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MAHATMA GANDHI/WINSTON CHURCHILL: JOURNALISTIC MOTIVATIONS

KINI

POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS

Honors Independent Study
Spring 1984
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INTRODUCTION

Within most societies there exists an adversary relationship between political leaders and the press. This situation
results from the often conflicting roles of politicians
and journalists. Politicians take an oath to lead individuals
and direct affairs of state for the general welfare. Journalists
are responsible for presenting information from which the
public can form ideas and make intelligient decisions in
choosing political leaders. In practice, however, the press
acts as a watch dog against corruption and inefficiency in
politics. Thus, an adversary relationship has inevitably
evolved.

But, there are exceptions to this adversary melationship between politicians and journalists. In some instances, a positive relationship between the two has benefitted both. Journalism has, on occasion, been an effective base for a person's gaining public prominence and building a political career.

The purpose of this study is to examine the careers of Mohandas Gandhi and Winston Churchill and the effect of their journalistic work on their political aspirations, activities and achievements. I will argue that both Gandhi and Churchill

used the power of the pen, especially in newspapers, to gain attention, fame and finally political support.

From the examination of their journalistic writings and the political careers their journalism generated. I will conclude that Gandhi and Churchill's use of the press was, in fact, the key that opened the door to their eventual political power.

GANDHI

"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." -Albert Einstein

The first example we will examine is Fohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Born on October 2, 1869, Gandhi became an Indian political and spiritual leader enrising the name Mahatma, meaning "great soul." With India under British rule, Gandhi appeared to the people as a symbol of strength and hope.

In a nation of slaves, Gandhi acted like a man that was free. Finally, and most importantly, he was a man of God. 'Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise; I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man.'

Gandhi helped to lead India to accept various reforms such as renewed interest in village industries and the equal treatment of the lower class, the "untouchables." In his lifetime, Gandhi launched three great mass movements against colonialism, racism, and religious intolerance and was surprisingly successful in each. (ne reason for his success was his unique personality and ability. Another reason was his strong religious beliefs and passions which he converted into political actions. Candhi believed that 1) when man listens, God speaks, 2) when mon obeys, God acts, and 3) when men change, nations change.

There is still another, more practical reason for his political success. He used newspapers to fuel the spread

of political movements. Most of his writing appeared first in the several newspapers he established and operated during his lifetime: Indian Opinion, 1904; Young India, 1919; and Harijan, 1933. The subjects of his writings were salf-restraint, Ohristian missions, nonviolence in war and peace, village industries, diet and diet reform, women, and social injustice, all considered by him to be essential to his political aims.

For his education, Gamdhi studied law in bondon when he was nineteen. He returned to imite in 1891 and practiced law in Bombay and Rajkot. Neither as a law student in Bogland nor as a lawyer entering promite did Gamdhi show interect in formal political work. He was terribly shy when faced with reading a speech or defending a client. However, he did use written statements to make comments about Indian affairs.

In 1893, Gandhi accepted an offer to work in South
Africa as counsel for a Muslim business firm. It was in
response to his falling victim to racial discrimination
that Gandhi established his first newspaper, the <u>Indian</u>
Opinion as the vehicle to carry on a political campaign
for the equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of
color. Gandhi recognized that the shites thought they
needed protection against a colored majority consisting
of Indians and Negroes. He wanted to establish one

principle: that Indians were sitzens of the British

Empire and therefore entitled to equality under its laws.

"Prejudices cannot be removed by legislation...They will

yield only to patient toil and education."

Formed in 1903 as a weekly journal, <u>Indian Opinion</u>
was published in Gujarati and English and contained Gandhi's
editorials on particular political events. He soon found
the newspaper to be an indispensable political tool.⁵
Gandhi was responsible for most of the financial obligations
of the paper, in addition to contributing articles. "Week
after week I powed out my soul in its columns."

Sjt. Mansukhlal Nazar became the first editor of the journal. The paper's budget allowed for a monthly ellowance of three pounds for the editor, errand boy, and compositor. However, Gandhi was still very much involved in the production of Indian Opinion.

I had to bear the brunt of the work, having for most of the time to be practically in charge of the journal. Not that Sjt.

Mansukhlal could not every it on. He had been doing a fair amount of journalism whilst in India, but he would never venture to write on intricate South African problems so long as I was there. He had the greatest confidence in my discernment and therefore threw on me the responsibility of attending to the editorial column.

In the short time after his arrival in South Africa.

Gandhi became a prosperous lawyer and an outstanding Indian political figure. He circulated petitions, wrate letters

to newspapers, addressed conferences and made friends among whites, Indians and Negroes.

The presses and offices of <u>Indian Opinion</u> were transferred in 1904 to a farm established by Gandhi, his family and several associates. Although his family lived at the farm, Gandhi's law practice required him to be in Johannesburg. He continued to use the paper to convey his thoughts on political issues and wrote much of the material in <u>Indian Opinion</u>. In addition, he personally covered most of the paper's deficits, which amounted to hundreds of dollars each month.

"salyagraba", to describe his nonviolent method of achieving some of his reforms. In one instance, this monocoperation took the form of picketing and burning registration certificates. Gandhi used Indian Opinion to gain support for "satyagraba" and without the use of the newspaper its success would have been limited. The idea of "satyagraba" was a part of everything Gandhi supported. It combined his political and religious thoughts and beliefs.

Satyagraha would probably have been impossible without Indian Opinion. The readers looked forward to it for a trustworthy account of the satyagraha campaign as also of the real condition of Indians in South Africa. For me it became a means for the study of human nature in all its castes and shades, as I always aimed at establishing an intimate and clean bond between the editor and the readers.

Returning to India in January 1915, Gandhi's attention focused on the condition of the dritich-ruled country and the social prejudices associated with the "untouchables." He also wanted to encourage unity between Hindus and Muslims and to foster the spread of cottage industries like spinning and weaving.

Gandhi formed a second paper in 1919. Young India, to gain support and influence policy regarding British rule and social conditions. The English language paper had a companion Gujarati edition, Navajivan. As editor, be wrote several articles for each issue, usually occupying more than half of the paper, These newspaper articles were Gamdhi's "personal organs" and promoted his doctrine of nonvielent noncooperation and language paper.

Some nationalist yearned for rebellion.
But Candhi believed in peace even at the price of cowardice. When there is only a choice between cowardice and violence. I would advise violence. But there was no cowardice. Nonviolence required more bravery than violence, and 'forgiveness is more manly than punishment.' Indians 'have better work to do, a better mission to deliver to the world' than the punishment of the Dyers. 'Monviolence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute.'10

Gandhi had several specific ideas behind the formation of the newspaper in India. These centered on his intent to change the political conditions. He wanted to use the

paper to invoke further support. "The pages of Young India can only illustrate the utility and the necessity of non-violence in dealing with the questions that engage public attention. So much for the central policy of Young India." He continued to support "satyagraba", nonviolence and the quest for truth.

I want to see God face to face. God I know is Truth. For me the only certain means of knowing God is nonviolence-Ahimsa-love. I live for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of Truth. Only a free India can worship the true God. 12

Taking his journalistic efforts further, Gandhi flooded the government, legislature and press with closely reasoned statements concerning Indian grievances. He often supported nonviolent actions and criticized violent revolutionary activities.

His nonviolent actions and newspaper articles tended to place Gandhi in jeopardy and occasionally in prison.

After repeated arrests, he was assigned hard labor to the point of collapse, subjected to physical restraints and exposed to ill treatment from both his jailers and fellow prisoners. "Jail is jail for thieves. For me, it is a temple."13

In March 1922, Gandhi and S.G. Banker, the printer of Young India, were arrested on a charge of "bringing or attempting to bring into hatred or contempt or exciting or

attempting to excite disaffection toward his Majesty's government. "14 They were tried March 18 at Ahmedabad before Justice C.N. Broomfield.

The evidence against the men included three articles published in Young India in 1921-1922. The first article, entitled "Tampering With Loyalty", appeared in September 29, 1921. It addressed the arrest of one of Gandhi's close associates, Mohammed Ali, for attempting to persuade Muslims not to serve in the British Army. The other two, "A Puzzle and Its Solution" published on December 15, 1921 and "Shaking the Mane" appearing February 23, 1922, addressed other Indian grievances.

In his statement before the court, Gandhi plead guilty to the charge of sedition. He addressed the violent actions of Indians responding to what he wrote.

I wanted to avoid violence. Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. 15

Banker entered a plea of guilty and received six months on each of the first two counts. The judge issued a fine of a thousand rupees on the third count, with six

months imprisonment in default. The court sentenced Gandhi to six years imprisonment, two years for each article. After serving two years, the court released him because of his health. Gandhi spent a total of some 2100 days in Indian jails after spending 249 days in South African prisons.

The weekly journal, Young India, disbanded in 1930.

With the visits to villages, Gandhi felt he did not have enough time to contribute editorials. There was some pressure from the government to discontinue its publication.

Gandhi formed his third newspaper while in prison.

In 1933, he began the weekly publication of Harijan in place of Young India. "Harijan" was the word Gandhi used for the "untouchables." His translation meant "children of God."

Some of the editorials and articles would have tramendous influence.16 The newspaper had widespread circulation.

In the 1940s, Harijan appeared in a total of twelve editions in nine languages; and, in addition, Gandhi's most important articles were reprinted the next day in all the newspapers of India.

A large number of Gandhi's articles dealt with the Indian community and the establishment of a self-sufficient village. With self-sufficiency, the Indian people would rely more on one another for goods and services. This would eliminate the need for British influence and manufactured goods. Depending on the Indian people for revenue and resources, the British government disliked the idea of self-rule.

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It is a complete republic, independent of its neighbors for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many other wants in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle. recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding...tobacco, opium, and the like. The village will maintain a village theater, school and public hall. It will have its own water works ensuring clean supply. Education will be completely compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on a cooperative basis...17

Gandhi received a large amount of mail in response to what appeared in his weekly journals. His daily post averaged a hundred letters. He answered about ten of them himself by hand, dictated the replies to some, and instructed his secretaries how to answer others. All communication was answered. On numerous occasions, when the correspondent did not object, Gandhi replied in his weekly issue of the Harijan. His contributions to the journal required two days of solid work. These articles were also written by hand and were very rarely dictated.

In February 1947, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that the British would leave India by June 1948. Although there remained several key issues for Free India to address, Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence had ended.

In his last years, Gandhi's writings appeared less frequently because of his lack of time. Summaries of the speeches he gave in the villages took the place of his articles.

My writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written. I have often said recently that even if all our scripture were to perish, one mantra (word repeated) of Ishopanishad was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism, but even that one verse will be on no avail if there is no one to live it. Even so, what I have said and written is useful only to the extent that it has helped you to assimilate the great principles of truth and ahimsa. If you have not assimilated them, then my writings will be of no use to you. 1?

On the evening of January 30, 1948, Nathuram Godse, a young Braham extremist, approached Gandhi in New Delhi. Godse believed that Gandhi had weakened India by befriending Muslims. As the Mahatma arrived for prayers, Godse fired three shots and killed the Indian religious and political leader. Gandhi's last words translated mean, "Oh God."

CHURCHILL

He nad a stout heart, an audacious spirit, colossal ambition, a late-maturing but massive brain from which elements of genius cannot be excluded, a sharp sword, and he was soon to fashion himself a valuable and rewarding pen, which was in the next few years, combined with his thirst for adventure, to liberate him from the thraldom of penury and open all doors during the seventy years that lay ahead. 19

Winston Churchill, the British statesman and national leader, combined his military experience, journalistic activities and political aspirations to finally become the Prime Minister of Great Britain. But his early journalistic writings were the base on which he gained influence and won fame with the British people. He had a single motivation behind writing news reports. Churchill confessed openly that by these articles, he wanted to present his personality before the electorate and lay a foundation for a future political career.20 This was utmost on his mind.

Churchill wrote for several newspapers including the Daily Graphic, 1895; Daily Telegraph, 1896-1897; and the Morning Post, 1899. Acting as the special correspondent for these papers, Churchill designed his articles to draw attention to himself and set him apart from his father's fame.

College, Churchill prepared for a career in the military.

After his father's death in 1895, he entered the 4th Hussars.

With a rather long period before his regiment would be transferred, Churchill investigated the possibility of joining in the conflict waging in Cuba between the Spanish and the rebels.

with financial support limited, Churchill arranged to make the trip, following Lord Randolph's example, with assistance from the <u>Daily Graphic</u>. The London newspaper commissioned him to write a series of articles from Cuba. The paper was willing to pay \$24.30 a letter. During this experience in Cuba, Churchill brought into play the dual functions of his pen and sword. The combination proved lucrative and glorious in the years to come.20 "From that moment on, he was a writer as well as a soldier, and the two professions complimented each other admirably."22

Churchill started writing despatches, and long before he reached the front in Cuba he had some exciting news for his first despatch to the <u>Daily Graphic</u>.

As far as Colon, the journey is safe, but thenceforward the country is much disturbed... At Santa Domingo a pilot engine and an armoured car are added to the train, as the rebels often indulge in target practicefrom a respectable distance. In the car rides the escort, the passengers being permitted the privilege of using the ordinary compartments. When we reached this place the line thence to Santa Clara had just been out, and the traffic had to go round by Cruces, thus causing a great delay. On arrival there it was announced that the train which preceded ours, and in which was General Valdes, had been thrown off the line a few miles beyond Santa Domingo, and that fifteen of its occupants had been severely injured...23

The war correspondent spent several months writing despatches on the Cuban War of Independence for the Graphic. He saw military action while serving with Spanish forces attached to the 31st Punjab Infantry and on his twenty-first birthday, fell under enemy fire for the first time.

As a journalist, he confronted difficulty in expressing a true picture without showing partiality to either side.

He couldn't overly criticize the Spaniards who were responsible for his food, shelter and safety. On the other hand, Churchill formed a natural sympathy for the Cubans who were trying to shake off an oppressor. He also acquired a distaste for some of the actions of the colonial administrators. He saw "the demand for independence is national and unanimous."24

Returning from Cuba, Churchill received a check from the <u>Daily Graphic</u> for twenty-five guieneas for the five articles used in the paper. He had filed a large number of despatches and his editor liked them. In addition to the money he received, and almost as important, Churchill enjoyed the reputation of a man who had actually been under fire.25

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The despatches in the <u>Daily Graphic</u> were Churchill's first exercise of the pen used to gain attention and political influence.

Open his return, Churchill found his regiment preparing for duty in India. There was, however, another nine months before the regiment was due to embark. Churchill arranged to serve with another field force sent to deal with the disturbances. The only condition was he find a newspaper to commission him to serve as an officer correspondent. Recognizing that his written reports helped him to gain prominence, Churchill sew the situation as advantageous for his political career. He received commissions with the Pioneer of Allahabad and the London Daily Telegraph. The Telegraph agreed to pay five pounds per column for the privilege of publishing his despatches. Churchill served as soldier and journalist with the Malakand Field Force in 1897.

They were good days, and I do mot know who enjoyed himself the more-Lieut. Churchill of the Hussars, or Mr. Churchill, correspondent of the Pioneer newspaper, Allahabad and the Daily Telegraph, London. His newspaper work was as good as his soldiering.26

Churchill's arrangement with the <u>Telegraph</u> was a result of his mother's efforts to secure him a commission with a newspaper. She was fortunate with the <u>Daily Telegraph</u>, but was able to receive only half the fee Churchill had expected.

He wanted the arrangement to be ten or fifteen pounds per each article.

The experiences with the <u>Daily Telegraph</u> help reveal Churchill's political ambitions and his method of gaining influence through the use of the written word. The <u>Telegraph</u> published the first of fifteen "letters" from Churchill on October 6. Two difficulties appeared with their publication:

- 1) Churchill's pay was considerably less than expected and
- 2) his name was withheld because it was thought he would receive punishment if he was known as the author.

The correspondent wrote the despatches with the intent of having his name read in order to lay a foundation for a political career. He wrote to his mother about these problems.

I saw in the week's papers that arrived yesterday the first three of my letters to the Daily Telegraph. I will not conceal my disappointment at their not being signed. I had written them with the design, a design which took form as the correspondence advanced of bringing my personality before the electorate. I had hoped that some political advantage might have accrued ... As to getting into trouble with the authorities. I am just as responsible now that they are not signed as if they had been. . As I am deprived of all satisfaction on this account, I mean to solace myself financially. I will not accept less than ten pounds a letter and I shall return any check for a less sum. I particularly asked for that amount ... Correspondents from the theatre of war who pay their own expenses are entitled to special rates for copy. I will not take less than 150 pounds for the series.27

Churchill's articles for the <u>Pioneer</u> newspaper included five stories on the Cuban revolt. The action was coming to a head with some American intervention. Churchill had to base these articles on his experiences eighteen months before when he was in Cuba. His agreement for the <u>Pioneer</u> included a cable of 300 words a day. Churchill hoped his despatches would attract attention and promote his political career.

In 1898, he departed on his third campaign on a third continent. He was in Cairo in August and in a month reached the battle-front. He was attached to Sir Herbert Kitchener's Nile Expeditionary Force. Churchill was appointed correspondent by the Morning Post for this assignment. His rate of pay was fifteen pounds a column. His reports tended to criticize the leadership of the expedition. In particular, the account of the charge of the Eventy-first Lancers at Omdurman was critical and drew attention to Kitchener and Churchill. The treatment of the enemy also received several negative comments.

During the passage to London from the Nile Campaign, Churchill made the decision to resign his military commission and actively pursue a career in politics. In England, he discovered himself the center of attention which was a result of his accounts of the calvary charge that appeared in the Post. His journalistic efforts had earned him much

more than his military service. He still had to depend on an allowance from his mother and after a great deal of pondering, he decided to leave the army. He would make writing his career.28

Although his connection with the Morning Post afforded him greater publicity than other young politicians, Churchill was unsuccessful in his bid for a seat in Parliament. He was defeated in an election at Oldham.

Putting the loss behind him, Churchill agreed to act as a correspondent for the Morning Post in reporting the South African War. His commission was 250 pounds a month, all expenses paid. This contract was probably the most lucrative one any newspaper correspondent received up to this point. In general, it served to increase the amount of journalists' salaries.29

Churchill sailed for South Africa to report the Boer War in October, 1899. He had not reached the age of 25 but was making his fourth major trip to see action and report on it. Two weeks after Churchill's arrival, he was captured by the Boers. This was the opportunity that he would use to launch his political carser. "It was to place him in a position of unparalleled popularity with the British public as the hero of the day. "30

At the time of his capture, he was acting as a civilian helping to rescue an ambushed armoured train. His escape from

the Boers brought him fame. Millions of Englishmen knew his name and a career in public life was assured.

The circumstances and the escape that followed won him renown that he could not have bought for all the diamonds in the Rand, nor yet have gained in a dozen years in politics. 31

The published account of Churchill's capture produced a sensation in England. While the war was not going well, the public longed for a hero. Churchill became that hero. As he continued to file absorbing despatches to the Morning Post, Churchill's reputation grew rather than diminished.

Using the fame acquired in the Boer War, Churchill returned home to contest the khaki election of 1900. He was approached by eleven different constituencies but returned to Oldham as "The Conquering Hero". He received a majority of 222 votes.

Churchill continued to build on his career by holding offices in the British government. His newspaper writing ceased but he used books and speeched to foster political support. In May 1940, Churchill became the Prime Minister of Great Britain. His political position and power was achieved largely through his writings for newspapers early in his career.

CONCLUSION

Although Gandhi and Churchill had different personal reasons, both used the press as a means of gaining political influence and power.

These journals helped me... to some extent to remain at peace with myself, for whilst immediate resort to civil disobedience was out of the question, they enabled me freely to ventilate my views and to put heart into the people. (Gandhi) 32

He was ardent for distinction. How could he ever hope for advancement without prestige? Much though he honoured and treasured his father's memory, he did not want to trade on it...He sought fame and glory so that he could lay aside his sword, and seize the pen with which he could liberate himself from financial thraldom. (Churchill) 33

Gandhi's formation of <u>Indian Opinion</u>, <u>Young India</u>, and <u>Harijan</u> contributed to the nonviolent noncooperation movement he introduced to the Indian people. He presented several reforms and made criticisms through the editorials he wrote. His newspapers presented grievances and aided in securing support for his ideas.

Churchill used the press to set himself apart from his father and other political leaders. He wanted to get his name before the voting public. His journal articles assisted him in acquiring some fame, especially with his accounts of his capture and escape during the Boer War.

Both leaders encountered circumstances that could have altered the method of journalism as a means or base in seeking political influence. Gandhi spent a great deal of time in prison because of the words he wrote and published. Similiarly, Churchill came under enemy fire several times while reporting for a newspaper. Each recognized how influential the written word is and were willing to accept the consequences. Both were willing to contribute money, time and energy in the production of the journals for the political influence they could gain.

Churchill and Gandhi combined several roles to become significant leaders in their countries. Churchill developed his political ideas from his family, his involvement in the military and through his war correspondent experiences. Gandhi combined his religious beliefs with his background in law and his political ideas to become one of the most important leaders in India. He formed three major newspapers to serve as a medium to present his doctrine to the people.

But their journalism was the base for their rise to influence and power in the political arena. They are valid examples of two individuals who used the pen early in their careers to gain political power. With this strength, they both went on to become national leaders and shape international politics.

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