bathurst's Muslim community, but to consult with the chiefs prior to making his choice; this would therefore comprise a rare example of the Protectorate participating in the political process.

By November 1921, the governor's plans had become public knowledge and two rival candidates had emerged. One was Jeng, whose cause was championed by Momadu N'Jai, the current Almami of Bathurst; a “Committee of Bathurst Muslims” led by Yerim N'Dure, the president of the Almami's Advisory

Committee; and the future Almami, Omar Sowe (Jeng's father-in-law), who was also a member of this Advisory Committee.<sup>62</sup> The other candidate was Sheikh Omar Fye, who played a key role in Gambian politics until the late 1940s. Fye was born in Bathurst in 1889 and was therefore younger than his rival. He was a Wolof and a Tijani; like Jeng, he was able to speak and write English as well as Arabic, having presumably been educated at a mission school. He was also engaged in trade, being employed as a dealer (possibly by the Bathurst Trading Company) at Njawara in the Baddibu area of the Protectorate.<sup>63</sup> His supporters in the contest included two other members of the Advisory Committee, Cherno Jagne and Ebriema Bobb, as well as two prominent artisans in government employment, Harley N'Jie, the head carpenter in the PWD, and N'Jagga Cham, the head blacksmith in the PWD.<sup>64</sup>

Fye based his claim to a seat on the Council on the fact that his father, Ebriema (a shopkeeper), was a leading member of the Muslim community in Bathurst. Ebriema Fye had been invited (along with Almami Momadu N'Jai) to attend the Legislative Council as an "extraordinary" member in July 1905 to discuss the Mohammedan Law Ordinance. He had also been appointed one of the trustees of the Mohammedan School established in 1903, a position he retained until his death in 1925.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately for Fye, this advantage was more than outweighed by the fact that, as Jeng's supporters pointed out, the Fyes were griots, a low status social caste within traditional African society.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, when Armitage toured the Protectorate in February 1922 to ascertain the views of the chiefs, the latter either openly declared for Jeng or stated that they would be content to leave the choice to the governor; none apparently supported Fye's candidacy. Armitage (who was presumably aware that Samuel Forster strongly supported Jeng) then convened a meeting of Bathurst's Muslims in March and asked any objectors to Jeng's appointment to state their reasons; when there was no response, he announced that he would select Jeng, a decision that he claimed "was received with the greatest enthusiasm."<sup>67</sup>

Immediately after his appointment to the council was confirmed, Jeng convened another public meeting of Bathurst's Muslims at which, he claimed, it was unanimously agreed that the community would have no further dealings with the Gambia Section. Although this was an exaggeration, a number of other former Congress supporters, including Omar Sowe, Omar Jallow, and Ousman N'Jie, also turned against the branch around this time.<sup>68</sup> Jeng's tactics were shrewd, not only because they enabled him to capitalize on growing Muslim disillusion with the Congress, but because they also improved his standing with the Gambian government. Armitage made his opposition to the Congress, in general, and its local branch, in particular, abundantly clear on his arrival in Gambia. In his inaugural address to the Legislative Council in January 1921, he denounced the "monstrous institution" of the Congress and ridiculed the "absurd and pretentious" claims of its "self-appointed" leadership to represent public opinion.<sup>69</sup> Within a few months, Armitage's hostility to the Congress increased considerably. He disapproved of the personal conduct of various Congress leaders, including Henry Jones, the second

Gambian delegate to London, and strongly resented any criticism that they made of his policies.<sup>70</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, he welcomed Jeng's defection from the local branch. Meanwhile, after his defeat in the 1922 "election," the disappointed Sheikh Omar Fye, who had hitherto stayed aloof, temporarily threw in his lot with the Congress and even attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the new Almami, Wakka Bah (who succeeded Momadu N'Jai in August 1922) to give it his support.<sup>71</sup>

### **Decline of Gambia Section: 1922–28**

The appointment of Jeng, the reappointment of Forster, and the refusal of the new Almami to endorse the Congress were all setbacks for the movement. Given the hostility of the Christian patrician elite and the reduced support from the Muslim Wolof community, the government's jibe that the Congress represented only the unrepresentative "Sierra Leonean" element of Bathurst society had some justification.<sup>72</sup> The current weakness of the branch may have been one reason why E. F. Small (who returned from England in early 1922) resigned as its secretary and left Gambia later that year to live in Rufisque, where he remained for up to a year. Situated about twelve miles east of Dakar, Rufisque was one of the Quatre Communes, which enjoyed significant constitutional privileges, particularly the right, with the three other communes, to elect a deputy to the French Chamber of Deputies.<sup>73</sup> It was during this period that Small produced the first edition of *The Gambia Outlook and Senegambian Reporter*, the first Gambian newspaper to be produced for twenty-six years, which was published in Dakar in May 1922.<sup>74</sup> Much to the irritation of Governor Armitage, he continued to take a keen interest in Gambian affairs and to criticize government policies. His activities also caused the British consul-general in Dakar "a great deal of bother."<sup>75</sup>

It is likely that while resident in Rufisque, Small made contact with a group of Sierra Leone Creoles (or other West Africans of Creole descent) who established a branch of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the town in 1922; the leader of the group, Wilfred A. Wilson, and three others were deported from Senegal in July 1922, but other members of the small branch remained.<sup>76</sup> Small may have stayed in contact with at least one member of the UNIA group in Rufisque, whom he met again in 1930.<sup>77</sup> But he was never an active supporter of the movement. There is no evidence that he ever made direct contact with Garvey, or openly espoused his radical political program. His response to Garveyism may have been similar to that of a number of Congress leaders elsewhere in West Africa, who were reluctant to yield control of African political advancement to non-West African Negroes. Indeed, it may well have been because of Small's failure to associate himself with it that no UNIA branch was ever established in Bathurst.<sup>78</sup>

By July 1923, Small moved on again, this time to London.<sup>79</sup> Relatively little is known of his activities over the next few years. He did try (albeit with little success) to relaunch his newspaper and he also made a vain attempt to interest both

Governor Armitage and former Governor Galway in a scheme to build a railway in the colony. He also ran up debts. Indeed, it may have been because he was short of money (and/or to escape his creditors) that he returned to Bathurst in late 1926.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, in his absence, the leadership of the Congress branch had passed first to B. J. George and then to another Aku Methodist, John A. Mahoney. The son of the late J. E. Mahoney, a leading Gambian merchant before World War I, J. A. Mahoney was a former government clerk who had risen to the post of chief clerk of the French firm, Maurel et Prom. Moreover, his wife, Hannah, was one of Small's half sisters and Governor Armitage believed that the latter in fact continued to direct the affairs of the branch from England.<sup>81</sup>

Since its foundation in 1920, the principal aim of the Congress had been to secure the franchise and there was a breakthrough in 1922 when the elective principle was formally conceded (on a limited basis) in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and a few years later in the Gold Coast.<sup>82</sup> These reforms spurred the Gambian branch into action and in July 1923, a petition calling for direct elections to the Legislative Council was presented to Governor Armitage. Given his past opposition to the Congress, it was not surprising that Armitage rejected the petition out of hand. He did so on the grounds that the Congress was quite unrepresentative even of the people of the Colony (let alone of the Protectorate) and that, in any case, sufficient representation was provided by Forster, Jeng, and the Chamber of Commerce member, William Yare. In an echo of the anti-Creole attitudes shown by Acting Governor Griffith in 1900, Armitage also considered it "absurd" that some of the petitioners had either been born in Sierra Leone, or in Bathurst of Sierra Leonean parentage.

The Congress leaders disputed the validity of these arguments; they argued, with some justification, that the selection of Jeng "did not carry the essentials of fair electioneering" and suggested that it was unfair to allow Muslims to elect their own representative, while the "indisputably more competent" Christian community had to be content with nomination. They also pointed out that Forster was of Ibo descent and Bishop was a Sierra Leonean. But their complaints were simply ignored by the government.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, in May 1924, Mahoney drew up a fresh petition, which this time was sent directly to J. H. Thomas, the secretary of state for the colonies in the first Labour government. Thomas was not unsympathetic, but was reluctant to go against the strongly expressed views of Armitage, even though these were at odds with the opinions of Governors Clifford (Nigeria), Slater (Sierra Leone), and Guggisberg (Gold Coast), all of whom were prepared to accept the franchise. In any case, Thomas allowed himself to be persuaded by his officials that the Colony and Protectorate could not easily be separated in any constitutional arrangement. Because there were very few (if any) chiefs who possessed the standard of education to be able to sit on the council, he stated that he would make no further concessions to Bathurst aspirations.<sup>84</sup>

The rejection of its petition was a major setback for the Gambian branch. It was due to host the Third Session of the NCBWA in May 1925, but following the rejection of the petition, it became so ineffective that the session had to be postponed

until the following December.<sup>85</sup> In the meantime, the branch attempted to revive its popularity by pursuing a number of local grievances. In 1924, it tried to persuade Governor Armitage to reduce the rates in the poorer areas in the town, which suffered from flooding. Unlike in 1912–13, its appeal was not supported by Forster (a sign, perhaps, of his growing conservatism) and Governor Armitage was less sympathetic than Galway had been a decade before.<sup>86</sup> It also petitioned the secretary of state to restore the jury system in criminal cases in 1924 and campaigned against the unpopular Licensing Bill in 1924–25. This issue was of concern to Wolof as well as to Aku and even Omar Sowe (who had succeeded Wakka Bah as Almami in 1923) was prepared to sign the petition. But once again the branch's efforts were in vain.<sup>87</sup>

Despite these earlier setbacks, the Congress Session of 1925–26 proved to be a success. The most important development (at least in the view of the Gambian hosts) occurred when Governor Armitage informed a Congress deputation led by J. E. Casely-Hayford that when Forster's term of office on the Legislative Council expired in March 1927, he would recommend to the Colonial Office that "the African member of the Legislative Council" be elected rather than nominated as hitherto. The Gambia would therefore gain the franchise.<sup>88</sup>

In view of his previous hostility to the Gambia Section, Armitage's decision appears surprising. By 1926, however, he had come to believe that the local Congress branch, which was now under the leadership of the elderly solicitor, I. J. Roberts (who, as noted, was originally asked to promote the Congress in Bathurst in 1918), was a far more moderate organization than hitherto. Moreover, Armitage insisted that candidates must meet strict qualifications with only those who were "native of the Gambia" being eligible. It is not certain what Armitage meant by this; if the only qualification for candidates was to have been born in Gambia, then most leading members of the Gambia Section would have been eligible to stand. If, however, Armitage envisaged the exclusion of all those with close family links with Sierra Leone, then many local Congress leaders (including Small and Henry Jones) would have been barred. In any case, as an additional safeguard, Armitage resolved that Forster should not lose his seat, but rather should be retained on the council for life; the elected member would be an additional member, thereby increasing the number of unofficial representatives to four (the same number as in 1912). This would still leave an official majority of one.<sup>89</sup>

Unfortunately for the Congress, the Colonial Office rejected Armitage's recommendation. In part, this was because of developments elsewhere in West Africa, which had made Colonial Office officials reluctant to introduce further constitutional reforms in the region. Earlier in 1926, a major railway strike in Freetown had been strongly supported by the Freetown elite, including the elected African members of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council, H. C. Bankole-Bright and E. S. Beoku-Betts. This so incensed the Sierra Leonean government that some had called for the suspension of the 1924 constitution.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, there was no desire to create further problems by drawing up a constitution for Gambia.



Meanwhile, in February 1926, a new political organization, the Gambia Representative Committee (GRC), had been established, with John A. N’Jai-Gomez, a retired civil servant of mixed Wolof and Manjago origin, as its secretary. According to N’Jai-Gomez’s later account, this followed a mass meeting in Bathurst, which took place shortly before a visit to the colony by the under-secretary of state, W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore. The meeting endorsed a list of issues to be presented to Ormsby-Gore by a delegation led by Forster, whom Ormsby-Gore subsequently termed “the outstanding personality in Bathurst.” The issues raised ranged from the need for legal reforms, including the abolition of trial by assessors, to a call for improved roads and the establishment of schools in the main Protectorate districts. However, significantly, the delegation made no demands for the franchise and thus the GRC can be regarded as a more politically conservative organization than the NCBWA.<sup>91</sup>

In these circumstances, it was inevitable that the secretary of state for the colonies should reject Armitage’s suggestion. Instead, Governor Sir John Middleton, who had only recently arrived in Bathurst and was therefore dependent on the advice of his colonial secretary, C. R. M. Workman (a longstanding critic of the Congress), reappointed both Forster and Jeng in 1927 without any prior consultation with either the Christian or the Muslim communities.<sup>92</sup>

The failure to secure the franchise in 1927 was a bitter blow for the Congress, which functioned only intermittently thereafter and apparently ceased to exist after the end of 1928.<sup>93</sup> But, as demonstrated in the next section, Forster and Jeng were by no means safe from attack. Opposition to both men began to build up in 1929 and although Forster ultimately survived the challenge, Jeng was to lose his place on the council in 1932 due to factionalism within the Muslim community.

## **The Revival of an Anti-Forster Party: 1929–41**

### **Intra-Muslim Conflict and the Fall of Ousman Jeng: 1929–32**

During his first term on the Legislative Council, Ousman Jeng managed to consolidate his hold over Bathurst’s Muslim population, but in so doing he created many enemies. The most important of these was a group of Muslim “elders” led by Momodu Jahumpa, an aged former shipwright who was now an owner of four river cutters. Jahumpa and the other elders had been influential in the Muslim community since the early years of the century and Jahumpa himself had been one of the original trustees of the Mohammedan School.<sup>94</sup> The Juma Society, the society of the elders, also claimed to have nominated all successive Almamis since the 1880s and to have played the decisive role in securing Jeng’s appointment to the Legislative Council in 1922.<sup>95</sup>

Jahumpa and his allies had no doubt expected to retain their influence after Jeng’s appointment. It had therefore come as an unpleasant surprise when Jeng “aspired to set himself up as a dictator,” presumably by ignoring the Almami’s

Advisory Committee (on which the elders were strongly represented). The disgruntled elders intended (or so they later claimed) to oppose Jeng's renomination to the Legislative Council in 1927 in favor of Sheikh Omar Fye, but were given no opportunity to express their opinion. A year later, however, their chance for revenge arose when Jeng (who already had three wives) had a child by an adulterous relationship with a fourth woman. This, according to Jahumpa, constituted a "capital offence" under Islamic law and rendered Jeng unfit to serve on the Legislative Council. Jahumpa also insisted that Jeng's father-in-law, Omar Sowe, be "disqualified from being a Muslim leader in any capacity" for condoning Jeng's action by permitting him to marry the woman after the baby was born.<sup>96</sup> When neither Jeng nor Sowe resigned from their respective positions, the Jahumpa party—perhaps with the covert encouragement of Fye—sought an injunction to prevent Sowe from officiating in the mosque. This did not succeed; in March 1929, Judge Aitken ruled that the Supreme Court had no power to intervene in a religious dispute.<sup>97</sup>

After much further public argument, both parties finally agreed to the appointment of Muslim arbitrators to settle the dispute in October 1929. But when the arbitrators proceeded to dismiss the charges against the Almami, Jahumpa refused to accept the verdict and the conflict within the community continued unabated.<sup>98</sup> The battleground now shifted from the mosque to the Mohammedan School; both factions sought control over its Managing Committee. Momodu Jahumpa's claim was based on the fact that he alone of the original trustees was still alive; but his opponents (generally supported by the Gambian government) argued that this did not give him the right to control the school. Neither side would compromise and, in April 1931, Governor H. R. Palmer lost patience and imposed a three-member school Managing Committee (which included Fye) on the warring parties.<sup>99</sup>

The ill feeling between Jeng and Jahumpa persisted even after the appointment of a "neutral" Managing Committee. Consequently, when Jeng's second term on the Legislative Council expired in 1932, the Gambian government concluded that it would be unnecessarily provocative to reappoint him. He was replaced by Fye, who had twice previously tried to gain a place on the council, but had been deemed unsuitable. In August 1924, the Almami of Bathurst had recommended to Governor Armitage that a second Muslim be appointed to the Legislative Council (or as a justice of the peace) and that Fye should be selected. However, when Jeng was consulted, he alleged that Fye had bribed the Almami to nominate him for the post. In addition, Fye was considered an unsuitable candidate because he had been placed on the "Black List," which contained the names of traders and dealers who made losses for which they were deemed responsible by the European firms. The fact that Fye had also joined the Gambia Section probably also counted against him. In April 1928, Almami Omar Sowe had requested the new governor, John Middleton, to appoint Fye as a second Muslim member of the council, but again the request was turned down.<sup>100</sup> In 1932, Fye was now more acceptable to the Gambian government because he had managed in recent years to avoid

identification with either of the Muslim factions. Moreover, he had severed his past links with Small and may even have privately indicated to Governor Palmer that he was now an opponent of Small and his political associates.<sup>101</sup>

### **Trade Unionism and Radical Politics: 1929–33**

In the meantime, S. J. Forster, the other African member of the Legislative Council, faced difficulties of his own. As in the early 1920s, his main opponent was Small, who returned to Gambia in 1926, determined to make a name for himself. He revived his newspaper, the *Gambia Outlook*, in 1927, apparently thanks to the financial backing of a leading trader at Kaur, John M. Roberts, who had been a relatively unimportant member of the Gambia Section since 1920.<sup>102</sup> Early in 1929, he also established the Gambia Planters' Syndicate (initially in partnership with Sheikh Omar Faye), which sought to increase the production of groundnuts on a collective basis. It was later renamed the Gambia Farmers' Co-operative Marketing Association (GFCMA) and assumed wider aims, with Small seeking to find an overseas buyer prepared to offer a higher price for groundnuts than the members of the "Unilever Combine" cartel (which included the United Africa Company (UAC) and other mercantile houses). The GFCMA was also one of the first organizations to seek to establish direct links between the Colony and the Protectorate.<sup>103</sup>

Small probably also became involved in the factional conflict within the Muslim community, as an ally of Jahumpa against his old enemy, Ousman Jeng. Soon afterward, in May 1929, he helped to found the first Gambian trade union, the Bathurst Trade Union (BTU). This was a trade union for artisans, whose leaders included Jahumpa and other members of the anti-Jeng party, some of whom were former members of the Congress; a number of Small's Christian associates from the Congress days were also involved in the BTU, but Sheikh Omar Fye was not.<sup>104</sup>

Shortly after its founding, the BTU became involved in a dispute with the European private sector employers. The employers, meeting as the Chamber of Commerce, decided in April to reduce the wages of the artisans and sailors they employed, but when the cuts became operative in October, the union organized effective resistance. Successive groups of artisans were called out on strike in October and early November, with employers trying in vain to break the strike. By mid-November, employers were ready not only to withdraw the wage cuts and recognize the union, but also to increase wages. Before a settlement could be reached, there was a violent clash between a detachment of armed police and a group of strikers. A number of civilians were injured and the incident caused an outcry in Bathurst. Indeed, after the matter had been reported in the British press, questions were asked in the House of Commons. The day after the clash, the employers hurriedly convened a "round table conference" with the union and substantial wage increases were conceded.<sup>105</sup>

The successful outcome to the strike (which was almost unheard of in British West Africa between the wars) made Small a hero in Bathurst.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, Forster "almost entirely lost his influence" in the town. This was because

both African councilors had been instructed by Governor Sir Edward Denham to declare their opposition to the strike in public. Forster, for example, was required on the day of the clash with the police to berate an angry crowd for its folly.<sup>107</sup> This response did not go down well with the local population and, as indicated, was in marked contrast to the reaction of the African members of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council during the 1926 Freetown railway strike. The Bathurst strike also had far-reaching consequences for the development of trade unionism in the British colonies. It seems clear that it provided the catalyst for the Passfield Memorandum, the famous circular dispatch issued by Lord Passfield (the former Sidney Webb) to all colonial governors in September 1930, which called for “the compulsory registration of Trade Unions.”<sup>108</sup>

The initiative therefore lay with Small, but he did not make effective use of his advantage. There were several reasons for this. First, he spent a large part of the next two years abroad, trying vainly to secure financial assistance for the BTU and the GFCMA. He left Gambia in February 1930 to travel via Dakar to Marseilles to purchase a new printing press for his newspaper; he later moved on to London to try to attract financial backing for the GFCMA. He did not return to Bathurst until mid-May and then left again in mid-June, again to travel to Europe; he did not arrive home until late November.<sup>109</sup> Although he was generally resident in Gambia during 1931, he did stay in Senegal between June and August 1931, having earlier visited Accra in the Gold Coast.<sup>110</sup> During this period, he left control of the BTU in the hands of its general secretary, Thomas Collingwood Fye, but he proved a disastrous choice as lieutenant.<sup>111</sup>

Second, Small further alienated an already hostile Gambian government and the Colonial Office by associating with two “subversive” organizations, the League Against Imperialism (LAI) and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW). The LAI was founded in 1927 as an organization dedicated to combating imperialism. It had a number of sections, including one in Britain, which was headed by its secretary, Reginald Bridgeman. During 1929, the LAI moved sharply to the left following the expulsion of one of its founder members, the leader of the Independent Labour Party, James Maxton, and the subsequent resignation of other non-Communists. Indeed, in November 1929, the Labour Party’s national executive declared the LAI to be an organization “ancillary or subsidiary to the Communist Party and that it was ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party.” Some members of the LAI, including Bridgeman and Glyn Evans, were also members of the Labour Research Department (LRDept).<sup>112</sup> The LRDept was founded by one of the luminaries of the Labour Party (and wife of Sidney Webb), Beatrice Webb, in 1912, but was taken over by members of the British Communist Party by 1924.

Small may have first come into contact with the LRDept during his visit to London in 1920–21 (he certainly established links with the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) at this time) and in 1929 he revived these links by affiliating the BTU to the LRDept.<sup>113</sup> This proved a fortuitous development, for during the 1929 strike, both the LRDept and the LAI mobilized support in Britain for the BTU and

sought to force the Colonial Office to instruct the Gambian government to make concessions to the union. It is possible, although there is no clear evidence of this, that financial assistance was also offered to Small during or after the strike. What is certain is that Small greatly appreciated the external support he received from these organizations.<sup>114</sup>

The LAI was also closely associated with the ITUC-NW, which was permanently established in Hamburg in 1930 through the combined efforts of the LAI and the trade union affiliate of the Comintern (the Third International)—the Profintern or Red International of Labour Unions (RILU). George Padmore, a prominent political activist originally from Trinidad, was the RILU's secretary and the editor of its journal, *The Negro Worker*.<sup>115</sup> The two men probably met during the first of Small's two visits to Europe in 1930; this may have been in London or in Berlin, because Small allegedly went to Germany to attend a meeting of the European Congress of Working Peasants, a Comintern-front organization.<sup>116</sup> At the end of April, while Small was still in England, Padmore traveled to Gambia at the start of a wider African tour under his real name, Malcolm Nurse. His aim was to recruit delegates for an International Conference of Negro Workers that the ITUC-NW was organizing in Hamburg in early July. He returned to Bathurst on June 13, at the end of his West African trip; four days later, Small himself left Gambia to travel first to Dakar and then to Europe, possibly on the same ship, the *S. S. Abinsi*.<sup>117</sup> Small duly made his way to Hamburg, where he delivered a fiery denunciation of "capitalist and imperialist exploitation" and made exaggerated claims of the strength of his trade union. He was subsequently elected to the ITUC-NW Executive and was appointed an associate editor of the *Negro Worker*. He may have been one of the Hamburg Conference delegates who subsequently attended the Fifth Congress of the RILU in Moscow in August 1930.<sup>118</sup>

Prior to 1930, the authorities saw Small as more of an irritant than a subversive threat; even as late as December 1928, Governor Denham granted him an interview in which he reported Small as praising government advertising support for the *Gambia Outlook* and providing it with correct information.<sup>119</sup> But Small's connections with the LAI and LRDept, as well as the fact that various articles from the *Negro Worker* were reprinted in the *Gambia Outlook* in March and April 1930, were more than sufficient to persuade the Gambian government that Small was a Communist sympathizer, if not necessarily a member of the Communist Party.<sup>120</sup>

Not surprisingly, Small strongly denied the charge that he had become a Communist.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, this official belief had a number of immediate repercussions. It resulted, for example, in increased harassment by government officials. His baggage was searched after his return to Gambia in November 1930 when, according to the French Consul in Bathurst, "bolshevik [*sic*] propaganda" was seized.<sup>122</sup> Much to his annoyance, his details were subsequently circulated to other West African governments, with the result that his brother, William A. Small (a clerk, who was apparently not involved in Small's political activities), had his baggage searched on his arrival in Freetown.<sup>123</sup> In October 1931, Small and Babucarr Secka, his agent in Senegal, were served with expulsion orders

from the colony, albeit in Small's case, in absentia.<sup>124</sup> Finally, on the advice of Acting Governor Workman, the Colonial Office also ensured that the Liberian government withdrew an invitation to Small to become its honorary consul in Bathurst; Small must have greatly resented the loss of this prestigious appointment.<sup>125</sup>

At the same time, the colonial authorities also sought to undermine Small's various organizations. First, alarmed by no doubt exaggerated claims by Small that some 2,000 farmers had paid the one shilling membership fee to join the GFCMA, the Gambian government permitted the commissioners in the Protectorate to stir up opposition to it in 1930–31. For example, R. W. Macklin, the commissioner of MacCarthy Island Province, urged the chiefs in his area to persuade farmers not to join the association and "pointed out . . . the grave challenge to their authority should they allow outsiders to gain influence over their people." Meanwhile, the Colonial Office attempted to persuade the potential backers of the scheme in Europe to withdraw their support. Partly as a result of these efforts, the GFCMA collapsed in early 1932.<sup>126</sup> Second, as discussed in the next section, the Gambian government used its legislative powers to weaken Small's position; the Licensing Ordinance was designed to make it more difficult for Small to publish the *Gambia Outlook* and the Trade Union Ordinance aimed to destroy his hold over the labor movement in the colony.

The colonial authorities continued to be suspicious of Small's political beliefs until at least the mid-1930s. For example, in March 1934, Acting Governor Oke considered that Small could be regarded as a "link subversive," a term used by Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, the secretary of state for the colonies, to describe individuals who were thought "to spread Bolshevik propaganda in the colonies."<sup>127</sup> One modern commentator, Edward Wilson, who, in the 1970s, examined the Comintern's activities in Black Africa in detail, indeed argued that Small had been engaged in "revolutionary activity" in West Africa during this period. But another, J. A. Langley, considered that he was essentially "a black Edwardian, though slightly more radical in his politics."<sup>128</sup> In fact, a careful review of the evidence and some of its contradictions suggests that, at most, Small's flirtation with Communism was short-lived and that he was primarily interested in the practical benefits his external contacts could offer him. Small recognized the value of the support offered by the LRDept and LAI during the strike; between 1930 and 1933, he also regularly requested one or other organization to intercede with the British government on his behalf and on at least one occasion he openly solicited funds from the LRDept.<sup>129</sup> Another of his lieutenants, Richard S. Rendall, a retired Aku and Methodist civil servant, even tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to develop a relationship with the right-wing British Conservative Party. Assuming that Small approved of Rendall's approach, this was hardly the action of a committed Communist!<sup>130</sup>

The hostility of the colonial authorities was not the only problem facing Small and his supporters in the early 1930s. They also faced renewed opposition from Forster and his supporters among the patrician elite; this is discussed in the next section.

### The GRC and the RPA: 1930–36

In October 1930, the moribund GRC was revived. The GRC (like the earlier Committee of Gentlemen or the Reform Club of Lagos) represented the interests of the patrician elite. It was headed by the increasingly conservative Forster. Forster's services to the government, which had already been recognized by his appointment as acting police magistrate in 1928 and coroner of the Island of St. Mary in 1929, received further acknowledgement when he was awarded the OBE in 1930. He was subsequently knighted in 1933, the first Gambian to receive this honor.<sup>131</sup> J. A. N'jai-Gomez remained as the GRC's general secretary and other members included Forster's Aku nephews, Henry D. Carrol (the head of the Bathurst family firm of H. R. Carrol and Co.), and his younger brother, W. Davidson Carrol. The latter, like his uncle, was a graduate of Oxford University and a barrister. He had returned to Bathurst to practice law in the mid-1920s; while in England, he was elected the first president of the West African Students Union (WASU) but, unlike some other WASU pioneers, he was in no sense a radical. These men were all Methodists, but the GRC also included prominent Muslims such as Almami Sowe and Jeng (but not Fye).<sup>132</sup>

The purpose of the revived organization was to ensure that Forster's allies were elected to the Bathurst Urban District Council (BUDC), which Governor Palmer was about to establish as a replacement for the now moribund Board of Health. The BUDC, which was entitled to discuss such municipal matters as roads, markets and sanitation, comprised four ex officio and four other nominated (European) members. In addition, to the irritation of the Colonial Office, Palmer abandoned his original aim to nominate Africans to the new body (African members of the old Board of Health were also nominated). Instead, he decided that each of the wards of the town (Half Die, Soldier Town, New Town, Joloff Town North, Joloff Town South, and Portuguese Town) should be permitted to elect one councilor. The franchise was to be restricted to persons on the rating list (i.e., owners rather than occupiers) and to government employees. Moreover, the ballot was to be open and the assistant colonial secretary was to oversee the election.

Governor Palmer probably calculated that, in these circumstances, government employees would vote for pro-government candidates and the position of Forster and his allies would be strengthened, and Small's influence would be reduced and calls for the franchise weakened.<sup>133</sup> This proved to be the case; the GRC won at least five out of six seats in the inaugural election held in January 1931. The successful candidates included the two Carrols and N'jai-Gomez; Gabriel M. N'Jie, a retired Wolof civil servant who was their staunch ally in 1932–33; and J. Francis Senegal, a commission agent who established a short-lived newspaper, *The Gambia Public Opinion*, in 1932, which provided a "sweeping endorsement" of Forster's policies. All bar Senegal (who was replaced by another GRC man, an Aku, Noble J. Allen) were reelected to the council a year later.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, when the GRC persuaded Forster to postpone his planned retirement and accept another term of office on the Legislative Council in March 1932, it appeared that the patricians had regained the

political ascendancy.<sup>135</sup> In contrast, as noted, Small's position was weakened by the collapse of the GFCMA, and a dissident faction (which Small termed the "dissenting society") led by a shipwright, Joseph Lemu N'Jie, and two carpenters, Marie Kebbeh and John L. Owens, emerged within the BTU leadership.<sup>136</sup>

Two months after Forster's reappointment, the political pendulum began to swing once more toward Small. Governor Palmer came into office determined to reform the system of government both of the Colony and the Protectorate. His first move was to codify the laws of the Colony, a step recommended by Judge Aitken as early as 1929. In September 1931, Judge Horne, Aitken's successor, agreed to draw up a Criminal Code and a Criminal Procedure Code, which would be based on those in operation in Kenya. The draft version was completed by May 1932 and a committee was appointed to consider it.<sup>137</sup>

Codification was a controversial issue in West Africa; for example, a proposal to codify the laws of Sierra Leone provoked widespread protest in Freetown between 1918 and 1920, which ultimately succeeded in preventing its implementation.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, the announcement that the government was to introduce the codes into Gambia met with fierce resistance. Small launched a vigorous and sustained press campaign against codification. This was portrayed as a retrogressive step which would bring about the introduction of "new offences and new penalties" and would sweep away existing legal safeguards.<sup>139</sup> Simultaneously, a Committee of Citizens and Ratepayers (a typical Creole organization), held a series of well attended public meetings to denounce codification.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, opposition to the codes was not universal. Forster, who was a member of the Codes Committee, was strongly committed to their implementation; W. D. Carrol and all other elected members of the BUDC also declined to attack them.

Their refusal to do so (which may be contrasted with the attitude adopted by the elected African members of the Gold Coast Legislative Council toward the Criminal Code Amendment Ordinance of 1934), was resented by Small, Rendall, and their allies, who became increasingly critical of Forster and the elected councilors.<sup>141</sup> In July 1932, they founded the Bathurst Ratepayers' Association (RPA), which sought (like other West African ratepayers' associations) to organize municipal elections. Unusually, however, the RPA's aim was to bring about the removal of existing councilors; it was more customary for ratepayers' organizations to be founded before any elections had taken place.<sup>142</sup>

Despite its title, the RPA was not restricted to the approximately 1,500 persons on the rating list. Any owner and occupier of property in Bathurst was entitled to be a member and it was therefore theoretically a "mass" organization, unlike the exclusive GRC.<sup>143</sup> In practice, however, the RPA was dominated by its executive and ward committees. Rendall was its first secretary, and its other members included former Congress activists and leaders of the faction within the BTU who had remained loyal to Small. It contained both Christian and Muslim members, among them Momodu Jahumpa. Small may not himself have been an executive member of the RPA; indeed, he was probably not even a ratepayer.<sup>144</sup> However, he exerted an overriding influence on proceedings through the Committee of



Citizens.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, the Gambian government believed that Rendall (the committee's secretary) was "a man of straw" and that Small was really responsible for writing the many petitions Rendall presented.<sup>146</sup>

At first the RPA met with limited success and its protest meetings and petitions failed to deflect Governor Palmer from the general tenor of his reform program. Apart from the codes, Palmer introduced new Rates and Licensing Ordinances and a Trade Union Ordinance and, in January 1933, passed three ordinances that aimed to transform the basis of administration in the Protectorate. These three ordinances—the Native Authority, Native Tribunal, and Subordinate Courts Ordinances—are collectively termed here the "Protectorate Ordinances."<sup>147</sup> Some concessions were made before these passed through all their readings in the Legislative Council, but only because of interventions by Forster or the elected councilors. At the request of the African members of the BUDC (supported by Forster in the Legislative Council), Palmer agreed that the level of increase of rateable value should be held in check, at least for 1933. After appeals and a petition from the councilors, the license fee for hawkers (under the Licensing Ordinance) was also halved; the newspaper license slightly reduced from £5 to £4 and, most important of all, a number of amendments were made to the Protectorate bills that had caused alarm in Bathurst.<sup>148</sup> In contrast, the efforts of the RPA were much less successful. For example, a petition calling for the disallowance of the Protectorate Ordinances was rejected out of hand by the Colonial Office.<sup>149</sup>

Two of these measures—the Licensing Ordinance and the Trade Union Ordinance—were clearly designed to weaken Small's influence. Small, who was now deeply in debt, could not afford to pay the new Licensing Ordinance and the *Gambia Outlook* was forced to close in February 1933 and was not published again until June 1934.<sup>150</sup> The Trade Union Ordinance, which Forster supported, stemmed from the Passfield Memorandum of September 1930 that, as noted, called for the registration of colonial trade unions. Unlike most colonial governments, which were opposed to the legislation, the Gambian government saw it as an opportunity to weaken Small's influence. The Legislative Council passed the ordinance in December 1932 and it received the Royal Assent one month later.<sup>151</sup> At the beginning of March, N'Jie, Owens, and Kebbeh asked the register general, A. G. B. Manson, to register their faction under the ordinance as the Bathurst Trade Union. Manson consented and, despite Small's bitter complaints, the Gambian government eventually confirmed this decision in July.

Small's political opponents were directly involved in the dispute. W. D. Carrol acted as the lawyer for the dissident faction and threatened Small with legal proceedings if he did not hand over certain items to his clients; N'jai-Gomez allowed Small's opponents to meet at his home and was elected as honorary secretary of the BTU in February 1933; and Forster, who was asked to adjudicate on the rival claims in June, not surprisingly announced that the dissident faction "had a superior authority and a legal right of preference, as it were to call meetings." Small subsequently petitioned the Colonial Office for redress, but the secretary of state

(Cunliffe-Lister), on the advice of the Gambian government and clearly mindful of Small's political reputation, refused to intervene.<sup>152</sup>

The RPA was thus unable to deflect Governor Palmer from his legislative course of action. It was also unable to displace the GRC at the forefront of local politics. Rather surprisingly, it failed to mount an effective challenge in the 1932 BUDC election; only one seat was contested (N'Jai-Gomez was challenged by two candidates, both of whom were probably Independents) and this was won easily by the GRC secretary.<sup>153</sup> The RPA paid dearly for its failure to oust the incumbent councilors. In March 1933, Governor Palmer granted the BUDC the right to nominate a candidate to the Legislative Council in recognition of the support it had offered his reform program in the face of much public criticism. The unanimous choice of European and African councilors alike was W. D. Carrol. His nomination was welcomed by Palmer, who valued the role he had played over the codes and no doubt also welcomed the legal advice that Carrol was giving to Small's opponents within the BTU; Carrol was appointed for a five-year term in May 1933.<sup>154</sup>

In December 1933, the RPA did manage to field three candidates, Rendall, Cecil S. Richards (a trader, who was another of the sons of J. D. Richards), and Edward Lloyd-Evans (a Mulatto writing clerk) against G. M. N'Jie and the two Carrols. But the three won only eleven votes between them and all were comfortably defeated in very low polls.<sup>155</sup> The incumbents were able to claim as an achievement that they had secured an additional unofficial seat on the Legislative Council. Their position was further strengthened when, a few days before the election, Acting Governor Parish agreed to make a number of significant amendments to the codes' bills. These had been revised by the Colonial Office for the sake of uniformity with a proposed new code for East Africa; as a result, a number of punishments, including corporal punishment, had been increased. After an appeal by the councilors, Parish agreed to remove these new punishments. The elected members could therefore argue, with some justification, that their private interventions had achieved something tangible, whereas the public protests organized by Small and Rendall had fallen on deaf ears.<sup>156</sup>

The omens did not seem good for the RPA, particularly when the Carrols, N'Jai-Gomez, Allen, and others established *The Gambia Echo* in Spring 1934. Supported by the European manager of the UAC, Lionel Ogden, the syndicate intended that their newspaper should take the place of the currently defunct *Gambia Outlook* and promote the GRC cause.<sup>157</sup> However, in the December 1934 election, the RPA at last made a significant breakthrough when four of the existing councilors, W. D. Carrol, N'Jai-Gomez, G. M. N'Jie, and Allen, were defeated by RPA candidates. Although the turnout remained low (a total of 441 votes were cast in the four constituencies, a 33 percent turnout), this election did attract much greater public interest than any since 1931.

It was also the most controversial to date; for example, W. D. Carrol was roundly condemned for appealing to the votes of "scavengers" (low-paid government employees who were not ratepayers, but who, as noted, were permitted to vote), and the RPA candidate in New Town accused police officers of instructing policemen

to vote for Allen.<sup>158</sup> The incumbents were again criticized for their association with the codes, which were finally introduced in October 1934, following the rejection of one last call for their non-enforcement. Unlike in 1933, the councilors were unable to claim any last-minute concessions; their subsequent fate can be compared with that of Dr. F. V. Nanka Bruce (the sitting member) who was defeated in the 1935 Gold Coast Legislative Council election by the more radical Kojo Thompson primarily because he had failed to oppose the Sedition Bill with sufficient vigor. The councilors were also blamed for failing to demand the introduction of a proper town council (with an elected majority) and for doing nothing to reduce unemployment in Bathurst.<sup>159</sup> Finally, there was irritation that the councilors refrained from attacking the sweeping quarantine regulations that had been imposed after an outbreak of yellow fever. These were highly unpopular, especially because the disease primarily affected Europeans rather than Africans.<sup>160</sup>

This proved to be the last election to the BUDC, for in May 1935, it was replaced by the Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC). The new body was responsible for a wider range of functions than its predecessor, but possessed no executive authority (not that the BUDC's potential powers had ever been exercised in practice). In addition, the voting rights of government servants were removed and only ratepayers were now permitted to vote or stand for election.<sup>161</sup> Small, who had called in the previous year for the replacement of the BUDC by a municipal council with an elected majority, welcomed the changes, although he argued that they did not go far enough. However, Rendall (who was not a ratepayer) disliked the fact that only ratepayers could now stand for election.<sup>162</sup> The first election to the BATC was held in May 1936 and the RPA won all the elected seats; it was perhaps indicative of the declining power of the GRC that only two wards (Half Die and New Town) were contested and then only because of dissension within the RPA.<sup>163</sup> This proved to be the last contested municipal election until 1943. In the meantime, all the elected African members of the municipal council were returned unopposed, having been nominated by RPA executive and ward committee meetings.<sup>164</sup>

### **Legislative Council Appointments: 1937–38**

In the 1936 BATC election, Ousman Jeng, the former Muslim member of the Legislative Council, won the New Town ward election. Not long after his removal from the council in March 1932, Jeng had joined the RPA and had become president of its New Town ward committee. As early as 1933, the Committee of Citizens had hoped to persuade him to stand for election to the BUDC, but he declined the invitation. If he had done so, there might well have been objections from Momodu Jahumpa, a prominent figure in the RPA in Half Die. However, in September 1935, Small at last effected a reconciliation between the two key figures in the dispute within the Muslim community and a few days later, a Mohammedan Society was founded "to find the verdict of the community on any common interest."<sup>165</sup> Its members included Jeng, Jahumpa, and Almami Omar

Sowe but, significantly, not Sheikh Omar Fye. Indeed, one of the main aims of the society was to secure Fye's removal from both the Board of Management of the Mohammedan School and the Legislative Council.<sup>166</sup>

The Mohammedan Society hoped that when Fye's term on the council expired in March 1937, it would not be renewed. The Gambian government accepted that Fye was not popular, but because the only alternative candidate was Jeng (and his selection would be seen as a victory for Small's party), he was offered a second term. Sir Samuel Forster was also reappointed for an unprecedented seventh term.<sup>167</sup> The RPA could not seriously have expected that one of its candidates would replace Forster, but had high hopes of ousting W. D. Carrol when his term expired in May 1938, because all the elected members of the BATC were now RPA supporters. Nevertheless, when the question was put to the vote during a meeting of the BATC in March 1938, Carrol defeated his challenger, E. F. Small, by seven votes to four. He owed his victory to the intervention on his behalf by Governor Sir Thomas Southorn. Like his predecessors, Southorn was concerned about Small's political beliefs and connections and so instructed the four officials to vote for Carrol. The three nominated European unofficials also voted for him. Because all four elected members who were present voted for Small, the RPA protested to the secretary of state about the propriety of allowing nominated members to vote, but its petition was ignored by the Colonial Office.<sup>168</sup>

In common with unofficial members of Legislative Councils throughout West Africa, both Forster and Carrol strongly supported the Allied cause when war was declared in September 1939. However, Carrol did oppose the Gambian government on one domestic issue, the proposed introduction of income tax, in May 1940. Similar proposals often met with resistance in West Africa. The conservative Lagos Reform Club opposed the introduction of income tax in 1920, and resistance in the Gold Coast was so strong that Governor Slater's Income Tax Bill of 1931 had to be abandoned. Governor Jardine also dropped plans to introduce income tax in Sierra Leone in 1940 in part because of objections from unofficial members of the Legislative Council. In Forster's absence because of ill health, Carrol took the lead in opposing income tax in Gambia; indeed, he voted against the bill, as did the Chamber of Commerce member, L. De V. Bottomley (the manager of the UAC) and even Sheikh Omar Fye. But the unofficial members were outvoted by the official majority and a "silent protest" led by Small and the elected members of the BATC was equally ineffective.<sup>169</sup>

This intervention by Carrol suggests that he (like his uncle and great uncle) cannot simply be dismissed as a government stooge. It is true that neither Forster (the barrister) nor Carrol criticized the government very frequently or very hard and they were not prepared to make common cause with more radical elements (except possibly over income tax). It is also reasonable to argue that Forster became more conservative as he grew older. Nevertheless, a useful description of Forster (which may also be applied to his nephew) is that he was good example of a "shock absorber," who absorbed and toned down agitations to the government and performed a similar function with government policies.<sup>170</sup>

Neither Sir Samuel Forster nor W. D. Carrol lived to complete their terms of service on the council. Forster died in July 1940 (aged sixty-seven), and Carrol, who suffered from ill health for some years, died at the age of only forty-one in October 1941.<sup>171</sup> This brought the political dynasty of the Forsters to a close and, as we shall see in Chapter 5, allowed their old enemy, E. F. Small, at last to gain a seat on the Legislative Council.

## Summary

Gambian politics between the mid-1880s and the early 1940s were dominated by a single family, the Forsters. Under their influence, representatives of the African community on the Legislative Council increasingly adopted a pro-government political stance, but after World War I, a more radical political movement, led by E. F. Small, inspired by events in other British West African colonies, arose to challenge the dominant patrician elite. Despite its use of populist techniques—“mass meetings” and vigorous criticism of government policies in Small’s newspaper—and its dismissal as “subversive” by the government and its conservative opponents, the radical faction always acted constitutionally in criticizing government and demanding political reform. Indeed, some of its objectives were shared more widely in the African community. By the mid-1930s, despite the hostility of the Gambian government and various setbacks, it secured control over local politics in Bathurst by forming a new alliance between the Christian and Muslim communities, with which to oppose the patricians. Yet it failed to displace them from the Legislative Council so that its influence remained very limited.

# 5

---

## **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTY POLITICS, 1941–59**

One of the most important developments in West Africa in the late 1940s and early 1950s was the sudden proliferation of political parties. Both before and immediately after World War II, most political organizations were of the “congress” type. They had loose-knit structures and sought to embrace all shades of political opinion to achieve specific (and limited) reforms, or to block undesirable legislation. Often as a result of an internal split, these congresses then gave birth to political parties that aimed to mobilize the mass of the population, both for immediate electoral purposes and to hasten the process of decolonization. As the political stakes became higher, rival parties, which often adopted a communal or regional complexion, were formed to challenge the monopoly of the dominant party.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter shows how this transition from the broadly based congress to the more narrowly focused party occurred in The Gambia as elsewhere. Although the Bathurst Ratepayers’ Association (RPA), a typical congress organization, managed to win the first direct election to the Legislative Council in 1947, it was swept aside in the 1951 election by the colony’s first genuine political party, the Gambia Democratic Party (GDP). Two other parties, the Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC) and the United Party (UP), were established by the time of the 1954 election. Nevertheless, party politics remained in a fledgling state at the end of the 1950s. Political parties remained undeveloped, with each depending on the personality and actions of its leader. They could therefore be described as “elite” or “patron” parties.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, all parties continued to draw their support exclusively from the urbanized area in and around Bathurst, with the Protectorate remaining very largely excluded from the national political process.

## Legislative Council Politics: 1941–47

The death of W. D. Carrol in October 1941, following that of Sir Samuel Forster in 1940, meant that for the first time since 1883, the African Christian community was not represented on the Legislative Council. Governor Southorn did not seek to fill the vacancy left by Forster's death, because he believed that Carrol could adequately represent Christian interests.<sup>3</sup> However, after Carrol's death, Southorn invited the members of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council (BATC) to nominate a successor. Two candidates emerged, Simeon A. Riley, a retired Aku civil servant and petty trader who served on the BATC since 1936 and was a leading member of the RPA, and E. F. Small, the defeated candidate in 1938, who was actually proposed by Riley! Riley was in fact only nominated because some councilors were under the mistaken impression that the choice must be made from one of their number. When the error was pointed out, his supporters tried to withdraw his name. But they were persuaded to allow it to go forward and he was defeated by only one vote. The outcome hinged on a decision by Southorn—who was impressed by Small's staunch loyalty to the Allied cause since the outbreak of the war—to instruct the official members to abstain, whereas he had ordered the official members to vote for Carrol in 1938. Riley probably received the support of the two European unofficial members; the nominated African member, J. A. N'Jai-Gomez (an old enemy of Small) and one of the elected African members, but the other five elected RPA members voted for Small to ensure his victory.<sup>4</sup>

Small took his seat in January 1942, and Southorn simultaneously appointed J. A. Mahoney to fill the vacancy caused by Forster's death. Mahoney had been secretary of the Gambian branch of the Congress in the mid-1920s, but had not been active in local politics in recent years and does not appear to have been a member of the RPA.<sup>5</sup> Both men were appointed for the customary five-year terms; in March 1942, Southorn also reappointed Sheikh Omar Fye for a further two years. Southorn had hoped to be able to replace Fye with a younger man, but reluctantly concluded that no other eligible Muslim candidate was both sufficiently knowledgeable in English and held in high enough esteem by Bathurst's Muslims to merit selection.<sup>6</sup>

Southorn also intended to introduce the franchise during his period of office, but pressure of work caused by the war prevented him from doing so. It was therefore his successor, H. R. R. (later Sir Hilary) Blood, who drew up firm proposals in February 1943. Whether constitutional reform in West Africa in the 1940s occurred because of popular pressure or imperial initiative has been fiercely debated, but it is clear that, at least in Gambia, the impetus came from above. Calls for the franchise had been infrequent in the past few years and the unofficial members of the Legislative Council were not united on the issue; whereas Small and Mahoney were anxious to achieve the franchise, Fye preferred to maintain the status quo and the Chamber of Commerce representative, L. de V. Bottomley (a European), was opposed to the idea. Nevertheless, Blood was keen to make concessions before there was any real necessity to do so and so pressed ahead.<sup>7</sup>

After the secretary of state approved the principle of constitutional reform, Governor Blood appointed a Franchise Committee in December 1943 to examine the electoral basis of the proposed constitution. The committee unanimously recommended that there should be universal suffrage for any British subject or native of the Protectorate resident in Bathurst or Kombo St. Mary aged at least twenty-five, and persons literate in English or Arabic should have the vote at twenty-one. Candidates had to be aged at least twenty-five; be able to read, write, and speak English; and not be in receipt of a salary from the public revenue (which excluded civil servants). E. F. Small, who was selected by the other unofficial members to represent them on the committee, also persuaded the majority of its members that until the predominantly rural Kombo St. Mary developed as “a live suburb” of urbanized Bathurst, there was “no practical basis” for the two areas to form a single constituency. Consequently, there should be two distinct constituencies, each of which should elect its own member. Mahoney adopted the same line when the Legislative Council considered the Franchise Committee’s report, but Fye, together with the European officials, argued that Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary should form a single constituency.

No doubt both Small and Fye took account of the likely electoral consequences. The chances of the former would be improved by the separation of Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary, because almost all his potential supporters lived in the capital. In contrast, Fye, who because of his farming interests liked to pose as the Protectorate’s representative on the council, probably calculated that the predominantly rural, Wolof and Muslim voters of Kombo St. Mary would vote for him.<sup>8</sup> His view prevailed, because Blood considered that the population of Bathurst was too small to support its own member of the council and that it would be a mistake “to fortify the political, social and cultural barriers,” which already existed between Bathurst and the rest of the colony. He also hoped that in a single constituency, the influence of the educated Aku elite (whom he disliked) would be nullified and, for the same reason, endorsed the recommendation of the Franchise Committee that there should be universal suffrage. The Colonial Office was unhappy about the idea of universal suffrage, but was reluctantly prepared to accept it, provided that the voting age was raised to twenty-five for the whole electorate.<sup>9</sup>

Beside being at odds over constitutional reform, the Gambian unofficial members also periodically adopted differing positions over issues debated by the Legislative Council. Small and Mahoney (who tended to act in concert) frequently criticized government policy, whereas Fye usually supported the government. For example, Small and Mahoney (as well as Bottomley) opposed a proposal to increase income tax in 1942; voted against the Registration of Newspapers and the False Publication Ordinances of 1944; and attacked government plans to reduce overcrowding and vagrancy in Bathurst in 1943. In contrast, even though Fye had opposed the introduction of income tax in 1940, he supported the raising of its level in 1942. He also voted with the officials over the Customs Tariff Amendment Ordinance in 1945, even though, according to Mahoney, the new duty would result in a 300 percent increase in taxation.<sup>10</sup>



Apart from their political differences, Small and Fye were also personally on bad terms. As shown in Chapter 4, Small and Fye fell out in the early 1930s and remained at odds thereafter. During the 1940s, the mutual antagonism of the two men was exacerbated by the Mohammed Faal affair. Faal was a Mauritanian cattle dealer who held a lucrative contract to supply cattle to the army for most of the war. In 1944, the contract was transferred to Fye even though, according to Small, Service Regulations prohibited a member of the Legislative Council from undertaking such work. Moreover, in early 1945, the controller of supplies decided to allocate cloth—which was in short supply—to cattle dealers in proportion to the number of cattle they provided for slaughter. Fye apparently received his full quota of cloth, which left Faal an insufficient amount to meet his commitments. Small, who was asked by Faal to take up the case with the authorities, alleged that Fye exerted undue political pressure on the controller to secure his quota, a charge that did nothing to improve their relationship.<sup>11</sup>

### **Garba-Jahumpa and the Bathurst Young Muslims Society**

As noted, after the demise of the Gambia Representative Committee, the only political organization operating in Bathurst was the RPA. However, in 1945–46, several new political organizations were established. These included such ephemeral creations as the New Town Democrats and the People's Party (whose Chairman was R. S. Rendall, Small's colleague of the 1930s).<sup>12</sup> But the Bathurst Young Muslims Society (BYMS) was a much more substantial body. It was founded as early as August 1936 as an offshoot of the Mohammedan Society and intermittently functioned thereafter as a cultural association for younger Muslims. In May 1946, it was revived as a political organization by Momodu Jahumpa's son, Ibrahima M. Garba-Jahumpa. This conversion of a cultural association into a political organization was fairly common in West Africa in this period; a comparison may be drawn, for example, with the formation in Nigeria in 1951 of the Action Group out of the Yoruba cultural society, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, and the Northern People's Congress out of the predominantly Hausa Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa.<sup>13</sup>

I. M. Garba-Jahumpa, who was born in Bathurst in 1912 and attended the Mohammedan School, was one of a new breed of educated young Muslims. He qualified to be a teacher in 1936 and, except for a short period during World War II, was employed in this profession until 1951. Momodu Jahumpa had been a key member of the RPA's ward committee in Half Die (Bathurst South) and his son apparently began his career in public life in the 1930s as an assistant secretary of the RPA. Garba-Jahumpa's promise was recognized when Governor Southorn appointed him to the BATC, as a nominated member, in succession to J. A. N'Jai-Gomez (who had become the first nominated African member in 1941).<sup>14</sup> A year later, he became secretary of the Gambia Labour Union (GLU, a trade union founded by Small in 1935) and it seems clear that Small, who had deliberately selected a Muslim rather than a Christian protégé, was grooming Garba-Jahumpa to be his trade union and political heir. Consequently, he invited the younger man

to attend the prestigious World Trade Union Conference in London in February 1945 as his secretary.<sup>15</sup>

A few months later, however, the two men quarreled. Ostensibly, the cause appears to have been that both wished to attend the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in October 1945. Garba-Jahumpa almost certainly attended the preliminary conference for delegates in March 1945 and certainly signed the manifesto, drawn up by the Pan-African Federation and other bodies, which was presented to the United Nations in April 1945. Small, in contrast, neither signed the manifesto nor showed much prior interest in the Congress. Shortly after Small's departure to Paris to attend a second World Trade Union Conference, a Pan-African Congress Committee was established in Bathurst to raise funds to enable a delegation to be sent to Manchester. This committee was dominated by its joint secretaries, Garba-Jahumpa and the editor of the *Gambia Echo*, C. W. Downes-Thomas, and not surprisingly these two were chosen to be the Gambian delegates. Perhaps because Downes-Thomas was thought to be a supporter of Sheikh Omar Fye, Small's supporters in Bathurst led by Abdou Wally M'Bye, a prominent Wolof trader, protested strongly and a telegram was despatched to London to urge him to attend the Congress. A second telegram was then despatched by Rendall of the People's Party and others to cancel the first and Downes-Thomas and Garba-Jahumpa did eventually go to Manchester.<sup>16</sup>

There was also a broader reason for the conflict between Small and Garba-Jahumpa. Small believed that, in view of his extensive political experience, he was still best equipped to lead Gambia to the next stage of constitutional reform. But Garba-Jahumpa considered that he had served his apprenticeship in the GLU and, fired by the experience of rubbing shoulders with some of Africa's most prominent nationalists at the Manchester Congress, considered it was now time for him to be allowed to make his mark. A parallel may be drawn with the conflict between J. B. Danquah and Kwame Nkrumah in 1949, which led to the split in the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the formation of the Convention People's Party. Small, like Danquah, was part of the pre-war generation of politicians who expected to retain the political mantle for the foreseeable future; Garba-Jahumpa, like Nkrumah, was part of a younger, more radical, group who believed that their turn had now come. Danquah regarded Nkrumah as a traitor for turning against the UGCC, which had given him employment as its general secretary. Small's view of Garba-Jahumpa was probably not dissimilar.<sup>17</sup>

The new organization appealed specifically to the "Youth" of Bathurst and was therefore in the tradition of the political movements and leagues of the later 1930s. Indeed, it actually received the blessing of the founder of the West African Youth League (WAYL), I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, who happened to make a fleeting visit to Bathurst in June 1946 while en route to an international trade union conference in Moscow.<sup>18</sup> There was, however, one fundamental difference between the WAYL and the BYMS; whereas the WAYL was predominantly a Christian body that had tried to attract Muslim support, the BYMS appealed exclusively to Muslims.<sup>19</sup> This narrowly sectarian approach was completely at odds with

the approach of the RPA, which had always contained Muslim, as well as Christian, members and had sponsored candidates of both religious persuasions in municipal elections. Indeed, the foundation of the BYMS greatly alarmed Small, who feared that it might make use of the inbuilt Muslim majority in Bathurst to sweep the RPA (and the Christian community in general) out of political life.

The formation of the BYMS meant that the municipal election of that year was the first to be contested by rival political factions since 1934.<sup>20</sup> The political atmosphere was intensified by the fact that in July 1946, Bathurst had at last been granted a Town Council, which enjoyed much greater powers than its predecessors; all fifteen elected seats were at stake in the inaugural election, with each voter possessing three votes in one of five three-member constituencies. The potential electorate, estimated to be 8,000 strong, was also much larger than before.<sup>21</sup>

Before the election, the RPA had become alarmed at the prospect of losing its control over municipal politics and concern had been expressed by Small and others that the voting qualifications had been made too liberal, an interesting reaction from the prime mover for constitutional reform in the 1930s. The relevant ordinance enfranchised the husbands and wives of all qualified voters, which in the RPA's view, gave an unfair advantage to Muslims (and perhaps therefore to the BYMS).<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, although the RPA lost its monopoly of the elected seats, it still emerged victorious in the election, winning six seats and securing representation in four out of the five Bathurst wards. Moreover, it is probable that most of the five civil servants who were elected were sympathetic to the RPA rather than to the BYMS. Despite this, the outcome was not an unqualified success for the RPA; its defeated candidates included J. W. Kuye, the deputy chairman of the Bathurst Temporary Local Authority (the forerunner of the Bathurst Town Council [BTC]) and S. P. Gibbs, the chairman of the RPA's Executive Committee. Indeed, Governor Blood interpreted the outcome as a severe setback for the organization.<sup>23</sup>

Three BYMS candidates were elected, including Garba-Jahumpa, but the BYMS' overall showing was disappointing. Not one of its three successful candidates headed the poll in their respective constituencies, with even Garba-Jahumpa being defeated in the family stronghold of Half Die.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Garba-Jahumpa may have concluded that to fulfill his ambition of achieving a place on the Legislative Council, he would have to broaden the base of his support, which was too narrowly restricted to a segment of the Muslim community in Bathurst. One way of doing this would be to control the Gambian labor movement. Consequently, in January 1947, he persuaded a number of trade union leaders to join with him in founding the Gambia Amalgamated Trade Union (GATU) as a rival of Small's GLU. Garba-Jahumpa became general secretary of the new organization. There can be little doubt that this was a deliberate maneuver designed to secure him votes in the forthcoming Legislative Council election; indeed, Garba-Jahumpa fits the stereotype outlined by Berg and Butler of ambitious politicians who used the trade union movement as "one of many organizational channels . . . in their rise to power."<sup>25</sup>

## **Political Role of Ex-Servicemen**

If the establishment of a political organization that appealed specifically to younger Gambians was not untypical of West Africa in this period, The Gambia was unusual in that ex-servicemen appear to have played no significant, collective role in postwar politics. Gambians served in substantial numbers in the imperial war against Japan.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere in West Africa, in Senegal, Nigeria, and particularly the Gold Coast, demobilized veterans played a key political role in the development of an anticolonial coalition, which in turn helped to bring about political change. In contrast, there is no evidence that war veterans adopted a distinctive political voice in Gambia after 1945. There were two main reasons for their political passivity. First, the majority seemed to have returned fairly quickly to their homes in the Protectorate. By March 1947, 4,000 servicemen had been demobilized. Of these, 2,500 returned to the Protectorate and therefore effectively removed themselves from national politics, given that the franchise was restricted to the urban areas. Second, employment, albeit of a seasonal nature, appears to have been found for most of the veterans who remained in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary under the Employment of Ex-Servicemen Ordinance of 1945; by 1948, only an estimated 500 were not employed.<sup>27</sup> Gambian ex-servicemen therefore lacked the economic grievances of their Gold Coast counterparts and although individual veterans doubtless became involved in domestic politics after 1945, they did not do so as a collective entity.

## **1947 Legislative Council Election**

Although the revised constitutional instruments had been agreed in principle in 1944, the first election to the Legislative Council did not take place until November 1947. The Colonial Office blamed the delay on legal problems, a lack of staff, and an overload of constitutions requiring revision. It is clear, however, that the lack of popular pressure for reform was also a factor, because resources tended to be concentrated on more volatile colonies.<sup>28</sup> The new constitution was eventually finalized in November 1946. However, the election was then further delayed because the new governor of Gambia, Andrew (later Sir Andrew) Wright, wished to appoint a number of Africans to the Executive Council (including the winner of the first direct election to the Legislative Council), and it took time for the details to be worked out with the Colonial Office.<sup>29</sup>

### **Candidates**

Five candidates competed in the November 1947 election: Small, Fye, Garba-Jahumpa, R. S. Rendall, the leader of the People's Party, and John Finden Dailey, the editor of the *Gambia Weekly News*, who was allowed to contest the election despite being a convicted felon.<sup>30</sup> Small described himself as a journalist, rather than as the leader of the RPA, which conceivably ceased to function after 1946, and Garba-Jahumpa stood as a trade union, rather than the BYMS, leader. The

other three candidates were Independents. Only the first three could entertain any serious hope of victory. Rendall, Small's main lieutenant in the early 1930s, won only twenty-seven votes in the 1946 BTC election to finish tenth out of eleven candidates in Soldier Town ward and just twenty-three votes in the 1947 election, whereas Finden Dailey was largely discredited because of his espousal of unpopular causes.<sup>31</sup> A few years before, Small would have been the clear favorite; indeed, the concession of the franchise was held up in the 1930s because it was assumed that he would automatically win any election. Now the outcome was much harder to predict. An anonymous correspondent to the *Crown Colonist*, writing at the beginning of September, even argued that Fye was the favorite, with Garba-Jahumpa likely to be his nearest challenger.<sup>32</sup>

This prediction that Fye would defeat Small seemed justified because the former possessed three important advantages over the latter. First, he was a Wolof in a predominantly Wolof constituency, whereas his opponent was an Aku. The Wolof made up just under half of the African population of Bathurst and about a sixth of the African population of Kombo St. Mary; the Aku accounted for only 12 to 13 percent of the African population of Bathurst and 2 percent of the African population of Kombo St. Mary. Second, he was a Muslim, like most of the electorate, whereas Small was a Christian. Approximately three-quarters of the Bathurst population—and 80 percent of the population of Kombo St. Mary—were Muslim; only 13 percent of the population of Bathurst, and 3 percent of the population of Kombo St. Mary, were either Anglicans or Methodists.<sup>33</sup> Fye could also count on the support of Bathurst's Islamic spiritual leader, Almami Mama Tumani Bah. Third, as a prosperous merchant and contractor, Fye had much greater financial resources at his disposal than Small, who by all accounts was of modest means.<sup>34</sup> Fye could even conceivably claim that he possessed more political experience than Small, having been a member of the Legislative Council since 1932. Finally, Small was now a recluse who was rarely seen on the streets of Bathurst—certainly he did not actively campaign.<sup>35</sup>

The suggestion that Garba-Jahumpa was likely to be Fye's nearest challenger also seemed plausible. Like Fye, Garba-Jahumpa was a Wolof and a Muslim. He could also claim to be the leading Gambian trade unionist; the European labour officer D. Barrett (who admittedly was sympathetic to him and hostile to Small) claimed in 1947 that the GATU possessed between 250 and 1,000 members and the GLU less than 50. If converted into votes, this could prove a decisive factor. In addition, Garba-Jahumpa might even be able to turn his relative lack of political experience to his advantage. In the 1938 Nigerian Legislative Council election, for example, the Nigerian Youth Movement successfully countered the claims of the Nigerian National Democratic Party to possess the greater experience by suggesting that in its fifteen years of representation on the Legislative Council, it had accomplished little.<sup>36</sup>

## **Election Results**

Despite these apparent disadvantages, Small comfortably headed the poll. The turnout was lower than might have been anticipated, given the importance of the

occasion and the presence of three serious candidates; out of a potential electorate of perhaps 10,000, only 5,580 electors registered and 3,195 actually voted (although this was a higher turnout than for the 1946 BTC election). This level of participation compared poorly with the inaugural election to the Sierra Leone Legislative Council in 1924 when 89 percent of those registered had cast their votes, but quite favorably with the inaugural elections to the Nigerian and Gold Coast Legislative Councils. Nevertheless, the outcome was decisive. Small gained 1,491 votes (47 percent of those cast) to the 1,018 of Fye (32 percent), and the 679 of Garba-Jahumpa (21 percent); Rendall and Finden Dailey polled a mere seven votes between them.<sup>37</sup> Small was consequently appointed to the Legislative Council for a three-year term, as well as to the Executive Council. The reasons for his success are considered below.

First, and most important, it is clear that the electorate did not vote along rigid religious or ethnic lines. No doubt Small received the votes of most Aku and of most Protestants, but he must also have been supported by a substantial number of Muslims. To demonstrate that he was not solely a Christian Aku candidate, Small was careful to select the Muslim Wolof trader, A. W. M'Bye (his ally in the controversy over the Pan-African Congress meeting in 1945), as one of his three nominators. No doubt he (or his supporters) also emphasized that Muslims were always placed in leading positions within the trade union and political organizations he established and that, throughout his career, he had been willing to take up the cases of Muslims (as well of Christians) with the authorities.<sup>38</sup> Behind the scenes, Small also used Ousman Jeng, the still influential former legislative councillor, to stir up latent hostility to Fye within parts of the Muslim community in Bathurst. Jeng probably also sought to persuade Muslim voters that the overtly sectarian stance adopted by Garba-Jahumpa was out of keeping with Gambian political traditions.<sup>39</sup>

Second, it is likely that the electorate considered that Small had been responsible for the achievement of the franchise. As noted, the initiative was in fact taken by the Gambian government, although of course Small had been pressing the case for more than twenty years and had recently been the leading member of the Franchise Committee. Consequently, Bathurst opinion appears to have been that it would be an act of ingratitude to deny Small the honor of being the first elected member of the Legislative Council. Small's supporters probably also pointed out that, contrary to the wishes of the representatives of Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary on the Franchise Committee, Fye was opposed to the idea of having two separate constituencies.<sup>40</sup>

Third, since his appointment to the Council in 1942, Small had proved more responsive to the needs of his constituents than Fye. He was willing to take up their grievances and also to criticize unpopular legislation. In contrast, Fye's main concern appeared to have been to further his own business interests by using his influence to obtain the army cattle contract or to secure his full quota of cloth. Such actions were probably resented, particularly because Fye apparently made little attempt to take up the grievances of Bathurst citizens with the authorities

(although he did show greater concern for prominent inhabitants of the Protectorate). This suggests that the belief of the *Crown Colonist's* correspondent, that Fye enjoyed “a wide influence and popularity amongst all sections of the community” was wide of the mark.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, it is at least conceivable that, in the last stages of the campaign, Garba-Jahumpa encouraged some of his supporters to switch their allegiance to Small to prevent Fye winning the contest. In an interview with one of the authors in 1984, Garba-Jahumpa claimed that when it became clear shortly before polling day that he could not hope to win, his supporters in Kombo St. Mary were asked to vote for Small to ensure that Fye was defeated. Although on the face of it, this version of events seems unlikely, given the known enmity between Small and Garba-Jahumpa at this time, it should be noted that an independent source made a similar suggestion in separate interviews (and at different times) to both co-authors.<sup>42</sup>

It should also be noted that some of the disadvantages Small faced may have been more real than apparent. It is probable that many of Garba-Jahumpa's supporters were under the age of twenty-five and therefore ineligible to vote. Furthermore, some farmers of Kombo St. Mary may have viewed with skepticism Fye's claim to be their natural representative, whereas others may have failed to register because registration took place at the height of the farming season. Small may also have benefited from the support of the Kombo chiefs, who conceivably instructed the “commoners” under their jurisdiction to vote for him. Small later claimed that, in 1947–48, he had been asked by these chiefs to be their representative on the Legislative Council.<sup>43</sup>

Small's victory in the 1947 election proved to be his crowning political achievement. After 1947, he was much less politically active than hitherto and spent a great deal of time abroad attending international trade union conferences on behalf of the GLU. Fye also retired from politics after his electoral defeat, and Garba-Jahumpa left Bathurst in 1949 to work as a teacher in Georgetown.<sup>44</sup>

## 1950 Wyn-Harris Constitution

Because Small had been appointed to the Legislative Council for a three-year term in November 1947, the second direct election should have taken place no later than November 1950. But it was delayed by the introduction of the first Wyn-Harris Constitution. In May 1950, Percy Wyn-Harris, who succeeded Sir Andrew Wright as governor in 1949, proposed to the Colonial Office that the number of elected members of the Legislative Council be increased to three. Two of these should be elected in a single two-member constituency in Bathurst, the third in Kombo St. Mary. Wyn-Harris also argued that each voter in Bathurst should be granted only one vote (even though two candidates were to be elected). He hoped that this mechanism would protect minority interests and help to prevent the development of “a party system of Government in the Gambia.” This novel idea

caused some concern in the Colonial Office, but the governor's proposals were formally accepted in September 1950.<sup>45</sup> This was too late for the changes to be implemented before the November election, a fact that was once again blamed on the volume of work. However, as Wyn-Harris (echoing Blood) caustically pointed out, "political advancement appears more likely to be expedited in places where there is political disturbance than where the people behave in a peaceful, loyal and orderly manner."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the amended Order-in-Council was not prepared until June 1951 and, owing to Wyn-Harris' absence from the colony, the election did not take place until October.

Prior to the promulgation of the new constitution, Wyn-Harris had also discussed the future composition of the Executive Council with the Colonial Office. He suggested that a fourth unofficial be added to the council and that two of the four should be appointed "members of the government." They would be permitted to tender advice to the governor on a range of subjects, including development, education, and public works, but would not be offered specific portfolios. Each "member of the government" would also be expected to support any government measure in the Legislative Council on a subject for which he was the adviser and to resign if in disagreement with the government over a major issue. It should be emphasized that Wyn-Harris did not regard the appointment of "members of the government" as the first step toward a full ministerial system, which was "not a practical policy here." His proposals were accepted by the secretary of state at the beginning of August 1951 and published in the *Gambia News Bulletin*.<sup>47</sup>

## 1951 Legislative Council Election

### Candidates

Seven candidates contested the second direct election to the Legislative Council in Bathurst. Three of these, Small, Garba-Jahumpa, and Finden Dailey, had competed in the 1947 election; the other four, Rev. J. C. Faye, P. S. N'Jie, Mustapha Colley, and J. Francis Senegal, had not done so, although one of them (Faye) was already a nominated member of the council.

The first of the new candidates, John Colley Faye, was born in 1907 of a Serere father (who was a storekeeper in the Public Works Department) and a Wolof mother. Faye was a fluent Wolof speaker and is best regarded as a "Wolofized" Serere. He was educated at the (Wesleyan) Methodist Boys' High School (MBHS) before becoming a teacher in the early 1930s. Following a period of training in England at the University of Southampton, he was appointed headmaster of St. Mary's Anglican School, Bathurst, in 1939. In 1942, he became the first headmaster of a recently established Anglican mission school at Kristikunda in Upper River Division (URD). Two years later he assumed full control of the mission station. In February 1947, he became the first Gambian to be ordained as an Anglican deacon and, having served his curacy at Kristikunda, he returned to Bathurst in 1949 to



serve as curate of St. Mary's Cathedral. It was in recognition of his educational work in the area, which had also brought him an MBE, that he was appointed to the Executive Council by Governor Wright in November 1947, on the recommendation of the commissioner of the URD.<sup>48</sup>

Although Faye does not seem to have been particularly active in politics before World War II, the RPA persuaded him to stand for election to the BATC for the Portuguese Town Ward in 1940. Elected unopposed, he transferred to the Joloff Town North ward in 1941 and retained his seat until November 1942, when he resigned from the BATC on his transfer to Kristikunda. He continued to follow political events during his sojourn in the Protectorate and, on his return to Bathurst, soon became active in local politics once again.<sup>49</sup>

To improve his prospects in the forthcoming election, Faye first pioneered a trade union, the Motor Drivers' and Mechanics' Union (MDMU); like Garba-Jahumpa in 1947, he seems to have viewed trade unionism primarily as a source of votes. Under the auspices of a "Committee of Union and Progress," he then set about establishing a new, broadly based, political organization by inviting a variety of cultural groups and trade unions to a series of committee and "mass" meetings to discuss his ideas. These meetings attracted an enthusiastic response and the process culminated in the public proclamation of the Gambia Democratic Party in June 1951; Faye was appointed party leader.<sup>50</sup> The bulk of the GDP's support was derived from the Aku and Wolof communities and consisted of civil servants, traders, and commercial clerks, as well as some of the more elderly former supporters of Small, such as Henry Jones and Cyril Richards. Many GDP supporters were Christian, but the party also attracted support from a significant number of educated Muslims.<sup>51</sup>

Two other new candidates stood as Independents. One of these, J. F. Senegal, an ex-journalist turned auctioneer, had been a founding member of the Bathurst Urban District Council in 1931 and was currently an elected member of the BTC. He therefore had a bedrock of support in his Soldier Town ward.<sup>52</sup> But it was most unlikely that he would manage to capture "Protestant" votes from either Faye or Small.

The other Independent, Pierre Sarr N'Jie, was a political newcomer, but seemed a much stronger candidate. A Wolof then aged forty-two, P. S. N'Jie had been brought up as a Muslim, before converting to Roman Catholicism at the age of twenty. He began his career as a teacher at St. Augustine's School in Bathurst before entering the civil service in 1929. After working in a series of government departments, he transferred to the Judicial Department as assistant clerk of the courts in 1932, where he remained until 1943.<sup>53</sup> Until then, he appeared to follow a not untypical civil service career. However, in February 1943, he was suddenly arrested on a charge of forgery in a complicated case involving the eviction of two tenants from a property owned by one of his cousins and in which N'Jie himself had an interest. Following a five-day trial, he was acquitted by the local magistrates on the grounds of a lack of evidence. He then tried to institute civil proceedings for false imprisonment and malicious prosecution against the two European

police officers who had arrested him, but was refused permission to pursue the case by Governor Blood. N’Jie later claimed that one of the officers, Assistant Police Superintendent Cyril Roberts, was a notorious racist and womanizer who bore him a grudge; he also alleged that Roberts received Blood’s support because he was a European, and he was an African, and that the colonial secretary, Rex Ward, used Sheikh Omar Fye to threaten him about his future career prospects if he pursued the action. Despite his acquittal, N’Jie in the meantime was transferred to another government department, but his career in the civil service soon came to an end when a Medical Board ruled in June 1943 that he was suffering from “cardiac trouble.” He was therefore allowed to retire on medical grounds with a pension and a gratuity.<sup>54</sup>

Three months later, in September 1943, having concluded that the chances that he would find suitable employment in Gambia were slim, he traveled to England to begin training as a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn in London. Having become the first Wolof to be called to the bar in 1948, he returned to Bathurst in early 1949 to set up a law firm. Almost immediately, he petitioned first the Gambian government and then the secretary of state for compensation for the damage done to his health and reputation as a result of his arrest and prosecution and the financial losses he had incurred from leaving the civil service. The Gambian government remained unsympathetic to his plight, and although the Colonial Office believed that Blood had been wrong to deny N’Jie access to the courts, the secretary of state finally ruled in February 1950 that he was not entitled to any compensation.<sup>55</sup>

P. S. N’Jie’s treatment by the Gambian government was not dissimilar to that experienced by E. F. Small some twenty years earlier. Both men felt that they were treated unfairly by the colonial authorities, with their sense of grievance heightened by the fact that their respective European opponents soon afterward fell foul of the colonial authorities.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that, as in the case of Small in 1919, N’Jie’s personal experience was a catalyst for his decision to enter politics. He was encouraged to do so by two disparate groups within Bathurst society. First, the Roman Catholic community, which was critical of a government proposal that the four existing secondary schools in the colony be replaced by a single, nondenominational, school, was keen for its interests to be defended at the highest levels by one of its own. Second, a section of the Muslim community was willing to support N’Jie (who remained on good terms with many Muslims) because of their distrust of Garba-Jahumpa’s sectarian approach to politics.<sup>57</sup>

The other newcomer to politics was one of the joint editors of the *Gambia Weekly News*, Mustapha Colley. Colley stood in conjunction with his co-editor, John Finden Dailey, the two having established the Common People’s Party a few weeks before the election. Colley assumed the post of secretary of the Bathurst Trade Union earlier in the year in the hope of capturing the trade union vote, but his chances seemed remote; only a week before the poll, he was defeated (albeit narrowly) in Half Die in the BTC election. Finden Dailey had even less chance, having won only four votes in the 1947 Legislative Council election and twenty-five in the recent BTC election.<sup>58</sup>

The two remaining candidates in Bathurst, Garba-Jahumpa and Small, were supported by political organizations (rather than by political parties). The former, who was now headmaster of Bakau School, apparently helped to draft the political program of the GDP. Nevertheless, in August 1951, he announced that he would stand for election, once again as the candidate of the BYMS.<sup>59</sup> Small did not enter the contest until mid-September, much later than most of his rivals, and it is probable that he originally intended to retire and throw his weight behind Faye. Faye had been regarded as his political protégé since his quarrel with Garba-Jahumpa in 1947; the two men worked closely together at the Africa Conference in London in 1948 and coordinated the protests in Bathurst against the transfer of the popular Governor Wright in 1949. Faye was also a former member of the RPA and the main Protestant candidate. But the two men fell out after the unofficial members of the Legislative Council selected Faye to represent Gambia at the Festival of Britain celebrations in London in July 1951. Small had assumed that, as the “senior unofficial” member of the council, he would be the automatic choice and was clearly resentful that Faye declined to withdraw in his favor. Perhaps in a fit of pique, he therefore decided to stand for election once again, this time as the candidate of the Gambia National League, a new creation that incorporated the Committee of Citizens (which had not functioned since the 1930s) and other largely ephemeral organizations.<sup>60</sup>

The separate election in Kombo St. Mary attracted three candidates: Henry Madi, a naturalized Gambian of Lebanese extraction, who was the scion of the leading commercial family in the colony and said to be “incomparably the richest man in the Gambia”<sup>61</sup>; J. W. Kuye, an Aku accountant; and Howsoon O. Semega-Janneh, a wealthy businessman prominent in the transport industry. Semega-Janneh, whose family originated from Mauritania, was a Serahuli who was “Wolofized” by residence in the Colony.<sup>62</sup>

## Election Results

Despite the increased number of candidates and the protracted nature of the campaign, only 2,262 votes were cast in Bathurst and a further 1,075 in Kombo St. Mary. The very low turnout surprised the public, but was easily explained; the many errors and omissions in the registers effectively disenfranchised a large number of voters, including many who were able to vote in 1947. Faye headed the poll in Bathurst, and he gained 905 votes (40 percent of those cast), with Garba-Jahumpa, who received 828 votes (37 percent), also being elected. Both men were subsequently appointed to the Executive Council as a “member of the government” by Wyn-Harris. N’Jie was the best placed of the unsuccessful candidates with 463 votes (20 percent); Small picked up only forty-five votes and the remainder just twenty-one votes between them. Meanwhile, in Kombo St. Mary, Madi easily defeated Kuye and Semega-Janneh; after the election, he was also appointed to the Executive Council.<sup>63</sup>

Faye probably owed his victory to four factors. First, the GDP was much the best organized participant in the election. It began campaigning before its rivals and

apparently cornered the market in drummers (i.e., griots), whose role was to call people to Faye's public meetings. The GDP may also have used the taxi drivers enrolled in the MDMU to ferry pro-GDP voters to the polls.<sup>64</sup> Second, like Small in 1947 and to demonstrate that he was not just a "Christian" candidate, Faye invited a prominent and wealthy Muslim businessman in Bathurst to be one of his nominators. This was Momodou Musa (M. M.) N'Jie, an import/export merchant originally from the URD, who was to continue to play an important, if indirect, role in national politics for several decades.<sup>65</sup> Faye's tactic paid off; a number of educated Muslims (as well as many Christians) appear to have voted for him. Third, the GDP was the most trenchant critic of the unpopular Wyn-Harris government. It criticized the fact that each voter was allowed only a single vote in a two-member constituency (and therefore in practice possessed only half a vote) and it disliked the constraints that were to be imposed on the "members of the government." It also attacked the slow pace of Africanization under the Wyn-Harris administration.<sup>66</sup> Finally, Faye was reportedly the first (but by no means the last) Gambian politician to seek to boost his electoral support by distributing free bags of rice to the electorate.<sup>67</sup>

Garba-Jahumpa, the other successful candidate, fared much better than in 1947, probably because he enjoyed the support of most Muslims, including Almami Mama Bah.<sup>68</sup> This more than compensated for the loss of trade union votes brought about by the winding up of the GATU in 1948. The BYMS also benefited from its attacks on the limitations of the new constitution (it called for the creation of a full ministerial system), and Garba-Jahumpa's long experience in municipal politics stood him in good stead. Its major disadvantage was that it was perceived by most Christians and many Muslims to be a sectarian party.<sup>69</sup>

Although unsuccessful, N'Jie fared respectably, considering that he had no prior base in municipal politics, nor any formal organization behind him, although he did enjoy the support of the *Gambia Echo*. He managed to pick up a fair share of Muslim votes, in part because of the endorsement of the still influential Ousman Jeng, and he might have fared even better if he had attacked the Wyn-Harris constitution.<sup>70</sup> Finally, unlike the Colonial Office, the Gambian government was not surprised by Small's poor performance. Not only were his supporters "moderate and rather out-moded," they also tended to concentrate exclusively on Small's past record, particularly his pre-war record, rather than looking to the future. To compound his difficulties, Small openly endorsed the new constitution, which he suggested should be accepted "without reserve."<sup>71</sup> After his humiliating defeat, Small retired from active politics. However, after the 1954 election, he was appointed to the Legislative Council by Governor Wyn-Harris as the "nominated unofficial" member. Unlike most of his predecessors, Wyn-Harris greatly admired Small and had already been instrumental in securing him the award of an OBE. in 1953. Small retained this position on the council until his death in January 1958.<sup>72</sup>

Small's retirement marked the end of an era, because it meant that all the leading politicians of the 1920s and 1930s had either died or ceased to be actively

involved in politics. His defeat in 1951 also signified the demise of the Aku minority as an independent force in Gambian politics, just as the failure of the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL) in the 1957 election was to end an independent Creole role in Sierra Leonean politics. Except temporarily (as after the death of W. D. Carrol), the Aku had enjoyed unbroken representation on the Legislative Council since 1883, but after 1951, the community provided few prominent politicians. Like the Creoles in Sierra Leone, the Aku community did, however, continue to play an influential role, through its continued domination of the upper ranks of the civil service and the professions.<sup>73</sup>

### 1954 Wyn-Harris Constitution

The third election to the Legislative Council in 1954 was fought under a new constitution. As noted, Wyn-Harris was anxious to prevent the evolution of a ministerial system of government. He argued that, outside the ranks of the civil service, there were too few Gambians capable of serving as ministers and that even these were not of ministerial caliber; that all the potential candidates hailed from the Colony and would therefore be likely to disregard the interests of the Protectorate; and that the territory could not afford the cost of establishing ministries or paying ministerial salaries.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing that there would be disappointment in Bathurst that Gambia was not to progress down the normal constitutional path to self-government, Wyn-Harris set up a Consultative Committee in April 1953 to draw up proposals for a revised constitution. The committee consisted of thirty-four prominent citizens of the Colony, all but two of whom were Africans. Its members were selected after the governor had consulted two of the three unofficial members of the Executive Council, Garba-Jahumpa and Henry Madi. Faye, the third unofficial member of the Executive Council, was absent from the colony but, according to Wyn-Harris, he stated that he would accept the nominations and, on his return, “tacitly” did so.<sup>75</sup>

The Consultative Committee, which met six times in May 1953, recommended that unofficial representation on the Legislative Council be increased to sixteen. Four members should be directly elected in Bathurst and Kombo St. Mary. Seven should be indirectly elected (three by the Chiefs’ Conference and four by a Divisional Electoral Conference) to represent the Protectorate and three should be chosen by the previously elected councilors from a pool of candidates put forward by the BTC and the Kombo Rural Authority. There should also be two appointed members: a person “skilled in commerce” should be appointed by the governor “after consultation with” the Legislative Council and one unofficial should be appointed “after approval by” the Council. A speaker should also be appointed “after approval by” the council. The three Bathurst members should all be elected in a single constituency but, as in 1951, each voter should possess only one vote. This device would enable the three main segments of Bathurst society—Muslims, Protestants and Catholics—each to have a chance of getting one of its

number elected. Finally, the Consultative Committee called for the concession of an unofficial majority on the Executive Council. Moreover, at least two of the six nonofficial councilors should be called “ministers” and given responsibility for specific departments.<sup>76</sup>

Wyn-Harris accepted most of the recommendations of the Consultative Committee and they were eventually incorporated into the revised constitutional instruments. But various changes were made to the report, mainly at the insistence of the Colonial Office. First, the Colonial Office objected to the writing into the constitutional instruments of a requirement for consultation. Whereas the Consultative Committee had proposed that the “nominated unofficial” member of the Legislative Council and the speaker should be appointed by the governor “after approval by” the Legislative Council, the secretary of state opposed the writing into the constitutional instruments of a formal requirement that these appointments should be made “after consultation with” the council. Second, and more important, the Colonial Office modified the Consultative Committee’s proposals about “ministers.” The committee suggested that, if requested either by the minister concerned or by an official member of the Executive Council, an Advisory Committee would be set up to help the minister to carry out his duties. However, the secretary of state insisted that ministers should be required to work with the Advisory Committees, a potentially significant diminution of their authority.<sup>77</sup> As indicated below, these changes to the Consultative Committee’s proposals were to become a factor in the election.

## **The 1954 Legislative Council Election**

### **Candidates and Parties**

The third Legislative Council election was held in October 1954. Four candidates competed for three seats in Bathurst: Faye, Garba-Jahumpa, P. S. N’Jie, and George St. Clair Joof, a barrister and former member of the BTC.<sup>78</sup> The three candidates who had stood in 1951 all now headed political parties: Faye led the GDP, Garba-Jahumpa, the Gambia Muslim Congress and N’Jie, the United Party.

The GMC, which was founded in January 1952, was an amalgamation of about forty Muslim organizations, including the BYMS. The new party was endorsed not only by Almami Mama Bah and the Assistant Almami, Momadou Lamin Bah, but also by Sheikh Omar Fye and other Muslim dignitaries. Its support was drawn exclusively from Muslims and very largely from Muslim Wolof; it had few non-Wolof leaders, except for the “Wolofized” Serahuli brothers, H. O. and B. O. Semega-Janneh. The GMC’s leading members included the growing number of educated Muslims employed in the civil service or as commercial clerks and the party was pledged to end the discrimination faced by Muslims in the provision of educational facilities. But its critics argued that it enjoyed little popular support outside Half Die, Garba-Jahumpa’s stronghold.<sup>79</sup>

According to Gailey (and most subsequent commentators), the UP was founded as early as October 1951, immediately after N’Jie’s defeat in the second Legislative Council election. But this seems very unlikely. The Political Intelligence Report (normally a reliable source of information) for April 1953 stated that there were only two parties in Bathurst, the GDP and the GMC, and Fletcher notes that she was told by P. S. N’Jie that the UP was founded about six months before the 1954 election, which is consistent with this evidence.<sup>80</sup>

The UP, like the GMC, drew its support mainly from the Wolof community, in particular from Wolof associated with the Saloum District of Central Division; N’Jie claimed to be descended from the kings of Saloum and the “Saloum Kheet (or Het)” or “Saloum-Saloum” factor (i.e., quintessential Wolofness) seems to have been an important element in the UP’s development. Moreover, like the GDP, the UP was not confined to one religious group. Roman Catholics welcomed the formation of a party led by one of their number, but Muslims were also well represented. The latter were no doubt assured that the UP would not be converted into a “Catholic” party by the fact that many of P. S. N’Jie’s relatives, including his half-brother E. D. (a future party leader), remained Muslim. Finally, the UP attracted strong support from (Wolof) women, many of whom were organized in women’s societies presided over by “Yayi Kompins”, in which N’Jie’s sister, Yadicone, played a prominent role.<sup>81</sup>

## **Election Results**

Since 1951, the electoral registers had undergone a wholesale revision and the number of registered voters in Bathurst had risen to 6,286. Owing to the introduction of a new system of voters’ cards, many of the problems that beset the 1951 election were eliminated and 94 percent of all registered voters went to the polls. According to the later report of the chief superintendent of police, public order was maintained effectively throughout the period of the campaign and on polling day, although party feelings ran high and there was some animosity between the parties on occasions. All three candidates who competed in 1951 substantially increased their total vote. More surprisingly, the order of the three candidates changed, with N’Jie rising from third to first by picking up 2,123 votes (36 percent of those cast). Faye gained 1,979 votes (33 percent), and Garba-Jahumpa 1,569 votes (26 percent), but St. Clair Joof won only 252 votes (4 percent).<sup>82</sup>

Several factors help to explain the remarkable progress made by N’Jie in the Bathurst constituency since 1951. Then, he stood as an Independent, whereas in 1954, he had the support of a party behind him. Fletcher considers this very important, but it should not be given too much weight; at the time of the 1954 election, the UP probably had a very undeveloped structure. It is likely that the role played in the campaign by the party’s informal network of Yayi Kompins was more significant; indeed, the UP may have derived the bulk of its support from women. An official in the Colonial Office subsequently claimed that N’Jie was elected “primarily by the women,” and a British academic, J. H. Price (who was in

Bathurst at the time of the election), cryptically suggested that “a great deal of P. S. N’Jie’s electoral success . . . could be attributed to his undoubted ability to be all things to all women at all times.”<sup>83</sup> In addition, N’Jie probably had much greater resources at his disposal than his opponents. Since 1951, his law practice had expanded considerably, primarily because he played a key role in a series of transactions in which land in Bathurst had been transferred from Africans to Lebanese. This had apparently made him “very wealthy” and no doubt enabled him, when the time came, to spend heavily on securing his election. It may be no coincidence that both the governor and the GDP subsequently claimed that many votes had been purchased during the election, although admittedly neither specifically charged the UP with this offence.<sup>84</sup> Finally, unlike his opponents, N’Jie was not associated with the increasingly unpopular Wyn-Harris administration (other than through participation in the 1953 Consultative Committee).<sup>85</sup>

Rev. J. C. Faye, who headed the poll in 1951, more than doubled his vote in 1954, but saw his share of the vote fall to 34 percent. Since the previous election, Faye had faced financial difficulties because of the failure of his business concerns, notably the Pilot Produce Syndicate. Indeed, one of his creditors brought a judgment writ against him in March 1953, and others appear to have held off taking action only because of his political influence.<sup>86</sup> It is likely that these difficulties weakened his chances in the 1954 election, if only because it made it harder for him to mount an effective campaign.

Faye had also encountered political problems, having twice been dismissed from the Executive Council. In mid-June 1952, the three elected members of the Legislative Council, Faye, Garba-Jahumpa, and Henry Madi, informed the secretary of state, Oliver Lyttleton, during a visit to Gambia that there was popular pressure for further constitutional reform. Wyn-Harris was furious that they had done so without discussing the matter with him first and told the three men that his confidence in them as members of the Executive Council was badly shaken. A fortnight later, Faye made remarks at a public meeting on June 26 that were interpreted by Wyn-Harris, on the basis of a police report, to be a statement that he had lost confidence in the governor. Faye was ordered to confirm or deny the accuracy of the report, but refused to do so. Wyn-Harris then instructed him to resign from the Executive Council, and when Faye also refused this course of action, he dismissed him on July 4.

This decision provoked outrage in Bathurst and a “mass meeting” was called to protest against Faye’s treatment, the intention apparently being to march on Government House and throw stones at the windows. However, the meeting was abandoned because of torrential rain. Before it could be reconvened, the Anglican bishop, Roderic N. Coote, headed a deputation of “responsible and well thought of citizens of all denominations” to the governor to seek Faye’s reinstatement. Eventually, after further lengthy negotiations between Wyn-Harris, Coote, and Faye, Wyn-Harris agreed at the end of July to reinstate Faye after the latter had assured him that he did not intend to convey the impression that he had lost confidence in him.<sup>87</sup>



The political effect of this first confrontation with Wyn-Harris is hard to gauge. Wyn-Harris argued that “the general wish of Bathurst” was that unofficials should work with government and so there was disapproval of Faye’s conduct. However, it seems likely that many people in Bathurst considered that Wyn-Harris had acted unreasonably and Faye’s position may actually have been strengthened, particularly as he refused to apologize to the governor for his actions.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the main effect of the incident may have been to weaken the position of Garba-Jahumpa, who seems to have been blamed for engineering Faye’s downfall; certainly, Garba-Jahumpa had been very quick to confirm to Wyn-Harris that Faye had stated at the public meeting on June 26 that he had lost confidence in him.<sup>89</sup>

Faye’s second dismissal from the Executive Council in September 1953 officially occurred because of his prolonged unsanctioned absence from the colony. Faye claimed, however, that he was a “political martyr,” who was removed for attacking the proposed new constitution (the principles of which were published in July 1953). He had argued that the proposals of the 1953 Consultative Committee had been “very tame, and come short of what any other body, elected by the people, would have demanded”; indeed, according to Wyn-Harris, Faye stated publicly that he had only signed its report “in the interests of a peaceful solution and not because he believed in it.” He was even more critical that some of the Consultative Committee’s recommendations had been watered down, in particular over the Advisory Committees. Faye was not alone in expressing dissatisfaction with the new constitution; a committee formed in November 1953 endorsed the recommendations made by the Consultative Committee and criticized the changes made to its report. Although Faye’s opposition to the constitution was undoubtedly in tune with the popular mood, he could be criticized for having failed to adopt this position on the Executive Council.<sup>90</sup>

The third major candidate, Garba-Jahumpa, also substantially increased the number of votes he received, but saw his share of the vote fall from 37 to 27 per cent. Garba-Jahumpa had remained a member of the Executive Council and a minister throughout the life of the constitution. This gave him powers of patronage that he used to good effect; he was in fact accused in June 1952 of using his official position to secure employment for his relatives and friends.<sup>91</sup> But it also meant that he was closely associated with the unpopular administration. Perhaps his fate was sealed when he also welcomed the new constitution.<sup>92</sup> His support ebbed and a large number of Muslim notables (including the assistant Almami, Momadou Lamin Bah, a key supporter in 1951) declined to endorse him; there was even a demonstration outside Government House after his subsequent appointment as a minister.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, in the separate election in Kombo St. Mary, the incumbent, Henry Madi, defeated S. J. Oldfield, a retired Aku civil servant turned manufacturer of mineral water, by 984 votes to 650; the turnout was again extremely high, at 97 per cent.<sup>94</sup> The election of the Protectorate representatives took place earlier; the Chiefs’ Conference selected three senior Seyfolu (none of whom could speak English well), and the Divisional Electoral Conference chose one younger chief,

Seyfu Omar M'Baki, and three "commoners" to represent the four Gambian Divisions. A Tukolor, who had been Seyfu of Sami District in MacCarthy Island Division since 1949, M'Baki was much better educated than most other chiefs, having attended the MBHS. He was trained at the Njala Teacher Training College in Sierra Leone and worked as a school teacher, including at Armitage School, before his appointment as a chief. Yet despite these appointments, the chiefs remained a peripheral element in Legislative Council politics until the late 1950s.<sup>95</sup>

### **Post-Election Appointments**

Immediately after the election, the eleven newly elected members of the Legislative Council formed an electoral college to choose three more members from a list of candidates put forward by the two urban local authorities. H. O. Semega-Janneh, the defeated candidate in the 1951 Kombo St. Mary election; Jacob L. Mahoney, an Aku barrister and close relative of J. A. Mahoney; and Alieu O. Jeng, a Wolof trader, who was the son of Small's old lieutenant, were selected in this way.<sup>96</sup> These fourteen elected councilors (together with the nominated unofficial member, E. F. Small) were then asked by Wyn-Harris to nominate three candidates for the Executive Council and two "ministers." There was unanimous agreement that N'Jie and Garba-Jahumpa should be appointed to the Executive Council; Faye received thirteen out of fifteen votes. N'Jie received thirteen or fourteen votes, and Garba-Jahumpa twelve votes in the "ministerial" poll, but Faye was supported by only four councilors. Nevertheless, even though he had previously intended to appoint only two ministers, Wyn-Harris agreed to offer all three men specific portfolios once he received an assurance from Faye that he would cease to be active in business and would resign if there were any further judgments against him for debt. Presumably he anticipated that there would be an unfavorable reaction in Bathurst if Faye were to be denied a portfolio, given that he had polled more votes than Garba-Jahumpa in the Legislative Council election. N'Jie was offered responsibility for education and social welfare, Faye for public works and transport, and Garba-Jahumpa for agriculture.<sup>97</sup>

### **Party Alliances and Party Conflicts: 1954–59**

We suggested that one of the underlying purposes behind both constitutions promoted by Governor Wyn-Harris was to prevent the evolution of a party political system in Bathurst. His strategy of allowing each voter only one vote in a three-member constituency appeared to be vindicated by the outcome of the 1954 election. All three major interests in the town secured representation on the Legislative Council and no one party could dominate proceedings. Nevertheless, during the second half of the 1950s, partisan rivalries intensified, even though the three parties remained "patron" parties and failed to develop the characteristics

of “mass” parties.<sup>98</sup> One consequence was that, as elsewhere in West Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, political alliances were formed, broken, and reformulated by politicians anxious to outflank their rivals.<sup>99</sup> The UP and GDP formed a loose political alliance between the end of 1955 and mid-1959 to isolate the GMC. The GDP then joined forces with the GMC in a last-minute attempt to prevent the UP dominating Gambian politics, and eventually signed a merger in 1960. Meanwhile, a fourth party, the Gambia National Party (GNP) was formed in 1957 as a pressure group ostensibly above party politics. This was a somewhat outdated concept and the GNP was unsuccessful; by 1960, one section of its leadership had joined the UP and another the GDP.

The first sign of party conflict occurred in October 1955 when the UP and the GDP formed an electoral pact for the BTC election; each party was to be given a free run in two wards. The pact was directed against the GMC, which held Half Die and hoped to oust the UP in New Town East.<sup>100</sup> Both parties in fact retained their respective seats, but ill feeling was stirred up between the parties and the day after the election, there was an affray between GMC and UP supporters near Garba-Jahumpa’s house in Bathurst. Several UP supporters were arrested (including P. S. N’Jie’s nephew) and this provoked the UP leader to accuse Garba-Jahumpa of being “the principal participant in this fight” and of having imported a consignment of whips from Senegal to be used to attack UP supporters. N’Jie urged the attorney general to charge Garba-Jahumpa and, when he declined to do so, accused the chief superintendent of police of suppressing crimes of violence and of treating lightly an “averted massacre of innocent people.”<sup>101</sup>

Governor Wyn-Harris responded by announcing the appointment of a commission of inquiry to examine N’Jie’s allegations against the police. The commissioner, a retired senior puisne judge in the Nigerian government, F. H. Baker, concluded that there was no evidence to support the charges and strongly criticized N’Jie’s conduct.<sup>102</sup> Wyn-Harris then instructed N’Jie to resign from the Executive Council and as minister of education but, like Faye in 1952, he refused to do so. He was therefore first suspended and then dismissed in January 1956. A memorial, containing over 4,000 signatures, was presented to Wyn-Harris to protest against the Baker Report. However, unlike in 1952, the governor refused to compromise and N’Jie remained outside the government for the rest of the life of the constitution.<sup>103</sup> The UP was convinced that Garba-Jahumpa had engineered the whole affair to discredit N’Jie and thereafter, there was “deep and bitter enmity” between the two men.<sup>104</sup> Public opinion generally sympathized with N’Jie and in the next BTC election in October 1956, Garba-Jahumpa—who had been returned unopposed in 1953—held on to his seat in Half Die by only eight votes, after a record turnout.<sup>105</sup>

### **Pressure for Constitutional Change: 1957–60**

According to Wyn-Harris, the UP and GDP now decided to band together to press for constitutional reform “to place effective political control of the Gambia in

their joint hands.”<sup>106</sup> By 1958, developments elsewhere in West Africa were beginning to have an impact. The Gold Coast achieved independence as Ghana in March 1957, and in Sierra Leone, Sir Milton Margai was appointed premier in 1956 and became prime minister on the attainment of full internal self-government in 1958.<sup>107</sup> Inspired by these events, the two parties drew up constitutional proposals in 1957, which differed in detail, but were not dissimilar in overall approach. For example, both criticized the allocation of only one vote to each voter in a three-member constituency, which had prevented parties fielding more than one candidate in 1954; the indirect methods of election that were used; and the enforced dependence of ministers on Advisory Committees. They also called for direct elections throughout the Colony and Protectorate to an enlarged Legislative Assembly; the division of Bathurst into five single-member constituencies; the abolition of Advisory Committees; and the replacement of the Executive Council by a council of ministers under a chief minister (GDP) or a cabinet headed by a prime minister (UP).<sup>108</sup>

When he returned from leave in November 1957, Wyn-Harris offered to meet Faye and N’Jie to discuss their proposals informally, but both men declined to do so.<sup>109</sup> In the previous month, it had been announced that Wyn-Harris would retire in mid-1958 and, given both his attitude to constitutional reform and his obvious dislike of them, the two party leaders preferred to await the arrival of his successor. Wyn-Harris was increasingly unpopular in Bathurst and when he left Gambia in April 1958, he quietly slipped across the border into Senegal with little fanfare. According to one former government official, this was to avoid embarrassing demonstrations.<sup>110</sup>

He was succeeded by Sir Edward Windley who, like his predecessor, had spent most of his career in Kenya, his most recent appointment having been as chief native commissioner and minister for African affairs.<sup>111</sup> Unlike Wyn-Harris, Windley (who arrived in Gambia in June) was quite willing to listen to Gambian demands for further constitutional change. He therefore convened a series of constitutional conferences at Brikama (October 1958), Georgetown (January 1959), and Bathurst (March 1959) to discuss the issue.<sup>112</sup>

Even before Windley’s arrival, the UP and GDP had drawn up a resolution in April to the secretary of state, which called for the concession of self-government in 1959.<sup>113</sup> This resolution was also endorsed by the GNP. The GNP had been founded the previous July by the leading figures in an informal “Committee of Gentlemen.” It had no overall party leader, but rather a collective leadership which included Edrissa J. Samba, a “firebrand” Wolof trader; Melvin B. Jones, an equally fiery Aku journalist; John W. Bidwell-Bright, a well known Aku businessman; and Kebba W. Foon, a Wolof chartered accountant, who had returned to Gambia in 1955 after living in Britain for ten years.<sup>114</sup> Its leaders frequently attacked the policies and the personnel of the Gambian government and the performance of the existing ministers in public meetings and through the columns of a Bathurst newspaper established in early 1958, *The Vanguard*, which was owned by Bidwell-Bright and edited by Jones. They also urged the existing parties to press

more strongly than hitherto for constitutional reform but, at least initially, did not seek to challenge the other parties in BTC elections.<sup>115</sup>

The call for self-government was not, however, supported either by the third Bathurst party, the GMC, or by the Protectorate chiefs who, in the absence of any Protectorate parties, remained the dominant element in the countryside (see Chapter 6). Although the GMC put forward constitutional proposals that were not dissimilar to those of the other parties in February 1958, it remained at odds with them. According to Wyn-Harris, the GMC was “basically conservative,” notwithstanding Garba-Jahumpa’s earlier flirtation with Pan-Africanism, and feared that unless a future constitution (like the present one) protected minorities, the party would be pushed aside by the more powerful UP and GDP. The GMC therefore attempted to stem the tide of reform. It refused to adopt the common negotiating policy agreed by the UP and GDP at the start of 1958 and then declined to sign the April 1958 resolution.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, the GDP and UP did not even bother to consult the chiefs about the April resolution, even though there were clear signs that the chiefs were beginning to play a greater role in national politics; for example, at the annual Chiefs’ Conference in February 1958, they called for an increase in the Protectorate membership of the Executive and Legislative Councils. Had they done so, the parties would have found that the chiefs did not approve of the proposals.<sup>117</sup>

Realizing the weakness of the GMC’s position, Garba-Jahumpa sought to make political capital of the situation. He was confident that he could do so; apart from religious affinities with the overwhelmingly Muslim Protectorate, Garba-Jahumpa had served as minister of agriculture since 1954 and this, he believed, gave him a special rapport with the chiefs. Consequently, at the Brikama Conference, he supported the argument of the chiefs that only “yard owners” (heads of families) and their senior wives should be enfranchised, even though the political parties had previously agreed that there should be universal adult suffrage throughout the territory. He also suggested that the chiefs should be offered government grants and even be built houses at government expense. Similarly, at the Georgetown Conference in January 1959, he seems to have accepted the view of the chiefs that no Bathurst resident should be allowed to stand as a candidate in the Protectorate, even though this was at odds with a fundamental principle of the Bathurst parties.<sup>118</sup>

Unfortunately for Garba-Jahumpa, the chiefs (who in fact were not at all impressed with his performance as minister of agriculture) did not believe he was acting in good faith and ignored his overtures.<sup>119</sup> At the final constitutional conference held in Bathurst in March 1959, the GMC therefore changed sides, a characteristic of Garba-Jahumpa’s political style on future occasions as well, and indicative of the primacy of personal advancement over political principles on his part, and generally supported the UP and the GDP.<sup>120</sup> This brought the GMC back into the political mainstream and raised the possibility that it might be able to take advantage of any breakdown in the relationship between the UP and the GDP. Despite their common strategy over constitutional reform, which had been

maintained at the three constitutional conferences of 1958–59, the two parties had drifted apart since 1955; certainly in 1957, and possibly also in 1958, their candidates stood against each other in BTC elections, which strengthened the hand of the GMC.<sup>121</sup> But until June 1959, when the UP disassociated itself from a demonstration organized by the GDP against the secretary of state, Alan Lennox-Boyd, there was no overt disagreement between the parties.

During a visit to Gambia, Lennox-Boyd held a meeting with the March conference delegates, which the GDP considered unsatisfactory. Although not ruling out any of the conference recommendations, Lennox-Boyd expressed reservations about a number of proposals.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, two of the most active GDP leaders, Alieu E. Cham-Joof (its secretary) and Councilor Crispin R. Grey-Johnson, together with M. B. Jones (general secretary of the GNP), convened a public meeting in Bathurst. The meeting was addressed by Rev. J. C. Faye, who claimed that the secretary of state intended to reject three-quarters of the conference recommendations. Faye was then asked to leave the meeting and a large crowd headed by Cham-Joof and Jones marched on Government House to protest against the visit of the secretary of state and had to be dispersed by force. Ironically, Lennox-Boyd had just arrived from Freetown where he had faced another demonstration, but this time by Creoles protesting *against* constitutional reform.<sup>123</sup> As an example of political unrest, the Bathurst “riot” was small beer when compared with the disturbances in Sierra Leone or the Gold Coast in the 1950s. Nevertheless, it had a profound effect on public opinion in Bathurst, which was quite unused to such events, and the next day the UP, the GMC, and K. W. Foon, the president of the GNP, all disassociated themselves from both the meeting and the demonstration.<sup>124</sup>

The GDP’s willingness to organize a demonstration against Lennox-Boyd suggested that it intended to repeat the tactic adopted before the 1951 and 1954 elections of posing as the most radical party. The publication of the new constitutional instruments in September 1959 provided it with good ammunition, because the proposals put forward at the Bathurst Conference in March were watered down considerably. This conference, which was attended by delegates from all four Bathurst parties, together with several independents, recommended the establishment of a House of Representatives of 34 elected and nominated members and a speaker. Nineteen members of Parliament (MPs), seven in the Colony and twelve in the Protectorate, should be elected by universal suffrage, which would mean that, for the first time, ordinary residents of the Protectorate would participate in the political process. The conference also called for an enlarged Executive Council, with an increased number of ministers under a chief minister, as well as the abolition of the unpopular Advisory Committees, which would enable ministers to be fully responsible for their departments.<sup>125</sup>

### **Windley Constitution**

Governor Windley accepted most of these proposals, including universal suffrage for the Protectorate, which he considered the most important development; the

abolition of the Advisory Committees, which he believed had failed to serve a useful purpose; and an enlarged legislature. These reforms were approved by the Colonial Office, although not without reservation; its preference would have been for only “yard owners” in the Protectorate to be enfranchised.<sup>126</sup> However, Windley (supported by the Colonial Office) insisted on various alterations being made to the conference proposals.

First, the constitutional instruments merely permitted, but did not require, the appointment of a chief minister, Windley arguing that it could not be assumed that “the new franchise would produce anyone able to count on a stable majority or, that if such a person did emerge, he would be qualified to head the administration either as leader of any one party or coalition of several.” The rejection of a chief minister meant that, in effect, Gambia had yet to reach the constitutional stage achieved in Sierra Leone as early as 1954.<sup>127</sup>

Second, the new constitution allowed for the appointment of up to six ministers, whereas the conference delegates had sought nine. Windley argued that the colony could not afford the cost in staff, buildings, and facilities for a greater number; he was also anxious that certain key posts (attorney general and financial secretary) should be filled by Europeans, because it was unlikely that suitably qualified persons would be elected to the House of Representatives.

Third, Windley accepted the argument of the Protectorate chiefs (who feared that otherwise they would be swamped by better-educated “carpet-baggers” from Bathurst) that candidates for Protectorate constituencies must either have been born in the Protectorate, or be on the electoral register there, or be recognized as hailing from Protectorate families. In contrast, the Bathurst Conference had proposed that no geographical restrictions should be imposed on candidates.<sup>128</sup>

Fourth, Windley strongly disagreed with the proposal that MPs should be paid salaries, given that the House would probably meet only three or four times a year. He was also concerned that this measure would create a class of professional politicians, which he considered undesirable. He therefore argued that MPs should receive allowances only when the House was in session.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, the governor disliked the proposal that English be made the compulsory language of the House; he feared that this would enable Bathurst politicians to dominate proceedings. He was, however, prepared to compromise on this matter by allowing the Legislative Council to decide the matter and in November 1959, it resolved that English should indeed be adopted as the language of the House.<sup>130</sup>

Immediately after the publication of the new constitution, a Committee of Citizens (which had no connection with Small’s organization of the 1930s) was established to oppose it. Its members included Garba-Jahumpa who, having failed to achieve his ends by conservatism, turned to radicalism, and other GMC leaders; E. J. Samba of the GNP; and the leaders of the recently formed Gambia Workers’ Union, Momodou E. Jallow and Henry J. Joof (who was also a member of the GNP). But it was dominated by the GDP secretary, A. E. Cham-Joof (who also became its secretary) and by other GDP leaders.<sup>131</sup> In mid-October, a petition criticizing

the constitution was presented to Windley, but it had no effect. A subsequent petition to the secretary of state was also rejected.<sup>132</sup>

According to Senghor, all four Bathurst parties were involved in the Committee of Citizens. In fact, even though the UP and GDP delegates had expressed similar opinions at the Bathurst Conference, the UP (and some GNP leaders, including Foon and Jones) were opposed to it. Moreover, after returning from England (where he had gone to prepare an appeal to the Privy Council against being barred from the legal profession), P. S. N’Jie publicly endorsed the new constitution.<sup>133</sup> Two factors may help to explain the UP’s position. First, acceptance of the constitution would mollify Protectorate opinion and facilitate its efforts to pick up votes in the rural areas. Second, even in Bathurst, public opinion seemed to be rejecting radicalism and the GDP had faced criticism “for leading people astray” by organizing the June demonstration.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, in the October 1959 BTC election, the UP unexpectedly won three seats. It retained New Town East and also won New Town West (defeating the GDP) and Half Die (where the GMC leader, Garba-Jahumpa, lost his seat). The UP also helped its new ally, M. B. Jones of the GNP, to defeat another incumbent, the GDP’s secretary, C. R. Grey-Johnson, in Soldier Town. The GMC won only one seat and both GDP candidates were defeated.<sup>135</sup>

By the end of 1959, therefore, the UP seemed to be in the ascendancy, and the GDP and the GMC were in decline. The GNP was hopelessly divided, particularly over the new constitution, and soon ceased to exist, with its leaders joining other parties.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, in contrast to Sierra Leone, where the major party since 1951 had been the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), which drew the bulk of its support from the Protectorate, none of the parties had yet attracted meaningful support outside the Colony.<sup>137</sup> This was to prove fatal because, as will be shown in Chapter 6, the Bathurst parties were soon to be outflanked by a new party, which appealed explicitly to voters in the countryside, the Protectorate People’s Party (later the People’s Progressive Party).

## Summary

Postwar constitutional reforms provided the impetus for the establishment and growth of urban political parties, which were usually set up either to fight Legislative Council elections or in response to their results. These Bathurst parties were dominated by their particular leaders, whose personal alliances and quarrels shaped the nature of politics and overrode sectarian or ethnic divisions within the Colony. Protectorate society still remained largely excluded from the political events of this period.



# 6

---

## **THE “GREEN UPRISING”**

### **THE EMERGENCE OF THE PEOPLE’S PROGRESSIVE PARTY, 1959–65**

Until the end of the 1950s, Gambian politics was essentially an urban phenomenon with the four-fifths of the population that lived in the Protectorate being excluded from national politics. However, the promulgation in 1959 of a new constitution, which allocated twelve out of nineteen directly elected seats to the Protectorate, transformed the situation. The People’s Progressive Party (PPP), which was specifically founded to give a voice to rural society in national affairs, won more seats than any other party in the first nation-wide election in 1960. Despite suffering a setback when P. S. N’Jie of the rival United Party was appointed chief minister in 1961, it achieved an overall majority in the 1962 election and its leader, D. K. Jawara, was appointed premier. The party strengthened its position after the election, so that by independence in February 1965, it controlled three-quarters of the House of Representatives. The urban parties, in contrast, were by now in terminal decline. Consequently, a “green uprising,” a term coined by Huntington to describe the seizure of power by a rurally based political movement opposed to urban based parties, had taken place in Gambia.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Origins of the People’s Progressive Party**

During the 1950s, the number of Mandinka living permanently in Bathurst (and Kombo St. Mary) increased significantly, with the recorded Mandinka population of the Colony rising from 4,115 in 1951 to 6,657 in 1963 (see table 1.5). Most Mandinka remained poorly educated and employed in low status jobs as laborers, petty traders, or domestics, but an increasing minority were now better educated and ambitious to advance themselves in the face of the economic ascendancy and

social disdain of the urban literate community. Some of these were alumni of Georgetown's Armitage School. As noted in Chapter 1, Armitage was established in the 1920s to cater for the sons and close relatives of Protectorate chiefs, but after World War II, it increased its enrolment.<sup>2</sup> Others had been "adopted" by Christian or Muslim families in Bathurst and had attended secondary schools in the capital, before obtaining clerical posts in the civil service or in the private sector.<sup>3</sup>

To cope with the vicissitudes of urban life, Mandinka immigrants founded a number of welfare and social associations in the 1950s. These included the Lillahi Warasuli (Arabic for "For God and his Messenger Society"), which was founded by Sanjally Bojang. A wealthy but unlettered Mandinka born in 1910, Bojang joined the United Africa Company (UAC) in the late 1920s and had risen to become its head labor contractor by the 1940s. The original aim of the society (which initially was called the Kombo–Niimi Friendship Society) was to ensure that provincial Mandinka who died in the capital received appropriate funerary rites, by arranging for the proper return of their bodies to their home villages. Bojang may have supported P. S. N'Jie in the early 1950s, but by the late 1950s, apparently oscillated between the Gambia Muslim Congress (GMC) and the Gambia Democratic Party (GDP).<sup>4</sup> A similar society was the Janjang Bureh Kaffo, which was founded by Ebrima N'Jie. N'Jie, who was the head of Bathurst Mandinka's community, was a confirmed United Party (UP) supporter.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the frustrations and unresolved aspirations of provincial youths living in the Colony, British officials noticed a growing unrest among the younger generation in the Protectorate itself as early as the mid-1950s. A study of the Western Division in 1955 identified a "spread of restlessness among young men."<sup>6</sup> This perceptive analysis identified several areas of discontent: youths had no opportunity to become head of their own "yard" (household) until they were forty; chiefs and elders were described as corrupt and reactionary, manipulating the district tribunals to their own advantage, while at the same time adopting a critical attitude towards the young men. The latter's restlessness was also fanned by proximity to Bathurst, with their economic grievances increasingly stirred by new political ideas deriving from the capital. The British themselves felt that some kind of reform of local administration in the Protectorate was required. Gerald Smith, the report's compiler, noted that the jealous protection of their existing powers by the chiefs, local councilors and elders ". . . was not matched in many cases by an equivalent determination to give good and progressive government to a common people."<sup>7</sup>

Early in 1957, a new organization, the Protectorate People's Society (PPS) began to establish itself in Bathurst. The PPS was founded at a meeting on December 30, 1956 at the Bathurst residence of Mamadi B. Sagnia (also known as Momodou Sanyang), a government health inspector in the Medical and Health Department, who was the son of the Seyfu of Kantora in the Upper River Division (URD). Sagnia became its first chairman; other leading figures in the organization included Baro Sanyang, an interpreter at the Magistrates Court, who was

originally from Kiang; Bakary K. Sidibeh, a teacher at Yundum College, who became its vice chairman; and B. O. Fofana, then probably an architectural draughtsman in the Public Works Department, who served as its honorary secretary (and later became an ambassador). Other members included Farimang Singhateh, a government pharmacist, who was later the first Gambian governor general and his future wife, Mrs Fanta Basse Sagnia; and M. F. Singhateh, who worked in the Audit Department.<sup>8</sup>

Three future PPP ministers, Sheriff S. Sisay, Lamin B. M'Boge, and Kebba N. Leigh, were also members of the PPS in the late 1950s. All three were from MacCarthy Island Division (MID) and were members of chiefly families. The son of the late Seykuba Sisay, a long-serving Seyfu of Niamina District, Sisay was employed as a clerk in the Education Department; by October 1958, he had succeeded Fofana as honorary secretary of the PPS. M'Boge, who was employed as a records clerk in the Public Works Department, was a close relative of Seyfu Lamin Bakoto M'Boge of Niamina Dankunku, and Leigh (who was a carpenter) was related to Seyfu Koba Leigh of Fulladu West (who was one of the representatives of the chiefs on the Legislative Council).<sup>9</sup> Many (although by no means all) of the most active members of the PPS were young,<sup>10</sup> educated (primary education in many instances), and resident in Bathurst. Most were of Mandinka origin.<sup>11</sup>

At first the PPS made little impact, but in October 1958, it unexpectedly merged with Bojang's Lillahi Warasuli society. This followed virulent criticism of Bojang (and the Protectorate people as a whole) by the Bathurst pressure group, the Committee of Gentlemen, in part because Bojang had organized a petition seeking an extension to Governor Wyn-Harris' term of office. The merger with Bojang's society greatly enhanced the status of the PPS within the Mandinka community. Bojang was appointed president and Sagnia vice president; Sisay became general secretary. The organization's stronghold was the Kombos, where Bojang wielded great influence.<sup>12</sup> Shortly afterward, the PPS resolved to convert itself into a political party, the Protectorate People's Party (ProtPP), to enable it to participate more effectively in the ongoing discussions about a new constitution.<sup>13</sup> The formation of such a party was welcomed by the Protectorate chiefs and, significantly, the establishment of the ProtPP was formally announced at the annual Chiefs' Conference at Basse in February 1959.<sup>14</sup> Over the next few months, some chiefs offered considerable assistance to the fledgling party and in some districts helped to coordinate its fund raising.<sup>15</sup>

During the first few months of its existence, the ProtPP was led by Sanjally Bojang, who devoted considerable time and resources to canvassing support for the new party in the Protectorate.<sup>16</sup> However, by the end of 1959, the ProtPP had chosen a new "party leader," David Kwesi (later Dawda Kairaba) Jawara. Born in 1924 at Barajally in MID, Jawara was the son of a prosperous, but low status—his father was a "nyamalo," a member of the leatherworker caste—Mandinka Muslim trader and farmer. He was brought up by a prominent Muslim family in Bathurst and educated initially at its Mohammedan School (where he was a student of I. M. Garba-Jahumpa) and subsequently at the Methodist Boys' High School (MBHS).

After working for two years as a nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Bathurst, he obtained a part scholarship in 1947 to study nursing at the prestigious Achimota College in the Gold Coast. In the following year, he secured a place at Glasgow University's Veterinary School, again on a part scholarship, becoming the first Mandinka to gain a university degree. On his return to Gambia in January 1954, he entered the veterinary department and by 1958, following a further period of training in Scotland, this time at Edinburgh University, he had become principal veterinary officer, the highest position in the civil service yet obtained by a Mandinka.<sup>17</sup> In 1955, he converted to Christianity, apparently so that he could marry Augusta Mahoney, a nursing sister in the Protectorate, who was the daughter of the Aku speaker of the Legislative Council, John (later Sir John) Mahoney. This was a very prestigious marriage for a provincial Mandinka.<sup>18</sup>

Jawara's appointment as leader of the ProtPP may appear surprising for several reasons. First, although he apparently joined the PPS around October 1958, he did not become an office holder of the society. Second, as noted, his family was of relatively low status in Mandinka society. But these disadvantages were more than outweighed by other factors. Jawara was one of only two Mandinka graduates at this time; he was the head of a government department; and his standing as an effective "cow doctor," in a society where cattle were highly prized, meant that he was a very popular figure in the Protectorate. He was therefore selected as "party leader" ahead of other candidates, such as B. K. Sidibeh and the only other Mandinka graduate, the director of agriculture, Dr. Lamin J. Marenah. At the same time, Bojang was confirmed as the ProtPP's national president and Sisay resigned from government service in early 1960 to become its full-time administrative secretary.<sup>19</sup>

The ProtPP thus acquired a foothold in the Protectorate by the end of 1959, but it had little or no support in Bathurst (it had not even bothered to contest the 1959 Bathurst Town Council (BTC) election). As part of its attempt to widen its appeal, particularly in the urban areas, the party dropped its formal identification with the Protectorate in December 1959 when it was renamed the People's Progressive Party (originally the Progressive People's Party) (PPP). It was now ready to prepare for the first nation-wide election in 1960.

## **The 1960 Election**

The election took place over a two-week period between May 18 and 30, 1960.<sup>20</sup> It was contested by the PPP, P. S. N'Jie's United Party and a new party, the Democratic Congress Alliance (DCA), which was formed through a merger of the GDP led by Rev. J. C. Faye and the GMC headed by I. M. Garba-Jahumpa. Each is considered in turn. The fourth urban political party, the Gambia National Party (GNP), did not formally contest the election, although, as noted, its general secretary, M. B. Jones, did stand as an Independent. The GNP was always a loose coalition of

individuals and its internal divisions were widened by the Windley Constitution, which, as noted in Chapter 5, some founder members had welcomed and others had opposed. These internal disagreements remained and it now ceased to function. There was also a separate indirect election for Protectorate chiefs, which was held at the Chiefs' Conference at Georgetown in May.

One complicating factor for this election was that, unlike in later Gambian elections, candidates were not required in 1960 to declare their party allegiance before polling day and many of them in fact chose not to do so. Although nominally Independent, a number of these candidates received the endorsement of one party or another without actually standing under its colors. Appendix table C.1 provides our assessment of the political affiliation (and ethnic origin) of all fifty-five candidates in the election, but it is not possible to be certain about either factor in all cases.

### **People's Progressive Party**

Undoubtedly, the PPP fielded more candidates of its own than either the UP or DCA. Indeed, the central leadership of the party made strenuous efforts to find candidates in all twelve Protectorate constituencies (although, as discussed below, these efforts were thwarted in Basse). The main factors in selecting candidates were an individual's record of political activity within the PPS and/or the PPP; their occupational status; and the local importance of their families.<sup>21</sup>

At least three candidates, M. B. Sagnia (Kantora); Sheriff Sisay (Niamina); and K. N. Leigh (MacCarthy Island) had been members of the PPS; a fourth, B. K. Sidibeh, was initially offered the party nomination in MacCarthy Island, hesitated over accepting, and was replaced by Leigh.<sup>22</sup> Two others, Jawara (Kombo) and Sheriff M. Dibba (Baddibu), had been prominent in the PPP in 1959–60. Dibba, who was the twenty-three-year-old son of a Mandinka farmer from Salikene in Central Baddibu, was educated at Armitage School and the MBHS. Formerly a clerk for the UAC, he had served as a PPP assistant secretary since 1959.<sup>23</sup>

Several PPP candidates in the Protectorate were either civil servants or school teachers. The former were required to resign to stand for election, but could apply to be reappointed if they were defeated at the polls (and could expect to regain their jobs). This group included Jawara, who was the most senior Protectorate-born civil servant; Sisay; and Jerreh L. B. Daffeh (Kiang), who was a junior employee in the Veterinary Department. The latter group included Michael Baldeh (Basse) and Musa S. Dabo (Wuli-Sandu).<sup>24</sup>

In Michael Baldeh's case, a more important consideration than his occupational status (or, indeed, his limited involvement in Bathurst politics in the 1950s), was that the Baldehs of Mansajang Kunda were one of the two families who contested the chieftaincy of Upper Fulladu East. Baldeh's endorsement by the PPP, which was enforced by Sanjally Bojang and other PPP militants, meant that their bitter rivals, the Kruballys of Koba Kunda, promptly turned against the party and, as noted below, three of the sons of Seyfu Jewru Krubally were to stand against the

PPP as Independent candidates. But the selection of Baldeh backfired, for although the PPP paid his election deposit, he appears to have secretly defected to the UP even before the election.<sup>25</sup> Several other PPP candidates were related to, or endorsed by, incumbent chiefs. Daffeh, for example, was apparently the nephew of Seyfu Karamo K. Sanneh of Kiang West, and Omar Jame Sise (Niani-Saloum) was the son of the Seyfu of Upper Saloum, Matar Sise. Moreover, Kalilu S. Dabo, the son of Seyfu Soro Dabo of Jarra East, was initially chosen as the PPP's candidate in Jarra, but was later dropped for supporting the idea of an alliance with the DCA and replaced by a young policeman from Sankwia, Yaya Ceesay.<sup>26</sup>

The PPP's rudimentary organization meant that it contested only two out of seven seats in the Colony. Alphonso M. (Fansu) Demba, another civil servant, was selected to fight Kombo East, and Augusta Jawara, the wife of the party leader, became the first Gambian woman to contest a Legislative Council/Parliamentary election. She stood in Soldier Town, Bathurst, a constituency in which her fellow Aku made up one-quarter of the Gambian population.<sup>27</sup> The PPP also endorsed the candidature of an Independent, A. S. C. Able-Thomas (a retired Aku headmaster), in another Bathurst seat, New Town West.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps as many as 11 of the 14 candidates who were originally selected by the PPP (i.e., including Baldeh) were Mandinka. These were D. K. Jawara, Sisay, Dibba, Daffeh, Demba, Sagnia, Leigh, Dabo, Yaya Ceesay, O. J. Sise (Niani-Saloum) and Famara B. Manneh (Niumi-Jokadu). There was also one Jola, Momodou N. Sanyang (Foni); one Fula Firdu (Baldeh); and one Aku (A. Jawara). Apart from the Jawaras, who were Methodists, and Baldeh, who was a Roman Catholic, it is probable that all were Muslims as well.<sup>29</sup> Many of them were in their 20s or 30s and were to remain politically active for two decades or more. One had a criminal record, which did not prevent him from standing for election.<sup>30</sup>

## United Party

The UP fielded fewer candidates of its own than the PPP, but appears to have endorsed a number of others who were nominally Independents. It is possible that as few as six candidates—five in the Colony and one in the Protectorate—openly declared for the UP at the time of their election.<sup>31</sup> Four of these—the party leader, P. S. N'Jie (New Town East), Joseph H. Joof (Half Die), Ishmael B. I. Jobe (New Town West), and J. E. Mahoney (Jolloff/Portuguese Town)—sought seats in Bathurst. All bar N'Jie had a background in local politics in the capital; indeed, in the equivalent wards in the 1959 BTC election, Joof and Jobe were elected and Mahoney (who was the party's general secretary) was defeated. N'Jie's half-brother, Ebrima D. N'Jie, was selected to fight Kombo West (the modern Serrekunda West). A former welfare and labor officer, who had retired from the civil service in 1955, E. D. N'Jie had qualified as a barrister in February 1958 and worked in his brother's law firm. He often served as party leader during P. S. N'Jie's many absences from the Colony. Two of the five UP candidates in the Colony were lawyers (the two N'Jies); Mahoney was a retired school teacher; Jobe worked as a writer for the shipping line, Elder Dempster; and Joof was a clerk.<sup>32</sup>

The party's only definite candidate in the Protectorate was Alasan N. Touray, a Wolof, who fought Niani-Saloum.<sup>33</sup> However, according to the party chairman, M. B. N'Jie, the UP fielded two other candidates in the Protectorate. One of these was certainly Michael Baldeh, and the other was probably Numukunda M. Darbo, a trader from Bansang, who contested MacCarthy Island.<sup>34</sup> If this assessment is correct, then the UP probably fielded five Wolof candidates (P. S. and E. D. N'Jie, Joof, Jobe, and Touray), one Aku (Mahoney), one Fula (Baldeh), and one Mandinka (Darbo). Thus the ethnic origin of the UP and PPP candidates differed considerably with the overrepresentation of the Wolof and the underrepresentation of the Mandinka among UP candidates being particularly striking. UP candidates also differed from their PPP counterparts in terms of religious persuasion; four out of the eight (Mahoney, Joof, P. S. N'Jie, and Baldeh) were Christian.<sup>35</sup>

M. B. N'Jie also asserted that the UP had "adopted" the GNP's general secretary, M. B. Jones (another Aku Christian), as its candidate in Soldier Town, Bathurst, and supported seven other Independent candidates in the Protectorate. He also claimed that, in total, the UP's own candidates and those it supported received just under 24,000 votes in the election. Although there is no doubt that the UP assisted Jones, as indeed he had been in the equivalent ward in the 1959 BTC election, the suggestion that the UP also endorsed candidates in most Protectorate constituencies where it did not have a candidate of its own is more controversial. N'Jie's argument was put forward to refute the colonial secretary's view that the UP gained only 6,000 votes out of a possible 69,000 in the election; he therefore had every incentive to exaggerate the degree of UP support in the country.<sup>36</sup> N'Jie provides no indication of the nature or extent of UP endorsement of the Independent candidates and it is doubtful whether it amounted to much in areas where the UP had only a rudimentary party structure. Nevertheless, we have taken N'Jie's claim at face value and have endeavored, therefore, to ascertain which candidates might have received the UP's assistance.

On the basis of the limited contemporary evidence, the reflections nearly four decades on of Assan Musa (formerly Andrew D.) Camara, one of the candidates in 1960, and the political stance adopted by individuals in the 1962 and 1966 elections (not always a reliable guide, of course, to their political leanings in 1960), our view is that the UP supported the following eight Independent candidates: Jones; A. D. Camara (Kantora); Omar J. Ceesay (Niamina); Saihou Biyai (Foni); Kantora Juwara (Wuli-Sandu); Kalilu S. Dabo (Jarra), after he had lost the PPP nomination; either B. or L. Sanneh (Kiang); and Landing Omar Sonko (Niumi-Jokadu). The ethnic origin of these candidates differed from the main UP candidates; four were Mandinka, the others being a Fula Firdu, an Aku, a Jola, and a Serahuli.<sup>37</sup> The eight presumed UP candidates—Jones and the seven candidates the party supported in the Protectorate—in total received more than 23,500 votes (irrespective of the identity of its candidate in Kiang), which would be consistent with M. B. N'Jie's claim. If this interpretation is correct, then the UP failed to nominate or support a candidate in only two constituencies, Kombo and Baddibu.

## Democratic Congress Alliance

The DCA was established only a month before the election, following the amalgamation of the GDP and GMC. Faye became "Leader of Alliance," and Garba-Jahumpa was appointed its secretary general. Other posts were divided up between the two parties.<sup>38</sup> Tactical expediency largely explained the merger for, as we have seen, the two leaders had a past history of intense personal rivalry. A joint Christian-Muslim leadership, and Faye's presumed good standing in the Protectorate (particularly in the URD), were seen as potential vote winners. Even so, the merger was not universally welcomed by GMC supporters and, as discussed below, three leading GMC members were in fact to stand as Independents in Bathurst, having failed to secure the Alliance's nomination.

The DCA nominated candidates in all five Bathurst seats. Like the UP, it relied on individuals with a background in municipal politics. Alieu B. N'Jie (Joloff/Portuguese Town) and Alieu E. Cham-Joof (New Town East) were serving members of the BTC, and Garba-Jahumpa (Half Die) and Crispin R. Grey-Johnson (Soldier Town) were former members, having been defeated in the 1959 election. The DCA's other definite candidate in Bathurst was Momodou D. Sallah, a former headmaster of Armitage School (New Town West); it is also possible that the party supported an Independent, S. J. Oldfield, who had been a candidate in the 1954 Legislative Council election, in Kombo East.

A. B. N'Jie's decision to accept the DCA nomination is particularly interesting. A Muslim Wolof in his mid-fifties who had reached the senior position of registrar of the Supreme Court before his retirement from the civil service in 1958, N'Jie had represented the Joloff/Portuguese Town ward on the BTC as an Independent since 1949. He was not listed as a DCA office holder in April 1960 and may have been persuaded to stand as a candidate for the Alliance at the last moment.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the party leader, Rev. J. C. Faye, perhaps surprisingly, contested Kombo West. He had apparently intended to stand in the Protectorate (presumably in the URD), but was prevented from doing so by the regulation that candidates in such seats must either have been born in the Protectorate or be recognized as originating from Protectorate families (the intention of the British, as noted in Chapter 5, being to prevent "carpet baggers" from Bathurst gaining a presence in the interior). This ruling in fact appears to have prevented the DCA nominating any candidates in the Protectorate at all.<sup>40</sup> Three of the known six DCA candidates, A. B. N'Jie, Cham-Joof, and Garba-Jahumpa, were Wolof; Faye was a "Wolofized" Serere; Grey-Johnson was an Aku; and Sallah was a Tukulor. Two were Christian and four were Muslim.<sup>41</sup>

## Independents

Party formation was of course still in a fledgling stage in 1960 and there was a considerable number of Independent candidates both in the Colony and the Protectorate. In the Colony, Jones, Able-Thomas, and perhaps Oldfield, received the overt or tacit endorsement of a political party, whereas, as noted, seven



Independents were supported by the UP in the Protectorate. In addition, according to Governor Windley, three GMC members who lost out when the DCA divided constituencies between the GMC and GDP, also stood as Independents.<sup>42</sup> These were H. O. Semega-Janneh, a member of the Legislative Council in the 1950s, who stood in his home area of Kombo West against the DCA party leader, Faye; I. A. S. Burang-John, an employee of the Marine Department and a GMC councilor for the Half Die ward, who opposed Garba-Jahumpa in the same constituency; and Sulayman B. Gaye, the cashier of the UAC and until recently the general secretary of the GMC, who opposed A. B. N'Jie in Joloff/Portuguese Town.<sup>43</sup>

At least two of the Independent candidates in the Protectorate, B. K. Sidibeh and Kalilu Dabo, were initially offered the PPP nomination, but later were replaced and then stood against the PPP candidate. Another, Andrew Camara, claimed that he was wooed by both the PPP and UP, but rejected the overtures of both parties at the behest of his constituents. Originally from Mansajang in the Basse area of URD, and a Fula Firdu, Camara was the son of a farmer and cattle breeder and was educated in Bathurst. An Anglican, he was then aged thirty-seven and, having taught at the Kristikunda mission school since 1948, latterly as headmaster, was a well-respected figure in the URD.<sup>44</sup>

Other Independents may have been encouraged to stand for election by individual Protectorate chiefs who were anxious to secure a voice in the new House of Representatives. For example, three of the sons of Seyfu Jewru Krubally of Fulladu East stood in Basse, Kantora, and Wuli-Sandu; Landing Omar Sonko, the son of Seyfu Landing Omar Sonko of Upper Niumi contested Niumi-Jokadu; and Kalilu B. Jammeh, the son of Seyfu Tamba Jammeh of Upper Baddibu, stood in Baddibu.<sup>45</sup> The best educated chief, Omar M'Baki of Sami, even toyed with the idea of standing as an Independent, but in the end decided not to.<sup>46</sup> Some of the remaining Independent candidates were probably genuinely unattached to any party or grouping; certainly, unlike in some neighboring French West African colonies where pro-government parties were encouraged by the colonial power to try and curb radical anti-colonial movements, there is no evidence of any official sponsorship of candidates by the Gambian government, although some officials clearly disliked the more disruptive elements in the PPP.<sup>47</sup>

### **Trade Union Neutrality**

Finally, it is worth noting that the trade union movement remained neutral in the election; unlike elsewhere in West Africa, active Gambian trade union leaders neither stood for election themselves nor endorsed a particular party.<sup>48</sup> We saw in Chapter 5 that the Gambia Labour Union (GLU) and the Gambia Amalgamated Trade Union played a small role in the 1947 Legislative Council election, and Faye established the Motor Drivers' and Mechanics' Union to try to improve his prospects in the 1951 election. The labor movement was in a moribund state in the mid-1950s and did not play a significant role in the 1954 election. However, in

February 1960, only a few months before the election, a new general workers' union, the Gambia Workers' Union (GWU), led by M. E. Jallow, organized the first successful general strike in The Gambia since 1929. In the immediate aftermath of the strike, Governor Windley gained the impression that Jallow and other union leaders would try to capitalize on their success by seeking power at the ballot box.<sup>49</sup> But in fact Jallow, who realized the danger of disruption to the union if the GWU were to participate in the election (particularly given the varied political allegiances of its leaders and rank-and-file members), chose to remain neutral. The GWU instead preferred vociferously to denounce all parties as ineffective and open to manipulation by the colonial government and demanded further constitutional reform.<sup>50</sup>

### **Election Process**

Prior to this election, a unique "drum and marble" method of voting was specially devised by two colonial officials. Under this system, a voter used a marble rather than a ballot paper to cast a vote. The marble was dropped through a narrow tube into an empty, sealed steel drum, which contained a bicycle bell; as it fell to the bottom of the drum, it struck the bell which made a sound audible to the presiding officer and the party agents outside the ballot box. One source of confusion was that the marbles used were blue—the party color of the PPP! This system was intended not only to make it easier for illiterate voters to participate (each drum bore the name, photograph, and chosen symbol of the candidate), but also to prevent electoral fraud. Multiple voting was not feasible; if a voter tried to drop two marbles into the drum, two sounds would be heard. This method (which has been used in all subsequent Gambian elections), together with the close checking of voters' credentials, was completely successful and ensured that the contest would be uncommonly honest by the standards of the region.<sup>51</sup>

The election was noteworthy, not only because it was free and fair, but also because it was not marred by any significant violence. Unlike in other pre-independence elections elsewhere in British West Africa, notably the elections in the Gold Coast in 1956 and Nigeria in 1959, there was very little unrest during the election campaign. Only two serious incidents were reported, both in the URD at Fantumbu and Basse, and only in the latter was there serious fighting between supporters of different parties and rioting.<sup>52</sup>

### **Election Results**

The election was hard fought throughout Gambia. There were thirty-five candidates for twelve seats in the Protectorate, only one of which (Kombo) was not contested, and twenty candidates for seven seats in the Colony.<sup>53</sup> The turnout was high in the Colony where more than 90 percent of the registered electorate voted. The turnout was much lower in the Protectorate, at 51 percent, in part because the registers prepared in 1959 proved defective. The registers were initially prepared

in Arabic script and many errors occurred when they were transliterated into Roman script. This made it difficult to identify individual names and quite a number of people who registered correctly were turned away at the polling stations as their names could not be found.<sup>54</sup>

The confusion over the party affiliation of candidates means that external commentators have not agreed about the detailed results. However, after a careful analysis of the evidence, including Colonial Office files released in the 1990s, our conclusion is that the PPP won nine seats, the UP five, and the DCA one. Four Independents, one of whom was allied with the UP, were also elected. This assessment differs from other accounts.<sup>55</sup> An initial report in the *Gambia News Bulletin* (*GNB*) at the beginning of June 1960 stated that the PPP had gained 27,521 votes (44 percent of those cast); the UP, 14,190 votes (22 percent); the DCA, 3,525 votes (6 percent); and the various Independent candidates between them, 17,368 votes (28 percent). This analysis of the performance of the various parties has been generally accepted by secondary sources; however, a comparison of these figures with the final results published later in the *GNB* show that they are incomplete, because a total of 69,048, rather than 62,604, votes were actually cast. It is not possible to account for the discrepancy between these figures. Our assessment is that the PPP won 25,490 votes (36.9 percent); the UP, 12,497 votes (18.1 percent); and the DCA, 3,526 votes (5.1 percent). The various Independent candidates gained 27,535 votes (39.9 percent) in total.<sup>56</sup>

Although the PPP gained fewer votes than the Independents, it won most seats. Moreover, its share of the vote would have been even greater had Jawara faced any opposition in the safe seat of Kombo. Not surprisingly, it fared particularly well in the Protectorate, where it was successful in eight out of twelve constituencies. This was an impressive achievement, given that the party was still in its infancy, and occurred for a number of reasons. First, as noted, the party often managed to persuade powerful local political leaders, like Michael Baldeh, to accept the party symbol. This pragmatic approach to candidate selection reaped rich dividends. Second, the party was much better organized than its rivals. In the months before the election, it set up a basic party structure in the countryside with PPP branches being established in many areas.<sup>57</sup> Third, it campaigned vigorously in the Protectorate, making extremely effective use of the traditional election techniques of drumming and dancing; the "osiko" drum, introduced from Senegal, served as the rallying point for young men and women. The highlight of the campaign was a grand tour of the whole Protectorate organized by Sanjally Bojang shortly before the election.<sup>58</sup> Fourth, its party leader, Jawara, was well-known and respected in the Protectorate because of his veterinary work (e.g., he had recently helped to control an outbreak of cattle rinderpest), whereas the leaders of the Bathurst parties were neither as familiar nor as well-regarded.<sup>59</sup> Fifth, the PPP was regarded at grassroots level as a farmers' party—its emblem was the hoe (the UP's was an umbrella), symbolic of the party's struggle for farmers' rights as well as independence.<sup>60</sup> Finally, the PPP was also considered to be a Mandinka party and it could thus capitalize on the built-in Mandinka majority in the Protectorate. It is

no coincidence that it won seven out of the eight Protectorate constituencies (Baddibu, Jarra, Kiang, Kombo, MacCarthy Island, Niamina, and Wuli-Sandu) in which the Mandinka comprised the largest ethnic group. The only exception was Niumi-Jokadu (where the successful Independent, L. O. Sonko, was himself a Mandinka). The PPP's other victory in the Protectorate was in Foni. The Jola comprised three-quarters of the Gambian population in this constituency and the PPP candidate, M. N. Sanyang, was a Jola.<sup>61</sup>

One other factor probably on balance also helped the PPP secure victory. During the election campaign, some PPP activists adopted a militant anti-chieftaincy stance. This probably brought the PPP more support from Protectorate "commoners," who were dissatisfied with the activities of their chiefs, than it cost it in the loss of votes from the more conservatively minded. A few chiefs who had originally supported the establishment of the PPP, were already turning against the party as early as October 1959, but there is no evidence that they campaigned as a group against the PPP. Their collective opposition to the PPP was rather to manifest itself a few months after the polls.<sup>62</sup>

In striking contrast to its success in the Protectorate, the PPP won only one seat in the Colony. This was Kombo East, where Fansu Demba defeated S. J. Oldfield by twenty-three votes. Because Oldfield was a much better known candidate, it is likely that ethnicity tipped the balance in Demba's favor; he was a Mandinka in a predominantly Mandinka constituency, whereas Oldfield was an Aku.<sup>63</sup> But Augusta Jawara was a well-beaten third in Soldier Town, her family ties having proved ineffective against two prominent local politicians, both of whom were Aku like herself. Indeed, the PPP would not be able to win a seat in Bathurst in any general election until 1972.

The UP won three Bathurst seats, New Town East, New Town West, and Half Die and was defeated only in Joloff/Portuguese Town. M. B. Jones was also successful in Soldier Town with UP support. This confirmed the UP's good showing in the 1959 BTC election when it won the same three wards and also helped Jones to win Soldier Town. It also demonstrated the personal popularity of the party leader, P. S. N'Jie, who continued to have a particularly strong following among women in the capital, and made effective use of their neighborhood associations (the "kompins"), which strengthened his party's ward organization in Bathurst. The UP also benefited from Roman Catholic support.<sup>64</sup> The party was also relatively well financed. The financial resources of the leader and other party candidates were augmented from funds raised by ward and neighborhood associations and by donations from richer members of the business community, in particular the merchant, M. M. N'Jie. A key supporter of Rev. J. C. Faye in the early 1950s, M. M. N'Jie, who was described in the mid-1960s as the richest man in The Gambia, had begun to support P. S. N'Jie in the late 1950s.<sup>65</sup>

Alasan Touray easily defeated the PPP's O. J. Sise in Niani-Saloum. This was not surprising, because this was the one Protectorate constituency in which the Wolof made up the largest single group of the population. In addition, the UP emphasis on its "Wolofness" ("Saloum Het"), with N'Jie making great play of the fact that

he was the nephew of Semu Joof, the last king of Saloum, was of course particularly effective in this constituency.<sup>66</sup> Michael Baldeh also won comfortably in Basse. However, E. D. N'Jie was defeated in a four-cornered contest in Kombo West and Darbo was defeated in MacCarthy Island.

The sole DCA winner was A. B. N'Jie. Elsewhere, the party's failure confirmed its poor showing in the 1959 BTC election, when the GMC won only one ward out of five and the GDP none. Although possibly a surprise to contemporaries, the defeat of the party's leaders, Faye and Garba-Jahumpa, was not unpredictable. Faye contested a seat (Kombo West) where he had no significant electoral base against Semega-Janneh, a wealthy candidate with strong local connections, and Garba-Jahumpa had been defeated by the same candidate, J. H. Joof, in the equivalent ward in the 1959 BTC election. This did not prevent Garba-Jahumpa publicly claiming that Joof had bribed the electorate to ensure his narrow victory (he won by sixty-six votes), a charge that was subsequently rejected by the Supreme Court.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from Jones and Sonko, two other Independents, Semega-Janneh and Camara, were successful. Jones joined the UP immediately after the election and although Semega-Janneh had defeated the UP's candidate, E. D. N'Jie, he also quickly joined forces with the UP (although nominally remaining an Independent for the time being). The other two GMC rebels, Burang-John and Gaye, also joined the UP soon after the election.<sup>68</sup>

At least seven defeated candidates from differing parties (or their supporters) petitioned the Supreme Court to have the results overturned, but only O. J. Sise was successful. The court ruled in October that the UP's A. N. Touray was not on the register in Niani-Saloum at the time of the election and he was unseated. But, as noted below, the UP retained the seat in the subsequent by-election in January 1961.<sup>69</sup>

Five of those elected in the separate election of chiefs had served in previous Legislative Councils, including their most prominent member, Tamba Jammeh of Upper Baddibu and the much younger, but better educated, Omar M'Baki of Sami, who to became their political spokesman.<sup>70</sup>

## **Ministerial Appointments: 1960–61**

### **July 1960 Appointments**

A few days after the election, Governor Windley appointed six of the newly elected members of parliament (MPs) as ministers. This followed discussions with various MPs including Jawara, P. S. N'Jie, A. B. N'Jie, and Camara, all of whom submitted nominations for ministerial office. Jawara's list consisted of PPP MPs and the DCA's A. B. N'Jie, but excluded UP MPs, Independents, and the Protectorate Chief MPs. A UP deputation submitted a list that included UP MPs (and Semega-Janneh) only. According to Windley, A. B. N'Jie and Camara presented a

"coalition" list and promised to cooperate in any government, particularly with the chiefs.

Governor Windley's own preference was to appoint members of all parties and groups to the Executive Council after the first nation-wide election. Because no party achieved an overall majority, he was able to choose a representative of each of the parties (Jawara, P. S. N'Jie, and A. B. N'Jie); a chief (M'Baki); and two of the three remaining Independents, Semega-Janneh and Camara. Semega-Janneh was one of the few elected members with prior legislative experience, and Windley regarded Camara (erroneously) as a strong supporter of the chiefs. Windley did not, however, appoint a chief minister. All except P. S. N'Jie and Camara were offered specific portfolios and all but the former accepted their preferment.<sup>71</sup>

Windley was reluctant to grant P. S. N'Jie full ministerial responsibilities for two reasons. First, his record as a minister in the mid-1950s had been far from satisfactory and Windley, who appears to have regarded him as "unbalanced," considered that he needed to reestablish himself in a minor post.<sup>72</sup> Second, there was a danger that the original decision of the Gambian Supreme Court to disbar N'Jie from the legal profession might be upheld by the highest court, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. On the eve of the election, the Privy Council allowed the attorney general of Gambia to lodge an appeal against a decision by the West African Court of Appeal to overturn N'Jie's disbarment. It would be a cause of some embarrassment to the government if the original verdict were to be upheld while N'Jie was serving as a minister. N'Jie, who apparently confidently expected to be appointed chief minister after the election, reacted with "pained surprise" when informed that he had not been offered a portfolio and immediately declined to serve on the Executive Council. Consequently, Windley appointed a second PPP MP, Sheriff Sisay, to fill the vacancy.<sup>73</sup>

UP MPs were angered that their leader was not offered a specific portfolio and that they did not receive more posts in the coalition government. They therefore staged a walk out from the House of Representatives during its official opening on June 15 and, following subsequent demonstrations in Bathurst, a memorial was sent to both Windley and the secretary of state for the colonies. This memorial, which was organized by the UP Executive Committee, expressed dissatisfaction with the election, the subsequent ministerial appointments, and the current government. Even though P. S. N'Jie had accepted the 1959 constitution before the election, the UP memorial also called for its abrogation and demanded that Gambia become fully self-governing. The UP's request for further constitutional change was rejected by the Gambian government and the party was henceforth effectively at odds with the governor.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, although the PPP had in the end secured more seats on the Executive Council than the other parties, it remained dissatisfied with the coalition government that had denied it the fruits of its victory at the polls. At the beginning of October, its opposition to the policies of the Gambian government became overt when it issued its "Independence Manifesto." This manifesto, which was finalized by Jawara during a visit to Lagos to celebrate the granting of

independence to Nigeria, called for internal self-government by May 1961, which should be followed by independence during 1962.<sup>75</sup> Because the DCA remained committed to independence, all three political parties were now seeking further constitutional change.

### **Appointment of a Chief Minister**

Governor Windley was reluctant to revise a constitution that had come into force so recently, but realized the need to make further concessions to the political parties. After securing the approval of the Colonial Office, he therefore announced to the House of Representatives in December 1960 that he would shortly appoint a chief minister. The composition of the House meant that Jawara, P. S. N'Jie, and M'Baki each had a bloc of support, and A. B. N'Jie was a possible compromise candidate who might be able to command a majority if all else failed. Windley held discussions with the various candidates in January and February of 1961 and ascertained that Jawara and P. S. N'Jie would not serve under each other and that neither would serve under M'Baki or A. B. N'Jie. Effectively this meant that the chiefs (who were acting in concert) held the balance of power; their eight votes would be enough to give either the UP or the PPP the fourteen votes necessary for an overall majority of the elected members.<sup>76</sup>

Once the chiefs realized that M'Baki would not be selected for the post of chief minister, they made clear their preference for P. S. N'Jie over Jawara. In July 1960, they complained to Acting Governor Smith that their status in rural society was being "seriously threatened" by members of PPP. They noted that the public was being advised by PPP MPs to disobey their lawful orders and court summonses and instead to take their complaints to the MPs to resolve. They also claimed that PPP MPs were stirring up hatred in the rural areas. Jawara subsequently agreed to tell his supporters not to try to usurp the customary and statutory powers of the Seyfolu, but the chiefs remained suspicious of his party's intentions.<sup>77</sup> In contrast, the UP appeared willing to allow the chiefs free rein in the rural areas and was also prepared to give them a permanent role in national politics through the establishment of a separate House of Chiefs.<sup>78</sup>

By March 1961, Windley ascertained not only that the Protectorate chief MPs preferred P. S. N'Jie to Jawara, but that all the Independent MPs (and A. B. N'Jie) supported the UP leader.<sup>79</sup> This was sufficient for N'Jie to command a majority. Several other factors were in N'Jie's favor. First, Windley appears to have modified his previously unfavorable opinion of the UP leader, whom he considered to have steadied down and to have given up alcohol.<sup>80</sup> Second, the governor believed that, in both the Colony and the Protectorate, public opinion was moving toward the UP. This view seems to have been based on the result of a by-election in Niani-Saloum, which was called after the unseating of Touray; E. D. N'Jie comfortably retained the seat for the UP.<sup>81</sup> Finally, Windley believed that P. S. N'Jie was more likely than Jawara to have influence over the leader of the GWU, M. E. Jallow, who he regarded as a dangerous militant with radical political connections.

The GWU had called another general strike in January 1961. This strike, which paralyzed the country and resulted in a substantial wage increase, firmly established Jallow's reputation and Windley was now convinced that Jallow would use his success as a stepping stone for power on a slogan of Independence for Gambia and a fair deal for Gambians vis-à-vis Europeans. The 1961 strike revealed that the PPP had little influence over the GWU; Jawara and Sisay, the PPP members of the Executive Council, were powerless either to prevent the strike or to help bring it to a rapid conclusion, and had indeed "remained rather on the sidelines." In contrast, Windley believed that the GWU received considerable support from P. S. N'Jie and the UP during the strike. Because Windley was aware that many GWU members were UP supporters, the governor hoped that the GWU leader would be reluctant to undermine a UP-led administration by further militancy.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, on March 14, he informed the Executive Council of his decision to appoint P. S. N'Jie as chief minister.

Although Jawara was not surprised by this turn of events, he naturally complained about the decision, arguing that the chiefs should be required to support the largest party and claiming that three of the Independent MPs would have supported him if he had been nominated. When Windley refused to change his mind, he resigned from the Executive Council; Sisay followed suit later that day. A. B. N'Jie also resigned on March 21, not apparently out of sympathy with the PPP ministers, but rather at Windley's request when it became clear that he was unacceptable to the UP. The three ministers were replaced by P. S. N'Jie, E. D. N'Jie, and Baldeh, which meant that the council now comprised three UP MPs, two Independents (both of whom were closer to the UP than to the PPP), and one chief.<sup>83</sup> Because the majority party in the House was no longer represented on the Executive Council, Windley convened a new Constitutional Conference in Bathurst in May, which was attended by three representatives of each of the political parties, three chiefs, and three independents, Jallow, Henry Madi, and Rachel Palmer (a doctor's wife who was selected to represent Gambian women). The Bathurst Conference called for full internal self-government as the next stage of the constitutional process, which should be followed within nine months by independence. These views were then reiterated two months later at a follow-up Constitutional Conference in London attended by representatives of the various political parties and of the chiefs and by other independent individuals.<sup>84</sup>

It was agreed at the London Conference that a new constitution should be drawn up. This constitution (which would come into operation after a new election) reduced the powers of the governor, who was now required to act on the advice of the Executive Council in all areas of internal affairs except security and the public service. The composition of the Executive Council was also revised; its membership now consisted of the governor, the deputy governor, and eight ministers. The composition of the House of Representatives was also altered significantly. The number of elected members was increased to thirty-two, with twenty-five seats being allocated to the Protectorate and seven to the Colony; the representation of the Protectorate chiefs was reduced to four. The leader of the



majority party in the House was to be appointed as premier by the governor and would then advise the latter on the appointment of the other ministers. Finally, it was agreed that a new general election should be held by May 1962.<sup>85</sup> This election is discussed below.

## 1962 Election

Three parties, the PPP, the UP, and the DCA, contested the next election which took place between May 22 and 31.<sup>86</sup> In marked contrast to the 1960 election, there was only one Independent candidate, Karamo Kinteh, in Lower Baddibu (see Appendix C.2). Two of the three parties, the PPP and DCA, formed an electoral pact, and the UP received the support of a new political organization, the Gambia National Union.

### **People's Progressive Party/Democratic Congress Alliance**

The DCA and PPP had tended to coordinate their activities in opposition to the UP since the resignation of A. B. N'Jie from the Executive Council in March 1961. The two parties adopted a common position on key issues at the London Conference and (along with the GWU leader, M. E. Jallow) met privately with the secretary of state to express their dissatisfaction with the political situation in Gambia. They also jointly tabled a vote of censure against P. S. N'Jie in the House of Representatives and formed an electoral pact to fight the 1961 BTC election; this helped the DCA win four out of five wards and thereby challenge the UP's predominance in municipal politics.<sup>87</sup> Under the terms of a general election pact, which was signed shortly before the 1962 election, the PPP agreed to support DCA candidates in four of the five Bathurst seats and in Serrekunda and the DCA to support the PPP in the twenty-five Protectorate constituencies and the remaining two seats in the Colony, Bakau and Soldier Town, Bathurst.<sup>88</sup>

Although there was no doubt that the PPP was the stronger party in the pact, both sides anticipated that they would benefit from it. No doubt encouraged by its success in the 1961 BTC election, the DCA hoped that Mandinka and Jola votes might help its candidates, particularly the party leaders, Garba-Jahumpa and Faye, to win marginal constituencies in Bathurst. Moreover, if the PPP were to win the election, the DCA could expect to be rewarded with one or more ministries in the first Gambian cabinet. For its part, the PPP expected to benefit from the DCA's financial resources for its own campaign; if the rumors were true, the DCA received money from the Ghanaian government because of Garba-Jahumpa's personal ties with Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>89</sup> If the UP lost any seats in Bathurst, the PPP's chances of securing an overall majority would also be improved.

The PPP reelected all nine of its current MPs, again for the same or similar constituencies, and gave two of its unsuccessful candidates in 1960, F. B. Manneh (Niumi) and M. B. Sagnia (Kantora), another chance. Three Independents who had

been defeated in 1960, A. S. C. Able-Thomas (Soldier Town), Bangally Singhateh (Wuli), and Kebba J. Krubally (Basse), also received the party nomination.<sup>90</sup>

Its remaining thirteen candidates, who had not stood for election previously, had a range of backgrounds. As in 1960, some had come to prominence through their party activities. For example, Lamin M'Boge (Illiasa) and Famara Wassa Touray (Western Kombo) were active in the early days of the PPP, but did not gain the party nomination in 1960; the latter played a major part in building up support for the party in 1959 and succeeded Bojang as national president in 1960. Similarly, Baba M. Touray (Jokadu) had become well known as a result of his role in the PPP's Youth Wing.<sup>91</sup> Several were civil servants, including Touray, M'Boge, Kalilou F. Singhateh (Lower Baddibu), and Demba S. Cham (Niani)<sup>92</sup>; others, including Amang S. Kanyi (Eastern Kiang) and Yusupha S. Samba (Sabach Sanjal), were involved in commerce. The candidate in Lower Fulladu West, Paul L. Baldeh, had a particularly interesting background. A Lorobo Fula, he was the son of one of the biggest cattle owners in the Fulladu West district, who was a member of the Native Tribunal and a supporter of a former Seyfu of Fulladu West, Cherno Kady Baldeh. Like a number of other educated Fula, Baldeh was a Roman Catholic. Very unusually, he was also a university graduate, having recently gained a degree from Trinity College Dublin, and before the election, he was employed as a teacher at St. Augustine's School in Bathurst.<sup>93</sup>

Four of the five DCA candidates had contested the 1960 election. A. B. N'Jie defended his seat in Joloff/Portuguese Town; Garba-Jahumpa and Cham-Joof again challenged J. H. Joof and P. S. N'Jie in Half Die and New Town East, respectively; and Faye, having realized the folly of competing against H. O. Semega-Janneh in Serrekunda, stood in his old stamping-ground of New Town West (succeeding M. D. Sallah).

### **United Party/Gambia National Union**

The UP was supported in the election by the Gambia National Union (GNU), a somewhat shadowy organization that appears to have been in existence between 1960 and 1962. The driving force behind it was Sanjally Bojang, the former PPP national president. In September 1960, while Jawara was in Lagos to attend the Nigerian Independence celebrations, Bojang conspired with Garba-Jahumpa and other leaders of the DCA and the former GNP to achieve a merger of all the existing parties. The aim was to establish a new party, the Gambia Progressive Union (popularly known as the "Gambia Solidarity Party"), which would press the colonial authorities for constitutional change. P. S. N'Jie attended a meeting called by Bojang to discuss the idea, but the return of Jawara (strongly opposed to it) ensured that the common front proved abortive.<sup>94</sup> Bojang was subsequently expelled from the PPP and with K. W. Foon (formerly of the GNP) later established the GNU, which by early 1962 could probably count on the support of L. O. Sonko (MP for Niumi-Jokadu until his elevation to the chieftaincy of Upper Niumi in 1962). M. E. Jallow may also have joined the new party (although the

GWU again remained neutral in the election), and Seyfu Omar M'Baki perhaps also endorsed it. It is unclear if the GNU and UP signed a formal electoral pact; however, the GNU certainly campaigned actively for the UP during the election campaign.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike in 1960, the UP nominated candidates in all constituencies except Western Kiang, where its candidate apparently failed to appear at the appointed time.<sup>96</sup> Eight of these, including H. O. Semega-Janneh, who apparently joined the UP soon after the 1960 election, and Andrew Camara, who joined the UP on the eve of the 1962 election to meet the wishes of his local constituents, were sitting MPs.<sup>97</sup> All were nominated for the same (or similar) constituencies. In addition, A. N. Touray, who had won Niani-Saloum in 1960 before being unseated on an electoral petition, was selected in Niani, and N. M. Darbo, who had been defeated in MacCarthy Island, this time stood in Upper Fulladu West. Five other UP candidates of diverse ethnic background had contested the 1960 election as Independents. These were the former GMC rebel, S. B. Gaye (Joloff/Portuguese Town), who was now a leading member of the UP; Kebba C. A. Kah, who had recently been dismissed as a clerk in the post office (Jokadu); Saihou Biyai (Western Foni); Mafode Sonko (Niumi); and Kalilu Jammeh (Illiassa).<sup>98</sup>

The remaining sixteen UP candidates had not stood for election previously. These included the GNU's Kebba Foon and two Basse-born civil servants who were to remain prominent in politics for the next two decades, Momodou C. Cham (Tumana) and Momodou C. Jallow (Wuli). A twenty-five-year-old Tukulor, Cham was the son of a respected elder and trader in Basse; prior to the election, he was a civilian clerk in the police department. The latter, who was the son of a prominent religious leader in Basse, Cherno Abdoulie Jallow, was a forty-two-year-old Fula who, after a career in the Veterinary Department, retired from the civil service as a first grade veterinary assistant just before the election.<sup>99</sup>

The three political parties differed considerably in terms of the ethnic background of their candidates. The PPP remained dominated by the Mandinka, who perhaps supplied twenty out of its twenty-six candidates. Two were Jola and two were Wolof from the rural areas, the others being a Fula and a Tukulor. The DCA was predominantly a Wolof party. Four of its candidates were Wolof, the others being a Wolofized Serere and an Aku. The UP was the most ethnically diverse party. Our estimate is that it had ten Mandinka, ten Wolof, five Fula, two Serahuli, two Tukulor, one Jola, and one Aku candidates.<sup>100</sup>

## **Election Issues**

Some contemporary observers found it difficult to distinguish between the parties in terms of issues,<sup>101</sup> but in four respects, the UP's policies differed from that of the PPP/DCA coalition. First, as at the London Conference, its approach to constitutional change was more conservative. In the view of the new governor, John (later Sir John) Paul, it emphasized the need for orderly economic and political development toward independence in close association with the British government,

whereas the PPP, and particularly the DCA, wished the pace to be quickened and were less concerned about assistance from Britain.<sup>102</sup> Second, it adopted a different stance toward Senegal. The UP remained more strongly in favor of eventual political, as well as economic, links with Senegal than either the PPP or the DCA; indeed, Faye went so far as to claim that Britain intended to sell Gambia to Senegal. Ironically, however, in a short space of time, N'Jie would excoriate the PPP for allegedly compromising Gambian independence, and the UP would stage demonstrations in Bathurst against the visit of the Senegalese leader, Léopold Senghor.<sup>103</sup> Third, it held a different view over the future role of the chiefs. The UP emphasized the value of chieftaincy, whereas the PPP attacked the "overbearing authority" of the chiefs and denounced them as "tools of imperialism" and "exploiters of the people." The PPP also criticized P. S. N'Jie for his failure, while serving as chief minister, to bring about the establishment of Area Councils, which would serve as an alternative source of authority in rural districts. It is difficult to say whether N'Jie's respect for the chiefs was born of his own aristocratic pretensions, or merely a ploy to forge a coalition against the PPP in the countryside.<sup>104</sup> Finally, the PPP emphasized that, compared with the Colony, the Protectorate, in general, and the Mandinka areas, in particular, continued to receive a lesser distribution of funds and services.<sup>105</sup>

These policy differences were exacerbated by the mutual ill-feeling between the parties. Both major parties accused the other of corruption.<sup>106</sup> In a party broadcast, P. S. N'Jie went further and allegedly likened "the PPP machine" to an "organisation of the devil . . . Here is a gang of political upstarts operating on the well-known totalitarian principles of terrorism and coercion." N'Jie apparently also accused the PPP of "compelling their lukewarm supporters into taking secret and frightful oaths of allegiance to the party."<sup>107</sup> Perhaps more important, both parties accused the other of "tribalism." The UP accused the PPP of using anti-Wolof slogans, while apparently adopting an anti-Mandinka stance itself, even though almost one-third of its candidates were Mandinka. Not surprisingly, in this volatile atmosphere, some unrest occurred in the Protectorate (although, as in 1960, compared with elections elsewhere in British West Africa in this period, it was of a very minor nature) and F. W. Touray, the PPP candidate in Western Kombo, was arrested and bound over to keep the peace.<sup>108</sup>

### **Election Results**

Unlike in 1960, the outcome of the election was clear cut and has not been disputed. The PPP won eighteen seats, the UP thirteen, and the DCA one. The PPP gained 56,343 votes (57.7 percent of those cast) in twenty-six directly contested seats (and would have won a higher percentage of the vote if Western Kiang, a safe PPP seat, had been contested); the UP won 37,016 votes (37.9 percent) in thirty-one seats; and the DCA, 4,180 votes (4.3 percent) in the five seats it contested in the Colony. The sole Independent candidate won a mere 108 votes. The polling was high, with an estimated 65 to 70 percent turnout in the Protectorate and a

turnout of 85 percent in the Colony. Despite the earlier unrest, the Gambian government reported that, as in 1960, the polling was "orderly and well-conducted."<sup>109</sup>

The PPP won seventeen out of twenty-five seats in the Protectorate. Its eight existing Protectorate members of Parliament were safely returned, all with comfortable majorities; indeed, only four of the seventeen gained less than 60 percent of the vote in their constituencies; six gained over 80 percent.<sup>110</sup> The PPP captured all four seats in the Western Division; seven out of nine in the Lower River Division (LRD); and four out of six in MID. But despite polling just over 50 percent of the divisional vote, it won only two out of six seats (Wuli and Sandu) in URD. The PPP also retained Bakau through A. M. Demba, but A. S. C. Able-Thomas, its candidate in Soldier Town, was defeated.

The UP retained the four seats it held in Bathurst at the time of the election, and Semega-Janneh comfortably won in Serrekunda. It also won Jokadu and Niimi in LRD; Saloum and Upper Fulladu West in MID; and Jimara, Basse, Tumana and Kantora in URD. However, it won a number of seats by narrow margins; only two UP candidates were elected with more than 60 percent of the ballot.<sup>111</sup> As we shall see, several of those who won narrow victories in 1962 were to defect to the PPP by the end of 1964.

The DCA gained one-third of the total Colony vote, but captured only one seat, Joloff/Portuguese Town, where A. B. N'Jie defeated the UP's S. B. Gaye by fifty-three votes. The electoral pact with the PPP did not bring the anticipated benefits to its party leaders, because both were narrowly defeated; Faye lost to I. B. I. Jobe by sixty-nine votes and Garba-Jahumpa to J. H. Joof by just eleven votes.

A number of factors helped to bring about the victory of the PPP. First, and most important, the redistribution of seats in 1961 favored the PPP. All the additional seats were awarded to the Protectorate where the PPP was powerful and none were given to the UP's stronghold in the Colony. Moreover, many of the new seats in the Protectorate were in predominantly Mandinka areas. Second, the UP's close links with the chiefs were counterproductive; by now the latter were largely discredited. Third, the UP's position as the party of power brought it little material advantage, but did make it appear responsible for unpopular government policies. Fourth, the PPP remained much better organized than the UP, particularly in the rural areas, and (outside Bathurst) conducted a much more vigorous and effective campaign.<sup>112</sup> Fifth, it is likely that the PPP had greater financial resources at its disposal than the UP; for example, P. S. N'Jie's income was declining by 1962 because he was still barred from directly practicing law (and this was probably not offset by his increased salary as chief minister). Finally, Jawara had greater personal qualities than N'Jie; the latter's behavior during the election campaign seems to have been a mixture of excessive self-confidence and indolence.<sup>113</sup>

It appears that fourteen out of eighteen directly elected PPP new MPs were Mandinka, the remainder being a Jola, a Fula, a Tukolor, and a rural Wolof. The UP's thirteen members of Parliament were more ethnically diverse: four urban Wolof, two Fula, two Tukolor, two Serahuli (one of whom was Wolofized), two Mandinka, and one Aku. The sole DCA member was an urban Wolof.

Four chiefs were elected separately in a keenly contested election in which four ballots were held over consecutive days in May. All, including Omar M'Baki of Sami (the only one to be elected unanimously), were known to be UP supporters, but were subsequently warned by Governor Paul that they would be dismissed if they voted against the PPP government.<sup>114</sup>

### **Ministerial Appointments**

The PPP thus achieved an overall majority and Governor Paul duly appointed Jawara as premier. On the latter's recommendation, eight other ministers were selected. Six of these, Sisay, Dibba, Paul Baldeh, Dabo, Daffeh, and Samba, were PPP MPs and the other posts were filled by A. B. N'Jie and M'Baki. A. B. N'Jie owed his seat in the cabinet to the PPP's electoral pact with the DCA and to the lack of experience amongst PPP MPs. Indeed, Jawara originally intended to appoint both Faye and Garba-Jahumpa as ministers. Following their defeats at the polls, he asked Governor Paul to appoint them as "nominated" MPs so that they could then be selected as ministers, but Paul considered that this would infringe the spirit of the constitution (if not the letter of it) and refused the request. Jawara therefore submitted a new ministerial list three days later, which excluded Faye and Garba-Jahumpa, but contained M'Baki, who was presumably included as a sop to the chiefs. Governor Paul accepted the recommendations.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, the first PPP cabinet contained five Mandinka (Jawara, Sisay, Dibba, Dabo, and Daffeh); one urban Wolof (N'Jie) and one rural Wolof (Samba)<sup>116</sup>; one Fula (Baldeh); and one Tukolor (M'Baki). Thus non-Mandinka were more strongly represented in Jawara's cabinet than their representation among PPP MPs merited, an indication that Jawara was seeking to accommodate non-Mandinka elements within the party and to shift the PPP from a Protectorate movement to a national political party, in substance as well as in name.

### **Establishment of the Gambia Congress Party**

Apart from the appointment of A. B. N'Jie, the DCA gained a number of other benefits from its alliance with the PPP. Sallah was rewarded for standing aside for Faye in New Town West by being appointed (along with T. D. Mallinson, the European manager of the UAC) as a "nominated" MP on Jawara's recommendation.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, another DCA activist, Alieu S. Jack, the manager of the Madi groundnut mill and former member of the BTC, was elected speaker of the House with the support of the PPP; Faye was sent to London to head the colony's Liaison Office in Britain.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, the co-leader of the Alliance, Garba-Jahumpa, who was acutely disappointed that he had again failed to secure a seat in Parliament, considered that he had gained little from the electoral pact. Frustrated by the turn of the events, he broke away from the DCA and founded the Gambia Congress Party (GCP) in October 1962, remaining as its general secretary until its

merger with the PPP in 1968. Some DCA leaders joined the new party, but most seem to have remained loyal to the Alliance.<sup>119</sup>

The GCP, like the former GMC, appealed primarily to Muslim Wolof from Bathurst. It was also closely associated with the GLU, E. F. Small's old union, which was now a bitter rival of the much more powerful GWU. Garba-Jahumpa served as vice president of the GLU for a short period from September 1962 and was succeeded in this post by the GCP's chairman, A. K. John. It seems clear that, as in the 1940s, Garba-Jahumpa was hoping to make use of organized labor to build an effective power base in Bathurst.<sup>120</sup> The new party was initially on good terms with the UP and the two parties signed an electoral pact in October 1962 that gave Garba-Jahumpa a free run in Half Die in the BTC election. This helped to establish a GCP presence in local government in the capital and, at independence, the GCP held four out of the fifteen seats on the BTC (compared with seven for the UP and four for the PPP/DCA); however, by the end of 1964, there were signs that relations between the two parties were strained.<sup>121</sup> Somewhat incongruously, the GCP adopted a radical foreign policy stance, which enabled its leader to engage in a series of visits to socialist countries and also provided much-needed funds for the party, but increased suspicions about Garba-Jahumpa's integrity.<sup>122</sup>

### **Election Petitions**

In 1960, the result in a number of constituencies was challenged and the election of A. N. Touray was overturned. Similarly, after the 1962 election, election petitions were brought against at least eighteen elected MPs; sixteen of these were brought by defeated UP candidates and only two (against the N'Jie brothers) by losing PPP candidates. The first eight petitions (including one against Jawara) were dismissed by the Supreme Court, but the ninth was upheld. This was brought by the UP's Mamadi Sabally against the PPP's Yusupha Samba in Sabach Sanjal (LRD). This constituency had witnessed one of the closest contests in the Protectorate; Samba had won by only 147 votes. Samba won the resulting by-election in October 1962, but the court's verdict threatened to undermine the whole election, because it called into question the legality of the election not only in LRD, but in the whole Protectorate.<sup>123</sup>

As noted, the 1962 election was fought under a new register of voters in the Protectorate. A bill, supported by both the UP and the PPP, was passed in 1961 to allow the compiling of fresh registers to replace those drawn up in 1959, which had proved unsatisfactory. However, the UP's lawyers (P. S. N'Jie's brothers, E. D. and Sheriff, and Berthan Macauley, a prominent Sierra Leonean barrister) argued that the revised registers had been compiled by a method differing from that laid down in explicit terms in electoral legislation. Their arguments were rejected by the Gambian Supreme Court in March 1963, but the West African Court of Appeal declared the registers in LRD invalid a month later. P. S. N'Jie promptly traveled to London to ask the British government to dissolve the House and call a fresh election. However, at the end of May, the secretary of state for the colonies,

Duncan Sandys, announced that the registers would be validated retrospectively by Order-in-Council to allow progress to be made toward full internal self-government. His decision incensed N'Jie and was condemned in the House of Commons by the opposition Labour Party, but Sandys dismissed their demands for a fresh election. The UP launched one final legal challenge, arguing that the Order-in-Council was not legally valid, but this was rejected by the High Court of Chancery in July 1964.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, P. S. N'Jie remained unchanging in his opinion that he had been badly treated by the British.<sup>125</sup>

## The PPP Consolidates: 1962–65

Between 1962 and 1965, the PPP strengthened its political position. It ended any threat to its control of the Protectorate from the chiefs, who ceased thereafter to play any significant role in national politics. It made solid progress both inside and outside Parliament at the expense of the UP and it improved its standing in Bathurst through developing closer ties with the DCA. These developments are discussed below.

### Weakening of the Chiefs

The Protectorate chiefs generally supported the UP (albeit covertly) in the 1962 election. They were spared the embarrassing dilemma of declaring for one party or the other after the election because the PPP achieved an overall majority.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, some members of the PPP, particularly the new minister of local government, Sheriff Dibba, were determined that the chiefs would never again side with its opponents. Consequently, between July 1962 and March 1965, the PPP either dismissed or forced to retire at least fourteen chiefs, who were either UP sympathizers or were considered to be too independently minded or too old. Those removed in 1962–64 included Tamba Jammeh, who was appointed Seyfu of Upper Baddibu as early as 1928, first sat on the Legislative Council in 1947, and had long been regarded as the most powerful and influential of the Protectorate chiefs. Two leading UP supporters, Jewru Krubally of Fulladu East (a chief since at least 1924) and Silla Ba Dibba of Central Baddibu (appointed in 1945), were also removed (the latter being replaced by Mustapha Dibba of Salikene, who was the father of Sheriff Dibba). Seven more chiefs were either forced to retire or were dismissed in March 1965. Four of these were apparently UP supporters and three were considered pro-PPP. Perhaps not surprisingly, their successors were quick to declare their allegiance to the PPP.<sup>127</sup>

The former group of chiefs included two MPs, Omar M'Baki of Sami and Seykuba Jarjussey of Jarra West. Both men were consequently also forced to resign from the House of Representatives. M'Baki's fall from power was gradual; he lost his specific portfolio as minister of communications in October 1963 and was then



forced to resign from the cabinet in September 1964. No chief thereafter served as a minister during the Jawara period.<sup>128</sup>

### **Defection of United Party Members of Parliament**

As noted, the UP gained a respectable thirteen seats in the 1962 election. However, by October 1964, its parliamentary strength had fallen to five. K. C. A. Kah, who only joined the UP on the eve of the 1962 election, defected to the PPP almost immediately after his election.<sup>129</sup> By the end of 1963, Andrew Camara, Michael Baldeh, and probably also Mafode Sonko and I. B. I. Jobe, had crossed the carpet.<sup>130</sup> Demba Jagana and H. O. Semega-Janneh defected to the PPP during 1964, and M. B. Jones, having previously sought membership of the PPP, joined the DCA in 1964.<sup>131</sup>

UP MPs apparently joined the PPP for a combination of reasons. First, they were disillusioned by P. S. N'Jie's failure to provide an effective leadership. N'Jie was frequently absent from Gambia after 1962 and rarely attended the House of Representatives. He spent a great deal of time in London attempting vainly to persuade the British government that another election was necessary before independence could occur.<sup>132</sup> Second, they hoped to obtain office. In November 1962, only a few months after he joined the PPP, Kah was appointed a parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Finance; in November 1963, Camara replaced his fellow Fula, Paul Baldeh, as minister of education.<sup>133</sup> Other UP defectors may have hoped that they would receive similar rewards. Third, some of the defectors secured relatively small majorities in the 1962 election and no doubt feared that they would lose their seats next time round.<sup>134</sup> Finally, some may have been encouraged to join the PPP by influential supporters in their constituencies. MPs were expected to look after the interests of their constituents and opposition MPs were unlikely to share in any government patronage as the PPP came to take over from the British administration.

The hemorrhaging of its parliamentary strength encouraged some UP leaders (particularly E. D. N'Jie, who was effectively the UP leader in his brother's absence) to consider overtures from the PPP for the establishment of a government of national unity. Preliminary discussions were initiated in November 1963, but were quickly abandoned by the UP when P. S. N'Jie, who remained implacably opposed to the PPP, returned home. They were resumed in September 1964 (while P. S. N'Jie was again in England) and in December, the UP, DCA and PPP agreed to cooperate over the election of a chairman and deputy chairman to the BTC. Consequently, the PPP's B. O. Semega-Janneh was elected chairman of the BTC and became mayor of Bathurst in February 1965; the UP's I. A. S. Burang-John was appointed deputy chairman. The two parties also agreed in principle to form a coalition government after independence.<sup>135</sup> Some UP supporters, probably including P. S. N'Jie (although he publicly avoided commenting on the issue), were opposed to the coalition, as were some PPP supporters in the Protectorate; nevertheless, only a fortnight after independence, Jawara announced his first

cabinet reshuffle with E. D. N'Jie, who had brokered the deal, being appointed minister of health. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, N'Jie was to be dismissed and the coalition to collapse only three months later.<sup>136</sup>

### **Closer Links with the Democratic Congress Alliance**

If attempts by the PPP to establish a better relationship with the UP proved abortive, the party was able to work closely with the DCA. This process was facilitated by A. B. N'Jie's continued membership of the Jawara cabinet and by the common opposition of the two parties to the UP. The DCA endorsed the PPP's stance over election petitions and even challenged P. S. N'Jie's claim to Gambian citizenship in the courts; the PPP supported DCA candidates in the BTC election and organized a joint congress with the DCA in April 1963. The two parties also adopted a similar stance toward constitutional reform in the run up to independence. Eventually, as noted in Chapter 7, the DCA was to be absorbed into the PPP in August 1965.<sup>137</sup>

The Gambia therefore entered independence as a parliamentary democracy with two main political parties. It was certainly conceivable that the decline of the opposition since 1962 would continue after independence and that The Gambia would in time become yet another African one-party state (*de facto*, if not *de jure*). Yet it was equally possible that its multiparty tradition would survive. Although the PPP was clearly the major party at independence, controlling the central government and holding two-thirds of the seats in the House of Representatives, its dominance was not complete and the possibility remained that the UP might mount an effective challenge to its sway in the future. The PPP/DCA alliance now held two of the five Bathurst parliamentary constituencies, but this was only because I. B. I. Jobe and M. B. Jones had changed parties, and it was likely that the bulk of the urban electorate still favored the UP (or possibly the GCP); moreover, the PPP's overreliance on the Mandinka vote in the countryside seemed to offer the UP the continued opportunity to mobilize non-Mandinka ethnic groups in the interior. Chapter 7 examines political developments in the post-independence period.

## **Summary**

In the early 1960s, constitutional changes resulted in a permanent shift in the balance of power away from existing urban-centered parties to a new rural-based political movement, the PPP. A detailed examination of the 1960 and 1962 general elections reveals how the PPP mobilized political and economic discontent in the Protectorate to become the dominant political force by 1962; before further strengthening its position, at the expense of its political opponents, in the run up to independence.

# 7

---

## **ELECTORAL POLITICS, 1965–81**

The first year or so of independence appeared to confirm the viability of the two-party political system in The Gambia: an early prospect of a one-party state through a coalition of the two major parties foundered; an attempt by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) to introduce a republican constitution by means of a national referendum in November 1965 was narrowly defeated; and even though the PPP easily defeated the United Party (UP) in the parliamentary election of Spring 1966, the latter won sufficient seats and achieved a large enough share of the vote to provide a credible opposition. However, over the next few years, the PPP steadily eroded UP support in Parliament and the country at large, culminating in its near annihilation in the general election of 1972. At the same time, the PPP overcame splits within its own ranks in 1968–70, which resulted in the formation of the People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) and succeeded a second time round, in April 1970, in winning a republic referendum, transforming Dawda Jawara from the prime minister to an executive president of the new republic.

The ruling party, as far as the established opposition was concerned, seemed invincible and any threat to its position now depended on further internal fragmentation. Such a prospect reemerged twice in the 1970s, first with the Independents in 1972 and then with the National Convention Party (NCP) in 1975; but these threats were also successfully countered.

This chapter examines the course of Gambian politics in the first fifteen years of independence and offers explanations for the transformation from a working two-party system to de facto single-party government. It also places Gambian post-independence politics within a broader context, by examining some of the similarities and differences between its experience and those of other African countries.

### **1965 Republic Referendum<sup>1</sup>**

Two months after independence, in April 1965, Jawara informed the governor general, Sir John Paul, that he was contemplating replacing the monarchy with a

republic on the first anniversary of independence in February 1966.<sup>2</sup> The decision was formally approved by the cabinet in mid-May and made public soon afterward; in a speech to the House of Representatives on June 1, Jawara outlined the reasons for the proposed constitutional change. He argued that Gambians were unable to understand the distinction between the formal authority possessed by the governor general and the real power exerted by the prime minister; that the head of government required the more extensive powers of a president to carry out his duties effectively; that some countries doubted that a monarchy could be truly independent; that it would be easier for a fellow president than a prime minister to develop closer links with President Senghor of Senegal; and finally, that the constitutional change would reduce administrative and staffing costs.<sup>3</sup>

As noted in Chapter 2, the existing form of government was protected under an “entrenched clause” of the 1964 constitution and could only be amended if endorsed by two-thirds of the elected members of Parliament (MPs) and confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those voting in a subsequent national referendum. Given the PPP’s control of Parliament, the support of MPs was inevitable and the Republic Bill duly passed its first reading on June 1. Although the UP MPs abstained on this vote, they made their opposition to the republic clear. P. S. N’Jie (who had returned to the country in January 1965) argued that the monarchy was working well, that fundamental human rights would not be protected by the new constitution, and that it was dangerous to give “too much power to one man” (i.e., Jawara). He also claimed that Jawara had only introduced the bill to avoid having to call an election (which he would lose), although ironically Jawara originally hoped to use an election victory as the means to establish a republic.<sup>4</sup> No doubt N’Jie also calculated that if the government were to be defeated in the referendum, the UP’s prospects at the next general election would be improved. It was also rumored that he wished to succeed Sir John Paul as governor general and thus had a personal motive for ensuring the monarchy was retained.<sup>5</sup>

The Gambia Congress Party (GCP), which had no representation in the House of Representatives, also opposed the bill, albeit for slightly different reasons; it argued that a republican constitution would give too much power to the president, enable the government to imprison opposition politicians and trade unionists, and do nothing to alleviate more pressing economic problems. It also suggested that the establishment of a republic would allow Senegal to “swallow up” The Gambia. Perhaps as important, the GCP leader, I. M. Garba-Jahumpa, was determined to remain on good terms with the UP to ensure a clear run for himself in a Bathurst constituency in the next general election and so had no choice but to oppose the referendum.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, the bill was supported by the Democratic Congress Alliance (DCA), which helped to strengthen the already close relations between it and the PPP, and in August the DCA was formally merged into the PPP with members of its Executive Committee being absorbed into an enlarged PPP Executive. The absorption of the DCA was not welcomed by all PPP members, however. Indeed, one leading PPP member, Abdoulie (Ablai) Fadia, protested so strongly that he was expelled from the party.<sup>7</sup>

One immediate consequence of the UP's opposition to the Republic Bill was the ending of the coalition pact that, as noted in Chapter 6, was reached with the PPP in February. On June 7, E. D. N'Jie was dismissed as minister of health (subsequently to be replaced by the former UP MP, K. C. A. Kah) and a day later, the PPP rescinded the pact. This was on the grounds that P. S. N'Jie had been unwilling to cooperate with the government and that certain members of the UP (including E. D. N'Jie) had been working actively against it. P. S. N'Jie, who showed little enthusiasm for the coalition, probably did not regret this development.<sup>8</sup>

Both the UP and the GCP campaigned actively against the referendum, as did two prominent politicians, the Independent MP for Illiassa, Lamin M'Boge, and the former DCA leader, Rev. J. C. Faye. Since his election in 1962, M'Boge had been one of the most outspoken PPP MPs. He was critical of the government's domestic policies and, together with two other PPP MPs, Kalilou Singhateh and Paul Baldeh, also attacked its pro-Western foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> He was also on close terms with the leader of the Gambia Workers' Union (GWU), M. E. Jallow, which caused Jawara further concern.<sup>10</sup> Following an inflammatory speech at a GWU May Day rally in the capital, M'Boge was expelled from the PPP and sacked as the deputy speaker. Consequently, he now sat in Parliament as an Independent.<sup>11</sup> Faye had only reluctantly signed the merger agreement with the PPP in August and resigned from the PPP in September over the republic issue.<sup>12</sup>

The referendum was also opposed by the main trade union, the GWU. Although in favor of a republic in principle, the GWU feared that its establishment might be followed by a crackdown on trade unions and strikes (as had occurred in Ghana); at least as importantly, the union needed to restore its reputation, which was badly tarnished. Moreover, after failing to make his name in the wider African trade union movement, the GWU leader, Jallow, was seeking to revive his flagging career at home.<sup>13</sup> Finally, at least some of the Protectorate chiefs who were removed from office in March sought to rally opposition to the referendum in the rural areas behind the scenes.<sup>14</sup>

The second and third readings of the Republic Bill received the assent of Parliament on November 9, with the referendum being held between November 18 and 26.<sup>15</sup> The result was extremely close: there were 61,568 votes in favor of the bill and 31,921 against, which meant that the government failed by only 758 votes (or 0.8 percent) to achieve a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. Votes were counted in two centers—Georgetown (covering the Upper River [URD], MacCarthy Island [MID], and Lower River [LRD] Divisions) and Bathurst (covering Bathurst, Kombo St. Mary, and the Western Division [WD])—with the government failing to secure its required majority by 535 votes in Bathurst and, much more surprisingly, by 203 votes in Georgetown. The overall turnout was only 60.6 percent, lower than in either the 1962 or 1966 elections and although it was as high as 90 percent in Bathurst, it was as low as 30 percent in some provincial areas.<sup>16</sup>

The result was "a considerable shock" to Jawara and his ministers, although not to the governor general. Paul argued that two main factors accounted for the outcome. First, the PPP government was overconfident. It failed to make sufficient

efforts to explain the purpose of the referendum to the electorate (especially in the rural areas) and also did not bother to campaign effectively in the Provinces (formerly the Protectorate); for example, Jawara himself did not leave Bathurst to tour the Provinces until November 16, only two days before the referendum began. Second, it failed to counter opposition arguments about the dangers of an executive presidency. Paul believed that this accounted for the low turnout in URD and MID among Fula and Serahuli who had a close knowledge, or direct experience, of the Guinean or Malian states. He also felt that the specter of the Ghanaian regime influenced “a number of the more thinking members of the electorate.”<sup>17</sup>

Although Paul tended to discount its importance, the anti-republican coalition did make a difference. It campaigned strongly in Bathurst, which ensured a good turnout of UP and GCP supporters in the capital. Its campaigning in the rural areas was more limited, but did have some impact, and the still influential ex-chiefs managed to persuade a number of PPP supporters to vote no (or at least abstain).<sup>18</sup> In addition, the timing of the election in November—a very busy time for farmers—may have reduced the turnout in the Provinces.<sup>19</sup>

Although the PPP gained almost two-thirds of the vote, the result was regarded as a defeat for the ruling party and a victory for the UP and its allies. Many PPP supporters reacted angrily and some ministers, apparently including Sheriff Dibba, Sheriff Sisay, and A. B. N’Jie, called for the result to be ignored and for the republican constitution to be introduced anyway. Jawara refused to consider this option, but instead, without consulting the cabinet or the party executive, decided unilaterally to call an early general election in May 1966 to test his party’s continued popularity.<sup>20</sup> Soon afterward, he requested that Sir John Paul (who was due to leave the country in early 1966) be replaced as governor general (initially on an acting basis) by Farimang Singhateh. A retired civil servant who had established a pharmacy at Farafenni in 1963, Singhateh was a justice of the peace and a member of the Public Services Commission (the body responsible for all civil service appointments). More important, he was a Mandinka and a longstanding PPP supporter, so his appointment was designed to placate Jawara’s cabinet critics.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, their success in the referendum brought the two opposition parties, the UP and the GCP, closer. This culminated, in February 1966, in an electoral pact between them. As far as the UP was concerned, the main aim of the pact was to prevent the PPP taking any Bathurst seats; Garba-Jahumpa’s motive was to regain the parliamentary seat he had lost in 1962.<sup>22</sup>

## **1966 General Election**<sup>23</sup>

The first post-independence election was held between May 17 and 26, 1966. As in 1962, a total of thirty-two directly elected seats were contested. Before the election, the Madi Commission redistributed seats in accordance with recent population changes; consequently, the number of Bathurst seats was reduced from five

to three, an additional seat was granted to the Kombos, and the Jarra constituency was divided into two. These changes seemed certain to benefit the government, given that both the Jarras and the Kombos were strongly PPP, whereas Bathurst of course remained an opposition stronghold.<sup>24</sup> The number of registered voters had also increased considerably since the 1965 referendum, an indication perhaps of a renewed popular interest in politics.<sup>25</sup> The election was contested by the PPP, the UP, the GCP, and several Independents. Each is considered in turn.

### **People's Progressive Party**

The PPP not surprisingly nominated candidates in all constituencies. All except two of its successful candidates in 1962 were reselected for the same (or a similar) constituency, the exceptions being Lamin M'Boge (Illiassa) and A. M. Demba (Bakau), who were replaced by Baba M. Touray and Abdoulie K. N'Jie, respectively. Touray had been the unsuccessful PPP candidate in Jokadu in 1962, but had since made his name as a pro-PPP (and anti-GWU) trade union leader.<sup>26</sup>

Five of the losing PPP candidates from 1962, M. B. Sagnia (Kantora), F. B. Manneh (Niumi), Malick Lowe (Saloum), Noah K. Sanyang (Tumana), and Alieu Marong (Upper Fulladu West), were also replaced, the first two by the sitting MPs, Andrew Camara and Mafode Sonko. Three other defectors from the UP, K. C. A. Kah (Jokadu), M. B. Jones (Bathurst Central) and H. O. Semega-Janneh (Serrekunda), also gained the PPP nomination. However, in Jimara, M. B. Sillah, the PPP's candidate in the same seat in 1962, was chosen rather than the incumbent, Demba Jagana; M. Harley N'Jie was preferred to I. B. I. Jobe in Bathurst North (which incorporated Jobe's old constituency of New Town West).<sup>27</sup> Because the remaining ex-UP MP, Michael Baldeh, had died in July 1965, the PPP selected Kebba J. Krubally, who won the subsequent by-election in Basse the following October by more than 500 votes.<sup>28</sup> Apart from Jones, it appears that only one former DCA leader was selected by the PPP; this was A. B. N'Jie, who transferred from the Joloff/Portuguese Town constituency in Bathurst (which now formed part of the new Bathurst Central constituency) to the much safer seat of Northern Kombo. The ethnic origin of some of the PPP candidates is disputed, but our estimate is that it fielded nineteen Mandinka, four Wolof, three Jola, two Fula, two Tukulor, one Aku, and one Serahuli candidates. Thus the PPP remained a predominantly Mandinka party, although its ethnic base was widening.<sup>29</sup>

### **United Party**

Buoyed by its recent success and already geared up for campaigning from the recent referendum, the UP was confident of exploiting the anti-republican sentiment, or perhaps more accurately, the continuing fear among the electorate of the PPP and Jawara exploiting their control of the state; for example, P. S. N'Jie informed the British high commissioner that he expected to win eighteen seats.<sup>30</sup> The party fielded twenty-nine candidates in total, of whom eleven were joint UP/GCP candidates; the other eighteen represented the UP only; the UP also

endorsed the sole GCP candidate, Garba-Jahumpa, in Bathurst South. Thus, it failed to contest only Southern Kombo and Western Kiang.<sup>31</sup>

Four of the UP's five remaining sitting MPs (P. S. N'Jie, E. D. N'Jie, N. M. Darbo, and M. C. Cham) were reselected for the same or similar constituencies. However, the MP for Half Die, J. H. Joof, was forced to retire, to enable his old adversary, Garba-Jahumpa, to stand in the new constituency of Bathurst South. This appears to have been resented by some UP activists, including its energetic General Secretary, I. A. S. Burang-John, who harbored ambitions of winning the constituency nomination; Burang-John instead contested the much less promising seat of Jokadu.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the MP for Jimara, Demba Jagana, having rejoined the UP (after failing, as noted, to gain the PPP's nomination), was punished for his earlier disloyalty by being moved from his relatively safe seat to face certain defeat against Sheriff Dibba in Central Baddibu (he was to obtain only 262 votes). He was replaced in Jimara by M. C. Jallow, who had come within forty-four votes of defeating Bangally Singhateh in Wuli in 1962, but had lost more heavily to Kebba Krubally in the Basse by-election; nevertheless, with the rural connections he had developed through his work as a veterinary assistant, he seemed a stronger candidate than Jagana.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from Jallow, only two other unsuccessful UP candidates from the previous election were reselected by the party.<sup>34</sup> Most UP candidates were therefore standing for the first time. These included John R. Forster in Bathurst Central and Gibril (Gibou) M. Jagne in Serrekunda. As the eldest son of Sir Samuel Forster (and a nephew of E. F. Small), the former was a member of Bathurst's leading Aku family. He was also a highly respected retired civil servant, a Methodist lay preacher, and a former Bathurst town councilor. Having been elected to the Bathurst Town Council (BTC) in 1955 for the GDP, he had joined the UP in 1959, but had never before stood for Parliament.<sup>35</sup> Our calculation is that ten of the thirty UP and UP/GCP candidates were Wolof, nine were Mandinka, four were Tukulor, three were Serahuli, two were Fula, one was an Aku, and one was a Jola.<sup>36</sup> The main differences between the ethnic background of these candidates and the PPP's were that the Wolof were much more strongly represented among the opposition and the Mandinka among the PPP.

It is evident that the UP was in no shape to challenge the PPP nationally. Fletcher, discussing the state of the party after independence, rightly saw its weakness deriving from its "patron" structure system, with a consequent inability to convert itself into a mass party outside the Bathurst area.<sup>37</sup> Such a system depends on the personal appeal, organizational ability, and personal financial resources of the patron and his close supporters—in the UP case, P. S. N'Jie and a small coterie of urban businessmen and rural notables. "Leaders gave little attention to the development of a cohesive philosophy or party program as such . . . although the party was clearly more than an amalgamation of independent units, it was less than a centralized, hierarchical organization."<sup>38</sup> As P. S. N'Jie increasingly failed to provide effective leadership and wealthy patrons began to back away, party organization and morale in the Provinces was further undermined.



## Gambia Congress Party

As noted, the sole GCP candidate was Garba-Jahumpa. This was an indication of the unequal nature of its alliance with the UP and showed that it was an even more atrophied version of a patron party, lacking even the loose network of support in the Provinces still enjoyed by the UP. Moreover, the party was in some internal disarray, having recently witnessed the defection to the PPP of several of its leading members, including two of its four representatives on the Bathurst City Council (BCC).<sup>39</sup>

## Independents

Finally, six Independents fought the election. These included Rev. J. C. Faye, who stood in his home area of Bathurst Central, Lamin M'Boge, who contested Illiassa; and M. E. Jallow. Jallow had expected to win the UP/GCP nomination in Bathurst Central, as a reward for helping defeat the referendum, but instead was offered the hopeless seat of Western Kiang, where Amang Kanyi had been elected unopposed in 1962. In a fit of pique, he chose to challenge P. S. N'Jie in Bathurst North.<sup>40</sup> M'Boge, Jallow, and Fabakary Jatta (Southern Kombo) all adopted the same symbol of a ladder, an indication that they were working in tandem.<sup>41</sup>

## Election Issues

Some indication of the issues animating the election may be gleaned from radio broadcasts made by government and opposition leaders.<sup>42</sup> The PPP was given three slots, including the first by Sisay, another by A. B. N'Jie, and the last by Jawara. A common theme was the achievements of the young PPP over the past seven years. It was argued that the PPP served the needs of the rural populace in particular, while remaining mindful of the need to represent all the people under a democratic government. Although Sisay confined himself to an unspecified claim of the gains made under the PPP (which had been fighting for "independence and the farmers") and dismissed the three Bathurst parties for ignoring the needs of the rural electorate, A. B. N'Jie spelled out in greater detail his party's accomplishments, but expressed criticism of his Aku "friends." While praising their past record, he regretted a recent "decline in the public spiritedness of this community." Finally, Jawara, as prime minister, speaking in Wolof, Mandinka, and English, stressed the unity of the country under his party, epitomized by the abolition at independence of the divisive names of the Colony and the Protectorate. He also gave a lengthy account of his government's achievements, again stressing the benefits to the countryside, but not ignoring improvements in the urban areas. He also denounced opposition claims of a "sell out" to Senegal in respect of an agreement for the joint development of the Gambia River basin.

The opposition were given at least two broadcasts, one each for the UP and GCP leaders. N'Jie gave the second broadcast, but this was a short address confined to general and unspecified denunciation of PPP rule. He extolled the UP

for its stand on personal liberty and freedom from hunger and made the unusual claim that his party was not for kicking the British out and bringing in Americans (although, as noted in Chapter 10, the United States installed a resident consul in Bathurst, there was no indication that the PPP was advocating such a move).<sup>43</sup> N’Jie mentioned that three other UP speakers would broadcast on May 11, but, if they did, the *Gambia News Bulletin* never reported them. Garba-Jahumpa’s was the fourth broadcast, coming after that of A. B. N’Jie. He made a longer address than the UP leader, providing both a lengthy criticism of PPP rule and an outline of the GCP’s alternative policies. The PPP was attacked under seven headings: “imprudent tribalism”; “to Mandinkanise the country”; rampant “Nepotism and curry-favouring”; coercion and improper use of chiefs; disastrous economic policies, particularly with regard to rural development; a political defeat in a referendum to establish “a bigoted Republic”; subordinating Gambian interests to those of Senegal in respect of exploiting the common resources of the River Gambia; and failing to pursue a “non-alignment policy.” Garba-Jahumpa’s residual commitment to his earlier Nkrumahist pan-Africanism was therefore at odds with the pro-British stance of his electoral ally, P. S. N’Jie.

Garba-Jahumpa also put forward a package of measures to stimulate the economy, in general, and agriculture, in particular; but these were little different from government policies. He suggested increasing the price of groundnuts to promote farming; the promotion of trade and foreign investment; more overseas aid to modernize infrastructure; and free education for those under fifteen within two years. He also stated that he was against an executive president and that he wished to bring in Mali and Guinea, together with Senegal, to help develop regional economic links and a free trade zone. As demonstrated below, the overwhelming majority of Gambians felt the PPP was performing satisfactorily and were not convinced by the combined opposition case.

## Election Results

The election was keenly contested, with a turnout of 70.8 percent, considerably higher than in the 1965 referendum, although slightly below the 72.4 percent of 1962. It was won by the PPP, which gained 65.3 percent of the vote (81,313 votes). The UP and the GCP between them received 41,549 votes (33.4 percent); the UP candidates standing alone won 17.4 percent and the UP/GCP alliance a further 15.9 percent. The Independents won only 1.3 percent of the vote.<sup>44</sup> The UP/GCP alliance share of the vote thus turned out to be remarkably similar to its performance in the 1965 referendum. The PPP benefited from the first-past-the-post electoral system to win three-quarters of the seats (twenty-four); the UP gained seven seats and the GCP one. All the PPP incumbents in the Provinces were returned, but its two ex-UP MPs in the urban areas, H. O. Semega-Janneh in Serrekunda and M. B. Jones in Bathurst Central, were easily defeated by the UP’s J. R. Forster and G. M. Jagne.<sup>45</sup> Most PPP victories were by comfortable margins, with fourteen candidates polling more than 70 percent of the vote. If our estimate is accurate,

after the election, the PPP had seventeen Mandinka, two Wolof, two Tukolor, two Fula, and one Jola MPs.<sup>46</sup>

The regional distribution of the UP/GCP vote confirmed its strength in the Bathurst-Kombo St. Mary area, where it won four out of five seats and two-thirds of the vote. Despite his erratic leadership of the party in recent years, P. S. N’Jie won 75 percent of the vote in Bathurst North, and Forster and Jagne gained 60 and 68 percent of the vote in Bathurst Central and Serrekunda, respectively. Garba-Jahumpa’s victory in Bathurst South was even more emphatic: thanks to the support of UP, as well as GCP, adherents, he won 80 percent of the vote.<sup>47</sup> In the Provinces, the UP retained the three seats (Saloum, Upper Fulladu West, and Tumana) it held at the dissolution of Parliament and regained Jimara through M. C. Jallow, an indication that it retained support among the non-Mandinka in MID and URD. Significantly, however, only E. D. N’Jie in Saloum won more than 60 percent of the vote and, in all four constituencies, the UP share of the vote was lower than it had been in 1962. Moreover, although polling around two-fifths of the vote in each constituency, it failed to regain any of the other seats (Basse, Jokadu, Kantora, or Niumi) that it had won in 1962, but then lost through the defection of their MPs to the PPP. Elsewhere, the party gained more than 40 percent of the vote only in Lower Fulladu West and Wuli.

All the Independent candidates were soundly defeated. Fabakary Jatta was the most successful, gaining 18 percent of the vote in Southern Kombo, but Jallow, Faye, and M’Boge each coincidentally won only 4 percent of the vote in their respective constituencies. Jallow returned to trade union activities, but, as noted below, sought election again as an Independent in 1972.<sup>48</sup> Faye did not stand for Parliament again after his humiliating defeat (although he was an unsuccessful UP candidate for the BCC in 1968); ordained as a priest in 1973, he thereafter concentrated on working for the Anglican Church until his death in December 1985.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, as discussed below, M’Boge moved openly into political opposition in 1967, before rejoining the PPP in 1968.

Several factors serve to explain why the PPP enjoyed a more comfortable victory than in 1962. First, the PPP and its leader, Dawda Jawara, enjoyed considerable prestige as “the bringer of independence,” perhaps particularly because the UP could be portrayed as the party that had sought to delay independence through its legal maneuvers after the 1962 election. Second, obtaining control of the post-colonial state allowed the PPP to control the material and psychological resources of political office. PPP supporters (particularly in the Provinces) could still confidently expect that the distribution of political patronage, already begun after the granting of internal self-government in 1963 and extended after independence, would continue unabated; disillusion with the PPP had yet to set in. In contrast, the opposition had little patronage to offer. Third, the PPP could undoubtedly make more effective use of state resources, such as government vehicles or the local radio station, during this election period than in 1962.<sup>50</sup> Fourth, having learned from the bitter experience of its referendum “defeat,” the PPP campaigned much more vigorously; for example, Jawara traveled extensively in the

rural areas.<sup>51</sup> Fifth, given the willingness of the PPP since the 1962 election to accommodate important non-Mandinka politicians, such as the Fula, Andrew Camara and Michael Baldeh, and the Tukulor, K. C. A. Kah, it was now much more difficult for the UP to portray the PPP as a Mandinka party; conversely, P. S. N’Jie did little to conceal his contempt for Mandinka, which was unlikely to endear him to wavering Mandinka voters.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the support provided the UP by Protectorate chiefs was much less significant in 1966 than it had been in 1962. As noted in Chapter 6, some of the most open supporters of the UP had been dismissed in March 1965 and replaced by PPP loyalists; others were doubtless wary of giving open support to the UP, fearing that they too might be dismissed after the election.

Jawara made few cabinet changes after his latest election victory. Paul Baldeh, who was said to be “desperately ill,” lost his position as minister of education for the second and final time, and Sheriff Dibba was shifted to Works and Communications. In addition, Jawara requested that Sir Farimang Singhateh be confirmed as governor general, having proved to be, according to local British officials, a surprisingly effective choice.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Decline of the Urban Opposition: 1966–70**

After the euphoria of its “victory” in the 1965 referendum, the UP’s performance in the 1966 election was a bitter disappointment for P. S. N’Jie and one he found difficult to accept; insisting that the UP had won the election, he challenged the results in the courts, but his claim was, not surprisingly, dismissed out of hand.<sup>54</sup> Yet he was still hopeful that the UP would build on its alliance of Bathurst and rural non-Mandinka to extend its support in the countryside by the next election, because the PPP failed to deliver on its promises to the electorate, and so remained confident of ultimately replacing Jawara. Whether the other MPs shared his confidence is less certain. Unlike after the 1962 election, no UP MP defected to the ruling PPP in the first four years of the new Parliament, but as early as July 1967, a group of UP leaders, including M. C. Cham and M. C. Jallow, opened talks with the PPP about a coalition. But Jawara offered few concessions and the talks broke down. They were revived in February 1968, with P. S. N’Jie this time meeting Jawara, but again came to nothing, because the UP’s demands were too high.<sup>55</sup>

During 1968–69, the UP experienced a series of setbacks. First, it lost one of its shrinking band of financial backers, the extremely wealthy Bathurst businessman, M. M. N’Jie (who was also very influential in URD), following the marriage of Jawara to his sixteen-year-old daughter, Chilel. Jawara had been on bad terms with his Aku Christian wife, Augusta, for some time. He successfully filed for divorce in January 1967, but the Supreme Court’s verdict was challenged by the Mahoney family and overturned by the Court of Appeal in May. The government then swiftly passed the Marriage Bill (Special Circumstances) Act of 1967, which

allowed an automatic divorce if one partner converted to another religion (as of course the prime minister had done) and also permitted a polygamous marriage. It was under this legislation that Jawara (who did not divorce Augusta and, indeed, remained formally married to her) was able to marry Chile.<sup>56</sup> The arranged marriage was clearly undertaken for both political and financial reasons; Jawara was under pressure from leading figures in the PPP to get rid of his Christian wife and marry a Muslim, and M. M. N'Jie's money provided a very welcome new resource for both himself and his party.<sup>57</sup> One side effect of the marriage was that some of N'Jie's Bathurst's clients, including the Almami of Bathurst, Momadou Lamin Bah, and his deputy, Ibrahima Ndow, apparently also joined the PPP, although his rural protégé, the UP MP for Tumana, M. C. Cham, stayed loyal to his party.<sup>58</sup>

Second, also in March 1968, the UP lost its electoral ally when, despite the past differences between the GCP and the PPP, particularly on foreign policy, Garba-Jahumpa suddenly dissolved his GCP and joined the victorious PPP; this was not the first time that this peripatetic politician abandoned an alliance that was no longer of use to him.<sup>59</sup> By early 1968, Garba-Jahumpa realized his party was moribund. In the 1968 BCC election, the GCP won only one seat (his own) with the UP's Burang-John securing one more vote than he did in Bathurst South<sup>60</sup>; his chances of retaining his parliamentary seat at the next general election therefore seemed slim. Garba-Jahumpa probably also demanded a ministerial post as the price for crossing the floor; certainly, less than a month after the dissolution of the GCP, he was appointed minister of health in a cabinet reshuffle, which was to have far-reaching consequences.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, he was taking a risk by merging his party with the PPP; the loss of UP support automatically made his Bathurst South constituency a marginal.

Jawara's reasons for accepting Garba-Jahumpa into the fold may have been more complex. Certainly he must have welcomed the chance to regain a foothold in Bathurst, which had been lost after M. B. Jones' defeat in the 1966 election. As Nyang suggests, he probably wished to benefit from Garba-Jahumpa's experience or, at least, as the British high commissioner argued, silence his most damaging critic.<sup>62</sup> But in addition, as discussed in Chapter 6, Jawara had made a conscious decision even before independence to open up the victorious party to former opposition elements, in the pursuit of a policy of national reconciliation or integration between the former Colony and Protectorate and between the potentially antagonistic ethnic groups in the country. From this perspective, Garba-Jahumpa, as both a leading Bathurst politician and a Wolof, made an ideal convert.

Third, the UP suffered further setbacks during 1969, when three of its parliamentary candidates in 1966, Baboucar B. Cham (Northern Kombo), Karamo Kinteh (Lower Baddibu), and Jallow Sanneh (Eastern Kiang), defected to the PPP. Sanneh, the son of Karamo K. Sanneh, the deposed Seyfu of Eastern Kiang, was undoubtedly the most significant acquisition by the PPP.<sup>63</sup>

The decline of its urban opponents strengthened the PPP's position, but from 1967 onward, it faced new challenges from its former supporters. It is these intra-party challengers to its predominance that are next examined.

## **Intraparty Challenges**

The PPP, as shown in Chapter 6, was not entirely free of personality rivalries and factional intrigue, but the pursuit of political power on behalf of the economically neglected and politically ignored Protectorate, and the anticipated redistribution of national resources consequent on winning independence, provided its leaders and supporters with a common set of objectives. Once independence was secured and the formal opposition entered a period of political decay, elements within the PPP renewed their opposition to the new direction of party policy, the neglect of grassroots activists as a result of growing complacency, and the increasing power of the prime minister, Dawda Jawara. The first serious challenge to the party and its leadership was made by the PPA in 1968. Their lead was followed by the Independents in 1972 and, finally and more dangerously, by the NCP from 1975.

These challenges took place over fifteen years and involved different political actors, but they had several themes in common. The most important of these was the perceived departure in party policy away from the primacy of provincial and Mandinka interests to a more inclusivist approach embracing the old Colony and Protectorate, the Mandinka and other ethnic groups, in a shared national community. This involved a greater extent of power sharing within the senior ranks of the party and in the government with non-Mandinka, and the balancing of Mandinka aspirations in respect of party and state patronage with the need to reward opposition elements who increasingly crossed over to the ruling party.<sup>64</sup> The power sharing can be seen in the steady growth of urban Wolof in the cabinet and the National Executive Committee of the PPP. A. B. N’jie had been in the cabinet since 1965. Those promoted to cabinet rank in 1968 included Garba-Jahumpa and, as discussed below, Momodou Lamin Saho, who replaced the expatriate, Phillip (later Sir Phillip) Bridges, as attorney general in September 1968, after Bridges was appointed chief justice.<sup>65</sup>

To achieve such a delicate equilibrium, the PPP had to promote sufficient economic development to justify its claims to rule the new state and create the necessary opportunities for all key political players and their supporting communities to feel a benefit. Given the high degree of expectation, particularly among the provincial heartland of the party, the post-independence PPP government faced recurrent criticism of its development policies. The essentially patron–client nature of politics, in which political loyalties were rewarded with opportunities for self-enrichment through public office, had the effect of undermining government development policies aimed at improving living conditions in the Provinces and threatened the legitimacy of the ruling party.

The government’s critics focused their attacks on Jawara. Not only was he the architect of the new inclusivist party policy, he was also at the center of the patronage system. Critics expressed mounting concern over the growth in his personal power, both within the ruling party and in government. In a matter of a few years, Jawara extended his authority from that of first among equals of a new generation of politically inexperienced provincial politicians to an astute and determined

executive president, displaying the leadership style of a “prince,” as typologized by Jackson and Rosberg.<sup>66</sup> Their depiction of the “prince” as “an astute observer and manipulator of lieutenants and clients . . . [who presides] . . . over the struggle for preferments . . . but not to let it get out of hand, nor to let any leader emerge as a serious challenger” fits Jawara’s evolving presidential rule well. It was thus not only the UP that would question his motivations for moving from a constitutional monarchy to an executive presidency.

### **National Convention Party: 1967–69<sup>67</sup>**

The first of these intraparty challengers, the National Convention Party, was founded in May 1967 by Noah Sanyang. As noted, Sanyang had been the PPP candidate in Tumana in 1962, but was replaced in 1966 by A. S. Kandeh, who fared only marginally better than he against the UP’s M. C. Cham.<sup>68</sup> Its other leaders were two former PPP MPs, A. M. Demba and Lamin M’Boge, and two radical journalists, “Ba” (Baboucar) M. Tarawale and M’Backe N’Jie. Tarawale was the PPP’s former political secretary and editor of the initially pro-PPP newspaper, *The New Gambia*, who resigned from the PPP in July 1966, following the closure of its Political Bureau, which he headed. N’Jie was the editor of *The Progressive*. Significantly, all save N’Jie were Mandinka. But the party was an ephemeral creation; by August 1967, M’Boge and Tarawale had left, allegedly to establish the even more obscure Gambia People’s Party. Sanyang, who probably earlier merged his party into the PPA, rejoined the PPP in August 1969.<sup>69</sup>

### **The People’s Progressive Alliance: 1968–72<sup>70</sup>**

The second challenger to the PPP, the PPA, posed a much more serious threat. It was launched in October 1968 by four dissident PPP ministerial MPs, Sheriff Sisay (Niamina), K. C. A. Kah (Jokadu), Paul Baldeh (Lower Fulladu West), and Yusupha Samba (Sabach Sanjal), all of whom nursed real or imagined grievances against the PPP leadership. They were assisted by B. M. Tarawale, the PPP’s former political secretary, who, as noted, flirted with the National Convention Party, and by the former UP parliamentary candidate, Jallow Sanneh, who helped to draft the party’s constitution, but soon after defected to the PPP. Tarawale had once been extremely close to Jawara, but was subsequently a persistent gadfly who used the columns of his *New Gambia* newspaper to expose corruption in government circles and attack Jawara’s leadership style.<sup>71</sup> It should be noted that only three of the six original PPA leaders (Sanneh, Sisay, and Tarawale—the last-named a “Mandinkanized” Bambara) were Mandinka; Samba was a rural Wolof; Baldeh a Fula; and Kah a Tukulor.

The PPA leader was Sisay, one of the founders of the PPP and its secretary general, who ever since 1962 had held the position of minister of finance. This was generally regarded as the second most important post in the cabinet after the prime minister. However, in December 1967, Jawara decided to reshuffle his

cabinet. He appointed Sheriff Dibba as minister of finance in succession to Sisay, who was instead offered the less prestigious external affairs portfolio. Although the move was apparently designed in part to get rid of the discredited A. B. N’Jie, it was rumored in Bathurst that Sisay was plotting against Jawara and the prime minister was keen to cut his overambitious subordinate down to size. Sisay at first accepted the new post, but when Jawara confirmed that he was now ranked third in the cabinet behind himself and Dibba, he changed his mind and resigned from the cabinet in January 1968 with the vacancy being filled by Andrew Camara.<sup>72</sup> He remained as secretary general of the party until June when he was relieved of his post and replaced by Jawara himself.<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, in April, Kah, the minister of health, was ousted to make room for Garba-Jahumpa on the merger of the GCP with the PPP. He was apparently offered a position as a parliamentary secretary, but declined it and returned to the back benches. At the same time, Samba was dismissed as parliamentary secretary to the minister of local government, lands and mines; he was replaced by Demba S. Cham, possibly to retain a Tukulor presence in the cabinet after Kah’s departure, although Samba’s lifestyle certainly contributed to his loss of office.<sup>74</sup> Baldeh had a longer standing grievance. He had twice served as minister of education, but, as noted, had not received any ministerial portfolio after the 1966 election, again in part because of disapproval of his lifestyle.

During the summer of 1968, the disagreement between the party leaders took on a more serious complexion. This was in part because the deposed ministers interpreted their political demotion as evidence of a growing neglect of provincial interests in the government, as demonstrated by the prime minister’s desire to open up party and government to non-Mandinka, and his nascent authoritarianism in respect of policy initiatives and cabinet appointments. There was undoubtedly, as well, a degree of rivalry between Jawara, better educated but of low social caste, and Sisay, of more limited schooling, but the son of a chief, dating back to the PPP’s decision to choose the former as its leader and the country’s first prime minister.

Matters began to move to a head in August 1968 when the dissident MPs joined forces with the UP to attack the government in Parliament. All four voted against an attempt to increase the number of “nominated” MPs and a bill to ministerialize the post of the attorney general. Both bills were associated with Jawara’s desire to have M. L. Saho in the cabinet. To be a minister, Saho had first to be a MP, but there were no convenient vacancies and Jawara was unable to persuade any existing PPP MP to stand down. Because he did not wish to replace either of the existing “nominated” MPs (both of whom represented commercial interests), he decided to increase their number to four, which would also allow him to appoint the first female member of Parliament. This would not have been enough in itself to allow him to appoint Saho to the cabinet because, as a recent member of the Public Services Commission, the latter was barred from holding a ministerial post for three years. The second bill was therefore designed to allow Jawara to circumvent this restriction. When the bills were put to the vote, the PPP won, but by only



twenty votes to eleven; this was less than the two-thirds majority that the opposition claimed was necessary on the grounds that the constitution was being amended. Eventually the British government concurred with Jawara's view that a simple majority only was required, but their enactment was delayed for several months.<sup>75</sup>

The willingness of the dissident MPs to join forces with P. S. N'Jie (who was unusually effective in Parliament over the issue), greatly angered Jawara. The prime minister first acted skillfully to prevent the rebellion from spreading by using patronage to exploit the factional tendencies and personal ambitions of second-tier PPP leaders. As the main beneficiary of the first reshuffle, Sheriff Dibba, who would later challenge Jawara, on this occasion strongly supported the prime minister. Indeed, he pressed for Sisay's expulsion from the PPP. Other beneficiaries of the cabinet reshuffles also supported the prime minister. To prevent the rebellion spreading outside the party, Jawara enticed back Lamin M'Boge, perhaps with a promise of Sisay's Niamina constituency at the next election; M'Boge rejoined the PPP in October.<sup>76</sup> Once Jawara was sure of the backing of his party, he acted decisively; on September 1, the PPP's National Executive Committee endorsed his recommendation to expel the four MPs from the party "for persistent and consistent indiscipline and disloyalty."<sup>77</sup>

A month later, the expelled MPs formed the PPA.<sup>78</sup> The deliberate overlapping of the new movement's name with that of the ruling party was part of an attempt by the dissidents to claim to speak for the unadulterated rural movement of the past; a going back to the PPP's original roots of a Mandinka provincial-centered organization under collective leadership (although, as noted, only three of the six original PPA leaders were Mandinka or "Mandinkanized"). This was in contrast to what had evolved under Jawara's imperious leadership, an interethnic and transregional party, in danger of selling out on its historic mission and native constituency (a theme to be brought up again by a new group of rebels in the mid-1970s).

The PPA leaders were supported by many of their constituents (including Sisay's brother, the chief of Niamina at this time) and a handful of urban political figures from the distant past, including two members of the defunct Gambia National Party, Edrissa Samba and Alexander Jobarteh. But support for the PPA remained local and it was never able to establish a national organization.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, despite its carefully thought-out appeal to the rural electorate, it failed to undermine Jawara's personal ascendancy or displace the PPP in the affection and loyalties of the rural populace. This was not least because it could offer no tangible benefits to an electorate that had come to view political power as the means to distribute state largesse to constituencies. Many Mandinka may also have distrusted Sisay personally. Its difficulties were compounded by a lack of money. This was a reflection of its failure to attract any important patrons in the rural constituencies, or any mass following to provide sufficient income from membership dues to enable it to expand its organization beyond the constituencies of the rebel ministers.<sup>80</sup> Instead, it came to rely on the insufficient profits of Tarawale's newspaper. A further setback occurred when Paul Baldeh, who retained a following

among the Fula community of MID, died in December 1968 at the age of only thirty-one.<sup>81</sup>

The PPA was therefore doomed to remain, at best, a minority party, with no prospect of winning more than a handful of rural seats, and, more remotely, achieving a successful electoral pact with the UP at the next general election. As noted, Jallow Sanneh joined the PPP in early 1969, and Kah did so in July. The latter claimed that this was due to pressure being exerted on him by his constituents, but dissatisfaction with the PPA was probably the root cause.<sup>82</sup> However, he did not enjoy his good fortune for long; in October 1969, he (together with the UP's N. M. Darbo) was charged with fraud involving passport irregularities. He was subsequently convicted and sentenced to a two-year term of imprisonment. He automatically forfeited his parliamentary seat, as a result of failing to appeal against the Court of Appeal's upholding of the sentence. He was expelled from the PPP in February 1971 and subsequently disappeared from political life.<sup>83</sup> The two remaining PPA MPs, Sisay and Samba, struggled on somewhat half heartedly. For example, the PPA did not contest any of the seven by-elections that occurred between 1968 and 1971, even in Baldeh's old seat of Lower Fulladu West.<sup>84</sup>

### **1970 Republic Referendum<sup>85</sup>**

The first real opportunity for both the UP and the PPA to challenge the ruling party nationally since the 1966 election was in April 1970, when Jawara and the PPP felt sufficiently emboldened to hold a second republic referendum. After failing to secure the required two-thirds majority in 1965, Jawara apparently put his plans to establish a republic on hold for two or three years. He may then have been deterred by the rise of the PPA, which initially seemed to threaten the PPP's dominance and would certainly enable the opposition to block any bill to amend the constitution in the House. But Paul Baldeh's death, together with the by-election victories of the PPP's Abdul M'Ballow and Della Singhateh in Lower Fulladu West and Wuli in February and March 1969, respectively, changed the political arithmetic; it meant that the PPP once again could be certain of achieving the twenty-two votes in the House it required.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, no doubt with Jawara's approval, in May 1969, the PPP's Executive Committee unanimously resolved that it would seek to establish a republic, a decision made public a few days later. The Republic Bill was eventually published in November 1969 and considered by the House. The new bill was broadly similar to that put forward in 1965, although in a number of respects the power of the president was strengthened.<sup>87</sup>

Once again, the UP opposed the bill on the familiar grounds that the new constitution would vest absolute power in the president and that Jawara had introduced the bill to avoid having to call a general election in 1971. But apart from trying (unsuccessfully) to persuade Margaret Thatcher, then an opposition Conservative MP, to take up his cause, P. S. N'Jie did little to mobilize resistance to

the bill.<sup>88</sup> Unlike in 1965, the referendum was not opposed by the GWU (which remained neutral), and the GCP was of course no longer in existence; it was also now much harder for dissident chiefs (or ex-chiefs) to foment opposition to the bill. However, this time the opposition to the bill included the PPA (even though its leaders had all supported the referendum in 1965); it argued that the abolition of the monarchy was undesirable and also objected to several specific clauses in the Republic Bill, particularly that a “yes” vote would effectively mean a vote for Jawara to be the first president.<sup>89</sup> But its tactical alliance with the UP backfired; the government succeeded in undermining grassroots Mandinka support for the PPA, by playing on the latter’s alliance with the UP, the historic opponent of the former Protectorate. The PPP also discredited the PPA by accusing it of going against the social consensus of Mandinka society and threatening it with a damaging disunity.<sup>90</sup>

Even with the cooperation of the PPA, the UP was unable to prevent a determined PPP, which presented its case more effectively than in 1965, from forcing through a “yes” vote on this occasion. The government obtained 84,968 “yes” votes to the 35,638 “no” votes of the opposition; this meant it won 70.5 percent of the vote and achieved 4,163 votes more than the required two-thirds majority. The very high turnout (90 percent) reflected not only the government’s determination and improved organization, but also the much improved electoral register.<sup>91</sup> Six of the seven constituencies with UP MPs in 1970 voted “no,” the exception being Jimara (where the “yes” majority was one); the “yes” majority was also relatively small in two other constituencies in URD, Kantora and Wuli. The only other constituency to record a majority for the “no” camp was Niamina, Sheriff Sisay’s home area, although there was solid support for the referendum in Yusupha Samba’s constituency of Sabach Sanjal. Of the third of the electorate that was against the government, a clear majority, it could be claimed, were UP sympathizers. At the same time, when compared with the outcome of the 1965 referendum, the result could be interpreted as further evidence of the shrinking of the UP’s rural vote.<sup>92</sup>

After the referendum, Sir Farimang Singhateh (whose role during the campaign was controversial) stepped down as governor general.<sup>93</sup> Jawara was automatically sworn in as president on April 24, and the Parliamentary seat he vacated in Eastern Kombo was inherited by Lamin Kitty Jabang, a twenty-nine-year-old Mandinka head teacher, in an uncontested by-election. Jabang, who was to become a leading political figure in the 1980s and 1990s, was the first of a new wave of younger and generally better educated PPP politicians to enter Parliament.<sup>94</sup> But if the result was a triumph for the PPP, the outcome marked the beginning of the end for the PPA. In July 1970, Sisay and Samba initiated discussions with Jawara and the PPP Executive Committee, but it was not until December 1971, a few months before the next general election, that they were finally readmitted to the party. The PPA was subsequently formally dissolved in February 1972.<sup>95</sup>

Despite returning to the fold, neither man was selected for the PPP in the next general election. Although some of his constituents tried to persuade him to stand as an Independent, Sisay supported the PPP and was subsequently rewarded for doing so by being appointed governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia in

December 1972.<sup>96</sup> He even made it back to his old post of minister of trade and finance in 1982. His brother was not so fortunate; he was removed from office in June 1971.<sup>97</sup> The Sisay episode throws an instructive light on Jawara's leadership style and his understanding of the mentality of his colleagues in the government. Both as prime minister and president, he manipulated their usually selfish aspirations against each other. Rebels were rarely cast from office for long; instead Jawara used periods of political "exile" to sanction them, often bringing them back into government later to be used against new challengers to his authority.

Unlike Sisay, Samba did not regain his former position and faded out of politics. Meanwhile, although Tarawale was readmitted to the PPP in July 1970, his rapprochement with the PPP was short-lived; in 1971, the government pressed charges of seditious libel against him for defaming the president in a series of articles. He was convicted in May 1971 and served eight months of a two-and-a-half year sentence, but on his release in 1972, the government prevented him from recommencing his newspaper, the *New Gambia*.<sup>98</sup> It would be another ten years before he and the PPP leadership would be reconciled. Tarawale's treatment was evidence of the coercive, as well as the patron clientage, approach adopted by the PPP in dealing with its political opponents; although dismissals and exclusion were the preferred means.

## **The 1971 Area Council and 1972 General Elections**

The next test of the PPP's ascendancy came on June 16, 1971 when Area Council (local government) elections took place.<sup>99</sup> On the basis of their outcome, when the PPP won sixty-eight seats out of seventy-two, it had every expectation of sweeping the polls in the general election some nine months later. In Kanifing Urban District Council (the authority for the capital's mainland suburbs), the PPP stood unchallenged in six of the eleven seats; of the other three, it won two and lost one to the UP. The situation was repeated in the Provinces. In Brikama Area Council (WD), it won all twelve seats unopposed and in Mansakonko Area Council (LRD), it again took all twelve seats, facing only a handful of Independent candidates. In Kuntaur Area Council (MID), despite a tradition of UP support, the party managed to contest only six seats out of twelve, winning only Ballanghar in Lower Saloum. In Kerewan Area Council (North Bank Division–NBD), only one UP candidate was put up; the PPP won twelve seats and Independents the other three. The same story was repeated in Georgetown (MID), again an area where the UP might have hoped to retain seats, having won three in 1967, but it failed to put up any candidates; the PPP took nine seats unopposed and defeated Independents in the remaining three. In addition, the PPP swept the board in Basse Area Council (URD), even though there had been previously strong support for the UP in this area. The results painfully exposed the organizational weaknesses of the UP as well as a fatalistic acceptance of PPP hegemony on the part of most voters. Yet,

despite these depressing results, the UP refused to give up the struggle and put up a renewed, if hardly more successful, challenge to the government in the general election held the following March.

The second post-independence general election took place over two days, March 28–29, 1972.<sup>100</sup> It was contested by the PPP, the UP and by a large group of Independent candidates. Each is considered in turn.

### **People's Progressive Party**

At the dissolution of Parliament, the PPP held twenty-eight seats and was confident of retaining all of these. Not surprisingly, almost all its sitting MPs, including M. C. Cham (Tumana) and M. C. Jallow (Jimara) who, as discussed below, joined the PPP from the UP in 1970, were renominated. There were only three exceptions: Della Singhateh (Wuli) and the former PPA leaders, Sheriff Sisay (Niamina) and Yusupha Samba (Sabach Sanjal). Singhateh was replaced by Sana Saïdy; Sisay by the PPP's administrative secretary, Lamin M'Boge, who was now fully rehabilitated; and Samba by a young Radio Gambia technician from Kataba, Sailhou Sabally.<sup>101</sup> In addition, the PPP could reasonably expect to win back Jokadu (which had been lost in a by-election to an Independent candidate in 1971), having replaced its inappropriate by-election candidate, Abdoulie M. Drammeh (a Bathurst lawyer and a Wolof), by Landing Jallow Sonko, a Mandinka teacher from Sika in Niimi, who was, more importantly, a member of the Sonko ruling family. The PPP also shrewdly chose Omar A. Jallow, a young cooperative inspector and former official of the GWU, who was well known as a local youth leader, to challenge Gibou Jagne in Serrekunda. Along with Lamin Kitty Jabang, Sabally, Sonko and Jallow represented the second wave of PPP politicians who were to come to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>102</sup>

The PPP also nominated strong candidates in its two target seats in Bathurst: I. B. A. Kelepha-Samba in Bathurst North and Horace R. Monday (senior), in Bathurst Central. The former was a career civil servant who had retired as senior accounting officer in the Marine Department shortly before the election; the latter was a former accountant general and Gambian high commissioner in London who, in recent years, had served as the chairman of the Public Services Commission. Their selection demonstrated that senior civil servants of an Aku and Wolof background, previously identified with the UP, were now confident that their positions would not disappear under a wave of provincial Mandinka aspirants.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Christians were reassured by key civil service appointments that they would not be displaced by Muslims.<sup>104</sup> The Bathurst elite discovered that the relatively inexperienced PPP government needed its professional and administrative experiences to run the new state and the promotion of provincial Mandinka in the public service was checked by a combination of their lack of training and by government prudence.

The choice of Kelepha-Samba, who was mayor of Bathurst between 1967 and the sudden dissolution of the BCC in June 1971, also illustrated how far the PPP's

presence in local government in the capital had increased since independence. As early as 1967–68, control of the BCC and Kanifing Urban District Council had passed to the PPP, by means of a combination of election victories and the appointment of nominated councilors to achieve overall majorities.<sup>105</sup>

In the Provinces, the PPP revived its dormant party structure, sending senior PPP MPs to head campaign teams in their home areas: Sheriff Dibba concentrated on NBD; B. L. Kuti Sanyang was in charge in WD; Yaya Ceesay took on LRD; Kebba Leigh managed the MID campaign; and Andrew Camara ensured that there was no UP revival in URD.<sup>106</sup> Seven PPP candidates, including Sanyang and Ceesay, were returned unopposed. This reflected the success of the ruling party in discouraging opposition candidates from standing through a combination of inducements and veiled sanctions. This allowed the PPP to redeploy financial resources and MPs to help out in other constituencies.

### United Party

Since its defeat in the 1970 republic referendum, the UP had suffered a series of further setbacks (apart from its poor performance in the 1971 Area Council elections). First, on the eve of the referendum, the party's general secretary (and editor of the *Gambia Echo* since 1968), I. A. S. Burang-John, joined the PPP, taking the party's records with him. Burang-John's justification for changing sides after ten years' service to the UP was that he had despaired of ever achieving the unity between the UP and PPP, which he had long sought; he had also previously tried in vain to persuade P. S. N'Jie not to oppose the referendum, which he considered the UP could not win. Second, in August 1970, M. C. Jallow, the MP for Jimara, defected to the PPP; Jallow also mentioned the cause of unity, but interestingly added that his decision met with the approval of his constituents.<sup>107</sup>

Third, in October 1970, M. C. Cham, the MP for Tumana, joined the PPP. His decision to join the PPP seems to have been a direct consequence of a fourth blow to the UP's prospects, the death of E. D. N'Jie. On May 8, the party's Executive Bureau had dismissed P. S. N'Jie as leader and replaced him with his more pragmatic brother, with Cham as deputy leader. P. S. N'Jie had refused to accept the legitimacy of the referendum or the establishment of the republic and in protest had withdrawn from the House of Representatives (even before then his attendance was erratic and his frequent absences attributed to a serious drink problem, which he subsequently overcame). Initially, he even refused to handle the new currency with Jawara's portrait on it. He also failed to attend meetings of the party's Executive Committee. This was the final straw for the other UP MPs who ousted him in the hope that E. D. N'Jie would provide a more effective leadership style. P. S. N'Jie initially challenged their decision, but in July, E. D. N'Jie was formally confirmed as UP party leader in the House of Representatives.<sup>108</sup> However, on October 19, E. D. N'Jie died from injuries sustained in a car accident and the party was obliged to reinstate P. S. N'Jie because no alternative leader could be found. This led almost immediately to the defection of Cham, who had strongly supported the replacement of

P. S. N’Jie, which not only effectively destroyed the UP’s prospects in URD, but also meant that the UP lost one of its most active spokesmen.<sup>109</sup> As discussed, both Cham and Jallow were to fight the 1972 election under the PPP banner.

A further blow to the UP cause was the loss of two of its seats in by-elections. In October 1970, a by-election was held in Upper Fulladu West because the sitting UP member, N. M. Darbo, had been sentenced to a two-year term of imprisonment in the previous November; the PPP candidate, Kebba Jawara, a relative of the president, who had lost to Darbo in 1966, this time defeated the UP’s Sheikh Samba Jobe with 70 percent of the vote. Even more significantly, in January 1971, the UP rural stronghold of Saloum, which E. D. N’Jie had won with 61 percent of the vote in 1966, was lost when K. W. Foon was defeated by the PPP’s Kebba A. Bayo by 178 votes.<sup>110</sup>

These by-election defeats meant that the UP held only three seats at the dissolution of Parliament, all in the former Colony area: Bathurst North through P. S. N’Jie, Bathurst Central through J. R. Forster, and Serrekunda through Gibou Jagne. Moreover, the loyalty to the UP of both Forster and Jagne was open to question; according to the British high commissioner, both men were ready to defect to the PPP if they could find a means of doing so without alienating their constituents.<sup>111</sup> In addition, in at least one constituency (Wuli) and possibly elsewhere, a potential UP candidate was persuaded by intimidation to withdraw. In view of these problems, the UP was able to field only fourteen candidates in total, compared with the twenty-nine it had put forward in 1966.<sup>112</sup> Four of these were newcomers to national politics, but only Momodou (Dodou) M. Taal, who represented the Bathurst South ward on the BCC and had been the president of the Gambia National Youth Council, was in any way known to the general public.<sup>113</sup> It was also evident that the UP’s regional base had shrunk considerably since the previous election; although it contested four out of five seats in Bathurst/Kombo St. Mary and five out of six in Georgetown Administrative Area, it could contest only three out of six seats in URD and only two out of fifteen seats in the three other administrative areas combined (Brikama, Mansakonko, and Kerewan).

### **The Independents**<sup>114</sup>

As we have seen, there had been Independent candidates in each Gambian general election since 1960. However, in the 1962 and 1966 elections, their presence was token: there were only two Independent candidates in 1962 and six in 1966 and none came remotely close to winning a seat. In contrast, in 1972, there were no fewer than nineteen Independents and they stood in every Administrative Area except Kombo St. Mary. That so many Independents were to contest a general election was most unusual in post-independence Africa; where competitive party politics continued after independence, almost all candidates represented a political party.<sup>115</sup>

One Independent candidate, Maja Omar Sonko, was a sitting MP. The nephew of Landing Omar Sonko, a former MP who was now the Seyfu of Upper Niumi, Maja Sonko had won the Jokadu by-election in March 1971, which was brought

about by the downfall of K. C. A. Kah. Sonko, who thus defeated the government's attempt to impose an outsider on a reluctant constituency organization in his home area, almost immediately applied to rejoin the PPP, but was turned down. L. O. Sonko, who had been dismissed as Seyfu in February 1971 for supporting his relative, also stood as an Independent, in Niuni.<sup>116</sup> Two candidates, the GWU leader, M. E. Jallow (Bathurst North) and Momodou K. Sanneh (Western Kiang), had been unsuccessful Independent candidates in the 1966 election; M. B. Sagnia (Kantora), one of the original founders of the Protectorate People's Society, had contested the 1960 and 1962 elections for the PPP. It is also probable that Yaya Dabo had fought Jarra for the UP in 1962.<sup>117</sup> All the rest appear to have been political newcomers who had not previously stood for Parliament.

All save one (M. E. Jallow) of the Independents were PPP supporters and constituency-level office holders. The PPP received over 200 applications for the thirty-two parliamentary seats and a number of those who were rejected chose to stand as Independent candidates.<sup>118</sup> Many were opposed to the virtually automatic re-adoption of existing MPs by the ruling party; as noted, twenty-five out of twenty-eight sitting members were renominated. Even Musa Dabo, who had been accused in January 1970 of aiding and abetting the obtaining of money by false pretences and forced to resign as minister of health, was reselected in Sandu.<sup>119</sup> This is a common problem with newly created political parties in the Third World, whose initial cohort of MPs are unusually young (compared with the age profile of MPs in developed countries) and consequently remain relatively youthful and unprepared to give up office, even after ten years of power. Consequently, a new generation of party activists find it difficult to displace their seniors, whose livelihood now derives from political office.

Many, although not all, of the Independents were young.<sup>120</sup> As will be seen in Chapter 8, youths in The Gambia were no different from their counterparts elsewhere in Africa in being critical of the party in power for personal, as well as for ideological, reasons. In seeking to exercise some control over them, the PPP reorganized its own youth wing in 1971, but it was from this same organization that most of the Independent candidates in 1972 were to emerge.<sup>121</sup> Personally ambitious to advance socially and economically through parliamentary office, they sought to mobilize kinship and locality support for their rebellious challenge to the party hierarchy, while at the same time claiming to be loyal to the PPP. This was not as inconsistent as it sounded: the bulk of the Independents saw themselves as loyal party members and their opposition was to the selection process, not to the PPP's manifesto and policies or leader. They even sought to adopt party leader Jawara as their presidential preference, but in a move designed to isolate them from rank-and-file party loyalists, who were strongly attached to him, he refused to accept their support.<sup>122</sup>

Typically, the Independents were drawn from the lower ranks of the public service and commerce—such as teachers and clerks. In fact their socioeconomic backgrounds were no different from other candidates, save that PPP candidates now described themselves as “politicians” and enjoyed an improved standard of



living as a result of their new livelihoods. Although all had to be sufficiently conversant in English to pass the simple linguistic and literacy tests applied by divisional commissioners at the time of their adoption, the competence of a number of them was limited.<sup>123</sup>

Nine of the nineteen candidates, including many of the most active, contested seats in the Kerewan Administrative Area of the LRD<sup>124</sup>; five stood in the three seats in the Baddibu districts, with a tradition of youth unemployment and migration to the capital city in search of work and social betterment. Baddibunku (those from Baddibu) in the Bathurst area supported their kinsmen at home and two of the leading organizers of the Independent group were from Salikene in NBD: Momodou S. K. Manneh and Lamin K. Saho. Both men, who were in their twenties, had recently returned home with doctorates, following higher education in the United States and West Germany, respectively. Prevented by the electoral residency regulations from standing himself against Sheriff Dibba in Central Baddibu, Saho sponsored his brother, B. K. Saho, as well as providing wider leadership for the Independents in Baddibu and more generally. Manneh was also prevented from standing by the residency regulations.<sup>125</sup> Baddibu discontent, an amalgam of economic grievances and resistance to PPP central office attempts to enforce sitting MPs on local constituencies, persisted after the collapse of the Independents' challenge in 1972 and helped to fuel a more serious challenge to the government a few years later.

Linked to the Independents' attacks on the selection process for parliamentary candidates was their criticism, often shared more widely, of incumbent MPs for neglecting their constituents. This was usually expressed in terms of the MPs keeping away from their constituencies, save at election time; failing to secure sufficient development projects for their home areas (infrastructural and health provisions, in particular); and not providing work opportunities for local youths at a time of rising unemployment among school leavers. At the same time, they enjoyed the perceived benefits of office, legitimate or otherwise, in the distant capital.<sup>126</sup>

It has to be said that attitudes toward political corruption in The Gambia have always been ambiguous<sup>127</sup>; anti-corruption rhetoric is part of the opposition's attacks on government, but it does not take long for the same critics, should they achieve office themselves, to engage in the very same practices earlier condemned.<sup>128</sup> There appears to be a general perception of the corrupting nature of power, but a relatively indulgent attitude toward those enjoying it, provided the benefits are either spread about more widely or circulated among competing sections of the aspiring political elite. The improper use of state resources or private money to "buy" votes is a case in point. The practice dates back to late colonial times in Bathurst<sup>129</sup>; yet the PPP and later critics of such irregularities readily resorted to the same methods in pursuit or defense of their own political power. It is more the lack of equal access to such patronage, rather than its use, that fuels such criticism. Independent candidates, lacking the means to engage in "vote buying," were understandably quick to condemn it.

Although the Independents' criticisms of MPs struck a chord with many voters, their chances at the polls were limited. First, the Independent candidates had very little in common other than their (generally) shared PPP background and frustrated ambitions, and no central organization to convert them into a new political party. Emblematically, this was seen in the adoption by Independents of a variety of symbols (such as a lantern, ladder, or key) from an official list, rather than a shared one, which would have at least lent them a cosmetic unity. Indeed, in three constituencies (Illiassa, Niumi, and Lower Baddibu), Independents stood against each other.<sup>130</sup> Attempts were made to couch their grievances in terms of issues of principle and M. E. Jallow, the veteran trade union leader and anti-colonial nationalist standing as an Independent in Bathurst North, and with the assistance of some of the Baddibu dissidents, did produce short, duplicated, communiqués which sought to identify common criticisms of the government. But at heart, nearly all the candidates were driven by ambition to hold elected office, a factor successfully exploited by the PPP leadership. Moreover, attempts to campaign as a group largely foundered, save for an initial rally in Banjul and limited joint campaigning in Niumi and the Baddibus. A promised joint campaign tour of the country was shelved, because the Independent candidates were forced to focus on their own localities.<sup>131</sup>

Second, the fact that nearly all Independents saw themselves as only temporarily in dispute with the PPP meant they could not form an alliance with the UP, still remembered as the political enemy in most rural areas. The UP, on its part, claimed to have offered limited financial support to some Independent candidates, but remained suspicious of them.<sup>132</sup> Such support would have been justified tactically, because Independents stood against the government in eleven constituencies in which the UP failed to put up candidates of its own. It would have had to have been offered discreetly, because PPP propaganda sought to present the Independents as covert allies of the UP. In five constituencies (Bathurst North, Upper Fulladu West, Niumi, Sandu, and Sabach Sanjal), Independents stood against the UP, but only in Sabach Sanjal did this allow the PPP to win on a minority vote.

Third, the Independents failed to attract the backing of local rural notables. Unlike with the PPA, and later the NCP or Gambia People's Party, no prominent political leader or powerful opinion leader in the provinces, save for chiefly close relatives of candidates, was prepared to come out openly for Independents. However, the father of Batapa Drammeh was removed as Seyfu of Sandu for campaigning for his son.<sup>133</sup> Independents were instead forced to rely on other, and ultimately less successful, stratagems. The principal ones were community-based extended family networks, village and locality loyalties and an appeal to youth (except that few of the latter were registered electors, given the 21 voting age requirement).<sup>134</sup> These tactics were not restricted to the Independents; they were, and are, the stuff of Gambian politics. All candidates, including party nominees, sought to mobilize local networks to command a majority of votes in their constituencies. Family pedigree and social standing were of great political value, as had been the case in earlier elections. The PPP proved adept at door-to-door canvassing of

heads-of-family in the interior, appealing to traditional notions of deference to age and social standing. This reliance on personal contacts helps explain the limited role of the news media and party political literature in the campaign, and, indeed, in other elections.

Fourth, the Independents, like the UP, lacked the financial resources to bolster their campaigns. Funding was the responsibility of each candidate, but PPP candidates enjoyed the financial support of the party and additional assistance from sections of the business community. The latter had nothing to gain, and much to lose, by supporting anti-government candidates. Likewise, local communities, eager to tap into albeit limited government development funds, put these at risk by voting for an opposition candidate.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, because the PPP regarded the Independents as a much more serious challenge to it than the long-established UP, it addressed its formidable resources, including its divisional campaign teams, to defeating them. Jawara, who took the opposition of the Independents very seriously, himself traveled the country “indefatigably” to bolster the support of PPP candidates.<sup>136</sup> The PPP also proved adept at dividing the support base of the Independents. The parochial nature of their activities allowed ruling party activists to play on family, ethnic, personal, generational, geographical, and, in one case, gender, divisions within constituencies. The more Independent candidates sought, in default of alternative resources, to mobilize local social networks, such as family, locality or age-grade ties, the easier it was for the PPP to counter these by appealing to rival constituency affinities. In Eastern Kombo, for example, the PPP effectively undermined a potentially serious challenge by Mrs. Ya Fatou Sonko, a twenty-four-year-old PPP party official from Brikama and the only female contestant, by playing on a combination of male prejudices against women holding office; generational hostility of elders to youths seeking to displace them; and geographical rivalry between Brikama town, from where Sonko drew much of her support, and the villages in the eastern half of the constituency, from where the PPP candidate, Lamin Jabang, hailed.<sup>137</sup> These strategies were in addition to the familiar pressure on chiefs and village headmen to keep out of the battle, or to support the government candidate, and financial inducements.<sup>138</sup>

## **Election Results**

The interest generated by the campaign of the Independents was probably the main reason why the turnout was much higher than in 1966 at 76.1 percent.<sup>139</sup> The PPP comfortably won the election, winning twenty-eight seats out of thirty-two. Its share of the total vote actually fell from 65.3 percent in 1966 to 63.0 percent, but this was mainly due to the fact that seven of its candidates were returned unopposed and it would certainly have expected to gain an above-average vote in these constituencies. For the same reason, its total vote fell from 81,313 in 1966 to 65,388.<sup>140</sup> The UP won three seats, but it gained only 17,161 votes (compared with 41,549 for the UP/GCP coalition in 1966) and its share of the poll, at 16.5 percent, was its lowest to date. The Independents won only one seat, but nevertheless

performed unusually well when all the disadvantages they faced are considered. They polled 21,302 votes, 20.5 percent of the total cast; a remarkable achievement for a disparate group of inexperienced and underfunded political novices.

All the PPP incumbents, except Musa Dabo in Sandu, were returned; Dabo was defeated by the Independent, Batapa Drammeh, who was elected with 53 percent of the vote. The PPP also regained Jokadu through Landing Jallow Sonko and, for the first time, won a seat in an election in the capital, with Garba-Jahumpa narrowly defeating the UP candidate in Bathurst South, M. M. Taal. All three current UP MPs, N'Jie, Forster, and Jagne, retained their seats, but saw their majorities sharply reduced. Meanwhile, although N'Jie overcame his customary lethargy in one last burst of campaigning in March, when he undertook a demanding eighteen-day tour of the Provinces, no mean achievement for a man of his years (he was sixty-two) and at the hottest time of the year, the UP failed to recover any of the seats it had lost through defections or by-elections. Indeed, only K. W. Foon in Saloum came even relatively close to winning and even in Jimara, which the UP had held until 1970, it managed only 14 percent of the vote. The bogey of Mandinka supremacism among the lesser ethnic communities had been laid to rest by the PPP's redefinition of itself and its effective use of patronage. Apart from Drammeh, Independents polled over one-third of the vote in four other constituencies. Only three won less than 10 percent of the poll.

There were various reasons for the UP's poor performance. First, as noted, its regional base was dwindling, thanks to the defection of its MPs and its declining role in rural local government. Second, the UP's financial resources were much reduced since 1966, particularly following the loss of support from M. M. N'Jie; P. S. N'Jie was probably also less able than in the past to fund the party out of his own pocket.<sup>141</sup> Third, the UP's organization was always weaker than the PPP's, but by 1972, the party had no effective propaganda machinery, nor any newspaper of its own to put across such views as it had. Although N'Jie did address the electorate (for the last time) in 1972, when he issued a press release of his radio election broadcast, entitled "Political Dark Ages of the Gambia," this was a poorly argued rant against the iniquities of the PPP, and with no clearly set out alternative policy. Typical of N'Jie's procrastination was his failure to send another election "press release" (a rather better argued one in which he rightly criticized anti-democratic acts on the part of the PPP government, such as dismissing chiefs whose sons stood against the ruling party) to *The Nation* newspaper until after the election!<sup>142</sup> Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of voters rejected an increasingly idiosyncratic N'Jie and his party. A skeptical electorate questioned the capacity of defeated or inexperienced opposition leaders to improve on the existing government; by the 1970s, there was little memory of N'Jie's brief administration in the early 1960s, and nothing in his current pronouncements, to suggest he could do any better than Jawara and the PPP.

N'Jie also conceded defeat for the presidency, even before the election took place. Under the indirect system of choosing the head-of-state, operative in 1972 and 1977, the president was selected by a college of electors made up of the

directly elected MPs in the House of Representatives. These were required to state their presidential choice at the time of standing for parliamentary election. Whereas all PPP candidates opted for Jawara, UP candidates nominated as their presidential choice not P. S. N’Jie, the party leader, but Percy H. Coker, a charming, but politically quite obscure and ineffective, Aku government pensioner.<sup>143</sup> N’Jie faced a dilemma in that he had campaigned against a presidency in 1965 and 1970, so could hardly stand for it in 1972. At the same time, his refusal to stand undermined his party’s credibility and left Jawara as the most likely president even in a hung parliament.

### **Post-Election Cabinet Changes**

Following his latest election victory, Jawara made only minor changes to his cabinet. Dibba remained as vice president and minister of finance, Camara as minister for external affairs, and M. L. Saho as the attorney general; only one minister, H. O. Semega-Janneh (agriculture), was sacked. However, there were two newcomers to the cabinet: Sir Alieu Jack, who had been speaker of the House of Representatives since 1962, became minister of works and communications, and M. C. Cham was appointed minister of state, with responsibility for information, broadcasting, and tourism. The appointment of Jack (who was appointed as a “nominated” MP to permit this), together with the reappointment of A. B. N’Jie (who replaced Semega-Janneh) and Garba-Jahumpa, meant that there was now a bloc of powerful urban Wolof politicians in the cabinet. Both former UP MPs, Cham and M. C. Jallow, were rewarded for defecting to the PPP; the latter was appointed a parliamentary secretary.<sup>144</sup>

### **Impact on the United Party and Independents**

Meanwhile, the UP survived its humiliation in 1972 to contest two further elections in 1977 and 1982. But although officially remaining leader of the party, the election marked the end of P. S. N’Jie’s active political career. He again boycotted Parliament and was consequently expelled from the House in August 1972 for nonattendance for two consecutive meetings.<sup>145</sup> By 1974, he had developed the bizarre notion that the British high commissioner in Banjul had been instructed by his superiors in London to call on him to take over the reins of government, but was refusing to do so; after several meetings in London, in which he tried in vain to disabuse N’Jie of this notion, one official concluded that he was “mentally unbalanced” on the subject.<sup>146</sup> The UP retained Bathurst North through Musa A. Jobe, a retired civil servant, in the subsequent by-election held in December 1972, but only just; the PPP candidate, Kelepha-Samba, lost by fifty-seven votes in a hard-fought and bitter contest.<sup>147</sup> As noted below, on his third attempt, in 1977, the latter was to take the seat.

Despite its good performance, the Independent challenge quickly dissolved after the elections and a number of the defeated candidates sought to rejoin the

ruling party in 1972–73, as had been the case with the earlier PPA defectors.<sup>148</sup> These did not include Batapa Drammeh (as Nyang claims); Drammeh was in fact unseated in August 1973 for failing to attend Parliament, probably on medical grounds, with Dabo regaining the seat in the subsequent by-election in November.<sup>149</sup> However, other Independent candidates were to stand for the new political opposition that emerged on the political scene in the mid-1970s, the NCP, which was to provide the next, and most serious, challenge to the PPP.

## **The Emergence of the National Convention Party**

Parties such as the PPP, with their weak ideological bonds and loose organizational structure, are particularly prone to internal leadership fissures. The fresh round of schism in the mid-1970s echoed the earlier one of the PPA era, in that a senior party leader once again challenged the dominance of the party leader (and now head of state) and sought to regroup the party around himself. Sheriff Dibba, as noted in Chapter 6, was a founding member of the PPP and its leading figure in NBD, where he had held the seat of first Baddibu and then Central Baddibu since 1960. He played a major part in the early successes of the PPP and was rewarded with high office in the new African administration. He was appointed minister of labor in 1964, then took up the strategic post of minister of local government in 1965; he became minister of works and communications in 1966 and then replaced Sisay as minister of finance in 1968. Finally, he became vice president and leader of government business in the first republican Parliament in 1970, while remaining minister of finance.<sup>150</sup> These key offices of state ensured him a crucial and public role in managing parliamentary affairs. At the same time, they placed him next in the political succession, a position that caused Jawara anxiety. Moreover, over the years, Dibba had acquired many powerful political enemies, who viewed him as a determined and ruthless operator.

In September 1972, Dibba's situation suffered a major reversal, which left him in the political cold and embittered. The "butut affair" was a scandal involving his businessman brother, Kutubo. At the end of August, a government Landrover flying the Gambian flag was stopped at a Senegalese customs checkpoint en route to Dakar. It was carrying a quantity of contraband goods and its occupants were subsequently charged with illegally importing transistor radios and copper Gambian currency (bututs) to Senegal (where they were recycled for their metal content). They were found guilty and fined heavily. It later transpired that the chief culprit was Kutubo Dibba, who was running the operation from No. 1 Marina, Dibba's formal residence as vice president, and that Sheriff Dibba raised the money to pay the fine. Although rumors about his involvement were already circulating in Bathurst, the pressure increased on Dibba when the disgruntled former minister, H. O. Semega-Janneh, publicly attacked him in a speech in the House of Representatives. Although Dibba continued to deny any personal knowledge of

what had been taking place, the political and diplomatic embarrassment was too much for Jawara who, egged on by Dibba's rivals in the cabinet and the party hierarchy, forced him to resign as vice president two days later; he was replaced by Andrew Camara.<sup>151</sup> He remained temporarily as minister of finance, but was no longer in Jawara's confidence, and on October 9, Jawara reshuffled his cabinet, with Garba-Jahumpa succeeding him as minister of finance. As compensation, Dibba was appointed The Gambia's first envoy to the European Economic Community at Brussels, but this sidelining only served to stoke up his resentment. It also failed to pacify his predominantly Mandinka supporters, who were becoming increasingly disgruntled at their weakened representation in the cabinet.<sup>152</sup>

In July 1974, Jawara reshuffled and enlarged his cabinet. A key change involved Dibba, who was brought home to head the new Ministry of Economic Development and Industrial Planning (MEPID). Dibba had apparently been angling to return to political life in The Gambia for some time and had been seeking to build up his grassroots support. Thus while the appointment was perhaps an indication that he had been partially rehabilitated, Jawara may also have considered that it would be easier to keep an eye on him if he was in the cabinet.<sup>153</sup> Certainly if Dibba and Jawara were reconciled, it was not for long; Dibba's relations with Jawara and his ministerial rivals deteriorated to the extent that on July 29, 1975, he was accused of seeking to unseat the president through a cabinet revolt and was dismissed. The British high commissioner, J. R. W. Parker, stated that he had been informed by Eric Christensen (the secretary to the cabinet) that the atmosphere in the cabinet had become "intolerable," with Dibba "constantly voicing his criticism of some of his colleagues and attempting to split off the others." Parker further suggested that there had been rumors for some time that dissident groups were intending to form a new political party to challenge the PPP at the next general election and that some ministers believed "that Dibba was in touch with, or attracting support from these groups." President Jawara also told Parker that Dibba had been seeking to take advantage of a general strike which had broken out on July 28 and that his "appeal was essentially to the hard-line Mandinka tribalists who wanted a dominant say in all the affairs of the country, to the virtual exclusion of other ethnic groups." For his part, Dibba later claimed that his expulsion was engineered by three principal cabinet opponents: A. B. N'Jie, the minister of external affairs; Sir Alieu Jack, the minister of works; and M. L. Saho, the attorney general. Significantly, as noted, all three men were Banjul Wolofs.<sup>154</sup>

Dibba was subsequently expelled from the PPP in August and on September 7, 1975, he launched his own party, the National Convention Party (which should not be confused with the earlier, and now defunct, party of the same name), at a rally at Busambala in Northern Kombo constituency.<sup>155</sup> The new party drew most of its support from Dibba's own political heartland (the Baddibu districts of NBD) and from migrants from these districts to Banjul, Serrekunda and the Brikama area. It had a particular appeal for those experiencing economic difficulties as a result of rising inflation and unemployment. Many of these blamed the PPP

government for failing to prevent the breakdown of existing trading networks and to stop profiteering by wealthy businessmen.<sup>156</sup>

Dibba's brother, Abdoulie, had succeeded their father as the Seyfu of Central Baddibu since 1969, naturally joined the NCP, but the government acted swiftly, first suspending him from office and later deposing him.<sup>157</sup> However, only one other PPP MP, Kebba A. Bayo (Saloum), together with the UP MP, Gibou Jagne (Serrekunda), joined the new party, with the other two Baddibu MPs, Baba Touray (Illiassa) and Kalilou Singhateh (Lower Baddibu), remaining loyal to the PPP. Thus, unlike in 1968, there were no other defections of cabinet ministers. One reason for this was that Jawara reacted swiftly to the crisis; after Dibba's expulsion from the PPP, he toured the Provinces extensively, speaking at up to ten meetings per day, to condemn the former vice president for tribalism and disloyalty.<sup>158</sup>

Not surprisingly, the NCP was in many ways a clone of its parent organization, differing principally in its leadership. Dibba hoped to build on Mandinka resentment at Jawara's successful policy of turning the PPP into a national trans-ethnic party through power sharing with the Bathurst/Banjul and non-Mandinka provincial elites. As early as 1973, this gave rise to protest meetings: a rally in Gunjur and a public meeting in a cinema in Banjul, at which disaffected sections of Mandinka society, most notably in the Baddibus, played a prominent role.<sup>159</sup> The perceived denial of opportunity for educated Mandinka youth later merged with the alleged discrimination against Dibba, seen as still loyal to his Mandinka origins. Yet the NCP could not hope to gain power solely on the basis of a Mandinka section of the PPP, as had been demonstrated in the short-lived history of the PPA, particularly if this rested on opposition to Jawara's trans-ethnic initiatives. The defection to the NCP of Gibou Jagne, a Wolof, and the later adoption of several other non-Mandinka parliamentary candidates, was insufficient entirely to dispel the new party's "tribalist" image.

Consequently, like Sheriff Sisay before him, Dibba sought to portray Jawara as a dictatorial leader, overthrowing the collective leadership principles of the PPP in pursuit of personal power. He further accused Jawara of presiding over a corrupt and incompetent administration to consolidate his position and undermine his critics within the party leadership.<sup>160</sup> The NCP focused on the past two years of the government's record, so as to avoid personal embarrassment to Dibba, who of course had held senior positions in the party and then the government since the early 1960s. Dibba, in contrast, projected himself as true to the old party ideals and as an honest and effective alternative to Jawara. The electorate would not be impressed with this selective interpretation of recent history.

As far as policies were concerned, the NCP's "Farafenni Declaration," which was issued in 1976, was a rehash of the PPP's original manifesto. Its eleven-point program revealed both a damaging lack of credible alternative policies on the new party's part and any evidence of its ability to usher in a more honest and efficient administration. Both its domestic and international policies were, in large part, those that the PPP was already pursuing. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was no mention of trying to reestablish the Mandinka hegemony, the decline of which had led to the formation of the NCP in the first place.



As part of its endeavor to be regarded as a national party, it adopted as its emblem the groundnut “cutter,” seen as an equally potent symbol of the Gambian rural populace and economy as the hoe (the PPP emblem); although by then this sailing vessel, which was used to transport groundnuts from the Provinces to the oil mills near Banjul, was largely defunct. Less explicable were the new party’s color—white—and its Latin motto, “Semper Fidelis” (“always faithful”); the latter was perhaps an attempt to emulate the earlier adoption of a Latin tag by the PPP (“*vox populi, vox dei*”—“The Voice of the People is the Voice of God”) and to avoid the potentially divisive use of a motto in an indigenous language.<sup>161</sup>

Because no by-elections were held between the foundation of the NCP in September 1975 and the next general election in April 1977, the latter would be the first opportunity to test the popularity of the new party.

## 1977 General Election<sup>162</sup>

Prior to the 1977 election, which was held on April 4–5, the number of parliamentary constituencies was increased from thirty-two to thirty-five to reflect the increase in The Gambia’s population since the last revision of the constituency boundaries in 1966: the Serrekunda and Niimi constituencies were both divided into two, and a fourth constituency was added to the Kombos (Central Kombo). Partly as a result of the population increases, there had also been a substantial rise in the number of registered voters since the early 1970s; the total was now well over 200,000.<sup>163</sup> Four parties contested the election: the PPP, the NCP, the UP and another new party, the National Liberation Party (NLP). These are considered in turn.

### People’s Progressive Party

The PPP held twenty-seven of thirty-two seats at the dissolution of the House. As usual, virtually all its incumbent MPs were reelected, with only Sana Saïdy in Wuli being deselected. He was replaced by Seni Singhateh, a civil servant from the area who was employed in the Social Welfare Department until the election. The party selected five other new candidates. The two NCP defectors, Sheriff Dibba (Central Baddibu) and K. A. Bayo (Saloum), were replaced by Dr. Lamin Saho (one of the leading Independents in 1972) and Amulai Jannah (a pharmacist), respectively. Another leading Independent in 1972, Dr. Momodou Manneh, was chosen in Jokadu, thereby allowing the incumbent, Landing Jallow Sonko, to transfer to his home constituency of Upper Niimi. The two new seats of Central Kombo and Serrekunda West were filled by Dembo Jatta and Abdoulie A. N’Jie (who had recently retired from the civil service as the lands officer), respectively. The PPP also once again chose its unsuccessful candidates in the 1972 election in Bathurst North and Bathurst Central; and O. A. Jallow transferred from Serrekunda to the new seat of Serrekunda East.<sup>164</sup>

Apart from its customary election broadcasts and limited support in the local Banjul press, the PPP once again relied on its personal network of political influentials and patronage to obtain electoral support. It produced no fresh propaganda literature, relying instead on its earlier manifesto and campaigned on the slogan, “Peace, Progress and Prosperity”—emphasizing the success of its rural development program, which initially focused on URD and MID, but was extended before the election to LRD and WD. In contrast, it paid very little attention to the economic problems of the urban areas.<sup>165</sup>

### **National Convention Party**

The NCP selected candidates in thirty-one seats, including Dibba in Central Baddibu and Jagne in Serrekunda West, allowing the UP a free run in the three Banjul seats and, more surprisingly, in Saloum, which it held through K. A. Bayo (who decided not to stand). Bayo was replaced by K. W. Foon, who had previously, and unsuccessfully, contested the seat for the UP. At least two of its other candidates, Foday A. K. Makalo (Lower Baddibu) and Maja Sonko (Upper Niumi), had stood as Independents in 1972; Badara K. Sidibeh (Tumana) also had some political experience, having been a PPP staff member.<sup>166</sup> However, most of the remaining candidates were political novices. Importantly for the future, these included an obscure young Jola named Kukoi Samba Sanyang, who stood in the PPP stronghold of Eastern Foni.<sup>167</sup> Prior to the election, the NCP received an important boost when Solo Darbo, a high-profile PPP financial patron in URD and a relative by marriage of President Jawara, joined the party, apparently because the PPP chose Seni Singhateh rather than his brother, Mohammed S. Darbo, as its candidate in Wuli. He was to remain one of the major sources of NCP finance until the early 1990s.<sup>168</sup>

In its campaign, the NCP stressed that the PPP government was guilty of corruption, extravagance, and inefficiency and had failed to deal with rising urban inflation and unemployment. It also condemned the failure of the PPP to implement its rural programs effectively and argued that the government had sought to undermine the institution of chieftaincy, in which Dibba himself had played a prominent part.<sup>169</sup>

### **United Party**

The other two parties had fewer candidates. The UP contested each seat in the capital: M. A. Jobe and J. R. Forster defended Banjul North and Banjul Central, respectively, the latter standing even though he was terminally ill, and M. M. Taal again took on Garba-Jahumpa in Banjul South. It also fought Upper Niumi on its own. In the absence of any direction from the party leader (who would surely have disliked a pact with the “revolutionary” NLP, given his conservative outlook) and with no national selection process in place any more, local activists formed an electoral pact with the NLP to fight six other seats; a UP candidate was selected in

four of these seats (Niani, Saloum, Lower Fulladu West, and Upper Fulladu West).<sup>170</sup> Thus the party had no candidates at all in Kombo St. Mary, Basse, Brikama, or Mansakonko Administrative Areas. Perhaps not surprisingly, given that it was now almost entirely an urban party, the UP emphasized the economic problems of Banjul, even suggesting that the Five Year Development Programme was a political gimmick designed to pacify the rural electorate and prevent improvements in the capital.<sup>171</sup>

### **National Liberation Party**

The NLP was established at a meeting in Banjul on October 4, 1975, following an earlier meeting in the capital on April 27, 1975.<sup>172</sup> It adopted a collective leadership, but the driving force was certainly Pap Cheyassin Ousman Secka, who was elected as its interim chairman. A Wolof from Banjul in his early thirties, who may have been the first Gambian to graduate from an American university, Secka returned to The Gambia in 1973 to practice law, having been very active in radical politics while at university in the United States. He was now determined to make his mark in local politics. Sam Sillah, a former lieutenant colonel in the Nigerian Army who had fought in the Biafran War and subsequently worked for a security company in the diamond-mining area of Sierra Leone, became the NLP's vice chairman; Alasan N'Dure, the former GCP national propaganda secretary, who later represented the PPP on the BCC, was its organizer; and Henry Baldeh from Basse was treasurer. One of its supporters in Banjul was Alieu Kah who, like Secka, was to participate in the 1981 coup. The party adopted a radical socialist viewpoint, but remained a largely ephemeral creation.<sup>173</sup>

Only two NLP candidates stood in the election, both in nominal alliance with the UP. Secka contested Sabach Sanjal and N'Dure stood in Jokadu. However, the latter was killed in a car crash on the eve of the polls and when the postponed Jokadu election was held a month later, no NLP candidate was put forward. The NLP also appears actively to have campaigned in only four constituencies.<sup>174</sup>

### **Independents**

In contrast with 1972, there were only two Independent candidates: Lamin Waa Juwara, a nephew of President Jawara and a well-known divisional commissioner, who had tried and failed to secure selection by the PPP, contested Sabach Sanjal, and the ex-chief of Sami, Omar M'Baki, stood in Sami.<sup>175</sup>

### **Election Results**

The election was hotly contested. There was a very high turnout, variously estimated at between 82 and 84 percent,<sup>176</sup> and the result was another comfortable victory for the PPP. It received 125,233 votes (69.7 percent of the total cast) and won twenty-eight seats. The NCP, with 40,668 votes, gained 22.6 percent of the vote, some 2 percent more than that won by the Independent candidates in 1972,

but fared better, winning five seats to the one of the Independents. Even so, because of the first-past-the-post system, it took nearly twice as many votes to return a NCP MP as a PPP one; hence the NCP's demands for a proportional representation system. The four UP candidates who stood in Banjul and Upper Niumi between them gained only 3.0 percent of the vote nationally, but won two seats. The five UP/NLP candidates and the two Independents each took 2.3 percent of the vote, but no seats.<sup>177</sup>

The PPP won both the Niumi constituencies, Central Kombo, and one of the two Serrekunda seats (Serrekunda East). In addition, it regained Saloum from the NCP through Amulai Janneh and also at last captured the former UP stronghold of Banjul North through I. B. A. Kelepha-Samba, who narrowly defeated M. A. Jobe. But these gains were offset by the loss of three seats to the NCP and one to the UP. Many of its victories were by large margins; eighteen candidates polled more than 70 percent of the vote, although a number of the results in Kombo St. Mary and WD were much closer.

The NCP retained two of the three seats it held at the dissolution and gained three seats from the PPP. However, it failed to break out of its original geographical heartland—the Baddibus and the Kombos, where Baddibu migrants were an important element of the population. Support for the NCP decreased in an easterly direction. In Kombo St. Mary, it won Bakau, where a newcomer, Bakary B. Camara, defeated the sitting PPP MP, A. K. N'Jie, and Serrekunda West, through G. M. Jagne. It also obtained 47 percent of the vote in Serrekunda East, a seat it claimed it lost through electoral irregularities on the part of the government.<sup>178</sup> In NBD, across the Gambia estuary, it also did very well, taking 38 percent of the vote and winning all three Baddibu seats. Dibba withstood the challenge of Lamin Saho in Central Baddibu, albeit with a reduced majority, while Foday Makalo and Fodayba Jammeh ousted the sitting members of Parliament, Kalilou Singhateh (who was minister of health, social welfare and labour at the time of the election) and Baba Touray in Lower Baddibu and Illiassa respectively.<sup>179</sup> It did less well in the Niumi, Jokadu, and Sabach Sanjal seats. In WD, it also won over one-third of the vote (34 percent), but failed to win any of the six seats. With a more even playing field, it could well have won Northern Kombo and Central Kombo, where it polled 48 and 43 percent, respectively. NCP support largely evaporated in the interior divisions: in LRD, it was just over 30 percent, but in MID and URD it was only 8 to 9 percent.

The NCP's failure to achieve a political breakthrough was due to a number of factors. First, despite Dibba's efforts to present himself and his party as genuinely inter-ethnic—as many as nine of its thirty-one candidates were non-Mandinka<sup>180</sup>—the early history of the NCP dogged it; at the same time the PPP skillfully portrayed it as antagonistic to non-Mandinka and Dibba as an unscrupulous, disloyal, and ungrateful individual. Unlike in the Baddibus, the majority of Mandinka remained loyal to Jawara in MID and URD, whereas Fula, Serahuli, and Wolof voters had little reason to abandon a party that had so consciously opened up its ranks to them to join an opposition party, which fed off Mandinka particularism.

Second, it was evident that the NCP was very much a personalist movement, and overdependent on its leader and his limited financial and organizational resources. Despite its efforts to contest every seat (save where it supported UP candidates), it was evident that a number of its candidates were nominal only, and most of its efforts had to be concentrated on the North Bank and the Kombos.<sup>181</sup> In contrast, however unimpressive the PPP organizational structure was between elections, it was still able to marshal its much greater human and material resources to good effect during election campaigns and to appeal to ancient solidarities among an electorate which still preferred the government that it knew to the uncertainties of a tyro administration under the NCP. Dibba recognized, in retrospect, these fatal weaknesses. He himself faced impossible logistical problems and enormous physical strain in trying to provide support for his almost entirely novice fellow candidates across the length of the country, while at the same time facing a major PPP onslaught on his own Central Baddibu constituency.<sup>182</sup> His undoubted political skills and energy were insufficient to contend with the divisional campaign teams of the PPP, led by senior ministers, backed by the resources of the state and reinforced by frequent personal visits to rural constituencies and appeals for loyalty by President Jawara.

Third, there was a huge disparity between the NCP and PPP in terms of material resources. As Dibba himself identified, two particular areas of weakness related to the party's lack of finance were transport and a newspaper of its own. M. B. Jones' little duplicated news sheet, the *Gambia Outlook* came out in support of the NCP, but its impact was very limited. In contrast, the official (and supposedly neutral) *Gambia News Bulletin*, as well as Radio Gambia, ensured a full coverage of government campaigning. Neither did the NCP have sufficient funds to purchase more than a handful of vehicles, so that hiring additional transport for campaigning and getting voters to the polls in the countryside presented serious difficulties. This was not helped by the reluctance of some private taxi and lorry owners to be seen to be renting their vehicles to the opposition. Despite the financial backing of Solo Darbo of URD and some other donations, membership subscriptions and the personal savings of Dibba and other NCP candidates were the principal sources of finance for the party and, although sufficient to establish a NCP presence throughout the Provinces, were unable to deliver the national victory claimed at the start of the election.

Fourth, the PPP benefited from the support of the chiefs, who campaigned openly for the government; moreover in some constituencies, such as Serrekunda East, there may well have been electoral irregularities. Nevertheless, there was no evidence of systematic vote rigging by the PPP, as Dibba himself accepted after the election.<sup>183</sup>

The UP won Banjul Central, where J. R. Forster slightly increased his share of the vote to 56 percent, but died almost immediately after the election,<sup>184</sup> and Banjul South, which M. M. Taal unexpectedly regained with 54 percent of the vote, defeating the minister of finance, I. M. Garba-Jahumpa. This, in ending the political career of his arch rival of the past, offered P. S. N'Jie some consolation, but probably occurred because of Garba-Jahumpa's unpopularity among trade

unionists and other working class voters, rather than because UP fortunes in the constituency were reviving. Garba-Jahumpa subsequently blamed his defeat on the machinations of Sir Alieu Jack, the minister of works, whom he accused of working against him covertly in the constituency where Jack also enjoyed some standing by virtue of family connections and his position as the former speaker of the House of Representatives. After this latest political setback, Garba-Jahumpa, who was now sixty-five, retired from politics; he died in September 1994.<sup>185</sup> However, the UP lost Banjul North in a tight contest, and in the Provinces, its opportunistic alliances, particularly with the NLP, not surprisingly met with little success. It did best in its old Saloum stronghold, where it managed to get 22 percent of the vote. Even this was a bitter disappointment, seeing that this was less than half the share of the vote that Foon achieved in 1972.

The UP's poor performance at the polls was not unexpected. Since its defeat in the 1972 election, its decline had continued unabated and by 1977, the party organization had virtually broken down, even in Banjul. Although still nominally party leader, P. S. N'Jie refused to take part directly in the election, or indeed to advise his followers on what to do, leaving his influential elder sister, Yadicone, to continue to rally female supporters in Banjul. Moreover, in contrast to 1972, N'Jie was also no longer physically up to the rigors of campaigning in the Provinces and he left it to those remaining party activists in the field to continue the struggle. Finally, unlike in past elections when the central party provided financial assistance with some of the election costs, candidates now had to rely even more on their own limited resources (especially as P. S. N'Jie could no longer bankroll the party); these were no match for their PPP rivals.<sup>186</sup>

The UP suffered a further blow a few weeks after the election, when its candidate, the luckless K. W. Foon, was defeated by 120 votes in the Banjul Central by-election brought about by Forster's death. The PPP candidate, H. R. Monday, thus finally achieved what Jawara's first wife (and also an *Aku*), Augusta, failed to bring about in the first national election in 1960, a PPP victory in the very heart of UP territory. The by-election also represented another humiliation for the NLP leader, Pap Secka, who gained only 123 votes.<sup>187</sup> M. M. Taal was left as the last remaining UP MP until November 1978, when he gave up the unequal struggle and defected to the PPP.<sup>188</sup> As noted in Chapter 9, the UP was to field three candidates in the 1982 election, but all were unsuccessful and although Jabel Sallah retook Banjul South for the UP/NCP alliance in 1987, he was probably a member of the NCP at the time. Meanwhile, the UP leader, P. S. N'Jie, lived on until the age of eighty-four, dying in December 1993. In his latter years, he seldom ventured out of his home on Buckle Street except to attend daily Mass at the Roman Catholic Cathedral, and he played no part in political life after 1977.<sup>189</sup>

Neither Independent was successful, although both performed well; Lamin Juwara gained 39 percent of the vote in a four-way contest in Sabach Sanjal, and Omar M'Baki won 35 percent in a three-way battle in Sami.<sup>190</sup> In contrast, the performance of the NLP's sole candidate, its leader Pap Cheyassin Secka, was very poor; he gained only 226 votes (4 percent) in Sabach Sanjal.

## Post-Election Cabinet Changes

After the election, Jawara was reelected as president, with only the five NCP MPs and the two UP MPs among the electoral college of directly elected members of the House of Representatives voting for Dibba. He reshuffled his cabinet, appointing A. B. N’Jie as vice president and Lamin M’Boge as minister of finance (who lost the position to Camara within a few days), but apart from Kalilou Singhateh and Garba-Jahumpa, who lost their seats, only one other minister, Sir Alieu Jack, was dropped. Jawara also restored the veteran MP, H. O. Semega-Janneh, to the cabinet and promoted two parliamentary secretaries, M. C. Jallow and Lamin Jabang, to health and external affairs, respectively.<sup>191</sup> But Jabang was the only member of the cabinet who entered national politics in the 1970s and the age profile of the ministers was continuing to rise.<sup>192</sup>

Despite their overwhelming defeat at the polls and the advantages, legal and otherwise, enjoyed by the PPP, both Dibba and the NCP remained strongly committed to electoral politics and sanguine about their prospect in five years’ time, seeing the 1977 election as the beginning only of their political odyssey. As a result, they vigorously contested a key by-election in the new Parliament, which was held in Bakau in June 1978 following the death the previous March of Bakary Camara in a car accident; their candidate, Dembo Bojang, won a hard-fought contest against the PPP’s Famara S. Bojang, with voters among the locally based Field Force perhaps playing a crucial role in the outcome.<sup>193</sup>

The NCP, in alliance with the UP in Banjul, also put up a substantial number of candidates in the next local government election, which was held in March 1979, following the dissolution of all the Area Councils save Basse on grounds of corruption and incompetence. Its share of the popular vote, just under 40 percent, was up considerably on its 1977 general election result, but once again, it made few gains outside its established heartland. All councils remained under PPP control, even Banjul, where the NCP won half of the ten seats as a result of UP support. Overall, it won eighteen seats to the sixty-seven of the PPP. Although party leader Dibba was pleased with a presence in the Foni wards of Mansakonko Area Council, it made no impact in MID, where it could only field six candidates for the twenty-four seats on the Kuntaur and Georgetown Area Councils, all of whom lost. Dibba blamed the poor performance on the failure of the UP leader, P. S. N’Jie, to endorse NCP candidates outside of Banjul, some unwise choice of candidates, and a lack of money.<sup>194</sup>

The very success of the PPP in 1977, created a new and more dangerous threat to its predominance. Two of the defeated candidates in 1977, Kukoi Sanyang of the NCP and the NLP leader, Pap Secka, interpreted the overwhelming defeat of yet another opposition party by the ruling party as conclusive proof that there were no constitutional means of defeating the PPP. Instead, they came to believe that the only way to replace Jawara and his administration was by insurrection.

## Summary

During the first fifteen years of independence, the PPP defeated challenges from the UP; from the large group of Independent candidates in 1972; and from two internal schisms within its ranks led by former senior ministers—Sheriff Sisay and the PPA in the late 1960s and Sheriff Dibba's NCP from 1977. Loyalty to Jawara personally and to the PPP, together with the president's opening of the party to all ethnic groups, reinforced by judicious use of state patronage, ensured the party's success. At the same time, its overwhelming parliamentary strength, although not leading to presidential dictatorship or a one-party state, so common elsewhere in Africa in these years, gave rise to a much more threatening nonparliamentary challenge.



# 8

---

## **RADICAL AND INSURRECTIONARY POLITICAL CHALLENGES, 1965–81**

As Chapter 7 showed, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) successfully maintained its political hegemony in the first fifteen years after independence, despite severe internal divisions and the emergence of the National Convention Party (NCP) in the mid-1970s. Yet its position remained insecure. The longer it stayed in power, the more it suffered from political sclerosis with its attendant neglect of important sections of the political community.

President Jawara also came to be seen as tolerating a persistent and growing incidence of cronyism and downright corruption on the part of his ministers and senior civil servants identified with the PPP administration. Even when it became necessary to remove such transgressors, the almost ritualistic process, which usually avoided any legal investigation or penalty, came to be his political Achilles' heel and contributed to the undermining of his legitimacy in radical political circles. Jawara's own personal finances also came under suspicion. In addition, his "one nation" approach, involving the creation of patron–client networks to link the political centre with its periphery, came with a price. Although it had clearly helped The Gambia avoid the intercommunal strife that wracked so many other African states after independence, the system was denounced by his radical critics.

The first wave of post-independence dissidents were won over with scholarships and accelerated promotions. But a second wave came close to overthrowing The Gambia's democratic political system by violent means in 1981. The Gambian coup was unusual in sub-Saharan Africa, where coups were then commonplace, in being organized and led by disaffected civilians rather than by soldiers, although the support of disaffected members of the paramilitary Field Force was crucial to the success of the operation. The coup, which resulted in several hundred deaths, was eventually defeated after the intervention of Senegalese forces.<sup>1</sup>

## **Ideological and Economic Dimensions of Radical Political Opposition**

Radical political dissent in The Gambia after independence centered principally on urban youths, whose opposition to the status quo rested on a mixture of ideological idealism and personal frustration (although, as indicated below, the opportunities for career advancement were in practice much greater for this group than for the second wave of dissidents). This is in line with the experience of other African countries; in Ghana, for example, economically and socially ambitious, but undereducated youths known as “verandah boys,” or “Standard VII” boys, have rightly been identified as a crucial element not only in the nationalist struggle, but also in the drive for state socialism.<sup>2</sup> It does seem to be the case that youthful elements in Africa in general, particularly in urban areas, are frequently drawn to revolutionary rhetoric with its promise of simplistic answers to the complex problems of underdevelopment, and the prospect of enhanced opportunities for personal advancement (both in respect of employment and social recognition) through the adoption of a collectivist Marxist–Leninist state. Latent xenophobia, rooted in colonial experiences and the continued marginalization of postcolonial African states, also formed part of African radicalism, informing attacks on “white” Western capitalism and its allies among moderate African governments; the latter being dismissed as “neocolonial stooges or puppets.”<sup>3</sup>

At the regional level, Gambian radicals were attracted to the political ideas of such first-generation radical-nationalist African leaders as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sékou Touré of Guinea. From 1957, when Ghana obtained its independence until well beyond his death in 1972, Nkrumah’s eclectic ideology, combining elements of Marxist–Leninism with pan-Africanism, offered politically disaffected young Gambians a persuasive critique of their country’s underdevelopment and an exciting vision of an independent and unified African continent. The Ghanaian leader also offered scholarships in 1962 to more than 100 young Gambians to study and intensify their revolutionary outlook in Ghana, primarily at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winnebah. These scholarships were organized by I. M. Garba-Jahumpa, who had first met Nkrumah at the Pan-African Congress in 1945, through the Young Pioneers youth movement.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, however, by the time that many of the Gambians returned home, Garba-Jahumpa had moved back to the political center ground, merging his party, the Gambia Congress Party, with the PPP in 1968. Touré, although a francophone African, was admired for standing up to the French and his equally vigorous denunciation of neocolonialism and advocacy of a socialist united Africa. But apart from providing some funds to the Gambia Workers’ Union (GWU) in the late 1950s, we found no evidence that the Guinean government offered any financial assistance to Gambian organizations.<sup>5</sup>

Further afield, Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban Marxism also had an impact on the political thinking of the first wave of Gambian dissidents. Among the second wave

of dissidents were elements more strongly influenced by the more ideologically idiosyncratic Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.<sup>6</sup> Radio stations from the Communist bloc also broadcast to sub-Saharan Africa and Marxist literature was not banned, although in December 1970, the Gambian government did proscribe the Gambian–Soviet Friendship Society, which had been set up by the “radical” anti-colonialist journalist, M. B. Jones and others a few months earlier, ostensibly for distributing anti-Israeli literature.<sup>7</sup> The authorities were also concerned about the number of young Gambians being granted scholarships in the 1970s to study at the Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow. These were apparently either directly granted by the Russians or were allocated by the Gambia Labour Union (GLU). The GLU, which had adopted a Marxist ideology since the mid-1960s, reaffiliated with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the trade union international supported by the Soviet bloc, in 1967, and particularly admired the North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung.<sup>8</sup> Poorly educated Gambian youths faced severe difficulties in getting scholarships to, and enrolment at, established British and North American universities, or Commonwealth higher education institutions (a consequence in part of the limited senior schooling facilities available in The Gambia). Sponsored further education in eastern bloc countries was therefore attractive, even to individuals not immediately drawn to Communist ideology. As elsewhere in Africa, not all those trained in Soviet bloc countries or China returned home convinced revolutionaries, notwithstanding the expectations of their educational mentors; although, as noted below, several important radical leaders did study in Eastern Europe.

A parallel ideological attraction was radical race assertion associated with “black power” movements in the United States, the writings of the francophone West Indian Frantz Fanon and the anglophone West Indian Walter Rodney and, in the 1970s, the ideas of Steve Biko, the black consciousness leader in South Africa. The radical pan-Africanism of Gambian dissidents consequently combined, often in a vulgarized way, aspects of racial assertion with Marxist critiques of neocolonialism. The result was a continuous denunciation of the moderate PPP government as a “tool” of Western imperialism.<sup>9</sup>

Economic factors also played a part in stimulating urban radicalism, at least in the case of second wave dissidents, in two ways. First, the gradual Africanization of the civil service before and after independence meant that in the 1960s and early 1970s, educated young radicals could be bought off with the offer of jobs. But by the late 1970s, there were far fewer opportunities for career progression for this group; it may be significant that, as noted below, two of the better educated individuals involved in the 1981 coup, Kukoi Sanyang and Tijan (“Koro”) Sallah, were both unemployed at the time. Second, as noted in Chapter 1, one consequence of the economic and social modernization of The Gambia was a substantial increase in the urban population in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in Serrekunda and other parts of Kombo St. Mary, but also in Brikama, the administrative centre of the Western Division. Population growth was fuelled by internal migration from impoverished rural areas by an overwhelmingly youthful and male migrant

community which experienced rising inflation and unemployment from the mid-1970s and a consequent deterioration in living standards. As Wiseman has shown, a significant number of young people in Serrekunda had become alienated from the political system by the early 1980s and some of these would participate in the 1981 coup.<sup>10</sup>

## **Radical Political Opposition Groups**

### **First-Wave Dissidents**

Prior to independence, politicized youths in The Gambia tended either to be involved in the struggle for independence or in the trade union movement. Some joined the youth wings which the various political parties established during the 1950s. They could be mobilized to campaign and vote for party candidates in elections; to participate in organized demonstrations; and occasionally to become involved in violent clashes with political opponents.<sup>11</sup> Other young Gambians were rank-and-file members, or at least supporters, of the GWU, which reached the peak of its power when it organized a successful general strike in January 1961. But by independence, there were fewer alternative outlets for Gambian youths; the youth wings of the political parties were perhaps less active than hitherto, and the GWU, although still a force to be reckoned with, had been in gradual decline since 1961.<sup>12</sup> There was also a new central organization of youth bodies, the Gambia National Youth Council (GNYC), which was established in November 1963, but this claimed to be both nonpolitical and nonsectarian.<sup>13</sup> Thus, those who were dissatisfied with the political status quo after independence turned to more radical politics.

The earliest radical groups in the capital were often formed on the basis of neighborhood associations, known as “vous” (said to be a shortened form of rendezvous) or among politically conscious teachers, students, and senior secondary school pupils.<sup>14</sup> Their meetings and other activities were usually not covered by the local press, even by older “left-wing” journalist critics of the government, such as M. B. Jones or W. Dixon-Colley, or discussed by outside observers and their own news sheets tended to have an ephemeral existence. As far as is known, they also did not publish the names of their leaders and office holders. Thus only fragmentary information about their activities has survived from written sources and we have had to rely more heavily on oral sources than for other topics.<sup>15</sup> One consequence of this is that it is often difficult even to date their foundation and demise with any precision.

It appears that the first of the radical organizations was Tonya (Mandinka for truth), which was certainly functioning by 1965.<sup>16</sup> This was organized among sixth-form students in Bathurst, probably with the support of militant teachers at the Gambia High School and students at the Yundum Teachers’ Training College, but had a provincial membership and focus.<sup>17</sup> Like other radical groups, which

succeeded it, Tonya eschewed formal electoral politics, preferring to attack the PPP administration in its occasional news sheet. Its militants also toured the rural areas to try and educate the people in their political rights, as well as denounce the government. According to our informants, among its leaders were O. G. Sallah, Mousa G. Bala-Gaye, Adama M'Boge, and Gibou Semega-Janneh. Tonya dissolved within a few years as its activists either entered the civil service directly or obtained government awards to study overseas, after which they often ended up in government or professional careers. Sallah entered the civil service as early as 1965 and Bala-Gaye (after graduating from Legon University in Ghana in 1970) did so in 1971; both ended up as senior civil servants. Meanwhile, M'Boge became a lecturer at a Nigerian university and Semega-Janneh a barrister in Banjul and an unsuccessful aspirant for selection as a PPP parliamentary candidate.<sup>18</sup>

The Kent Street Vous (KSV) was formed around 1967, and met in the open in Kent Street in Banjul. Its leaders included Sulayman Samba and various members of the Taal family, including the future United Party and PPP member of Parliament (MP), M. M. Taal, and his brother, Sheikh Omar Taal. The latter had been sent to Ghana by Garba-Jahumpa and, as a consequence, had absorbed much of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism; the vous apparently met near their home.<sup>19</sup> It also included others from what were deemed low-caste families in the Half Die area of Bathurst South. The KSV attracted some provincial as well as urban members, although it is probable that the majority were urban Wolof. It deliberately rejected ethnic identity and drew heavily on members of the teaching profession, themselves drawn from different sections of the community, for its members and leadership. Membership of this and other radical groups was small and loose, with individuals moving between them. Some twenty-five to thirty individuals regularly attended its informal political discussion meetings.

The KSV differed from the usual informal neighborhood youth groups, in engaging in socialist as well as social activities. From the outset, it adopted a critical position toward the government, and, like Tonya, adopted a similar left-wing critique of domestic and foreign policy and published its own occasional "newspaper," in which to attack the government. For example, in an issue produced in 1969, it argued that independence brought benefits only to the privileged few and called for a reduction in the salaries and allowances of ministers, MPs and civil servants and demanded the introduction of a "socialist development programme" to end "the legacy of extreme poverty."<sup>20</sup>

The KSV was also able to mobilize support in Bathurst for public demonstrations. Thus, in February 1971, possibly with the backing of the GNYC, which had also condemned the Senegalese, it organized a demonstration in the capital against the presence of the Senegalese head of state, Léopold Senghor, following recent Senegalese infringements of Gambian territorial integrity (see Chapter 10). The demonstration was led by Sheikh Omar Taal. The KSV first presented a petition to Jawara, who was so incensed by its tone that he refused to speak to the KSV leaders or view their banners; they then organized an attack on the Senegalese High Commission and the properties of Senegalese traders.<sup>21</sup> When a

KSV leader (or possibly the leader of one of the other radical groups) appeared in court in March 1971, there was also some minor rioting in Bathurst.<sup>22</sup> But this perhaps marked the high point of the KSV's popularity and soon afterward it fell into decline. As with Tonya, it appears that many of its key members (including Samba, as discussed below) were absorbed into the political establishment following state awards to study abroad and civil service positions on their return.

The Black Brotherhood Movement (BBM), likewise, was founded in the mid-1960s. Its leading lights are said to have included Moussa Battaye, Lamin Lanha, Ndeckem Nguéye, Sehou Taal, Pa Omar N'Jie, Dawda Faal, and two men who were to remain very active in radical politics, Ousman Manjang and Koro Sallah. At least two of these, Battaye and Sallah (as well as another member, Tamsir Jallow), apparently received scholarships to Ghana. On his return, Sallah may have been employed as a teacher at the Crab Island (secondary) School for a time, as well as becoming a well-known local footballer.<sup>23</sup> Membership of the BBM overlapped with that of the KSV (again, many members were of low caste). It also attacked the government from a radical position, in this case Nkrumahist pan-African socialist. Again, it had a monthly news sheet, "Fansoto" (Mandinka for "self-freedom"), containing frank and aggressively anti-government articles (it also had a cartoon feature in which Jawara was depicted as a pig—a particularly offensive image in a Muslim society).

The BBM's membership also overlapped with another more obscure organization, the Black Panthers, whose leaders included Dawda Faal, which adopted the name and reflected the influence in the late 1960s of African-American activists such as Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael, who was then resident in neighboring Guinea, paid a four-day visit to The Gambia in December 1969 and led a symposium in Bathurst. The British high commissioner subsequently blamed him for the growth of xenophobia, which he detected during 1970.<sup>24</sup> As well as sharing some of the political vocabulary of African-American militants, their Gambian emulators also dressed in a similar manner, namely, black berets and dark glasses. The Black Panthers were perhaps more radical than the BBM and also apparently contained a clandestine group, the Black Scorpions, which engaged in direct action; this included the desecration of what was regarded as the opulent grave of the former minister, Amang Kanyi. It is thought that the leader of the 1981 coup, Kukoi Samba Sanyang, was a member of the latter group.<sup>25</sup>

As in the case of Tonya and the KSV, many of the BBM's members drifted from radical politics once they obtained scholarships and jobs from the government or went abroad to study, although as noted below, two notable exceptions to this trend were Manjang and Sallah. Others turned increasingly to heavy drinking and endless arguments among themselves, thereby discrediting and further undermining the movement. One of these arguments concerned the fate of proceedings of a concert given in Bathurst by Carmichael's wife, Miriam Makeba, the internationally renowned South African singer and anti-Apartheid activist, during their joint visit in December 1969. It is also probable that some BBM members moved into the PPP youth wing in 1969–70. According to Bakarr, Alasan Jaye, one

of the leaders of the Black Power Movement, joined the PPP youth wing in October 1969, and in December 1969, *West Africa* reported that a group of youths from the Black Power Movement had applied to join the PPP youth wing. Given the similarity between the names, it seems likely that the BBM and the Black Power Movement were one and the same organization.<sup>26</sup>

The Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Foundation (KNMF) was established following the death in exile (in Rumania) of the former Ghanaian leader in April 1972. Radical youths organized a symbolic funeral in Banjul, processing from Allen Street via Lasso Wharf and Anglesea Street to the Guinean embassy in Hagan Street. The coffin was taken into the building and a young Aku teacher, Femi Peters, gave an address from the roof. The Guinean ambassador also spoke. This event was followed by a symposium on the achievements of the late Ghanaian head of state at the National Library on Independence Drive, chaired by Sulayman Samba, a former member of the KSV.<sup>27</sup> The KNMF was set up as a result of the symposium. It issued membership cards and held monthly meetings at the Allen Street Youth Centre. It had over twenty members including Peters; two former members of the BBM in Ousman Manjang and Koro Sallah; Sam Osseh Sarr (who was probably then employed as a teacher); Wassa Fatty; and Coumba Marenah who, as a woman, stood out in the male-dominated environment of the radical groups.<sup>28</sup> Sidia Jatta, another who was to remain active in radical politics thereafter, may also have been a member of the KNMF for a short period. Jatta, a Mandinka from Wuli Sukutoba in Upper River Division, attended Yundum Teachers' Training College between 1964 and 1966 (where he may well have been radicalized) and was subsequently employed as a primary and secondary school teacher.<sup>29</sup>

The PPP government was attacked from a Nkrumahist or Pan-African/Marxist-Socialist position. The KNMF sought financial assistance from overseas and distributed books for the radical PANAF press to raise funds and disseminate radical ideology. It even wrote to the inspector general of police for funding! Internal problems quickly arose. The chairman, Sulayman Samba, soon afterward traveled to the United States to study for a higher degree and on his return to The Gambia in 1977 entered the civil service, like many radical activists before him; he eventually rose to become permanent secretary to the Office of the Chairman under President Jammeh in 1995.<sup>30</sup> Peters was asked to take over after Samba's departure, but claimed that the organization was usurped by Sam Sarr and Koro Sallah, at which point he left it to run a radical bookshop. By 1975, the KNMF had apparently broken up.<sup>31</sup>

Sallah, who had influential family ties (his brother, Captain Baboucarr Sallah, was managing director of the Gambia Ports Authority) went abroad to study as an engineer, reportedly first at Harvard University in the United States and thereafter at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow.<sup>32</sup> Manjang too went abroad to study, probably also to the Soviet Union; Jatta certainly went to France to study in 1972.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Peters turned first to trade unionism and later entered constitutional politics; after the 1994 coup, he became a leading member of the

United Democratic Party (UDP), the principal opposition to the Jammeh Government, serving as the UDP's campaign manager in the 1996 election.<sup>34</sup> Marenah would later become a senior official in the Department of Community Development and secretary to the National Women's Council and even served briefly as minister of health, social welfare and women's affairs in the Armed Forces Provisionary Ruling Council administration.<sup>35</sup>

These early radical groups were limited in membership, generally fractious in organization and viewpoints, and short-lived as their leading activists moved on to other things. According to the British high commissioner, the various "black power" groups did combine to form the Gambia Socialist Party in October 1972, but the new party was refused registration by the government and seems to have disappeared from the political scene thereafter.<sup>36</sup> Their political impact at this time was practically negligible. Their extreme political views, predominantly youthful and urban membership and urban-focused activities, in a rural and conservative Muslim society, largely account for this. It was only the later groups that realized the necessity to address their policies to the rural and poorly educated majority of the populace or to take up feminist interests, in a belated recognition of the double disadvantage facing rural women. Generally, though, they remained male dominated and arguably less interested in promoting women's interests than the PPP.<sup>37</sup>

The radical groups also failed to make alliances with more effective bodies. They did not join forces with any of the political parties opposing the PPP in the 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, they did not develop close ties to Gambian trade unions which, unlike their counterparts elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa and the Third World, did not feature prominently in stimulating or organizing radical opposition to the government in The Gambia.<sup>38</sup> Neither the GWU nor its rival, the GLU, sought to establish links, let alone provide much-needed financial assistance, to more radical youth groups. After independence, the GWU continued to focus more on industrial rather than political grievances and its leader, M. E. Jallow, did not seek to form a labor party, although he did stand for Parliament twice as an Independent in 1966 and 1972; in any case, there were ideological differences between the radicals, with their Marxist leanings, and the GWU, which formally affiliated with the pro-Western international labor movement, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in March 1963.<sup>39</sup> Although the GLU seemed a more likely ally for the radicals, its commitment to left-wing socialism was questionable and its critics dismissed this as little more than an attempt to obtain funding from Soviet bloc countries and free trips to various Communist-funded jamborees.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the radical groups had little money with which to pursue their cause and there is no evidence of funding from Socialist bloc countries. This did not prevent internal quarrels over money. The history of Gambian political radicalism reveals that "bourgeois" politicians had no monopoly on financial impropriety, only that they had access to more money from their control of the postcolonial state and so could misappropriate larger amounts of it than their radical critics.



## Second-Wave Dissidents

As the earlier grouplets broke up, new organizations emerged in the late 1970s to continue radical and direct forms of political protest. Three new political organizations were established in the late 1970s, two of which shifted political opposition into more violent directions. The first of these was a shadowy, neo-Marxist, organization, the People's Movement for Independence against Neo-Colonialism and Capitalism in The Gambia (known popularly as "Red Star") which, according to the subsequent allegation by the government, began to operate in 1975.<sup>41</sup> The government also alleged that its leaders included the former KNMF activist and teacher, Sam Sarr; Halifa Sallah (another graduate, who was employed as a social worker in the Social Welfare Department); Sarr's wife, Amie Sillah (a health inspector in the Ministry of Health); Adama Bah; Momodou Sarho; and Louis Sambou. This group was widely suspected of editing and distributing a free underground newspaper, *The Voice of the Future* (which probably first appeared in late 1978), around the streets of Banjul and the Kanifing area. Sarho, who, as noted below, was a member of another radical organization, was accused of distributing *The Voice* and put on trial in 1980, as were all six leaders in 1984, but all were acquitted.<sup>42</sup>

*The Voice* specialized in highly personalized and virulent attacks on individuals within the PPP government and on exposing examples of corruption in political life.<sup>43</sup> No doubt some of its accusations were more accurate than others. However, it does appear that corruption was becoming more widespread in The Gambia by the late 1970s, in part because of the increased opportunities for graft brought about by the expansion of the public sector under the first Five Year Plan (although when compared with Nigeria, for example, it remained negligible).<sup>44</sup> Yet there was little evidence that the government took the issue seriously. Jawara did periodically reshuffle his cabinet at least in part to remove individuals suspected of corruption (although this was never stated as the reason for a dismissal), but no further action was taken against either the politicians or senior civil servants. For example, Pap Cheyassin Secka, the leader of the National Liberation Party (NLP), claimed that when it was found that a minister and an ambassador had received bribes from a French firm, the former was dismissed and the latter was transferred to another post, but that no prosecutions took place.<sup>45</sup> The president did apparently set up an inquiry into all ministries after the sacking of Yaya Ceesay in September 1978, but nothing more seems to have come of this.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, suspect ex-ministers continued to find comfortable sinecures for themselves after leaving office.<sup>47</sup> On at least one occasion before the coup, Jawara set up a formal commission of inquiry to investigate corruption, in this case into the infamous Rural Development Project (RDP) I. But the long-awaited report did not appear until after the coup and even then, despite the recommendations of the commission, the senior civil servants who were implicated escaped serious punishment.<sup>48</sup>

Whether Jawara was personally corrupt is difficult to assess. *The Voice* claimed that the reason that "Fafa" (the president) was loath to act against his ministers was because he himself was culpable. Secka noted that there were rumors circulating

about Jawara's business interests abroad and property in The Gambia, but admitted that there was no evidence that the president was personally implicated in corruption.<sup>49</sup> After Jawara's overthrow in 1994, however, a number of allegations about his conduct were made before the various commissions of inquiry set up by the Jammeh government.<sup>50</sup>

*The Voice* also condemned the PPP government for its authoritarian response to nonparliamentary opposition. It highlighted the sacking of a number of employees of the Gambia Utilities Corporation (GUC) in November 1976; the suppression of the general strike called by the GWU to support the GUC workers in the same month; the subsequent deregistration (portrayed as banning) of the GWU in January 1977; and the unjustified public accusations of sabotage that the minister of works and communications, Kuti Sanyang, leveled at GUC workers in October 1978.<sup>51</sup> All these incidents served to strengthen the opposition of urban radicals to the regime. However, it should be recognized that the government was acting within the framework of the law, both in its response to the general strike and the actions it subsequently took against the GWU. The Trade Union (Amendment) Act of October 1976 had made strikes illegal without twenty-one days' notice in essential services and fourteen days' notice in nonessential services, yet the GWU leadership (which naturally condemned the legislation) called its supporters out on strike without any prior notice at all. Moreover, the GWU and four other trade unions were deregistered for their persistent failure to submit their accounts for inspection to the registrar general. Annual submission of accounts had been a requirement of the Trade Union Act since the colonial period, but the GWU, along with other trade unions, often failed to comply and had still not submitted its accounts for 1974 and 1975 at the time of its deregistration, despite a number of warnings from the registrar general.<sup>52</sup>

The second organization, the Movement for Justice in Africa—The Gambia (MOJA-G, more commonly MOJA), was formed in 1979 and operated in the Greater Banjul area.<sup>53</sup> Two of its prominent spokesmen were Koro Sallah and Ousman Manjang; both men, along with another leader, Wassa Fatty, were previously active in radical political organizations, and another member, Momodou Sarho, was a member of the NLP between 1975 and 1978. Unlike earlier educated activists, Sallah apparently was not offered a civil service job on his return from higher education and remained unemployed.<sup>54</sup> MOJA-G was doubtless inspired by the original Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA-L), which was founded by a small group of Liberian academics based at the university in Monrovia in the late 1970s, although there is no evidence of closer ties between the two bodies. The Liberian MOJA had played an important role in undermining the standing of President William Tolbert and his True Whig Party in the late 1970s by denouncing corruption and misgovernment. Although MOJA-L leaders do not seem to have participated directly in the bloody coup in Monrovia in March 1980 that overthrew Tolbert, they subsequently attempted to provide ideological guidance to the semi-literate army leadership headed by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe. However, their efforts proved short-lived and several were forced to flee abroad.<sup>55</sup>