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## **THINKING BLACK IN THE BLITZ: HAROLD MOODY, THE LEAGUE OF COLOURED PEOPLES AND ITS SHIFT OF PAN-AFRICAN IDEAS IN SECOND WORLD WAR LONDON**

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**DOSSIÊ**  
**Internacionalismo e história global**

## **ABSTRACT**

London, as the capital of the British Empire, was the centre for imperial structures and networks in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The city enabled and regulated the transport of people, ideas and wealth. Similarly, it offered space for the development of ideas and became a venue for the critique of colonialism. This article examines how the London-based Black pressure group League of Coloured Peoples shifted its political vision from moderate reforms for equal rights for all inhabitants of the British Empire towards Pan-African forms of independence beyond the concept of independent nation states for British Colonies in Africa and the West Indies during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath.

## **KEYWORDS**

London. Pan-Africanism. League of Coloured Peoples.

London, the capital of the British Empire, was the centre for imperial structures and networks in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The city enabled and regulated the transport of people, ideas and wealth, while offering space for the development of political ideas and, as the US-American historian Marc Matera noted, “the resources for the creation of a rich array of subaltern networks of the colonised” (MATERA, 2015, p. 2). Throughout the 1930s and the time of the Second World War, London became a “junction box” (DUFFIELD, 1981, p. 35) for Black colonial activists, remaining a venue for critique of colonialism. In this hub of Black Internationalism, ideas were discussed during the Second World War as to what a post-war world without an Empire might look like. The League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), which was one of the most influential groups of the lively scene of Black pressure groups residing in London at the time had advocated in the interwar period for a liberal, reformed Empire without racial discrimination and with expanded civil rights, became formulated increasingly sharp criticism of colonial oppression and racism.

This article examines the shift of political ideas of the LCP during the Second World War. It looks at how the group’s political stance shifted towards anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism that argued for a fundamental restructuring of global power relations, functioning beyond the demarcation lines of conservatism and Marxism, but was its own manifestation of Black Internationalism.

This study commences with an overview of the historiography and continues to explain the methodological approach. This is followed by a short introduction of the LCP. It investigates how the LCP navigated its political work through wartime conditions. This paper concludes with the part the LCP played in the preparations for the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945 and the formation of the vision of Black internationalism. It will point out the shift of its political vision from moderate reforms for equal rights for all inhabitants of the British Empire towards Pan-African forms of independence beyond the concept of independent nation states for British Colonies in Africa and the West Indies during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath.

This work is intended as a contribution to what is commonly described as “New Imperial History”. Around the turn of the millennium, historians, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars such as Catherine Hall, Bill Schwarz and Wendy Webster have contributed to decisively question the dichotomy between “metropolis” and “colony” (HALL, 2006; SCHWARZ, 2003; WEBSTER, 1998; COOPER, 2005). They conclude that Britain’s history cannot be separated from that of its overseas possessions but was strongly influenced by colonialism and interactions between overseas territories and metropolises should receive greater attention (COOPER, 2005, p. 43). The New Imperial History has also expanded the historiography of the British Empire, which had hitherto been dominated by politics and economics, to include categories such as culture, race, gender, and sexuality (HOWE, 2010).

Furthermore, this paper connects with the relatively recent academic debate on a Global Urban History, which focuses on the reciprocity of global developments and local, space-related practices. In his study of Paris in the interwar period, Michael Goebel examines the administrative centre of the French Empire as a “locus of resistance to the Empire, serving as a meeting point of intellectuals, artists, revolutionaries, and movements for colonial freedom” (GOEBEL, 2015, p. 2). Marc Matera has applied the anti-imperialist metropolis approach to interwar London, noting that it brought together “people from diverse colonial settings”, who “exchanged ideas and devised plans for a transformed global order” (MATERA, 2015, p. 3). He chronicles how social relations

and London as a city have shaped forms of Black Internationalism. This “Black London” has inevitably also shaped the LCP that has operated within it. Matera’s study focuses on social relations and culture in the inter-war and the immediate post-war period. This paper seeks to add that it is particularly worthwhile to examine the war years in relation to the LCP, as the grouping transformed its political stance during the war years and experienced a brief springtime of Pan-Africanism. Furthermore, Matera argues that most of the visions of a world without colonialism developed in London in the 1930s were not pleas for independent nation states, but rather various forms of a — sometimes heavily — revised system of colonial Empires or federal forms of independence (MATERA, 2015, p. 2-3).

The political theorist Adom Getachew in her already influential 2019 study calls this “worldmaking”: Notable anti-colonialists, among whom she counts George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah in particular in the 1940s, would not only have fought for a right to self-determination and the establishment of new nation-states, but would have envisaged new forms of independence (GETACHEW, 2019, p. 2). According to Getachew, they were aware that the world they lived in was shaped by hierarchies anchored in colonialism and racism, whose structures went so deep, even formal independence would be a precarious achievement if the deeper laying economic, racial, and political hierarchies established through the global imperial system would not be broken, as newly independent territories would risk to simply reproduce the global power structures that were established during colonialism. Therefore, anticolonial thinkers aimed to establish new power structures and establish a counterweight to the global imperial powers. The politics of self-determination, she argues, sought much more than national sovereignty, they pursued a universal project of creating a new international system through decolonisation (GETACHEW, 2019, p. 2-8, 72-73). This fits the shift of political ideas of the LCP, which adopted its own form of Pan-Africanism during the years of the Second World War.

Additionally, this paper is informed by aspects of the New History of Ideas, which calls for the investigation of ideas as not entities detached from social contexts, but rather emphasises the complex conditions between the world of ideas and the social world (BEVIR, 2002; BÖDEKER, 2002). Ideas influence the actions of historical actors, whose actions in turn reflect the underlying ideas and systems of thought, which have an impact on ideas (LUTZ, 2006). Ideas and concepts of order must therefore be consistently embedded in the specific contexts, the life-worlds, and experiences of the actors, in which they are expressed (ROSA, 1994; BURROW, 2006). Applied to the LCP in the Second World War, this means that the transformation of the group’s political ideas was linked to its many interactions with the social fabric of “Black London”.

Until the end of the last century, the history of Black people in Britain was largely neglected in British historiography, works such as Peter Fryer’s *Staying Power* represented an exception (FRYER, 1984). In recent years there has been a surge in historiography on how race, the British Empire and resistance to it have helped to shape the understanding of Britain, and indeed London as a city, of which Matera was maybe the most prominent one (e.g. HOWE, 1993; ADI, 1998; DERRICK, 2008; JAMES, 2015; MALOBA, 2018; SHERWOOD, 2019; KILLINGRAY, 2003; RUSH, 2002; POLSGROVE, 2009; WHITALL, 2012; UMOREN, 2018; GOPAL, 2019). The most important recent essays on the LCP come from historians, such as David Killingray and Anne Spry Rush, who have built on and further developed the early literature on the LCP. Killingray illuminates the influence of Christian faith on the activities of pious

Moody and his LCP. In doing so, he examines the religious dimension of Black British history, which has received yet little attention (KILLINGARY, 2003). Rush, on the other hand, analyses the LCP's efforts to claim a Black British identity (RUSH, 2002). Both build on a handful of earlier studies, such as the largely uncritical illumination of the grouping by Moody's personal pastor and close friend David Vaughan (VAUGHAN, 1950). Other works written in the first two decades after Moody's death pay particular attention to the aspect of racial understanding in Britain. The anthropological studies of Kenneth Little and the academic and activist St Clair Drake, who investigate race relations in Britain analyse Harold Moody's effort in that department and deliver an early academic account of the group (LITTLE, 1948; DRAKE, 1954). Similarly, the introduction by Roderick J. Macdonald, who published a collected volume of the LCP's journal *The Keys* in the USA in 1976, after publishing a retrospective on Moody 25 years after the latter's death, elaborates on Moody's commitment to the Black population of Britain and the relationship between the LCP and wider Pan-Africanist groups in London in the 1930s and 1940s (MACDONALD, 1973, 1976). Immanuel Geiss in his classic overview of Pan-Africanism devoted attention to Moody as well, painting him as a conservative counterpart of the London-based Trinidadian Marxist George Padmore (GEISS, 1968). This might partly be based on his source material. Geiss had access to the personal papers of Lapido Solanke, the founder of the West African Students' Union (WASU), which were still in London at the time of Geiss' research, while today they are at the University of Lagos and unfortunately only seldom considered (GEISS, 1968, p. 457; ONUZO, 2018, p. 278). However, Geiss could not examine the records of the British government records, especially the Colonial Office and its lively correspondence with Moody, as they were not yet released in 1963, which paint him as less close to the British government as earlier works stated. Takehiko Ochiai, in an essay first published in Japanese in 1994 and translated into English in 2019, drawing on these early works on Moody, compares the LCP and the WASU, concluding that the LCP would have been mostly devoted to improving race relations, and left anticolonial politics to other Black groups in London such as the WASU (OCHIAI, 2019, p. 23-24). The key data on Moody and the LCP are also reproduced in the biographical notes by Marika Sherwood and Hakim Adi in their collection of biographical essays of Pan-African personalities (ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003). This article argues that the League of Coloured Peoples started to develop its own form of Pan-Africanism in the late 1930s and the 1940s, that was more multi-faceted than could be captured in the classic palette of political positioning from radical-left, liberal-reformist to conservative, and is therefore worth reconsidering.

The term "thinking Black" is used in relation to the British historian Rob Waters' monograph with the same title, in which he argues that in Britain between the 1960s and 1980s, in face of persistent discrimination, racial minorities campaigned to extend the concept of Britishness within the categories of race and gender. He describes the history of activists, who tried to turn the growing self-confidence of Black minorities in Britain into a functional and powerful political movement. Waters cites the fight against racism, which they saw as a top-down structuring force in British society and politics, as the activists' main objective. For British society to transform itself, it must begin with "thinking Black", they argued, recognising how oppression based on skin colour has historically grown out of colonialism and continues to structure social and political life (WATERS, 2019, p. 3). This article takes up Waters' concept and extends its temporal applicability. It is argued here that Waters' concept can also be applied to the period before the Windrush moment in 1948 and the Second World War, to point out that



from the interwar period onwards, there existed a politically powerful scene of Black pressure groups in Britain that saw racial discrimination as a consequence of British colonialism and therefore organized and campaigned for structural change.

The LCP, as well as other 1940s London Black social progress groups are described here as Pan-African organisations. Most definitions of “Pan-Africanism” begin by noting how difficult it is to describe the term precisely, as it has had varying meanings at historically and geographically different times. This paper applies the British historian Hakim Adi’s definition from his recent review of the history of Pan-Africanism, in which he states:

Pan-Africanism is concerned with the social, economic, cultural and political emancipation of African peoples, including those of the African diaspora. What underlies the manifold visions and approaches of Pan-Africanism and Pan-Africanists is a belief in the unity, common history and common purpose of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora and the notion that their destinies are interconnected (ADI, 2018, p. 2).

The examined period is focuses on the years 1939-1947. The outbreak of the Second World War changed the conditions of political work for London-based people, who were engaged in the abolition or reform of the Empire, through repression and scarcity of resources. In the colonies the war acted as a catalyst for independence movements. This was reflected in London, where discussions were held in the diplomatic quarters and corridors of Whitehall about the future of colonialism, although Black people were not given a seat at the official negotiation tables. Consequently, they formulated their own ideas for a post-war world without Empire in the informal rooms of “Black London” (MATERA, 2015, p. 6). In the immediate post-war period, discussions flared up again in Britain about Pan-African ideas and their implementation, which had been negotiated off the record during the war at the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress. From 1946 onwards, the site of political anticolonial struggles shifted from the metropolis to Africa itself as a venue. As part of this reorientation, Jomo Kenyatta, future president of Kenya, left Britain for East Africa in 1946, and Kwame Nkrumah, future leader of Ghana, for West Africa in 1947, with other activists moving from London to various cities in Britain. For the LCP, the death of its founder and engine, Harold Moody, after he fell ill on a fundraising-tour to the Caribbean in 1947 led to a sharp decline in activities and eventual loss of its political influence (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 67). Although there is a post-1947 version of the LCP’s history, the changes of that year lend themselves as an end to the time frame of this study.

## **BLACK LONDON AND THE LEAGUE OF COLOURED PEOPLES: FROM “INTERRACIAL HARMONY” TO COLONIAL CRITIQUE**

Harold Moody founded the LCP in 1931. Born in 1882 in Jamaica, he moved to London and earned his doctorate in medicine from King’s College London in 1912, at the top of his class. When he was denied working as a doctor in public hospitals in Britain because he was Black, he opened his own private practice in Peckham, South

London (RUSH, 2002, p. 365; VAUGHAN, 1950, p. 30-31). The middle-class physician was opposed to the colour bar, as well as other oppressive forms of discrimination against Black people in Britain. After some involvement in the anti-racist organisation the Friends House Service Council, he decided to establish his own organisation (RUSH, 2002, p. 365; VAUGHAN, 1950, p. 54-55; MACDONALD, 1973, p. 292).

By the end of the 1930s, the membership of the LCP had grown to around 500 members, which thereafter remained constant until Moody's death (MOODY, July 1933). The membership of the LCP consisted mainly of Black students and intellectuals from British Overseas Territories, and white Britons from Christian groups and missionary societies (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 62; ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 134). By statute, all LCP board members were people of colour, mostly from the West Indies, and occasionally from Africa or Asia (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 62; RUSH, 2002, p. 365; GEISS, 1968, p. 267). Moody was an ardent Christian and board member of several religious organisations in London, such as the Colonial Missionary Society, to whose members he promoted the LCP as a charity organisation and which he presided from 1943 onwards. His Christian faith greatly influenced his moral and political beliefs. All people, he was convinced, were equal before God, and racial prejudice was therefore un-Christian. On most Sundays, Moody delivered a sermon in the Congregational church, and meetings of the LCP were often concluded by a spiritual message by Moody (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 56-57).

The LCP's aim was to "protect the social, educational, economic and political interests" of Black people, work for the "welfare of coloured peoples in all parts of the world" and promote "interracial harmony" within Britain (ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 135). This was publicised and promoted through the title of the LCP's quarterly published magazine *The Keys*. The magazines' name alludes to a piano, on which the player needs to use white and Black keys in order to create a musical harmony. The LCP claimed that Black and white people must work together for creating social harmony (RUSH, 2002, p. 366). *The Keys* was published uninterruptedly until the beginning of the Second World War, when it was replaced by the *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* which took its place as the group's mouthpiece (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 53). Moody's main advocacy after the organisation was founded in 1931, stood for reforms of the British Empire aimed against racism and for achieving equality for people of all colours. Thus, he called for a new form of citizenship with equal rights for all inhabitants of British territories regardless of the colour of their skin and the creation of what Anne Spry Rush dubbed a "race-blind" Empire (RUSH, 2002, p. 373). This was in contrast to the de facto limited opportunities for Black people in Britain due to the colour bar (RUSH, 2002, p. 365). To counter this, Moody advocated better career opportunities and more senior administrative and government jobs for Black people, the creation of universities, more rights of self-government, and more opportunities for democratic participation for the colonies in Africa and the West Indies. In the editorial of the first edition of *The Keys* in 1933, Moody advocated for changing the Empire by fighting racism and creating more equal opportunities through improved "racial understanding" and increased "goodwill" in the British Empire (MOODY, July 1933).

With its moderate tone and main engagement against the colour bar, the LCP was one of the less radical organisations for Black social progress in 1930s London. It advocated moderate reforms within the British Empire, rather than a fundamental overthrow or anti-capitalist revolution. To achieve his goals, Moody systematically lobbied with the British government and political establishment. To this end, he made



use of the positions and contacts he had through his religious network (MACDONALD, 1973, p. 297; KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 60-61). By drawing the authorities' attention to what he considered injustices against Black people, he would be able to make policy reforms for equal rights for Black people more popular with them. In Moody's eyes, such reforms for more rights and opportunities would not only increase the lives of Black people, but also increase the political stability within the British Empire (MATERA, 2015, p. 38-40). For their reformist approach in criticising the colonial system, the LCP had been criticised by other Black social progress organisations in London such as the anticolonial WASU or the Marxist International African Service Bureau (IASB) as too soft (DERRICK, 2008, p. 310; MACDONALD, 1973, p. 294).

The WASU was founded in 1925 by the Nigerian law student Lapido Solanke in protest against the racist portrayal of the "native" African population at the Empire Exhibition in London in 1924. West Africa was interpreted liberally; Kenya and South Africa were also included. According to its official statutes, the Union was a welfare organization for African students and emigrants in London. Its aim was to improve and facilitate their living situation in the city, for example by supporting newly arrived West Africans in finding accommodation (ADI, 1998, p. 33). However, the organization quickly changed into a platform to vividly discuss alternatives to the imperial world order. Solanke eventually saw the WASU as a "training ground for practical unity and effective cooperation between all West African students" (SOLANKE, 1927, p. 64 *apud* SHERWOOD, 1994, p. 166).

The Pan-African group that most stridently condemned colonialism in interwar London was the International African Service Bureau (IASB). The organization grew out of the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA), a protest group against the Italian invasion of the sovereign African state of Abyssinia. The organization was founded by a group led by West Indian activists George Padmore, Amy Ashwood Garvey, C.L.R. James, Sierra Leonean trade unionist I.T.A Wallace-Johnson and Kenyan activist Jomo Kenyatta. The grouping sought to draw attention to grievances in the colonial Caribbean and Africa and sharply criticized the colonial world order (ADI, 2018, p. 117-120). At the end of the Second World War, the IASB, together with the Pan-African Federation (PAF) that grew from its ranks, was then largely responsible for organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress in Manchester, which is widely considered to be the zenith of Pan-African activity (ADI, 2018, 122-124).

When Moody agreed with the usually more aggressive anticolonialism of the WASU or the IASB, the groups occasionally collaborated from the late 1930s onwards, for instance in shared support for Black strikers in the West Indies' labour unrest or in a shared criticism of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (GEISS, 1968, p. 269; MACDONALD, 1973, p. 299). The invasion of Abyssinia spurred Pan-African protest around the globe, which also affected the LCP. As other Pan-African groups in London sharpened their anticolonial rhetoric, the LCP was put under pressure to match this more critical tone and to not lose any students, who constituted the majority of its membership to radical groups like WASU or the IASB. This was mainly because other Black groups in London were sharpening their anticolonial language (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 64; ADI, 1998, p. 68).

Marxist-influenced Pan-African activists such as George Padmore, C.L.R. James and Desmond Buckle also repeatedly attempted to directly influence the political course of the LCP towards the end of the 1930s, seeking to publish anticolonial articles in *The Keys*, and brandishing fervent votes against British colonialism at LCP events that were a good deal sharper than Moody's plea for imperial reform (RUSH, 2002, p.

367; ADI, 2006, p. 36-37). But it was during the Second World War, that the LCP started working with radical Black British organisations more often and gradually adopted a more and more radical stance towards the British Empire (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 65).

## THE CHARTER FOR COLOURED PEOPLES AND THE LCP'S BLACK INTERNATIONALISM IN WARTIME-LONDON

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the external conditions for political activism in Britain changed due to restrictive war laws, scarcity of resources and restrictions in the circulation of persons and goods. With the “emergency power defence acts” enacted in 1939, public criticism of the government — and thus of colonialism — was criminalised as “sedition” and sanctioned with imprisonment. Mass demonstrations by Black pressure groups, such as the protests against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia organised by the International African Service Bureau and others frequent in the interwar period, were no longer possible (JAMES, 2015, p. 50). The visibility of political actors from the African diaspora in London’s public sphere thus decreased dramatically. However, interwar activists and the groups with which they pursued their political goals did not cease to exist. Pan-African activists were well aware that the African Diaspora and African men in the British colonies were being called upon to fight against fascism and for the democratic freedom of Western Europe, now that Britain was urgently in need of economic support from its colonies for its war effort, while the colonial world would continue to face British oppression (ADI, 2018, p. 122). In fact, Moody capitalised on this position, using the vital support of the colonies for the war effort, the government’s language for the need to fight fascist injustices and racism, and the fear of Communist influence in the colonies as bargaining chips against the British government in his fight against the colour bar (MACDONALD, 1973, p. 304; DRAKE, 1954, p. 80).

Moody was critical of the war out of Christian pacifism, but when his son and daughter registered for the armed forces; he voiced support for the recruitment of people from the British colonies into the British Army as a step towards equality. However, he quickly found an array of criticism of the colour bar in the war, starting with the criticism of commission for Black officers in the armed forces (MOODY, 15. Mar. 1940). The influx of Black wartime workers provided both potential new members for the LCP, and reason to criticise unequal working and housing conditions for Black people in Britain (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 64). In the LCP’s Annual Report for 1941, Moody therefore noted, that the League’s fight “to improve relations between the races” would be “more than ever necessary” (MOODY, 13 Mar. 1942).

However, it was the exclusion of the colonies from the Atlantic Charter that led to the staunchest protest from the LCP. When Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill, together with US-President Franklin D. Roosevelt, proclaimed the Atlantic Charter in 1941, they declared to “restore sovereignty and self-government to those who had been forcibly deprived of them” (NATO, 1941). This proclamation was interpreted as applying to all territories participating in the war, including the British colonies (ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 135-136). In response, the LCP, along with other groups, was pleased to announce that the Caribbean and African colonies could finally look forward to the long-awaited self-government, as the Atlantic Charter would recognise the war efforts of people of African origin (MOODY, 26 Nov. 1941). In response to



this, Churchill hastily contradicted such claims and proclaimed that the Atlantic Charter was not applicable to the colonies. Moody was outraged by this reply and refused to simply let go of the claims for self-government, noting in the group's Annual Report of 1941, that the Atlantic Charter "sets [...] a poser" to colonial people (MOODY, 13 Mar. 1942). Subsequently, the group's agenda shifted towards a more critical view of the British Empire. Moody showed commitment in his protest against the Atlantic Charter and wrote numerous letters to the Colonial Office, the War Office and Churchill, and planned public discussion meetings (MOODY, 27 Apr. 1944). A Foreign Office official called Moody "one of our more persistent critics" in an internal letter to one of his colleagues in 1942 (KEITH, 22 Aug. 1942). Even though the government refused to deviate from its position, Moody had recognised the high potential of mobilisation with the message of anticolonial protest. That the more aggressive tone was well received is also evident in the finances of the organisation. In 1939, when Moody was still advocating moderate reforms towards a colour-blind Empire, the LCP had an income from magazine sales and donations of £211. In 1943, the grouping had an income of £1,273, which can be mainly explained by the increase in donations from £57 in 1939 to £1,022 in 1943 (MACDONALD, 1973 p. 310, MOODY, 15 Mar. 1940; MOODY, 10 Mar. 1944).

In 1943, the LCP developed its own "Charter for Coloured Peoples" (ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 136). It asked for the political, educational, social and economic development of all colonies, "for Imperial Powers to account for their administration to an International body" as well as "full self-government at the earliest possible opportunity" (MOODY, 27 Apr. 1944). This Charter was heavily influenced by Moody's frequent discussions with the Pan-African intellectual George Padmore during the war (GOPAL, 2019, p. 393). In 1942, he published *The White Man's Duty: An Analysis of the Colonial Question in the Light of the Atlantic Charter*. The book's premise was that anticolonial activists should take Churchill and Roosevelt by their word to ask for democracy, which of course meant independence from their colonial overlords. For Padmore, the war offered the ideal prospect to radically reconstitute the world. He later laid out a vision of the idea of independence for the African colonies in the shape of a united Africa of federal territories modelled along the ideal of the Soviet Union in his *How Russia Transformed her Colonial Empire* (WILLIAMS, 2019, p. 531-539). This sheds further light on the importance of London as a city for Black activists critiquing the British Empire. Global ideas for a world without Empire were negotiated and disseminated through the Black intellectual networks of the imperial centre (GOPAL, 2019, p. 394). This was aided by the fact that the membership between Black political groups in London was fluid, with people usually belonging to different groups at the same time, sharing ideas in different organisations simultaneously. In contrast to the 1930s, when activists still fluctuated cosmopolitically between overseas territories, the USA and Great Britain during the war years, they were locally tied to London due to mobility restrictions caused by the war. These travel constraints further intensified the regular exchange between groups and partly aligned political opinions through countless discussions.

Strongly influenced by such radical proposals, in summer 1944, the LCP organised a conference entitled "Peace Charter for Colonial Peoples". This meeting articulated the increasingly vocal demands for increased freedom for the colonies and "an expansive conception of racial unity" (MATERA, 2008, p. 391).

Besides numerous Black social progress organisations and the British government, the French, Dutch, and Belgian exiled governments seated in London were

also invited to develop a universal manifesto for colonies under any rule (ROBINSON, 15 June 1944). During the war, London became the seat of all European governments in exile. During this “London Moment”, with its extraordinarily high concentration of political groups and actors accumulating in especially West London, political ideas for the post-war period were developed by this European political elite (EICHENBERG, 2018, p. 453; CONWAY; GOTOVITCH, 2001, p. 2-4). The exiled governments were unsettled by the invitation and individually questioned the Colonial Office whether accepting the invitation to such a conference was appropriate. After the Colonial Office advised not to get involved with Moody and the LCP, all exiled governments declined their invitation. A letter sent from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office on June 30 of 1944, states: “You may like to know that we have now heard from both the French and the Dutch that they do not propose to send a representative to this meeting” (FALLA, 30 June 1944). In addition, the character of the correspondence with the Colonial Office made it clear that the exile governments did not want to disagree with their host country by participating in a congress not desired by the British government. Since the colonies’ representatives were not given a seat at the official negotiating tables where plans for the post-war world were drafted, they developed their own ideas for a post-war order without colonial rule, whether British, French, Belgian or Dutch, and formulated these post-colonial ideas of order for a world without Empire and federal models of independence within their own channels.

Despite that rejection of invitations, the conference took place and adopted a revised version of the LCP’s 1943 “Charter for Coloured Peoples” (MOODY, 27 July 1944). With a plea for public endorsement Moody sent it to the British government, including Churchill and the Secretary of State, as well as allied governments, the press, and to religious and sympathetic organisations within Britain and abroad. The revised Charter demanded equal “economic, educational, legal and political rights” for people “whatever their colour” and “development of the dependent regions and their people” as well as the creation of “comprehensive plans” (MOODY, 27 July 1944) with a specially assigned budget and time schedules. The economic development, the Charter argued, had to serve the native population of the concerned regions. Reforms in the sector of education should aim at the possibility to complete full educations, including university degrees, in every overseas territory. Further, it asked for a “majority on all law-making bodies” for the “indigenous people of all dependent territories” and “self government at the earliest possible opportunity” (MOODY, 27 July 1944). Finally, it asked for “Imperial Powers [...] to account for their administration [...] to an international body” (MOODY, 27 July 1944).

In the editorial of the 1944 September issue of the *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter*, Moody further stated that the time was ripe for the emancipation of the African population of the British colonies. West African soldiers had been trained as special forces to carry out reconnaissance missions behind Japanese lines in South Asia, while in Britain a famous Black cricketer, Learie Constantine, had not been given a hotel room because of his skin colour, for which the hotel was later convicted in court (RUSH, 2002, p. 376-378). The course of time would speak for itself, and “had the Government followed at the time the advice we tendered on many issues they would have won for themselves many laurels” (MOODY, Sept. 1945). However much the British government may be reluctant to grant more rights to Black people, it would soon be unable to avoid it, Moody confidently claimed. As soon as the global freedom to travel was restored, Moody planned to hold a Pan-African Congress with



delegates from all regions of the world with Black populations to give more support to these demands (MOODY, Sept. 1945). In order to realise those plans, Moody got in touch with the US-American author, activist and intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois. Moody had already been thinking about the idea of a global conference to address the issues of Black people at the end of the 1930s and wanted to hold it in Africa in 1940, but these plans could not materialise due to the outbreak of war (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 65; GEISS, 1968, p. 300). Moody's efforts to convince a broad alliance, including established politics, for his "Charter for the Coloured Peoples" were not as successful as hoped. The Charter resonated mostly within the limited Black press in Britain (ADI, SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 136). However, a growing confidence and self-confidence can be observed among Black intellectuals in wartime London. The concept of Black internationalism was called for by activists, "to not only underpin their vision of global Black unity, but also appeal to the imperial state and public opinion [...] for substantive changes" (MATERA, 2008, p. 389). This is also reflected in an open letter published by Padmore in the *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* the following spring in 1945. The title was *African Peoples Earned Right to Benefit by New Concept* and was signed by representatives of the LCP, IASB, WASU and activists from Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. In the letter, Padmore described how, by contributing to the war in the form of material resources and manpower in Africa, Europe and Asia, the "African peoples had earned the right to benefit from the new concept of international cooperation" (MATERA, 2008, p. 393). Black activists in 1940s London, including those who signed the above-mentioned letter, saw increased international cooperation as an important way to exploit the resources of overseas territories with Black populations.

A further round of discussions was held between LCP, IASB, WASU and trade union representatives from the Caribbean and West Africa, who were coincidentally in London to attend the February 1945 World Confederation of Trade Unions Congress, as well as Black social progress groups from Manchester, to suggest new proposals to be considered at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on International Organisations to be held in San Francisco on 25 April 1945. Based on the LCP's "Charter for the Colonial People", LCP member and journalist Desmond Buckle, heralded by Adi, as the first Black African to join the British Communist Party, helped Moody to outline a new proposition titled *Manifesto in Africa in the Post-War World* (ADI, 2006, p. 36-37; GEISS, 1968, p. 303). Mostly repeating the demands from the previous Charter, it included additional appeals such as the fight against illiteracy in Africa, but also "achievement of full self-government within a definite time limit" (MOODY, Apr. 1945).

This manifesto was sent to the United Nations to be discussed at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on International Organization. However, due to the intervention of the colonial powers within the United Nations, the application was not admitted for discussion. Once again, the manifesto's content was published only in the channels of Black social progress organisations such as those of the LCP, IASB and WASU. Nevertheless, it foreshadowed several of the demands expressed at the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress (MACDONALD, 1973, p. 306; GEISS, 1968, p. 303-304). Most noticeably, the British government perceived these activities as a coherent and growing protest by Black activists in Britain (ROBINSON, 1944). Indeed, in July 1945, the LCP repeated an announcement in the *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* for plans for a Pan-African Congress to be organised with other Black social progress groups such as the Pan-African Federation or the WASU, with representatives expected from

the USA, the West Indies, as well as British territories in Eastern, Western and Southern Africa (MOODY, July 1945).

## IMAGINING A WORLD AFTER EMPIRE: THE LCP AND PAN- AFRICAN VISIONS AT THE 5<sup>TH</sup> PAN-AFRICAN CONGRESS

The 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress, which was held in October 1945 in Manchester is widely seen as the pinnacle of Pan-Africanism, and certainly represents the culmination of Black internationalism that built up in London in the years before. It empowered independence-movements and anticolonial activism all over the Caribbean and Africa (ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 4; GEISS, 1968, p. 316).

Roughly 200 delegates from Africa, the West Indies and Britain participated, W.E.B. Du Bois was honoured with the presidency over the Congress and named “father of Pan-Africanism” by the London-based organisers. Other participants included many of the future leading figures of the independence movements throughout Africa. Not only Nkrumah, future postcolonial leader of Ghana, took part, but future presidents Kenyatta (Kenya) and Hastings Banda (Malawi) were also among the participants. WASU and IASB also participated. Moody, however, did not attend. Killingray attributes this to Moody’s political disagreements with the “Labour Groups” that represented the majority of the Congress participants and their Marxist worldview, as Moody wrote to Du Bois: “I do not want to tie ourselves to any one group either politically or in any other way” (APTHEKER, 1976, p. 66-67, *apud* KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 65).

Despite his absence from the Congress, Moody showed support for its resolutions in early 1946 by publishing them in the *League of Coloured Peoples News Letter* (MOODY, Jan. 1946). The overarching themes of the Congress, as readers of the magazine were informed, were independence from imperialism and strengthened international Black unity (ADI, 2018, p. 125-127; MATERA, 2008, p. 398; GEISS, 1968, p. 316). The main demands of the Congress were listed in two documents: Firstly, the “Declaration to the Imperialist Powers of the World” stated: “[w]e demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far and no further than it is possible in this ‘ONE WORLD’ for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation” (MOODY, Jan. 1946). Secondly, the “Declaration to Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals”, demanded that “the struggle for political power by colonial and subject peoples is the first step towards, and the necessary prerequisite to, complete social, economic and political emancipation”. It ended: “Colonial and Subject Peoples of the World — Unite” (MOODY, Jan. 1946).

The present delegates unanimously approved the resolutions. It is notable that most attendees were Anglophone from British territories in the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa or, although not in large numbers, from the USA, marking the shift of Pan-Africanism towards a political movement in Anglophone Africa and the Caribbean (ADI, 2019, p. 126-127; GEISS, 1968, p. 308-312).

Moody did not live to see decolonisation happen. In 1946, he left London for a fundraising tour for the LCP to Canada, the Caribbean and the USA, to raise money for a Cultural Centre in London, which he also envisaged to serve as the LCP’s official headquarters (KILLINGRAY, 2003, p. 65) In addition to only modest financial success, Moody’s health suffered severely under his restless travels and strenuous efforts. Seriously ill, he was forced to return to London, where he died on 24 April 1947



(VAUGHAN, 1950, p. 137; ADI; SHERWOOD, 2003, p. 137). With Moody's death, the organisation lost its strong presence in public discourse. In effect, it ceased to play a role during the strong period of immigration of Black Caribbeans to Britain, when the equality of Black people in Britain was more actively debated than ever, or during the dissolution of the British Empire, for which the LCP had stepped up its advocacy in Moody's final years.

Despite the beauty of the narrative of a growing anticolonial solidarity, these concepts were in reality short-lived. With a look to India, nationalism as a mode of action became more popular. After the Congress, Pan-Africanism turned into a mass movement in sub-Saharan Africa — which was only possible because many of its participants moved relatively quickly from Britain to the colonies to build up national liberation movements (ADI, 2019, p. 129-130; GEISS, 1968, p. 321-322).

Still, the period following immediately after the 5<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress was an inspiring period in which different and creative ways out of the rule of imperialism were discussed and Pan-African cooperation seemed possible. For a moment, there was a combination of internationalism and anti-imperialism that went beyond anticolonial nationalism. This vision of change for non-national forms of independence, which Getachew dubbed “worldmaking”, had a profound impact on the rather small, but still influential group of black activists and intellectuals in 1940s London, including the league of coloured peoples in the Second World War (GETACHEW, 2019, p. 2). On what Adi called the road “from Ethiopia to Manchester”, the LCP caught on to this “worldmaking” and lived through a brief springtime of Pan-Africanism (ADI, 2019, p. 107). Looking at the transformation of the LCP's political ideas through the Second World War shows that even before the Windrush moment in 1948, black political groups in England had begun to “think black” (WATERS, 2019, p. 3). The LCP developed its very own form of black internationalism that functioned beyond the categories of nation, conservatism and Marxism. Shaped by Christian morality and charity, petty bourgeoisie, a Black British identity, the education in the colonial British school system of many of its members, anti-racism, but also plans to create a world without empire, which emerged especially in the exchange with other Pan-African groups in London. They lived in a world that was largely comprised of empires and were attuned to an internationalist hope for a new world that rejected the violence of warring nations. At times, Black activists took what seemed to be significant steps toward this goal, which went on to inspire future anticolonial movements across the globe and endeavours of Pan-African solidarity in the Black Atlantic.

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