

Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?: the Case of Nkrumah's National Security Service

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FROM the ancient Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta to twentieth-century Bolivia and Zaïre, from theories of development and under-development to models of civil-military relations, one is struck by the enormous literature on armed intervention in the domestic political arena. In recent years, a veritable rash of material on the subject of military politics has appeared – as much from newspaper correspondents reporting pre-dawn coups from third-world capitals as from the more rarefied towers of academe. Yet looking at the subject from the perspective of how régimes mobilise resources and mechanisms to protect themselves from their own security forces, one is struck by the paucity of empirically-based evidence on the subject.¹

Since 1945, more than three-quarters of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have experienced varying levels of intervention from their military forces. Some states such as Thailand, Syria, and Argentina have been repeatedly prone to such action. And in Africa approximately half of the continent's 50 states are presently ruled, in one form or another, by the military. Most of the *coups d'état* from the men in uniform are against civilian régimes, but an increasing proportion are staged from *within* the military, by one set of khaki-clad soldiers against another.²

The maintenance of internal law and order, and the necessary provision for protection against external threats, are the primary tasks of any political grouping, be it a primitive people surrounded by hostile

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¹ But see David Goldsworthy, 'Armies and Politics in Civilian Regimes', in S. J. Baynham (ed.), *Military Power and Politics in Black Africa* (London, forthcoming); Elise Forbes Pachter, 'Contra-Coup: civilian control of the military in Guinea, Tanzania, and Mozambique', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), 20, 4, December 1982, pp. 595–612; and R. Charlton, 'Predicting African Military Coups', in *Futures* (Guildford), 15, 4, 1983, pp. 281–92.

² As in Benin, December, 1965; Nigeria, July 1966; or Ghana, July 1978 and June 1979.

tribal antagonists or a modern and militarily-powerful state in the last quarter of this century. But there is, paradoxically, a danger inherent in this rôle. For while Napoleon's maxim that without an army there is neither independence nor civil liberty may be true, it is equally important to stress Burke's warning that an armed disciplined body is, in its essence, dangerous to liberty. The potential threat to an incumbent régime, and to the wider society, is further emphasised because armies use force to achieve their objectives. In this respect, as Samuel Finer has argued, they have three crucial advantages over civilians: 'A marked superiority in organisation, a highly emotional symbolic status, and a monopoly of arms', which thereby give them 'overwhelming superiority in the means of applying force'.¹

In accounting for patterns and levels of armed intervention, two major approaches have been developed in the study of civil-military relations. The first 'internal characteristics' model focuses on the social organisation of the armed forces: structural format and techniques of control, hierarchy and authority, recruitment and assimilation of military rôles, skill patterns and career development, sources of cohesion and cleavage, and professionalism. In this model, explanations of military participation in politics are mainly restricted to the inner characteristics and dynamics of the armed forces themselves. But as Morris Janowitz (who has devoted most of his academic effort to investigating the composition and sociology of military bureaucracies) has pointed out, any analysis of an institution's internal structure requires attention to the social context.²

The second school of thought, that favoured by Samuel Huntington who argues that 'the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political',³ accentuates the social and political circumstances in which the army operates.⁴ Although he does not ignore the strictly military variable altogether, Finer also maintains that military interference is largely regulated by what he calls the degree of public attachment to civilian institutions or the 'level of political culture'.⁵ For him, the greater the degree of political modernisation, the fewer opportunities the military have for intervention and the less support it will receive. The lower the development of a well-mobilised

¹ Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: the role of the military in politics* (London, 1962), p. 6.

² Morris Janowitz, *Sociology and the Military Establishment* (New York, 1959), p. 8.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 194.

⁴ According to Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: military coups and governments* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1977), p. xi: 'The external or "environmental" variables include the actions of civilian executives, the performance and legitimacy of civilian governments, the politicization of workers and peasants, the severity of communal conflicts, the extent of socioeconomic modernization, and the rate of economic growth.'

⁵ Finer, *op.cit.* chs. 7, 8, and 9.

public opinion, the more numerous the opportunities and the greater the likelihood of public support. For instance, the 1920 Kapp *Putsch* in Berlin and the 1961 Generals' Revolt in Algiers were met with overt civilian opposition and strikes,¹ whereas coups in Bourkina Faso (previously Upper Volta) and the Central African Republic have been greeted with civilian support or indifference.

In fact, as a closer examination of their texts reveals, Finer and Huntington were as sensitive to the importance of the military's social and organisational profile as Janowitz was to those of the society. Today, there is a general consensus that both traditions in civil-military relations analysis are important, and that the explanatory force of stressing the internal qualities of the armed forces to the exclusion of the social and political sphere, or *vice versa*, is limited.

This said, it should be appreciated that the present article is concerned not so much with military intervention *per se*, but rather with the other side of the coin; with the question of civilian *control* of armed forces, a sadly neglected but key aspect of civil-military relations inquiry. For this reason, our emphasis here is on the institutional characteristics of the military establishment itself.

In western liberal democracies, it is commonly assumed that it is 'natural' for the military establishment to obey the civil powers. But in the world at large, this is far from being the normal pattern of events. Our focus in this article, however, is not all-embracingly global since we shall examine events in one particular third-world state, Ghana, during an otherwise well-documented and clearly identifiable period of its political history.² Utilising Huntington's 'objective'/'subjective' pattern variable, we shall concern ourselves with a detailed examination of Kwame Nkrumah's efforts to subordinate his army to the civil authority during the Ghanaian First Republic, 1960–6. Having outlined Huntington's theoretical dichotomy, it will be argued that the pattern of control inherited by Ghana from the British colonial power was eventually cast aside in favour of an entirely new format. This involved the orchestration of a programme of military diversification in which new security organisations were formed and existing ones split up. President Nkrumah deliberately encouraged rivalry between the units of the dual security system that emerged with the aim of controlling all.

¹ For a further account of civilian opposition to military intervention, see Adam Roberts, 'Civil Resistance to Military Coups', in *Journal of Peace Research* (Oslo), xii, 1, 1975, pp. 19–36.

² A good deal has already been written on the nature of politics and society in the period under review, three of the most important being: Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946–1960* (London, 1964); Henry L. Bretton, *The Rise and Fall of Kwame Nkrumah: a study of personal rule in Africa* (London, 1966); and Trevor Jones, *Ghana's First Republic, 1960–1966: the pursuit of the political kingdom* (London, 1976).

It will be argued, furthermore, that these changes had their roots in the policy to accelerate and complete the process of military Africanisation, a decision predicated on wider foreign-policy objectives.

In his classic text on the theory and politics of civil-military relations, Huntington gives considerable attention to the question of how civilian supremacy over the armed forces might be assured.¹ He begins by delineating a conceptual distinction between what he calls 'objective' and 'subjective' control. In the former, the officer corps is disciplined by its own professionalism, the most important constituent involving service to the community. He concludes that the more professional an army (that is, the more it saw itself serving society), the less of a threat it would pose.² According to the latter, subjective model, civilian political control is ensured by the denial of an independent military sphere. Here the army becomes an integral, though subordinate, part of the political authority, and is permeated by civilian values and interests. In short:

Subjective civilian control achieves its end by civilianizing the military, making it the mirror of the state. Objective civilian control achieves its end by militarizing the military, making them the tools of the state.³

The subjective format is most clearly identified with absolutist or totalitarian régimes, such as Nazi Germany and the U.S.S.R., where policy is ultimately determined by force and coercion. In such states, internal military power is checked by breaking the officer corps up into competing groups, establishing political armies and special military units (*Waffen-S.S.* and the Soviet M.V.D. security troops), infiltrating the armed services with alternative political chains of command (commissars), indoctrination, and surveillance. By contrast, the objective model is clearly associated with the western liberal democracies (United Kingdom, Scandinavia, U.S.A., etcetera), where control is instituted through the maximisation of military professionalism, thus 'rendering them politically sterile and neutral. . . . A highly professional officer corps stands ready to carry out the wishes of any civilian group which secures legitimate authority within the state.'⁴

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (New York, 1957).

² But as Finer has noted in *The Man on Horseback*, p. 15, the problem here is that the army might accept the formula, then distinguish between the good of the state and the performance of a particular government. Professionalism may then actually lead to armed intervention. See, too, Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 63–7, whose discussion on the subject underlines the narrow and 'essentialist' definition of professionalism expounded by Huntington.

³ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, p. 83.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 84.

GHANA: THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF OBJECTIVE CONTROL

At independence, on 6 March 1957, there were 209 Britons and 29 Ghanaians in the army officer corps.¹ Consisting of three infantry battalions and support services, the 5,700-man army was commanded by Major-General Victor Paley, who had been Chief of Defence Staff since May 1954. Almost all of the infantry soldiers were from the North. This must be contrasted with the overwhelming predominance of southerners in the black officer ranks.² The explanation for this skewed pattern of recruitment lies in the fact that the educational and economic benefits of the colonial era were unevenly distributed to the advantage of the coastal and southern regions, and to the relative disadvantage of the backward hinterland.

With only two exceptions, the African officers had been commissioned after several years in the rank-and-file. This was a clear manifestation of the caution displayed by the colonial military authorities over the question of localisation. In British eyes, it ensured that the Ghana army inherited a spirit and tradition of professionalism and political impartiality.³ It also ensured that black officers were properly qualified and competent to carry out their duties, and that commissions, promotions, and postings rested on considerations of suitability and merit.

The principal change, then, from Gold Coast Military Forces to Ghana Military Forces in March 1957 was one of nomenclature. The continuation of expatriates in the key military postings, and the early uninterrupted dependence on Britain for equipment and officer training, ensured that continuity was maintained when Ghana emerged from colonial crumple as a sovereign state. Also, the retention of European assistance undoubtedly tended to consolidate the western concept of an army's obedience to its political masters, thereby providing a ready-made deterrent to unconstitutional action.

In the garrison towns and military units, the thread with the past and the resemblance of the army to its colonial progenitor remained

¹ Ministry of Defence, *The Army Seniority Role, July 1967* (Accra, 1967); and H.M.S.O., *The Army List* (London), 1947–57.

² Estimated from an examination of recruitment lists appearing in Ministry of Information, *Ghana Gazette* (Accra), 1957–62. Very frequently, the tribes of the men are immediately recognisable since the registered surname often coincides with the ethnic group or area of origin: Bukari Sissala, Allasan Gonja, Braima Dagarti, Tindana Talensa, and so on.

³ This is not to say that Gold Coast soldiers or ex-soldiers never played a political rôle prior to 1957. In fact, some did although it was of a 'relatively limited nature' according to David Killingray, 'Soldiers, Ex-Servicemen, and Politics in the Gold Coast, 1939–50', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 21 3, September 1983, p. 534.

very much in evidence: the Aldershot lay-out (admittedly improved by the hibiscus and bougainvillea); the routines, training procedures, and disciplinary codes; the Battle Honours of past campaigns, regimental Colours, sports trophies and silver; officers with bristling moustaches, swagger-sticks, and Sam Brownes; N.C.O.s bawling out orders to their intimidated *bugabugas* (trainee soldiers), and the arm-wrenching salutes and ear-splitting ‘sahs’. There were the dinner nights, Saturday afternoon drinks in the mess, and mid-morning ‘elevenses’. Also in evidence were schools for service children who were treated to an annual Christmas party complete with a white-bearded Santa Claus. These features together with the emphasis on field sports, all pointed to the continuing link with the past.

The organisational structures and outward similarities derived from the colonial forces were also accompanied by continuity in the officially perceived function of the military. At independence, the job envisaged for the army was essentially the same as before. It would continue to have an ‘efficient’ function, that of maintaining internal security and frontier defence. The ‘dignified’ rôle of providing a vivid expression of the state’s sovereignty with guards of honour, parades, and Independence Day marches would also be performed.

To begin with at least, the leadership of the Convention People’s Party – preoccupied with other matters of state – took little interest in the army it had acquired almost intact from Britain. No immediate attempt was made to redefine the rôle of the armed forces, nor were there demands for increases in military expenditure. The British officers believed that they would continue to lead the army for another 10–15 years, during which time African officers would be trained in a policy that was designed to produce professionals in the British mould whose job was to soldier, leaving politics to the elected politicians. Indeed, of all Ghana’s major institutions, the military seemed the least likely candidate to become a focus for inter-party controversy or national dispute.

But all this was to change. Within two years, extensive plans had been initiated for the enlargement of the armed forces. These preparations included the creation of new battalions for the army, in addition to the formation of naval and air forces.¹ It also involved diversifying sources of military assistance and increased reliance upon military aid from the socialist states of Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba. These moves,

¹ For details, see S. J. Baynham, ‘The Ghanaian Military: a bibliographic essay’, in *West African Journal of Sociology and Political Science* (Exeter), 1, 1, 1975, pp. 83–96; and *Ghana Armed Forces Magazine* (Accra), 1, 1, 1967, pp. 30–3.

together with the accelerated indigenisation of the officer corps and the establishment of a military academy at Teshie, enabled Nkrumah to reduce his single dependency upon Britain.¹

FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AND AFRICANISATION

The key to these departures from established military practices and orientations lay, not in internal security requirements nor fear of outside attack, but in Nkrumah's foreign-policy objectives and his search for international recognition and prestige. At his midnight pronouncement in Accra on 5 March 1957, Nkrumah told his audience that 'the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent'.²

Nkrumah's vision of elevating the former Gold Coast to be the vanguard of African liberation involved the build-up of strong military forces. It also required the modification of Ghana's close connections with the British military establishment because such ties conflicted with Nkrumah's pan-African aspirations and his proclaimed policy of non-alignment. These strategies caused friction between the expatriate senior command, who believed the primary function of the armed forces lay in the area of internal security, and the C.P.P. administration they served, which wanted to utilise the military for wider international aims. In short, ideological and continental political considerations, meshed with questions of national honour and the desire for increased influence and prestige, were the key factors in the twin process of expansion and diversification.

By 1960, the British concept of a professional army had already been diluted by the premature promotion of inexperienced Ghanaians to senior positions. These changes reflected political, not military imperatives. This process was taken to its logical conclusion in September 1961 when all British officers were replaced by Ghanaians. The catalytic agent of change in the abrupt reversal of the earlier policy of gradual localisation was the Congo crisis, an event Nkrumah considered to be crucial in the battle for African freedom.

The primary factor in the abandonment of the gradualist approach to military Africanisation was the U.N. 1960–4 operations in the Congo where, in terms of its resources, Ghana made one of the heaviest

¹ By the end of 1958, the number of African officers had more than doubled, from the March 1957 figure of 29, to 59. By the end of 1959, there were 83 Ghanaian officers in the army, a figure that had risen to 119 by December 1960. Computed from *The Army Seniority Role, July 1967* and *Ghana Gazette*, 1959–62.

² Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (London, 1958), p. 62.

manpower contributions.¹ The process occurred in three stages. Initially, the localisation programme was accelerated so that most of the major appointments in the Ghanaian U.N. contingent might be transferred to Africans. Then the policy was widened to include the majority of middle and junior commands. Finally, on 22 September 1961, came the dismissal of Major-General H.T. Alexander (who had replaced Paley the previous year) and his entire staff of British officers. While President Nkrumah placed considerable value on their stabilising influence in the army, the prominence of expatriates embarrassed him as it clashed with his projection of Ghana as a progressive and non-aligned independent state. Nkrumah's discomfort was not isolated since it was a sentiment shared by his own soldiers:

The Congolese and the other African troops... were always pointing fingers at the white officers in the Ghana Army and wanting us to explain their presence in the ranks of the Ghana Forces, whilst the Congolese were being urged by Nkrumah to sack their Belgian officers; for they could hardly reconcile the presence of British officers in our Forces with his advice. I may say this often caused us some embarrassment.²

It was essential, in Nkrumah's view, to have credible security forces if his country's voice was to carry any weight abroad. In this respect, the conspicuous presence of white officers in the army presented a dilemma. On the one hand, he was anxious to maintain standards, and the presence of expatriates ensured a high level of professionalism. On the other hand, for political reasons, a non-African officered army – especially one led by citizens of the ex-colonial authority – would not be able to play a leading rôle in foreign affairs.

To these apparently irreconcilable considerations was added an extra complication. This involved the whole issue of Ghana's, but more especially the C.P.P. administration's, security. For one of the most important signposts in Ghana's early history concerned the arrest (in 1958) and court martial (in January 1959) of an African officer, Captain Benjamin Awhaitey. Subsequently, a commission of enquiry was convened by the Government. Both events centred around an alleged conspiracy to kill Nkrumah and topple the C.P.P., and supposedly involving prominent Gã and Ewe politicians who had

¹ These events lie outside the scope of this article, but details of the Ghanaian rôle may be found in Major-General H. T. Alexander, *African Tighrope: my two years as Nkrumah's Chief of Staff* (London, 1965); Ernest W. Lefever, *Uncertain Mandate: politics of the U.N. Congo operation* (Baltimore, 1967); and W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1957–1966: diplomacy, ideology, and the new state* (Princeton, 1969).

² Major-General A. K. Ocran, *A Myth is Broken: an account of the Ghana coup d'état of 24th February 1966* (London, 1968), pp. 6–7. Ocran's First Infantry Brigade played a rôle in toppling the C.P.P. régime.

merged with other opposition groups in 1957 to form the United Party.¹ Sir Tsibu Darku and Maurice Charles concluded in their majority report of the Granville Sharp commission of enquiry that Awhaitey 'was engaged in a conspiracy to assassinate' Nkrumah.²

One result of the Awhaitey affair was to convince the C.P.P. leadership that the best way to prevent a coup was to delay localisation and continue to rely on British officers in the important command posts. The Government calculated that it would be safer to keep the armed forces under expatriate command. As Nkrumah explained after the 24 February 1966 coup against him:

The individual loyalties of such officers and their training, combined with the political complications for Britain which would have resulted in their joining in a revolt, would have made it unlikely that a military take-over could take place.³

Yet, although the Awhaitey case acted as a temporary check on the pace of officer indigenisation, C.P.P. attitudes towards the army became increasingly susceptible to other, conflicting, pressures. The central military contradiction of needing to balance internal security requirements and the Government's instincts for self-preservation on the one hand, whilst simultaneously accommodating radical foreign-policy objectives and the demands for increased Africanisation which these entailed on the other, was ultimately resolved in favour of the latter course of action. There was no *via media*; if Ghana's international designs were to have any credibility, the expatriates had to go.

But when they left, no clearly defined areas of distinctive civil and military competence were bequeathed. Whereas previously Nkrumah had relied on the British to keep the army politically quiescent, it was now no longer possible to trust an all-African force in the same way. During the first few years after independence, Ghana's civil-military relations were based on the West European concept of objective control in which an autonomous military professionalism is recognised. After September 1961, Nkrumah could not be sure of his officers since their loyalty depended largely on the presence of expatriates. The President's apprehensions were fuelled by fears about his own personal safety following a series of assassination attempts on his life in 1962 and 1964.⁴

¹ See Austin, *op.cit.* ch. VIII.

² Ghana Government Printer, *Proceedings and Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Matters Disclosed at the Trial of Captain Benjamin Awhaitey before a Court Martial and the Surrounding Circumstances* (Accra, 1959), Appendix B., p. ii.

³ Nkrumah, *op.cit.* p. 37.

⁴ The growing proclivity towards armed intervention elsewhere in Africa (U.A.R., 1952; Congo-Kinshasa, 1960 and 1965; Dahomey, 1963; Nigeria, 1966; in addition to a wave of abortive

These incidents, two of which came very close to success,¹ confirmed his doubts about the reliability of the regular security forces.

So, as a means of neutralising potential opposition, the inherited format of control was abandoned in favour of subjective civilian governance. An alternative policy emerged, in which the regular armed forces were to be systematically imbued with the political purposes and orientations of the C.P.P. The programme to politicise the army was accompanied by a further diversification of foreign-training and supply programmes, in which greater reliance was placed on aid from the socialist states. In this way, Nkrumah hoped to further offset the western bias in training and equipment.

It also involved a strategy to raise rival security and intelligence formations staffed by loyal officers who were considered reliable. From the evidence available, it seems that the most important feature of 'reliability' to emerge was related to ethnic/regional background: all the sensitive posts were held by Nzimas – Nkrumah's own ethnic group – and northerners.

NKRUMAH'S NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE

As formulated under Nkrumah's direction, the new system took the shape of a National Security Service (N.S.S.) which, it shall be argued, duplicated and usurped the functions of the conventional military and police forces. Although the two sectors existed side by side, the unmistakable trend was towards the newer security structures which were responsible, not to the Defence Ministry, but directly to the Office of the President.² In this system of institutional dualism, Nkrumah encouraged rivalries and dissensions among officers, thereby hoping to discourage them from taking united action against him.

military uprisings and mutinies since independence in Algeria, Burudi, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanganyika, Togo, and Uganda) caused considerable consternation within the leadership of the C.P.P. Addressing the National Assembly soon after the January 1966 coup in Nigeria, and only a fortnight before his own overthrow, Nkrumah referred to the 'unfortunate military incursions into the political life of several independent African states', and warned that 'it is not the duty of the army to rule or govern because it has no political mandate'. *Parliamentary Debates* (Accra), 72, 1 February 1966, cols. 929–32.

¹ The first was a grenade attack on Nkrumah at the northern village of Kulungugu on 1 August 1962 where several people were killed; Nkrumah received shrapnel wounds in his back. In the second episode, the President was attacked in the grounds of Flagstaff House, Accra, by an armed constable, Seth Ametewee, who fired several close-range rifle rounds at Nkrumah before being overpowered by his police colleagues. Nkrumah's only injury was a bite on the cheek received whilst wrestling his would-be killer to the ground.

² In his study of the civil service during the C.P.P. era, Benjamin Amonoo convincingly argues that a similar process occurred with regard to the civilian bureaucracy at national and lower levels. 'Politics of Institutional Dualism: Ghana, 1957–1966', Ph.D. dissertation, Exeter University, 1973.

Included within the N.S.S. was Military Intelligence, Special Intelligence, the Cuban-trained civilian Bodyguard, Counter Intelligence, and the President's Own Guard Regiment (P.O.G.R.). More than any other counterweight to the inherited armed forces, it was the creation and enlargement of the Presidential Guard that contributed most to the growing atmosphere of insecurity in which the regular officers lived. Had Nkrumah's plans for the metamorphosis of the security machine been completed, there can be little doubt that the army would have withered away. It was largely in an effort to forestall such an eventuality that the officers struck against the Government in 1966. Their first targets were those units that were being groomed to take over responsibility for the security and maintenance of the C.P.P. régime.

The Security Service Act of 1963 grouped intelligence and special military bodies into several Departments within one N.S.S. Administratively, it was exclusively at the disposal of, and directly responsible to, the President. Organised from Flagstaff House, Nkrumah's residence in Accra, it was totally independent from the regular armed forces and police. Its command elements were trained largely in Moscow, or by East European and Cuban specialists in Accra.

Under N.S.S. control came Military Intelligence, which had originally been set up by General Alexander as a small army branch but expanded after the British left in 1961. Prior to 1960, there was no Military Intelligence Service as such, but only a small number of Intelligence officers attached to Army headquarters and the batallions. After Africanisation, it was not part of the Ministry of Defence as its name would imply. Instead, it was organised in such a way that, while not severed altogether from the regular army, it was integrated in the Security Service run from the Presidential Office. Its task was to make an independent check on the loyalty of personnel in the three regular armed services. For this purpose, it maintained an interrogation centre located inside Burma Camp. The Director of Military Intelligence was Colonel M.M. Hassan, who, like Nkrumah, was an Nzima from the western region of Ghana. According to one regular army source:

Military Intelligence was very strong; we had to be extremely careful. In conversation over a glass of beer, we'd talk generally if we saw an intelligence chap or someone else around. This secrecy was very bad for morale.¹

This view was endorsed by a subsequent chief of Military Intelligence: 'People felt that other officers were spying on them. But intelligence work should not be seen to be done overtly. It was a serious mistake'.²

¹ Interview, Lt.-Colonel C. K. Enniful, Military Secretary, 11 August 1975.

² Interview, Lt.-Colonel I. K. Akuoku, Director of Military Intelligence, 21 August 1975.

There was also a Special Intelligence Unit, established early in 1963 and directed by Ambrose Yankey, also an Nzima. This body initially employed a number of officers from the Special Branch, which was itself hived off from the police following the assassination attempt on Nkrumah in 1964. At the time of the 1966 coup, Yankey had recruited almost 300 security officers who were trained in undercover-surveillance techniques by two Soviet agents, Nicholai Gladkiy and Robert Akhmero. Special Intelligence's function was to check on the political activities of civilians in order to uncover plots and indications of dissension against the C.P.P. among individuals and groups that were not covered by other intelligence organisations. Spies were placed everywhere, in factories, offices, shops, public transport, political rallies, and in beer and *akepeteshi* bars.¹

The Bodyguard was composed largely of ex-servicemen trained and supervised by Cuban experts. Emphasis was placed on small-arms handling, physical fitness, and hand-to-hand combat. Housed in new flats directly across the road from Flagstaff House, its members were the personal bodyguards who preceded the President on trips, mingled with crowds, and frisked suspicious individuals for weapons.

As its name signifies, the rôle of the Soviet-trained Counter Intelligence was to check on the loyalty of all members of the Security Service, and to prevent that organisation from being penetrated by elements hostile to the régime. However, it was resentment against the fifth component of the N.S.S., the President's Own Guard Regiment, which contributed most to the growing chasm between Nkrumah and his regular military forces.

Established largely as a ceremonial force to guard Flagstaff House and visiting dignitaries, the P.O.G.R. was raised in October 1960 and had attached to it a saluting troop of three light field-guns. The concept of the Guard Regiment originated in the office of the British Chief of Defence Staff, but there were no plans to separate it from the regular army. When the British departed, the Guard was placed under the command of Lt.-Colonel D.G. Zanlerigu, a northerner, who had been sent to Moscow to take a special internal-security course.

Following the unsuccessful Kulungugu assassination attempt in August 1962, Nkrumah ordered that the P.O.G.R. be expanded from one to two battalions. The additional battalion was accordingly raised

¹ Ministry of Information, *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa* (Accra, 1966), pp. i and iv. While the language of this propaganda publication put out by the army-police National Liberation Council junta soon after the coup is somewhat virulent, the data, according to numerous military and political personnel interviewed by this writer, is clearly factual.

and trained under Soviet supervision at Bundase, but at the time of the coup only two companies (then barracked at Afiénya) had been formed. By February 1966, however, the Guard consisted of about 50 officers and 1,200 men,¹ while skeleton plans for enlarging it into between three and five battalions had reached the ears of regular army officers.² The P.O.G.R. came under the aegis of the N.S.S. in early 1963, but it was not officially detached from army command until July 1965.

This duplication of security forces was responsible for serious problems in command and control. A simmering hostility developed between the Security Service (especially the P.O.G.R. section) and the regular forces. Occasionally, the tension burst into blazing rows between Zanlerigu, who maintained that he took orders direct from the Commander in Chief (Nkrumah), and the Chief of Defence Staff, Stephen Otu, who protested that an army cannot have two chains of command.

As the Guard was gradually strengthened (mainly with Soviet equipment, including armoured cars, field artillery, high-velocity AK-47 rifles, and special uniforms complete with knee-length jack-boots), a growing sense of grievance and deprivation permeated the regular forces. By December 1965, according to one officer who played a leading rôle in the coup, many of the regular troops were without equipment and clothing, 'things essential for [their] pride, morale and efficiency'; there was an acute shortage of accommodation 'due to the rash military expansion scheme that Kwame Nkrumah had launched'; 'We were also aware that members of the President's own Guard Regiment were receiving kingly treatment'.³ One Sandhurst-trained officer, an active participant in the anti-C.P.P. rebellion as a major in command of the Second Battalion, had this to say:

Psychologically, the Guard had to be given preferential treatment to look after Nkrumah, but the regular army was neglected. . . . The P.O.G.R. was an empire within an empire and Zanlerigu was a boss in his own right.⁴

POLITICISATION OF THE MILITARY AND NEW APPOINTMENTS

The state of general unease and insecurity among regular officers was also related to Nkrumah's emphasis on the need for ideological education of all citizens, including personnel in the armed forces. This period was also characterised by heavier imposition of C.P.P. power,

¹ Interview, Major B. B. Lorwia, Deputy C.O., Ministry of Defence Records Office, 13 August 1975.

² Interview, Brigadier D. A. Asare, retired army officer, 22 April 1974.

³ Colonel A. A. Afrifa, *The Ghana Coup: 24th February 1966* (London, 1967), pp. 100-4.

⁴ Interview, Brigadier Asare, op.cit.

and an insistence upon identification of party with state.¹ Thus to counteract the western bias in the training of the army, and in order to secure his officers' loyalty, Nkrumah embarked on a policy to commit his officers to the régime. A directive was issued that party education would be introduced into the army, and plans were drawn up for the introduction of political commissars.² The President was not content to encourage his soldiers in the political tradition of the British army. For him, such a model of civil-military relations clashed diametrically with his vision of a one-party state encompassing the national institutions of Ghana. What was required were committed armed forces, schooled in the subjective method of control, who owed loyalty not only to Ghana, but also to the C.P.P. and the *Osagyefo* personally. In this context, western traditions of political detachment and neutralism become meaningless, and are replaced by an ethos in which enthusiasm for the existing régime becomes an essential quality in a military officer.³

Concomitant with the C.P.P.'s plans to introduce the crude ideology of 'Nkrumahism' into the armed services, came efforts to create additional countervailing forces. While the military was being politicised, civilian political organisations of the C.P.P., the Ghana Young Pioneers – consciously patterned on the Soviet *komsomol* schools⁴ – and the Workers' Brigade, were militarised. Secret plans also existed for the establishment of a Peoples' Militia. The build-up of alternative security services, and the militarisation of civilian organisations, were correctly construed by the army officers as counter-weights to neutralise the power of the regular forces. For Afrifa the Workers' Brigade was seen as 'a storm trooper organization and the instrument of Kwame Nkrumah's growing desire to turn [Ghana] into his private domain'.⁵

The C.P.P. leadership further demoralised the officer corps by abrupt changes among senior army personnel. As with the formation of a whole network of competing controls, the juggling of appointments in the regular army was concerned with ensuring the régime's safety and minimising the chances of a coup. Ethnic factors, together with

¹ For details, see Austin, *op.cit.*, Bretton, *op.cit.*, and Jones, *op.cit.*

² In fact, muted opposition from the officers, encouraged, it should be added, by the inevitable sluggishness of the bureaucratic process in launching the scheme, ensured that the directive had not been enforced by the time of the 1966 coup.

³ A view expressed most succinctly by Nyerere: 'Our conception of the President's Office is obviously incompatible with the theory that the public services are and ought to be politically impartial.' *The Observer* (London), 3 June 1962. Elsewhere in Africa today (in Machel's Mozambique, in Mengistu's Ethiopia, and in Quaddafi's Libya, for instance) similar sentiments govern the political authorities' perceptions of the military establishment.

⁴ Some several hundred Young Pioneers were sent on courses and summer camps to Moscow, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

⁵ Afrifa, *op.cit.* p. 86.

considerations of ideological reliability, played a part in the reorganisation of appointments to the critical commands. The process reached its peak when Major-General S. J. A. Otu, the Akan Chief of Defence Staff, and his Gã deputy, Major-General Joseph Ankrah, were summarily dismissed from the army on 28 July 1965. In the subsequent reshuffle, Brigadier Nathaniel Aferi (a trusted Akan who was known to be closely identified with the C.P.P.), and Colonel M. Barwah (a northerner and Nkrumah's special military confidant) filled the two top appointments in the ranks of major-general and brigadier, respectively. Quite apart from these changes, we have already taken note of Nkrumah's discrimination in favour of two ethnic/regional groups, especially in the alternative security services established to protect the régime from the army. The Guard Regiment, Military Intelligence, Special Intelligence, and also the Workers' Brigade were all controlled by northerners or Nzimas. And Brigadier Barwah, a Dagomba Muslim, now commanded Nkrumah's army.

CONCLUSION

When the British officers were superceded by Ghanaians in 1961, the C.P.P.'s most reliable safeguard disappeared with them. Before that date, the presence of expatriates acted as an effective check on internal subversion, not least from the army itself; with their expulsion, that guarantee of military subservience to the civil power no longer existed. The inherited format of objective civilian control was made redundant because it relied, in the first place, on the presence of Europeans who had not been given sufficient time to train their protégés in their own image.

But the withdrawal of the British guardians generated widespread insecurity in the régime. Concern for his personal safety in the wake of Kulungugu and the bomb explosions in 1962 largely explain Nkrumah's decision to develop a new strategy for the armed forces. The hallmark of his approach was the adoption of the subjective model of control in which the military forces would become an integral wing of the C.P.P. The new system to organisationally neutralise the security forces through an amalgam of ethnic-related and functional techniques was characterised by five interrelated features: (i) diversified foreign military training programmes, (ii) the development of rival security formations to the orthodox armed forces, (iii) political indoctrination of servicemen, in an attempt to identify them with the orientations and purposes of the Government, (iv) the creation of comprehensive

intelligence services independent from the regular military establishment, and (v) much closer involvement in the appointment of reliable officers to sensitive commands.

To summarise, the argument here is simply that, with the departure of the expatriate officers, Nkrumah's insecurity forced him to adopt an entirely new format of control. The new order, relying as it did on East European and Cuban-trained cadres, was the very antithesis of the western-type army acquired from the British. Nevertheless, the regular army continued to exist (albeit under constant threat of dismantlement) parallel to the new forces in a split arrangement of institutionalised dualism. In format and methods, the profile of the N.S.S., with its independent intelligence units and a well-equipped Presidential Guard, was reminiscent of – indeed, it was structured upon – the Soviet system of ‘*apparat*’ control, salient features of which include political indoctrination of servicemen, covert surveillance of suspect personnel, and close party supervision in the appointment of reliable officers to sensitive commands.

Elsewhere in the Third World (for instance, in Ben Bella's Algeria, in Modibo Keita's Mali, in Bustamanta's Peru, and in Congo-Brazzaville under Massamba–Debat), attempts to establish alternative armies have been fiercely resisted by the regular forces.¹ While a number of factors have been identified in explaining the widespread discontent that existed within the Ghanaian army by 1966, there seems to be little doubt that President Nkrumah's efforts to stem the emergence of internal military power by building up guards to guard guards was the most vital background feature to the coup. More than any other development, it was a fear of being squeezed out of existence that united the army officers against the régime.

In fact, the C.P.P. leadership failed to develop the N.S.S. – especially the Guard element – with sufficient celerity to neutralise the conventional forces. By 1964, it was clear there was a real danger that the only institution capable of challenging Nkrumah by force would soon lose

¹ Ben Bella's efforts to strengthen his power base by the formation of a peoples' militia in mid-1965 was clearly a major determinant in Colonel Houari Boumedienne's coup of June 1965. In Mali, the young subalterns led by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, who seized power in November 1968, were motivated by a desire to clip the wings of Keita's popular militia. Intervention based partly on the ‘counter-weight’ motive came about in Peru in 1948 when President Bustamanta attempted to form such a force (as was also the case in Venezuela that year). And in Congo-Brazzaville, Captain Marien Nguabi's coup in 1968 was largely a response to the creation of the Cuban-trained *Mouvement national de la révolution*. Robert Mugabe's North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade in Zimbabwe, which has been described by the Prime Minister as having a *gukurahundi* (anti-dissident) rôle, and some units of the Uganda army (also supervised by Korean communists), appear to have been groomed, partly at least, for a ‘guardian’ rôle, but in neither country have they (yet) assumed a separate status from the regular military hierarchy.

its effectiveness, largely because of the assembly of forces capable of countering it.¹ In the final analysis, the formation of an alternative security system, and the decision to disconnect the P.O.G.R. from the orthodox military command, was counter-productive. In the early hours of 24 February 1966, the army and police overthrew Nkrumah shortly before his personal security apparatus threatened to become effective.

¹ William F. Gutteridge, *The Military in African Politics* (London, 1969), p. 105.

