

THE COMINTERN AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM, NATIONALITY AND RACE

THE COMINTERN AND THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF SOUTH AFRICA, CANADA,
AND AUSTRALIA ON QUESTIONS OF IMPERIALISM, NATIONALITY AND RACE,
1919-1943

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2017) Hamilton, Ontario (History)

TITLE: The Comintern and the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and

Australia on Questions of Imperialism, Nationality and Race AUTHOR: Oleksa

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NUMBER OF PAGES: x, 307.

Lay Abstract

In 1919, the Bolshevik Party of Russia created the Communist International, an organization to lead communist parties throughout the world. Through this body, the Bolsheviks and international communists promoted colonial liberation, racial equality, and self-determination of nations. This dissertation uses the examples of the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia to show that each party dealt with these issues differently, saw different levels of intervention from the Communist International, and the severity of this intervention is directly tied to the priorities of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. Also included in this study is a comparative analysis of the tactics of all three parties, including the efforts of individual communists in each nation in developing platforms unique to the local conditions they were facing.

Abstract

In 1919, the Bolshevik Party of Russia formed the Communist International (Comintern) to lead the international communist movement. As part of its efforts, it maintained a strong commitment to supporting colonial liberation, self-determination of nations, and racial equality. Many scholars of the Comintern and the Soviet Union assume that Moscow demanded firm discipline of all member parties and these parties largely followed its lead. But the Comintern was not as monolithic as is often presumed. Colonial affairs frequently were overlooked and European Communist Parties often skirted their commitment to supporting their colonial counterparts. Individual communists took it upon themselves to promote anti-imperialism or racial equality, but their efforts were frequently hampered by the tactical shifts of the Comintern and eventually, the erosion of Moscow's interest. Frequently, the prioritization of certain issues in the Comintern proved to be the most important factor in determining Comintern interference in member parties. This dissertation includes the first comparative analysis of the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada and Australia on issues of anti-imperialism, nationality, and race. In comparing these parties, this study explores the limits of Moscow's control of other Communist Parties, while detailing the similarities and differences in the efforts of these three parties to combat imperialism, support colonial liberation, and fight for national rights and racial equality. This dissertation is the first to detail the Canadian and Australian communism's efforts, sometimes on their own initiative, on anti-imperialism, nationality and racial equality during the interwar period, to provide new conclusions about Comintern intervention in South Africa, and to highlight the prioritization of the

Comintern as each party sees Moscow's intervention on these issues to very different degrees.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the opportunity to have some space to thank the many individuals and institutions which helped make this dissertation a reality. I would like to thank the Department of History at McMaster University. It is here where I found a group of scholars who enabled me to have many sounding boards which helped shape and challenge my approach to this project. Tracy McDonald, my supervisor, has been a fantastic advisor and mentor as I tackled this project and her advice and feedback made this dissertation far better as a result. She frequently challenged me to keep asking questions and encouraged me to follow my own ambitions on this project, allowing me to ensure that it became a project of which I could be proud. I am thankful that I had John Weaver on my committee as without him, there is a good chance that much of the prose in this dissertation would have been unintelligible. I apologize for any grey hairs he has accumulated as a result of reading early drafts. Bonny Ibhawoh always found ways to ask deeper questions to take my chapters to the next level and keep me thinking throughout this process, especially on matters that frequently were overlooked in the history of communism. All three proved to me how pivotal and important having a good committee is in ushering a student through their doctoral program and I will forever be thankful to all three.

I would also like to thank Professors Ian McKay, Ruth Frager, Stephen Streeter, Juanita DeBarros, and Stephen Heathorn, along with all those who attended my departmental talk, for their time, encouragement, book suggestions, and advice. I need to thank my fellow graduate students, especially Andrew Kloiber, Chelsea Barranger, Shay

Sweeney, Scott Johnston, and Jaqui Kirkham, for sitting through dinners and social events where inevitably we would talk about our projects and they would offer advice, suggestions, and support. It would also be remiss if I neglected to thank them for being great friends with whom I hope to stay in touch no matter where our studies and dreams take us.

I had the honour and privilege of presenting parts of this dissertation at multiple conferences. An early version of my first two chapters was presented in front of Pogrankom, an annual meeting of Russianists in Southern Ontario, where I received invaluable feedback and encouragement. Other content was presented at the Canadian Association of Slavists Annual Convention and the Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies Convention. I thank all those who asked a question or posed something further for me to consider. Furthermore, discussions I have had with Lars Lih, Alastair Kocho-Williams, R. Carter Elwood, Ian Thatcher, Michel Beaulieu, and Stuart Macintyre helped me refine some of the ideas presented in the following pages and my meetings with them helped me appreciate the value of my work, but also affirmed that I was on the right path.

I would like to thank the McMaster University Department of History who generously provided financial support which enabled me to undertake my doctoral studies and covered my many research and conference trips. This dissertation was funded in part by an Ontario Graduate Fellowship and the L.R. Wilson Institute for Canadian History.

I would like to thank the staff at Library and Archives Canada who made my visit in June 2015 as smooth and enjoyable as possible. Carol Leadenham and the staff at the

Hoover Institute and the Hoover Library at Stanford University aided me in making sure I was able to see any and all relevant sources in their holdings. The archival staff at the State Library of New South Wales was indispensable in assisting me plan my trip to the archives and making available to me a collection much larger than I initially had imagined I would see. I regret that I was unable to get the name of one particular archivist who would check in frequently, asking me how my research was going each day. His shared excitement in my findings made the whole process that much better. The staffs of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne Archives ensured that my visits were pleasant, efficient, and worthwhile.

I want to thank my father who instilled a strong passion for history in me at a young age and has been supportive of whatever I have wanted to do my entire life. He read many of these chapters in their earliest forms and his feedback helped me clarify much of my analysis. My mother, who unfortunately passed away before the completion of my dissertation, was always there if I needed someone to talk to or a hug to remind me I could get through all of those tough moments one faces while engaging in a doctoral program. Our cats, Luka and Sasha, were very good at telling me which books or sources I should either ignore or prioritize, depending on whether they knocked them off my desk in the middle of the night or not. Finally, I must acknowledge my partner, Andrea, who has been by my side throughout this process and my entire academic career. We have both survived doctoral studies and the support of having someone who understood and sympathized with all of the trials and tribulations related to this journey meant everything to me.

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Declaration of Academic Achievement

Oleksa Drachewych is the sole author of this dissertation.

Introduction

On 5 December 2013, Nelson Mandela passed away, succumbing to a respiratory infection. Mandela had been a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) earlier in his life and many of his political ideas were informed by Marxist ideology.¹ Communism backed the African National Congress (ANC), assisting in its struggle against apartheid. Recent research has confirmed that the SACP led and developed *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the militant form of the ANC's anti-apartheid movement.² In Canada, as civil rights became a prominent feature in politics in the 1960s, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) called for greater respect for Indigenous peoples and Marxist influences can be found in French Canadian separatism and nationalist movements of the period.³ In Australia, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was on the frontline in protesting the White Australia policy following the Second World War, fighting the conservative forces who sought to maintain the policy through to its abolishment in 1966. The CPA was one of the ardent champions of Aboriginal peoples and in the 1960s, helped spur political changes for their benefit.⁴

¹ Stephen Ellis, "Nelson Mandela, the South African Communist Party and the origins of Umkhonto we Sizwe," *Cold War History* 16, no. 1 (2016): 1-2; Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russian and South Africa in the Soviet Era* (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2013), Kindle edition, loc. 6305-6334. Others still suggest he cooperated with many communists and was willing to work with any group that supported African nationalism. Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 67-108; Peter Limb, *Nelson Mandela: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 24-32.

² Stephen Ellis, "Nelson Mandela, the South African Communist Party and the origins of Umkhonto we Sizwe," 1-18; Stephen Ellis, "The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948-1961," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 4 (Dec., 2011): 657-676.

³ Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 183-192.

⁴ Douglas Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945-1960" (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2011), 160-245; Bob Boughton, "The

Coupled with these specific national contexts, much more well-known is the Soviet Union's commitment and support of decolonization and national movements during the Cold War. Nikita Khrushchev, at the United Nations in 1960, spoke of his conviction that the developing world, freed from colonialism, would play an important role economically. Khrushchev also believed that decolonization opened up several possibilities for the Soviet Union and for communism to spread revolution. As part of the battle of ideologies that played out during the Cold War, the Soviet Union supported several independence movements, especially in Africa.⁵

Direct support from the Soviet Union was one half of this story. More widespread was the influence of communism on many nationalist leaders throughout the world, beginning in the interwar period. Well known are the links between Tan Malaka or Ho Chi Minh and the Communist International (Comintern). Though they were not communists, communism influenced Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Herbert Macaulay of Nigeria, and many others. These leaders were delegates at communist front organization events, such as the Congresses of the League Against Imperialism (LAI).⁶

Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Rights 1920-1970," in Robert Hood and Ray Markey ed., *Labour and Community: Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2-4 October 1999* (Wollongong, 1999), 37-46.

⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66-109; Fritz Schatten, *Communism in Africa* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 53-73; George A. Brinkley, "The Soviet Union and the United Nations: The Changing Role of the Developing Countries," *The Review of Politics* 32, no. 1 (Jan., 1970): 91-123; Robert F. Gorman, "Soviet Perspectives on the Prospects for Socialist Development in Africa," *African Affairs* 83, no. 331 (Apr., 1984): 163-187.

⁶ Westad, 66-109.

Through the Comintern, the Bolsheviks developed platforms on anti-imperialism, racial equality, and self-determination of nations. International communism promoted these ideas and established a concerted effort to undermine international imperialism. Though these efforts could be characterized, especially under Stalin's leadership, as mere lip service by Moscow or a cynical attempt by the Soviet Union to gain allies, this conclusion is to some degree irrelevant if not misleading. Individual communists believed and many nationalists were happy to turn to the movement to help realize their dreams.

The Comintern was a significant international organization. Developed as a response to the perceived ideological bankruptcy of the Second International, Vladimir Lenin, the Bolshevik Party, and the Zimmerwald Left created the Comintern.⁷ Anti-imperialism was a key component of its worldview. The Comintern existed from 1919 to 1943 and at one point boasted over seventy member parties throughout the world and a membership of over three million.⁸ The Bolshevik Revolution and the Comintern helped establish communist parties throughout the world, including in Latin America, Asia and Africa. This study considers South Africa, Canada and Australia. Each nation had influential trade union and socialist movements, but the Bolshevik Revolution inspired some on the left in these countries to form communist parties in the early 1920s.

The focus on South Africa, Canada, and Australia may seem out of place for a study that looks at the National, Colonial, and Racial Questions and the Communist

⁷ John Riddell ed., *Founding the Communist International: Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress: March 1919* (New York: Pathfinder: 1987), 21-25. For more, see R. Craig Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁸ Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe eds., *International communism and the Communist International 1919-1943* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 2.

International. By 1919, all three were British dominions, meaning that they were considered to be autonomous, yet part of the British Empire. The Comintern, initially, saw all three as part of the colonial world and assigned all three to the Anglo-American Colonial Group, a subcommittee initially developed by David Ivon Jones of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).⁹ The classification of two of these nations, Canada and Australia, changed over time, eventually being labeled secondary imperialist nations. As a result, they collectively demonstrate shifts in Comintern policy, their effects, and the regional differences. More importantly, Comintern officials deemed the work of these parties as significant enough to necessitate direct intervention to correct some of their party lines or to influence a change of tactics. However, gaps exist in the history of the Comintern and in the histories of these three parties. Comparative analysis allows one to close these gaps and in the process, by building on multiple historiographies, lead to new conclusions and more nuanced insights.

The Comintern as a Monolithic Body

Many early historians of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Union accepted the conclusions of the totalitarian paradigm. Scholars such as Richard Pipes and Martin Malia suggested that Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin aimed to develop a state based on terror and firm control.¹⁰ This orthodoxy has been challenged from the 1970s to the present, with new interpretations spearheaded by Alexander Rabinowitch, Stephen

⁹ See Chapter Three.

¹⁰ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1990); Richard Pipes, "1917 and the Revisionists," *National Interest*, no 31 (1993): 68-79; Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

Cohen, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Lynne Viola, J. Arch Getty, and others.¹¹ Whereas totalitarian approaches to the study of the Soviet Union are no longer considered convincing, the totalitarian approach still endures in Comintern studies. Many scholars argue that the communist parties led by the Comintern were subservient to Moscow.

The monolithism of the Comintern, the overwhelming control of Moscow and Soviet leaders, has been a persistent theme in studies of the Comintern. E.H. Carr, in his seminal works on the Bolshevik Revolution and the history of the Soviet Union during the interwar period, was hesitant to give Moscow complete control over the movement, but determined that the credibility gained from the Bolsheviks, as the only successful party to bring about revolution, and later, Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union, meant many parties and communists were willing to fall into line.¹² Isaac Deutscher asserted that Joseph Stalin slowly turned the Comintern into a monolithic organization, based on Stalin's own vision for the Bolshevik Party, cutting rebellious foreign communists off from their support, undermining Trotskyism, giving little time to ideological discussions, and requiring Comintern platforms to have his approval.¹³ William Chase, in his important work looking at the effect of the Purges on the Comintern, leaned to the side of Comintern control of its members. Though he was hesitant to explicitly state it, he

¹¹ Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004); Stephen Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics & History Since 1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance & Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); J. Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹² Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1919-1923: Volume 3* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 200-205.

¹³ Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 386-413.

suggested that members may have disagreed privately with the Comintern's methods; many still towed Moscow's line as a price for being a part of the movement. Those who disagreed or criticized the Comintern were expelled or purged and movement unity and discipline trumped all.¹⁴ Historians of specific communist parties, especially the British and American, were more definitive. Theodore Draper, in his highly influential work on American communism, contended that the American party was completely under the thrall of Stalinism.¹⁵ A series of works by Harvey Klehr and his colleagues on American communism reinforce that argument.¹⁶ In the British context, Henry Pelling made similar conclusions.¹⁷ Most recently, Silvio Pons maintained that Moscow had full control of the movement as national Parties willingly subordinated themselves to the Bolsheviks.¹⁸ Comintern historiography has borrowed the centre/periphery binary that is referenced frequently in studies of empire; the centre, the Comintern in the Moscow metropole, held complete influence and control over the periphery. Even if there was some back and forth, the back and forth was highly tilted in favour of the centre.¹⁹

¹⁴ William J. Chase, *Enemies With the Gates?: The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934-1939* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 1-36.

¹⁵ Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957).

¹⁶ Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Henry Pelling, "The Early History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-9," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 8 (1958): 41-57.

¹⁸ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917-1991*, trans. Allan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), xv; Silvio Pons, "Response to 'Débat autour de *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917-1991* de Silvio Pons,'" *Monde(s)* 2, no 10 (2016): 177-183.

¹⁹ Pons was one recent example. Pons, *The Global Revolution*, xv. Fredrik Petersson noted it as one method to approach Comintern studies going forward. Fredrik Petersson, "Historiographical Trends and the Comintern – The Communist International (Comintern) and How it has been Interpreted," *CoWoPa – Comintern Working Paper* 8 (2007): 14. Occasionally referenced directly is Catherine Hall. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002). One prominent example is Mikhail Narinsky and Jürgen Rojahn, eds.

Slowly Comintern historians challenged this position. Eric Hobsbawm and Perry Anderson expressed the need for a more balanced view of the Comintern and its ability to control international communism.²⁰ After the opening of the Comintern archives following the fall of the Soviet Union, historians were able to more convincingly contest the idea of the Comintern's total control. Andrew Thorpe, a historian of British communism, contended that Moscow's reach was not infinite and there were many occasions where British communists ignored Comintern orders.²¹ Matthew Worley also questioned the totalitarian nature of the Comintern specifically considering the Third Period (1928-1935). During this period, the Comintern called for a complete break from any cooperation with other leftist forces and communists needed to stand alone as the leaders of the working class. The Third Period could be seen as an abject failure because it alienated much general support for communism while also being an example of the Comintern's overly-centralized control of international communism. Worley asserted that when one looks at the development of individual communist parties during the Third Period, the results are much more mixed, with some experiencing success and others failure. Therefore, according to Worley, local conditions had to play some role and individual parties and communists must have reconsidered Comintern tactics in their

Centre and Periphery: The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1996).

²⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, "Problems of Communist History," *Australian Left Review* 1, no 23 (Feb.-March, 1970): 9-15; Perry Anderson, "Communist Party History," in Raphael Samuel, ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 145-156.

²¹ Andrew Thorpe, "Comintern 'Control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-43," *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 452 (Jun., 1998): 637-662.

home countries.²² Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley made an effort to move the debate further, taking Herman Weber's conclusions on Stalinization and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) as a starting point and seeing if they could be useful in other party situations. Weber argued that the Comintern's control was felt strongly in the German context; though this was also the case in other parties, many articles in the collection suggested Weber's thesis was not applicable to other parties and historians needed to move past assuming the strength of Stalinization and a full discipline to Moscow's whims. Unfortunately, the collection included no consideration of non-Western parties.²³

John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, however, vehemently argued against such "revisionism" suggesting that Moscow was still the determining factor in many of the decisions taken. They also referenced the British party to support their position, and claimed Comintern subordination to be an important part in any national party's evolution during the interwar period. They suggested that Thorpe and Worley, along with others, considered the local to the detriment of the larger context of international communism.²⁴

One of the limitations of these studies is that they focus entirely on the party apparatus and Moscow's influence on that apparatus. By considering only whether a party fell into line or not, these studies neglected the agency of individual communists.

²² Matthew Worley, "Courting Disaster? The Communist International in the Third Period," in Matthew Worley, ed., *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 1-17.

²³ Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley, eds., *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁴ John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, "'Nina Ponomareva's Hats': The New Revisionism, the Communist International, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1930," *Labour/Le Travail* 49 (Spring, 2002): 147-187.

Transnational studies of the Comintern have exposed the limits of Moscow's reach.

Brigitte Studer's *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* discussed the lives and influence of low-level followers of international communism in the Comintern bureaucracy. Some of these individuals affected significant change in tactics or ideology.²⁵ Lisa Kirschenbaum, in her study on communists and the Spanish Civil War, argued that many communists fell in love with communism, and developed solidarity with the movement through shared experiences. Some communists attended the Lenin School or other Soviet educational programmes and many were still able to disagree as they came face to face with the singular vision of Stalinism. These individuals were committed to international communism, not the Soviet Union or the Comintern and therefore, had more agency than many have assumed.²⁶

Other transnational studies have detailed the role of individual communists in certain organizations developed or funded by the Comintern. For example, Fredrik Peterssen, in his study of the LAI, showed the role of Willi Munzenberg in creating the body, but also discussed how certain communists were genuinely interested in undermining imperialism.²⁷ Holger Weiss and Hakim Adi considered different aspects of the Comintern's racial platforms, including discussions of how certain activists, such as James Ford and George Padmore, carved their own paths, at least until the Comintern

²⁵ Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, trans. Dafydd Rees Roberts (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

²⁶ Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁷ Fredrik Petersson, *Willi Munzenberg, the League Against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925-1933* (New York: Edward Mellen Press, 2014).

caught wind of some of their efforts and curbed their freedom to operate, if not outright replacing them with more pliable individuals.²⁸

My study builds on these transnational studies and highlights the agency of individual communists. Many of the transnational studies have looked at one specific sub-organization (The LAI) or a general concept (Pan-Africanism, Anti-Fascism). This study considers both organizations and concepts in examining the National, Colonial and Racial Questions and the Comintern and looks at the Comintern's interaction with the South African, Canadian and Australian Communist Parties. Though this approach maintains use of the centre-periphery binary, it does not presume the Comintern's extensive influence over an individual party. Comintern intervention is a theme touched upon here, but so are instances when individuals set their parties on new paths without the influence of the Comintern. All three parties discussed in this study had members who instituted tactical shifts outside of the direction of the Comintern with significant success which suggests that Moscow did not dictate or formulate all communist party platforms. Furthermore, unlike earlier studies which have commented on the monolithism of the Comintern, the comparative approach allows more substantial conclusions to be made about the nature of Comintern interference and the degree of Comintern control; the Comintern allowed national parties to carve their own paths to a certain degree. Moscow checked in and offered advice to keep parties engaged in issues of importance but national parties ignored feedback, were slow to act, or pressed on with disapproved

²⁸ Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013).

tactics. Only when a party diverged seriously with the Comintern's tactics, or hesitated in correcting its approach, did the Comintern act to bring a party into line through expulsions, criticism and reprimands. In South Africa, the CPSA leadership was purged and replaced, nearly rendering the party ineffective. In Canada, despite CPC leadership at one point describing the Comintern line as Kautskyian and attacking its merits, they were reprimanded lightly and returned to their posts. In Australia, despite some confusion, the CPA generally fell into line with the Comintern's wishes on matters of anti-imperialism, racial equality, and nationality. On some issues, especially in the Canadian and Australian case, the Comintern urged consideration of them, and it took multiple reminders before the parties acted.

The Comintern and Nationality, Colonialism and Self-Determination of Nations

The National and Colonial Questions and the Comintern is still understudied. Despite the increased availability of sources, a general study of the National and Colonial Question and international communism during the interwar years has not appeared. E.H. Carr's series of works remain the most extensive overview of the Comintern's position on these issues.²⁹ Stephen White produced a series of articles reviewing the Bolsheviks' efforts to support "the East" until 1924. White explained why the Bolsheviks turned their attention away from Europe when seeking world revolution and believed Bolshevik leaders were genuine in supporting colonial liberation. However, much like Carr, White could not access the Comintern archives, and thus relied on published works and memoirs

²⁹ Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: Volume 3*, 232-271.

for his analysis.³⁰ The first studies following the opening of the archives added little to our understanding. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew produced an overview of the Comintern, hoping to ask new questions. As part of their volume, they included a chapter on the National and Colonial Question, written by Michael Weiner, exclusively covering the Comintern and China.³¹ Andrew Thorpe and Tim Rees in their edited collection also sought to accomplish the same ends though focused on non-colonial parties, continuing the focus on European affairs and the Communist International.³² The best commentary on the National and Colonial Question under Vladimir Lenin's guidance was by John Riddell in his edited collections of the First Four Comintern Congresses which took place from 1919 to 1922. In these early years, the Comintern established its commitment to anti-imperialism, which all communist parties were required to follow. Riddell placed Vladimir Lenin as a central figure in crafting the original Theses on the National & Colonial Question, and Indian communist M.N. Roy in revising Lenin's Theses.³³ By placing emphasis on the role of Lenin, as leader of the Comintern, and Roy, as a prominent non-Russian communist, Riddell showed how Comintern efforts to promote

³⁰ Stephen White, "Communism and the East: The Baku Congress, 1920," *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (Sep., 1974): 492-514; Stephen White, "Colonial Revolution and the Communist International, 1919-1924," *Science & Society* 40, no. 2 (Summer, 1976): 173-193; Stephen White, "Soviet Russia and the Asian Revolution, 1917-1924," *Review of International Studies* 10, no. 3 (Jul., 1984): 219-232.

³¹ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Michael Weiner, "Comintern in East Asia, 1919-39," in Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 158-190.

³² Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe eds., *International communism and the Communist International 1919-1943* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

³³ John Riddell ed., *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!: Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920*, vol. 1 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2013), 15-88; John Riddell, ed., *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 43-44; John Riddell ed., *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 28-33.

colonial liberation were a prominent consideration of the Bolsheviks and of communists generally as they rose to undermine imperialism.

The National and Colonial Questions and the Third Period have less commentary. John Callaghan explained the importance of China to certain tactical shifts after the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928. The Comintern urged colonial parties to rally around the proletariat and to battle other nationalist groups for leadership of the movement, adopting Third Period tactics. Callaghan argued these new platforms were incoherent, perhaps un-Marxist and set “impossible targets” for colonial parties as they advocated for independence while converting their nation into a communist regime. The Comintern barked orders and blamed colonial Parties if they failed, although some Parties did resist Moscow’s edicts.³⁴

The reason for such limited discussion of the National and Colonial Question may be a result of the Comintern’s perceived Eurocentrism. If the Comintern overwhelmingly focused on European affairs, its commitment to colonial liberation was, therefore, less important. E.H. Carr claimed that the Comintern was always Eurocentric, especially after 1928 when Stalin had consolidated his own position within the Soviet Union. Stalin always had his eye to Europe, outside of the Chinese situation, instead of colonial affairs.³⁵ Silvio Pons agreed. Pons argued that the Communist International’s initial target for world revolution was Europe. Spreading communism to Germany was its first

³⁴ John Callaghan, “Storm Over Asia: Comintern Colonial Policy in the Third Period,” in Matthew Worley, ed., *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 18-37.

³⁵ Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1919-1923: Volume 3*, 69-271, 381-540; Edward Hallett Carr, *The Interregnum: 1923-1924* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 161-251; Edward Hallett Carr, *Socialism in One Country: 1924-1926* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1964); E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern: 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

priority. When that failed, its attention shifted to Great Britain and the Comintern only focused on the Empire and supported colonial liberation to bring it down.³⁶ Former communist Fernando Claudin condemned the Eurocentrism of the Comintern. He suggested that the Comintern had no intention to support colonial liberation and always considered European affairs more important.³⁷ Many diplomatic historians have concluded that the Comintern was a tool of Soviet foreign policy and nothing more, further supporting the position that Moscow always ranked European affairs higher than non-European ones. The softer rhetoric of the Seventh Comintern Congress, held in 1935, came at the same time that the Soviet Union was hoping to court better relations with Great Britain and France and therefore, an attack on imperialism ran counter to its diplomatic aims.³⁸ Many of these historians however focus on Stalin's leadership and his own perceived dislike of the Comintern. When considering Lenin's leadership, some historians have been able to make compelling cases about Moscow's consideration of colonial affairs. For example, Stephen White reasoned that the Comintern did hope to

³⁶ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 118-123. Pons, "Response to Débat," 177-183.

³⁷ Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform, Part One: The Crisis of the Communist International*, translated by Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 260.

³⁸ Donald Priestland affirmed the orthodox view that the Comintern was an extension of Soviet foreign policy upon Stalin's assumption of Soviet leadership. Alastair Kocho-Williams suggested that the development of the Popular Front in 1935 was the moment that the Comintern was brought into line with Soviet diplomacy. Kevin McDermott argued that historians should be cautious of drawing the conclusion that the Comintern, communism and the Soviet Union were all one and the same. He also claimed that Stalin may have been more interested in world revolution than previous historians have suggested. Both Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew's study along with Archie Brown's gave a much deeper analysis of the limits of Comintern's acquiescence to Soviet diplomacy. Kevin McDermott & Jeremy Agnew, 41-80, 94-98; Kevin McDermott, "The history of the Comintern in light of new documents," in *International communism and the Communist International, 1919-1943*, eds. Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 31-40; Archie Brown, *The Rise & Fall of Communism* (Doubleday Canada, 2009), 82-92; Donald Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 124; Alastair Kocho-Williams, *Russian and Soviet Diplomacy, 1900-39* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 139-141; Helmut Gruber, *Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern: International Communism in the Era of Stalin's Ascendancy* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1974), 508-509.

spread revolution to the colonial world, but failed due to its rigidity and inability to consider local conditions.³⁹ Richard Pipes claimed that although the Comintern “concentrated” on Europe, colonies were not “ignored.”⁴⁰ I suggest that while attention to colonial affairs lessened upon Stalin’s rise to power, the Comintern did not ignore colonial affairs, especially as individual communists maintained a strong interest in improving conditions outside of North America and Europe.

Communists also attacked imperialism generally through the interwar period. The Comintern developed the LAI in 1927. Spearheaded by Willi Munzenberg, the LAI acted as a front for communist ideas. The LAI invited prominent nationalist leaders to publicize colonial conditions and nationalist movements, while communists used the League to promote their solutions to imperialism. While tactical shifts caused the LAI to become more insular, turning away non-communists, the period often seen to be most Eurocentric, the Third Period, has been referred to as a golden period of anti-colonialism in Comintern rhetoric. Attacks against imperialism were sharper and better defined against the United States and Great Britain. Several campaigns developed, including a “Hands Off China!” campaign, and concerted efforts to expose German, Japanese and Italian imperialism, owing to their militarism and fascist tendencies.⁴¹

This study takes a middle position. The Eurocentrism of the Comintern cannot be ignored. It permeated everything that it did. Many European communists cared little for

³⁹ Stephen White’s works especially show this. Stephen White, “Communism and the East: The Baku Congress, 1920,” 492-514; Stephen White, “Colonial Revolution and the Communist International, 1919-1924,” 173-193; Stephen White, “Soviet Russia and the Asian Revolution, 1917-1924,” 219-232.

⁴⁰ Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 298-299.

⁴¹ Fredrik Petersson, *Willi Munzenberg, the League Against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925-1933*; Callaghan, 18-37

colonial liberation. In the parties discussed in this study, anti-imperialism was slow to develop for a myriad of reasons including a greater focus on trade unions, general party growth, or a perceived inapplicability of Comintern doctrine in a given nation. But this is not to say there were not genuine anti-imperialists. The CPA, for example, proudly supported many of the campaigns the Comintern developed in the 1930s. Certain members of each party saw value in combatting imperialism within their respective nations. Within the Comintern apparatus, many saw anti-imperialism as an important platform and individual communists, such as Britain's R. Page Arnot and Germany's Willi Munzenberg, sought to raise the profile of international communism's anti-colonialism. Most importantly, regardless of whether the Comintern itself made anti-imperialism its main priority or not, the idea motivated individual communists to fight for colonial liberation and self-determination of nations.

The Comintern and Race

Tied to the issue of colonial liberation was racial equality. Beginning at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, in 1922, the Comintern adopted the "Theses on the Negro Question." Much of historiographical discussion of international communism and race has focused on American communism. This attention is owed to the importance of African American communists in starting discussions on race in the Comintern, attending Lenin Schools, and increasing the Comintern's desire to consider racial issues. Their role, coupled with the United States' rising profile in international affairs as a leading imperial power, made the oppression of African Americans a useful target for the Comintern.

Some African American members of the American Communist Party used the issue to reorient their party to better deal with race. Many of the most prominent studies on communism and race during the interwar period almost exclusively focus on the United States.⁴²

The South African context is the next most developed, thanks to the efforts of historians Sheridan Johns, Allison Drew, Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson.⁴³ The “Negro Question” however was much bigger than just the United States and South Africa. Some historians of Latin America have examined how international communism tackled race in the Caribbean, but with varying levels of detail.⁴⁴ Marc Becker, through his work on Peruvian communist Jose Mariátegui, included Indigenous peoples in the discussion and showed how the Comintern attempted to translate its position on the “Negro Question” to the Indigenous peoples of Peru.⁴⁵ Despite these limited discussions, almost all discussion on the Comintern and race has centred on the black Atlantic. Some

⁴² Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); Philip Sheldon Foner and James Allen, *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History*, Two Volumes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987 and 1991); Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Jacob Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism 1919-1929* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 287-364; Cathy Bergin, ‘Bitter with the Past but Sweet with the Dream’: *Communism in the African American Imaginary: Representations of the Communist Party, 1940-1952* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 16-35.

⁴³ Sheridan Johns, *Raising the Red Flag: The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-1932* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1995); Allison Drew, “The New Line in South Africa: Ideology and Perception in a Very Small Communist Party,” in *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, edited by Matthew Worley (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 337-359; Allison Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution: A Life of Sidney Bunting, 1873-1936* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007); Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns eds., *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930 (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

⁴⁴ For example, Manuel Caballero, *Latin America and the Comintern 1919-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴⁵ Marc Becker, “Mariátegui, the Comintern, and the Indigenous Question in Latin America,” *Science & Society* 70, no. 4 (Oct., 2006): 450-479.

transnational studies have tried to better explain and compare international communism's response to racism. Hakim Adi considered the links between Pan-Africanism and communism during the interwar period generally.⁴⁶ Holger Weiss has written a much needed history of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), an attempt by the Comintern to unite and represent blacks on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁷

The position of international communism on race is a major part of this project. South Africa, Canada, and Australia all had prominent racial minorities. This study integrates the history of the Communist Party of South Africa into the greater context of the Comintern and racial equality. South Africa was a priority for the Comintern as a result of its racial makeup and the ability of the CPSA to promote international communism's platform on race. Canada and Australia's racial issues barely registered within the Comintern. Though Moscow had little to say on the issue, the CPA still developed one of the most progressive positions on racial equality for both Aboriginal peoples and Melanesian peoples. The CPC, however, failed to consider Indigenous peoples in any significant way until the Second World War.

By comparing these three parties and looking at the Comintern's programme for racial equality, the limits of Moscow's reach and interest can be better explained, as can the individual efforts of communists in each region, and within the Comintern apparatus.

⁴⁶ Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Holger Weiss, "Between Moscow and the African Atlantic: The Comintern Network of Negro Workers," *Monde(s)* 2, no. 10 (2016): 89-108.

For example, Max Petrovsky, a British communist in the Comintern bureaucracy, heavily promoted the “Negro Question.” His influence is important in understanding why the Comintern shifted from an orthodox Marxist approach towards race, focusing on class and downplaying racial difference, to calling for self-determination on racial lines in the United States and South Africa, conflating nationality, culture, and race. Furthermore, despite this discussion beginning for South Africa first, Petrovsky and African American communists generalized the concept, making it harder for South African communists to disagree as the Comintern accepted this new formulation. Issues surrounding race also included considerations of nationality and immigrant workers. By giving an overview of the general programme on race that the Comintern approved and by comparing three regions with notable racial minorities, both in terms of Indigenous peoples and in terms of immigrant workers, international communism’s contribution to civil rights and racial equality can be better understood. Communist positions in South Africa, Canada, and Australia informed approaches towards apartheid and civil rights generally in the second half of the Twentieth Century.

National Party Histories and the Comintern

Each national party’s history has its own particular history. Following the opening of the archives, historians of national communist parties took full advantage of the Comintern archives. However, many national party historiographies remain isolated fields. Comparative studies are few and far between and the focus on one party means conclusions are limited by their specificity. Many of these studies also poorly engage with

the histories of other parties or the Comintern itself, failing to consider transnational links between parties. Some historians have pointed out that comparative histories of national parties would be a welcome addition to the field.⁴⁸

The comparative studies that do exist do not do enough. The article collections of Rees and Thorpe and of Worley only posited questions for the comparison of party histories and affirmed the need for further investigation. Worley's collection claimed to perform this appraisal, but outside of his introductory comments, the comparative was left to the reader. Historians who have attempted some degree of comparative analysis have done so in limited ways. For example, historian of the Canadian left, John Manley, compared the American, British and Canadian Communist Parties and their "independent leadership" from Moscow, speaking to the discussion of the monolithism of the Comintern.⁴⁹ While his efforts were laudatory and he articulated well the individuality of certain members, his comparative was somewhat flawed because of the parties he studied. Even if these parties offer a convenient comparative, the parties shared few similarities outside of being English-speaking, Western, and having healthy trade union movements. The British and American parties were of much greater importance to Comintern officials than the Canadian party. They also had larger memberships. The United States and Great Britain were primary imperial powers, both rising to importance in the Soviet ideological worldview by 1928. Canada, as a dominion, was poorly known until the mid-1920s and

⁴⁸ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, xiv. Worley, "Courting Disaster," 15. Fredrik Petersson, "Historiographical Trends and the Comintern," 14. Sabine Dullin and Brigitte Studer outlined new directions of Comintern historiography in the introduction to the *Monde(s)* thematic volume on communism and Transnationality. Sabine Dullin and Brigitte Studer, "Introduction Communisme + transnational: L'équation retrouvée de l'internationalisme (premier xx^e siècle)," *Monde(s)*, no. 10 (Nov., 2016): 9-32.

⁴⁹ John Manley, "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class against Class' in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928-1935," *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (Fall, 2005): 9-49.

Moscow did not interfere in the affairs of the CPC until 1928, when it finally pronounced Canada a secondary imperialist power. Canada's role also increased in importance due to Canadian communist Maurice Spector smuggling certain writings of Trotsky from Moscow to North America and helping start Trotskyism there. Though comparative studies of these three parties highlight these uneven relationships and some commonalities of Moscow's reach, it still, at its core, is an uneven comparison between two parties which were high priorities for the Comintern and one that typically was peripheral, and there was no reason for these parties to otherwise be deemed equal. Historians need to compare parties that should have been more common than not. By comparing three dominions that on paper share many similarities, but were treated differently by Moscow, one can learn much more about the ebbs and flows of Moscow's "iron discipline," the Comintern's priorities, the regional variation in the development of communist platforms, and the agency of local communists.

The Historiography of the South African Communist Party

This study, while also being a response to Comintern historiography, is also a response to certain historiographical arguments unique to each party it explores. The narrative of the Communist Party of South Africa during the interwar period has generally become accepted and of the three parties discussed in this study, it has the most established historiography. Moscow's interference in CPSA affairs was a pivotal moment in the party's history. The Comintern forced the CPSA to implement the "Native Republic Thesis." This Thesis called on the party to support racial self-determination,

supporting black Africans in gaining better rights and living conditions, while also standing against white imperialism. Although some CPSA-supported biographies and writings have been positive on the Native Republic Thesis, many former communists and most historians suggest that it was misguided if not devastating to the CPSA and reflected a textbook example of Comintern interference and ignorance of local conditions, causing damning results. As a result of this negative evaluation, many historians have attempted to determine the genesis of this idea.

Former CPSA member Edward Roux argued that trade unionist James La Guma was to blame. He also suggested that Sidney Bunting, the CPSA leader at the time, believed La Guma was its progenitor as well.⁵⁰ Some historians agreed with Roux's assessment and attributed the concept to La Guma's personal beliefs.⁵¹ Most historians accepted the Comintern's leadership in the development of the Native Republic Thesis and used it as an example of Moscow's limitless reach, and its careless handling of local conditions. The majority of prominent historians of the history of the CPSA including Sheridan Johns, Allison Drew, Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova referenced Nikolai Bukharin as the purveyor of the concept.⁵² Some suggested the Comintern in general developed the concept and do not attribute it to any one person.⁵³

⁵⁰ Edward Roux, *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography* (Johannesburg: Commercial Printing Co., 1944), 88-90.

⁵¹ Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice': Josiah Tshangana Gumede 1867 – 1947, A Biography* (2001), 103; Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), 235-240.

⁵² Allison Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution: A Life of Sidney Bunting, 1873-1936* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 149-151. See also "Introduction," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 12; Allison Drew, "The New Line in South Africa: Ideology and Perception in a Very Small Communist Party," in *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, edited by Matthew

This discussion, however, highlights the need for a transnational and a comparative approach to the CPSA. Many of these historians, until recently, focused only on the CPSA and did not consider the CPSA in conjunction with the Comintern's general racial, national, or anti-imperial policies more broadly. The CPSA has been treated in isolation. Furthermore, while we know more about the history of the party since the opening of the archives, a true reconsideration of the party's history with Comintern sources has only recently been done. Written by Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson and building on their previous collaboration on an important document collection on South African communism, it reaffirmed many of the same arguments they had made there.⁵⁴ While their research is commendable, they continue to maintain the same narrow approach to the study of communism in South Africa, only looking at the party and its relationship with Russia. Missed by these approaches are the transnational links and the greater context of more general discussions in Moscow and their influence.

The Canadian Communist Party and its Historiography

Whereas race was a central issue for the CPSA during the interwar period, the Communist Party of Canada ignored race. Many historians have detailed the CPC's evolution and development from a small party inaugurated at a farm in Guelph in 1921 to a party firmly committed to communism and Stalinism. Issues of nationality, race, and

Worley (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 339-340; Sheridan Johns, *Raising the Red Flag: The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-1932* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1995), 200-201; H.J. Simons & R.E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 389-390; Adi, 58.

⁵³ A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years: The Communist Party of South Africa 1921-1971* (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 63-64; Record, 54-57.

⁵⁴ Filatova & Davidson, *The Hidden Thread*, Chapter 4.

anti-imperialism were peripheral. The earliest and most influential histories of the CPC discussed the party's beginnings and trade union work before detailing how it came under the leadership of Stewart Smith and Tim Buck. Smith and Buck were Stalinists and maintained a firm commitment to the Communist International and the Soviet Union. Their ascension led to the expulsions of Maurice Spector in 1928 and Jack MacDonald in 1931, the intellectual and organizational leaders of the CPC since its formation. This split and the shift in tactics tended to be the prominent theme in the history of the party, and depending on a historian's given ideological outlook, underpinned their evaluation.⁵⁵

Microhistories have looked at nationality in the CPC. Michel Beaulieu detailed the work of the CPC in Thunder Bay and placed considerable emphasis on the role of language groups within the party.⁵⁶ Joan Sangster looked at certain cultural and feminist trends by Ukrainian-Canadian communists.⁵⁷ French Canadians made up the other prominent focus of nationality in the CPC during the interwar period. Historians have explored the attempts of the party to reach and organize French Canadian workers, and the CPC's flirtations with declaring French Canada its own state.⁵⁸ It was not until the 1930s that these efforts bore any fruit and not until the Second World War that the CPC was able to act undeterred by the Comintern on its aims for self-determination for French

⁵⁵ William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada 1919-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party of Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975); Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981); Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988).

⁵⁶ Michel Beaulieu, *Labour at the Lakehead: Ethnicity, Socialism, and Politics, 1900-35* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

⁵⁷ Joan Sangster, "'Robitnytsia,' Ukrainian Communists, and the 'Porcupinism' Debate: Reassessing Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Early Canadian Communism, 1922-1930." *Labour/Le Travail* 56, (Fall, 2005): 51-89.

⁵⁸ For example, Marcel Fournier, *Communisme et Anticommunisme au Quebec (1920-1950)* (Laval: Éditions cooperatives Albert Saint-Martin, 1979).

Canada. The only reference to Indigenous peoples during the interwar period came in the CPC's official party history.⁵⁹

These studies, however, much as the case for South Africa and many other national party histories, did not consider much outside of the immediate Canadian context. Other than Manley's comparative analysis referenced earlier, they treated the CPC in isolation.

The Communist Party of Australia and its Historiography

Studies of the Communist Party of Australia again considered the party in isolation. Alastair Davidson was first to write the general history of the party, but it was written with limited access to party documents.⁶⁰ The first major work to reference the Comintern archives and the complete CPA collection at the State Archives of New South Wales was that by Stuart Macintyre. Macintyre's collective works on Australian communism remain the most substantial discussions on the formation of the party and its later development through the Third Period.⁶¹ His works, along with those by W.B. Brown and Robin Gollan, were the first to give some discussion of Australian efforts to defend foreign workers and Aboriginal peoples.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982), 272.

⁶⁰ Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969).

⁶¹ Stuart Macintyre, "Dealing with Moscow: The Comintern and the Early History of the Communist Party of Australia," *Labour History*, no. 67 (Nov., 1994): 128-143; Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds* (St. Leonard's: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Stuart Macintyre, "The New Line in the Antipodes: Australian Communists and Class Against Class," in Matthew Worley, ed., *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 247-269.

⁶² W.J. Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia: An historical outline – 1890s to 1980s* (Haymarket: Australian Labor Movement History Publications, 1986), 53-59; Robin Gollan,

The historiography of the CPA has been dominated by the focus on trade unionism and the CPA's relationship with the Labor Party. These issues, to be fair, were the main priorities of the party. The CPA's relationship with the Labor Party led to Comintern interference, the only one of the three parties which did not see leadership changes because of disagreements on Comintern tactics for racial equality, nationality, or colonial liberation. As a result of Comintern intervention, the CPA had a significant amount of turnover in its leadership and furthermore, because of the influence of trade unions in Australia, certain former leaders, such as Jock Garden or Jack Kavanaugh could not be easily ignored by the party, despite their expulsion.

The limited attention of CPA histories to racial issues, nationality, or anti-imperialism in the interwar period is curious. The White Australia policy was still in effect, a racial policy that aimed to protect Australian workers from immigrant workers, especially those from Asia, but also affecting Southeastern European workers. Aboriginal peoples had very few rights, if any. These immigrant workers were a significant concern for the party, but their role in the party has generally not been well discussed. More problematically, there has not yet been a full history of the CPA and Aboriginal rights including the interwar period.⁶³ When the CPA's engagement with racial equality is referenced, the Comintern is credited for its impetus. These studies argue that without Moscow's suggestion, the CPA would not have attacked the White Australia policy or

Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955 (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975), 15-17; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 265-274.

⁶³ The closest was that by Bob Boughton but it focused more the Second World War and after. Bob Boughton, "The Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Rights 1920-1970," 37-46. Robert Bozinovski also had some important discussions in his doctoral dissertations. Robert Bozinovski, "The Communist Party of Australia and Proletarian Internationalism, 1928-1935," (PhD diss., Victoria University, 2008).

supported Aboriginal rights.⁶⁴ The historiography has ignored the CPA's campaign for the rights of Melanesian workers.

Organization of this Study

This study fills gaps present in the historiography of the Comintern and each of the national party histories it explores. It also compares the experiences of three communist parties that, at a glance, should have had much more similar experiences than their development suggests. South Africa, Canada and Australia, during the interwar period all had dominion status, meaning they all had some degree of governmental autonomy, but they were still part of the British Empire. Each dominion had to deal with the problem of racial and national minorities or immigration. South Africa had a significant Afrikaaner population along with many Asian workers and a black African and Coloured worker population oppressed by imperial policies and continued limitation of civil rights. In Canada, the French Canadian population and foreign workers, reflected in the significant immigrant party base, with high numbers of Ukrainians, Finns, Jewish and Asian workers, could not be ignored by the CPC. The White Australia policy naturally meant that foreign workers needed to be considered by the CPA with significant Italian, Yugoslav and Greek populations, among others, working in Australian industries. Canada and Australia had Indigenous populations that had few rights and poor living conditions. In Australia, race also played a role with the Melanesian workers in

⁶⁴ For example, Macintyre, *The Reds*, 265. Drew Cottle, "The Colour-line and the Third Period: A Comparative Analysis of American and Australian Communism and the Question of Race, 1928-1934," *American Communist History* 10, no. 2 (2011): 126-131.

Queensland or the Australian mandate of Papua New Guinea. The League of Nations criticized Australia for its treatment of the Indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea, and Melanesian workers had long been used as a cheaper source of labour for many Australian industries.

Each communist party was inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution and all eagerly joined the Comintern. The Comintern advised them throughout their development and interfered in each party's affairs at some point or another. The CPSA, CPC and CPA responded to imperial, national and racial issues differently, with local communists developing their platforms, even if they were influenced by Comintern ideas. Finally, the platforms these parties developed in the interwar period continued past the Second World War and shaped their responses in the second half of the twentieth century when supporting civil rights movements or fighting apartheid.

This study is divided into two sections. The first section provides a reconsideration of the Soviet Union and the Communist International and the National, Colonial and Racial Questions. In doing so, it builds upon transnational scholarship and ties it to an organizational and ideological history of the Comintern on these issues. It also speaks to the monolithism and Eurocentrism of the Comintern. Section one is divided into two chapters. The first chapter details the roots of communism's positions on self-determination of nations and racial equality. Vladimir Lenin and his writings form the nucleus of these ideas, as do the works of other prominent Bolsheviks, including Nikolai Bukharin, and, as an antagonist, Karl Kautsky. These writings underpinned a worldview on imperialism and nationality that the Communist International affirmed at its first two

Congresses in 1919 and 1920. This worldview defined communism as a legitimate partner for nationalist movements and gave it a foothold in the colonial world due to its aims for world revolution and colonial liberation. This chapter also details the earliest considerations of racial equality through to the establishment of the “Theses on the Negro Question” at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922. At this point, while Bolsheviks led the way, individual communists played a significant role in evolving Comintern tactics. Indian communist M.N. Roy and African American communists Claude McKay and Otto Huiswood, among others, played a role and influenced these early positions on anti-imperialism, self-determination, and racial equality.

The second chapter covers the period from 1923 through to the end of the Communist International in 1943. Following Vladimir Lenin’s death, communism placed less attention on colonial affairs, outside of in a handful of areas. The Eurocentrism of the Comintern became a much more significant theme. This is not to say that the Comintern ignored the colonial world, self-determination, or racial equality; while Russian communists frequently turned their attention to other matters, colonial delegates criticized their speeches and the evolution of Comintern policy. At the same time, certain Comintern functionaries and communist party members were pivotal to fundamental shifts in Comintern policy. For example, Harry Haywood, Nikolai Nasanov and Max Petrovsky, members of the Comintern’s Negro Commission, pushed the concept of self-determination on racial lines in 1928, affecting the American and South African parties and their tactics moving forward. This chapter also discusses some of the transnational organizations that the Comintern formed, such as the LAI and the ITUCNW, linking their

histories to the organizational and ideological history of the Comintern on these issues. Here again, the priorities of the Comintern play a prominent role; certain individuals tried to maintain the initial aims of these bodies, even if Moscow grew tired of them.

These first two chapters detail the international context in which national communist parties operated. Each party represents a national communist party that had to navigate these tactical shifts. From the earliest days, they were part of the Anglo-American Secretariat and interacted with one another, yet they did not share the same course of development. The second section of this study is devoted to each of these parties.

The third chapter, the first of the second section, details the history of the Communist Party of South Africa on issues of anti-imperialism, nationality, and racial equality. It explores the role of Sidney Bunting and David Ivon Jones in establishing early positions on racial equality and anti-imperialism which were not initially agreed to by the whole party. Bunting became Party Chairman in 1925 and he ascribed to a traditional Marxist position on race: racial issues could be dealt with if class inequality was eliminated. Bunting's rise to the Party Chairmanship caused the party to shift to supporting black Africans more prominently and led to a swelling in the number of African party members. When James La Guma, a Coloured trade unionist, travelled to Moscow, the Comintern developed the Native Republic Thesis, a platform that demanded the CPSA promote self-determination on racial lines and increase its previously non-existent commitment to colonial liberation. The Comintern always considered South Africa to be a colony. In this chapter, whereas other historians have ignored his role,

outside of his animus towards Bunting at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, I argue that Max Petrovsky, a British communist who was present at every major meeting in Moscow regarding the Native Republic Thesis, was crucial in developing the controversial programme and ensuring its confirmation by the Comintern. The CPSA eventually relented in its obstinacy against the Thesis and the Comintern backed certain members of the CPSA thereby not only forcing Sidney Bunting out, but also causing the party to fracture and its membership to collapse. The party started to rebuild itself by the Second World War and continued to devote great attention to racial issues in South Africa, presaging its later antagonism to apartheid in South Africa.

The fourth chapter details the Communist Party of Canada and its consideration of anti-imperialism and self-determination of nations, along with the absence of any consideration of Indigenous peoples. The party initially failed to reflect on these issues and required prodding from the Comintern to do so. It also had a party membership that skewed heavily towards immigrants and the Comintern repeatedly expressed its desire for more “native-born” English or French Canadian workers to join. The most significant clash came as a result of Canada’s international position. The Comintern defined Canada as a secondary imperial power at the Fourth Comintern Congress. The Comintern enforced this designation on the party after the Sixth Comintern Congress. Therefore, it was improper to discuss Canadian independence, something that the CPC had begun to promote shortly beforehand with Comintern approval. A series of miscommunications and ideological differences led to a yearlong row between the Comintern and CPC members at the Lenin School in the Soviet Union, and the CPC leadership, predominantly

Stewart Smith. The CPC continued to call for Canadian independence and also declared a need for self-determination for French Canada. The Comintern disagreed and intervened and this chapter details this episode and its consequences. These incorrect tactics returned during the Second World War. Meanwhile, the CPC made a handful of comments on Indigenous peoples, and did take a stand on foreign workers. All of these positions are the precursors to later CPC positions in the 1960s and beyond.

The fifth and final chapter details the Communist Party of Australia and its responses to the White Australia policy and Australian imperialism, and its programmes for racial equality for Aboriginal peoples and Melanesian workers. Initially, during the 1920s, the impetus to attack the White Australia policy came entirely from Moscow. The party focused primarily on trade unions and affiliation with the Australian Labor Party. Moscow's suggestions underpinned many of the earlier actions of the party, including potentially the first mentions of fighting for Aboriginal peoples' rights in 1931. Afterward, the party, on its own accord, detailed the plight of Aboriginal peoples into the Second World War. Tom Wright, a CPA member who had sat on Comintern secretariats discussing these issues, spearheaded the "New Deal for Aborigines" and detailed a progressive policy for respecting Aboriginal peoples. Related to these programmes was a growing attention given to foreign workers and Melanesian workers. One moment that frequently is ignored in the party history, but is illuminating in a comparative context is the Australian response to the Comintern's designation of Australia as a secondary imperialist power. The CPA acquiesced with little to no disagreement. Furthermore, as a result of this designation, the CPA turned its attention to Melanesian workers as colonized

peoples and to events in Papua New Guinea. In this chapter, I argue that the CPA was the Comintern's willing partner on national, colonial and racial issues, happily following its lead, while occasionally developing its own tactics, as seen in the programmes for Aboriginal rights or Melanesian workers. The CPA also had a healthy and strong commitment to supporting colonial liberation campaigns in India and China, and to attacking imperialism in the Pacific and fascism in Spain.

By detailing the histories of these parties with specific attention to anti-imperialism, racial equality, and nationality, and in light of the context of how international communism had resolved to deal with these issues, one can shed light on many of the historiographical controversies mentioned earlier. The Comintern was aware of local conditions. It may not have had a clear indication of how to deal with them. In some cases, Comintern knowledge of a given region was entirely the result of individual communists bringing it to its attention. The Comintern offered advice to each party and showed a willingness to intervene. The level of that intervention was directly tied to the Comintern's priorities and typically occurred following the Sixth Comintern Congress when the rigidity of Comintern policy was given practical importance by Moscow. The CPSA, for example, was important with regards to racial issues, second only to the American context. When a party failed to follow the Comintern's wishes, the Comintern could overhaul the party leadership and force it to fall into line. In the Canadian and Australian contexts, Moscow's concerns were more limited, but when a party deviated too far, as with the Canadian independence episode, the Comintern stepped in, although in a much different way than it did in the CPSA. Finally, although the Comintern, its

Eurocentrism notwithstanding, had a general commitment to anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, self-determination of nations, and racial equality, each national party dealt with these issues differently and with varying levels of commitment. They had some ability to develop their own tactics, outside of Comintern direction. Certain parties had much more flexibility than previously thought. While this study is not the final comment on issues of Comintern monolithism or on the National, Colonial or Racial Questions, it establishes some of the limitations of the totalitarianism of the Comintern, while also detailing the role that these parties had regarding self-determination, anti-imperialism, and racial equality, and explaining the precursor to the Left's involvement in anti-colonial and civil rights movements later in the twentieth century.

Optimistic Beginnings and Early Portents: The Comintern under Lenin and the National, Colonial and Racial Questions

Socialism fragmented at the start of the First World War. With Europe descending into war, many socialist parties, rather than appealing to internationalism and attacking the imperial ambitions of European leaders, supported their individual nation's war effort.⁶⁵ Vladimir Lenin, and others, saw this nationalism as a betrayal of revolutionary Marxism rendering the Second International, in their minds, ideologically bankrupt as a result. Lenin, along with many supporters, continued to advocate for a strand of Marxism that was revolutionary, anti-imperial and promoted self-determination of nations.

Fighting imperialism and supporting colonial liberation became important campaigns of the Comintern. These positions evolved during the First World War in works by Vladimir Lenin and Nikolai Bukharin. Both responded to now bankrupt Second International leaders, such as Karl Kautsky, and sought to adopt long-held socialist positions as their own. The anti-imperialism and self-determination of nations defined during the war years became key aspects of the worldview promoted by the Bolsheviks. These concepts underpinned Bolshevik diplomacy, such as in their response to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk negotiations of 1917-1918, and to the Allied Intervention and Russian Civil War of 1918-1921. In the Comintern, it influenced the 1920 "Theses on the National and Colonial Question", the 1922 "Theses on the Eastern Question", the 1922 "Theses on the Negro Question" and several congresses of the Peoples of the East. The Comintern expected member parties to follow these Theses. As a result, the worldview, the policies,

⁶⁵ Terrence McDonough, "Lenin, Imperialism, and the Stages of Capitalist Development," *Science & Society* 59, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 341-46; Donald Priestland, 59; Nation, 22.

and the tactics developed by the Bolsheviks or other communists in the Comintern created the context that all parties operated within. Each party had different ways of responding to these theses, but when looking at colonial liberation, nationality, and race, every party needed to be aware of these platforms.

The Communist International, over its formative years, while Lenin was still alive, saw Bolsheviks and communists from around the world all contribute to the foundational positions of international communism on colonial liberation, nationality and race.

Vladimir Lenin, Gregory Zinoviev, Karl Radek, Leon Trotsky, and others made these issues important by giving Bolshevik leadership, and approval, to these discussions as

was seen in the Comintern's Manifesto, the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question," or their presence at the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in 1920.

Other communists and delegates to these early Congresses, such as M.N. Roy, David Ivon Jones, Otto Huiswood, and Claude McKay, added to their tactical formulations and took advantage of discussions to ensure a collaborative effort to answering the National,

Colonial and Racial Questions. In particular, their role in promoting an appropriate response to racism cannot be denied and their actions at the Third and Fourth Congresses in 1921 and 1922 respectively must be highlighted. Furthermore, postwar, targets changed and international communism sought to combat imperialism at every turn.

Imperialism was always an issue for the Comintern. What changed, however, was where the Comintern set its sights in order to attack capitalism and undermine the world order to the benefit of the Soviet Union. This chapter outlines these early attempts to give international communism a collection of tactics and responses to imperialism, racism and

chauvinism and how the Bolsheviks applied their own ideologies within the former Tsarist Empire as they attempted to develop actual policies.

Communism, Anti-Imperialism and the First World War

The communist critique of imperialism developed during the First World War. Vladimir Lenin wrote *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in 1916.⁶⁶ When war broke out in the summer of 1914, many socialists sided with their respective nations, breaking with what had been the Second International's anti-imperialist stance. Lenin, incensed by the actions of his socialist colleagues, criticized them and called for a break with the Second International and the formation of a new International, founded upon revolutionary principles.⁶⁷ He believed that the tactics of socialism had been sullied by his colleagues and during the war, he strengthened his own positions on international issues. *Imperialism* borrowed from critics of imperialism, including some prominent socialists, and attacked alternate socialist ideas about imperialism promoted during the war. The scope and influence of this work cannot be denied. The *Communist International* periodical advertised it frequently as the "most important" work written by Lenin.

J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism* was one of Lenin's inspirations.⁶⁸ Lenin declared Hobson's *Imperialism* as one of the few English or French works he was able to reference

⁶⁶ For more on what Lenin was doing around this time and some of the issues surrounding *Imperialism's* publication, see Carter Elwood, "Lenin in Heidiland," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57, no. 1-2 (2015): 97-107.

⁶⁷ Nation, 41.

⁶⁸ Daniel Kruger argues that Hobson is Lenin's hero in his book. Daniel H. Kruger, "Hobson, Lenin, and Schumpeter on Imperialism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16, no. 2 (Apr., 1955): 255-256.

“with all the care that, in [his] opinion, that work deserves.”⁶⁹ Lenin appropriated Hobson’s arguments on the “decay” of capitalism, or “parasitism.”⁷⁰ Lenin demonstrated how imperialism links the state with the bourgeoisie. Imperialism caused capitalism to stagnate by enabling the rich to get richer through exploitation of colonies and trade, and essentially creating “creditor” and “rentier” states. Stagnation was compounded by the use of colonial peoples for military service by the imperial powers. Lenin added that segments of the proletariat get caught up in these same matters and support the “parasitic” system of imperialism.⁷¹

There were other influences on Lenin. Rudolph Hilferding, a German Social-Democrat, in his work *Finance Capital*, also saw monopolies and finance capital as integral to imperialism. Hilferding argued that banks and industry tended to enter into partnerships, uniting their capital, and encouraging cartelization and monopolies. This form of finance capital encouraged tariffs which prevent foreign competition, while also encouraging expansionary policies, or imperialism.⁷² This attention to the role of

⁶⁹ Vladimir Lenin, “Imperializm, kak vysshaya stadiya kapitalizma,” *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (PSS)*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 301.

⁷⁰ Charles W. Lindsay, “Lenin’s Theory of Imperialism,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 14, no. 1 (Mar., 1982): 2.

⁷¹ Lenin, “Imperializm,” 396-406. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Cosimo, 2005), 46-61.

⁷² Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study in the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, edited by Tom Bottomore, translated by Morris Watnick and Sam Gordon (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). In particular, for banks and their link to industry, see Chapter 14: Hilferding, 223-226. For how finance capital lends itself to tariffs and expansionary policies, see Chapter 21: Hilferding, 301-310. For the link to imperialism, see Chapter 22: Hilferding, 311-336. See also McDonough, 348-350. Lenin himself also explicitly notes his respect for the value of Hilferding’s work. Lenin, “Imperializm,” 309. Finally, Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido point out Lenin’s use of Hilferding, among others. Richard B. Day & Daniel Gaido, eds., *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 85-90. Hobson argued something similar. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Cosimo Press, 2005), 71-77, 94.

monopolies and finance capital inspired Lenin to argue that imperialism was equivalent to finance capital, the highest stage of capitalism.⁷³

Nikolai Bukharin weighed in on imperialism during the war too, also influencing Lenin. While his work *Imperialism and World Economy* was published in 1917, it was initially written in 1915 and historian Stephen Cohen points out, “Lenin borrowed freely from it.”⁷⁴ Bukharin recognized the world’s geographical diversity.⁷⁵ He argued that imperialism “implies violent methods, for the expansion of the state territory means war,” and was “a policy of conquest.”⁷⁶ He asserted that capitalist society had no unified position, instead existing through interconnected and diverse economies which as a whole made up the world economy.⁷⁷ This interconnectedness naturally lent itself to rivalry, conquest, war, and the militarization of capitalist societies. War further monopolized industry due to the interests of the state and the bourgeoisie. This monopolization gave the bourgeoisie greater control to enforce their interests at the cost of the workers’ livelihood. Workers lose more ground because freedoms are curtailed.⁷⁸ These positions formed the backbone of the Comintern’s later anti-imperialism and good communists were familiar with these works.

⁷³ Lenin, “Imperialism,” 364-373.

⁷⁴ Nikolai Bukharin, “Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State,” in Richard B. Day ed., *Selected Writings on the State and the Transition to Socialism* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 6-37; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 25; Stephen F. Cohen, “Bukharin, Lenin and the Theoretical Foundations of Bolshevism,” *Soviet Studies* 21, no. 4 (Apr., 1970): 437-438. Lenin also wrote the introduction. Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (London: The Merlin Press, 1972), 9-14.

⁷⁵ Bukharin, 17-27. McDonough also stresses Bukharin’s structure as the main difference between Hilferding and Bukharin’s works. McDonough, 350-351.

⁷⁶ Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, 107; 114-115.

⁷⁷ Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, 114-115.

⁷⁸ Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, 115, 154-160. Stephen F. Cohen outlines *Imperialism and World Economy* in far greater detail. Cohen, “Bukharin, Lenin and the Theoretical Foundations of Bolshevism,” 436-457.

In *Imperialism*, Lenin also grappled with his mentor, Karl Kautsky.⁷⁹ During the war, Kautsky retreated from some of his earlier positions. Lenin declared him to be an opportunist who had betrayed him and the Marxist revolutionary spirit.⁸⁰ Kautsky articulated a concept referred to as “ultra-imperialism.” He argued that agrarian zones (colonies) were dominated by imperial nations. The drive to gain colonies led to the world war. Kautsky argued similar points at the turn of the century and Lenin could agree with these points.⁸¹ Kautsky, however, continued arguing that capitalism could evolve further. He claimed that imperialism was not a necessity and from an economic standpoint, the world could enter “ultra-imperialism,” or a “holy alliance of the imperialists” developed from the fear of another war between the imperial powers. In ultra-imperialism, they might cooperate to preserve peace amongst themselves.⁸² Both

⁷⁹ Elements of Bukharin are evident in the second half of his book. Lenin, “Imperialism,” 364-426.

⁸⁰ Lars T. Lih, “Lenin’s Aggressive Unoriginality, 1914-1916,” *Socialist Studies: the Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 90-112. Lars Lih also considered how Lenin tried to adopt certain Socialist ideas and theories that he felt still had value and developed them as his own during the First World War. Lars Lih expanded on this theme and on the impact of the war on Lenin in a recent article. Lars T. Lih, “‘The New Era of War and Revolution’: Lenin, Kautsky, Hegel, and the Outbreak of World War I,” in *Cataclysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics*, edited by Alexander Anievas (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 366-412. See also Lars T. Lih, “Lenin and Kautsky, The Final Chapter,” *International Socialist Review*, no. 59 (May-June 2008), <http://www.isreview.org/issues/59/feat-lenin.shtml>.

⁸¹ Karl Kautsky in 1900 had already identified the link between finance capital, imperialism, state interests, and rivalries between states, elucidating an early formulation of one of Lenin’s main arguments in *Imperialism*. In one notable passage, Kautsky argued finance capital would invest in infrastructure in a given power, but also make foreign investment. Kautsky continued by pointing out that foreign investment promoted “jealousy” between Britain, Germany and the United States as financiers would always prefer their investments under the power of the nation they best could influence. Kautsky extended this conclusion to suggest that finance capital demanded the control of markets and therefore the extension of imperial power on new areas, or even over rival powers. As a result, imperial rivalries developed. Kautsky was not explicit in these connections, but they are implied from his analysis. Lenin is far more unequivocal and polemical. Karl Kautsky, “Germany, England and World-Policy (1900),” in Richard B. Day and Daniel Gadio, eds., *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 166-176. Lars Lih notes several links between Lenin and pre-war Socialist positions in his research. Again, see Lih, “‘The New Era of War and Revolution’,” 366-412.

⁸² This article was originally printed in September 1914 in *Die Neue Zeit*. Karl Kautsky, “Ultra-imperialism” *New Left Review* 1, no. 59 (Feb., 1970): 41-47.

Bukharin and Lenin attacked this formulation as nothing more than a utopian pipedream.⁸³

Lenin adopted socialist positions on self-determination and appropriated them for international communism and revolutionary means. Many socialists saw value in a colonial policy and the economic benefits from this exploitation, a problem Bukharin and Lenin noted in their works on imperialism. But Lenin remained intellectually indebted to Kautsky who argued that if Marxists were against “capitalist colonial policies,” they must be in turn against any colonial policies.⁸⁴ He linked the success of the proletariat revolution to the end of colonialism. Kautsky argued that colonial exploitation could not be combatted on every occasion. Revolution must come when a region was ripe. This correct timing would prevent further exploitation from an imperial power, but also from the “barbarism” occasioned by the lack of readiness for socialism.⁸⁵ Kautsky concluded that:

Revolutions in Europe and North America cannot fail to affect the states in the rest of the world. The shifts of power between classes must be accompanied by shifts of power between races and states, just as it is probable, on the other hand, that internal revolutions are started off by external revolutions, world wars.⁸⁶

A world revolution, and one of significant scope, would be necessary in order to make all possible benefits a reality. Colonial liberation could occur with the end of capitalist

⁸³ Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, 130-143. Lenin, “Imperialism,” 387-396,

⁸⁴ Karl Kautsky, *Socialism and Colonial Policy* (Belfast: Athol Books, 1975), 58.

⁸⁵ Kautsky, *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, 47-59.

⁸⁶ Kautsky, *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, 57.

regimes in Europe. Kautsky, also, in this pre-war article, suggested the First World War could be used to awaken revolution.⁸⁷

Lenin built on this position to formulate a prominent theme of his regime after October 1917. He defined the right of self-determination of nations as the “right to secession.”⁸⁸ While Kautsky argued for unanimous opposition to colonial policies, Lenin argued for unanimous acceptance of the right to political self-determination. Nationality and political freedom needed to be supported by any good Marxist. Lenin, however, held a specific definition for “nation”:

Recognising equality and equal rights to a national state, it values and appreciates above all the alliance of the proletariat of all nations, evaluating any national demand, any national separation, *from the angle* [emphasis in original] of the workers’ class struggle.⁸⁹

Lenin positioned self-determination as freedom from oppression and a desire for full equality. The proletariat motivated nationality and self-determination could only be applied if the proletariat demanded it. Upon receiving independence, the proletariat would merge their new nation with the international “nation,” unifying the international working class, with all free from exploitation.⁹⁰ It was a creative way of linking proletarian internationalism with nationality and equality.

⁸⁷ Kautsky, *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, 47-59.

⁸⁸ Vladimir Lenin, “Tezisy po natsional’nomu voprosu,” *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniĭ (PSS)*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1961), 314. Vladimir Lenin, “O prave natsij na samoopredelenie,” *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniĭ (PSS)*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1961), 275-276, 316-320.

⁸⁹ Lenin, “O prave natsij na samoopredelenie,” 274-275.

⁹⁰ Lenin, “Tezisy po natsional’nomu voprosu,” 314-322.

Buoying this formulation was Lenin's contempt of "chauvinism," the oppression of a "greater nation" over a lesser one.⁹¹ Thus, even if several nationalities existed in a given nation-state, they were to be protected and free from national, ethnic or racial oppression. This position, coupled with Lenin and Bukharin's analysis of imperialism, underpinned the Bolshevik, and eventually, Comintern worldview. It was familiar to many socialists, building on platforms established before the war.⁹² It reflected the changing international situation and maintained the revolutionary spirit of those disenchanted by the Socialist International.

Facing Imperialism: The Bolsheviks and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

The Bolsheviks' seizure of power forced them to consider the practical aspects of these ideological tenets formed when in opposition. One of the first orders of business for the Bolsheviks was to end Russian involvement in the First World War. Almost immediately, they called for peace negotiations. Only the Central Powers obliged. The negotiations offer insight into how much the fight against imperialism weighed on the minds of key Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks demanded the application of self-determination of nations and a non-annexationist peace. The peace negotiations were a stage to stress the aims of the Bolshevik Revolution to Europe and to attack imperialism. Adolf Joffe, the leader of the Bolshevik delegation, called for the restoration of independence to any occupied territory

⁹¹ Vladimir Lenin, "Sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya i parvo natsij na samoopredelenie," *PSS*, vol. 27 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 252-266. See also, Vladimir Lenin, "K voprosu o natsional'nostyakh ili ob 'avtonomizatsii'," *PSS*, vol. 45 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1964), 356-362.

⁹² For a lengthy review of the history of some of these other positions, see Day and Gaido, 1-91.

and for referendums for all nationalities who desired independence.⁹³ The Bolsheviks were willing to open the doors to complete and total self-determination at least when applied to political entities other than those under their control. Begrudgingly they did the same within their own borders, accepting a *fait accompli* as the Bolshevik Revolution had destabilized the Russian Empire, allowing regions to secede.⁹⁴ The Central Powers were willing to grant self-determination as proposed by the Bolsheviks to former Tsarist Russian lands. Their delegates mentioned some public figures from Poland and the Baltic States had opposed Tsarist rule. The Germans would happily oblige with protectorates over this region. The Bolsheviks saw the response as an extension of German power in the region and an annexation of former Tsarist lands. To the Bolsheviks, the German aims were imperialistic.⁹⁵

The Bolsheviks were in no position to continue Russian involvement in the war. The Central Powers knew they were in a position of strength, especially when the other Entente Powers elected to forego the negotiations. The Bolsheviks attempted to buy time, hoping for some sort of revolutionary surge in Germany or Austro-Hungary.⁹⁶ The Bolsheviks were divided in how to respond to the Central Powers. If they agreed to peace, some suggested they were supporting imperialism in Eastern Europe. If they continued to fight, the revolution would likely be undone by the German military.⁹⁷ Lenin accepted the

⁹³ Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 133-134; John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1956), 99-148.

⁹⁴ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 107-108.

⁹⁵ Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 134-135.

⁹⁶ A Hungarian Soviet Republic did develop, but not until March 1919, and fizzled out in August 1919.

⁹⁷ Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 133-209; Wheeler-Bennett, 151-308.

reality of the situation and after threatening his resignation, the Bolshevik reluctantly accepted the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk provided “breathing space,” allowing the Bolsheviks to turn their attention to domestic issues and to the resolution of the civil war that had begun. Some Entente governments saw the treaty as a clear indication of the naiveté of the Bolsheviks.⁹⁸ The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, however, was the first of a series of diplomatic moments that gave the Bolsheviks credibility when they turned to the colonized world. The Bolsheviks were another victim of imperialism. Russia, or at least the former Imperial Russia, lost roughly a third of its population, significant agricultural lands, industrial centres and coal mines.⁹⁹ The Central Powers, even if they were not going to take control of territories, appeared to be imperialistic with their peace treaty.

The Bolsheviks ensured that the message was clear. While ratifying the Treaty, the Fourth All-Russia Congress affirmed that Russia no longer was participating “in the plunder and suppression of other countries.”¹⁰⁰ A year later, the Bolsheviks hailed it as a necessary peace. The Bolsheviks needed to pull themselves out of a war against “half of world imperialism” and “retreat” in order to regroup, consolidate the revolution at home, and work towards their goal of undermining imperialism through the education of the international working classes.¹⁰¹ Lenin, in a new preface to *Imperialism* written in 1920, claimed that the series of harsh peace treaties, which now included the Treaty of

⁹⁸ Judah Magnes, *Russia and Germany at Brest-Litovsk: A Documentary History of the Peace Negotiations* (New York: The Rand School of Social Science, 1919), 179-184.

⁹⁹ Wheeler-Bennett, 269.

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Lenin, “Rezolyutsiya o ratifikatsii brebstskogo dogovora,” *PSS*, vol. 36 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 123.

¹⁰¹ Vladimir Lenin, “Otchet tsentral’nogo komiteta 18 marta,” *PSS*, vol. 38 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 132.

Versailles, were Exhibit A in illustrating the persistence of imperialist states. Lenin argued that the treaties “opened the eyes of the millions and tens of millions of people who are downtrodden, oppressed, deceived and duped by the bourgeoisie with unprecedented rapidity.”¹⁰² In a short period, the people of the world had been awakened to the immorality of imperialism and Wilsonianism.¹⁰³ The Paris Peace Negotiations had exposed the bankruptcy of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s ideas. Lenin implied that Wilsonianism was a fraudulent claim that reform and peace could occur under an imperialistic system. This new awakening of millions of people would inevitably lead to proletarian revolutions.¹⁰⁴

The Bolsheviks, therefore, declared themselves the vanguard in the fight against imperialism. Echoing *Imperialism*, they stated their “firm determination to wrest mankind from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism” and “at all costs, by revolutionary means, [establish] a democratic peace between nations...on the basis of the free self-determination of nations.”¹⁰⁵ They were oppositional, declaring themselves as a true champion of the rights of the exploited or colonized. As a propaganda initiative, albeit consistent with pre-1917, the rhetoric had potential benefits. It could help in their consolidation of the former tsarist lands and it provided a backbone for their future policies of world revolution in Asia and Africa that would later be fleshed out in the Communist International.

¹⁰² Lenin, “Imperializm,” 305-306.

¹⁰³ Lenin, “Imperializm,” 305-306.

¹⁰⁴ Lenin, “Imperializm,” 305-306.

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Lenin, “Deklaratsiya prav trudyashchegosya I ehkspluatiruemogo naroda,” *PSS*, vol. 35 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 222.

The Russian Civil War

Shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Entente Powers landed troops in the north of Russia and in the Far East.¹⁰⁶ These events advanced Bolshevik anti-imperial credentials. Lenin declared that Bolshevik Russia was in a “critical” position as “the deepest and fundamental interests of international capital and imperialism” strove to crush Bolshevik power.¹⁰⁷

The Bolsheviks conflated the Entente troops and counter-revolutionaries as one and the same, a tactic that the Bolsheviks would use repeatedly. Rallying the workers of Russia in the summer of 1918, Lenin began first by chastising the “imperialist” forces present in Russia, but also noting their lack of strength to stop the revolution.¹⁰⁸ He declared that these forces were working with the “internal enem[ies] of the Soviet government,” the White Army and remnants of the petty bourgeoisie.¹⁰⁹ This tactic continued well into the following year. As the Whites continued to battle against Red Army forces, they were characterized as pawns of imperialism. The imperial powers commanded and the White Army generals listened. Russia was facing imperialism, stopping it, and showing the international proletariat that socialism could defeat imperialism.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Richard Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918-1921* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 6.

¹⁰⁷ Vladimir Lenin, “Shest’ tezisov ob ocherednykh zadachakh sovetskoj vlasti,” *PSS*, vol. 36 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 277.

¹⁰⁸ Vladimir Lenin, “Tovarishchi-rabochie! Idem v poslednij reshitel’nyj boj!” *PSS*, vol. 37 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 38-42.

¹⁰⁹ Lenin, “Tovarishchi-rabochie! Idem v poslednij reshitel’nyj boj!” 39.

¹¹⁰ Vladimir Lenin, “Rech’ o bor’be s kolchakom na konferentsii fabrichno-zavodskikh komitetov i professional’nykh soyuzov moskvy 17 aprelya 1919 g.,” *PSS*, vol. 38 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 316-319.; Vladimir Lenin, “Bce na bor’bu s denikinym!,” *PSS*, vol. 39 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 44-63.

While the Red Army regained control of much of the former tsarist lands of Russia, it also looked to extend Bolshevik rule to Ukraine, the Baltics, Central Asia and the Caucasus.¹¹¹ Bolshevik ideology could perform a sleight-of-hand trick. Lenin could put into practice self-determination of nations by granting independence to these regions, removing imperialist forces in the process, while hoping that a Bolshevik-friendly government would lead to a federation of states under Bolshevik Russia's leadership. The White Army played right into the Bolsheviks' hands. Anton Denikin made clear the desire to unite Russia with no consideration of autonomy for the various nationalities of the former Tsarist Empire. Other White leaders made similar statements. In addition, because many counterrevolutionaries had sided with the British and the French, two of the most prominent imperial powers, any promotion of self-determination, had they even considered it, would ring hollow. In areas like Ukraine, where the Treaty of Versailles significantly hampered and deflated independence efforts, and the Caucasus, where the Germans, Ottomans and British all had forces present, the Bolsheviks appeared to be the lesser of many evils.¹¹²

Events in the Caucasus deserve a final thought. After the Bolsheviks gained control of the area, the actions of specific Bolsheviks threatened the appearance of Bolshevik anti-imperialism and self-determination. Russian chauvinism plagued early

¹¹¹ See Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*.

¹¹² Debo, 169-174. For more on the Ukrainian situation, see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 339-379; Matthew Stachiw et. al, *Ukraine and the European Turmoil 1917-1919*, two volumes, ed. Joan L. Stachiw (New York: The Shevchenko Scientific Society, 1973); Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: Its Land and Its Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 491-584; Vasyl Kuchabsky, *Western Ukraine in Conflict with Poland and Bolshevism, 1918-1923*, trans. Gus Fagan (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2009); Pipes, 114-154. For more on the Caucasus, Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 191-218; Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2011), 310-313.

Bolshevik efforts in Georgia. The Mensheviks were very popular in rural Georgia, though socialism was new to the area. Sergo Ordzhonikidze, a good friend of fellow Georgian Joseph Stalin (the Commissar of the Nationalities at the time) was placed in a position of power in the region. He ordered the military conquest of the area by the Red Army.¹¹³ Looking to force the Transcaucasus to follow the Russian lead, Ordzhonikidze, forced a merger of the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian “nations” into one federation, despite the reservations of local Georgian communists. . He brutally suppressed dissent. When Lenin caught wind of these efforts, he accused Ordzhonikidze and Stalin of “Russian chauvinism” and criticized them for treating the nationalities in the area much like imperial powers treated their colonies.¹¹⁴ The episode in the Transcaucasus exposed, at worst, the imperialism of some Bolshevik leaders. Lenin saw chauvinism as one of the most serious sins one could commit in the struggle with national minorities. These events also gave the European powers a propaganda victory, as they could point to some of the Bolsheviks’ faults and raise doubt over the true intentions of communism.

The First Congress of the Communist International

While the Bolsheviks battled counter-revolution in the Russian Civil War and rebuilt the former Tsarist Empire, they began another ambitious project. The Communist International, founded in March 1919, represented the true, revolutionary International Lenin had called for during the First World War to respond to socialism’s bankruptcy.

¹¹³ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 225-240; Mawdsley, 314-315

¹¹⁴ Lenin, “K voprosu o natsional’nostyakh ili ob ‘avtonomizatsii’,” 356-362; Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 375-376.

Lenin reaffirmed and re-established the orthodoxy of revolutionary Marxism.¹¹⁵ The Comintern's founding Congress saw a limited turnout from other leftist parties that agreed with the principles of revolutionary Marxism. Travel was made difficult by the Allied blockades. Most parties agreed for the need for a Third, revolutionary, International. Little else was resolved or agreed upon.¹¹⁶

Condemnations of the Second International occurred frequently, especially when discussing anti-imperialism and colonial liberation. The Second International had failed to make the war against imperialism a common resolve and self-determination was a concept with which many Marxists struggled. It was a key tenet of the Comintern under Lenin. The Bolsheviks' position was well articulated by this point, but other delegates were in agreement. S.J. Rutgers, a representative of the Dutch Socialist Democratic Group, but also given credentials for the American Socialist Propaganda League Group, mentioned the need to unify the world's races. He suggested the Netherlands had "become entirely a vassal state of Britain." He further pointed out the end of German imperialism, its benefits for Britain and how Dutch "exploiters" would likely do anything to ensure some benefit from the colonial world.¹¹⁷

Rutgers also made the first references to race at a Comintern Congress, concluding "It would also be a good thing for this congress to adopt practical resolutions on the struggle we have to wage in the colonies hand in hand with the brown and yellow

¹¹⁵ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 21-34, 237-57; Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 127-133.

¹¹⁷ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 129-132.

proletarians.”¹¹⁸ Stating the Comintern was against colonialism was not enough; tactics needed to be developed for communists to follow. Action was necessary. While the First Congress failed to meet this goal, later Congresses developed these tactics.

The First Congress did establish the Leninist worldview as the Comintern’s worldview. Discussing the Platform of the Communist International, Bukharin recited the main tenets of his and Lenin’s works on imperialism and made Lenin’s *Imperialism* the backbone of the Communist International. Rutgers continued to recommend putting the colonial world front and center. He also wanted to avoid patronizing the colonial world. For example, he took issue with Comintern declarations claiming to reveal imperialism’s “banditry.” The colonial world, he noted, had known this for most of its experience and thus, this was not much of a revelation. A revision to a declaration might be necessary to avoid a “strange impression” on those oppressed in the colonies.¹¹⁹

The most vociferous condemnation of imperialism came in the “Theses on the International Situation and the Policy of the Entente,” written by Nikolai Osinsky and in the “Manifesto of the Communist International,” authored by Leon Trotsky. Both statements highlighted the bankrupt, duplicitous nature of imperial nations while lauding the efforts of the Bolsheviks. In the “Theses,” the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk exemplified how the Germans were as “predatory” as the other powers and used self-determination for their own purposes. The lone state outside the new European order of “victorious imperialism” was Bolshevik Russia, which now posed the biggest threat to that European order. In peace, the imperialist powers continued to show their desire to enhance their

¹¹⁸ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 129-132.

¹¹⁹ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 187-188.

own power base, apportioning reparations, “trampling” on self-determination, calling for further armament, and fostering nationalist sympathies for pogroms. The Theses attacked Wilsonianism as a smokescreen for the true aims of the victorious Entente Powers. Despite calls for peace from the Bolsheviks in regards to the Allied Intervention, they portrayed the Entente nations as having no interest. The only true counter to imperialism was Bolshevik Russia and the Communist International and communism needed to fight against imperialism.¹²⁰

The Manifesto was a review of the First World War with Lenin’s *Imperialism* the main inspiration. The Manifesto also established proletarian revolution, or the Comintern, as the only hope for true independence in the colonies:

[Proletarian revolution] liberates the productive forces of all countries from the closed vise of the national state, uniting nations in close economic cooperation through a general economic plan, and gives the smallest and weakest nation the opportunity, the freedom and independence to develop its national culture, without any damage to the unified and centralized economy of Europe and the entire world.

The last war, which was significantly a war over colonies, was also a war fought with the help of the colonies. The colonial peoples were involved in the European war as never before. Indians, Negros, Arabs and Malagasy fought on the European continent. In whose name? In the name of their right to remain slaves of England and France. Never has the picture of the dishonour of capitalist rule shown itself more shamelessly. Never has the problem of colonial slavery been posed more sharply as now.¹²¹

Lenin’s definition of self-determination underpinned the Manifesto. The Manifesto promoted the value of every nation having its own autonomy. It cleverly included a

¹²⁰ Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 296-306.

¹²¹ RGASPI, 488.1.9, 42. In Riddell’s translation, much of the vivid language has unfortunately been removed. For example, “closed vise” became “narrowness.” Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, 317. This vivid language was important to the Comintern as it was maintained in different translations of the Manifesto. For example, in French, “closed vise” became “tight pincers.” RGASPI, 488.1.9, 69.

reference to the unity of proletariats, thus also appealing to non-communists. For those on the left who were concerned about independence in Asia or Africa and the loss of colonies of their European nations, the Manifesto suggested that should independence be granted on communist principles, it would not hurt Europe in any way. It also developed the concept of a communist world that sees true national equality and presumably individual equality. The Manifesto was a brilliant document; it outlined the goals of international communism for colonial liberation and self-determination of nations, while acting as a propaganda piece to promote nationalism and win over those uncertain of the results of losing colonies.

Declaring the attempts of Wilsonianism to only change “the label of colonial slavery,” the Manifesto coupled colonial liberation with revolution in imperial countries.¹²² Again, positioning the Comintern against the imperial powers, the Manifesto concluded its section on the colonial world by proclaiming the benevolence of Bolshevism:

Capitalist Europe forced the underdeveloped parts of the world into the capitalist maelstrom; socialist Europe will come to help the freed colonies with its technology, organization, and intellectual insight to accelerate the transition to a systematically organized socialist economy.

Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will also be the hour of your liberation!¹²³

With respect to the history of communism’s engagement with race, racism, and colonialism, the First Congress has been overlooked as a result of the substantive

¹²² RGASPI, 488.1.9, 43.

¹²³ RGASPI, 488.1.9, 43.

platforms developed later.¹²⁴ While developing no tactics, the First Congress established a common worldview where significant attention was given to nationality and independence movements, while positioning the Comintern as a distinct alternative to the imperial powers and the Second International. Nationalists in the colonies could hear or read these resolutions and find hope in the Comintern. The Comintern was a genuine revolutionary International which demanded the overturning of imperialism. It was not bankrupt like the Second International, nor was it duplicitous like Woodrow Wilson.¹²⁵

Developing Tactics: The Second Congress of the Communist International

The Second Comintern Congress buoyed the established anti-imperial worldview of the First Congress with platforms communist parties and nationalists could employ in their struggle for colonial liberation. The Second Congress occurred in July and August 1920. Many parties considered membership, either because of the perceived success of the Bolshevik Revolution or the radicalization of many on the left. As a result of the increased desire for membership, the Bolsheviks had to consider conditions for admission. One of their prominent criticisms of the Second International had been its splintering at the outbreak of war. Having a series of clear statements from the First Congress helped in establishing the orthodoxy of international communism. The Second

¹²⁴ See Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 127-133. Carr however did briefly discuss some of the above resolutions, but only in passing, only dealing with explicit mentions of calls for revolution in Asia and Africa. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 238. See also, Jon Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 32-36; James Hulse, *The Founding of the Communist International* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), 17-23; Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 289-291.

¹²⁵ James Hulse, while certainly not going as far as I do here, did point out the First Congress' value as propaganda and in getting the word out about Bolshevism. Hulse, 21.

Congress enhanced this orthodoxy by developing tactics and clear guidelines. For issues of imperialism, self-determination and independence, two documents were significant: “The Conditions for Admission” and “The Theses on The National and Colonial Question”. The “Conditions” made colonial liberation a priority for communist parties throughout the world. The “Theses” developed the tactics the Comintern would use in supporting independence movements.

“The Conditions for Admission” have acquired infamy for the level of submission required to the Comintern and the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). “The Conditions” guaranteed that the resolutions and edicts of Comintern Congresses and the ECCI would be followed by all affiliated parties. For Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the splintering of the Second International that had occurred at the outbreak of war had to be avoided. Many delegates agreed and supported the Conditions during debate and the Congress.¹²⁶

Relevant to the problems of imperialism and colonialism, two conditions stand out. Condition Six focused on the perceived natural inability of imperialism to bring peace. It called upon all parties to attack nationalism (“patriotism”) and “social-pacifism” to expose the inherent hypocrisies in imperialism and, presumably, social democracy. Condition Nine is even more relevant. It demanded that all parties in an imperial nation needed a clearly defined position on colonialism. Furthermore, they were mandated to support independence movements in their countries’ colonies. The conditions required parties to do so in proclamations but especially in actions. These two points elucidated

¹²⁶ RGASPI, 489.1.16, 5-6.

that parties needed to accept the worldview developed in Lenin's *Imperialism*, the First Congress and the Comintern. Supporting independence movements, ending colonialism and fighting against imperialism were necessary should a party wish to be part of the Comintern.¹²⁷ These Conditions seemed a natural extension of the Comintern's worldview, but by the end of the 1920s would be used to try and bring parties into line or to demand more attention to colonial or racial affairs.

International communism still required a set of tactics to promote and support colonial liberation. Colonial parties required a plan of action to follow in order to create their own Bolshevik Revolutions and defeat imperialism. Whereas "The Conditions" showed the primacy of the worldview and focus on imperialism and colonialism in the Communist International, the Second Congress also considered how to go about revolution and self-determination in the colonial world. Before the Second Congress, Lenin drafted a set of theses to bring communist revolution in the colonial world. One of the greatest challenges for Lenin was to explain how a socialist revolution could take place in regions which lacked a true proletariat. As a result, Lenin elected two formulations. The first, generally agreed upon by most delegates, was to suggest that colonial countries, with help from Bolshevik Russia and other communist parties, could progress to communist revolution without a prior capitalist revolution, repudiating an essential part of Marxist theory. While no details were given, this concession was

¹²⁷ RGASPI, 489.1.16, 5-12. For an English version, see Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 2, 979-987.

necessary to ensure the applicability of communist theory to the colonies. Furthermore, with no details, experience was to be the guiding principle in these situations.¹²⁸

The second formulation, however, led to disagreement. Initially, in his preliminary theses distributed before the Congress, Lenin suggested that communist parties in the colonies, and presumably those in the appropriate imperial powers, work with the bourgeois-democratic movements in the colonies.¹²⁹ As Lenin would later explain at the Congress, the realities on the ground needed to be considered. Bearing in mind the concept of oppressor versus oppressed, the situation in the colonies led to a different combination of forces than would be seen in Europe. Lenin claimed assuming consciousness from the peasantry in the colonial world was problematic due to their perceived lack of revolutionary development, therefore, communists needed to work with “bourgeois-democratic” groups.¹³⁰ This concept drew fire, particularly from M.N. Roy, an Indian communist representing the Mexican Communist Party at the Congress.

For most of the 1920s, Roy was one of the primary thinkers for the Comintern on colonial matters. He took issue with the concept of aligning with bourgeois-democratic

¹²⁸ Vladimir Lenin, “Pervonachal’nyj nabrosok tezisov po natsional’nomu i kolonial’nomu voprosam,” *PSS*, vol. 41 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 161-168. They were published widely in Comintern publications. See, N. Lenin, “Preliminary Draft of some Theses on the National and Colonial Questions: For the Second Congress of the Communist International,” in *The Communist International* Vol 1, no. 11-12 (Petrograd: Smolny Rooms 32-33, June-July 1920), 2155-60. In the same issue, Pak Dinshoon offered his theses which largely promote the same themes of the bankruptcy of the Second International, the leadership of the Communist International in colonial independence and a need to fight militaristic nationalism. However, unlike Lenin, he gave into his ideological flare much more strongly, having no idea of how to extend communism and furthermore, seeing revolution in the “East” as beginning with revolution in Europe. That said, the excitement and need for focus on colonial independence is clear in Dinshoon’s piece. Pak Dinshoon, “The Revolutionary East and the Next Task of the Communist International,” in *The Communist International* Vol 1, no. 11-12 (Petrograd: Smolny Rooms 32-33, June-July 1920), 2315-2320.

¹²⁹ Lenin, “Pervonachal’nyj nabrosok tezisov po natsional’nomu i kolonial’nomu voprosam,” 161-168.

¹³⁰ Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, 271-278.

forces. In his mind, framing the question this way exposed potential independence movements to unwanted motivations. Lenin, therefore, suggested that M.N. Roy write his own theses.¹³¹ Roy's theses echoed the worldview that the Comintern had established regarding imperialism. However, Roy's theses added a clear distinction between bourgeois-democratic groups and national-liberation parties. Bourgeois-democratic groups might genuinely want independence from their respective imperial power, but they also sought to reaffirm capitalism and subjugate the peasant population. National-liberation groups, on the other hand, had no such plans and were mass movements seeking to end colonial rule and oppression. Roy's formulation convinced Lenin to adopt it in his theses. By working with these appropriate groups, the Comintern could help independence movements while growing the consciousness of the colonized before developing a truly proletarian party.¹³²

Lenin's Theses continued and built on other prominent themes. They called for an unrelenting attack on imperialism and its supporters in parliament and in propaganda. They highlighted a need to act, not just proselytize, and this action was not just to support independence movements, but also to counter sources of religious support, particularly those motivated by Christianity and the civilizing mission, or unifying movements like Pan-Islam or Pan-Asianism. Lenin saw Pan-Islam and Pan-Asian ideology as an extension of Turkish or Japanese imperialism.

¹³¹ Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, 76.

¹³² John Riddell included in his edited conference proceedings Roy's original theses along with annotations for changes he made to them during the Congress. Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 2, 1077-1088. Carr also details the differences and debate on Lenin's and Roy's theses in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 254-258.

“The Theses on the National and Colonial Questions” discussed racial equality. Lenin explicitly attacked nationalism and called for attacks on racism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism to be made a priority. Furthermore, Lenin called for communist parties to fight for equal rights of all groups within all nations and colonies, mentioning the black population in the United States as an example.¹³³ “The Theses” were Lenin’s ideas on self-determination, nationality, imperialism, and now, racism coming together into a coherent platform. The evolution of capitalism and imperialism, a need to support a Marxist form of self-determination of nations, a shedding of nationalities and an attack on chauvinism are all present. Lenin’s theses were unanimously adopted. Roy’s theses were adopted as well.¹³⁴

Mobilizing “The East”

The foundations of the Comintern policies on imperialism, colonial independence, self-determination and race were developed at the Second Congress. The Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, Azerbaijan, a rally held in September 1920 and organized by the Comintern, kept the momentum going. The Congress drew representatives from various Middle Eastern regions and British or former Tsarist colonies. Delegates gave inflammatory speeches that drew cheers of “Down with British Imperialism!” They placed the Bolsheviks as leaders of the anti-colonial movement. Gregori Zinoviev opened the Congress proclaiming the Bolsheviks as the vanguard against capitalism, adding that

¹³³ Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, 360-367.

¹³⁴ John Riddell noted that Roy’s theses were not voted on, but simply adopted in tandem with Lenin’s. E.H. Carr, meanwhile, suggested that they were forgotten about whereas only Lenin’s were adopted. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Carr’s analysis was more accurate. Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, 76-77. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 258.

the relationship between the proletariat of the West and the colonized in the East could undo imperialism.¹³⁵ Karl Radek followed by detailing the significance of the town of Baku. It had been traded many times among imperialist states following the First World War. Also, it was known for its oil fields and was home to a significant number of workers. He stressed that the Bolsheviks approached the matter differently from imperial nations, desiring not to oppress or to exploit, but to liberate and to give the peoples of the East the opportunity to “escape from the yoke not only of capital but also of medieval relations, from the yoke of feudalism and ignorance, and to give them the opportunity to begin living as human beings.”¹³⁶ It was almost a new interpretation of the civilizing mission, but less for teaching lessons and steeped more in socialist opportunity, offering revolution as a way to get out from under imperialism.

Following the speeches of the two Bolshevik representatives, Peter Petrov, representative of the British Communist Party, gave a short speech declaring the British communists and workers as friends of Russia and announcing the beginning of the end of British imperialism. Delegates interrupted his speech with loud applause multiple times. He concluded “[t]he movement of the Eastern peoples will also contribute to sweeping away the British imperialists.”¹³⁷ The French Communist representative and the American journalist John Reed followed.¹³⁸ The purpose of the Congress was made clear

¹³⁵ “Joint celebration of the Baku soviet and the Azerbaijan trade union congress,” in *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920, First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, edited by John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 47-52.

¹³⁶ “Joint celebration of the Baku soviet and the Azerbaijan trade union congress,” 52-55.

¹³⁷ “Joint celebration of the Baku soviet and the Azerbaijan trade union congress,” 56.

¹³⁸ “Joint celebration of the Baku soviet and the Azerbaijan trade union congress,” 56-58.

at the beginning of the first session. The head of the Azerbaijan Soviet, Nariman Narimanov, explained what would occur:

The gray-haired East, which gave us our first notion of morality and culture, will today shed tears, telling of her sorrow, of the grievous wounds inflicted upon her by capital of the bourgeois countries.

These peoples of the East, each living its own distinct life, could not be unaware of the terrible, oppressive effects produced here by capital.

But today, as we learn here about each other's situations, the whole picture will unfold before us. Only then will these peoples of the East realize all the terrible, oppressive effects produced by capital. And this knowledge will impel all these peoples to unite. They will come to one conclusion: to use their united strength to throw off and smash the chains of capital.¹³⁹

The purpose of the event was not to discuss tactics or to develop solutions. Instead, it was a rally. Each delegate or representative revealed how British imperialism had wronged them and this motivated all present to unite under the Bolshevik flag to bring about the end to the capitalist world order. These denunciations were mixed with the new sectarian hallmarks of lengthy speeches clarifying the Bolshevik struggle against imperialism, and the condemnation of the false socialists of the Second International. Delegates largely spent the sessions praising the frankness and novelty of the Bolshevik approach and condemning the exploitative nature of British imperialism. The Manifesto enumerated the crimes Britain had committed in each region represented at the Congress.¹⁴⁰ It ended with an almost religious appeal to arms:

Long live the battle headquarters of this united movement—the Communist International!

May the holy war of the peoples of the East and of the toilers of the entire world against imperialist Britain burn with unquenchable fire.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ "Tasks of the Congress of the Peoples of the East," in *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920, First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, edited by John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 60.

¹⁴⁰ "Manifesto to the peoples of the East," in *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920, First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, edited by John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 221-233.

¹⁴¹ "Manifesto to the peoples of the East," 232.

Responses to International Events

Delegates at these congresses used the stage to respond to relevant international events. Both the Second Congress of Comintern and the Baku Congress saw fit to respond directly to specific crimes of British imperialism. The Amritsar Massacre in April 1919 was one such incident. Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, fearing an Indian insurrection, ordered his troops to shoot on a multidenominational crowd. M.N. Roy criticized the British for their control of communications out of India, which muted the international response that such an event should have warranted. He further criticized the British for not elucidating the fact that India had been experiencing a famine and the British had done little except “[respond] with bombs and bayonet,” and strict laws.¹⁴² Karl Radek attacked the Second International. At the Second Congress of Comintern, in July 1920, he criticized the British Labour Party for its “hypocrisy” for demanding independence in India and Egypt, but refusing to categorize Dyer “as a common murderer.”¹⁴³ At the Third Comintern Congress, Lenin noted that events like Amritsar showed how the revolutionary spirit in India, and other oppressed nations, was increasing “in proportion...to the increase in the brutal terrorism of the British.”¹⁴⁴ The Congress of the Peoples of the East also made an appeal to workers worldwide. The appeal not only pointed out that no Labour Party member had said anything to condemn Dyer in Parliament but also condemned Britain for its use of Indian forces, dubbed “the brothers

¹⁴² M.N. Roy, “Hunger and Revolution in India,” in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy: Volume 1 1917-1922*, edited by Sibnarayan Ray (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 155-158.

¹⁴³ John Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, 296.

¹⁴⁴ “Theses for a Report on the Tactics of the RCP,” in *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, edited by Alan Adler (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), 205.

of the victims of Amritsar,” to subjugate Arab peoples in order to obtain oil reserves in Mosul.¹⁴⁵

The Amritsar Massacre was not the only event current event to fall into the hands of Bolshevik ideologues and their anti-imperialist declarations. The Washington Naval Conference drew the attention of the Bolsheviks. They responded with the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in January to February 1922, held in Moscow and Petrograd. It was an attempt by the Bolsheviks to gain a foothold in the Far East. Whereas Bolshevik representatives such as Gregory Zinoviev and Dmitri Kalinin focused on the commonalities of the “toiling populations” of Russia and the Far East and the genuine revolutionary spirit of Russia, Sen Katayama, eventual founder of the Japanese Communist Party, alleged that the Washington Naval Conference was an effort by the imperial powers to dismantle and exploit the Far East.¹⁴⁶ The remainder of the congress operated in a matter similar to the Baku Congress, although the British were not the sole target; Japanese imperialism was criticized too. The Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian delegates who attended expounded upon their region’s respective realities. Little of substance was accomplished at this Congress outside of a resolution affirming the standard message.¹⁴⁷ However, the message was couched in terms amenable to would-be nationalists, but also represents a great example of “The Theses of the National and Colonial Question” as presented to others. Georgy Safarov, after detailing the entire situation in the Far East, summarized the Comintern position:

¹⁴⁵ “Appeal to the workers of Europe, America, and Japan,” in *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920, First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, edited by John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 237.

¹⁴⁶ *The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East: Held in Moscow, January 21st-February 1st, 1922. Closing Session in Petrograd, February 2nd 1922* (London: Hammersmith Books, 1970), 3-9.

¹⁴⁷ *First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, 9-230.

It must be quite clear to everyone that only the Soviet Russian orientation, only the orientation of the Communist International and of the international labour forces, as an international labour power, that only such orientation can save the oppressed masses of Korea, China, Manjuria [sic.] and Mongolia. It is only such an orientation which can free them from the imperialist yoke.

Comrades, the principal result of our Congress and of our discussion should be that all those who participated in the Congress should have a clear understanding of the correlations between the national-revolutionary and the labour movement. We do not wish to impose our views upon anybody, we do not wish to force our program upon anybody, we do not invite anyone that is unripe to enter the ranks of the Communist Party, we do not wish any forcible Sovietisation, but on the other hand, we say, that in as much as we support the national-democratic movement we demand a loyal attitude to the labour movement, to the Communist Party, to the working class.¹⁴⁸

The Comintern was giving these individuals a choice, a clear alternative to the imperialist powers, but the choice, if made in favour of the Comintern, required total loyalty. Safarov's speech also was a clear formulation of "The Theses on the National and Colonial Question." The Comintern and communists would work with the national-revolutionary movement in a given region and continue to support it, only if the proletariat and communism was protected and made a priority. Much like they wanted the workers to be a focus for independence movements, the Comintern, by 1922, had clearly made colonial independence a valued goal.¹⁴⁹

Also by 1922, two major changes had occurred for the Bolsheviks. They had succeeded in their efforts to consolidate the Soviet Union and they were being invited back into the diplomatic scene at the Genoa Conference. The British granted Ireland its independence with the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Egyptian independence followed on 28 February 1922. Lenin was aware of these events and how they altered the Bolsheviks

¹⁴⁸ *First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, 173.

¹⁴⁹ For all of Safarov's speech, see *First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, 157-174.

anti-imperialist policy. Lenin also held no illusions regarding Ireland or Egypt where British “methods” not only undermined the revolutionary spirit in those nations, but allowed the British to maintain strategic control of key areas.¹⁵⁰ He also realized that the Bolsheviks could be criticized by the European powers for the actions of Ordzhonikidze and Stalin in Georgia.¹⁵¹

The complete package that the Bolsheviks promoted, ideological abhorrence of anti-imperialism, support of self-determination of nations, successful revolution, and consistently standing against all of the imperial powers, helped encourage like-minded individuals to flock to communism. The Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia all were formed during these early years with members influenced directly by the Bolsheviks, as news trickled to their nations of revolution in Russia and what the Bolsheviks stood for. Colonial parties, in particular, emerged during over the 1920s as some nationalists agreed with the assessment of the Bolsheviks and saw them as the best chance to help them undo the colonial regimes that oppressed their people. The Comintern had directly and indirectly given many hope that its methods were the best step forward. It, however, also wanted these individuals to organize and offered leadership and advice, while also being protective that the actions of individuals did not undermine what they were hoping to achieve.

¹⁵⁰ Vladimir Lenin, “Proekt direktivy zamestitelyu predsedatelya i vsem clenam genuehzskoj delegatsii,” *PSS*, vol. 44 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1964), 374-376.

¹⁵¹ Lenin, “Proekt direktivy zamestitelyu predsedatelya i vsem clenam genuehzskoj delegatsii,” 374-376. Regarding Georgia, see above when discussing Russian Chauvinism. “Appeal to Red Army soldiers fighting in the East,” in *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920, First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, edited by John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 304-309.

Evolving Comintern Tactics

The fight against imperialism and for colonial independence and self-determination continued at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. The topic had received very little attention at the Third Congress which had been preoccupied with improving the organizational structure of the Comintern.¹⁵² The Fourth Congress had anti-imperialism as a priority again, partially as a result of The Turkish War of Independence which had established the Republic of Turkey. Willem van Ravestejn of the Dutch party, who delivered the first report on the Eastern Question, saw this event as a turning point for British Imperialism in the area. Ravestejn spent his allotted time recalling the history of Ottoman imperialism, British imperialism and clashes Britain had had with the Ottomans and Russians. He briefly touched on a possible revival of Italian imperialism with the rise of Italian Fascism, one of the few concrete pieces of analysis on fascism at the Congress. This preamble led to his more important points; British power was receding and “the power of the proletarian republic” was increasing.¹⁵³ He also noted that diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union was a sign of Britain’s decreasing strength. Ravestejn ended his report by noting the rise of Pan-Islam and how the British Empire was the greatest enemy to Islam and independence in the region. Ravestejn extended the support of the communist movement to Islam.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² South African delegates did submit a resolution discussing South African conditions, discussed in Chapter 3. For the Resolutions of the Third Congress, see *Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Third World Congress of the Communist International: June 22nd – July 12th, 1921* (New York: Contemporary Publishing Association, 1921).

¹⁵³ John Riddell ed., *Toward the United Front*, 651-685.

¹⁵⁴ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 651-685.

Supporting Pan-Islam was something for which other delegates also saw a need, viewing Pan-Islam as another movement with which the Comintern could work.¹⁵⁵ This could be seen as a sign of the general evolution within the Comintern as it had to find some grounds for optimism after defeats. In March 1921, the German Communist Party (KPD) attempted a general strike in hopes of spreading communist revolution to Germany. It was a failure. As a result of the March Action, a failure to enhance revolutionary sentiment in Europe and a changing diplomatic landscape where the Bolsheviks achieved some recognition, the Comintern changed tactics. Instead of promoting the theory of the offensive consistently, they promoted the United Front. Arguing that communist parties needed to build the consciousness of the workers and that they generally had limited influence in their nation, communist parties were encouraged to enter unions, to work with other labour groups, and to build this consciousness. Along with this change in tactics, colonial independence was given further attention. Working with groups that had limited or no leftist credentials was promoted more than ever before.¹⁵⁶ This shift helps explain why working with Pan-Islamist groups or certain nationalist groups was encouraged. It also suggests that Roy's Second Congress Theses were already forgotten as any nationalist group, regardless of their aims, could be beneficial in the communist struggle for colonial independence and undermining international imperialism.

¹⁵⁵ Tan Malaka, an Indonesian communist, and Tahar Boudengha, a Tunisian communist, both call for the need to support and reconsider the Comintern stance on Pan-Islam. Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 264-265, 703-705.

¹⁵⁶ Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923: Volume Three*, 336-338.

Tactics also became more complex. It was no longer proper to speak of the “East” or colonial world as a common mass. M.N. Roy followed Ravesteyn’s report to explain this new direction. He delineated three types of colonies. The first were similar to European nations in that there was capitalist development, a conscious bourgeoisie and a proletariat. The second were those with some primitive capitalist development. The third were colonies hampered by “patriarchal feudalism,” and had no capitalist development. For Roy, the first two groups of colonies were susceptible to bourgeois conservatism and maintaining imperial rule, and thus hampered independence movements. He concluded his address by calling for “an anti-imperialist united front.” Declaring the need to create communist parties in all colonies to ensure independence was possible, these parties should then work with and lead any “bourgeois-revolutionary” parties to move the process along. This aspect of the strategy should be united with communist agitation in imperial countries.¹⁵⁷ Many of the items highlighted by Roy were included in “The Resolution on the Eastern Question” that was passed at the Fourth Comintern Congress.¹⁵⁸

Race and the Comintern: Foreign Workers and the “Negro Question”

While tactics for the colonial world evolved, the Comintern developed its first platform to battle racism at the Fourth Congress. Many delegates related racial issues to issues of immigration. Foreign workers were a significant and vulnerable population in many industrialized nations. “The Resolution of the Eastern Question” referenced the

¹⁵⁷ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 686-694.

¹⁵⁸ See Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 1180-1190.

United States, Japan, Britain, Australia and Canada as “imperialist countries” where the communist parties needed to agitate against “cheap coloured labour” and immigration. Concerned with the development of racist tendencies in the proletariat, the resolution urged parties of the United States, Canada and Australia to publicly speak against restrictive immigration laws and other potentially xenophobic legislation.¹⁵⁹ Despite these definitions, the Communist Parties of Canada and Australia maintained that their home countries were colonies until the late 1920s when the Comintern corrected their approach.¹⁶⁰ The “Theses on the Eastern Question” also delineated differences amongst British dominions, suggesting economic development was more important than political autonomy. The Comintern still perceived South Africa as a colony and did so for the entirety of its existence.¹⁶¹

Foreign workers and immigration policies were not the only consideration of the Comintern when it came to race. At the Third Comintern Congress, although colonial issues were overlooked, two South African delegates, David Ivon Jones and Sam Barlin, presented a resolution on the South African situation which discussed some of the racial issues in South Africa. They also referenced racism towards African Americans.¹⁶² Prior to the Fourth Comintern Congress, the Anglo-American Colonial Section attempted to determine how to press forward on “The Negro Question.” It was not until the Fourth Comintern Congress and the efforts of African-American communists that any resolution appeared. Otto Huiswood and Claude McKay attended the Fourth Congress. Both were

¹⁵⁹ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 1189.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 4 and 5 respectively for more.

¹⁶¹ See Chapter 3 for more.

¹⁶² “Ivon Jones: The Black Question,” in *To The Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921*, edited by John Riddell (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 1193-1196.

members of the African Blood Brotherhood. The ABB was a Pan-Africanist, black nationalist and communist-sympathizing group. Huiswood and McKay criticized the absence of any communist tactics on the “Negro Question.” McKay then noted the efforts of W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey in mobilizing African sentiment and that the Comintern needed to offer an alternative. Huiswood and McKay wrote the “Theses on the Negro Question” developing the first racial platform for the Comintern. The Congress eagerly passed it. It placed exploitation of blacks in the United States, Africa and elsewhere on the same plane as the exploitation of workers or other colonized peoples. The Comintern was “not only the organisation of the subjugated white workers in Europe and America, but is also the organisation of the oppressed coloured peoples of the world.”¹⁶³ The resolution added that helping blacks was “absolutely necessary” for the success of proletariat revolution and explicitly called for racial equality, equal wages and rights.¹⁶⁴ These calls for greater focus on race, continued in the Comintern’s official journal, *Communist International*.¹⁶⁵

McKay and Huiswood turned the Comintern’s attention to these issues. To maintain engagement with black affairs, the Comintern established a Negro Commission following the Fourth Congress and both Huiswood and McKay sat on the Commission.

¹⁶³ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 949.

¹⁶⁴ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 950. An alternate translation has “extremely important” instead of the much stronger “absolutely necessary” included in Riddell’s translation. “The Black Question,” in *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, edited by Alan Adler (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), 331.

¹⁶⁵ Israel Amter, a founding member of the Communist Party of the United States of America, further described the plight of blacks throughout the world, specifically highlighting racial oppression in Africa and the United States. Largely, Amter echoes the resolution at the Fourth Congress, but adds that black population in the United States must “furnish the leadership for the negro race.” I. Amter, “Black Victims of Imperialism,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 26-27 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1923), 113-119.

Historian Hakim Adi argues that the internationalizing language of the Theses suggest the embrace of Pan-Africanism by the Comintern.¹⁶⁶ To say so much may be going too far. The Comintern frequently used internationalizing language and a good communist needed to maintain some respect for accepted vernacular. The Theses, however, tended to revolve around American affairs. The ABB took the position that American blacks were the leaders of the movement. The Theses reflected this idea placing African-Americans as “the vanguard of the struggle against oppression in Africa.”¹⁶⁷ They also detailed the oppression endured under slavery, but when detailing the struggles of Africans throughout the world, spoke generally. Beyond the Theses, the Negro Commission established at the Fourth Congress tended to dwell on American issues, only further causing a disconnect. Sidney Bunting of the Communist Party of South Africa was one critical voice of the development of Comintern consideration of black issues.¹⁶⁸ Even still, the role of McKay and Huiswood in highlighting a need to deal with the “Negro Question” reflects the role non-Bolsheviks had in enhancing the importance of issues the Comintern had failed to consider. “The Theses on the Negro Question” had developed a plan of attack as a foundation on which other communists would build.

Conclusion

The Fourth Congress, the final Congress while Lenin was alive, developed the most complete tactics to battle imperialism. By the end of 1922, Lenin’s worldview,

¹⁶⁶ Adi, 23.

¹⁶⁷ Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 948.

¹⁶⁸ Adi, 24.

articulated in *Imperialism* and his works on self-determination, implemented both within the Soviet Union and especially so within the Comintern, was canonical. Colonial independence, now coupled with racial equality, was a prominent aspect of the Comintern's plans regarding the United Front and world revolution. Even while the Bolsheviks arguably engaged in their own imperialism and sought diplomatic rapprochement, the Comintern maintained its focus on the national and colonial question. During these first four years of the Comintern, whether there were successes or not, there seemed to be a genuine desire to continue to develop the movement and to eradicate imperialism and all of its negative aspects from the world.

The Comintern had articulated the worldview of Bolshevism and had many followers, and communism was gaining a foothold internationally as a potential force in independence movements. International communism, through the Comintern, developed platforms that every party could follow to make anti-colonialism an important part of its efforts. Racial equality and immigration were becoming significant issues. These programmes were the tactical underpinning that the Communist Parties of South Africa, Australia, Canada, and many others, accepted upon their enthusiastic agreement to join the Comintern. Every party also had delegates in Moscow that commented on these issues. These still general platforms, however, required much more work to be done and local conditions led each party to either set them aside or challenge them directly, such as in the example of Sidney Bunting above. Regardless, the Comintern's accepted principles that all communists needed to know and this was the context in which these parties operated.

The most pivotal moments in the application of Comintern resolutions, however, came after Lenin's death. These early Congresses established the foundations for the Comintern's evolution on the National, Colonial, and Racial Questions. Racial issues became more important as black communists found a voice for their ideas, leading to some radical applications of self-determination of nations. Individual communists also developed new methods to promote anti-imperialism and support the Comintern's mission in that sphere. But the failures in China, leadership changes in the Soviet Union and concerns about how Europe reacted to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s caused significant changes, whereby the Soviet Union and international communism's Eurocentrism hampered the effectiveness of what the Comintern set out to accomplish in these early Congresses.

Anti-Imperialism and Racial Equality vs. Eurocentrism: The National, Colonial & Racial Questions and the Comintern 1922-1943

Under Lenin, the National, Colonial, and Racial Questions were priorities for the Comintern. Prominent Bolsheviks moved debates forward and appeared at the Comintern's rallies for the Peoples of the East. Non-Russian communists played a key role in refining the Comintern's tactics or identifying areas where the Comintern needed to improve. Following Lenin's death in 1924, these trends continued for a brief period. While Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin engaged in their struggle for control of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union, individual communists promoted the initiatives that they felt were important. African American communists worked on methods to fight racism and refine the tactics on the Negro Question. German communist Willi Munzenberg secured Comintern support for a sub-organization dedicated to promoting anti-imperialism internationally.

Despite Joseph Stalin's credentials as the Commissar of Nationalities, and the perception that he was the Soviet expert on nationalities, colonial independence, racial issues and fighting imperialism were not necessarily guaranteed to be priorities for the Comintern. Beginning in 1928 and continuing to 1935, making up the Third Period of the Comintern, two strands of action permeated the Comintern. Certain communists maintained a strong commitment to anti-imperialism and anti-racism. Some debates taking place around the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, its aftermath, and the actions of the League Against Imperialism (LAI) and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) reflected these efforts. At the same time, the Eurocentricism of the Comintern became further entrenched. European parties, despite the Second

Comintern Congress resolving that they needed to be committed to colonial liberation and work with their colonial counterparts, failed to prioritize colonial issues and ignored Comintern orders. The Comintern tended to also have an eye to the West. Fighting imperialism initially focused on undermining Britain or the United States. With the rise of Nazi Germany, the Comintern conflated imperialism and fascism.

Because of these split foci, the Comintern's commitment on the National, Colonial and Racial Questions from 1924 through to the Comintern's demise in 1943 was inconsistent. The shift to Third Period tactics, jettisoning United Front policies and demanding communist purity for any Comintern initiatives, led to drastic shifts that undermined the effectiveness of the League Against Imperialism, turning it from a broad anti-imperial movement to a more communist-driven movement. The same period has been referred to as the "golden age" of the prioritization of racial issues in the Comintern. With the death of Lenin and the ouster of Gregori Zinoviev, Karl Radek and Leon Trotsky, the next tier of Bolshevik leaders seemed less engaged in colonial issues and other communist delegates voiced their concerns. Although colonial affairs continued to be discussed, at the Sixth Congress, at great length, Bolshevik leaders were less refined in their approaches. They supported certain initiatives if they felt the results were worthwhile, but the moment that a concept had seemingly run its course or would run counter to Comintern interests, it needed to change or end. The reason some of the initiatives lasted as long as they did was because of the intense efforts of the individual communists intimately involved with them.

Building on the efforts of Otto Huiswood and Claude McKay, black communists gained more influence throughout the 1920s and developed Comintern tactics on how to deal with the “Negro Question.” Equally as important were individual communists in Europe who took it upon themselves to develop Comintern front organizations to reach wider audiences and promote anti-imperialism on a grander scale. Examples of these organizations include the League Against Imperialism, developed by Willi Munzenburg, beginning in 1927, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, formed in 1930, which saw prominent figures such as James Ford and George Padmore attempt to provide support to the black Atlantic. Though their efforts would flame out as a result of the Comintern’s tactical shifts and waning interest in the organizations, these initiatives exemplified how no matter what structural issues existed in the Comintern, international communism attracted individuals who would take up the mantle regardless and do what they could to promote colonial liberation and racial equality.

Between Lenin and Stalin

The fifth Comintern Congress, held from 17 June to 8 July 1924, was the first after the death of Lenin. It was a transitional Congress, because of the power struggle in the Soviet Union that was underway between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. The slow infiltration of Stalinist ideas began to pervade the revolutionary character of the Comintern. For example, Stalin was voted onto the Executive Committee, replacing

Trotsky.¹⁶⁹ Trotsky and Stalin disagreed on the role of the Soviet Union internationally. Leon Trotsky advocated the concept of permanent revolution and promoted internationalism. The National and Colonial Question was an important part of Trotsky's criticism of Stalin. Trotsky was opposed to the idea of Chinese communists joining the Kuomintang. Trotsky viewed the Kuomintang as a bourgeois party and one not in line with the interests of international communism and therefore, the Comintern. An alliance was possible, but the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) should remain separate.¹⁷⁰ Stalin, however, articulated the platform of Socialism in One Country. Stalin saw the defense and establishment of communism within the Soviet Union as paramount to the success of international communism. He called for a halt to the explicitly revolutionary character of the Comintern, instead opting for what would become a much more opportunistic platform. In China, Stalin wholeheartedly supported the CCP merger with the Kuomintang.¹⁷¹

As Stalin slowly took control of the Comintern, conversation continued on the Comintern's tactics. Ukrainian communist Dmitry Manuilsky led the discussion on the National and Colonial Question at the Fifth Congress. Manuilsky became a mainstay of the Comintern. He sat on the Executive Committee's Presidium beginning in 1924. He was its Secretary from 1928 until the Comintern's dissolution in 1943. Manuilsky was co-editor of *Nashe Slovo* with Leon Trotsky. But by 1924, he supported Stalin. Manuilsky's report at the Fifth Congress outlined the shortcomings and failures with regard to

¹⁶⁹ Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 550-551.

¹⁷⁰ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 55-60; Callaghan, 25-26.

¹⁷¹ Callaghan, 25-26. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163-164; Pons, 55-60.

revolutionary aims on national or colonial lines. He criticized the overemphasis on dealing with each region separately, seeing a regional focus as leading to an uneven application of the National and Colonial Theses of the Second Congress. His conclusions ran counter to the more detailed theses of the Fourth Congress, drafted by M.N. Roy. Tactically, he chided Egyptian and Turkish communists for taking the wrong course with a nationalist, albeit bourgeois, government in power.¹⁷² Manuilsky's discussion of the colonial world ended there. He turned his attention to self-determination and its application in the Balkans and how it could be used in conjunction with issues such as the occupation of the Ruhr. The discussion of the Balkans, potentially stemming from his familiarity with Eastern Europe, was his main focus. When colonial affairs returned to the forefront of Manuilsky's speech, he condemned the Communist Parties of Great Britain and France for not doing enough to help colonial liberation.¹⁷³

Manuilsky also affirmed Stalinist principles in the sphere of national policies. He agreed with Stalin on the need for alliances between colonial communist parties and nationalist-bourgeois groups, such as the one between the Kuomintang and the CCP in China. Manuilsky lauded the success of the Soviet Union's nationalities policy. To him, the Soviet Union practiced what it had preached. It had extended Leninist principles of

¹⁷² The Soviet Union attempted to court some allies in the realms of Soviet diplomacy, signing treaties with Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey, making fighting British imperialism the main goal. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, when taking power in 1919, had a diplomatically friendly relationship with the Bolsheviks to start. Quick though, he persecuted communists and declared the party illegal. Meanwhile, in 1924, the Wafd Party gained control in Egypt. While anti-imperial, they were the definition of a bourgeois-nationalist party, representing landowner interests. The Wafd Government was hostile to communism and quickly took action to quash the nascent Egyptian Communist Party. Jacobson notes that the Soviet Union, nor the Comintern, directly attacked these regimes at this time, exposing each nations' attacks on communists. Even the Fifth Congress seemed to still support working with these regimes to some degree. Jacobson, 116-120.

¹⁷³ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Report of Meetings held at Moscow, June 17th to July 8th, 1924* (Covent Garden: The Communist Party of Great Britain), 185-193.

self-determination within its own borders, and established equal rights for all peoples.

Echoing Lenin, he pointed out that the Soviet Union was a natural bridge between Europe and Asia and it had awakened the world to its revolutionary potential. He urged European parties to promote these successes in their home countries.¹⁷⁴ The emphasis on the value to European parties only further entrenched the report's general Eurocentrism.

Colonial delegates expressed their disappointment with Manuilsky's report. M. N. Roy, criticized the vagueness of Manuilsky's programme. Roy responded by reiterating his Theses from the Fourth Congress. He claimed that Manuilsky was misinformed in some of his conclusions on the colonial world. Roy attacked Stalinist formulations on the National and Colonial Question. Roy, restating his contributions at the Second and Fourth Congresses, suggested that revolutionary-nationalist groups needed to be supported by communism, not nationalist-bourgeois groups.¹⁷⁵ Others delineated what they regarded as serious shortcomings in Manuilsky's speech, included his ignorance of colonial affairs. Comrade Rossi of the Italian Communist Party recognized the need to do better, calling on his fellow delegates to avoid attacking "detailed propositions" and instead "guarantee our colonial comrades a more careful attention in the future to work on colonial and national questions."¹⁷⁶ Perhaps the most famous, and damning, comment came from Nguyen Ai-Quoc, the future Ho Chi Minh, who stated, "I feel that the comrades have not yet sufficiently grasped the idea that the destiny of the proletariat of the whole world...is closely tied to the destiny of the

¹⁷⁴ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 194-195.

¹⁷⁵ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 196-198.

¹⁷⁶ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 198-211. Quotes from page 203.

oppressed nations in the colonies.”¹⁷⁷ Other European communists were less critical. Several agreed with Manuilsky’s criticisms of the English and French parties; others tried to defend their parties.¹⁷⁸

Absent from Manuilsky’s report was any consideration of race. The delegates took it upon themselves to discuss racial and ethnic issues. Japanese communist Sen Katayama noted the need to fight anti-immigration laws in the United States that were based on a fear of Asian immigrants. He added that this discrimination was going to be taken advantage of by the Japanese imperialists who would, in turn, use racism to justify their own goals.¹⁷⁹ South African communist Tom Mann pointed out the “mistrust” between black Africans and white workers in South Africa and that racial division was deeply ingrained in South Africa.¹⁸⁰ Comrade Pepper of the United States recommended a need to go beyond simple self-determination and instead to promote complete equality between nationalities and races. He also suggested a “right of free emigration and immigration.”¹⁸¹ Israel Amter, noted in the last chapter for his general agreement with the “Theses on the Negro Question” from the Fourth Congress, repeated his call for the American blacks to take a leadership position and for the “Negro Question” to be dealt with amongst blacks.¹⁸² The National and Colonial Question had lost momentum by the Fifth Congress, owing to a weak report and a number of disparate voices, each of whom had his own

¹⁷⁷ Kotkin, 550.

¹⁷⁸ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 198-211.

¹⁷⁹ Enrica Collotti Pischel and Chiara Robertazzi in their summary of Katayama’s speech use the term “le racisme panasiatique.” Enrica Collotti Pischel and Chiara Robertazzi, *L’Internationale Communiste et Les Problèmes Coloniaux, 1919-1935* (Paris: Moulton & Co., 1968), 135. *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 198-199.

¹⁸⁰ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 203-204.

¹⁸¹ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 207-208.

¹⁸² *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 209.

opinions on how to move forward. This turn of events, however, showed the need for a generalized programme with some flexibility for local priorities and issues. That solution however did not come in 1924.

The development of the Negro Commission following the Fourth Congress and a desire to solve the “Negro Question” compelled some communists to press forward despite the issues at the Fifth Congress. Lovett Fort-Whiteman of the American party, who also criticized Manuilsky’s report, continued his vocal disparagement of communism’s tactics on race. He was the first African-American to attend the Lenin School in Moscow. Criticizing the American party, he pointed out the difficulties of gaining black followers in the United States. He owed these obstacles to racial discrimination, arguing that it was not a problem of class. Racial equality presented certain theoretical issues with which American communists had struggled.¹⁸³ He also suggested that an American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), in line with some of the suggestions of the Fourth Congress, take place in Chicago. The Congress, despite resistance from some American communists, took place in October 1925 and remained a force, albeit a minor one, in labour politics in the United States for the rest of the decade. The ANLC attempted to mobilize black workers. It also followed the Comintern line, articulating black issues on class lines, while also trying to link the American struggle to the greater struggle for black rights internationally. It also brought two prominent black communists, James Ford and George Padmore, into the fold.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, 200-201.

¹⁸⁴ Zumoff, 318-329.

Big Changes on the Horizon

Stalin's influence on the Comintern was evident elsewhere during the Fifth Comintern Congress. Zinoviev referenced the need to be prepared for a new series of wars with the imperialist powers. This concept gained in prominence in Comintern circles, and Stalin was able to mobilize these fears in his bid for power within the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁵ There was plenty of cause for alarm in the mid-1920s. The British General Strike led Britain to end relations with the Soviet Union. Italian Fascism was a looming threat for Soviet diplomacy. Germany distanced itself from the Soviets. France remained intransigent in its hostile policies toward the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the Japanese and the Americans were cold in their dealings with the Soviets.¹⁸⁶ Whether real or imagined, Soviet fears of war with the imperialist world carried some weight.

Typically, historians have cited the war scare beginning after the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, usually in 1926 or 1927.¹⁸⁷ The alarm of imminent war with the West, initially Britain, was sounded earlier in the Comintern. According to the Comintern, the United States came onto the imperialist scene following the First World War as an unrivalled force and a direct challenge to British dominance. The British, fearful of communist gains in China, intensified their antagonism towards the Soviet Union. The Comintern's publications stressed the need for a united front against imperialism. To

¹⁸⁵ Michal Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); John P. Sontag, "The Soviet War Scare of 1926-27," *Russian Review* 34, no. 1 (Jan., 1975): 66-77; Leonard Shapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Methuen & Co., 1985), 307-308; Kotkin, 616-625, 633-640. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew hinted that the concept of the war scare really gained traction in the Comintern first. McDermott & Agnew, 95.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Jabara Carley, *Silent Conflict: A Hidden History of Early Soviet-Western Relations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 205-347.

¹⁸⁷ For some examples, see Sontag, 66-77; Kotkin, 616-625, 633-640; Suny, 164-165.

assuage fears of workers in imperial powers, the Comintern asserted that the end of imperialism would lead to no change in quality of life in Europe, echoing resolutions from Comintern Congresses. In 1925, leading Bolsheviks were writing articles in the *Communist International*. Gregory Zinoviev, for example, penned one claiming that the British would seek to isolate the Soviet Union and would again create a coalition to destroy international communism. The Soviet Union remained the “guiding light” for the colonial world and would stand up to this challenge.¹⁸⁸

These early proclamations stressing impending war with the imperial world did not ignore the National and Colonial Question. Reports from various colonies continued to be commonplace in the *Communist International*.¹⁸⁹ Much as Lenin had stressed imperialism as moribund capitalism, communists pointed out that imperialism was in decline. While imperial rivalries intensified, communists asserted that imperial powers struggled to maintain their control of their colonies. As revolutionary and nationalist

¹⁸⁸ See “Theses on Tactics,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 7 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 11-36; John Pepper, “Anglo-American Imperialist Cooperation,” in *The Communist International Vol I*, no. 1014 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 18-37; “Results of the Enlarged Plenum of the E.C.C.I.,” in *The Communist International Vol I*, no. 11 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 3-21; Martynov, “British Imperialist Plot Against the U.S.S.R.,” in *The Communist International Vol I*, no. 14 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 31-49; G. Zinoviev, “Our International Position,” in *The Communist International Vol I*, no. 16 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 3-10.

¹⁸⁹ See K. Radek, “New Imperialist Attack on the East,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 9 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 17-26; Pierre Semard, “The War in Morocco,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 12 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 8-15; Andrei Chernov, “Events in Persia,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 17 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 30-45; “P. Kitaigorodsky, “Syria in the Struggle for Independence,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 17 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 46-53; Semaon, “International Imperialism and the Communist Party of Indonesia,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 17 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 75-82; “Chili and Anglo-American Imperialism,” in *The Communist International Vol 1*, no. 23 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925), 70-80; Charles Wurm, “The Intervention of the United States in Nicaragua,” in *The Communist International Vol 4*, no. 3 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927), 33-35; Kjai Samin, “The Uprising in Java and Sumatra,” in *The Communist International Vol 4*, no. 6 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927), 106-109; Kjai Samin, “The Uprising in Java and Sumatra (Part 2),” in *The Communist International Vol 4*, no. 8 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927), 147-151.

fervour increased, imperial powers spent more money to maintain order.¹⁹⁰ The British Empire remained the focus of many of these reports.¹⁹¹ Imperialism's need for a victory made them desperate and thus a threat to the Soviet Union. If their imperialism remained under siege, they could be defeated. While the colonial world occupied significant space in Comintern publications, it still was focused on the end result: the defeat of European imperialism.

Developments in China, however, called into question Comintern tactics. Beginning in March 1926, Chiang Kai-Shek, having just taken leadership of the Kuomintang, began to persecute members of the CCP, severing the partnership that was the gold standard for Stalin's vision of the Lenin's Theses for the National and Colonial Question. Whereas the hope had been that the Communist Party of China would be able to seize the revolutionary spirit and take leadership of the movement itself at the opportune moment, the national-bourgeois group, the Kuomintang betrayed the communists first, exposing the worst possible result for the Comintern's National and Colonial programme. This episode also further deepened the differences between Trotsky and Stalin, and their followers, in the leadership struggle.¹⁹² By 1928, Stalin had effectively outmaneuvered Trotsky.

¹⁹⁰ E. Varga, "Ways and Obstacles to the World Revolution," in *The Communist International* Vol 1, no. 18-19 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925-1926), 77-96.

¹⁹¹ John Pepper, "Britain's Balance Sheet for 1926," in *The Communist International* Vol 3, no. 5 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1926), 5-13; A British Communist, "Problems of the British Empire (Notes for a Research Worker)," in *The Communist International* Vol 3, no. 6 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1926), 17-20; J.T. Murphy, "After the British Empire Conference," in *The Communist International* Vol 4, no. 2 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927), 13-16.

¹⁹² Callaghan, 24-26.

The Sixth Comintern Congress and the Dawning of the Third Period

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow, from 17 July to 1 September 1928, was the most significant Comintern Congress since the Second Congress. It represented the most substantial tactical shift since the abandonment of world revolution in Europe. The Congress affirmed the beginning of the “third period” of capitalist development following the First World War. The Comintern argued that the collapse of capitalism was imminent and therefore the Comintern needed to aggressively mobilize the proletariat. The Comintern ended their United Front tactics. This period, sometimes referred to as “class against class,” called for parties to establish separate trade unions and to aim for control of the left in their countries. The Comintern returned to criticizing Social Democrats and anyone not aligned with communism. This general tactical shift led to important doctrinal changes for the National, Colonial and Racial Questions.¹⁹³

Nikolai Bukharin, President of the ECCI, did his best to promote the new line and to reconceptualise the world within it. He opened the Congress with a speech on the international situation. While not ignored entirely, Bukharin limited his remarks on the National and Colonial Question to a brief discussion of China and India, two regions that the Comintern prioritized, thanks to stronger than usual independence movements. Bukharin asserted that German imperialism was on the rebound from Versailles. Anglo-American antagonism was growing, and Latin America was going to be more important

¹⁹³ Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 291-295; Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, “Reflections on the Origins of the ‘Third Period’: Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 3 (Jul., 1989): 387-410; Jacobson, 268-272; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, 68-80; Worley, “Courting Disaster?” 1-17.

in the future.¹⁹⁴ This limited discussion of the National and Colonial Question was not lost on the delegates. Several delegates openly criticized Bukharin's report. Particularly damning was that the Sixth Congress hosted the highest number of parties in Congress history, including many colonial parties. The mention of Latin America pleased Latin American delegates, but they wanted to see the Comintern spend more time on their issues. The lack of any mention of Africa troubled the South African party and others.¹⁹⁵ Bukharin commended the criticism of his speech, but he urged delegates to focus on the bigger picture. He added that the danger of imperialist war and the Soviet war scare were the most important issues.¹⁹⁶

Debate continued in other sessions. The split in the revolutionary movement in China in 1927 brought to the fore the issues of the United Front policy with regard to the National and Colonial Question. The Third Period demanded a reconsideration of tactics, resulting in the "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies." The "Theses" were an amalgamation of deference to Lenin and lessons learned from the faults of the United Front. The "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" from the Second Congress remained the "guiding line" for the party, again ignoring the resolutions of the Fourth Congress. It reviewed the situation in China and prioritized India, Indonesia and Latin America. The "Theses" repeated old themes.

¹⁹⁴ "The International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern. Comrade Bukharin's Report of the Executive Committee of the Comintern," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 41 (30 July 1928): 725-740.

¹⁹⁵ "Discussion on the Report of Comrade Bukharin," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 44 (3 August 1928): 770-791; "Discussion on the Report of Comrade Bukharin," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 46 (8 August 1928): 811-822; "Discussion on the Report of Comrade Bukharin," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 48 (13 August 1928): 839-862.

¹⁹⁶ "Comrade Bukharin's Speech in Reply to the Discussion on the International Situation," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 49 (13 August 1928): 863-874.

Lenin's *Imperialism* and Stalin's additions were recast at length. Youth, women, trade unions and peasant groups were given roles in the struggle for colonial liberation.¹⁹⁷

Tactically though, the National and Colonial Question remained a confounding problem. Many colonies still had weak communist parties and some had weak independence movements. The Comintern prepared delegates to consider this problem, including a discussion piece in *Communist International* just as the Sixth Congress began.¹⁹⁸ To immediately bring about a wholesale end to United Front tactics in the colonial world would prove disastrous as it would be a drastic shift and permanently damage colonial communist parties. To blindly reaffirm them was equally problematic, as the situation in China had shown. Therefore, the Comintern adopted a flexible approach. It warned against ideological errors which could cause the communist parties to lag behind changing circumstances in the independence movements. It reminded communists to be aware of different sections of the national-revolutionary movements, such as students as they were often the most enthusiastic but failed to truly understand socialism. They also could not be a true ally of the oppressed because of their class. The Theses noted learning from China was important, but simply transferring any lessons to other regions was wrong. Linking with national-bourgeois groups of a revolutionary character was still allowed, but parties should be aware of the problems of doing so and maintain their autonomy. The "Theses" demanded the communist parties be aware of the situation

¹⁹⁷ "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies," *Comintern and National & Colonial Questions: Documents of Congresses* (New Delhi: D.P. Sinha for Communist Party of India, 1973), 59-123; Callaghan, 26-30.

¹⁹⁸ "Organizational Problems in Eastern Countries," in *The Communist International Vol V*, no. 14 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1928), 336-341.

in their own colony and act appropriately.¹⁹⁹ The “Theses” were guidelines aimed at ensuring communist parties remained communist in the revolutionary struggle. The Comintern replaced the rigidity Manuilsky called for at the Fifth Congress with flexibility based on local conditions, again doing an about-face.²⁰⁰ However, while parties may have had some wiggling room, the expectation was that they still needed to follow Third Period thinking which was rigid in its tactics.

The Comintern still urged communist parties in imperial countries to support colonial independence, reaffirming the resolutions of the Second Comintern Congress. It instructed parties to yet again combat the influence of the socialists who had clearly demonstrated their “bourgeois” position, such as support for the civilizing mission and the maintenance of imperialism, two positions that plagued the Second International before the First World War. The Communist International also vowed to place special importance on national and colonial issues.²⁰¹

Remembering the “Negro Question”

Whereas the fight for colonial independence saw little tactical evolution, the Comintern nearly ignored racial issues. The original theses had no mention of race or the “Negro Question.” American and African communists convinced others of the need to

¹⁹⁹ “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies,” 59-123. John Callaghan suggests that the theses put the colonial communists in a very difficult situation with “impossible targets.” Callaghan, 26-30.

²⁰⁰ At the Fourth Congress, M.N. Roy had supported greater local variation of the application of the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question.”

²⁰¹ “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies,” 120-123.

discuss it, especially in light of some of the work done by the Negro Commission.²⁰²

Initially, many perceived the Commission as preoccupied with American racial issues, stemming from its significantly American membership. Because of their influence, and the importance of the United States as an imperial power, Comintern tactics placed African Americans in a leadership role on black issues. The Negro Commission's involvement in hosting an American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) in Chicago in 1925 added to the America-centric perception of the body and the Comintern on these issues. While the ANLC aimed to be more international in scope, it failed to mobilize much support. Historian Hakim Adi suggests that the success of the Congress lay in Comintern support for black issues. This conclusion is only part of its importance; it also reflected the initiative of certain individual communists in promoting certain issues important to them and the Comintern's willingness to support them as long as they conformed to the Comintern's tactics. The Negro Commission and a greater awareness of racism led to another shift for the Comintern; more black communists sat on relevant committees to develop an appropriate resolution.²⁰³

Leading to the Sixth Congress, the biggest issue was how to develop a resolution to deal with black issues internationally. A related discussion regarded what role self-

²⁰² "The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies: Report of Comrade Kuusinen," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 68 (4 October 1928): 1225-1248; "Questions of the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 72 (17 October 1928): 1299-1326; "Continuation of the Discussion on the Questions of the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 74 (25 October 1928): 1343-1370; "Continuation of the Discussion on the Questions of the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 76 (30 October 1928): 1387-1478; "Concluding Speech of Comrade Kuusinen on the Colonial Question," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 81 (21 November 1928): 1519-1530; "Report of the Colonial Commission: Speech of Comrade Kuusinen," *International Press Correspondence* 8, no. 81 (21 November 1928): 1542.

²⁰³ Adi, 29-35.

determination was to have in black affairs. Harry Haywood and Nikolai Nasanov took on this task. Harry Haywood was an African American communist who had become displeased with the tactics of W.E.B. Dubois' National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). He had met with Nikolai Nasanov, a Russian member of the Young Communist International in Chicago, and major proponent of self-determination for African Americans.²⁰⁴ Nasanov convinced Haywood that the best opportunity for equality for African Americans was to look at their socio-economic condition, instead of race. The conditions in the southern United States, generally agrarian, suggested that the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" as drafted by Lenin in 1920 were applicable to the African American population.²⁰⁵ The American Civil War and Reconstruction were "the unfinished bourgeois-democratic revolution." This unfinished revolution, coupled with the effects of American imperialism, made African Americans a subject people by all relevant definitions: ethnicity, economics, and culture.²⁰⁶ To Haywood and Nasanov, race mattered for inculcating certain values onto the population, but their shared values, experiences and economic status in the United States made them a colonized peoples and a nation.

Together, during a meeting of the Negro Commission of the Anglo-American Secretariat in August 1928, they presented a set of theses on which they had worked, colloquially known as the "Haywood-Nasanov Theses." The theses dealt with African Americans specifically. It criticized American communists for their failures to adequately

²⁰⁴ Zumoff, 346; Haywood, 218.

²⁰⁵ Haywood, 218-222.

²⁰⁶ Haywood, 227-235.

deal with black issues. It also embraced attacks on white chauvinism, declaring that “the prerequisites of a nationalist movement exist” for African Americans, and called for self-determination.²⁰⁷ Initial reaction was negative. Most disagreed with the classification of blacks in the Theses as allies of the proletariat, instead of as equal members and thereby conflating nationality with race.²⁰⁸ The second day of discussion saw more support for the theses. Delegates reflected upon Lenin’s own statements, where African Americans and the Irish were considered similarly, and thus racial identity and national identity could be one and the same.²⁰⁹ More generally, however, many saw the theses as a promising contribution to any discussion of race. Max Petrovsky, directly referencing Lenin’s “Theses on the National and Colonial Question,” supported forwarding the “Haywood-Nasanov Theses” to the committees of the Sixth Congress. After three days of discussion, the committee voted by a count of six to four, to pass the theses along to the Negro Commission of the Sixth Congress as a basis for discussion. The debate was entirely preoccupied with American issues, but the resolution passed by the Commission made clear the relevance to the greater problem – it was a part of the general discussion on black issues.²¹⁰

The Soviet Union’s most preminent expert of race and one of its teachers at the Lenin School, Endre Sik, writing as A. Shiek, had some concerns regarding the “Negro Question.” His criticisms were timely as his article was published as the Sixth Congress was ongoing. He also highlighted many of the same problems some Negro Commission

²⁰⁷ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 46.

²⁰⁸ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 46-50.

²⁰⁹ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 52-56.

²¹⁰ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 52-56, 82-93.

delegates had. In his piece, he explained his conception of race. He attacked the concept of superior or inferior races as a concept developed by exploiter classes. He pointed out that any anthropological definition of race was irrelevant to the racial oppression that existed in the world. Circumstance frequently defined oppression, not race. This difference, according to Sik, was that there were different circumstances for the black population in the United States and in Africa, similar to the different treatment of Jews throughout the world. Black Africans were oppressed as a “colonial nation” instead of because of their race; African-Americans were oppressed because of race. Therefore, the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question” were acceptable for blacks in Africa, but not applicable in the American context. Sik argued self-determination, in the manner that Nasanov and Haywood proposed it, was not the proper tactic in the American context and instead equality should be the goal. The Comintern should strive to end racial prejudice within the American party.²¹¹ Neither Sik’s concerns, nor his suggestions, were considered. However, what it did show was that there was not full agreement on how to proceed, and that there were many communists who prioritized fighting racial prejudice.

The Sixth Congress was in many ways a turning point for the “Negro Question.” Prior to the Congress, Fort-Whiteman, noted earlier for his involvement with the ANLC, submitted a note, outlining a series of items that he felt needed to be discussed at the Comintern Congress. Included in this list was a need to bring more black delegates into higher levels of Comintern work and to create a Bureau for the purpose of collecting materials on and to give direction to both the American and African struggle thereby

²¹¹ A. Shiek, “The Comintern Programme and the Racial Problem,” in *The Communist International* Vol V, no. 16 (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1928), 407-411.

uniting the two regions.²¹² The Negro Commission itself was a collection of delegates from a wide number of countries and regions including the United States, South Africa, Great Britain, France, and Latin America. Five of these delegates were African Americans. Promptly, the Comintern created a sub-committee to discuss South Africa and the United States with the intention to develop individual plans of action for primary areas of importance before creating a more general line regarding black issues.²¹³ The section of the “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies” on the “Negro Question” reflected this methodology.

The “Theses” linked the “Negro Question” to the National and Colonial Question. The Comintern offered different tactics for different regions. The Comintern emphasized the building of communism and of independence movements in Latin America and the majority of Africa. The United States and South Africa, however, were its significant priorities. In the United States, the Comintern encouraged American communists to promote racial equality and call for an end to segregation. The Comintern argued that African American communists needed to convince non-blacks that the success of the greater proletarian revolution relied on an end to racism. In South Africa, the Comintern highlighted racial divisions and the colonial nature of the white government which benefitted by exploiting the black African population. Much like in the United States, the Comintern commanded the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) to fight for black acceptance in non-black trade unions.

²¹² RGASPI, 495.155.56. 96.

²¹³ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 97-103.

In both regions, the Comintern advocated for self-determination on racial lines. Echoing Harry Haywood's arguments in the Negro Commission and the "Haywood-Nasanov Theses", the black population in both the United States and in South Africa was seen as a nationality. In South Africa, the Comintern demanded the creation of an independent black African republic, highlighting the need to make assurances to whites that their rights would not be abridged in this republic.²¹⁴ For all of the ambiguity elsewhere in the Theses, not only was the Comintern more concrete in its tactics, it was more radical than ever before.

Perhaps no one cared as much about the "Negro Question" as black communists. The results of the Sixth Congress increased their influence. They pushed for racial self-determination and they were an active part of the newly developed Negro Bureau, created in the aftermath of the Sixth Congress. Their voices grew louder. In the South African context, James La Guma and other supporters managed to force some of the more stubborn and entrenched leadership of the CPSA to follow the Comintern-dictated Native Republic Thesis.²¹⁵ In the American context, the Comintern issued a second version of the Theses in 1930 when the Communist Party of America failed to implement them initially. Historian Hakim Adi pointed out that factional issues may have played a role. Some members of the American Communist Party disagreed with the concept of self-

²¹⁴ The discussions on South Africa and "an independent native republic" had been taking place since March 1927 and predate some of the American discussions. The Sixth Congress, however, was when the CPSA was forced by the Comintern to accept the Thesis and the general acceptance of self-determination for blacks helped make disagreement impossible. "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies," 116-118.

²¹⁵ This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

determination. The African American members of the Negro Bureau, which included Haywood, were in favour.²¹⁶

One final note should be added regarding the topic of race at the Sixth Congress. Indigenous peoples were mentioned, although the Comintern tackled their plight carelessly. The Comintern redefined Canada and Australia as imperial nations; the Comintern outlined that these dominions had been established through the destruction of the Indigenous peoples.²¹⁷ But the “Negro Question” was a separate issue from other general racial issues. Indigenous peoples and foreign workers were not discussed in the Negro Commission and only mentioned separately, if at all, in general colonial theses. Therefore, it is very likely that the Comintern saw these racial issues as separate strands and one cannot assume that positions discussed or resolved by the Negro Commission would simply be extended to other races. The ramifications of this narrow application can be seen in the Australian context with regards to Aboriginal peoples and Melanesian peoples.²¹⁸ There was no formal plan of action regarding Indigenous peoples or foreign workers internationally emanating from any Congress of the Comintern.

The League Against Imperialism

As the Comintern underwent a general ideological shift, individual communists spearheaded several projects to fight against imperialism or promote racial equality under Comintern auspices. Two examples, the League against Imperialism (LAI) and the

²¹⁶ Adi, 77-80.

²¹⁷ “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies,” 69-70.

²¹⁸ See Chapter Five.

International Trade Union of Coloured and Negro Workers (ITUCNW), were the most significant and highlight alternate, yet generally unsuccessful, attempts made by communists to mobilize either anti-imperial or anti-racist supporters.

In the mid-1920s, the focus on fighting imperialism and colonial oppression motivated some communists to develop a group specifically for this purpose. Unlike the Baku Congress or the Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, the initial meeting was supposed to be a gathering of European communists. While no such formal gathering took place, the idea of such a meeting motivated Willi Munzenburg, a German communist, to attempt to create the League Against Imperialism.²¹⁹ Moscow supported Munzenburg's concept.²²⁰

The initial intention of the LAI has been debated by historians. Some historians, such as E.H. Carr, Stephen Howe, Jonathan Derrick and Vijay Prashad, suggested it was nothing more than a Comintern front organization, an auxiliary organization in order to mobilize support from the Left, generally speaking.²²¹ Fredrik Petersson argued that the term front organization is incorrect and instead, the LAI was better understood as a “sympathizing communist organization” which sought to extend communist influence

²¹⁹ In a meeting in February 1926 in Berlin, a League Against Colonial Oppression was formed by delegates present which included a mix of European socialists, interested individuals and Munzenburg himself. This group would go on to develop and organize what became the League Against Imperialism in Brussels in 1917. Jean Jones, *The League Against Imperialism* (Fulwood: The Socialist History Society, 1996), 4-6.

²²⁰ Fredrik Petersson, ““We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers”. Willi Munzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925-1933” (PhD diss., Abo Akademi University, 2013), 96-114.

²²¹ E.H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 385. Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 71-72; Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's 'Agitators': Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 174; Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 19-20.

while avoiding suspicion.²²² He also concluded it became a “hub” for the entire anti-imperialist movement within Europe and the world, irrespective of ideological position.²²³ Sean McMeekin was more cynical. McMeekin claimed a double lie was at work. Many of those involved were not sympathetic to the Comintern or Moscow, misleading the Comintern in the aims of the organization; Munzenburg and others lied to those involved, causing them to believe that Moscow had not financially backed the LAI, nor had it any role in its organization. He also argued that Willi Munzenburg manipulated the Comintern into agreeing to fund the LAI.²²⁴ John Callaghan stated that its purpose was to bring together the left and mobilize its anti-imperial sentiment, while linking it with nationalists in the colonial world.²²⁵

The Comintern intended the LAI to be a front organization. The Comintern wanted the LAI’s predecessor, the League against Colonial Oppression (LACO), “to act as a neutral intermediary between the Communist International and nationalist movements in the colonies.”²²⁶ In instructions to Munzenburg, the Comintern suggested the agenda for the Brussels Conference, including who to invite and what topics should be discussed. The Comintern took great care to note not only its concerns over the possible existence of “opportunistic elements” among these speakers, but also that a

²²² Petersson argued that the term front organization comes from its use during the United Front period and carries an antagonistic meaning that includes a value judgment, but also obscures the true goals of the organization. He notes that the terms’ baggage comes directly from the early uses of the term during the 1930s and into the Cold War. Petersson, “We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers,” 47-51.

²²³ Fredrik Petersson, “Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 53-54.

²²⁴ Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Munzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 193-197.

²²⁵ Callaghan, 30.

²²⁶ RGASPI, 542.1.3, 10-11.

communist wing would maintain control of the League and determine its general ideology.²²⁷

The League was founded in Brussels on 10 February 1927. The Congress, in general, was a success; 174 delegates attended from 134 organizations or parties, representing 34 countries. Of these delegates, sixty percent were involved in colonial independence movements. The Congress attracted a wide array of individuals who gave the appearance that the LAI was not a communist-driven organization. Individuals involved included Henri Barbusse, who gave the opening address, Upton Sinclair, Maxim Gorky, Albert Einstein and others. The future first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru was on the LAI's executive committee. While they were sympathetic to the proposed aim of the Congress, many could not be said to be communist.²²⁸

The main goal of the conference was the call for self-determination of the colonial world.²²⁹ Many British delegates discussed Chinese affairs. Delegates signed a Sino-Indian agreement, likely drafted by Nehru.²³⁰ Some delegates representing the ANLC, South Africa and French West Africa wrote a resolution on the "Negro Question."²³¹ Historian Jean Jones argues that the most important function of the Congress was to allow delegates to develop their networks and meet other like-minded individuals.²³²

²²⁷ RGASPI, 542.1.3, 15-17.

²²⁸ Petersson, "Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement," 50-52; Prashad, 21-22; Derrick, 172-178.

²²⁹ Prashad, 22.

²³⁰ Jones, 6-8.

²³¹ Zumoff, 331. For more on black issues, see Derrick, 175-177.

²³² Jones, 8.

The response to the Congress was generally positive. The attendance of the Congress impressed the Comintern.²³³ Fenner Brockway of the Independent Labour Party saw the Congress as a significant event and the only “international” conference he had attended, owing to the significant number of colonial delegates.²³⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru saw it as confirmation of the existence of a strong anti-colonial movement in Europe.²³⁵ However, there were critical voices. The Second International claimed the LAI was communist-run and refused to consider otherwise.²³⁶ Colonial governments cracked down on LAI literature and persecuted delegates following the conference.²³⁷ The Comintern also had a degree of skepticism, although this could be in part due to its desire to ensure the alleged neutrality of the LAI. Immediately after the first Congress, *Communist International* published a critique with cautious optimism about the LAI, suggesting that while it was clear that the delegates wanted to destroy imperialism and support colonial independence, they did so by emphasizing positions that were either wrong or social democratic.²³⁸

While the LAI did spread enthusiasm and served to act as a legitimate anti-colonial group, the evolution of Comintern policy made it difficult to maintain the LAI under its initial mandate. As noted above, in 1928, the Comintern discarded all united front policies and prohibited any allegiance to or cooperation with social democratic forces. The LAI could no longer act as a front organization claiming neutrality. Instead, in

²³³ Petersson, “Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement,” 57.

²³⁴ Howe, 72-73.

²³⁵ Petersson, “We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers,” 172-175.

²³⁶ Howe, 73-74; Jones, 9.

²³⁷ Jones, 8.

²³⁸ “Under the Control of the Struggling Masses,” in *The Communist International* Vol 4, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1927), 46-48.

order to reflect the new line, Willi Munzenburg and other members, including American communist and American representative to the LAI, James L. Ford, introduced a more militant line, attacking reformist tendencies within the League.²³⁹

The Second Congress of the LAI, the Frankfurt Congress of 1929, displayed the new tone for the LAI. James Maxton, member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), was a focal point of hostility going forward. He was a symbol of the social democrats, leftist reformists and other elements that the Comintern no longer wanted involved with its organization. Willi Munzenberg, following his new orders from Moscow, began the attack before other members of the communist bloc within the League condemned the KMT, pledged allegiance to the Soviet Union, and demanded the need to determine who was a foe to the League. This last charge included Maxton and others like him. As the Congress continued, communist delegates introduced Comintern rhetoric in their speeches, including the war scare and criticism of bourgeois nationalist groups, such as the KMT and the Indian National Congress, of which Nehru was a member of, for working against independence. No longer was the LAI ideologically neutral. Now, it was a Comintern organization, and this Congress was an example of the Comintern's control over the proceedings.²⁴⁰ The Comintern praised the Frankfurt Congress in *Communist International*. It pressed the LAI to defend the Soviet Union, both as the true rival of imperialism and as opposed to the impending war, placing upon it the same demands it

²³⁹ Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers," 237-247. Prashad suggested this evolution was incredibly damaging to the League's success. Prashad, 29. John Callaghan also argued that the dawn of the Third Period weakened Comintern front organizations broadly with the LAI being a particularly clear example. Callaghan, 30.

²⁴⁰ Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers," 327-338; Jones, 13-16; Derrick, 184-186.

gave every communist party. The Comintern further reminded the LAI that it needed to increase its links to the proletariat and also to other colonial parties.²⁴¹ The League conformed to the Comintern line post-Sixth Comintern Congress and was no longer considered independent by any keen observer; it was a Comintern initiative even though the Comintern wanted to still suggest otherwise.²⁴²

Following Frankfurt, the League had little influence. While some of the networks established continued to prove important for some colonial communists, the League was disorganized and never maintained the enthusiasm of its earlier years. Many former members who were not communist were either expelled or left.²⁴³ Nehru, for example, after hearing of how the INC representative at the Frankfurt Congress was treated, stated that the LAI would never have the support of the INC again.²⁴⁴ The League had its offices in Berlin raided in 1931, and by the time of Adolf Hitler's rise in 1933, the League had no physical location from which to operate.²⁴⁵ Largely ineffectual after this point, it quietly dissolved in 1937.²⁴⁶

The League Against Imperialism was important, however, as one example of individual communists taking the anti-imperialism of the Comintern to heart and developing their own initiative to support colonial liberation and international

²⁴¹ "The Last Session of the League Against Imperialism," in *The Communist International* Vol 6, no. 8 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1929), 239-243.

²⁴² Despite this image of the Comintern being confirmed in the eyes of many, some individuals still were able to maintain their international contacts and remained strong allies to colonial figures. For example, historian Stephen Howe highlights CPGB member Reginald Bridgeman, who Jawaharlal Nehru continued to contact for assistance after this break. He however also promotes the strength of the LAI in Britain following the Frankfurt Congress, something that later research, including that of this thesis, leads one to suggest otherwise. Howe, 74-77.

²⁴³ Howe, 71-77.

²⁴⁴ Jones, 16; Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers," 331.

²⁴⁵ Petersson, "Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement," 65-69.

²⁴⁶ Derrick, 375.

communism. Individual communists could pursue pet projects based on their personal motivations. Willi Munzenberg developed a group which would act as a hub for anti-imperialists, while also being sympathetic to communist aims. The shift to Third Period tactics hurt the concept, but not enough to prevent it from having some role in Comintern tactics. It was a useful project to Moscow and one it would support until Hitler's rise hampered its ability to do the work it was tasked to do. The priorities of Western communist parties also ensured its downfall.

The Colonial Conference of 1929 That Never Was

While the raids and changing political landscape of Germany played a role in hastening the League's operational collapse, there were also structural reasons for its collapse. Many of the European communist parties did not prioritize anti-colonialism. The Eurocentrism of international communism was present from the start, becoming more obvious at the Fifth and Sixth Comintern Congresses. Bolshevik leadership was not the only problem. European parties had a poor track record of helping colonial parties. This Eurocentrism was not unknown to Comintern officials. Following the Sixth Congress, the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern desired more emphasis on colonial work, at least within Europe. Shortly after the Congress, on Otto Kuusinen's order, the Comintern named R. Page Arnot the liaison between the LAI and the Comintern.²⁴⁷ Arnot spent most of 1929 in Moscow and was a prominent anti-colonial activist in the Communist Party of

²⁴⁷ Otto Kuusinen was the chairman of the Eastern Secretariat at this time.

Great Britain. Arnot became one of the most powerful voices of colonial issues in the Comintern, taking over from the expelled M.N. Roy.²⁴⁸

The Eastern Secretariat of the ECCI tasked Arnot to evaluate the implementation of the National and Colonial Question by the European parties, to investigate why these parties avoided colonial work and to propose solutions to this problem. Over the first two months of 1929, Arnot travelled from Moscow to Germany to meet with Munzenburg, to Cologne to meet with the LAI executive, to London to meet with the CPGB, to Paris to meet with the Communist Party of France (PCF), to Brussels and to Amsterdam. The investigation was only part of his mandate; he also sought to organize a European Colonial Conference.²⁴⁹

After having visited each party and discussing matters with them, Arnot filed a report to the Comintern which presented a disappointing outlook. Virtually all of the parties had little to no connection with their home country's colonies. The British party was too small and had limited connections such as domestic links to the LAI, certain trade unions and colonial emigres. France was in the best shape of the four parties Arnot had met. The PCF had, at least, worked on some "negro work" in North Africa and supported the Ligue pour defence de la race negre (LDRN), a rare positive note. Otherwise, the PCF was largely still limited to dealing with domestic issues. The Belgian and Dutch parties had issues with the LAI, questioning its ideological makeup, while also having virtually no contact with their major colonies, the Congo and Indonesia respectively.²⁵⁰ Things

²⁴⁸ Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers," 255.

²⁴⁹ Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers," 256.

²⁵⁰ RGASPI, 495.154.364, 52-54.

were as bad as they seemed with little hope of getting better without a significant change in approach. This change in approach, for Arnot, came in the form of an authoritative Colonial Conference that would impose Comintern tactics on these parties.²⁵¹ Support from European parties to colonial parties was a key feature of the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question.” If European parties were not holding up their end, many colonial parties were rudderless. Equally important was that if the regions that the Comintern arguably had most interest in had parties that could ignore certain platforms of the Comintern, it should not be a surprise when each of the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia failed to consider combatting colonialism as a priority. Furthermore, when the Comintern did interfere, as would be the case in South Africa, it asked European communists to oversee colonial party affairs. European ignorance of colonial or racial affairs hampered the effectiveness of the appropriate Comintern programmes.

Initially the purpose of the Colonial Conference was to “[put] into operation...the decisions of the CI on colonial questions, more especially [sic.] by means of closer coordination of all colonial activities.”²⁵² Berlin and Koln were proposed locations for the Conference which would take place in April 1929.²⁵³ The Conference would help open doors, informing parties of possible colonial connections within their home countries, and encourage them to use the Lenin School and other similar programmes through the Comintern to bolster their understanding of colonial questions. The PolitSecretariat of the

²⁵¹ Petersson, “We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers,” 259-260.

²⁵² RGASPI, 495.154.406, 1-2.

²⁵³ RGASPI, 495.154.406, 1-2.

Comintern agreed to the creation of a Commission specifically to plan this conference. Organizers suggested 31 delegates, nineteen of whom would come from Western European communist parties, with the Conference lasting no longer than seven days.²⁵⁴

While planning the conference, Arnot and Hungarian communist Ludwig Madiar (Magyar) developed what became known as the “Magyar Thesis,” formally titled “The Organisation of the Colonial Work of the European communist parties.” The resolution delineated the many failings of the European communist parties to engage in “colonial routine work.” Many of the suggestions made should have been second nature in terms of unifying the European parties to their colonial counterparts. Articles on colonial affairs needed to be widely available. Articles should be sent to any trade union publications in the colonies by whatever channels were available. Many colonial parties had little knowledge of party structure and organization, so Magyar suggested that European parties should take the opportunity to provide advice if their colonial counterparts requested it. Communist party members in Europe should travel to colonies and guide the parties. The report also highlighted ship workers and students, many of whom came from colonies, as targets for agitation.²⁵⁵ The report ended with reference to the colonial commissions of each party:

The colonial commissions must not only read the colonial press, discuss the political and economic situation in the colonies involved, write articles or pamphlets on colonial questions and undertake and conduct investigational work with regard to the colonies, but must also carry on a

²⁵⁴ RGASPI, 495.18.670, 3-4, 6-7. Fredrik Petersson also suggested this conference was done outside of Willi Munzenburg’s knowledge. Initially this may have been the case but Munzenburg had to be aware eventually. Arnot messaged him in May 1929 referencing the conference. Petersson, “We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers,” 268; RGASPI, 542.1.30, 41.

²⁵⁵ RGASPI, 495.18.670, 49-55.

ceaseless activity in the organisational field, first of all in the application of the tasks outlined above.²⁵⁶

For Magyar, and Arnot, the parties needed to do more. The “Magyar Thesis” outlined what European parties should aim to accomplish with regards to the colonial world.

The conference however never occurred. Many parties were slow in submitting reports to the Commission, halting progress, to the point that the proposed conference was later postponed until May, and then until July, before being postponed indefinitely.²⁵⁷

The cancellation of the conference was in part a result of R. Page Arnot’s sudden resignation from his post. The Comintern dispatched Arnot to the United States in order to resolve the factional struggles in American communism. He could not continue to work on organizing the Conference and was replaced by Alexander Bittleman, an American communist. Bittleman accomplished little and instead, the Comintern and the many delegates involved turned their attention to the aforementioned Frankfurt Congress of the LAI and the Tenth Plenum of the Comintern which both occurred in July.²⁵⁸

Arnot’s report and the aborted plans for the Colonial Conference clarified the priorities of European communist parties. Colonial matters barely registered. The Eurocentrism of the European parties was hard to shake. Even when the Comintern castigated European parties for their failure to support colonial independence, no change occurred. Part of this failure to change was a function of the prioritization of European affairs in international communism. With repeated concerns about war between imperialist powers, and between those powers and the Soviet Union, maintaining strong

²⁵⁶ RGASPI, 495.18.670, 54-55.

²⁵⁷ RGASPI, 495.18.670, 101.

²⁵⁸ Petersson, “We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers,” 268-273.

parties that could aid the Soviet Union in Western Europe was more important. If these parties tackled colonial affairs, it was a bonus, but not one over which the Comintern was willing to upset established leadership.²⁵⁹ The American case also dealt with similar problems, but with race being more relevant. The “Negro Question” became a significant issue for the Comintern in the late 1920s. The United States, with its significant African American population, was a testing ground for some of the Comintern’s tactics on these issues. Therefore, ensuring that the party was following Comintern dictates was far more important. As a result, the Comintern continued to press the Communist Party of the United States to adopt the correct approach. On colonial affairs, however, all the Comintern was willing to do was castigate these parties and hope they would see the light. Comintern response to European affairs, which were prioritized by Moscow, illuminates how it would respond to some colonial affairs. Priorities mattered in the Communist International. South Africa, for example, became important because of its racial makeup. Australia and Canada, though having some significance as potential battlegrounds between British and American imperialism, were more peripheral and therefore, could be less engaged on certain issues or avoid Comintern attention altogether.

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers

The prioritization of the “Negro Question” was the other side of the Comintern’s colonial work during this period. As mentioned earlier, the Sixth Congress developed a Negro Bureau in the Eastern Secretariat and a Negro Commission in the Anglo-American

²⁵⁹ Unlike, for example, Trotskyism.

Secretariat for the purposes of coordinating its efforts on black issues. This renewed effort to deal with black issues was also reflected in trade union work. In March 1928, the Red International Labour Union (RILU) elected black communist James Ford to its executive to increase its capabilities to deal with black issues. Ford, with other leading African American representatives present at the Sixth Congress, drafted a resolution which developed the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW). The idea had the full support of the ECCI. Notably, recognizing the issues endemic in European parties, some supporters suggested the ITUCNW was needed because of the inability of the Western communist parties to deal with black issues.²⁶⁰

The initial purpose of the ITUCNW was to unite the African Atlantic, with representatives from the United States, South Africa, Northern and Western Africa, and Latin and South America.²⁶¹ It would promote the organization of trade unions, ideally uniting white and black workers, although supporting segregated unions if racism made it necessary. Much like in other Comintern initiatives of the time, it was responsible for establishing global connections and developing a worldwide network for the “Negro Question.” It published its own bulletin, *The Negro Worker*, and began planning an international conference.²⁶² By 1929, the ITUCNW placed itself within the Comintern’s Third Period way of thinking, mentioning the struggle of blacks worldwide, both on

²⁶⁰ Adi, 43-44. Later on, in early 1929, at the same time Arnot was meeting with European parties, James Ford was engaged in a similar tour hoping to gain support for black issues and establish connections between the European parties and Africa. Adi, 92; Derrick, 196.

²⁶¹ The first representatives were James Ford of the United States, James La Guma of South Africa and Ducados of Guadalupe. Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 131-132.

²⁶² Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 132. On *The Negro Worker*, the history of the publication was rocky at its start. Its first run began in July 1928, published in both English and French, and only lasted four editions. A second run began in March 1930. The third, and most successful run, started in January 1931, initially as *The International Negro Workers’ Review* before reverting to the old *The Negro Worker* name in March 1931. Adi, 88; Callaghan, 30.

economic and racial lines, in the same vein as the war scare and the imminent threat of an imperialist war against the Soviet Union.²⁶³

Organization of the ITUCNW conference began in 1929. The ECCI suggested Berlin, or another German location. The hope was to hold the conference in 1929, but it did not occur until 1930. However, the LAI's Frankfurt Congress offered an opportunity for ITUCNW delegates and interested delegates from Africa to meet for the purposes of discussing the conference in more detail.²⁶⁴ The meeting confirmed a conference date, July 1930, and location, London, owing to the large black population under British imperial rule and to undermine the new Labour government. Jomo Kenyatta, future leader of Kenya, was present and after the Congress, the Comintern invited him to study at its Lenin School in Moscow. This meeting also called for African independence from imperial influence, reminding delegates of the link between the "Negro Question" and the colonial question. The process also showed how powerful the combination of the LAI, the ITUCNW and the Negro Bureau of the Comintern could be in organizing workers under their banner.²⁶⁵

Unfortunately, little work was done until 1930. Most of 1930 was spent with ITUCNW leaders travelling to or contacting various communist parties, trade unions and other sympathizing groups to gain support and inviting them to the conference.²⁶⁶ The attitude of European communist parties towards colonial work hampered efforts too as

²⁶³ Adi, 90.

²⁶⁴ RGASPI, 542.1.30, 48. James Ford formally requested to hold a preliminary meeting at the Frankfurt Congress which outlined much of what would become confirmed, including the July 1930 Conference date.

²⁶⁵ Adi, 93-97.

²⁶⁶ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 205-238. Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 68-69.

they were hesitant to back the conference. Comintern advice and support was hard to obtain.²⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the Labour Government of Britain refused to allow the Conference to take place in London, forcing organizers to move it to Hamburg, Germany. Eventually the Conference was able to bring seventeen delegates together.²⁶⁸ The Conference reaffirmed the line of the previous Frankfurt meeting, and gave delegates a platform on which to share their experiences. It also established a working committee, based out of Hamburg, to run ITUCNW affairs.²⁶⁹

Historians of the ITUCNW saw the Hamburg Conference as incredibly important, but indicative of the problems with the Comintern as well. Hakim Adi suggested that the Conference was most important for showing the strength of black leadership within the ITUCNW and the “miraculous” effort needed to pull off the Conference. He argued that the lack of support, both from communist parties and the Comintern, both factors which he stressed continued well after the Hamburg Conference, shows that speaking of a monolithic Comintern where “Moscow’s Gold” was thrown about is inaccurate.²⁷⁰ Holger Weiss suggested that the Conference was “impressive” for what it was able to accomplish, but it was not yet the international group it aimed to be.²⁷¹ Adi and Weiss both claimed that the Hamburg Conference reflected a general Pan-Africanist line that sought to build international connections and promote African issues. Weiss stressed the

²⁶⁷ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 251-267.

²⁶⁸ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 238-249. Delegates included Herbert Macaulay of Nigeria, and representatives of Sierra Leone, the LDRN, the Railway Workers Union of Jamaica, the Gambian Labour Union, labour unions of the United States and the ITUCNW delegates themselves. Many European communists were blocked from attending, as were the delegates from the CPSA. Jomo Kenyatta was to attend, but did not. Callaghan, 30-32; Pennybacker, 70; Derrick, 199-201.

²⁶⁹ Adi, 107-114.

²⁷⁰ Adi, 114-121.

²⁷¹ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 248-250.

racial rhetoric of the Conference, hinting that the Hamburg Conference presaged a potential rift between the Comintern line, which saw the need for racial oppression downplayed and either parlayed into national issues along lines of self-determination or smoothed out entirely into class oppression, and the Pan-Africanist line which focused on a “race before class” idea.²⁷² Weiss continued by concluding the following:

The events in Hamburg were certainly orchestrated from Moscow and Berlin, but the African and African American participants all had their own agendas. The meeting in Hamburg was to result in the establishment of a Moscow-monitored radical African Atlantic network. At least, this was the intention of the various Comintern- and RILU apparatuses. Ford and the other comrades were only useful gears in the Comintern machinery. The conference itself was closely monitored and orchestrated from Moscow as well as the auxiliary offices and institutions in Berlin and Hamburg. However, a different standpoint prevailed among the African and African American participants...From this perspective, it could be argued that Moscow and Berlin assisted in establishing an institution, but its contents, strategies and visions were formulated by the Black delegates.²⁷³

For Weiss, the Hamburg Conference was a forgotten event in the history of the Comintern, but one that was far more important for Pan-Africanism for the hope and euphoria that it engendered. It also saw both the Comintern and the delegates of the Conference using the apparatus for their own purposes and one where the actions of the delegates was more important long-term. Weiss highlighted the meteoric rise of George Padmore as the greatest legacy of this Conference.²⁷⁴ Some black activists meanwhile

²⁷² Adi, 121; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 251-252.

²⁷³ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 253.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

called this period the “highpoint in the Comintern’s concern for colonial Africa” and a “heroic period of the Comintern’s anti-colonialism.”²⁷⁵

While Weiss’ argument about Padmore, the potential clash between Pan-Africanism and the Comintern line, and Adi’s argument about the Comintern’s non-monolithic state were all on point, they missed one serious vein of Comintern thinking – its Eurocentrism. No matter the good intentions and the occasional interest in colonial or black work, European communist parties never got on board. Furthermore, colonial work was often seen as a prong of the general struggle and even concepts such as the war scare and the promotion of fighting the imperialist war were Eurocentric campaigns at their core. It too often came down to the efforts of enthusiastic individuals, such as the ITUCNW leaders who organized Hamburg, or Willi Munzenburg and the LAI, to achieve the most significant gains on the colonial, national or racial questions.

The ITUCNW also ran headstrong against the latent racism of the Comintern and its affiliates. Africans in Moscow ran into chauvinism and stonewalling from African American comrades. The remainder of James Ford’s tenure as leader of the ITUCNW saw him struggle to maintain office space thanks to the racism of building owners. A continued lack of engagement by European parties and the assignment, or reassignment, of those engaged with black work in Moscow to other matters or to other apparatuses prevented them from being fully involved in the work of the ITUCNW.²⁷⁶

The most significant campaign of the ITUCNW was its work on the Scottsboro case, defending the rights of the accused and turning it into an international event. Over

²⁷⁵ Callaghan, 30-31.

²⁷⁶ Adi, 124-136.

time, the Comintern elected to remove American work from the ITUCNW, changing its mandate to the rest of the African Atlantic, developing trade unions and communist parties. There is some disagreement regarding the role of South Africa in this mandate. Holger Weiss noted that initially in September 1931, South Africa was included, but this changed the following month. What makes South Africa's role in the ITUCNW further unclear, however, was that *The Negro Worker* included many articles on South African and American affairs, suggesting that this split was ignored or only applied to concrete campaigns.²⁷⁷ Regardless, outside of some propaganda, little was accomplished in Africa by the end of 1931 by the ITUCNW.

George Padmore became the head of the Hamburg Committee in November 1931 as James Ford returned to America.²⁷⁸ Padmore dealt with many of the same issues Ford had. The RILU and the Comintern corralled ITUCNW efforts with a limited budget. Padmore however did manage to greatly improve the ITUCNW's connections throughout Africa and Latin America. Padmore also continued to be involved in American and European affairs, despite that being outside of the Committee's mandate. Padmore even extended support to the Union des Travailleurs Nègres (UTN), Garan Kouyate's successor to the LDRN which had gone through its own factional turmoil in France. While Padmore was incredibly active and did expand the ITUCNW's scope, he had little support within the RILU.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Adi, 137-139; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 294-298

²⁷⁸ Pennybacker, 70.

²⁷⁹ Adi, 139-152,

Padmore's tenure as leader of the ITUCNW ended acrimoniously. When the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, they arrested Padmore and deported him to Britain.²⁸⁰ The Hamburg Committee ceased to operate, but was able to relocate temporarily to Copenhagen.²⁸¹ Padmore moved to Paris and used some of the UTN's services to continue printing *The Negro Worker*. The interruptions took a toll on ITUCNW efforts and the Comintern relieved Padmore of his duties. Over the course of the next year, some of Padmore's connections, including his support of Gran Kouyate, who was under siege within the PCF, and the Save Liberia Movement, gave the Comintern cause for alarm and produced more charges which it used to publicly discredit Padmore. Simultaneously, Padmore attacked the Comintern for "sabotaging" any efforts to agitate amongst blacks.²⁸² As a result of these disagreements, Padmore resigned from the Communist Party of the United States of America, becoming a staunch Pan-Africanist and anti-communist.²⁸³

Following Padmore's expulsion, Otto Huiswood and his wife, Helen Davis, re-established the ITUCNW in Antwerp. This new committee saw the merger of the Negro Bureau of the RILU with the Negro Commission of the Communist International.²⁸⁴ Huiswood attempted to guide the ITUCNW and rebuild it as best he could. Padmore, however, refused to give his contacts to the reformed committee. As a result, Huiswood

²⁸⁰ Pennybacker, 77; Derrick, 284-285.

²⁸¹ Derrick, 284-285.

²⁸² Adi detailed the conflicting reports surrounding this meeting and its aftermath. Adi, 155-161; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 575-610; Derrick, 285-305.

²⁸³ Pennybacker, 79-87.

²⁸⁴ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 212-214.

needed to re-establish contacts while restoring the *Negro Worker*.²⁸⁵ The ITUCNW also was an illegal organization and the threat of arrest and harassment followed, something that forced relocation to Amsterdam in late 1934.²⁸⁶ Couple these problems with the addition of uncooperative and slow-to-act communist parties in Europe, the ITUCNW's reach was highly restricted. In fact, the majority of its successes came in propaganda, especially in line with greater Comintern campaigns against fascism and its "Hands off Abyssinia" campaign which attacked Italian aggression and imperialism.²⁸⁷

Despite the ITUCNW becoming a legal organization in November 1935, opening an office in Paris to better facilitate the development of connections, the ITUCNW had lost steam. At this same time, the Seventh Congress of the Comintern discussed black issues. Citing many of the problems that Huiswood and the ITUCNW were facing, it again criticized the European and American communist parties for failing to meet the tasks set out to them at the Sixth Congress. Furthermore, the Comintern tasked the ITUCNW with "anti-imperialist Negro work" for multiple communist parties with *The Negro Worker* being a locus for the discussion of various experiences. It also was explicitly made the leader and chief organizer in any region lacking a communist party.²⁸⁸

However, the ITUCNW, despite some minor advantages gained due to its legal status, was unable to grow in any significant capacity following the Seventh Congress. Its work, even a few months later in 1936, was limited to the publication of *The Negro Worker*. By 1937, the Comintern dissolved the ITUCNW. The discussions surrounding

²⁸⁵ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 618-629; Adi, 163-164.

²⁸⁶ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 629-641; Adi, 168-169.

²⁸⁷ Although, there were limits. There were few articles written by Africans discussing African conditions. Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 638-658.

²⁸⁸ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 694-702; Adi, 194-199.

the ITUCNW's end involved many closely tied to the ITUCNW or black work over the previous decade.²⁸⁹ James Ford, Otto Huiswood and others promoted a Pan-Africanist approach, realizing that the Second World War was increasingly likely. The Comintern however had the final say and emphatically attacked Pan-Africanist tendencies, placing importance on the work of individual communist parties, especially those in Africa to support blacks. The ITUCNW had no place in this future.²⁹⁰ Regardless, returning agitation for these issues to individual parties ensured that black work could be easily ignored.

The Seventh Congress and Decline

Some saw the Third Period as a golden age of colonial or racial agitation for the Comintern, owing to its efforts with the LAI or ITUCNW. The Third Period came to a close with the Seventh Congress. Class against Class was replaced with the Popular Front, a revised version of the United Front tactics of the 1920s. It reflected Soviet diplomacy which promoted collective security to deal with the fascist menace. Fascism was now public enemy number one and Europe was the focus of Comintern general strategy. During this period, the Comintern intervened in the Spanish Civil War, saw a Popular Front government elected in France, and continued to agitate against German, Italian and Japanese militarism.

²⁸⁹ Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 707-716.

²⁹⁰ Hakim Adi put great focus on the split between Pan-Africanist thought and the Comintern's position. Weiss, meanwhile, argued that Huiswood and others were still very much within the Comintern system and so the difference has been overstated. Adi, 401-411; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 691.

A consequence of the shifts in Soviet diplomacy and a Popular Front government in France was that anti-imperial agitation was politically problematic. Soviet diplomats attempted to align with Britain and France and therefore the Comintern could not criticize the oppression of British and French imperialism without practical consequence. The Seventh Congress navigated through this problem. On colonial liberation and anti-imperialism, it repeated the same themes, focusing on local conditions, placing emphasis on China and India, with some added focus on the Middle East and Brazil, before calling for a broad Anti-Imperialist United Front.²⁹¹ The centrality of European affairs was overwhelming though. Fascism, defined as the most extreme form of capitalism, skewing Lenin's definition of imperialism, became the main tenet of Comintern doctrine.²⁹² The war menace and combating fascism took precedence to virtually any other issue. One only needs to look at the *Communist International* periodical to see how pervasive this campaign was in its literature well into the Second World War.²⁹³ Colonial issues nearly

²⁹¹ *VII Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939), 280-313. Meanwhile, the colonial world was given minimal attention in any resolutions. Often, it was limited to declaring their primary task was to develop the anti-imperialist united front. "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Fight for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism," *VII Congress of the Communist International*, 570-586. Otherwise, they were a target of the new imperialisms of the world, Japanese, German or Italian. "The Tasks of the Communist International in Connection with the Preparations of the Imperialists for a New World War," *VII Congress of the Communist International*, 587-595. The "Negro Question" was largely ignored as well, but there was some minor mention of racial issues in the United States and a reference to the Scottsboro trial by American communist, Earl Browder. *VII Congress of the Communist International*, 86.

²⁹² Jonathan Derrick pointed out that diplomatic considerations played a greater role into how vociferously the Comintern called for colonial liberation. Derrick, 374-377.

²⁹³ R. Palme Dutt, "The Imperialist Contradictions and the Drive to War," J. Billett, "Work in the Reformist Trade Unions in Australia," in *The Communist International* Vol 12, no. 16 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 1142-1156; D. Z. Manuilsky, "Results of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International," in *The Communist International* Vol 12, no. 19-20 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 1467-1492; M. Ercoli, "The Italo-Ethiopian War and the Tasks of the United Front," in *The Communist International* Vol 12, no. 23-24 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 1568-1579; D. Z. Manuilsky, "Results of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Part 2)," in *The*

vanished from its most prominent periodical with only two articles that could be seen as reminding readers of the importance of the colonial question.²⁹⁴

Communist International Vol 12, no. 23-24 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), 1580-1602; V. Molotov, "The International Situation, the Growing War Menace and the Soviet Policy," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 2 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 239-247; "Stalin-Howard Interview," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 487-493; "The Instigator of War in Europe," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 494-497; George Dimitroff, "The United Front of Struggle for Peace," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 6 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 719-727; V. Florin, "The Struggle Against Fascism Is a Struggle for Peace," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 9 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 1108-1117; Georgi Dimitroff, "The People's Front of Struggle Against Fascism and War," in *The Communist International* Vol 13, no. 12 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1936), 1563-1575; "The Berlin Agreement of the Chief Instigators of War," in *The Communist International* Vol 14, no. 1 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1937), 3-11; Wang Ming, "The New Stage of Japanese Aggression and the New Period of the Struggle of the Chinese People," in *The Communist International* Vol 14, no. 10 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1937), 719-736; "The Forces of War and the Forces of Peace," in *The Communist International* Vol 14, no. 11 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1937), 783-788; R. Page Arnot, "British Foreign Policy in the Pacific," in *The Communist International* Vol 15, no. 2 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1938), 130-135; Karl Funk, "The Colonial Demands of German Fascism," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 1 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 58-65; "The Eighteenth Congress of the Bolsheviks and the International Working Class," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 296-311; Karl Funk, "The European Colonial Empire of German Fascism," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 336-344; E. Varga, "The Imperialist Struggle for a New Redivision of the World," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 7 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 419-430. Following the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the Comintern returns to relaying the negatives of British imperialism more forcefully, while still maintaining a level of attack against German imperialism: Edgar Fielding, "Why Are the People of England Being Sent to Their Death?" in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 10 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 1060-1065; W. Florin, "Fight the War Criminals in Berlin as Well as London and Paris," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 10 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 1066-1073; S. Dzerzhinskaya, "The Bankruptcy of Imperialist Poland," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 10 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 1074-1083; E. Varga, "Anglo-American Contradictions in the Second Imperialist War," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 1 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 56-64. There also was an attempt to more effectively link Lenin and his teachings to the Second World War: A. Vladimirov, "Lenin's Voice and the Imperialist War," in *The Communist International* Vol 16, no. 11 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1939), 1128-1132; "The Voice of Lenin," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 1 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 5-12; Eugene Varga, "Monopoly Capitalism in the Second Imperialist War," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 4 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 241-252.

²⁹⁴ G. Oldner, "Stalin and the National and Colonial Question," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 2 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 124-139; W. Leitner, "The October Revolution and the Peoples of the Colonial and Dependent Countries," in *The Communist International* Vol 17, no. 11 (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1940), 764-777.

Conclusion

Lenin's death had a tremendous effect on the nature, and importance, of the national, colonial and racial questions. These issues lost its most vociferous Bolshevik supporter. As the last chapter showed, anti-imperialism and colonial independence were cornerstones of his communist worldview. Lenin's could not be involved in the debates of the Fourth Congress due to his deteriorating health, which led other communists, often of colonial communist parties to mould Comintern policy to better reflect local conditions or regional variations. Lenin's "Theses" were always of paramount importance to the whole project, but evolved as other communists tried to improve upon them. Colonial parties, at least initially, were happy to take a leadership role and were not going to let the Comintern forget about these issues. Individuals, such as black communists, Willi Munzenburg, George Padmore and others ensured that anti-imperialism and work amongst Africans had strong voices. As a result, the Third Period saw an increased emphasis on colonial and race work and led to renewed hope for successes in these areas. These communists had enough influence, or initiative, to maintain these ideas. As a result, more tactically-sound ideas developed that were based, to some degree, on the reality on the ground, instead of abstract concepts. This colonial leadership continued until the Comintern's dissolution. Frequently, individual parties and communists did more to keep the discussions, debates and policies in the forefront of communist minds. Following the Sixth Comintern Congress, as Comintern interference in the League against Imperialism shows, the Comintern was willing to jettison useful ideas or hamper its support of these bodies' ability to combat racism or colonialism. Furthermore, while the

Comintern was happy to remind parties of their need to make colonial or racial issues important, the general Eurocentrism latent within the majority of the most influential, and important, parties, and Russia's consistent focus on Europe as the main battleground, always arrested the significance colonial issues had in Comintern rhetoric. Without a concerted effort, and consistent support, these campaigns were doomed to producing propaganda and networking. The Bolsheviks often blunted the strength of their own policies on an international level. They however did promote the importance of these ideas locally and forced parties to fall into line with Moscow's perceptions and conclusions on colonial and racial affairs. In the South African context, the conclusions of the Negro Commission forced a violent upheaval within the South African leadership and caused a drastic tactical shift on colonial and racial affairs in the Communist Party of South Africa.

The platforms of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern outlined the programmes to which all member parties were expected to conform. If one is to claim that the Comintern was a monolithic body, it presumes that every party would follow the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question." Therefore, every party should have made combatting imperialism and supporting colonial liberation prominent features of their work. The failed Colonial Conference of 1929 hinted at the fact that European parties had already generally ignored their commitment to supporting the colonial world and the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia also neglected to adopt the "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" initially. In all three cases, it would not be until after

the Sixth Congress that each party began to tackle anti-imperialism as a serious focus. As will be seen, despite this shift, it was still inconsistent and each party responded in different ways, even if they were prodded by the Comintern.

On racial issues, the record becomes even murkier. The influence of black communists ensured that the “Negro Question” undoubtedly became a key feature of Comintern tactics. With the evolution to self-determination on racial lines, coupled with key cogs of the Comintern bureaucracy supporting the new formulation, any nation with significant black populations needed to also adopt this programme. Notably, the Comintern only had a commitment to the black population and largely confined their efforts to the black Atlantic. As a result, South African affairs grew in importance whereas the racial dimension of Australia barely registered. But the Comintern did place some emphasis on immigration. Their position at the Sixth Congress could be seen as limited, but the Comintern did give attention to immigration in direct communication with some of its follower parties and this was a problem that the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia had to consider.

When reviewing this greater context, the one that each party operated in as members of the Comintern, it is then important to analyze each party’s interaction with Moscow and how much Moscow impressed upon these parties the implementation of the required tactics or the adoption of certain policies. As will be seen in the second half of this study, the Comintern only interfered at specific moments when the tactics of a given party were unacceptable and to varying degrees. Furthermore, highlighted across these first two chapters were the efforts of individual communists to promote certain ideas or to

develop new tactics. Each party had individuals who did much of the same and in some cases, created platforms that ran counter to the Comintern. As will be seen, that alone did not necessarily require Comintern intervention as some communists disagreed with Moscow and did so openly. Others, however, were not so lucky. As will be seen, if the Comintern was a monolith, then it was not that good at it.

Moscow's Meddling Most Obvious: The Communist Party of South Africa and the Native Republic Thesis

This chapter details the CPSA's racial policies during the interwar period, from its establishment in 1921 to the fight against fascism during the Second World War. The Native Republic Thesis was the most important tactical shift for the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) during the interwar period. Discussed in Moscow and in South Africa for over a year before being adopted in 1928 at the Sixth Comintern Congress, the Thesis was forced on the party by the Comintern. It argued for self-determination on racial lines, promoting the rights of "natives," or black Africans, in South Africa to the point of independence, conflating Comintern policy on colonial liberation and racial equality.²⁹⁵ Prior to the tactical shift, the CPSA had been making strides to increase its black African membership and support black African issues. Sidney Bunting, named Party Chairman in December 1924, was the reason for this increased attention to black African affairs. Until 1924, the CPSA attempted to build support by focusing on white worker issues, and preferred to avoid specifically promoting black African workers' rights as a result of the tumultuous racial divide in South Africa, fearing it would lose its support from white workers. Bunting's importance in the development of the party during the 1920s cannot be ignored. Comintern officials and CPSA members hoping to change the direction of the party claimed Bunting was an opportunist; many others lauded him for turning the party into a legitimate force for black African rights. Bunting however

²⁹⁵ The term "native" was the preferred term of the CPSA. The South African delegates went out of their way to note their dislike of the term "Negro" in their statement to the Comintern. This sentiment was again noted by Bunting at a later Comintern meeting. "Statement of the South African Delegation to Comintern, 16 July 1921," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 74-77.

became a victim of the Bolshevization of the CPSA and the interference by Moscow in party affairs.

The Comintern's intervention into CPSA platforms came as a result of a visit to Moscow by James La Guma, a coloured trade unionist, who was a South African delegate to the First Congress of the League Against Imperialism in Brussels in 1927. He was invited to Moscow following the Congress and spoke with Comintern officials. Upon his return to South Africa, the Comintern began speaking of a Native Republic Thesis which La Guma also promoted. While the CPSA leaders were unwilling to move forward with the new line, seeing it as at best premature and at worst, inflaming the racial tensions the CPSA was still precariously navigating, the Comintern, led by Max Petrovsky, previously noted for his support for the "Haywood-Nasanov Theses," forced the CPSA to adopt the Native Republic Thesis. The Thesis altered the party's direction and hindered its development by dissolving the party base. White workers were unwilling to support to new platform and many black workers were unwilling to back the more radical line in light of South African politics and out of support for the established leadership. Moscow's interference, in terms of its policy dictates and in implanting and supporting new leadership, forced many old members, including Sidney Bunting, out. The inability to support existing bodies, such as the African National Congress (ANC), as a result of Third Period instructions, also limited the effectiveness of the party. While the party was able to revert to some older, more inclusive policies by the Second World War, the damage had been done and the Communist Party of South Africa was unable to become

the driving force for improved “native” rights it had hoped to be during the interwar period.

The Formation of the Communist Party of South Africa

On 30 July 1921, the Communist Party of South Africa formed from the remnants of the International Socialist League (ISL).²⁹⁶ The Industrial Workers of the World, and other leftist currents, including a smaller communist party which ignored electoral politics, influenced this new party. Led by trade unionist William H. Andrews, it sought to immediately link its efforts with the Communist International, hoping to follow the example of the Bolshevik Revolution.²⁹⁷ Andrews was the former leader of the ISL and maintained his leadership during the conversion to the communist party. While the party formed over the course of 1921, David Ivon Jones and Sam Barlin travelled to Moscow to attend the Third Comintern Congress.²⁹⁸ Jones was a prominent supporter of black African issues in South Africa and was one of the earliest voices on this issue in the party. At the Third Comintern Congress, he and Barlin presented a statement that placed the race issue front and centre. It noted that the general labour movement was “lagging” in South Africa, but especially so with regards to black African workers. To unite white and black workers, promoting the concept of solidarity with white workers was necessary.

²⁹⁶ The ISL was a socialist party formed in 1915.

²⁹⁷ Derrick, 116; Allison Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 337-338.

²⁹⁸ See “Letter from W.H. Andrews to S. Barlin, 27 April 1921,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 66-68; “Letter from W.H. Andrews to G. Zinoviev, 17 May 1921,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 70.

They also noted that communication prevented strong engagement with black workers.²⁹⁹ Despite Barlin and Jones' statement, the ISL and the early CPSA tended to consider white worker issues more prominently than any black African issues.

Undeterred, Jones continued to promote black interests as a major field of activity for the Comintern. He stated that the black South Africans were the most "advanced" of the black African populations. He even suggested that a Comintern official, the Dutch communist S.J. Rutgers, travel to South Africa to help evaluate the situation of the black African population, as well as its relation to the Boer population.³⁰⁰ From the beginning, Jones wanted these issues given prominence. His efforts contributed to the Fourth Congress resolution on the "Negro Question." The statement also lauded the involvement of Sidney Bunting. Bunting was London-born and a son of a journal editor. He came to South Africa to serve in the Boer War, before joining the ISL, supporting its anti-war stance. He was elected as the CPSA's first treasurer, owing to his favourable disposition towards black issues.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Other groups of workers, such as coloured workers, were not mentioned in their statement. "Statement of the South African Delegation to Comintern, 16 July 1921," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 74-77. Ivon Jones also delivered a statement in Session 23 of the Third Comintern Congress. "Ivon Jones: The Black Question," *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921*, edited and translated by John Riddell (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 1193-1196.

³⁰⁰ Rutgers should be familiar to readers. He was one of the earliest proponents of Comintern work on the colonial and racial questions in early Comintern Congresses.

³⁰¹ "Statement of the South African Delegation to Comintern, 16 July 1921," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 74-77; "Official Report of First Congress, CPSA. 30-1 July-1 August 1921 (Extracts)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 82. Allison Drew details much of Sidney Bunting's early agitation towards improving the conditions of black African workers from 1917 through the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa. Allison Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 105-119.

The positions of Bunting and Jones were not yet commonplace throughout the party.³⁰² The party was not against equality for black Africans though. The position reflected certain limitations of the party and of the context in which the CPSA operated. The party was small, only having 175 members when it began. This low membership placed the party on the periphery of South African politics. It also had a predominantly white membership. Links to the white trade unions of South Africa made reaching white workers easier.³⁰³ The small membership did not limit idealism; the Manifesto of the CPSA included the hope that the party would be a labour party representing all peoples of South Africa.³⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Bunting and Jones, who remained in Moscow after the Fourth Comintern Congress, continued to press the Comintern on racial issues.

The Rand Revolt of 1922

The Rand Revolt of 1922 highlighted South Africa's racial politics, compelling the newly minted CPSA to deal with a very volatile situation. South African mining labour was segregated. Several skilled jobs in the mining sector were maintained as "white" jobs, limiting the number of black African workers who could be hired in these positions.³⁰⁵ A status-quo agreement, put in place in 1918 by the Chamber of Mines, defined this arrangement, freezing the ratio of black workers to white workers. But with

³⁰² Edward Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, Preface, 62-69.

³⁰³ Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 338; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 119-120.

³⁰⁴ "Manifesto of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the Cape Town conference held on July 30-31 and August 1, 1921," in *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party* (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1981), 62-65.

³⁰⁵ Many of the laws regarding labour focused on protecting white workers' jobs while limiting options for African workers. Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South African: The rise and fall of apartheid* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 19-23.

fluctuations in the value of gold and coal, mining companies abrogated the status-quo agreement and declared wage cuts for white workers. These companies also began to open up semi-skilled jobs to black workers. In early 1922, as a result of these changes, white miners began to strike.³⁰⁶

The strike itself became uncontrollable. Large in scale, its suppression required martial law and the use of the military and air support.³⁰⁷ It also inflamed racial tensions. The CPSA tried to use the strike for its own purposes and guide it to a revolutionary end but with little success. Trying to downplay the issue of the colour bar and black African work, the CPSA emphasized turning the strike into a general strike on the issue of wage cuts. The party called for unity of all workers, regardless of race. Unfortunately for the communists, many individuals involved in the strike had neither time nor interest in communist ideals and ignored their messages. Many white workers wanted the colour bar to remain to protect their labour rights. They attacked non-whites generally. Banners with the slogan of “Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa” appeared. Many assumed the communists led the strikes, owing to the slogan’s similarity to the Comintern’s “Workers of the World Unite!”³⁰⁸ Newspapers and the government

³⁰⁶ Johns, 128-132; Derrick, 116-117; Simons & Simons, 271-282; Lerumo, 49-50.

³⁰⁷ Johns, 138-139; Lerumo, 50-51.

³⁰⁸ Jeremy Krikler argued that the Rand Revolt revealed a more generalized race-based assault, where most victims were not African miners. Jeremy Krikler, “The Inner Mechanics of a South African Racial Massacre,” *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 4 (1999): 1051-1075. For more on the links to the Communist Party, see the following sources: Johns, 133-138; Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 338; “Statement of D.I. Jones to ECCI, 25 March 1922,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 97-99; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 50-54; “‘The Fight to a Finish’, manifesto issued by the Communist Party to the striking workers of the Witwatersrand on January 30, 1922,” in *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party* (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1981), 68-69; Simons & Simons, 297-299; Lerumo, 51-52; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 120-121.

blamed the communist party for the strike, despite a distinct lack of evidence and a general inability of the CPSA to coordinate anything.³⁰⁹

The Rand Revolt, however, gave the CPSA some direction. The government raided the party headquarters in March 1922. As a result, the CPSA prioritized defeating the South African Party government led by Jan Smuts. Some, including Sidney Bunting, hoped that the Rand Revolt had led white workers to realize a joint labour movement of all workers was the best strategy. Bunting added a comparison between the Rand Revolt and the 1905 Russian Revolution, suggesting both were preludes to a successful revolution. The appeal for racial unity failed. Racial tensions increased and in fact, the CPSA, in its public statements following the Rand Revolt, neglected to consider black workers.³¹⁰ Historian Sheridan Johns argued this lack of attention showed the party “reorienting” itself to the white working class, while reflecting the party’s difficulties reaching non-white workers.³¹¹ Figures such as Bunting and Jones, though influential, had not yet won over the majority of members to promoting black African rights. Many members either did not want to alienate white workers or, as former party member Edward Roux argued, simply disregarded black issues, seeing “workers of the world” as “the white miners, tramwaymen, building artizans [sic.], and so on.”³¹²

³⁰⁹ Johns, 139-143; Lerumo, 50.

³¹⁰ Johns, 143-145; Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 338-339; *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party*, 67-68; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 123-124.

³¹¹ Johns, 144.

³¹² Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 62-63.

Over the next two years, the CPSA supported a coalition of the National and Labour Parties to unseat Smuts.³¹³ The 1924 general election gave the desired result, but the Pact government reaffirmed the colour bar and a strong support of white workers' rights. The violent end to the Rand Revolt, the actions of the Coalition government and the ability of Bunting and others interested in black African rights to convince members of the need to consider black African rights steadily led to a shift in CPSA priorities.³¹⁴

Colonial Issues

While racial issues manifested themselves in general everyday labour politics, South African communists needed to be aware of their country's international position. South Africa was a self-governing Dominion, but the Comintern saw it as a part of the colonial world.³¹⁵ David Ivon Jones agreed and argued aggressively for the development of a colonial bureau. Jones discussed the possibility with other colonial delegates and saw the lack of guidance from the Comintern in early 1921 while in Moscow as troubling. Also, he realized that racial issues could be a prominent topic for his proposed bureau.³¹⁶

In the fall of 1921, Jones continued his advocacy in Moscow, citing the absence of strong parties in Egypt, India and Ireland, but also the growing Pan-Africanist movement.

³¹³ The coalition developed as a result of Smuts' growing unpopularity due to poor labour relations and a desire for South Africa to maintain ties with Britain.

³¹⁴ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 62-63.

³¹⁵ This position was markedly different than Canada and Australia where while both nations were treated as colonies until 1928. As the next two chapters articulate, they were clearly defined as second-tier imperialist nations. The Comintern never applied this distinction to South Africa. Instead, it always saw South Africa as a colony and therefore, it had an oppressed people which required the full support of the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question."

³¹⁶ "Letter from D.I. Jones to M. Rakosi, [July-August 1921]," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 78-79.

These circumstances suggested to him that the Comintern was losing an opportunity to rally anti-colonial movements. W.E.B. DuBois had organized Pan-African Congresses to discuss the effects of imperialism on Africa and the black Atlantic world. Jones saw these meetings and Pan-Africanism as dangerous and bourgeois in nature. He called on the Comintern to intervene to keep colonial populations attuned to communism.³¹⁷ On 30 March 1922, taking notice of several arguments that recommended better organized anti-colonial agitation, the Comintern formed an Anglo-American Colonial Section of the Executive of the Comintern with representatives of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Ireland, Egypt, South Africa and Australia present. Jones was the first South African representative.³¹⁸

Jones, and to a lesser extent, Sidney Bunting, played a role in shaping the South African position on the Comintern's racial and colonial platforms. Jones, for example, took issue with calls for a Negro Congress, seeing it as affirming bourgeois racial sentiments instead of promoting a revolutionary form of agitation. He preferred local answers to racial issues.³¹⁹ Jones also helped spearhead discussions that led to the "Theses on the Negro Question" at the Fourth Congress.³²⁰

Meanwhile, Sidney Bunting spent time in the Colonial Section trying to avoid defining South African issues only by race. He was always cognizant of black African rights, but he saw them more as a result of class politics, instead of race politics. In one

³¹⁷ "Statement by D.I. Jones to ECCI, [September-October 1921]," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 89-90.

³¹⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-2, 1-3.

³¹⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-2, 87-88.

³²⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-2, 148.

meeting, held on 14 September 1922, when “coloured labour” was being discussed, Bunting tried to convince other delegates to consider looking at the question as a cheap labour issue instead of only a racial issue, a line of thinking to which few others were receptive.³²¹ Bunting also criticized Comintern policy on the “Negro Question” for its distinct Americentrism. He regarded it as inadequate to help Africans throughout the world and, for the most part, inapplicable to the South African context. For example, Bunting suggested Jim Crow segregation may no longer be appropriate in the United States, but in South Africa, that system could be considered an improvement. Bunting, instead, championed the organization of a broad movement of workers, regardless of race, that allowed increased membership and representation. Bunting’s concern for black workers came out of his concern for class issues as a whole; if communists could solve class inequality, racial issues would disappear.³²²

Bunting’s philosophy on racial issues extended to colonial issues. Bunting had a purer Marxist interpretation of the issues at hand. He refused to consider matters in terms of race or colony, but instead in terms of oppression. Class was the main defining characteristic. With the Fourth Comintern Congress on the horizon, on 17 October 1922, in the Anglo-American Group, Bunting argued that the National and Colonial Theses, passed at the Second Congress, were not relevant to the African context. The issues in

³²¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-2, 116-117.

³²² Bunting based his criticism on partial reports he had received of the Theses. He had been forced to leave the Fourth Congress to tend to his wife who had fallen ill. “Letter from S.P. Bunting to General Secretary, Comintern, 1 January 1923,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 111-117. Allison Drew also discusses Bunting’s reaction to the “Thesis on the Negro Question.” Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 131.

Africa had to do with labour, not colonial oppression. The prominent issues in South Africa could be boiled down to divisions between highly-skilled European workers and low-skilled black workers.³²³

Bunting also took issue with the phraseology of black liberation, suggesting that it could not be the same as kicking “all whites out of Africa.” Ignorance was the reason why many white workers did not fight for black workers.³²⁴ The following week, he continued his argument and questioned the role of British Dominions in the National and Colonial Theses. He reaffirmed his position that all workers should be united, not placing a priority on whites over blacks, or vice-versa.³²⁵ To make his point, he cited an Australian comrade’s claims on fighting the White Australia policy. The comrade argued that white workers should be courted first before extending the struggle to other races. Bunting disagreed, suggesting it would still prioritize one racial subset of workers.³²⁶ These arguments foreshadow some of the same issues he and the CPSA would discuss at the Sixth Comintern Congress with the Native Republic Thesis which also ran counter to Bunting’s philosophies. The concepts of national liberation, black rights, autonomy and the race/class dichotomy all came to a head then too. But early in his Comintern career, he was clear in his philosophy on the colonial and racial questions; they were secondary. At most, they were tools to achieve the greater goal – freedom from labour oppression

³²³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-3, 139-143

³²⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-3, 139-143.

³²⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-3, 148-149. The black-white dichotomy seems to be a result of Bunting, and the CPSA, simplifying racial issues. Black Africans made up the most significant marginalized group that the CPSA sought to support. Coloured and Asian workers seemed to be folded into the “native” category, and Bunting treated their racial issues as one problem going back as early as his work in the ISL. Allison Drew hints at this but does not say anything firm. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 117, 139.

³²⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495-72-3, 148-149.

and the struggle for the rights of all workers, regardless of race, ethnicity or politics. Furthermore, Bunting's arguments show the relative freedom communists had to disagree. Bunting's disagreement with the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" and their applicability in South Africa meant that, upon his election as Chairman at the end of 1924, the party would ignore Comintern tactics and choose a different method to achieve its still communist goals.

From Rand to Upheaval

Back in South Africa, the party dedicated its efforts to help dethrone the Smuts government while promoting white worker issues in a hope of making in-roads into many of the trade unions, building on the strengths of many communist leaders. The party also attempted to align with the South African Labour Party, employing a similar strategy to that used by the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The Labour Party, however, wanted little to do with the communists. Despite this rejection, the party stubbornly continued to support the Labour Party during 1923 and 1924, seeking to apply United Front tactics as defined by the Comintern and hoping to increase their political significance within South Africa in the process.³²⁷

The Third Congress of the CPSA, held 27-30 December 1924, led to a shift for the party. Sidney Bunting became the Party Chairman by acclamation. Bunting called on the party to tackle the problem of uniting white and non-white workers, citing that the CPSA was the only party recognizing the issue. If the party could unite all workers in South

³²⁷ Johns, 146-160; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 136-141.

Africa, it would be a victory of the communist movement. It was not only a matter of winning over black workers but a path to eliminate racial prejudice or ignorance so white and non-white workers would work together for better living conditions for all. As Bunting himself knew full well, the racial tensions from Rand would not easily be resolved, but to ignore them was not an option.³²⁸

Bunting was not alone in seeking a change in the CPSA's politics. The Youth Communist League, led by Edward Roux, who would become a prominent member of the party until the mid-1930s, was made up of new, inexperienced, yet very enthusiastic members who were less wedded to work in the trade unions and wanted to see change. Many members who hoped to downplay black African issues were defeated in party elections, which also helped shift the party away from its old ways. Soon after the Third Party Congress, Andrews and several other supporters left the party, allowing the new direction to take hold.³²⁹ These tactical shifts also caused many white members to leave the party.³³⁰ The party's shift to considering black African affairs was still not fully appreciated by its membership and reflected the latent racism playing out in South African society.

South African labour politics also played a role in the CPSA's new platform. After the 1924 general election that saw the Coalition government come into power, it became clear that reactionary, conservative labour policies would follow. It introduced legislation

³²⁸ The document is mistitled in the collection. "Minutes of Third Congress of CPSA, 27-30 October 1924 (extracts)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 133-138. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 141-142.

³²⁹ Johns, 160-162; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 62-69; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 142,

³³⁰ Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 339; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 143.

to improve conditions for white workers, appeasing many of the concerns they had had during the Rand Revolt. For example, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 prevented black workers from joining a union. The Wages Act of 1925 fixed a minimum wage for all workers, except public servants, domestic servants and farmers, the latter two groups often comprised of black workers. The Works Amendment Act of 1926 reaffirmed the colour bar in the mining industry. The CPSA, in response to these Acts, courted black African workers and promoted their interests, especially as they confirmed the inequality, and as a result, different interests of the South African working classes.³³¹ To gain a foothold in African communities, the party relied on straight-forward messaging, training black Africans at communist night schools, or working with black unions.³³²

Meanwhile, non-white labour started to organize in the 1920s. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was formed in 1920 and established itself as one of the stronger unions throughout South Africa, expanding through much of Southern Africa, including South West Africa and Northern and Southern Rhodesia by the 1930s. Clements Kadalie, a black African, born in the British Central Africa Protectorate, who had come to South Africa in 1916, headed the ICU. Within South Africa, the ICU had grown to 100 000 documented members by 1927. Non-white dockworkers had displaced white workers who had returned from the First World War. These non-white dockworkers became aware of American ideologies, including those of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Garveyism, and, in turn, influenced the ICU. Many of these dockworkers became familiar with Garvey's ideas and promoted them to other non-white

³³¹ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 66-67; Derrick, 120; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 141.

³³² Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 70-71.

workers. The ICU also supported Pan-Africanism as one of its core tenets. One of its prominent ideals during the 1920s was to “emancipate” the black worker, and the ICU sought to use a general strike to do so. Until 1926, when the ICU ejected CPSA members, rejecting overt support for communism, the CPSA and ICU developed a working relationship.³³³

During the period of CPSA and ICU cooperation, James La Guma, a Colored trade unionist and presumed inspiration for the Native Republic Thesis, joined the CPSA. Despite his racial status, La Guma seemed to identify with black Africans and much as Bunting did, he conflated black Africans and Colored workers as one group.³³⁴ La Guma had been the secretary of the ICU’s Port Elizabeth branch and General Secretary of its Cape Town branch. When CPSA/ICU relations soured in 1926, La Guma turned his attention to CPSA affairs and travelled to Brussels to represent South Africa at the First Congress of the League Against Imperialism.³³⁵

³³³ Clements Kadalie, *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1970), 11-12; Lucien van der Walt, “The First Globalisation and Transnational Labour Activism in Southern Africa: White Labourism, the IWW, and the ICU, 1904-1934,” *African Studies* 66, no. 2-3 (Aug.-Dec. 2007): 237-243; Lerumo, 52-53, 61-62; Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999), 161-164; Edward Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man’s Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 156-175; Alex La Guma, *Jimmy La Guma*, edited by Mohamed Adhikari (Cape Town: Friends of the South African Library, 1997), 24-29; Johns, 168-181; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 144-146.

³³⁴ This conflation seems to be a result of his view that both black Africans and Coloured peoples were oppressed peoples. Van Diemel, 103-104; Haywood, 235-240. In his statements in Moscow, he articulated a concern that some South African legislation, such as the Coloured Peoples’ Rights Bill, sought to “split the coloured and native workers.” “Statement of J. La Guma to Presidium, ECCI, 16 March 1927,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 152-153.

³³⁵ Simons & Simons, 266-267; Martin Legassick, *Class and Nationalism in South African Protest: The South African Communist Party and the “Native Republic” 1928-1934* (Syracuse: Program of Eastern African Studies, 1973), 11fn2.

Meanwhile, the much smaller African National Congress (ANC), renamed from the South African Native National Congress in 1923, also slowly grew during the 1920s. It argued for a platform similar to that of the CPSA, calling for racial unity and a removal of the colour bar. It also sought to curb the influence of Garveyism and the ICU.³³⁶ Initially hostile to communism, the ANC gradually grew closer with the CPSA, owing to the efforts of its leader, Josiah Gumede, a former anti-communist who had turned left as a result of realizing that the British Government would do nothing to help the plight of black Africans. While the communists would vilify the ICU after they were ousted, the relationship between the ANC and CPSA was cordial for a brief period beginning in 1927, owing to the CPSA's own internal shifts in policy, but also because of similar tactics used to achieve black rights. This relationship continued when Gumede and La Guma attended the League Against Imperialism's First Congress in Brussels in 1927.³³⁷

The Influence of James La Guma

The trip to Brussels proved to be one of the more pivotal events in the development of CPSA policy. The League Against Imperialism Congress itself recognized the plight of blacks worldwide and promoted racial equality. The South African delegates forwarded their own resolution on South Africa calling for the right of self-determination as a result of socialist revolution, leaving unclear who was to benefit, white or non-white. This resolution also made a series of demands, many of which could

³³⁶ Bush, 159-160; Lerumo, 63.

³³⁷ La Guma, 30; Lerumo, 63; Johns, 181-184; Clements Kadalie was also present, representing the ICU. Adi, 36. For more on Gumede's shift to the left, see Simons & Simons, 217-219.

be applied to all workers, and still continued to promote the CPSA and ANC's message of solidarity among workers and centred more on the colonial nature of the Union of South Africa.³³⁸

H.J. and R.E. Simons perceived this resolution to be the beginning of La Guma's personal crusade to radicalize CPSA thinking.³³⁹ However, the resolution itself, outside of a vague call for self-determination, largely conformed to the CPSA and ANC position, generally downplaying anti-colonial or even pro-racial rhetoric in favour of the call for the right to organize for all workers, the right to education, the end to "oppressive taxes," and the right to free speech for all peoples.³⁴⁰ The resolution was not as radical as it could have been, especially since at the same Congress, there was a more forceful resolution on the rights of blacks internationally.³⁴¹ The tempering of the resolution, being more in line with the CPSA's general position, may have been a result of the South African delegates not yet willing to step out of line without having support from Moscow.

More important to the development of the CPSA, the Congress put Gumede and La Guma in touch with Comintern officials who invited both to Moscow.³⁴² La Guma's visit was eventful and precipitated the Comintern's first significant interference in CPSA affairs. La Guma spent 10-17 March 1927 in Moscow and during this time met with Comintern leaders, including Nikolai Bukharin. The results of these meetings cannot be

³³⁸ La Guma, 32; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 150.

³³⁹ Simons & Simons, 389.

³⁴⁰ La Guma, 32.

³⁴¹ See Chapter 2.

³⁴² La Guma, 30-33; Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 340; Lerumo, 63-64; Johns, 191; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 150.

over-exaggerated.³⁴³ These meetings birthed the Native Republic Thesis that by 1932 derailed the development and influence of the CPSA. James La Guma, whose arrival led to the meetings, has often been given credit, or blame, by some former CPSA members and historians for this shift in tactics.³⁴⁴ Others give credit to Nikolai Bukharin for mentioning the concept during the meetings.³⁴⁵ Some historians vaguely asserted that the Comintern developed the concept.³⁴⁶ What many of these CPSA scholars and members have neglected was that the Native Republic Thesis was initially mentioned in passing, as a suggestion. It was not proposed as a bold new tactical shift. It also took several months for a clear platform to be articulated by Moscow. It is likely that these meetings did lead to the genesis of the concept. But when looked at the context of the Comintern and the “Negro Question” as a whole, it is more likely that the actions of Max Petrovsky, who was also present at these meetings, ensured that the Native Republic Thesis would evolve from idea to platform to the set course the Comintern demanded the CPSA follow.

Max Petrovsky should be a name familiar to readers thus far. He was one of major forces in the Negro Commission during the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and his

³⁴³ At this point, I should reference the work of Mia Roth. While her argument about the biases of many memoirs and writers of the CPSA are important reminders of the narrative building that many of these individuals engaged in the aftermath of the Native Republic Thesis debacle, her analysis was careless and in many cases, she misread the original sources. Mia Roth, “Eddie, Brian, Jack and Let’s Phone Rusty: Is This the History of the Communist Party of South Africa (1921-1950)?” *South African Historical Journal* 42 (May 2000): 191-209. Her book which attempted to correct the history of the CPSA should not be seen as a serious, or accurate, contribution. Mia Roth, *The Communist Party in South Africa: Racism, Eurocentricity and Moscow, 1921-1950* (Partridge Publishing Africa, 2016).

³⁴⁴ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 88-90; Van Diemel, 103; Haywood, 235-240.

³⁴⁵ Allison Drew attributed the concept to Bukharin and implies that the Native Republic Thesis concept was determined at this first meeting, a vague and inaccurate assertion as it was months later that the ECCI formally produced a resolution on the matter. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 149-151. See also “Introduction,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 12; Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 339-340; Johns, 200-201; Simons & Simons, 389-390; Adi, 58.

³⁴⁶ Lerumo, 63-64; Record, 54-57.

chairmanship of that body undoubtedly ensured that the “Negro Question” became a priority for the American party when it accepted the Haywood-Nasanov Thesis. Max Petrovsky, born David Lipetz, a Ukrainian Jew, initially was instrumental in the defense of Jewish peoples. He had been a member of the Bund and the president of Burdichev province shortly after the Russian Revolution. Having many pseudonyms throughout his political career, he was known Max Goldfarb briefly before taking on the name Max Petrovsky, the name with which he was most associated and cited as in Comintern documents. South African members and historians will recognize him as “Bennett,” one of the foils Edward Roux described in his account of the CPSA delegation’s trip to Moscow for the Sixth Comintern Congress. Petrovsky joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919. He soon thereafter became a functionary in the Comintern, and was assigned to Britain, where he eventually joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and married party founder Rose Cohen. Both had busy Comintern careers, frequently moving about Europe. Petrovsky, however, ended up in Moscow in 1927 and quickly became a key cog in the Comintern system.³⁴⁷

Petrovsky’s rationale for championing self-determination on racial lines is unclear. It may have extended from his support of the Jewish people in Burdichev. CPSA histories on the Native Republic Thesis have ignored Petrovsky, but he is the plausible answer to several questions about Comintern policy on race and colonialism. How did one statement by Bukharin become so pervasive, especially if after the meetings, there still was no clear plan? How would La Guma, who was a low level CPSA representative,

³⁴⁷ Branko Lazitch and Milorad Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 310.

have so much support from the Comintern? Even if we argue La Guma was the main progenitor of the Native Republic Thesis, the negative atmosphere that Bunting and the CPSA delegates received at the Sixth Congress could not have occurred without more influential people pushing a certain agenda. Finally, if we suggest that Bukharin influenced others to view the Buntings and Roux coolly, it is equally problematic as many delegates of the Sixth Congress recalled that Bukharin and his ideas were attacked by delegates outside of committee sessions, presumably following Stalin's orders, and giving the Congress the nickname "Corridor Congress." Reviewing the events in Moscow in 1927, one can see Petrovsky's role. His insistence in developing, passing and promoting a Native Republic Thesis for the CPSA was evident through 1927 through to the Sixth Congress. He also cultivated a relationship with La Guma.

To understand the development of the Native Republic Thesis, it is necessary to return to those initial March 1927 meetings. La Guma's first meeting was with the British Secretariat. At these meetings, he provided a report on the general situation in South Africa, giving information about political parties and the state of the CPSA.³⁴⁸ He later discussed several South African issues, including the CPSA's rupture with the ICU, continued affiliation with the South African Labour Party, agitation within trade unions, and the establishment of contact between the CPSA and CPGB.³⁴⁹ A resolution from his meeting with the British Secretariat called for the CPSA to advocate South African independence and in the process, develop a left wing of the National Party, directly

³⁴⁸ "Report by J. La Guma to Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI, 10 March 1927 (Extract)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 149-151.

³⁴⁹ RGASPI, 495.72.23, 12.

applying the Theses of the National and Colonial Question.³⁵⁰ These ideas all came from a discussion of a report on the CPSA's attitude to the South African government, independence and racial issues. That report noted that the CPSA's party paper had not considered independence in "any direct form." The party had been silent on the issue. Regarding black Africans, it did note some improvement in 1926, citing the improved emphasis on non-white issues and a general strike call for all black African workers to combat the Coalition government anti-black legislation.³⁵¹ Coming out of these meetings, improving the CPSA's work under the National and Colonial Theses, something the British Secretariat was more capable of advising, seemed to be the primary concern, not racial issues.

La Guma then attended the 16 March 1927 meeting of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The Presidium discussed the British Secretariat's resolution with Nikolai Bukharin present. La Guma gave a lengthy statement in which he noted many of the problems facing the CPSA. He referenced the aforementioned bills passed by the Pact Government, but noted that the CPSA was "at [its] wits end" on how to tackle the repressive regime. The CPSA was also unsure of how to unify white and black workers, citing racial tensions and class tensions, suggesting many white workers were unwilling to allow black workers equality of status. Finally, La Guma pointed out that the party was hamstrung in promoting black African interests or self-determination because of a fear of alienating white workers. La Guma's statement revolved around the shortcomings of the party and especially on racial issues.

³⁵⁰ RGASPI, 495.72.23, 25.

³⁵¹ RGASPI, 495.72.20, 23.

Other delegates asked questions relating to the strength the CPSA, its involvement in trade unions, limiting themselves to fact-finding at first.³⁵² Russian communist Lazar Schatzkin on multiple occasions asked about self-determination and he specifically referenced a “Negro Republic,” seeking clarification on whether that was the aim.³⁵³ La Guma never responded to Schatzkin’s questions, but Bukharin and Max Petrovsky referred to the concept of a black African state. Bukharin initially mentioned the concept of an independent “Negro Republic” as a potential solution to the racial issues for South Africa. He did not suggest it as the only solution, but merely as an option. Petrovsky pointed out the vagueness of a call for independence for South Africa, wondering if a “Negro Republic” or a republic based on the will of the majority of people was the objective. At this point, no plan of action was discussed. La Guma did not make any response on record regarding an independent native republic, nor did Bukharin or anyone else firmly develop policy in that vein coming out of this meeting.³⁵⁴ Before he left Moscow, Petrovsky noted La Guma was given verbal instructions from the British Secretariat, the content unknown. As regards the resolution from the British Secretariat, only the preamble was allegedly sent with him.³⁵⁵ While La Guma operated in South

³⁵² RGASPI, 495.2.94, 118-121.

³⁵³ RGASPI, 495.2.94, 118, 120. The editors of *South Africa and the Communist International* pointed out that Bukharin is the first to use the term. That was incorrect. Schatzkin used the term before Bukharin does, at least in this session. “Remarks of N. Bukharin to Presidium, ECCI, 16 March 1927 (Extracts),” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 155fn3.

³⁵⁴ RGASPI, 495.2.94, 115-171.

³⁵⁵ RGASPI, 495.72.25, 47-48; “Memorandum of D. Petrovsky to Presidium of ECCI, 17 March 1927,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 158-159.

Africa, hoping to get the party to see the need for a shift in tactics, Petrovsky spearheaded an initiative to produce a written platform to give to the CPSA.

In July 1927, the Politsecretariat of the ECCI produced a resolution which urged the CPSA to work towards “an independent black South African Republic.” The committee included Petrovsky who had the resolution copied to his personal archive in the Comintern.³⁵⁶ Petrovsky presumably identified La Guma’s passion for helping South African black Africans. Both were willing to consider radical applications of the concept of self-determination of nations. As the Comintern warmed to the idea of self-determination on racial lines, outlined in the previous chapter, James La Guma was prepared to champion this radical new concept by promoting an independent black African republic as a solution to the racial, and labour, issues of South Africa. Petrovsky meanwhile championed the concept within the Comintern apparatus.

The CPSA reacted negatively to the July 1927 resolution. By the end of the year, the CPSA had still not yet accepted the new line. La Guma, who had returned to Moscow to report on the party, claimed that those against the new thesis argued it did not take into consideration the real situation on the ground and at best, felt the thesis was premature. To them, the black Africans were not yet capable of this level of revolutionary spirit. La Guma in his report dismissed these arguments. He noted support in the Cape Town Branch of the party, and again, chastised the Central Committee of the CPSA for wanting

³⁵⁶ It should be noted that the copy to one’s personal archives was not unique. The fact that it was copied to Petrovsky’s archives suggests a particular link to the content of the resolution. “Resolution of Politsecretariat of ECCI, 22 July 1927 (Extract),” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 161.

to wait until white workers were ready to work with black workers.³⁵⁷ Petrovsky, present during La Guma's report, called on La Guma to champion the resolution more forcefully.³⁵⁸

Back in South Africa, the CPSA Party Congress remained steadfast in its opposition, voting down the Native Republic Thesis.³⁵⁹ La Guma expressed frustration with the stubbornness of the "European" comrades, suggesting that there was a clear split on racial lines towards the new platform.³⁶⁰ Petrovsky, upon hearing of the setback appealed to the party directly, hoping to pressure it.³⁶¹ Petrovsky was very involved in the development of the platform. He was at the meeting when the concept was first mentioned. He frequently corresponded with La Guma. He was present at every major meeting involving La Guma or discussion on the Native Republic Thesis. Furthermore, he chaired the Negro Commission at the Sixth Congress and made sure the Native Republic Thesis would be forced upon the CPSA.

The controversy exposed a fault line within the CPSA. There were many supporters of the thesis, including La Guma, buoyed by Douglas and Molly Wolton.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ RGASPI, 495.72.25, 166-170.

³⁵⁸ "Report of Discussion, Meeting of Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI, 1 December 1927 (Extract)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 166-168.

³⁵⁹ Simons & Simons, 395.

³⁶⁰ "Letter from J. La Guma to V. Demar, 10 January 1928," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 173-174. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 151.

³⁶¹ "Letter from D. Petrovsky to J. La Guma, 15 February 1928," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 175. "Letter from D. Petrovsky to CPSA, 15 February 1928," 175-176.

³⁶² Douglas and Molly Wolton's role was minor at this point but grew as time passed and the Comintern's direct intervention developed.

Many others, led by Bunting and including black African members, T. W. Thibedi, Gana Makabeni, and H. L. Phooko, saw some merit in the Thesis. They suggested that sometime in the future, a black African republic would be appropriate for South Africa, but they felt that that time had not come yet and they also were concerned about the thesis' "racialistic" and Garveyist approach.³⁶³ What these meetings throughout the first half of 1928 reveal was that the CPSA was not split on racial lines, as La Guma had claimed in his report to the Comintern.³⁶⁴ The split was over whether seeking black African rule was appropriate given the South African situation at that exact moment. Critics believed that black African rule was inevitable and thus should not divert the party's attention immediately. Supporters saw the Native Republic Thesis as a challenge to the Nationalist Party's call for the Union's complete independence from the United Kingdom. Black workers could adopt and enable the CPSA to become the party of the black African. Bunting and others saw that step as problematic, but realized there was some value in the thesis in the long-term. The time to pull the proverbial trigger had not come though.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ "Minutes of Meeting, Executive Committee, CPSA, 15 March 1928," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 177-180; "Minutes of Meeting, Central Executive Committee, CPSA, 12 April 1928 (Extracts)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Fightsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 181-183; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 152.

³⁶⁴ Allison Drew also made this argument. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 152.

³⁶⁵ It should be noted that the "Haywood-Nasanov Theses" was about to become a significant consideration for the Negro Commission just a couple of months later. See Chapter Two for more details.

Stemming from these discussions, CPSA delegates attended the Sixth Comintern Congress, beginning July 1928, to argue against the Thesis.³⁶⁶ Represented by Sidney Bunting, Rebecca Bunting, and Edward Roux, they had an uphill battle. Roux points out that the CPSA delegates received a frosty reception, perhaps in anticipation of the heated discussions to come over the Native Republic Thesis.³⁶⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, the Comintern had made the “Negro Question” a priority with a Negro Commission established to discuss it. The South African Question took up a good portion of this discussion. But it would be some time until the CPSA delegates could make their case in this commission. Bunting therefore aired his position on South African affairs from the floor of the main conference bringing more negative attention to him.

On 23 July 1928, Bunting, while referencing the frosty reception, announced that South Africa could also use more attention from the Comintern. He argued that the Comintern misrepresented the conditions of South Africa in Comintern publications. The errors made the economic situation seem worse in South Africa than it actually was. Subtly criticizing the Native Republic Thesis, he called for better research and analysis on the South African situation. In addition, he highlighted the lack of communication between the CPSA and the Comintern; until the correspondence related to La Guma’s visit in December 1927, the party had not had any contact with Comintern officials, a claim which emphatically shows how little South Africa had registered in Comintern affairs to this point.

³⁶⁶ “Minutes of Meeting, Central Executive Committee, CPSA, 12 April 1928 (Extracts),” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 181-183.

³⁶⁷ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 91.

He also promoted his long-held philosophy of the primacy of class issues, or, in the case of black African workers, many of whom were farmers, agrarian issues, instead of national ones. Colonial liberation, for Bunting, was “a most important weapon for the overthrow of capitalist rule.” Attacking the Comintern’s colonial platform, Bunting continued by stating that the black proletariat in South Africa was as much part of the proletariat as any European proletariat, suggesting that their differences were negligible. One workers’ movement was all that was necessary. Furthermore, national liberation, in the South African context, was problematic as only Afrikaners held any aspirations for independence. Bunting brought his argument back to racial issues by claiming that the Comintern’s division between Europe and colonial masses was akin to the way white South African workers perceived the difference between white and black workers. Instead, a traditional Marxist approach was best for South Africa.³⁶⁸ Bunting maintained his long held position. It was one that the CPSA had largely maintained for its entire existence. Other delegates, including American delegate, William Dunne and Native Republic Thesis booster, Max Petrovsky, attacked Bunting, charging him with being a social-democrat who stood against colonial liberation and racial equality.³⁶⁹

Edward Roux also delivered a report on the Native Republic Thesis. The original thesis had suggested that an independent black African republic was a transitional stage, similar to the bourgeois revolution that was required before the socialist revolution in Marxist dialectics. Roux, however, argued that this transitional stage was unnecessary in

³⁶⁸ “Speech of Comrade Bunting, VI Congress Session 23.7.28,” in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 158-159.

³⁶⁹ Johns, 219-221; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 159.

the African context. For example, there was no African bourgeoisie. Therefore, there was no possibility of a true bourgeois revolution. To establish his case, Roux detailed the living conditions of many African peoples before turning his attention to the black South African movement. Here, he lauded what the CPSA had done. It had taken the lead in the South African “native” movement and had begun to implant a revolutionary sentiment amongst them. Roux concluded by arguing that South Africa did not require a black nationalist movement as the CPSA could radicalize the black African masses to such an extent that it could lead the entire African continent.³⁷⁰ Two days later, Roux made a much more impassioned and direct plea. The Native Republic Thesis, as constructed, was bad strategy. It would only inflame racial tensions and undo what good the CPSA had done. It would replace worker unity, regardless of race, and instead seemingly promote a racialized slogan. The Rand Revolt undoubtedly replayed in Roux’s mind, recalling the pro-white worker rhetoric that had developed then. The Native Republic Thesis would replace calls for a “White South Africa” with a “Black South Africa” and only continue to enhance the racial divide. Roux concluded bluntly, “This is mere perversity, not dialectical materialism.”³⁷¹

Matters did not improve for Bunting or the CPSA delegates. When they finally were able to argue their position in the Negro Commission, chaired by Petrovsky, they found no audience for their views. Bunting stated it was unthinkable that a member of the

³⁷⁰ E.R. Roux, “Thesis on South Africa, 28.7.28,” in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 159.

³⁷¹ E.R. Roux, “The New Slogan and the Revolution Movement among White Workers in South Africa,” in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University. Roux’s position may reflect what Krikler discusses in his article on the Rand Revolt. Krikler, 1051-1075.

CPSA, especially one of his standing, could stand for a “White South Africa” given how much time he and the CPSA had spent combating racism. He recounted the outstanding record of the CPSA, that black Africans made up nine tenths of the party membership, and that the party’s message was one of emancipation and equality.³⁷²

Bunting expanded on his position in a second report. This report stated that the situation in South Africa was very different from that in America; he delineated the unique situations in South Africa. The British and Dutch peoples worked together; Indian and Coloured populations had added to diversity. He outlined the legal and political roadblocks to black participation and outlined the history of the CPSA, including numbers for party membership. Bunting claimed the CPSA had 200 whites and 200 blacks in 1927, whereas by 1928, 158 whites and 1600 blacks. He followed by pointing out a need for white support to “shield” the party in its work for black Africans, before citing the many difficulties the party had in reaching black workers. Finally, Bunting discussed the ECCI resolution on the Native Republic Thesis, suggesting it could not be put forward as written, as he felt the thesis was irrelevant, and potentially disastrous in the South African situation.³⁷³

Petrovsky responded. He questioned Bunting’s claims. He cited La Guma’s visits to Moscow and his reports and used them to discredit Bunting. Petrovsky cited La Guma’s figures from March 1927: 400 white members with 55 blacks. Bunting argued that the ICU and ANC were incapable of leading the charge on black African issues in

³⁷² Sidney Bunting, “Declaration by South African Delegate,” in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University.

³⁷³ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 117-128.

South Africa. Petrovsky parroted La Guma from a year and a half earlier, pointing out their incapability was a result of the CPSA's failure to effectively infiltrate them or use them for its own purposes and thus, the CPSA had not done enough on black issues.³⁷⁴

At this point, Roux presented his two reports, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Roux attempted to resolve matters by agreeing with Petrovsky, stating that more attention needed to be paid to the ECCI programme. Roux continued by arguing that "The Party has sort of decided to live from day to day on the immediate issues that arise and to adhere to the idea that no programme is needed. This shows the extreme youth and lack of understanding of the party." This shift for Roux was likely an attempt to move debate forward. Instead, another commission was appointed to write a resolution to repudiate the CPSA's line and to align it with the ECCI.³⁷⁵

The comments of the CPSA delegates caused La Guma to write a personal letter to Petrovsky. La Guma suggested that the Buntings and Roux "exposed their political leanings." He continued, criticizing Bunting and his followers of being "unable to divorce their feelings from the parasitical white worker who [is] using the black worker now as a catspaw." He finished by pointing out his lack of faith in the CPSA delegates to follow any line set by Moscow.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ RGSAPI, 495.155.56, 111-112.

³⁷⁵ RGSAPI, 495.155.56, 112. This document is part of the *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History* collection. The editors noted that Roux's reports have not been found in the archives. I suggest that the two reports he provides are those referenced earlier. If this was the case though, they differed from the tenor of his comments in the Negro Commission. "Minutes of Meeting, Negro Commission, Sixth Congress, Comintern, 11 August 1928 (Extract)," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 184-186, 186fn3.

³⁷⁶ "Letter from J. La Guma to D. Petrovsky, 22 August 1928," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930,

Meanwhile, Bunting was busy elsewhere, speaking in one of the general sessions on Kuusinen's Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the East. Bunting tried again to air his grievances regarding the Native Republic Thesis, with which he still disagreed on practical grounds. This time he also discussed the Theses on the National and Colonial Question of the Second Congress. He reminded those in attendance that he felt that in some cases a general proletariat movement was better than a specific colonial movement and suggested that the Theses make provisions for this, as actual conditions determined the form of support. He also noted that the Theses promoted developing a general class consciousness, especially in the more developed regions. He then restated long held positions, the lack of a black African bourgeoisie, the need for racial unity, and that concentrating on nationalist forces within South Africa would bring about disastrous results for black workers. Bunting continued by stating that the Negro Sub-Commission was writing a thesis for conditions that did not exist in South Africa. Instead, he argued white workers would not understand any of the distinctions in a Native Republic Thesis. Instead, they would focus on the simple phrase "Native Republic" and turn against communism.³⁷⁷

Bunting continued his criticism in the Negro Commission. He suggested La Guma had given the wrong impression about the party, and accused him of being a "black chauvinist." He took issue with the CPSA being called white chauvinists, the uncomradely atmosphere of the meetings, and concluded that the Native Republic Thesis

edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 187-188.

³⁷⁷ "Minutes of 38th Session. VI Congress. 20.8.28," in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 159-160.

was problematic and kept white workers from having a role in whatever followed.

Ultimately, Bunting wanted something simple – a slogan that would not give rise to misunderstandings and split the movement, a slogan that could not be taken to mean “Pure Black Republic.”³⁷⁸

Petrovsky, however, was not swayed in the slightest and delivered a condescending speech to the CPSA delegates. The CPSA would need to change:

[The white Central Committee members of the CPSA] have to adapt their brains and feelings to this line of the Comintern resolution. They will have to work hard in order to persuade the members of the Party (I speak of the whites) to fall in with the Comintern opinion. They will have a very difficult job when they speak to workers in general, but Comrade Bunting will remember that in such countries as the United States, South America and England, there was a great difficulty to speak of the class struggle, even the workers used to be very much against it, and they used to insult our Socialist speakers, but we never told them, the best way to meet the situation is not to speak about the class struggle and socialism....I think instead of trying to persuade us, the South African comrades will do a better job and will render a better service to the Comintern and the South African Party if they will try to think along the lines of the Comintern on national and racial questions, of which this resolution is a very simple application.

There is nothing new and original in this resolution; nothing which is in any way outside the general line put forward by Lenin.³⁷⁹

Petrovsky put the slogan to a vote. However, confusion reigned. When Petrovsky read it aloud, Bunting noted that it was different from what the South African delegates had.³⁸⁰

Petrovsky also had the preamble stripped from the resolution, leading Bunting to exclaim “the less facts the better!?”³⁸¹ Bunting and the other CPSA delegates attempted to change the language, arguing for “An Independent Workers’ and Peasants’ South African

³⁷⁸ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 129-135.

³⁷⁹ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 137.

³⁸⁰ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 138-139.

³⁸¹ RGASPI, 495.155.56, 136-146. The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing racial questions as put in the general colonial policies. RGASPI, 495.155.56, 146-158.

Republic with Equal Rights for all Toilers Irrespective of Colour, as a Basis for a Native Government.” The amendment was shot down.³⁸² After over a year of debate, Petrovsky ensured that the CPSA would need to integrate the Native Republic Thesis. Historian Sheridan Johns argued that this episode was a “symbol of CI discipline.”³⁸³ A. Lerumo and Jonathan Derrick noted that the Native Republic Thesis was a precursor to other prominent policies in South African politics, whether it was the 1962 SACP Plan or the politics post-Apartheid.³⁸⁴ The chapter on the Native Republic Thesis had just begun. It was the first significant time the Comintern had become involved in CPSA affairs. From the Sixth Congress on, Moscow’s interference was far more prominent in the South African party.

Moving on from Moscow

Having failed to convince the Communist International to moderate its position, the CPSA reluctantly agreed to fall into line. After significant debate, the Seventh Party Congress of the CPSA, held at the end of the year, adopted the Native Republic Thesis.³⁸⁵ The CPSA also had to deal with the general tactical shift in international communism from the United Front to the Comintern’s Third Period strategy of class against class. A year earlier, the Communist International urged the CPSA to develop left wings in white

³⁸² “Amendment to ‘Native Republic’ Slogan Proposed by CPSA Delegation, Sixth Comintern Congress, 25 August 1928,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume I: Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers 1919-1930, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 188-191; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 160.

³⁸³ Johns, 228-229.

³⁸⁴ Lerumo, 65; Derrick, 187.

³⁸⁵ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 340.

and non-white trade unions and political parties. Now, with the new line, the Comintern disallowed working with groups not run wholly by the communist party. Therefore, the CPSA could no longer work with the ANC. The ICU, which had gone through a split and was waning in its influence and could have been a target for communist involvement, could no longer be infiltrated. The CPSA had to act outside of existing trade unions and potential nationalist groups.³⁸⁶

The CPSA, however, was still capable of moving forward. The party was gaining members. Bunting remained the Chairman of the party, but otherwise the party leadership changed. Albert Nzula, a black African communist who had joined the CPSA in the mid-1920s, and Douglas Wolton were elected to the Executive. Douglas Wolton, Molly Wolton and Nzula were ardent supporters of the Native Republic Thesis.³⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Edward Roux committed himself to the new line, while Sidney Bunting, despite his reservations, attempted to do so as well. Bunting, however, did so while sharing with Edward Roux his disappointment in the “hundred word slogan,” poking fun at the final formulation of the thesis: “A South African Native Republic as a stage towards a Workers’ and Peasants’ Government with full protection and equal rights for all national minorities.”³⁸⁸ Bunting also reacted publicly. He released a statement to *The Star* in November 1928 which attempted to explain that the new slogan was a continuation of old lines of thinking while also pointing out that there had been some disagreement in

³⁸⁶ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 341-342.

³⁸⁷ Douglas Wolton even introduced the Native Republic Thesis at the Seventh Party Congress. Lerumo, 65; Johns, 231; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 164.

³⁸⁸ Eddie Roux & Win Roux, *Rebel Pity: The Life of Eddie Roux* (London: Rex Collings, 1970), 64.

Moscow and that the Comintern had overruled the CPSA.³⁸⁹ The Comintern became aware of the piece. It was the beginning of Bunting's downfall.³⁹⁰

Bunting was able to alter the immediate effects of the Thesis though. While accepting the Native Republic Thesis, the CPSA's Seventh Party Congress passed a meandering definition that allowed the party to maintain a general class-based approach, downplaying the racial aspects and instead delineating the Native Republic as a step in a general end to oppression of all peoples by any oppressor within the Union of South Africa. Historian Sheridan Johns, along with fellow party member Edward Roux, attribute this restatement to Bunting.³⁹¹ While this formulation passed, Douglas Wolton attacked the CPSA for its "chauvinistic tendencies," hinting at the tension between the Native Republic Thesis boosters and the Bunting faction.³⁹²

The general class-based approach continued through 1929 and into 1930. The CPSA used these tactics in the general election of 1929, fielding communist candidates for the first time. Bunting ran in Tembuland, Transkei, and Douglas Wolton ran in Cape Flats. Bunting's campaign was the more successful of the two, but in both cases, they lost and police intimidation hampered both campaigns.³⁹³ The campaign reflected, according to Edward Roux, a mix of the strength of Bunting's reputation and was a "personal victory" for Bunting and the party, extending their influence into rural areas.³⁹⁴ While the

³⁸⁹ Johns, 230-231.

³⁹⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.34, 100-101

³⁹¹ Johns, 233-235; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 104-105; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 164.

³⁹² Johns, 235. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 164.

³⁹³ Bunting received 289 votes out of 2302 votes cast; Wolton received 93 votes out of 3082 votes cast. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 166; Lerumo, 66; Johns, 236-237. Allison Drew gave a detailed look at the campaign: Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 170-185.

³⁹⁴ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 104-122.

general election campaigns were moral victories, the party suffered a significant defeat to close out 1930. It staged a Union-wide campaign against the Pass Laws, held on 16 December 1930, Dingaan's Day, the day commemorating the anniversary of the Battle at Blood River between Afrikaners and Zulus. The protests were of limited success and the Durban police became involved and clashed with African protesters injuring several and killing Johannes Nkosi, a well-liked black trade unionist and party leader who had joined the CPSA in 1926.³⁹⁵

Whereas events such as these put the CPSA front and centre as a champion of blacks, Bunting remained under siege. During 1929, he had started the League of African Rights. Its purpose was to fight for a black African franchise and equal education.³⁹⁶ The Comintern attacked the concept and saw it as too vulnerable to reformist and unwanted influences, likely a function of some of the individuals Bunting courted for executive positions, which included the ANC's Josiah Gumede and other ICU and ANC members.³⁹⁷ The Communist Party of Great Britain also apparently threw its support behind the Comintern, adding further pressure on Bunting and the CPSA to disavow the concept. Those supporting the League saw it as a way to extend CPSA influence into rural areas, while also mobilizing blacks who might otherwise have no place in the

³⁹⁵ Lerumo, 67-68; Johns, 256-258; Bush, 163-164; Roux & Roux, 90-92; Legassick, 21.

³⁹⁶ Johns, 240.

³⁹⁷ Johns, 240-241; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 113-115. Simons & Simons presented the League of African Rights as the coming together of "working class and national radicals in the liberation movement." This campaign and idea would have been right at home in Comintern politics pre-Sixth Congress. Unfortunately, falling in the Third Period, it was unacceptable to the tactics marshalled from Moscow. Simons & Simons, 417; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 193. Martin Legassick pointed out that the League showed the CPSA's desire for a mass organization and the party's refusal to wait for the ANC to reorganize. He later noted that the ANC backed away from supporting the League, ousted Gumede and became less militant. Legassick, 17-19. The removal of Gumede, who was pro-communist, from the ANC likely also ensured the ANC would distance themselves from the CPSA. Bush, 167.

movement. It also had the added advantage of being potentially useful in the event the CPSA was deemed illegal, a real possibility given increased repression by the South African government.³⁹⁸

The League for African Rights situation showed how closely the Comintern had its eyes on South Africa. CPSA members sent notes to Moscow defending their ideas, but the Comintern was firm. The Comintern urged the CPSA to send a delegate to the 1929 Second Congress of the League Against Imperialism, reminding the party of its obligations to that group. Add the formation of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers shortly thereafter, and it appears that South African affairs continued to be a concern for officials in the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern.³⁹⁹ The Secretariat even sent representatives, such as German trade unionist Paul Merker, to oversee the CPSA.⁴⁰⁰ Moscow's influence grew when Douglas Wolton returned to South Africa at the end of 1929. Wolton had been in Moscow for part of the year, meeting with Comintern officials. He returned two weeks before the aforementioned pass burning campaign on Dingaan's Day 1930 with a clear mandate. He was sent by the Comintern to deal with elements in the CPSA who refused to fall into line. Wolton's return put Bunting's CPSA career directly in the crosshairs of his enemies.⁴⁰¹

Douglas Wolton returned with a report from the Comintern, titled "How to build a Revolutionary Mass Party in South Africa," and its contents were printed in the South African communist paper *Umsebenzi* over several weeks from December 1930 to March

³⁹⁸ Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 343-344; Simons & Simons, 421-426; Legassick, 101.

³⁹⁹ Johns, 242-249.

⁴⁰⁰ Johns, 247-248.

⁴⁰¹ Johns, 262; Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 345; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 201; Legassick, 22-23.

1931. It criticized the CPSA for its failure to properly institute the Native Republic Thesis. It suggested many CPSA leaders were afflicted with white chauvinism and specifically criticized Bunting's philosophy of elevating the general class struggle, which in the process downplayed black African issues. The Comintern blamed the shortcomings on reformist tendencies in the party and urged the CPSA to purge these problematic elements from the party.⁴⁰² At the Ninth Conference of the CPSA, held in December 1930, delegates passed a resolution in conformity with the report, promising to purge right-wing elements from the party and Bolshevize. That meant Sidney Bunting and those who followed his lead.⁴⁰³

The CPSA split between those who were willing to follow the Comintern and those who defended Bunting. Several newer members agreed with Wolton and the Comintern's assessment and were willing to use Comintern interference to take control of the party. One such individual was Albert Nzula, who had become the Party Secretary while Wolton was away and became a significant figure in the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. Nzula agreed with the Native Republic Thesis and his issues with Bunting may have been more than tactical. Roux suggests that Bunting saw Nzula as a drunk who could not be trusted.⁴⁰⁴ While Wolton, Nzula and others, supported by Moscow, launched their attack, long-time Bunting supporters such as Gana Makabeni laid blame on the discipline of the new black membership. Rebecca Bunting supported

⁴⁰² *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party*, 112-113.

⁴⁰³ "Building a Leninist Party – Important Decisions of Johannesburg Conference', reported in *Umsebenzi*, January 9, 1931," *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party*, 113-115.

⁴⁰⁴ Roux, 118-119.

her husband and the party, pointing out that the CPSA had done what it could to fix mistakes as directed by the Comintern. Sidney Bunting found himself losing influence. The Ninth Party Convention elected a new executive and Wolton took on the leadership of the party. Edward Roux shifted his support to Wolton, seeing him as someone who could turn the party into a legitimate Bolshevik party with a clear platform and “a definite theory of revolution.”⁴⁰⁵ The rest of the executive was overhauled; Africans held nineteen executive positions along with four white members. Bunting was pushed out of the leadership of the party.⁴⁰⁶

The look of the CPSA drastically changed as the Comintern-supported members increased their influence and Bolshevized the party. A Latvian communist, Lazar Bach, an expert on Comintern ideology and tactics, arrived in South Africa to bring the party into line. He joined the CPSA in 1931.⁴⁰⁷ The Woltons, along with Bach, strove to purge the CPSA of its “right-wing” elements. Douglas Wolton continued to vilify Bunting at CPSA meetings, now characterizing his legal practice, something Bunting had used to help ameliorate the plight of black workers throughout the 1920s, as counter-revolutionary. He also brought in an agrarian platform, hoping to allow the CPSA to distinguish between different classes of farmers, a concept that some other members,

⁴⁰⁵ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 123.

⁴⁰⁶ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 346-347; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 203-204; Legassick, 22-23; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 123-124.

⁴⁰⁷ Sheridan Johns suggested he joined the Central Committee at the Ninth Conference. Records of the Conference are unclear if he was present. In all likelihood, he arrived in 1930, but became a factor in CPSA affairs in 1931. Johns, 268; Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 347; Roux & Roux, 95-98; Brian Bunting, *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary* (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1986), 56; Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 205.

including later CPSA leader Moses Kotane failed to understand.⁴⁰⁸ The Wolton leadership succeeded in expelling Bunting from the party in September 1931. Along with Bunting, former leader Bill Andrews, who had not been a factor in the CPSA for years, was expelled, along with many trade unionists. Under the cover of Buntingism and right danger, the party expelled anyone who had engaged in factionalism against the party leadership or who had not continuously been involved in the party.⁴⁰⁹ These expulsions brought a series of other expulsions at the regional level. Wolton even expelled former Native Republic Thesis champion, James La Guma, over differences in trade union policy and for having engaged in factionalism against the party leadership in the past.⁴¹⁰

With many of the “right-wing” and “Buntingites” removed from the party, the party now was firmly in line with the Comintern and sought to build on its relationship with Moscow. The CPSA increased the number of black South Africans who were sent to the Lenin School, which included future party leader Moses Kotane among others. The Comintern continued to send representatives to South Africa to ensure the Comintern line was followed.⁴¹¹ Domestically, the CPSA’s only tactical success came when in 1932, the CPSA ran John Marks, a black South African, as the party representative in a by-election

⁴⁰⁸ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 349. Sheridan Johns noted that the CPSA attempted to instigate several pass-burning campaigns to promote the Comintern line, but with limited success. Johns, 271-278.

⁴⁰⁹ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 350; Johns, 278-281; Lerumo, 72; Roux & Roux, 101-103; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 55-57. Drew, *Between Empire and Revolution*, 206-207. Roux noted that many of the expulsions were for trumped up reasons that frequently surrounded minor errors, factionalism or individuals maintaining membership while distancing themselves from the party. Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 132-134.

⁴¹⁰ Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 350-351; Johns, 281; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 134.

⁴¹¹ Brian Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 56-60; Drew, “The New Line in South Africa,” 354-355; Johns, 291. Even before the “Buntingites” were purged, the ECCI was glowing in its appreciation of the party’s efforts to purge the right deviationists from the party. “Letter from ECCI to Central Committee, CPSA, 20 June 1931 (Extracts),” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Footsoldiers to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 9-14.

in Germiston. Marks had no chance of winning as black Africans were prohibited from running for parliament or voting.⁴¹² These measures covered up the CPSA's biggest problem, dwindling membership. Allison Drew points out that the CPSA dropped to 100 members in 1931, with roughly sixty by 1932. Sheridan Johns is more generous, suggesting that the CPSA in late 1932 had no more than 300 members. The low membership numbers, in turn, limited how relevant the CPSA could be in South African politics more generally.⁴¹³

The party would soon be without its leadership. Douglas Wolton was arrested after a demonstration. Molly Wolton suffered a breakdown in 1933. In order to recover, Douglas Wolton suggested Molly needed to leave South Africa; when a job offer came from his brother in Great Britain, the couple accepted and left.⁴¹⁴

Lazar Bach remained, as did Comintern pressure. In 1934, the CPSA maintained its full support of the Native Republic Thesis and its Third Period way of thinking that included attacking the ANC. Bach's subordination to the Moscow line continued to dilute a weakening party. Differences between Moses Kotane and Bach, which began in 1933, illustrated the still strong grip Bach held. Kotane, as editor of the party paper *Umsebenzi*, published articles with his own interpretation of the Native Republic Thesis which he saw

⁴¹² Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 356; Roux & Roux, 109-126.

⁴¹³ Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 356; Johns, 282; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 58; Legassick, 23-25. See footnote 111 of this chapter for another note about membership.

⁴¹⁴ Drew, "The New Line in South Africa," 356; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 64; "Letter from D.G. Wolton to ECCI, 13 March 1934," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Footsoldiers to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 90-92.

as a step to socialist revolution, with a bourgeois revolution as the first step.⁴¹⁵ Bach emphatically attacked this view and suggested that the Native Republic Thesis could directly lead to socialist revolution in South Africa.⁴¹⁶ Kotane and his supporters sought to make the Thesis applicable to local conditions as Bunting had done. By moderating the approach, the party could consider United Front action. Bach, citing Comintern edicts, made clear that there was no room for equivocation. In 1935, with the aid of two members who had returned from the Lenin School in Moscow, Bach had enough backing to force his view as party doctrine, and in the process, expel Kotane and his supporters, including Edward Roux, from the Political Bureau. Kotane and Roux challenged the decision and appealed to the Comintern. Bach, unwilling to back down, went to Moscow to defend his position. In an ironic twist of fate, after engineering many expulsions for deviations, his roommate in Moscow was found to be a “Trotskyite” and Bach, painted with the same brush, was arrested and never returned to South Africa. It is presumed he was executed in the purges.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ “Letter from M. Kotane to ECCI, 31 October 1934,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Fights to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 117-121; Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 152.

⁴¹⁶ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 152-153.

⁴¹⁷ Roux, *S.P. Bunting*, 153-156; Roux, *Rebel Pity*, 141-150; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 61-71; Lerumo, 72-74. See also, “Telegram from M. Kotane, J. Gomas and E. Roux to ECCI, 14 September 1935,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Fights to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 129. For the statement to the ECCI, see “Letter from E. Roux and Others Communists to ECCI, 20 September 1935 (Extracts),” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Fights to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 135-138. For more on Bach and his demise, see “Minutes of Meeting, PB of CPSA, 11 June 1937,” in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Fights to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 252fn5.

Moving On from the Native Republic Thesis

Following the gutting of the CPSA, the remaining members gradually attempted to rebuild. The Comintern's shift to Popular Front helped. *Umsebenzi* paid a posthumous tribute to Sidney Bunting, who died in 1936. Bill Andrews returned and became Chairman of the party again. Moses Kotane and Edward Roux were reinstated.⁴¹⁸ The ECCI stepped back from the Native Republic Thesis. Instead, it urged the CPSA to form a united trade union of all workers, regardless of race while maintaining a strong defense of black African rights.⁴¹⁹ The party obliged. It remained one of the few political groups in South Africa that promoted black rights. The CPSA returned to United Front tactics, working with the ANC and rebuilding its trade union presence. Most importantly, it promoted unity between white and black workers. Brian Bunting pointed out that Moses Kotane was "almost entirely" responsible for the rebuilding of the ANC in the Cape. This shift was a return to the party's pre-1928 platform, taking lead from the Comintern's stepping back from the rigid promotion of the Native Republic Thesis. Bunting's assessment also was an example of the party's attempts to defend the actions of then-current members, without denigrating any of its past, regardless of how tumultuous it was.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Lerumo, 74; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 81.

⁴¹⁹ The resolution cites Bunting's figures from the Sixth Congress, not La Guma's, claiming that since the Sixth Congress, party membership had dropped from 2000 to 150. "Resolution of Secretariat of ECCI on the Situation in CPSA, 17 March 1936," in *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Volume II: Bolshevik Footsoldiers to Victims of Bolshevisation 1931-1939, edited by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 186-187.

⁴²⁰ Johns, 291-293; Lerumo, 76-77; Moses M. Kotane, "Greetings on the 26th Anniversary of the Communist Party of South Africa: A Message from Moses M. Kotane, Gen. Sec. Communist Party of South Africa," *Freedom* 6, no. 4 (July-Aug., 1947): 2-3; "Document 92: "Communist Party of South Africa Plenum Held from 5th to 8th April 1936", Umsebenzi and 16 May 1936," in *South Africa's Radical Tradition, a documentary history, Volume One: 1907-1950*, edited by Allison Drew,

By 1940, the CPSA had borrowed from both “eras” of its development, merging the calls for unity of the Bunting-led party with the calls for national liberation and equality that the Comintern had foisted upon it and combined them into a platform in the CPSA’s draft programme. Tying the defeat of fascism to national liberation and racial unity, despite the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the party called for worker unity, the end to racial discrimination and equal wages, improved working conditions and insurance for all workers. The draft resolution was steeped in old party thinking, but maintained enough of the new concepts, aligning it with the Comintern position. As for the attack on fascism, every party struggled to deal with the Nazi-Soviet Pact. In general though, the CPSA seemed to equate fascism with imperialism, maintaining the line of the Comintern in the 1930s.⁴²¹

The CPSA promoted these positions in pamphlets during the Second World War. For example, the party detailed the hazards of Nazi rule, while proposing that the People’s Front was the only means for workers to protect their rights. If victorious, the Nazis would turn South Africa into their colony, ensuring “national hatred,” the destruction of trade unions, the “enslavement of women,” religious persecution and

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/south-africas-radical-tradition-documentary-history-volume-one-1907-1950-allison-drew> (Accessed July 15, 2016). Brian Bunting, however, argued that that the CPSA/ANC partnership that developed in the second half of the 1930s “reflected the spirit of the resolution on the South African question adopted by the 6th congress of the Comintern in 1928.” He continued by suggesting that this position informed both parties actions for the following decades until the mid-1970s. Given that Bunting’s work, and the history of the CPSA has been tarred by the politicization of these topics, and especially the Native Republic Thesis, it is more than likely an overexaggeration of how much the Native Republic Thesis remained a priority for the party. Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 86.

⁴²¹ The party included coloured and Indian workers explicitly, suggesting they were being attacked similar to how black African workers had been by the South African government. “Document 120: “Draft Programme of the Communist Party of South Africa (C.1940),” in *South Africa’s Radical Tradition, a documentary history, Volume One: 1907-1950*, edited by Allison Drew, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/south-africas-radical-tradition-documentary-history-volume-one-1907-1950-allison-drew> (Accessed July 15, 2016); Bunting, *Moses Kotanes*, 92-95.

militarism.⁴²² Other pamphlets linked the South African government's trade union policy, which endorsed a colour line, as fascist. To combat fascism, all workers needed to unite to resist fascist ideals of the bosses, and pave the way for a new system that would benefit all.⁴²³ Following a series of attacks on coloured workers in Stellenbosch, a pamphlet issued by the United Front laid blame at the feet of the National Party, drawing a parallel between Nazi treatment of Jews and the treatment of non-Europeans in South Africa.⁴²⁴ Meanwhile, the party predictably lauded the Soviet Union for having "solved" the national question within its own borders and of the Red Army as "liberator of peoples."⁴²⁵ The running thread through most of the CPSA's pamphlets during the Second World War focused on worker unity, an end to segregation and racial equality. These positions lead Sheridan Johns to conclude that the party returned to being the main party for non-white workers during the war.⁴²⁶

⁴²² "Blackshirts! Greyshirts! Hunger! Slavery! Oppression and War!" *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 1 (C734a), Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁴²³ "Must We Fight?" *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "6 Point Communist Programme," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "A New Year's Message for South Africa 1941," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "Organise a People's Front in South Africa," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "A New Year's Message to South Africa for 1942," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁴²⁴ "Who Caused the Riots?" August 6, 1940, *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 1 (C734a), Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁴²⁵ "Brighter Bonfires," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 1 (C734a), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "National Question Solved," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 1 (C734a), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "Soviet Russia – Liberator of the Peoples," *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁴²⁶ "Democratic Rights for All!" *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "Smash Hitler Now..." *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "Smash Fascism Now!" *Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943*, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; "Programme for Victory,"

Even if the CPSA's had regained this position, the party membership had not yet recovered and therefore, the influence of the party was patchy at best. Martin Legassick noted that the party had fewer than three hundred members, the majority in Johannesburg, limiting party effectiveness.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, the factionalism of the early 1930s allowed other parties to emerge on the left, including a Trotskyist group and groups run by former communists Solly Sachs and Hyman Basner. These groups also curbed the influence and membership of the CPSA.⁴²⁸

The Native Republic Thesis damaged the CPSA's influence during the 1930s. As the ANC grew in significance throughout the 1940s, it became a more legitimate option. The CPSA continued to operate for the remainder of the decade, trying to fight for black workers' rights. However, as the National Party established apartheid following its election in 1948, the CPSA was fighting a losing battle. Illegality loomed large for the CPSA; it disbanded in 1950, pledging all support to the ANC. One wonders what the scope of the CPSA would have been during the 1930s had it not promoted the disastrous policy, influenced by La Guma's visit and supported by Moscow. Undoubtedly, the need for strict adherence to the Comintern interpretation prevented the Native Republic Thesis from becoming a useful program. The deviations or reformulations of Bunting or Kotane could have allowed the party to build off the successes heading into the Sixth Congress, or stop the proverbial bleeding, in the mid-1930s. The Native Republic Thesis was the Comintern's first interference into South African affairs and it continued to meddle until

Communist Party of South Africa issuances, 1937-1943, Box 1 (XX051-9.13), Folder 2 (C734b), Hoover Institute, Stanford University; Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 95; Johns, 293.

⁴²⁷ Legassick, 25.

⁴²⁸ Johns, 293.

1935. Afterwards, while it certainly kept an eye on affairs, it never became as directly involved again. An underground communist party did reform in South Africa in 1953, renaming itself as the South African Communist Party (SACP), supporting anti-apartheid measures and the ANC. Perhaps the Soviet Union remained bitter about what could have been in South Africa. Though customary, the Soviet Union did not send friendly communist greetings.

One Wrong Turn: Canadian Communism and the National, Colonial and the Racial Question, 1921-1945

South Africa was an important country for the Comintern because of the significance of the Native Republic Thesis and South Africa's prominent racial issues. Though Canada was not as important to the Comintern as South Africa was, the Comintern did see Canada as relevant because of the proximity and influence of the world's two strongest imperial powers. It was a British dominion and shared a border with the United States. Canada also had a number of significant issues that were of note to communists. Domestically, Canada had an ethnically diverse population with a significant number of immigrants as part of the working class. It also had a large French-speaking population and numerous Indigenous groups. In theory, this demographic makeup, coupled with Canada's status in the British Empire, made it a unique battleground for the National, Colonial and Racial Questions of the Comintern. In practice, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) struggled with these issues.

The story of the CPC, anti-imperialism, racial equality and the Comintern was one of high hopes, confusion and limited application. Initially, Canadian communists had little time for combatting imperialism. The ethnic makeup of the party was dominated by Ukrainian and Finnish workers with English and French Canadian members overwhelmingly in the minority. During the interwar period, this composition was a constant issue. The party defended immigrant workers. Mobilizing French Canadian support was a challenge. Indigenous peoples were ignored.

The party also struggled with the Comintern's tactics. While the Comintern defined Canada as a secondary imperialist country by the end of the 1920s, the

Communist Party of Canada disagreed and called for Canadian independence from the British Empire and defined French Canada as an oppressed minority. This disagreement led to Comintern interference in 1929 and an overhaul of the CPC's tactics, but not its leadership. The Comintern's correction of the CPC platform caused the party to avoid fully adopting tactics to the Canadian situation, instead opting to follow Comintern suggestions broadly, while constantly being aware of its previous tactical failings. The arrest of many leaders of the party in the early 1930s also diverted party efforts. The Canadian federal government targeted the CPC and sought to undermine whatever influence it felt the party may have, especially as agents of Moscow. During the Second World War, CPC leadership revived its incorrect line. It sought to take advantage of French Canadian nationalism and general wariness towards British or American influence, while propagandizing against fascism. At this point, it finally placed prominent attention on national and anti-imperial issues which foreshadowed its later platforms during the Cold War.

The Early Days of the Canadian Communist Party

The First World War, as for many communist parties, was a significant experience for Canadian communists. The war had led to an increased promotion of workers' rights. The Bolshevik Revolution influenced some on the left, including many prominent Canadian communists, who hoped that socialism would rise in Canada as well.⁴²⁹ The

⁴²⁹ A.E. Smith was one such individual. A.E. Smith, *All My Life: Rev. A.E. Smith, An Autobiography* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1949), 44-45. See also, Craig Heron and Myer Siemiatycki, "The Great War, the State, and Working-Class Canada," in *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*, ed. Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 26-27.

Winnipeg Strike in 1919 and its failure convinced many of a need to radicalize the left in Canada. The Conservative Government of Canada targeted movements on the Left and quashed the strike.⁴³⁰ As fears of the “Bolshevik menace” created a red scare, many affirmed their commitment to communism.⁴³¹ Support for radical solutions divided the Canadian left. Those who were critical of the Bolsheviks saw the October Revolution not only as a chance event, but also as a repudiation of their long held belief that socialism would come gradually and through parliamentary means.⁴³²

In Guelph, on a small farm, on 23 May 1921 with many of these communists present, twenty-two delegates declared the formation of the Communist Party of Canada. Lenin’s *Imperialism* and the Comintern’s charges of socialism’s bankruptcy during the war were noted as reasons for the need for a radical CPC.⁴³³ Over the course of this founding convention, the delegates adopted a constitution and proclaimed their allegiance to the Comintern.⁴³⁴

The convention also defined the early position of the party on Canada, imperialism and the world. Lenin’s *Imperialism* and the worldview established by the

⁴³⁰ Roger Graham, *Arthur Meighen: The Door of Opportunity* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1960), 229-244; David Jay Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1974), 176-195; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History, Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996), 51-57.

⁴³¹ Avakumovic, 1-16; Angus, 49-56, 63; Craig Heron, “National Contours: Solidarity and Fragmentation,” in *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925*, ed. Craig Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 293-295; Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Brief History, Second Edition* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996), 51-57.

⁴³² William Beeching & Phyllis Clarke eds., *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1977), 90-91; Avakumovic, 18-19; Angus, 16-26; Craig Heron, “National Contours,” 290-297.

⁴³³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-271, 495.98.1, 13-15.

⁴³⁴ Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 47-48; Avakumovic, 21; Angus, 70-72; Beeching & Clarke, 95-108; *Canada’s Party of Socialism*, 16.

Comintern became the worldview of the CPC. Imperialism had ravaged the entire world, including the Americas. Regarding Canada's position, the CPC noted that Canada was a "so-called self-governing colon[y]" with "political autonomy and control of fiscal policy." As a result, it was "an auxiliary of British Imperialism" and therefore supported Britain's dominance in non-dominion colonies. It was a colony, yet it had a bourgeoisie that was directly enabling British imperialism which needed to be exposed. In line with this position, the CPC supported colonial liberation.⁴³⁵

Support did not mean active promotion though. Day-to-day CPC affairs and operation forced any consideration of colonial liberation to the background. The CPC needed to establish a clear trade union policy while also developing its own presence in the Comintern; until the Comintern's Fourth Congress, Canadian representation in Moscow did not exist. In order to support United Front tactics and to have a public face that could operate in elections, the CPC created the Worker's Party of Canada (WPC) which further monopolized the CPC's attention. The WPC was the CPC's public face, under the belief that a "Communist Party" would be unwelcome in the Canadian political climate. It only existed for a couple of years before, with the Comintern's counsel, the CPC elected to fold the WPC and maintain only one party to serve all required functions.

⁴³⁶ Related to the organization of the CPC, however, there was a further significant issue that required immediate attention – its ethnic makeup.

⁴³⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-271, 495.98.4, 12.

⁴³⁶ Avakumovic, 27; Angus, 94-102; *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 18-22; Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 44-69.

The Nationalities Issues

From the very start, most of the CPC's membership was Finnish or Ukrainian. Many supported the left as they had left highly oppressive societies in the late nineteenth century to come to Canada. They sympathized with anti-imperialism and socialism. When these recent immigrants joined the CPC in 1921, they forced the party to adopt a federative structure; each of the individual ethnic sections had relative autonomy. Each section held its own organizational meetings and published its own periodicals in its own language.⁴³⁷ This structure, in many ways, mirrored the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union.

Despite this ethnic makeup and federative structure, the Comintern was always uneasy about the ethnic makeup of the party.⁴³⁸ In March 1925, having roughly 4500 members, the CPC took great pleasure in the fact that it had a "more than proportional" number of English members, but the Comintern was unimpressed and unconvinced. The Comintern demanded the reorganization of the party to form a more unified party. The Comintern wanted to remove unfavourable members and dissenting groups, but also to allow a more direct form of control of its member parties. The CPC attempted to follow through with some of these requests and tried to curb the autonomy of the different language sections. By doing so, however, the party then had to absorb all of the internal

⁴³⁷ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 18; Angus, 80; Avakumovic, 35.

⁴³⁸ Avakumovic included a lengthy discussion of the benefits and problems with such an ethnic makeup. He highlights that the inclusion of the language section gave the CPC a foothold in certain communities, but propagated the appearance that the CPC was not "Canadian." Avakumovic, 36-37.

issues within each ethnic group that had often been resolved at the local district level for each section.⁴³⁹

By 1927, the Comintern was still not pleased by the membership composition of the party. In a telegram dated 20 February 1927, it reminded the CPC to improve recruitment, stressing that it was “extremely necessary to increase the real Canadian and British membership of the party.”⁴⁴⁰ Recognizing that Canada continued to experience high immigration, the Comintern realized foreign workers needed to still be a priority. However, instead of working with the existing autonomous language or ethnic groups, the Comintern stressed the need to avoid special sections of the party and instead only offer foreign workers language support. Beyond that, the party was urged to draw these foreign workers into life in Canada and the party and to teach them to speak English. The Comintern resigned itself to the fact that foreign workers were going to be a strong proportion of party membership. By 1928, when discussing the Ukrainian Worker Organization, work with immigrant workers was encouraged, but again, increasing recruitment amongst English-speaking workers remained the preference for the Comintern. The Comintern felt that on one hand, party members who could not speak to most workers could hamper efforts to expand the appeal of communism; on the other hand, it could not hurt the base of some of the more enthusiastic and zealous membership.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ Rodney, 84; Avakumovic, 38.

⁴⁴⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.46, 31.

⁴⁴¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-275, 495.98.54, 34-38. The Comintern requested the same of the American party as well. Zumoff, 172-186.

The uneasy relationship with the language sections also had significant personal ramifications for their membership. A Finnish or Ukrainian section could represent the interests of its own workers better than the CPC itself. The CPC was a general party and one that was supposed to be the voice of the working class, but English workers had fewer concerns than foreign born workers. Historian Ian Angus pointed out that while English workers could strike or protest and at worst, face jail time or a fine, foreign-born workers risked deportation and as a result, while they sympathized with some leftist positions, they were more likely to be more conservative in their radicalism.⁴⁴² These issues were bubbling under the surface as the CPC became embroiled in a leadership struggle, developing from the purges of suspected Trotskyists.

The New Leadership and the Language Sections

Maurice Spector, a Ukrainian immigrant who had been educated at the University of Toronto, was arguably the most influential leader of the CPC. However, when the personal rivalry between Stalin and Trotsky seeped into the Comintern, he was unwilling to attack Trotsky. The Comintern ordered Bolshevization in all of its member parties and the CPC had its own leadership struggle with Spector on one side and the duo of Tim Buck and Stewart Smith, calling for greater loyalty to Moscow, on the other. Tim Buck was one of the trade union specialists for the party, but had gradually developed a greater role in crafting policy. Stewart Smith, meanwhile, was the first Canadian to attend the Lenin School in Moscow and, because of the prestige attached to Lenin School students,

⁴⁴² Angus, 291.

he rose in the party as a result. Spector was expelled from the CPC as a Trotskyist and Buck and Smith became its new leaders. Their importance to the development of the party cannot be understated. As a result of their position on Canadian independence and how the CPC currently managed the ethnic makeup of the party, they precipitated the Comintern's most serious intervention in Canadian affairs.

Buck and Smith had few connections to the various ethnic leaders within the party. With Spector gone and a desire to commit to the Comintern's position on the CPC's organization, they pressed forward and in the process had to deal with an open revolt from the party's language sections. The Finnish and Ukrainian sections fought back against the CPC's interference in their affairs. The Finnish section and the CPC had a particularly messy battle that saw the CPC's Central Executive Committee replace Aarvo Vaara, a popular editor of *Vapaus*, a Finnish-Canadian communist periodical, with another more supportive individual leading to open insurrection by the Finnish community. Vaara used his Finnish Organization contacts to return to the editorship, upsetting the party leadership.⁴⁴³ Both sides became so angry that each published lengthy tracts denouncing one another. The CPC expelled Finnish members while Finnish members replaced CPC appointees and locked out CPC members from speaking at their meetings.⁴⁴⁴ The struggle with the Ukrainian section was much less hostile, as it decided to passively resist the new leadership. The Ukrainians were also critical of the CPC leadership. While there were no condemnatory tracts published in anger, one Ukrainian

⁴⁴³ Vaara was a supporter of Jack MacDonald, another prominent CPC leader who was under fire for some of his tactical positions. These positions are discussed later in this chapter. Rodney, 157; Angus, 296; Beaulieu, 144-145.

⁴⁴⁴ Angus, 296-301, 308-311; Beaulieu, 142-146; Avakumovic, 62; Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 91.

member, John Stokaluk, attempted to challenge the CPC leadership, only to be denounced as a traitor by supporters of Buck and Smith. While other Ukrainian leaders criticized this decision, little more was done.⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the brouhaha revealed the tense relations that developed between the party leadership and the language sections over the second half of the 1920s. It extended to other divisions within the party as well. The Jewish section also had issues with CPC leadership in the immediate aftermath of the start of the Third Period that ended with the replacement of a publication editor and sanctions being placed against another prominent member.⁴⁴⁶

When the Comintern intervened in early 1930, it elected to pursue compromise positions, calling on all sides to engage in self-criticism. The Finnish section had to pull back on its harangues, agree to the CPC line, but the CPC had to respect the autonomy of the Finnish section. The Comintern elected to send a Finnish communist to deal with the matter, leading some to suggest Finnish interests were being mollified. Eventually, a similar resolution came for the Ukrainian situation. But these incidents only served to confirm the issues with a federal structure.⁴⁴⁷ These sections would best represent the interests of their fellow workers, but they were still separate from the CPC, due to the inability to harmonize English interests with those of foreign workers. These tensions and these issues continued for the remainder of the interwar period, especially with the overwhelming majority, roughly 95%, of the party membership coming from these ethnic sections. The Comintern continued to press CPC leadership to improve its membership

⁴⁴⁵ Angus, 301-304; Beaulieu, 135-137; Avakumovic, 62; Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 91.

⁴⁴⁶ Angus, 304-305.

⁴⁴⁷ Otto Kuusinen, Finnish communist and reporter for the “Colonial Question” at the Sixth Congress, was pivotal to this compromise position. He sent a Finnish communist and ally, who also spoke no English, to Canada to mediate. Angus, 308-311; Beaulieu, 160; Avakumovic, 62-63.

composition.⁴⁴⁸ The Communist Party of Canada's official history downplays these issues, especially those that involved the censure of the Finnish section. In fact, it suggests that the Finnish resistance to change was rooted in the city of Sudbury and was quickly "isolated" before it "transformed itself from an autonomous language section of the Communist Party into an independent progressive organization."⁴⁴⁹

Limited Effect on French Canada

Despite calls for more English-speaking members and problems with its various language sections, the CPC always tried to increase its foothold in French Canada. From its establishment, the CPC struggled to develop a viable French Canadian segment of the party. The CPC lacked literature and, in many cases, the ability to translate relevant works to pass out to French Canadian workers.⁴⁵⁰ Many of the French Canadian workers initially were hesitant to join the party, although a CPC report suggested that there was a growing genuine, yet inexperienced, movement.⁴⁵¹ The greatest obstacle in these early years revolved around the dual party system that developed. Mentioned earlier, the CPC was illegal and therefore, in order to have a public face for its goals, it created the WPC. The Worker's Party softened many of the stances of the CPC to remain legal, but in the process, cast doubt on its radical credentials. Part of the allure of communism was Comintern support and revolutionary tactics. In a letter to the Comintern, CPC leader William Moriarty submitted that French Canadians were radical and influenced by their

⁴⁴⁸ Beaulieu, 149-150; Rodney, 152-153.

⁴⁴⁹ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 59.

⁴⁵⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-272, 495.98.14, 24-26.

⁴⁵¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-272, 495.98.14, 38.

religious upbringing. As a result, they openly wanted to advocate for armed insurrection, something the Worker's Party, for legal reasons, was hesitant to pursue openly.⁴⁵²

While the Worker's Party concept was dismantled by the mid-1920s, the organizational problems constantly hounded the Canadian communists. Even by 1926, the challenges were in no way resolved. French Canadian workers still were underrepresented in the party. Language issues remained a problem. It seemed that the party was unsure of how best to tackle the issue. The CPC viewed Quebec as a largely backward, albeit quickly industrializing, province. The working class was growing, but it still had strong ties to the Catholic Church and the party had no way to undermine that influence while taking advantage of the growth. The CPC repeatedly stressed the need for French publications.⁴⁵³

The Comintern seconded the CPC in highlighting the need to gain French Canadian comrades as a main task of the party. The Comintern saw French Canadians as native workers, workers born in Canada.⁴⁵⁴ Since Canada was a bilingual country, French Canadians needed to be courted in order to provide the strongest and widest possible base to bring the Canadian proletariat under the guidance of the CPC. They were not to be organized as a separate language section. However, the CPC lacked practical solutions. It, and the Comintern, cited the need for French publications. At one point, the Comintern intervened and demanded the French Communist Party provide suitable publications to

⁴⁵² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-272, 495.98.15, 23-24.

⁴⁵³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-273, 495.98.33, 26-36.

⁴⁵⁴ The term "native" was used to denote one's place of birth as Canada, mirroring the Australian party's nomenclature there. While this also was similar to that of the South African party, the racial component was obviously non-existent. This language also hints at the complete ignorance towards the Indigenous population.

help agitate workers in Quebec. While these publications were helpful, the CPC at its Fifth Convention realized they were not effective. The differences in local conditions between France and Quebec were too great. In 1927, the CPC managed to begin publication on *L'Ouvrier Canadien*, a left-wing paper for propaganda purposes.⁴⁵⁵ Furthermore, both the Comintern and the CPC knew they needed someone, specifically in Montreal, not only capable of speaking French, but also capable of navigating language and religious issues to bring more French Canadian workers into the party. It was not until 1930 that they felt they had a solution, even with the Comintern, again, trying to open communication between the French party and the CPC.⁴⁵⁶ During this period, George Dubois and Emery Simard, the latter running for the Communist Party in the riding of Maisonneuve during the 1930 Federal Election, were able to help organize a foothold in French Canada.⁴⁵⁷ However, by August 1930, the CPC's involvement in French Canadian affairs remained disappointing. Of the CPC's roughly 3700 to 4000 members, only forty-four were French Canadian.⁴⁵⁸

The Canadian Question

To further understand how the issue of French Canada continued to cause the CPC difficulties, one needs to consider how Canada itself was defined on the world stage. This information is important, if only to determine the method of oppression of subject

⁴⁵⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-275, 495.98.51, 1-109. While the CPC records note the publication in 1927, it appears it was only published occasionally and without regularity. It would not be until 1930 that it was able to ensure regular publication. Fournier, 38-42.

⁴⁵⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.46, 15-17. 31-34; LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.101, 117-125

⁴⁵⁷ Fournier, 37-38.

⁴⁵⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.101, 117-125.

peoples. If Canada was a colony, then any Indigenous peoples could claim self-determination and the “National and Colonial Question” policies of the Comintern could be applied. As noted earlier, when the CPC was formed, Canada was defined as a “self-governing colony” and one with some degree of autonomy and complicity in the British Empire. As Comintern ideology evolved, this definition was no longer considered correct. With the CPC under Tim Buck and Stewart Smith, failing to consider these changes, the CPC had a tense and volatile disagreement with the Comintern leadership in the late 1920s.

During the early years of the CPC’s development, as noted earlier, the CPC’s position on the “Canadian question” was limited because its attention was turned elsewhere. Essentially, the answer to what Canada was came from its political circumstance. It was a colony caught between the United States and United Kingdom. The rivalry between the two only seemed to be growing, mirroring the general Comintern emphasis on a potential American-British clash. Due to the Comintern’s concern over a lack of any real policy-making by the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the CPC, the CPC began to develop a limited stance on imperialism. The CEC called for an annual anti-imperialism week at the start of August. This week would promote resolutions to attack imperialism, counter any influence of other international socialist forces, namely the Amsterdam International, and host speakers who would discuss American and British imperialism and revolutionary movements taking place in crucial British colonies. The

CPC commended the actions of the American party for its attacks on American imperialism, which the CPC affirmed had grown since the First World War.⁴⁵⁹

By mid-1925, however, the Canadian party finally had a firm position on Canada and imperialism. In its “Resolution on the Canadian Question,” it stated that Canada occupied a crucial position on the international stage. Canada was economically linked to the United States, but politically linked to Britain. Canada’s proletariat was exploited economically and politically by the American, British *and* Canadian bourgeoisie.⁴⁶⁰ The CPC made clear that Canada should be independent, both from the British and the Americans and that workers needed to be made aware of this issue. Notably, attacking British imperialism was still the primary aim and the objective of Canadian independence was one of the central issues for the party. Highlighting Comintern concerns, the resolution also lambasted the CPC for not taking enough initiative and only following Comintern leadership instead of developing its own tactics on these issues. Aside from the founding convention, this resolution was the first firm consideration of Canadian independence by the CPC.⁴⁶¹

The CPC also began to develop other auxiliary positions that buttressed its attack on imperialism in Canada. The British North America Act was a popular target for the CPC. It was seen as the main policy that protected Canadian politicians, served as an excuse for Canada’s inability to enact fair labour legislation, and kept Canada from growing too quickly for its British minders.⁴⁶² The CPC also began to attack political

⁴⁵⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-271, 495.98.4, 101c; LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-272, 495.98.21, 48-49.

⁴⁶⁰ Rodney, 118; Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 86.

⁴⁶¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-272, 495.98.23, 20-27.

⁴⁶² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-273, 495.98.25, 39-45.

parties and specific aspects of Canada's political system. To the communists, the Conservative Party was happy with the current arrangement on the world stage. The Liberal Party meanwhile wanted to pull away from Britain, only to gain closer ties with the United States. The Senate was attacked as "highly imperialistic," owing to a perception of its conservative nature. In a report by the Information Department of the ECCI, the CPC's platform was summarized in a number of tenets: abolition of the Senate, abolition of the British North America Act (BNA Act), Canadian independence, neutrality in foreign wars, and formal diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union.⁴⁶³

Historians Ian Angus and Norman Penner argue that the policy shifts in Canada on the Canadian Question in 1924-1925 were distinctly non-Marxist and actually go against the Comintern line.⁴⁶⁴ As Angus correctly pointed out, the Comintern had declared Canada an imperialist nation. This position was affirmed in the Resolution on the Eastern Question at the Fourth Comintern Congress. But, as Angus and Comintern documents show, the ECCI itself accepted the line of Canadian independence.⁴⁶⁵ This acceptance more than likely reflects disconnects among the various assessments of the political economies and social tensions of British dominions. The CPC had claimed Canada was a colony since drafting its constitution in 1921. This situation had parallels to South Africa where despite being aware of South Africa's colonial status, the CPSA

⁴⁶³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.39, 87-95.

⁴⁶⁴ Angus, 168; Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1977), 88.

⁴⁶⁵ Angus, 168-169; Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 1189. A similar issue comes out in the Australian context where despite Australia being defined an "imperialist" nation at the Fourth Congress, in 1925, Comintern officials speaking to Australian delegates exposed their belief that Australia was a colony. See Chapter 5 for more.

ignored that issue and instead called for worker's rights and to fight class-based oppression. The CPSA, like the CPC, also ignored Comintern tactics.

Ultimately, in 1925, the Comintern was impressed that the Canadian party had established a position that fit with the Soviet worldview and the impending clash between the Britain and the United States. What's further confusing is that the CPC, in *The Worker* and implicitly in its other statements, maintained Canada's colonial status.⁴⁶⁶ No doubt *The Worker's* support came from its editor Stewart Smith who agreed with Buck. Maurice Spector also supported Buck's arguments and historian Norman Penner argued that all three forwarded this idea.⁴⁶⁷

The federal election of 1926 in many ways emboldened the CPC's attack on Canada's colonial status as it began to produce more forceful statements. The CPC attacked any sentimental links to Britain and concluded workers needed to be dissuaded from this myth. The party also suggested the real possibility of Canada being ceded to the United States and that the only way Canada could be its own nation was through "complete self-determination, sovereignty and independence of the dominions."⁴⁶⁸ This sentiment was linked to the international struggle for self-determination and the end of colonialism.

By the beginning of 1927, the Canadian independence issue was seen as "exceedingly important" by the Comintern. The United Front tactics that the Comintern promoted were still the guiding principle. Given the competition between American and

⁴⁶⁶ Angus, 169.

⁴⁶⁷ Penner, *The Canadian Left*, 89.

⁴⁶⁸ Quote on 50b. LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.42, 49-50b; Angus, 167.

British imperialisms, with Canada caught in the middle, the party presumed that Canada's bourgeoisie would need to choose a side or its own path. As a result, creating the broadest possible movement was necessary. Also the party needed to generalize the slogan of Canadian independence so all workers would follow. To do so, the Comintern suggested a meeting of trade union leaders, the Canadian Labour Party, and working class and farmer's groups.⁴⁶⁹ Some previous studies of Canadian communism suggest that the CPC took the lead on these matters until 1929.⁴⁷⁰ This claim is inaccurate. The Comintern was offering suggestions throughout and overseeing and responding to events as it received reports.⁴⁷¹

However beginning with the Seventh Plenum of the Communist International in November 1926, the Comintern challenged the CPC's definition of Canadian nationalism. Some CPC members had suggested that it was similar to Chinese nationalism, given that Canada was being courted by American and British imperialism. Earl Browder of the American party, along with other delegates, stressed that Canada's nationalism was unique; it was not based on economics or geography, but born entirely out of imperial competition. The CPC line, including its attacks on the Senate and the BNA Act, its general conclusion on each of the major political parties, and the concerns of certain groups, was otherwise affirmed after some debate.⁴⁷² Over the next year, issues such as

⁴⁶⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.46, 72-77.

⁴⁷⁰ Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 87.

⁴⁷¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-274, 495.98.48, 5-6.

⁴⁷² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-275, 495.98.51, 44-49. Related to certain groups, they agreed that farmers were typically against aiding the British in war and anti-Senate due to their tendency to block pro-agricultural legislation. French Canadians meanwhile were anti-British due to British chauvinism. They also were convinced of the need to dismantle the BNA Act. Taking advantage of these sympathies was deemed important for the CPC.

Canada joining the League of Nations as a non-permanent member ensured that Canada on the world stage was a prominent topic of discussion for the CPC.

But the CPC's position was going to be a sticking point with the Comintern. Following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, the shift to the Third Period meant a reappraisal of most Comintern ideology and policy.⁴⁷³ The war danger, mentioned in Chapter Two, was deemed a concrete issue and one with which the CPC had barely engaged.⁴⁷⁴ While there were calls for recognition of the Soviet Union by the Canadian government, Canadian independence was the predominant theme the CPC propagated. Furthermore, with calls to Bolshevize, rooting out Trotskyites was another major issue for the Canadian party. It was as a result of these shifts that Buck and Smith were able to rise to the leadership of the party. But this period meant that everyone, including these newly-minted leaders, were under the watchful eye of Moscow.

In April 1929, the Comintern sent a closed letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada and delineated a series of criticisms of its policies. In line with the changes to the policies towards the East, outlined at the Sixth Congress the previous year, it declared Canada a “definitely capitalist economy.” What this distinction meant was that it could no longer be considered a colony. It was self-sustaining to some degree. As a result, no longer would calling for independence or self-determination be

⁴⁷³ This episode has only been reviewed generally in much of the literature of Canadian communism and certainly not to the level of detail included here within. See Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 87-89; Penner, *The Canadian Left*, 86-99; Angus, 308-309, 315; *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 61-64.

⁴⁷⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-275, 495.98.54, 16-24. Ian Angus stated the CPC began to promote the war danger in 1927 with Comintern encouragement. Angus, 170-171.

appropriate.⁴⁷⁵ The Comintern also demanded a change in tactics and one that directly considered self-determination in a different light:

The struggle for free and full independence for Canada, the guarantees for complete self-determination (French Canada) can only be achieved through revolutionary action. We must emphasise the fact that the main struggle in this connection should not be at the present moment the abstract struggle for independence, but should be concretized around the struggle against being dragged by the Canadian bourgeoisie or any section of it in either of the imperialist camps in the coming war.⁴⁷⁶

Fighting for independence was not concrete enough. Instead, revolutionary action, while promoting a general anti-imperialism and anti-war sentiment, was more important.⁴⁷⁷ The Comintern continued their criticism of the party by mentioning the familiar refrain of the party's failure to gain more native-born members, especially in French Canada. Noting that "[t]hough the French Canians [sic] make up one-third of the total population and are the most exploited section of the working class," the Comintern saw the lack of French Canadian members and the low numbers of English members as an indictment on the "weakness and isolation of the Party."⁴⁷⁸

What was going on in the CPC regarding this issue in 1929? Stewart Smith had become the driving force on the Canadian question and he was clear in his personal stance on the issue. A series of letters between Stewart Smith and John Porter, alias of Leslie Morris, a Canadian communist who was studying at the Lenin School in Moscow illuminates the evolution of policy, and also the trouble the CPC had in following the new line delineated at the Sixth Comintern Congress. Stewart Smith was a major proponent of

⁴⁷⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.67, 18.

⁴⁷⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.67, 21.

⁴⁷⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.67, 18-26.

⁴⁷⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.67, 25.

the slogan of “Canadian Independence” and stressed that Canada was a colony. He also suggested the strength of the Canadian bourgeoisie was over-estimated in Comintern rhetoric. The struggle between American and British imperialism was far more critical.⁴⁷⁹ Morris responded, criticizing this position. On 18 August 1929, he attacked Smith’s insistence that Canada was not an imperialist power. He suggested Smith only saw it as “an American Belgium,” land to be fought over, and focused too much on American and British imperialism instead of highlighting the role of Canada’s own domestic bourgeoisie. To Morris, this line of thinking had two implications. Stewart Smith was falling into line with some arguments Maurice Spector had made previously, suggesting Smith was a Trotskyite. This accusation clarifies that Spector had been tarred as the main figure responsible for the wrong line.⁴⁸⁰ It also smacked of the same problems that occurred in China – working with the bourgeoisie to topple imperialism. In all likelihood, Smith was holding onto the old arguments and tactics made prior to the Sixth Congress. The Third Period, the need to Bolshevize and remove all Trotskyites and right deviationists, and the repudiation of United Front tactics made those positions obsolete. Morris, being based in Moscow, had become steeped in Third Period thinking. The CPC hesitated in its desire to change, a fact shown by Morris insisting that Smith had accepted the aforementioned Comintern letter in February, while failing to change his tactics.⁴⁸¹

By the fall of 1929, the pressure on the CPC increased. Leslie Morris collaborated with two other Canadian communists at the Lenin School, believed to be Sam Carr and

⁴⁷⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.72, 82-84.

⁴⁸⁰ Penner, *The Canadian Left*, 93.

⁴⁸¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.72, 1-2, 23-24.

John Weir.⁴⁸² These three individuals submitted several reports, criticizing the party, building on, and in some cases, using the same language as Morris had in his personal letters to Smith.⁴⁸³ They also contacted Comintern brass, who, in a letter sent to the CPC on October 3, demanded Leslie Morris return to Canada to correct the party line.⁴⁸⁴ The letter also condemned the CPC's line. The Comintern remained concerned about the retention of the slogan of Canadian independence, stressing that it was a "social-democratic rightist deviation." It also remained critical of the lack of native-born workers involved with the party. Given these issues, the Comintern demanded a plenum be held to discuss these transgressions.⁴⁸⁵

During a Pol-Buro⁴⁸⁶ meeting on 24 October 1929, the party attempted to figure out how to move forward. There was a large portion of the party that disagreed with the Lenin students. As a result, Jack MacDonald, ironically, someone who was already on thin ice as a potential deviationist, and Tim Buck drafted a cover letter conveying that disagreement and submitting the letters from the Lenin students as "information material."⁴⁸⁷ In actuality, they dithered for two months, seemingly refusing to share the documents with their party members. CPC members discovered this fact. Leslie Morris

⁴⁸² The letter was written by the students under pseudonyms. They were Frank Evans (Sam Carr), John Porter (Leslie Morris) and Jack Davis (John Weir).

⁴⁸³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.72, 62-70.

⁴⁸⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 80-81.

⁴⁸⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-276, 495.98.67, 206-208.

⁴⁸⁶ For the purposes of consistency, the term Pol-Buro will reference any Political Bureau of the CPC. In Comintern and party documents, several different variations of Pol-Buro appear.

⁴⁸⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 80-81. Jack MacDonald aided in the removal of Spector from the party, but soon was attacked as being a Lovestonite (the term reflected the position of Jay Lovestone, an American communist who was seen as supportive of Nikolai Bukharin, a member of the Right Opposition and a proponent of American exceptionalism, a theory which suggested communism could not develop in the United States as it could in Russia or Europe.). MacDonald was not expelled at first, merely suspended and remained as part of the party until 1930 when he was expelled for failing to attack both Trotskyites and Bukharinites in the general struggle. Rodney, 167.

suggested that this delay confirmed the problems of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the CPC. During this time, Tim Buck had gone to the Soviet Union, leaving Smith in charge. To assuage concerns, the Pol-Buro agreed to share both Comintern letters, the Lenin Students' criticisms and the cover letter.⁴⁸⁸

The reason for this delay may have been because the CPC was going to double down on defending the CPC's position and more vigorously attack the flaws in the Lenin Students' thinking. The Political Committee of the CPC published "Strengthen the Struggle against the Right Danger: Statement of the Political Committee," a lengthy diatribe outlining all of the inaccuracies of the Lenin School students. In all likelihood, Stewart Smith wrote this statement given his growing influence at this time. It pointed out that lumping the CPC in with Spector was wrong. To the CPC, Spector was an opportunist who argued that Canada was a suppressed colony, with the Liberal bourgeoisie's pro-Americanism seen as revolutionary, satisfying the old United Front tactics suggested in early iterations of the National and Colonial Question. Meanwhile, the Lenin School letter writers were equally opportunist in suggesting "Canada is an imperialist power." Employing Lenin to defend its view, the CPC continued by suggesting that the Lenin School students employed the same argument as the British Labour Party imperial supporters, that the British Empire was made of colonies which all mutually benefit from empire, directly counter to Lenin's *Imperialism*.⁴⁸⁹

Continuing, the CPC made a very serious charge. The party claimed that the "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semicolonies," passed at

⁴⁸⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 112-116; LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 117.

⁴⁸⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 119-142.

the Sixth Congress, was “irreconcilable” with Lenin’s arguments. Furthermore, the CPC suggested that there was confusion in the aforementioned Comintern letters. Morris misread them to attack the CPC leadership. The CPC, meanwhile, saw them as confirmation of its position that Canada was an imperialist battleground. To plunge the sword of criticism further, the CPC leveled another harsh condemnation against the Lenin School members. The party argued they were promoting a Kautskyian approach in order to define Canada as imperialist. The CPC stated that Morris and his colleagues claimed Canada was no longer predominantly agrarian in nature and since Kautsky defined imperialism as the exploitation of “backward hinterlands,” it could no longer be a colony.⁴⁹⁰ Again, applying Lenin, the party attacked this approach, stating that Canada was not “an economic partner” of Britain, but still under Britain’s imperial rule.⁴⁹¹

The article continued to attack specific points. Whereas the Lenin School members argued that the Canadian bourgeoisie had investments abroad, the CPC saw these investments as merely US or British capital at work, not distinctly Canadian. The Canadian bourgeoisie was the extension of the British bourgeoisie. The piece concluded with a rousing endorsement of Smith’s line:

The Communist Party of Canada stands for the separation of Canada from the British Empire, and leads the Canadian workers in the revolutionary struggle against the Canadian bourgeoisie, utilizing the growing antagonism within the Canadian bourgeoisie, and the growing conflict between British and American imperialism as a means of mass action and revolutionary struggle. As Lenin has said, we would be very poor revolutionaries, indeed, if we failed to do this.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ For more on Kautsky’s positions, see Chapter One.

⁴⁹¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 119-142.

⁴⁹² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-277, 495.98.75, 141.

As can be expected, the Comintern was very upset. When it received “Strengthen the Struggle Against the Right Danger,” the Comintern condemned it as against the Comintern line, a serious right deviation and an endorsement of incorrect theories about Canada being a colony. It reaffirmed the two Comintern letters noted above. To ensure that there was no confusion, the Comintern confirmed that Canada was a “secondary imperialist power,” owing to “capitalist investments of the Canadian bourgeoisie abroad, especially in Central America.” The CPC should move forward under the premise that Canada was capitalist. The Comintern criticized the CPC for focusing too narrowly on the Anglo-American conflict and neglecting greater trends in international capitalism.⁴⁹³ Tim Buck, who was in Moscow at the time, sent a letter to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the CPC. In the letter, he pointed out that the cover letter the CEC had attached to the Comintern’s corrective to CPC policies was a grave mistake and further stressed the need for self-criticism while also accepting responsibility.⁴⁹⁴ Buck also contacted Smith in a private letter where he warned him that some in the Anglo-American Secretariat wanted Smith denounced, feeling he was growing too powerful within the CPC.⁴⁹⁵ The Secretariat was equally concerned with whether the CPC could even fall into line.⁴⁹⁶

The Lenin School students also threw scorn on the CPC. They affirmed that there were no disagreements between the Comintern letters. If there was confusion, the CPC should have contacted the Comintern itself. The cover letter needed to be condemned.

⁴⁹³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-278, 495.98.94, 49-50, 67-69.

⁴⁹⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 8.

⁴⁹⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 32

⁴⁹⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 2-5.

Furthermore, the CPC's delay in discussing the letters, which had been issued as a corrective to CPC policy, was equally incorrect.⁴⁹⁷ The Comintern and the Lenin School students were on the same side. In addition to all of the other issues the Comintern was seeing in the CPC, namely those with the Finnish and Ukrainian groups, and the fact that there were notable deviationists that had been in the party's midst in recent years (Spector, MacDonald), the CPC seemed to be infected by rightist tendencies.⁴⁹⁸ When the CPC Executive received these letters criticizing it, it promptly agreed to repudiate the incorrect line, including the incendiary "Strengthen the Struggle Against the Right Danger," before engaging in self-criticism. Smith motioned for the repudiation.⁴⁹⁹

This chapter of the CPC, however, was not quite done. The Canadian Question was still troubling for Stewart Smith. He wrote to Morris, continuing their discussion on 19 May 1930. While Morris noted that Smith was moving towards the correct understanding, he remained concerned that Smith was holding onto some old theories, particularly his insistence that the Sixth Comintern Congress had Canada listed as a colony, creating issues in defining Canada. Morris suggested that no such discrepancy existed, instead pointing out that colony was used in the past tense in the case of Canada and that Canada no longer had an imperial bourgeoisie that maintained the "colonial fashion of the natives."⁵⁰⁰ In fact, Smith was an anomalous character in this whole period. Even in early 1930, when the party realized mistakes were being made, *The Worker*, the CPC's official organ, and Smith were highlighted as entities who may continue to

⁴⁹⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 9-13.

⁴⁹⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 36-39.

⁴⁹⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.98, 47-53.

⁵⁰⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.97, 50-52.

promote the wrong line and needed to be disregarded.⁵⁰¹ By the summer of 1930, the CPC formally corrected its line with a series of statements that placed Morris' correspondence and correctives, along with Buck's actions from Moscow earlier in the year, as important to understanding that the wrong line had been taken. These statements were the party's open self-criticism. Again, Smith's role was highlighted in promoting the wrong line throughout 1929.⁵⁰² Yet, Stewart Smith remained with the party, only needing to spend a brief period in Moscow as penance. Compared to how Sidney Bunting was treated in South Africa, Stewart Smith and Tim Buck not only got off lightly, but they maintained their leadership and influence in the party. The reason for the difference can be chalked up to Comintern priorities. The Native Republic Thesis and the "Negro Question" were important issues for the Comintern. Whereas combatting imperialism was not any less important, there were enough forces in the party who would at least fall into line that the Comintern could let it be. In South Africa, the influence of Bunting and his consistent stonewalling of the true imposition of the new tactical line in the CPSA was too much to ignore, especially on an issue that had become very important to Comintern officials.

Canadian Independence No More

With so much interference by the Comintern in CPC affairs, on the Canadian Question and with the language sections, the Communist Party of Canada fell into line, and deviated little from what was expected. This acquiescence, perhaps out of embarrassment for how far they had strayed in 1929, was seen as early as the CPC's 1930

⁵⁰¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.101, 35-62.

⁵⁰² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-279, 495.98.101, 87-106, 117-125.

General Election Platform. No longer was there any discussion of independence. Instead, the Canadian bourgeoisie was placed alongside the British and American by noting Canada's activity in the League of Nations. The war scare was a prominent theme, with the CPC not only advocating for recognition of the Soviet Union, but also detailing fears of imperialist encirclement of the Soviet Union and another "imperialist slaughter," led by Britain and the United States as they competed for "world mastery." Arguing that the workers and farmers of Canada would be sent to fight, the CPC called for revolutionary class war to avoid this war in Canada and "other imperialist countries," a subtle distinction noting that the CPC had taken the criticism to heart. The platform continued by mentioning that the CPC would "turn the imperialist war into a class war." It also only noted colonial independence as part of the general struggle.⁵⁰³ Though this response could be seen as an example of the monolithism of the Comintern coming into play, it was an example of the party realizing it had pushed too far in a direction the Comintern was unwilling to accept. The party still had the freedom to move forward and adapt Comintern tactics to the Canadian context, as long as it followed the Comintern's lead.

The war scare became the prominent theme for the CPC from this point forward. The CPC declared R.B. Bennett's embargo against the USSR a war measure against the Soviet Union.⁵⁰⁴ The party also focused more on its anti-imperial events that usually occurred at the beginning of every August. In 1931, for example, the CPC promoted the imperialist past of Canada by noting Canadian contributions to the Allied Intervention in

⁵⁰³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-280, 495.98.105, 97-98.

⁵⁰⁴ For more on the embargo, see Aloysius Balawyder, *Canadian-Soviet Relations between the World Wars* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 131-170.

Siberia in 1919.⁵⁰⁵ In 1933, the impending war was again the main theme, highlighting the Soviet Union's desire for peace and stressing that "[a] militant, organised and conscious working class is the greatest guarantee against war."⁵⁰⁶ Speakers who were sent out to agitate workers were to focus on a wide number of issues, tying domestic issues to international ones. For example, wage cuts and a lower standard of living would be promoted by the Canadian bourgeoisie while the imperialist world stood up against the Soviet Union. The CPC gave speakers information regarding the imperial nations. This information included diplomatic agreements, notes about railroads being built to the Soviet border, reports of wrecking and the Bennett budget.⁵⁰⁷

Coupled with attacks on the Canadian bourgeoisie, the CPC began to defend the Soviet Union against some of the "myths" that the "Canadian imperialists" were allegedly forwarding. For example, the CPC sought to counteract the opinion that the Soviet Union used slave labour or that the USSR was hoping to undermine the international market with cheap goods.⁵⁰⁸ In turn, the communists stressed that the Soviet Union had no unemployment, but a shortage of workers, a claim that was particularly powerful given the Great Depression.⁵⁰⁹

As the decade continued, the CPC continued to follow the Comintern line. The Comintern noted the need to openly agitate against the British Empire Economic Conference of 1932, which took place in Ottawa. The Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern told the CPC to attack the British Empire for the oppression throughout the

⁵⁰⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-280, 495.98.114, 43-44.

⁵⁰⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-285, 495.98.151, 51-53.

⁵⁰⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-282, 495.98.125, 14-19.

⁵⁰⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-282, 495.98.122, 4-6.

⁵⁰⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-282, 495.98.125, 14-19.

Empire and for imperialism's inability to solve the economic issues of the day. It urged party members that they should remind workers of the joint interests of the entire proletariat and how the lack of industrial investment in British dominions was causing an antagonistic relationship between the Empire and Canada.⁵¹⁰ These messages, of course, were what the CPC duly passed along while also taking a moment to ensure a clear definition of Canada's place in the world: "Canada is an imperialist country of the secondary rank which does not play an independent or leading role similar to that of the big imperialist powers." There remained some holdover of past views, but ones that ensured the Canadian bourgeoisie was front and centre. The CPC continued by placing great importance on Canada's position in the Anglo-American rivalry, but the Canadian bourgeoisie held the cards for economic independence and action.⁵¹¹ The party also promoted a Worker's Economic Congress to occur at the same time as the Empire Conference to expose the flaws in the plan of the imperialists.

The problem with the CPC at this point was that it largely took what the Comintern said and regurgitated it to its membership. The Comintern and the CPC were both aware that the CPC had devolved into repeating Comintern slogans with little initiative. While the party did its best to forward slogans, stage demonstrations, and follow the Comintern line, it was accused by the Comintern of turning the war scare into "another campaign."⁵¹² At one point, the party was criticized for making some superficial connections between Canadian and international events to promote the war scare. The

⁵¹⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-283, 495.98.134, 5-8.

⁵¹¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-283, 495.98.131, 20-39.

⁵¹² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-284, 495.98.140, 89-99

war scare had not been a central issue.⁵¹³ However, what became a common occurrence was for members to be constantly reminded of the episode of 1929-1930. Many reports by the CPC began by engaging in significant criticism of that period, reminding members of the mistakes made, but now the party had accepted organizational changes and improved.⁵¹⁴ Unfortunately, for most of the 1930s, the CPC did little else besides parrot the Comintern line. It was afraid to run into another row with the Comintern. Therefore, while the CPC could take it on the chin if it failed to do enough, it refused to step too far and need to be reined back and potentially suffer another embarrassment or stern intervention from the Comintern. The CPC decision to do so was not its only option though as historians who highlighted the Comintern's monolithism would have one believe. The CPC allowed its fear to paralyze them and limit its ability to adapt policies further to the Canadian context.

To show how the CPC became a reactionary party, one following the Comintern's line with little variance, one only needs to look at its many resolutions and reports. Following the twelfth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the CPC had its limitations delineated in a resolution. It noted that the party had not developed a revolutionary movement and had failed to do much on the topics of the war scare or anti-imperialism. Workers had not flocked to the CPC, nor had they been convinced by the slogans of the CPC. The Comintern resolution was blunt in its conclusions about CPC actions, stating, "We have given lip service to the fight against imperialist war and for the defense of the Soviet Union." The CPC needed to make this a

⁵¹³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-285, 495.98.150, 1-17.

⁵¹⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-285, 495.98.150, 1-17, 18-62.

prominent theme and undermine any who minimized the threat against the Soviet Union. To conclude, the Comintern argued that the best way to move forward would be to fight the Canadian bourgeoisie and expose their lies, before promoting the strengths of the Soviet Union. Also, fascism was formally linked to the fight against imperialism, much as it was within the Comintern.⁵¹⁵ Despite these notes, the Canadian Communist Party made little headway and continued to engage in these issues in the same, limited manner as before.

Whereas the CPC may have been reluctant to become too creative with its thinking, unwilling to risk another row with Comintern brass, the increased activities of the Canadian criminal justice authorities to suppress the party further inhibited its activities. Despite the CPC's initiative in implementing Comintern tactics, the Canadian government saw communism as a serious threat. In August 1931, the RCMP raided the CPC headquarters and arrested many leaders, including Tim Buck, on charges of sedition. They were later sentenced to five years in prison for their revolutionary politics. Many communists caught in this legal repression of the party were deported. The party spent significant time agitating for the release of these members, and had some note of success when Tim Buck was released in December 1934. Regardless, these events blunted the effectiveness of the party and distracted it from other issues.⁵¹⁶

While the party sought to free some of its most important members, in January 1934, following the thirteenth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the Comintern gave the CPC its new marching orders. The rise of Hitler in

⁵¹⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-287, 495.98.158, 63-75.

⁵¹⁶ Balawyder, 181-185.

Nazi Germany made the fight against fascism a greater priority. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was one target the Comintern highlighted. It was a “social-fascist” party, suggesting its connection with capitalism and militarism, and the CPC’s failures to expose it had allowed it to gain political influence. The Great Depression had continued to expose the crisis of capitalism, with the transition to military industry allegedly typifying capitalism’s evolution. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was thriving; it had no unemployment, was balancing its budget and explicitly declared an end to class war “with the liquidation of the kulak as a class.” Internationally, the imperialists were working to take control of China, while also protecting German fascism indirectly.⁵¹⁷

How was the CPC to respond? More initiative needed to be taken at the local level. Workers needed to be better trained in theory, tactics and strategy to counter the chauvinism of fascism, promote the internationalism of communism, and support colonial liberation throughout the world. Educating workers on the problems of capitalism, such as wage cuts and unemployment, along with attacking the allure of fascism continued. To turn the future imperialist war into a civil war, the CPC needed to infiltrate war munitions factories and revolutionize the workers. Finally, the party needed to promote the Soviet Union as its true hope with the slogan “Soviet Power is democracy for the toilers, but a stern dictatorship against exploiters.” Socialism was the only solution to the Great Depression and that solution would come through confiscation of all property, land

⁵¹⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-286, 495.98.157, 1-79.

distribution and the dismantling of the capitalist army.⁵¹⁸ These tactics also led to some perceptions of success for the party. For example, a strike wave took place in 1934-35 and the CPC linked its messages to these demonstrations. Many of the strikes occurred in industries related to war material, directly applying the strategies surrounding the topic of the war scare. What is unclear, however, was how much these slogans and topics were really influential in radicalizing workers. The CPC reports on the strike wave were self-congratulatory, but it is unclear whether it ascribed a successful strike to be the same as a successful application of its anti-imperial, anti-war tactics.⁵¹⁹

Whereas the last two major evaluations of the CPC seemed to build a clear consensus of what to do, the shift to the Popular Front strategy in 1935 led to various tactical changes that the CPC needed to adopt or uphold. The Soviet peace program and the fight against fascism were retained. The United Front tactics returned and the CPC was now to work with the formerly social-fascist CCF to gain parliamentary control of Canada.⁵²⁰ No longer was the ultimate goal a Soviet Canada. The party also toned down the attack on imperialism. The CPC removed the inflammatory rhetoric of the past when criticizing the Bennett government.⁵²¹ However, while this rhetoric was removed, it did not mean that the understanding of Canada's international position was less important or even altered. Comintern information material on Canada reaffirmed Canada as an "imperialist country of secondary rank, possessing its own independent imperialist

⁵¹⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-286, 495.98.157, 1-79. Quote 77.

⁵¹⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-289, 495.98.172, 1-23.

⁵²⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-288, 495.98.171, 60-77.

⁵²¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-288, 495.98.169, 40-46.

ambition.”⁵²² Canada was not a colony, despite being part of the British Empire. Canada had colonial interests in Latin America and Newfoundland, represented by the Royal Bank of Canada, and it was symbolic of Canada’s imperialist goals and the power of finance capital.⁵²³

Meanwhile the CPC was taking the Comintern line and doing its best to promote the correct messages. The CPC’s yearly anti-war demonstrations for 1 August 1935 promoted anti-imperialism as Japan and Italy were attacked for their recent acts of imperialism by armed force in Manchuria and Abyssinia. The British were still a prominent target, due to their links to Nazi Germany and their apparent development of an anti-Soviet bloc. The CPC called for the entire mobilization of the party to hold factory meetings, organize demonstrations against armaments shipments, and carry out agitation amongst the youth and war veterans to limit fascism’s allure, even asking the various national groups within the party to aid in the agitation, while also demonstrating against their home countries.⁵²⁴ The election campaign was equally as important and the ties to British imperialism remained a major theme, especially in light of the Italo-Abyssinian crisis. With the British potentially intervening in Abyssinia, it was feared that Canadian

⁵²² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-288, 495.98.171, 60.

⁵²³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-288, 495.98.171, 60-77. For some further information on Canadian banking and economic interests in the Caribbean during this period, see: Neil C. Quigley, “The Bank of Nova Scotia in the Caribbean, 1889-1940,” *The Business History Review* 63, no. 4 (Winter, 1989): 797-838; Salimah Valiani, “The Articulation of an Independent Foreign Policy: Canada and Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 6, Tourism, Gender, and Ethnicity (Nov., 2012): 165-180.

⁵²⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-290, 495.98.179, 75-76.

workers would be sent to Africa. The CPC attempted to stir fears among workers of this most unlikely possibility throughout 1935.⁵²⁵

As the Popular Front concept developed, the CPC became more selective in how it approached certain issues. The Spanish Civil War was one event on which the CPC had a clear position. When the Canadian government declared that Canadians could not travel to Spain, the CPC fought against this policy, seeing neutrality as only helping the fascists gain control of Spain.⁵²⁶ When developing its platform for the late 1930s, foreign policy occupied a central position. The CPC opposed Canadian arms buildups. It declared Canada's need for a completely independent foreign policy, one that maintained peace.⁵²⁷ The Comintern, however, stepped in again at this point and offered further suggestions. The call for an independent foreign policy was deemed too close to calling for Canadian independence from the British Empire, an issue that was "not the question at the present time." Focus should be put on coordinating Canadian foreign policy with the British Empire if it promoted peace, but otherwise one that focused on criticizing British foreign policy, not Canadian-British relations, if necessary.⁵²⁸

Back to French Canada

In the 1930s, French Canada often remained a separate battleground owing to the distinct problems of Quebec.⁵²⁹ Whereas the CPC often continued to note the need to

⁵²⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-290, 495.98.179, 95-100.

⁵²⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188, 7. For more on the CPC's contribution to the Spanish Civil War, see Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 136-138.

⁵²⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188, 28-32.

⁵²⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188, 33-36.

⁵²⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-287, 495.98.158, 47-52.

continue to promote French literature and it managed to find individuals who could at least make inroads, French Canada was always an unstable battleground. Even with a French language periodical and a handful of Francophone leaders, the CPC struggled to attract new members and the Comintern and the party realized a need to increase French Canadian membership.

The need to appeal to French Canadians also acquired a new dimension. Following the explosive conflict regarding the Canadian Question, it became more common for the CPC to declare French Canadians as “the most exploited section of the working class in Canada.” this insistence was rooted in the conviction that Quebec was “backward” due to the influence of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, with the growing fight against fascism, Quebec seemed to be one of the areas most susceptible to fascist ideas. For example, the CPC saw the Arcand and David Bills, legislation the party argued outlawed strikes, demonstrations and unions, as proof of fascism’s appeal in Quebec.⁵³⁰ The CPC also claimed that the Catholic Church drew people to fascism. The weakness of the CPC in Quebec only exacerbated the importance of solving these problems. Even its publication, now entitled *Vie Ouvriere*, while formerly a promising endeavour, had failed to gain traction in the eyes of CPC members. It was predominantly Montreal-based, struggled to break-even and had very little content from Quebec workers to really connect

⁵³⁰ The David Bill restricted certain public meetings and the distribution of certain publications within Quebec. The Arcand Bill settled negotiation rights for collective agreements in Quebec. It was viewed as toothless, with workers only having civil recourse to employers breaking the law, and it limited the right to strike. F.R. Scott, “The David Law (Quebec),” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1, no. 2 (May, 1935): 294-296; F.R. Scott, “The Arcand Law (Quebec),” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1, no. 2 (May, 1935): 291-294.

it to the French Canadian working class.⁵³¹ By the end of 1935, these issues had not improved and the party made the French Canadian issue one of its main priorities.⁵³²

While the French Canadians were alleged to be the most exploited workers in Canada, the CPC concurrently maintained that they were not an oppressed people. The reason for this awkward position was articulated in November 1936. The French Canadian bourgeoisie was not excluded from the “plundering of the Canadian people.” Instead of seeing the French Canadians as a nationality that English Canada had kept down, the CPC argued that the French Canadian proletariat needed to join the general workers’ struggle in Canada which included English workers and workers of other nationalities.⁵³³ The promotion of nationalism, especially in the 1930s, was seen as the equivalent of bourgeois or fascist nationalism, similar to how racism had been defined in the “Negro Question” by the Comintern.

The Union Nationale led by Maurice Duplessis was elected to office in 1936. Antagonistic to communism, the Duplessis government became a late foil to the CPC’s efforts in Quebec. For some sound reasons, the CPC considered Duplessis sympathetic to fascism. The Duplessis Government continued to promote anti-communism, passing the Padlock Law, a law against communist propaganda on 24 March 1937.⁵³⁴ To counter these policies, the CPC called for a “Free and Prosperous Quebec” noting that a communist program would be the only program which could promote freedom and

⁵³¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-287, 495.98.158, 47-52. Despite the alleged successes of *Vie Ouvriere*, it was replaced after the move to the Popular Front tactics with a new paper, *Clarte*, declared to be a better broad united front paper. LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-289, 495.98.177, 174-175.

⁵³² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-287, 495.98.161, 63.

⁵³³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-290, 495.98.183A, 46-63.

⁵³⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-290, 495.98.184, 71-72.

unlimited rights in Quebec and that could improve the living standards of French Canadian lower classes, again stressing their current exploitation.⁵³⁵ French Canada remained a concern for the CPC for the remainder of the 1930s and it continued to try and make inroads while looking to prevent the expansion of potentially fascist ideas in Quebec. Ironically, despite its condemnation of nationalist sentiment in French Canada, a section of the party embraced it during the war years as a response to the CPC's limited ability to win over Quebec workers.

The Second World War

Whereas the 1930s were typified by a complete subservience and careful adherence to Comintern directives and advice following the Canadian Question fracas of 1929, the Second World War revived the old thinking of Stewart Smith and some others in the party. During the 1930s there were frequent reminders to the party of how badly it had erred and how the Comintern had brought the CPC back into line. One should recall also how there was some concern over whether Stewart Smith had really learned from the events. Evidently, he had not entirely distanced himself from his 'wrong line' because during the Second World War there was a revival of 'the flawed' Canadian independence position and its corollaries.

While Leslie Morris completed a celebratory review of Tim Buck's time as leader of the CPC, reminding party members of the incorrect party thought of the late 1920s and the later Comintern correctives, Stewart Smith and other CPC leaders began to speak of

⁵³⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188, 24-27.

an independent Socialist Canada.⁵³⁶ An article in the 5 November 1940 edition of *The Clarion* articulated this position. The impetus for this line of thinking came from fears that the British would be unable to win the Second World War. The article called for neutrality in the war, while at the same time promoting a relationship with the Soviet Union. It pointed out that “Canadian independence through a Socialist Canada, made possible in the fight of the masses of the people against the war and the withdrawal of Canada from the war --- this is the only hope against the extending flames of world conflict.”⁵³⁷ Concluding, the article noted that “In our Canadian fight for Socialist Independence, we will find peace and security in friendship with the U.S.S.R.”⁵³⁸ Another report argued that the Canadian bourgeoisie was “a second nation” that developed within British imperialism in Canada. With the war as the backdrop, the CPC had to represent the interests of the Canadian nation.⁵³⁹ Both of these statements lent themselves to a revival of the Canadian independence theses and reassuming the Canadian context under the guise of the original 1920 “Theses on the National and Colonial Question.” Smith and his followers saw an opportunity to break with the old Comintern line, likely analysing the Second World War as the end of British imperial power and hoping to take advantage by reviving their old position. As the Comintern and some CPC members had feared in 1929, Smith had not disavowed this platform. As a result, the party leadership was split and with control of some of the publications could promote a line to which the Comintern did not agree.

⁵³⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.190, 32-48.

⁵³⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.192, 44.

⁵³⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.192, 45.

⁵³⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.193, 1-22.

The Comintern became aware of the issue by 1941 and identified a series of individuals, including Stewart Smith, Leslie Morris and Stanley Ryerson, as proponents of this incorrect position. These individuals revived, in other documents, the concept of the Anglo-American struggle and how it defined Canadian contradictions, echoing the wrong line of 1929. It appears that the Comintern became aware of this issue through Tim Buck.⁵⁴⁰ Buck and Smith disagreed over the correct tactics. Smith affirmed that the correct line for Canada was “an Independent Socialist Canada” and he was aware it would run counter to the feelings of the Central Executive Committee of the CPC. Smith, much like he had done earlier, claimed he had read Comintern leaders correctly and in his interpretation, American imperialism was supporting British imperialism in the Second World War in order to drive its rivals from the Western hemisphere and to build its power. The British were being used and in the process, Canada had entered the United States’ military order.⁵⁴¹

In another note from August 1940, Smith clarified the domestic implications of his position. Smith argued that the Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King, had sold Canada’s independence to Britain. Capitalism was the sole reason that Canada was at war. Britain was on the precipice of collapse and therefore, Smith believed

⁵⁴⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 5-9. A number of issues develop from the evolution of CPC policy. Firstly, Leslie Morris’ inclusion as a proponent of the revived Canadian independence slogan is interesting if only for his role in exposing its falsity in 1929. In fact, in his celebratory account of Tim Buck, he attributed the concept of Canada as colony to Trotskyist Maurice Spector and that the party had correctly seen its errors. LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.190, 32-48; Meanwhile, in his *Reminiscences*, Tim Buck was incredulous that such a position could even come from presumably educated people, conveniently ignoring his own role in developing such a position a decade and a half earlier. Beeching & Clarke, 294-299. Tim Buck also defined this period by the “re-emergence of erroneous theories.” Tim Buck, *Thirty Years 1922-1952: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952), 165.

⁵⁴¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 11-20.

some British leaders intended to flee to Canada, and rule the British Empire from Canada. Thus, the only way for there to be true peace was to support the end of the British Empire. If the British lost, empire would end and Canadian independence and revolution would follow.⁵⁴² At the very least, it was a creative application of the new reality of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and positioning the British as a prominent enemy, while also engaging in fantastical applications of theory.

But Smith went farther. He outlined what an Independent Socialist Canada would look like. It would mirror the goals the Bolsheviks had in 1917. It would be a workers' government. Banks, large industry and railways could come under state ownership. Workers and farmers would obtain a greater standard of living, and unemployment would be abolished. Foreign policy would be dictated by Canadian interests and no others. Finally, for French Canadians, the right to self-determination would be applied. For Smith and his followers, French Canada was not just another section of the Canadian proletariat. French Canadians were an oppressed minority or the equivalent of a colonized people, a significant distinction. This distinction allowed French Canada to seek secession and an Independent Socialist Canada proposed a referendum for French Canadians to determine their future.⁵⁴³

This position on French Canada was affirmed by the party in 1942 and remained a prominent theme going forward.⁵⁴⁴ Stanley Ryerson, a Smith follower, published *French Canada* in 1943, developing a historical analysis supporting this call for self-

⁵⁴² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 21-32.

⁵⁴³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 21-32.

⁵⁴⁴ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 256.

determination of the oppressed French Canadian people. Referencing Joseph Stalin's own definition of a nation, Ryerson argued that French Canadians have a nation defined not by political sovereignty, but through historical terms and relationship based on class. For Ryerson, French Canada struggled with many issues, poor living conditions, an inferiority complex toward English-speaking Canada and at the turn of the century, the French Canadian bourgeoisie had merged with the English-speaking bourgeoisie which in turn was exacerbated by a not-yet-politically conscious proletariat and had led to a strengthening of a conservative, pro-Catholic and soon to be fascist nationalist movement in French Canada. This movement would be based on racial hatred. Ryerson, in turn, pointed to the Soviet Union and the Atlantic Charter as reflections of the general movement towards ethnic and racial equality. Ryerson went a step further and noted that socialism was the only possibility to truly provide French Canada with self-determination, or true equality, as class discrimination would no longer exist and bourgeois nationalism would cease to exist as was the case in the Soviet Union. Ryerson made a hard sell of the concept, managing to weave in long held Soviet positions on self-determination and linking it to French Canada, without explicitly mentioning colonialism. Instead, the focus was on true equality.⁵⁴⁵

It would be an error to suggest, however, that Smith and his supporters simply revived his old slogans and position or failed to learn anything from the past. In fact, he was aware of a need to merge his position with that held by the CPC during the 1930s. Smith asserted that Canada was not a colony and also that the Canadian bourgeoisie had

⁵⁴⁵ Stanley Ryerson, *French Canada: A Study in Canadian Democracy* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1943), 170-181.

no imperial interests. For Smith, however, the change came from Canadian dependency on British imperialism which prevented Canada from being truly independent and thus still exploited.⁵⁴⁶ Smith continued as follows:

The demand for independence of Canada from the British imperialist system does not become invalid because we face in Canada, not a bourgeois-democratic revolution, but a socialist revolution. It does not become invalid because Canada is not an oppressed nation but an imperialist state. Precisely because we face the Socialist revolution and because the class relations in Canada are those of a highly developed capitalist state, it will not divert the struggle of the Canadian working class and the masses away from the Canadian bourgeoisie to a foreign oppressor. On the contrary, it is a demand of the incompleting [sic.] and defeated bourgeois revolution in Canada, which becomes an essential part of the struggle for the Socialist revolution against the bourgeoisie of Canada...⁵⁴⁷

Smith skewed Bolshevik revolutionary theory to apply it to Canada. A bourgeois revolution had not been completed thanks to the oppression of a foreign power. As a result, the CPC needed to take the process to its logical ends and promote true revolution.

Smith was able to dictate the position of the CPC largely thanks to Tim Buck being outside of the country. As a result, he sent messages to different sections of the party to follow his line of thinking. His position remained unchallenged for most of 1940 and Smith only continued to become more self-assured in his position. He argued that an imperialist clash between the United States and Japan and then the British was necessary to redraw the globe. Only a “stupid apologist for imperialism” could see otherwise.⁵⁴⁸ The British Empire was struggling in war and was close to collapse. This call was repeated

⁵⁴⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 35-39.

⁵⁴⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 38.

⁵⁴⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 39.

multiple times.⁵⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Tim Buck, who was writing in the *Monthly Review*, had Comintern backing for the correct line.⁵⁵⁰ Buck outlined his position when writing to the E.C.C.I.:

They maintain that the political perspective in Canada flows from the capitalist monopoly character of Canadian economy and the general imperialist character of Canada's economy and the general imperialist character of the Canadian bourgeoisie and its state policies. They reject the theory that the crisis higher up will necessarily derive from sharpening of Anglo-American relationships, they reject the characterization of the French Canadians as an oppressed nationality and they condemn the reiterated assertion that a revolutionary crisis is maturing in Canada.⁵⁵¹

Buck had affirmed the Comintern line as dictated following the fracas of 1929.

The Comintern began to craft a response to the Smith faction in 1941. In a draft resolution, the Comintern called for the unity of the CPC under Tim Buck. The resolution declared Smith's position as pacifist and leftist.⁵⁵² In a following report, the Comintern was clearer in its criticism. They confirmed the Comintern line post-1929 and criticized the Smith faction's plan for socialism as lip service. The Comintern report noted the contradiction in the Smith faction's appraisal of the Canadian bourgeoisie, given that the Smith faction stated that French Canadian bourgeoisie were not an oppressed minority, yet called for self-determination for French Canadians. The Comintern also was critical of the Smith faction's lack of any detail on other issues including the CCF, trade unions, farmers and youth.⁵⁵³ Unfortunately, nothing more is known regarding the Comintern

⁵⁴⁹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 39-41, 47.

⁵⁵⁰ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 44-45, 50-51.

⁵⁵¹ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 60.

⁵⁵² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 108-110.

⁵⁵³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-292, 495.98.194A, 111-136.

response as the Comintern dissolved in 1943, before any response was sent. Meanwhile, the Canadian Communist Party maintained some of its ‘flawed’ views. Tim Buck, recollecting this period, states that the 1943 Party Plenum rectified these incorrect formulations.⁵⁵⁴ Ironically, following the Second World War, Buck proudly noted that the party promoted “[k]eep[ing] Canada independent” and fought against closer ties with the United States.⁵⁵⁵

The CPC and Race

Readers will notice that to this point, race has played virtually no role in the discussion on nationality or imperialism in the Communist Party of Canada during the interwar period. Historian Ian McKay has noted that the Canadian left had struggled to deal with racial issues, with the main advancements coming in practice, such as with the rise of language groups, prior to the interwar period.⁵⁵⁶ In another work, McKay argued that the left’s consideration of First Nations peoples as a significant issue arose with the beginning of First Nations’ rights movements in the 1960s.⁵⁵⁷ The gap over race in the CPC’s policies during the interwar period looms large in the history of the Canadian left. Race never truly became a major issue for the party during this time, nor did the Comintern suggest the party make it a greater priority.

⁵⁵⁴ It should be noted that the CPC was declared illegal by the Canadian government in 1940. To maintain a public face, much as it did with the Worker’s Party of Canada concept, they founded the Labour-Progressive Party of Canada to act as its public face. Tim Buck, *Thirty Years 1922-1952*, 183.

⁵⁵⁵ Tim Buck, *Thirty Years 1922-1952*, 208-210.

⁵⁵⁶ Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 345-415.

⁵⁵⁷ McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 40.

As noted in the second chapter, the Comintern saw Canada and Australia as dominions in which the Indigenous peoples had been decimated. This same position was reinforced in one of the significant communist educational publications on the history of Canada.⁵⁵⁸ Tim Buck even reflected the position in his testimony during his federal trial, following his arrest as leader of the CPC. While the official history of the CPC points out the “outstanding record” of the party, the issue of race was nearly non-existent until at least the late 1930s.⁵⁵⁹ At its Eighth Party Convention in 1937, the CPC railed against the poverty and disease that typified the reserve experience, while also noting how Indigenous culture, traditions and language were under siege, while the government ignored treaties. Its “Resolution on Support to the Native Indian Population” called for the CPC to help the Indigenous population gain “remedial governmental assistance” and support the extension of “statutory regulations governing other sections of the Canadian people” to Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the resolution saw Indigenous peoples as needing “greater...social assistance.” They were however not defined as exploited, as the French Canadians were, nor were the concepts of self-determination or colonized peoples marshalled in any way.⁵⁶⁰ In 1943, the CPC, under the banner of the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), supported the Metis people.⁵⁶¹ Even still, these items were rarely a prominent focus until after the Second World War.

⁵⁵⁸ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188B, 1-19.

⁵⁵⁹ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 272.

⁵⁶⁰ Communist Party of Canada, “Resolution on Support to the Native Indian Population,” in *We Propose: Resolutions adopted at the Eighth Dominion Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, held in Toronto, October 8-13, 1937*, (Toronto, 1937), 67; *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 272.

⁵⁶¹ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 272.

Meanwhile, the only place where race may have played any significant factor in the policies and ideas of the CPC came when discussing foreign workers. Given the uneven representation of the CPC for most of the interwar period, dominated by foreign-born workers and members who spoke different languages, their issues could have had a significant effect on the party. For the party, the most frequent call made to support foreign workers, when it was not being asked to bring in more “native” workers, was to defend foreign workers from discrimination. Nationalist groups or businesses could be far crueller to those of a different ethnicity and especially to those of a clear racial minority. If individuals of a racial minority demonstrated against the government, participated in the strike movements or applied for unemployment relief, it was felt they would be threatened with the loss of their jobs or deportation.⁵⁶²

In some cases, the CPC considered the exploitation of foreign-born workers similar to that of the French Canadian working class. For example, the National Executive Board of the Workers’ Unity League declared that “foreign born workers are in the worst position of all.” It continued by suggesting that many of them had been “lured” to Canada under the premise of a better life, yet, they sit in a position worse than Canadian workers, which was declared “intolerable” as it was.⁵⁶³ Add the possibility of deportation, which was referred to as “kidnapping” at some points, foreign born workers were a vulnerable group which the CPC saw as a priority at some level.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-285, 495.98.151, 34, 54.

⁵⁶³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-286, 495.98.153, 34-44.

⁵⁶⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-286, 495.98.154, 1-3.

Asian workers comprised the most significant racial minority for which the party fought. Especially in light of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Chinese and Japanese workers needed to be a focus, both to support the Chinese peoples, while also ensuring Japanese workers did not rely on nationalist sympathies and fall under the influence of Japanese imperialist ideas. As early as 1933, the CPC attempted some consideration of these problems. For example, when reflecting on Japanese workers in British Columbia, the party pointed out that many Japanese immigrants had pride in Japan and these immigrants would attempt to convince Japanese Canadians to regain their pride in their home country. Building up a comradeship with Japanese Canadians was a priority, given their willingness to stand with Canadians, despite being often left outside of white worker circles, especially in British Columbia.⁵⁶⁵

The concern for Asian workers also came from an impetus beyond the military or diplomatic reality of the world. Racism was the main target. One report from the mid-1930s saw Asian labour as a large part of the workforce of British Columbia. Whether Asian workers were immigrants or born in Canada was irrelevant to their position. They were often seen as “cheap yellow labour” and discriminated against not only by their employers but also by any bosses of the same minority. Japanese, Chinese and Hindu workers were specifically mentioned with most of the focus on Asian workers directed at their plight in the British Columbia.⁵⁶⁶

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor temporarily shelved support for Japanese workers. In British Columbia, communists were pressured by fishermen’s unions to

⁵⁶⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-285, 495.98.151, 64-74.

⁵⁶⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-288, 495.98.164, 13-24; LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-291, 495.98.188, 66.

promote a particularly vicious attack on Japanese workers. Historian Werner Cohn highlighted that the British Columbian situation was unique, although generally, North American communism pulled back from support for Japanese workers and their integration into the general working class. The CPC as a whole was not as harsh in its treatment of Japanese-Canadians as their British Columbian comrades, but still argued that Japanese-Canadians were a “Japanese fifth column.” This brief shift was in the immediate wake of Pearl Harbor, and Cohn noted it was atypical to Canadian communism’s otherwise anti-chauvinistic approach towards Asian workers.⁵⁶⁷

While there was some consideration of the plight of Asian workers, in many cases, it was a peripheral battle. Compared to the focus on the war scare, imperialism, the general national makeup or French Canadian issues, the concern for issues of the foreign-born was often a secondary issue. This is not to say it was ignored. It however never became a major issue for the party and more than likely it was left to specific districts which had a greater ethnic makeup, such as British Columbia, or the national or language groups to promote these issues.

Conclusion

Much like in the South African case, the Canadian case is defined by one significant intervention. But the Canadian case did not have the same level of consistent and direct meddling by Moscow afterwards, owing to the priorities of the Comintern. The Canadian Question and the party’s complete inability to understand and navigate the new

⁵⁶⁷ Werner Cohn, “The Persecution of Japanese Canadians and the Political Left in British Columbia, December 1941-March 1942,” *BC Studies*, no. 68 (Winter, 1985-86): 3-22.

policies of the Comintern in the Third Period, followed by doubling down on its mistake, the firm acceptance of Canada's colonial status and placing Canadian independence front and centre, both represented its more forceful promotion of its own ideas while also its gravest error. After 1930, the Comintern maintained contact from afar, advising and ensuring that the CPC was maintaining the correct line. As long as the CPC did, the Comintern remained a guiding force. It would continue many of the same criticisms as it had before the fracas on the Canadian Question. The ethnic makeup of the party was never appropriate, French Canada remained isolated from the party, and the CPC needed to promote Soviet foreign policy aims and reflect current Comintern policy. Otherwise, the CPC's record during the interwar period, at least on these issues, remained for the most part a basic parroting of Comintern policy. Racial issues were barely touched as they never seemed to be a major issue, exacerbated by its problematic relationship with its language groups to whom the party owed much thanks to their numbers and financial support, but reflected in the poor "native" makeup of the party. One could say that the run-in with Moscow in 1930 scared the party and it took time before some of its members were confident enough to promote their own derivations of Comintern policy again. Alternately, issues such as the arrest of key members likely distracted and stunted the CPC and its development. While the party had some active and very motivated members, on these issues, the CPC had little to show for its efforts.

The Comintern's Willing Partner: The Communist Party of Australia and White Australia, Anti-Imperialism, and Aboriginal and Melanesian Workers

The histories of the South African and Canadian Communist Parties during the interwar period necessitate a discussion of racial issues and imperialism. The history of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) during the era has been written, but without much discussion of anti-imperialism, Aboriginal peoples or Australian nationalism.⁵⁶⁸ But if one neglects to consider the CPA's position on these issues, one would miss an important chapter of progressivism in Australian politics. Also one would be overlooking an example of a party that happily followed the Comintern's lead. In 2008, David W. Lovell and Kevin Windle published a document collection titled "Our Unswerving Loyalty." Lovell and Windle argued that the genesis for most positions taken by the CPA came from the Comintern and the Comintern had strict oversight not only of the Communist Party of Australia, but also of all communist parties.⁵⁶⁹ Despite this flawed interpretation of a totalitarian Comintern that seemingly saw all and corrected all – something the South Africa case suggests is incomplete and the Canadian case shows was limited – the collection's title is an accurate descriptor for the CPA from 1920 to the Comintern's dissolution in 1943.

With the leadership looking to maintain Comintern support as consistently as possible, the CPA made every effort to follow Comintern directives, especially when it

⁵⁶⁸ For example, Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969); Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920-1955* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1975); Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party* (Melbourne: International Bookshop, 1966).

⁵⁶⁹ David W. Lovell & Kevin Windle, eds., *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A documentary survey of relations between the Communist Party of Australia and Moscow, 1920-1940* (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2008), 25-51.

came to issues of imperialism, racial equality and the White Australia policy. The White Australia policy began in the late 19th century, responding to the significant immigration of Asian populations imported as indentured labour or attracted to gold in Australian gold rushes. The policy sought to “protect” white, generally British, Australian citizens by banning immigration from Asia and limiting the rights and movement of Aboriginal peoples. The legislation lasted in some form or another until the 1960s; the end of the Second World War and the realization of the horrors resulting from Nazi racial policies helped cause a shift in thinking.⁵⁷⁰ The Comintern directed the CPA to attack this policy with great ferocity throughout most of the interwar period.

This acquiescence to the Comintern line, however, did not mean that the party operated entirely at the whim of the Comintern. As this chapter argues, the Comintern initially criticized the CPA for its listless, or non-existent, focus on the White Australia policy. But the CPA had little more to go on than the Comintern’s desire to see that policy attacked. Much as in the Canadian case, the Comintern declared Australia a secondary imperialist state in 1929. But unlike the CPSA or the CPC, where these issues were of primary concern for each party, requiring Comintern interference, it remained on the periphery for the CPA until becoming an important plank of the party’s platform during the late 1930s and Second World War. Following 1928 and the shift to Third Period tactics, the Comintern and the CPA were most concerned with the party’s continuing relationship with the Australian Labor Party. Trade union issues dominated party politics

⁵⁷⁰ Andrew Markus, “White Australia,” in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, edited by Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (Oxford University Press, 2003); Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 253-258.

with many of the CPA's early leadership also leading trade unions. Despite this peripheral status the CPA's dealing with the White Australia policy and racial equality – seen through its positions on Aboriginal rights and foreign workers, on British, Japanese and Australia imperialism, and on fascism – was arguably the most consistent and least challenged internally.

The CPA initially ignored issues of race and immigration, similar to the case of the Canadian party. Other matters took precedence. Its leadership, however, was aware that the White Australia policy was a problem in Australia and went against proletarian internationalism. By the mid-1920s, the Comintern urged the CPA to start developing some platform to educate workers on and combat the effects of the White Australia policy. The party began to support foreign workers and bring them into the movement. Imperialism was an equally overlooked issue before the Sixth Comintern Congress. The Comintern informed the CPA that Australia was a secondary imperial power, much as it did Canada, but the CPA, despite some confusion, accepted the new line. The line underpinned an increased consideration of racial issues in Australia. Starting in 1931, the CPA developed a campaign to support Aboriginal peoples and call for better living standards and labour conditions. At the same time, it also began to consider Melanesian workers in Queensland and the Australian mandate of New Guinea. The Aboriginal and Melanesian campaigns became prominent aspects of communist work by the late 1930s and increased during the Second World War. So did their attacks on Australian imperialism, while maintaining a strong attack on imperialism generally. Following the Comintern's lead, the CPA sent volunteers to Spain to take part in the Spanish Civil War,

supported Hands off India, China and Abyssinia movements, while still detailing the ills of British, American, Japanese and Italian imperialism and educating workers on the horrors of Nazi Germany and the threat of fascism to Australia. The CPA had no major rows with Comintern leadership on these issues unlike the CPSA or CPC. The Comintern urged the party to develop tactics on White Australia and follow certain international movements. The CPA, unlike the CPC, had no significant intervention over the issue of its home country suddenly seen as imperialist. Finally, the racial platform, even if influenced by a greater focus by Moscow on racial issues, was homegrown and was amongst the most progressive platforms on Aboriginal and Melanesian rights, until arguably the 1960s.

Early Years

The Communist Party in Australia's origins start with the development of two rival factions, former Australian Socialist Party (ASP) members, and left-wing members of the New South Wales Labor Council.⁵⁷¹ These two blocs jockeyed for position and both sought Comintern recognition. The Comintern demanded unity, but both sent members to Moscow for the Third Comintern Congress in 1921. William P. Earsman, a Scottish communist and trade unionist, representing the latter group, attended the Congress and was the first significant voice for Australia in Moscow, taking advantage of what historian Stuart Macintyre described as "a good hand," owed to the misfortune that many other Australian delegates died traveling to Moscow. Earsman's luck and ability to

⁵⁷¹ Macintyre, "Dealing with Moscow," 130-133; Brown, 26-33; Gollan, 3-12; Davidson, 3-23; Miriam Dixon, "The First Communist 'United Front' in Australia," *Labour History*, no. 10 (May, 1966): 20-31.

win over allies in Moscow gave the New South Wales Labor Council the leadership of Australian communism during this initial period. The party unified in August 1922. Earsman remained in Moscow afterwards and during the early years of the Anglo-American Secretariat, spearheaded by South Africa's David Ivon Jones, he represented Australia.⁵⁷² Here Earsman delineated early positions on the White Australia policy and foreign workers.

In a discussion regarding a Pan-Pacific Workers' Congress, a concept that Australian communism engaged with for the remainder of the decade, Earsman noted some of the hallmarks of Australian politics. Australia had been poorly engaged with other Pacific nations and the White Australia policy stood in the way of obtaining cheap labour for Australia's growing manufacturing industry.⁵⁷³ Earsman believed that Australia should be a political and economic leader in the region and desired a new Comintern body for the Pacific.⁵⁷⁴ The consideration of a Pan-Pacific Workers' Congress on the part of the Comintern underscored the importance of the coloured labour issue, and therefore cheap labour issue, to Australian labour politics. All Anglo-American Secretariat members saw value in the congress, but most agreed for a need to downplay any rhetoric that placed emphasis on coloured labour instead of on labour in general. At this meeting, Sidney Bunting made clear his desire to focus on cheap labour over coloured labour. Earsman, however, stressed the importance of race, especially in Australian matters. The

⁵⁷² See Chapter 3 for more on Jones. Macintyre, "Dealing with Moscow," 134. See also, Davidson, 21-25; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 53-68. Fred Wilkinson was the first Australian representative on the Anglo-American Secretariat. He did mention White Australia as something to combat, but the Comintern remained focused on party unity before discussing any other issues. Earsman replaced Wilkinson starting in September 1922.

⁵⁷³ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.3, 116-117.

⁵⁷⁴ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.3, 139-143.

Comintern was less willing to accede to such an emphasis. To the Comintern, discussing coloured labour without a correct approach in place would lead to confusion.⁵⁷⁵

Earsman's position on the White Australia policy described in the Anglo-American Secretariat revealed the limitations of the CPA, but also led to some interaction between him and future South African party leader Sidney Bunting. Recall that in 1922, Sidney Bunting attacked the utility of the National and Colonial Theses in the South African context. Earsman suggested that the murky position of British dominions, namely Canada, Australia and New Zealand, affirmed Bunting's criticism and that the Theses were inapplicable. To Earsman, though the dominions were independent, he doubted they would ever be antagonistic toward Britain.⁵⁷⁶ Earsman further was unsure of the level of general dissatisfaction of workers towards the White Australia policy in Australia. Therefore, he argued for a need to win over white workers before turning attention to other workers. This position ran counter to Bunting's core tactical beliefs and drew Bunting's ire in the Anglo-American Group of the Comintern.⁵⁷⁷

When in Moscow, Earsman brought certain Australian peculiarities to the attention of Comintern officials and bodies. These issues did not lead to any platform declaration by the CPA. However, Earsman expressed the importance of foreign labour in understanding the Australian situation. He also was concerned that workers lacked an awareness of the White Australia policy. More importantly, Earsman's statements suggested that the CPA should be a tactical leader in the Pacific. To do so, the CPA

⁵⁷⁵ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.3, 116-117.

⁵⁷⁶ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.3, 139-143.

⁵⁷⁷ LAC, R14860-0-3-E, K-269, 495.72.3, 148-149.

needed to have a clear platform on White Australia, something which the Comintern of the early 1920s was unprepared to tackle. Meanwhile, one also sees a different tactic from that of Bunting and of the CPSA on the other side of the Indian Ocean; individual communist parties had some flexibility with regards to their local situations.

Tackling Foreign Labour and White Australia

The CPA began its attack on the White Australia policy by looking at the increase of foreign workers. In 1924, American immigration restrictions led some Australian unions to support the immigration of Italian, Greek and Yugoslavian workers. Some CPA members supported racial or ethnic equality and workers' unity. Others pointed out that the significant presence of foreign workers, especially those earning lower wages, was harmful to the entire labour movement. The extension of this position was to claim that mass immigration should be protested against to protect the living wage of all workers. While these debates were going on, the CPA worked on bringing foreign workers into its movement. Despite concerns from some sections of the party, it began to establish party branches for each nationality but with limited success.⁵⁷⁸

The impetus for greater attention to the White Australia policy however came directly from Moscow. Australian affairs had some audience to Comintern officials when Earsman was in Moscow, but it was not until 1926 that Comintern officials intervened on this issue in Australian affairs. On 26 April 1926, the Comintern's Inform Department hosted CPA member Hector Ross and asked him a number of questions. Ross was asked

⁵⁷⁸ Macintyre, *The Reds*, 126-128.

about the position of Australian and New Zealand Aboriginal peoples and whether there existed a national movement. Ross gave a general answer, suggesting the Maori were antagonistic to the British and that “[t]he Australian natives are not to be reckoned with at all.”⁵⁷⁹ The question and response reflect a number of sad truths of both the CPA and the Comintern. The Comintern delegates viewed the CPA and the Communist Party of New Zealand as one and the same, similar to how the Comintern saw the American and Canadian parties early on. Comintern officials also saw Aboriginal peoples as colonized peoples. The question suggests that the Comintern still saw Australia and New Zealand as colonies, despite their dominion status and partial independence.⁵⁸⁰ It also ignored the Theses on the Eastern Question of the Fourth Comintern Congress.⁵⁸¹ Ross’ answer is perhaps more telling: Aboriginal peoples barely registered, if at all. This interaction reflected a general lack of knowledge by both sides of Indigenous affairs in Australia. Aboriginal peoples were not yet a priority for the CPA and this lack of attention continued for the remainder of the 1920s.

Ross also discussed foreign workers in Australia. He claimed it had become a new, and pressing, issue for the CPA. Although Earsman had discussed foreign labour three years earlier, the situation had changed. Now, instead of Asian workers arriving in great numbers into Australia, European workers were. Ross noted that the CPA was attempting to bring these European workers into the movement, but language issues had

⁵⁷⁹ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-14, 49

⁵⁸⁰ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-14, 49.

⁵⁸¹ See Chapter 1, page 37. At the Fourth Comintern Congress, the Theses defined Australia as an imperialist nation.

made that difficult. On the issues of ethnicity and race, foreign workers at least had some attention in party affairs.⁵⁸²

Similar to the Canadian party, the CPA attempted to reach foreign workers and bring them into the movement. Australian communists did not owe as much to immigrant members, as the Canadian communists did to Ukrainian or Finnish supporters. Greek or Italian sympathizers were not bankrolling the party. But the party elected to unite all workers, adopting a general challenge to the White Australia policy. At the party's Sixth Annual Conference in December 1926, the party passed a resolution, dictated from Moscow, on the Australian Question. The party needed to attack the restrictions on immigration, stating "[i]t is one of the most important duties of the Communist Party of Australia to get a foothold not only among the masses of native-born Australian proletarians, but also to champion the interests of the foreign speaking element of the country." The resolution urged the CPA to stand for both Australian and foreign-born workers equally. Aligned with these platforms, the Comintern also reminded the CPA to combat British imperialism.⁵⁸³ The resolution was a restatement of the conclusions the British Secretariat had made eight months earlier following Ross' report.⁵⁸⁴

The party's link to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union (PPTU), a trade union organized by the Red International of Trade Unions (RILU), bolstered the party's criticisms of racial discrimination. The PPTU began in the early 1920s, but by 1928, affiliation with the PPTU was problematic. Jock Garden – head of the Australian Council of Labour Unions

⁵⁸² SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-14, 50-55.

⁵⁸³ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/1, 6th Annual Conference: Communist Party of Australia, December 1926, Resolution on the Australian Question, 447-450.

⁵⁸⁴ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-14, 58-63.

(ACLU), who also enjoyed prominent support within the Comintern despite expulsion from the CPA – spearheaded the development of the PPTU. The PPTU sought to combat imperialist sentiment, to bring together the Pacific labour movement, and to place Australia in a meaningful role in the Pacific. Because the White Australia policy affected Australian labour relations with nearby Asian countries and South Pacific colonies, it had to be considered by the PPTU. Through the PPTU, the party sought to attack the White Australia policy, both as a sign of solidarity with foreign workers, but also to increase opposition to the policy. By 1928, owing to Garden's continued involvement and the ACTU's "weak affiliation" to the body, the party was unsure whether the PPTU would be able to stand against the White Australia policy.⁵⁸⁵ The ACTU hesitated to zealously attack the White Australia policy.⁵⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the Comintern also supported the PPTU to build connections in the struggle for colonial liberation.⁵⁸⁷

In Moscow, Australian affairs were discussed from time to time. Two familiar figures intervened: Max Petrovsky and Nikolai Nasanov. The harbingers of the Native Republic Thesis and the boosters of racial self-determination chimed in on CPA platform disputes in the Anglo-American Secretariat. They never discussed Aboriginal peoples. Tom Wright represented the CPA on the Secretariat. In October 1927, the Secretariat discussed how best to attack capitalism's enthusiasm for letting in more foreign workers. Attacking immigration directly was problematic; it would alienate foreign workers. However, the nature of capitalism's deceit, at least to the Comintern, was that the bosses

⁵⁸⁵ SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-41, 57-62. SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-42, 86-92; Cottle, 127; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 112; Davidson, 35-36.

⁵⁸⁶ SANSW, FM4-10422, 534-7-4, 115-117; SANSW, FM4-10422, 534-7-5, 46-49.

⁵⁸⁷ SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-43, 7-12.

desired “mass immigration” to Australia in order to lower wages. Petrovsky argued that free immigration had to be opposed. He also stressed the party’s need to promote Australian independence and the dissolution of the British Empire.⁵⁸⁸ One year later, Nasanov at an Anglo-American Secretariat meeting in November 1928 also argued in favour of Australian independence.⁵⁸⁹ The Comintern support for Australian independence came one year before the explosive clash between the Lenin School Students and the CPC over Canadian independence and the official shift to seeing Canada and Australia as second-tier imperialist nations. Petrovsky and Nasanov’s positions would also no longer be considered correct for Australian affairs heading into the Third Period.

Australian Independence?

The Canadian Communist Party struggled to follow the Comintern’s line on Canada’s position in the world and the situation turned into a fiasco. The Communist Party of South Africa was equally disengaged from anti-imperialism and South African independence. The CPA had in general ignored the issue, but beginning in 1926-1927, the party realized a need to develop a position on Australia’s relation to the British Empire. At first, the party made a cumbersome link between its position on independence and foreign workers. The CPA argued that the Australian government had entered into an agreement with British imperialism to send unemployed Britons to Australia. To combat

⁵⁸⁸ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-27, 48-58.

⁵⁸⁹ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-72-43, 4.

this arrangement, the party aimed to encourage foreign workers to enter trade unions, use them to expose the system and attack British imperial policy at the same time.⁵⁹⁰

By 1928, the CPA began to reflect further on Australia's role in the British Empire. The party stressed the partnership between Britain and Australia and linked it to the Comintern's rhetoric of the war scare. The Australian navy policed the Southern Pacific for the British Empire. To undermine this meddling, the CPA promoted national liberation movements across the Pacific and opposed the White Australia policy. The CPA continued to articulate the nature of the conspiracy between Great Britain and Australian capitalists and politicians. The immigration agreement with Britain would flood Australia with cheap labour which would increase Australian unemployment and lower the standard of living for all workers.⁵⁹¹ Fears some communists had about cheap labour early on merged with the CPA's attack on Australian imperialism to create a coherent platform against the White Australia policy.

While the party promoted an image in line with previous Comintern statements, further confirmed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, the CPA also sought a reorganization of its position within the Comintern apparatus. The Comintern desired better relations between the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and the CPA, enforcing the Theses on the National and Colonial Question of the Second Congress. The CPA was unhappy with the partnership, feeling that the CPGB was not fulfilling its obligations. Furthermore, the CPA wanted to be removed from the Anglo-American

⁵⁹⁰ SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-35, 55-60.

⁵⁹¹ SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-43, 7-12. The agreement referred to British Preference in immigration. See Peter D. Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation: The History of Cane Sugar Production in Australia, 1820-1995* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 617-625.

Secretariat and moved into the Eastern Secretariat, highlighting its distinct link to Pacific affairs.⁵⁹²

The Comintern turned down the CPA's request to be moved to the Eastern Secretariat.⁵⁹³ It also became more involved in CPA affairs over the next three years, owing to the CPA's continued desire to work with the Australian Labor Party, which ran counter to Comintern Third Period tactics.⁵⁹⁴ During this same time, the CPA shored up its position on Australia in the world, but not without some confusion. As noted earlier, by late 1928, some Comintern officials continued to press the CPA to promote Australian independence. As in the Canadian case, it was improper to forward the slogan of "an independent Australia." Instead, it was a slogan for propaganda purposes to gain followers to its cause. In fact, the Comintern informed the CPA that the slogan was only to be used in conjunction with the promotion of a Workers and Farmers' Government, exactly as the CPC had been initially instructed.⁵⁹⁵ This similarity should not be surprising as Canada and Australia were both capitalist, British dominions and were semi-independent. Here, the Comintern was consistent.

As in the Canadian case, the Comintern identified Australia as a second-tier imperialist power. Both parties were informed of this shift over the course of 1929. The CPA however accepted the edict more quickly than the Communist Party of Canada.

After the Comintern cabled the CPA to explain to the party Australia's imperialist

⁵⁹² SANSW, FM4-10416, 495-94-43, 6.

⁵⁹³ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, C.E. Minutes 1926-30, "Letter to the CE of the CPA, 20/12/28," 633.

⁵⁹⁴For a good overview of these clashes between the Comintern and the CPA, see Macintyre, "The New Line in the Antipodes," 247-267.

⁵⁹⁵ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, C.E. Minutes 1926-30, "Letter to the CEC of the Australian Party, October 5, 1928," 611-615.

position, Tom Wright, Party Secretary, did what the Comintern criticized the Canadian party of not doing; he asked for clarification:

The role of Australia in the scheme of Empire is formulated unconvincingly.

In your resolution on the Australian Question of October, 1927, you said: “The Australian bourgeoisie has not strength yet to follow an independent imperialist policy.” You referred to “The dependent imperialist policy of the Australian bourgeoisie in the future.”

It has been customary in our resolutions and articles to feature British imperialism as the central organising factor of the offensive against workers’ conditions in Australia. This is the point of view expressed also by Comrade Stohler in the August, 1929, issue of the “Red International of Labor Unions.”

In your letter, however, you push British imperialism almost out of the picture and treat the Australian bourgeoisie as the only factor in directing the capitalist offensive.

Further, you describe the Australian Labor Party as “the Party agency of British imperialism.” It is certainly a Party agency of Imperialism, but its allegiance to Australian capitalism and, to an extent, to United States capitalism, distinguishes it from the Nationalist Party which is essentially the agency of British imperialism.

This suggests the need for a more careful formulation of the question, to which the C.C. will contribute.⁵⁹⁶

The CPA realized there were some mixed messages coming to Australia. For years, the Comintern ordered the CPA to attack British imperialism. The party also received a different explanation of the situation unique to Australia which caused consternation. Tom Wright was well acquainted with these debates. He had already jostled with M.N. Roy in the ECCI Politsecretariat in 1927, the same body James La Guma had addressed on his fateful visit.⁵⁹⁷ M.N. Roy saw Australia no longer as a colony, despite its position in the British Empire. To Roy, Australia did not have the same “struggle” against imperialism present in exploitative colonies. Australia operated as an

⁵⁹⁶ SANSW, FM4-10417, 495-94-53, 67-69

⁵⁹⁷ James La Guma addressed this same body upon his trip to Moscow in March 1927.

“independent, bourgeois country.”⁵⁹⁸ He hinted at what would become the next phase of Comintern doctrine which would define Australia as imperialist. Roy, in particular, used Australia to demonstrate the need for a revision of the National and Colonial Theses, something he had argued for at the Fourth Congress, and that change was accepted at the Sixth Congress the following year. Wright, responding to Roy, observed the traditional line of thinking in Australia. Australia was not imperialist as it did not export material to countries other than England. Therefore, Australia was still presumed to be under British control, despite the lack of colonial exploitation as demonstrated, for example, in India.⁵⁹⁹ In Canada, Stewart Smith had little background regarding these matters at the Comintern level and he led the CPC to a humiliating conflict with the Comintern and the Canadian communists present in Moscow.⁶⁰⁰

Despite the confusion, the CPA fell into line. Clarification did not come immediately, and not in time for the Ninth Annual Conference of the CPA. The only comments on imperialism were vague remarks about the international struggle between rival empires using as guidance the reports it had from the Sixth Comintern Congress. By the Tenth Party Congress in 1931, the CPA reflected the Comintern way of thinking. The party was in the midst of Bolshevization. As a result of Labor Party affiliation and continued work in non-communist run trade unions, the CPA suffered numerous expulsions. Australia’s international position remained on the periphery of party discussions because of the purges. Jack Kavanaugh was one of the handful of CPA

⁵⁹⁸ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-3-39, 66-68.

⁵⁹⁹ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-3-39, 69-71.

⁶⁰⁰ See Chapter Four.

members who disagreed with the new line, suggesting in 1930 that it made little sense; Herbert Moxon, a Comintern-backed member, corrected him. The party expelled Kavanaugh, albeit for his whole package of incorrect positions. He would remain a thorn in the side of the party on trade union issues. The party moved forward highlighting Australia's unique position, tied to a British Empire that appeared to be disintegrating and to an American Empire that was increasing its investment into the Pacific.⁶⁰¹ By the end of 1932, Party Chairman J.B. Miles left no doubt. Australia was a second class imperialist power. It was “not an appendage of Great Britain, nevertheless, England – of the large Imperialist powers – occupie[d] a dominant position so far as Australia is concerned.” This formulation was a clever way to fall into line with the Comintern while explaining Australia's dominion status. Miles also highlighted Australia's growing aggressiveness in economic deals, seeking more opportunity within the British Empire.⁶⁰²

Linking Race and Imperialism

The turn to Third Period tactics and the change to highlighting Australia's imperial status seemed to embolden the CPA and its attacks on the White Australia policy. The party's support of racial equality became more significant. Historian Stuart Macintyre attributed this shift to the Comintern. Influenced by the American experience, he suggested that Moscow demanded that communists worldwide more critically consider

⁶⁰¹ This evaluation was also similar to that of the Canadian situation. SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/1, “1931 Party Congress, 3rd Session, 4/3/31, Communist Party of Australia,” 890-907.

⁶⁰² SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, CC Minutes 1932-35, “Political Report, delivered by Com. Miles, 3rd Plenum, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia, December 25-27, 1932,” 905-918.

colonial and oppressed peoples.⁶⁰³ By defining Australia as an imperial nation, the CPA categorized Aboriginal peoples, the South Pacific Islanders and the people of New Guinea as colonial peoples.⁶⁰⁴ Denouncing the treatment of these groups in Australia was only part of the programme for racial equality. In another modification, the CPA saw the attack on the White Australia policy as a foreign worker issue. The CPA may have rhetorically denounced the colonial treatment of Aboriginal peoples but addressed correction of injustices as a completely different matter.

The CPA had ignored Aboriginal peoples to this point.⁶⁰⁵ Beginning in the 1930s, the CPA ensured that its members and the readers of its many publications became aware of the plight of Aboriginals. The 1931 Senate election campaign demonstrated this shift. During his Senate campaign, Lawrence Sharkey, one of the party's prominent leaders well into the Cold War, highlighted a need to end the White Australia policy and "racial discrimination" which divided workers. The communist campaign for the 1931 election made combating White Australia a key feature. It also highlighted Australia's alleged imperialist position and called for self-determination of the New Guinea and Pacific Islands peoples.⁶⁰⁶ Two years earlier, when the CPA ran in multiple state elections,

⁶⁰³ Macintyre, *The Reds*, 265; Macintyre, "New Line in the Antipodes," 263. David Cottle made a similar inference. Cottle, 127-129.

⁶⁰⁴ Prior to this shift, the Comintern seemed to see Aboriginal peoples and Melanesian workers as colonized peoples. The CPA did not seem to share that position, generally keeping its attention only on foreign workers when dealing with racial issues.

⁶⁰⁵ David Cottle argued this was a function of the "white Australian history." David Cottle, 127.

⁶⁰⁶ SANSW, FM4-10419, 495-94-20, 21.

neither the White Australia policy nor self-determination were notable aspects of their campaigns.⁶⁰⁷

In 1931, the CPA published an article in *Worker's Weekly* entitled “Communist Party’s Fight for Aborigines.” The article amounted to the first considerable effort of the party to make the plight of Aboriginals a part of its attacks on Australian capitalism and defined Aboriginal peoples as one of the most exploited groups in Australia.⁶⁰⁸ The CPA suggested they were “slaves of slaves.” The article delineated the oppressive policies that imperialists, both British and Australian, had imposed. These policies included “exterminationist” policies, including the poisoning of water supplies, and the contemporary lack of political, and in some cases, legal rights, as seen with instances of the rape of Aboriginal women by government officials and station operators. In support of these points, the article referenced the recent case of the Coniston Massacre of 1928.⁶⁰⁹ Aboriginal workers also were paid meagre wages. The article continued by stating that “no struggle of the white workers must be permitted without demands for the aborigines being championed; no political campaigns without political programs applicable to our fellow exploited – the aborigines – being formulated.” It then listed fourteen demands for Aboriginals which included equal rights, political freedom, an end to slave labour, the right to develop Aboriginal culture and land rights. With regard to land rights, the CPA

⁶⁰⁷ SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-54, 23-24; SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-54, 25; SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-54, 33.

⁶⁰⁸ This definition echoes the Communist Party of Canada and their position on French Canadians. See Chapter Four.

⁶⁰⁹ “Communist Party’s Fight for Aborigines: Draft Program of Struggle against Slavery – Full Economic, Political and Social Rights,” *Worker's Weekly*, Friday, September 24, 1931, page 2. (Actually Friday September 25, 1931; paper has date wrong.) For more on the Coniston Massacre, see Bill Wilson and Justin O’Brien, “‘To infuse an universal terror’: a reappraisal of the Coniston killings,” *Aboriginal History* 27, (2003): 59-78.

declared itself in favour of something similar to the Native Republic Thesis. The party wanted Aboriginal peoples to be given Central, Northern and North West Australia to develop an Aboriginal territory independent of any other power. This republic was also to have the right to conduct diplomacy and establish its own military. “Communist Party’s Fight for Aborigines” very much was an article befitting the Third Period and the Comintern’s positions. The party placed the fight for Aboriginal rights as a struggle against Australian imperialism.⁶¹⁰

Historians have focused on this article, but it should be noted that it was only one article of many published during the fall of 1931 in CPA publications. It was part of a greater campaign about the oppression of Aboriginal peoples. For example, the *Red Leader*, the official organ of the CPA’s Minority Movement, in the month of September had multiple articles on Aboriginal affairs.⁶¹¹ The first article outlined the alleged “exterminationist” policies of the Australian government in the late 1920s and that many Aboriginals had few legal rights.⁶¹² Another article detailed how Aboriginal peoples in Australia could not attend schools, “preventing the aboriginal children from developing as intellectuals.” Supposedly, the police and governments were working in tandem to drive Aboriginals into slave labour.⁶¹³ The paper continued by outlining exploitative policies that other unions supported. On October 9, the *Red Leader* published an article discussing

⁶¹⁰ “Communist Party’s Fight for Aborigines: Draft Program of Struggle against Slavery – Full Economic, Political and Social Rights,” *Worker’s Weekly*, Friday, September 24, 1931, page 2.

⁶¹¹ The Minority Movement was the CPA’s front organization for trade union work during the Third Period.

⁶¹² Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, S954, The Red Leader, “Massacre! Rape! Slavery!: The “White Man’s Burden” in White Australia,” *Red Leader*, September 11, 1931

⁶¹³ NBAC: RL, S954, “Hands off the Aborigines!” *Red Leader*, September 25, 1931

the low wages paid to Aboriginals and the purchase of Aboriginal children as slaves.⁶¹⁴

The article in *Worker's Weekly* outlined a platform. The articles in *Red Leader* aimed to educate and outrage Australian workers.

Historian W.J. Brown argued that the party did little with its new program and it was “inadequately implemented across the following years.”⁶¹⁵ Historian Drew Cottle suggested that the “1931 document was never at the forefront of the party’s activities.”⁶¹⁶ This conclusion considers only the absence of results. However, the 1931 programme was the beginning of Aboriginal issues receiving space in party organs. These articles, along with several plenary and congressional statements made by CPA leaders, showed how much the new Third Period tactics defined how the party campaigned against some of Australia’s ills. The Northern Territory, and the significant Aboriginal population located there, became a consistent example of Australia’s imperialism. The Northern Territory also served as a clear, and well-known, colony. Over the remainder of decade, when Aboriginals were mentioned, often it was in conjunction with the Northern Territory.

One reason the party gave the Northern Territory significant attention was its campaign against Judge Thomas Alexander Wells and his perceived anti-Aboriginal stance during certain trials. Aboriginal peoples accused of murder received a mandatory death sentence if convicted.⁶¹⁷ In 1932, at Fitzmaurice River, eight Aboriginals enacted “tribal justice” against two white prospectors who had accosted an Aboriginal woman. Wells sentenced the accused Aboriginals to death. The party defended the accused by

⁶¹⁴ NBAC: RL, S954, “Real Forced Labor in Australia,” *Red Leader*, October 9, 1931.

⁶¹⁵ Brown, 58.

⁶¹⁶ Cottle, 130.

⁶¹⁷ Russell Goldflam, “The (Non-)Role of Aboriginal Customary Law in Sentencing in the Northern Territory,” *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 17, no. 1 (2013): 71.

stating Wells, and the system, ignored the justification of the act and Aboriginal customs. Articles highlighted Wells' "vindictive decisions in working-class cases," and "his race biases" against Aboriginal peoples, stating he was "temperamentally unfitted to try native cases." In conjunction with the attacks on Wells, articles detailed a broken judicial system where it was in the best interests of lawyers to fail to defend Aboriginal clients given that lawyers relied on the government for work. Articles included quotes from noted activist for Aboriginal rights, A.P. Elkin, and some articles were written by Michael Sawtell of the Association for the Protection of Native Races.⁶¹⁸ The campaign expanded during the infamous trial of Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda. Dhakiyarr had been accused of murdering Constable McColl and several Japanese fishermen who were fishing on reserve land. After a trial with limited defense, Wells sentenced Wirrpanda to death. The case stirred public outrage and drew international attention. The Communist Party joined the campaign against Wells and advertised demonstrations against him in party organs.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁸ "Aborigines Sentenced to Death," *Workers' Weekly*, no. 556, June 8, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Aborigines Meet 'British Justice'," *Red Leader*, no. 145, June 13, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Capitalism's Atrocities against Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 146, June 20, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Demand New Trial For Aborigines!," *Red Leader*, no. 148, July 4, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Sydney Rally in Defence of Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 151, July 25, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "More Trials of Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 152, August 1, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Brutal Sentences Against Aborigines Excused on Political Grounds," *Red Leader*, no. 153, August 8, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "The Fight to Defend the Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 155, August 22, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "More Aborigines Sentenced," *Red Leader*, no. 181, February 27, 1935. Drew Cottle briefly discussed these events as well. Cottle, 131; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 265-267.

⁶¹⁹ NBAC: RL, S954, "More Trials of Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 152, August 1, 1934. "Mass Protest Demands Release of Aborigines," *Workers' Weekly*, no. 565, August 10, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "To Defend Aborigines," *Red Leader*, No. 154, August 15, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Campaign for Defence of Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 154, August 15, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "The Fight to Defend the Aborigines," *Red Leader*, no. 155, August 22, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, "Aborigines Campaign," *Red Leader*, no. 156, August 29, 1934. For more on the Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda trial, see Peter Read, "Murder, Revenge and Reconciliation on the North Eastern Frontier," *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (2007): 09.1-09.15; Marik Finnane & Fiona Paisley, "Police Violence and the Limits of Law on a Late Colonial Frontier: The "Borrooloola Case" in 1930s Australia," *Law and History Review* 28, no. 1 (Feb., 2010): 163-164; National

Party organs and the official circulars of the Australian division of the League Against Imperialism printed multiple reports regarding Aboriginal peoples. Police brutality against Aboriginals was a frequent focus.⁶²⁰ Some of these reports pointed out how police officers attempted to manipulate Aboriginals to attack white workers, seeking to inflame racial tensions. Another frequent allegation was that Aboriginals were treated as slaves, forced to work, or did not have legal or political rights. The lack of proper food and miserable living conditions were other repeated topics. If the Northern Territory was not the focus of these reports, Queensland was.⁶²¹ One article compared the treatment of Aboriginals to that of “rabbits and kangaroos,” the target of “shooting expeditions” by white Australians.⁶²² Other articles referenced the “white man’s burden” and how it was

Archives of Australia, “Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda,” *Uncommon Lives*, 2017,

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/snapshots/uncommon-lives/dhakiyarr-wirrpanda/index.aspx>

⁶²⁰ NBAC: RL, S954, “Old Black Batoned to Death,” *Red Leader*, no. 29, March 11, 1932; NBAC: RL, S954, “W.A. Aborigines form Defence Association,” *Red Leader*, no. 113, October 25, 1933; NBAC: RL, S954, “Capitalism’s Atrocities against Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 146, June 20, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Usual Method of Discipline Employed Against Aborigines Is The Whip,” *Red Leader*, no. 150, July 18, 1934.

⁶²¹ NBAC: RL, S954, “Aboriginal Slavery,” *Red Leader*, no. 95, June 21, 1933; NBAC: RL, S954, “W.A. Aborigines form Defence Association,” *Red Leader*, no. 113, October 25, 1933; NBAC: RL, S954, “Workers of All Colors,” *Unite*, *Red Leader*, no. 121, December 20, 1933; NBAC: RL, S954, “Atrocities Against Aborigines Must Cease,” *Red Leader*, no. 137, April 18, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Aborigines Meet ‘British Justice’,” *Red Leader*, no. 145, June 13, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Capitalism’s Atrocities against Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 146, June 20, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Demand New Trial For Aborigines!,” *Red Leader*, no. 148, July 4, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Atrocities Against Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 151, July 25, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “More Trials of Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 152, August 1, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Brutal Sentences Against Aborigines Excused on Political Grounds,” *Red Leader*, no. 153, August 8, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “To Defend Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 154, August 15, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Campaign for Defence of Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 154, August 15, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “The Fight to Defend the Aborigines,” *Red Leader*, no. 155, August 22, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “How the Tasmanian Aborigines Were Exterminated,” *Red Leader*, no. 158, September 12, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “More Aborigines Sentenced,” *Red Leader*, no. 181, February 27, 1935; NBAC: RL, S954, “Aboriginal Woman Killed in Ochre Mine,” *Red Leader*, no. 184, March 20, 1935; NBAC: RL, S954, “No Law Against Aboriginal Women in Mines,” *Red Leader*, no. 185, March 27, 1935; NBAC: N57/1986, “The Aborigines,” *The League Against Imperialism Youth Bulletin*, no. 3, August 25, 1932; NBAC: N57/1989, “The Australian Aborigines,” *World Survey* 1, no. 4, January 1, 1933; NBAC: N57/1989, “How We Hold Our Empire,” *World Survey* 1, no. 12, September 1, 1933.

⁶²² NBAC: N57/1989, “How We Hold Our Empire,” *World Survey* 1, no. 12, September 1, 1933.

crushing the Aboriginal peoples out of existence.⁶²³ On some occasions, presaging the rhetoric used against fascism in the latter half of the decade and the Second World War, comparison was made to the Nazi treatment of Jews and the extreme of “race prejudice” in Germany.⁶²⁴ The CPA, in common with other communist parties, highlighted the positive results of Soviet nationality policies, for example eulogizing how the Soviet Union treated Siberian natives as an exemplar for the treatment of Indigenous peoples under a communist regime.⁶²⁵ The ultimate goal was to win over workers to support Aboriginal rights. It was also done to make clear to Aboriginal peoples that the party would stand up for their rights.⁶²⁶

The effort of the party to expose the crimes being committed against Aboriginal peoples is commendable. The party had also a small number of Aboriginal party members. Stuart Macintyre, however, notes that the party saw those Aboriginal members and any Aboriginal workers in Sydney and Perth not as Aboriginals, but instead as workers with cultural and racial differences irrelevant for the purposes of equality. Instead, “Aboriginals” were Indigenous peoples in rural Australia who had been oppressed racially and culturally by capitalism.⁶²⁷ At the same time, the party had little to lose politically as these deeds were happening far from urban centres. If workers wanted to ignore these issues, they could.

⁶²³ NBAC: N57/1989, “The Australian Aborigines,” *World Survey* 1, no. 4, January 1, 1933.

⁶²⁴ NBAC: N57/1989, “The Australian Aborigines,” *World Survey* 1, no. 4, January 1, 1933.

⁶²⁵ NBAC: RL, S954, “Atrocities Against Aborigines Must Cease,” *Red Leader*, no. 137, April 18, 1934.

⁶²⁶ NBAC: RL, S954, “Aborigines and Workers Have Same Enemy,” *Red Leader*, no. 147, June 27, 1934; NBAC: RL, S954, “Usual Method of Discipline Employed Against Aborigines Is The Whip,” *Red Leader*, no. 150, July 18, 1934.

⁶²⁷ Macintyre, *The Reds*, 265-267.

Related to the living conditions of Aboriginal peoples and racial prejudice, the declaration that Australia was a secondary imperialist country also led CPA members to consider the treatment of Melanesian workers in Queensland and in the mandates of Papua and New Guinea. For example, when the *Sydney Sun* ran an article detailing the plight of Africans in Liberia, the CPA attacked the *Sun*, claiming it should consider sharing the details of the living conditions of Pacific Islander workers in New Guinea, suggesting Australia should “clean up [its] own backyard first.” The article pointed out that Melanesian house-servants lived in sheds, dirty houses with no windows; many women were treated as concubines.⁶²⁸ It outlined how religion was used to exploit Pacific Islanders, with the use of a Fijian native, “Joni,” to proselytize to New Guinea Indigenous peoples. Other Melanesians would be chained to trees to avoid escape and forced to work for days on end.⁶²⁹ Stories of Pacific Islanders resisting British exploitation appeared.⁶³⁰ Many articles also pointed out the low wages and the slave-like conditions under which Melanesian workers suffered, not only in New Guinea, but also on nearby British holdings, such as the Solomon Islands.⁶³¹

The new attention given by the CPA to Aboriginal and Melanesian peoples reflected the desire to educate workers about the plight of the region’s Indigenous peoples, but it also served to indict the capitalist system that, the CPA argued, oppressed all workers. There is one curious note to add. Articles referred to Aboriginal and Pacific Islander workers as “black,” noting their skin colour and their difference from white,

⁶²⁸ NBAC: RL, S954, “White Men and Black Maids,” *Red Leader*, no. 5, September 18, 1931.

⁶²⁹ NBAC: RL, S954, “Under the Lash of Australian Imperialism,” *Red Leader*, no. 10, October 23, 1931.

⁶³⁰ NBAC: RL, S954, “Murder in New Guinea!” *Red Leader*, no. 16, November 20, 1931.

⁶³¹ NBAC: RL, S954, “Against Imperialism,” *Red Leader*, no. 18, December 18, 1931; NBAC: RL, S954, “Slavery in New Guinea,” *Red Leader*, no. 44, June 22, 1932.

British or Australian workers. Apart from borrowing rhetoric similar to the Native Republic Thesis in “Communist Party’s Fight for Aborigines”, the CPA never mentioned the “Theses on the Negro Question”.⁶³² These workers were not considered part of the “Negro Question.” During the election campaigns and in some further articles during the Third Period, if self-determination was mentioned, it was done broadly. The CPA treated the concept similar to that of national liberation, but in a much more vague way. The party started to consider race, but the Comintern’s most prevalent position on racial inequality and race-based oppression, such as those promoted in South Africa, were not introduced in Australia. Additionally, as in previous chapters, a comment should be made on use of the term “native.” It was used sparingly to refer to Aboriginal peoples of Australia or New Guinea during this early period, but became much more common by the end of the decade and into the Second World War. The term native, at this point, referenced Australian-born, reflecting Australian vernacular at the time, just as it did in the Canadian context.⁶³³

The Party and Foreign Workers in the 1930s

The CPA continued to support foreign workers. Australian communists promoted worker unity, attacking the White Australia policy itself instead of immigration. Adopting the rhetoric of the Third Period, the party sought to promote the statement “not Race against Race, not Nation against Nation, but, Class against Class.” Evolving from their

⁶³² Cottle made a reference to American communism and the Black-Belt Thesis, detailed in the second chapter of this thesis, in his comparative analysis of the American and Australia parties. Cottle, 130.

⁶³³ For more on Australian vernacular regarding Aboriginal peoples, see John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australia Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 87-88.

previous concerns about free immigration, good communists now promoted unrestricted movement of workers throughout the world, while standing up against cheap labour and refusing to promote racial divisions, the goals of capitalist bosses.⁶³⁴ This platform resembled attempts by the Canadian party, with its work with foreign workers, and the South Africa party of the 1920s to build worker unity and equality for all. It diverged from the South African party's new Native Republic Thesis and related programs.

The CPA stood against the Empire Settlement Act of 1922 which gave preference to British immigrants in Western Australia and Queensland. The CPA continued to protect Italian, Greek and Yugoslavian workers. The Kalgoorlie race riots of 1934 illustrated why the CPA needed to remain vigilant about foreign worker issues. The riots broken out after a British worker brawled with an Italian barman. When the British man died, many British workers went on strike to protest against mine operations hiring immigrant workers. The restoration of order required governmental intervention.⁶³⁵ The CPA supported the Yugoslavian and Italian workers in Western Australia during the riots. At the CPA's Fourth Plenary Session, held from 31 March to 2 April 1934, Kalgoorlie became a symbol for the CPA's issues with White Australia, chauvinism and British Preference. The Political Report highlighted the racial divisions and growing issues between, on one hand British and Australian workers and foreign workers on the other. The CPA concluded that the bosses in Kalgoorlie wanted more foreign workers to

⁶³⁴ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/1, Ninth Annual Conference of the Communist Party of Australia, December 1929, "Draft Resolution on White Australia," 506-507.

⁶³⁵ Ted Docker and Rolf Gerritsen, "The 1934 Kalgoorlie Riots," *Labour History*, no. 31 (Nov., 1976): 79-82; Sarah Gregson, "'It All Started on the Mines'? The 1934 Kalgoorlie Race Riots Revisited," *Labour History*, no. 80 (May, 2001): 21-40; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 268; Justina Williams, *The First Furrow* (Willagee: Lone Hand Press, 1976), 143-145.

increase racial tension between these two groups.⁶³⁶ Attention expanded to other states. The CPA also considered the sugar industry in Queensland with its many Italian workers and stood against racial discrimination and anti-immigration sentiment in the Weil's Disease strike in 1935.⁶³⁷ The CPA also started to lecture its members to avoid using racial slurs. Part of this reflected the increasing number of foreign workers with ties to the CPA, especially in radical southern European clubs.⁶³⁸

The party went a step further. Fascism became a major concern starting in the Comintern's Third Period. Communists believed that racial differences promoted fascism in Australia, and in turn, that the heightened tensions would lead to war. This war could only be avoided if capitalism was destroyed.⁶³⁹ Class against Class policies also necessitated targeting the Australian Labor Party. The CPA charged the ALP with the promotion of racial discrimination and the White Australia policy for its own benefit and to gain power.⁶⁴⁰ The CPA position was similar to that seen in both South Africa and Canada, a broad assault on fascism. German, Italian and Japanese aggression were frequent topics in CPA meetings and party organs. As Nazi racial policies became better known, the CPA denounced them to attack racial prejudice in general.

The fight against fascism and against the White Australia policy converged in other ways. The World Committee Against War and Fascism, based out of Paris, a

⁶³⁶ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, CC Minutes 1932-35, "Fourth Plenary Session, March 31 – April 2, 1934," 1084-1111.

⁶³⁷ Griggs, 627-629; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 268.

⁶³⁸ Macintyre, *The Reds*, 267-268. For more on the relationship between Greeks and the CPA, see Con K. Allimonos, "Greek Communist Activity in Melbourne: A Brief History," *Labour History*, no. 86 (May, 2004): 137-155.

⁶³⁹ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, CC Minutes 1932-35, Fourth Plenary Session held March 31st, April 1st and 2nd, 1934, "Political Report," 1084-1111.

⁶⁴⁰ SANSW, FM4-10417, 495-94-44, 106-118.

communist front organization, sent Czech writer and Nazi opponent, Egon Irwin Kisch to Melbourne in November 1934. The government refused to allow Kisch to land. Kisch, undeterred, attempted to enter Australia by jumping from his ship, breaking his leg on the pier. Australian officials continued to refuse entry to Kisch and administered a dictation test in a European language, as per the Immigration Act. The officials demanded that he take the test in Gaelic. Kisch refused and was arrested. The case went to the High Court where the decision was eventually overturned on the grounds that Gaelic was not considered a European language. Upon his release, he delivered his message. His speeches brought news of the horrors of Nazi rule. His treatment by immigration officials enabled the CPA to describe Australia's government as opposed to freedom of speech. The episode led some to question the democratic nature of Australian rule.⁶⁴¹

The increased focus on racial issues was buoyed by a consistent effort to be the faithful arbiters of the Comintern line on colonial independence and combating imperialism. The CPA managed to develop an active branch of the League against Imperialism, along with producing a local LAI periodical, which included international news, including the British Empire, and African matters. The party organized several campaigns, beginning with a "Hands Off India" campaign, directed against British intervention in labour issues in India.⁶⁴² With the concerns about Asian labour, the CPA

⁶⁴¹ Gibson, 41-43; Macintyre, *The Reds*, 270-271; Macintyre, "New Line in the Antipodes," 264. David Rose details some of the background to the group who invited Kisch, the Movement Against War and Fascism in David Rose, "The Movement against War and Fascism, 1933-1939," *Labour History*, no. 38 (May, 1980): 76-90.

⁶⁴² SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, C.E. Minutes 1926-30, "CEC Meeting, June 15, 1930," 830-833; SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, C.E. Minutes 1926-30, "From the Org Dept. of the CEC to all district committees, June 20, 1930," 838-840; SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/3, C.E. Minutes 1926-30, "Meeting of the Political Bureau, July 6, 1930," 862-863.

campaigned against the racial prejudice of the White Australia policy and called for support for Chinese workers, both those affected by the Kuomintang and later by Japanese imperialism, much as the Communist Party of Canada had done. The CPA protested against Italian imperial ambitions in Abyssinia, while also attempting to ensure that fascist ideas could not gain a foothold in Australia through Italian immigrants. At the same time, it wanted to turn them into key supporters of communism.⁶⁴³ It was a tricky problem for the CPA as they held sympathy for exploited workers of Italian background, but also were concerned that Italian fascism had supporters in Australia. The broad anti-imperial programme included further exposure of the links between Australia and Britain, as well as British and American influence worldwide. The party attacked Australia's economic position in the Pacific and its horrible record of treatment of Indigenous peoples.⁶⁴⁴ For example, the party included articles that exposed the economic imperialism in Malaya and New Guinea and discussed the operation of mining companies in those colonies.⁶⁴⁵

By the middle of the 1930s, with the Comintern's return to pursuing United Front policies, the Communist Party of Australia returned to a working relationship with the Labor Party and other trade unions. Furthermore, the CPA publicized the Spanish Civil War and Australians numbered among some of the most enthusiastic and numerous

⁶⁴³ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, "Tasks Facing the Communist Party of Australia,;" SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, "To All Districts, from CC of CPA, 26 August 1935;" SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, "To All Distracts, from CC of CPA, 4 October 1935;" SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, "Cir. No. 26 – 12 March 1937 from CC of CPA;" SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, "Cir. No. 50, from CC of CPA, June 29, 1937."

⁶⁴⁴ SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-70, 100. SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-73, 68.

⁶⁴⁵ NBAC, N57/1989, "Australian Imperialism in the East," *World Survey* 2, no. 1, October 1, 1933; SANSW, FM4-10420, 495-94-73, "Speakers' Notes for Elections," 68.

volunteers for the Comintern's International Brigades.⁶⁴⁶ Generally speaking, the CPA attempted to follow through with any programme the Comintern asked its parties to implement with regards to anti-imperialism, colonial liberation and anti-fascism.

Into The Second World War

By the late 1930s, the CPA still had a tendency to neglect Aboriginal issues in its general meetings and Central Committee meetings. While discussing the Fight against Fascism, which included discussion of the Seventh Comintern Congress and Australian communist participation in the Spanish Civil War, the members of the CPA also discussed their pride in Australian heritage, defined through a history of democracy and peace, and the rejection of reactionary action and of pointless wars. During this shift in focus, Aboriginal peoples were ignored.⁶⁴⁷ A year later, in 1938, perhaps realizing the problematic pride in Australia without referencing the Indigenous peoples of Australia, J.B. Miles mentioned that Australians needed to defend Aboriginals, "the original Australians – the people who are being treated to our shame, in ghastly fashion."⁶⁴⁸ Aboriginals were linked to Australia's historic tradition, but the party still had a habit of treating the issue as outside standard party platforms. One report, compiled by Miles, matter-of-factly stated that the party, from November 1937 to May 1938, had discussed

⁶⁴⁶ Diane Menghetti, "North Queensland Anti-Fascism and the Spanish Civil War," *Labour History* 42, (May, 1982): 63-73; Gollan, 51-69; Davidson, 85-87.

⁶⁴⁷ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/4, Minutes of Central Committee 1936-1940, CC Meeting, Afternoon Session, 7.11.37, 993-1045.

⁶⁴⁸ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/1, 12th Congress Communist Party of Australia November 1938, 633.

Aboriginals affairs twice.⁶⁴⁹ In summer 1939, draft statements discussing living standards and peace in Australia, including independence from the British Empire, ignored Aboriginal peoples.⁶⁵⁰ The CPA did reference Aboriginal issues vaguely in other avenues, but not until the war years did it do so at a level similar to the early 1930s.

The CPA continued to support the attack on Australian imperialism. One pamphlet, published in 1937 by Modern Publishers and Importers in Sydney, a likely front for communist publications, was entitled “Australian Imperialism.” Written by L.C. Rodd, it mentioned for the first time the territories that Australia administrated, including Nauru and Norfolk Island. Regarding New Guinea, Rodd argued that despite Australia’s mandate requiring Australia to designate the care of Indigenous peoples a priority, Australia had ignored its duties. Instead, Australian capitalists had enforced indentured labour. He cited a League of Nations report that had criticized Australia’s failure to protect the peoples of New Guinea. The pamphlet highlighted the treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and alleged that their exploitation was necessary for white Australian industries to thrive. Exploitation and neglect had allegedly led to public outcry.⁶⁵¹

The pamphlet argued that Australia represented the most extreme aspects of imperialism. Aboriginal peoples were taken from their land for white people’s “pastoral and mining interests.” When Aboriginals were independent, they were seen as a threat

⁶⁴⁹ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Outline of the Work of the P.B. from C.C. Meeting Nov. 1937 to C.C. Meeting May 1938.”

⁶⁵⁰ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/4, Minutes of Central Committee 1936-1940, “For Peace, Freedom and a Better Life (Draft Statement of the CC of the CP of Australia,” 1257-1267; SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/4, Minutes of Central Committee 1936-1940, “The Stronger the Community Party, the Stronger the Labor Movement (Draft of Inner Resolution of C.C. Australian C.P.), 1268-1278.

⁶⁵¹ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 48, Folder – 1937, L.C. Rodd, B.A., “Australian Imperialism.”

and “[became] the subject of a debate as to the humanitarian advantages of chains or handcuffs.” Grouping the oppressed Aboriginal peoples, Melanesian workers and foreign workers into the same issue, Rodd argued that Indigenous workers in Papua were a cheap source of labour, but easily replaced by labour from Asia. Australian capitalists also ignored the rights of the Nauru peoples in order to extract phosphates. He concluded by arguing that the terms of the League of Nations mandate must be followed, and that there was a need to help “the natives to develop the economic potentialities of their lands.”⁶⁵²

The position of New Guinea, and its role as an Australian colony, also led the CPA to discuss the ramifications of European diplomacy. South African communists were worried about fascism affecting their nation. Canadian communists concerned themselves with fascist tendencies in Quebec. Australian communists worried about the return of former German colonies to Nazi Germany.⁶⁵³ In late 1938, with the appeasement of Nazi Germany in the minds of many communists, some believed that part of New Guinea, the former Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, stripped from Germany after the First World War, could be returned to Germany.⁶⁵⁴ The Australian government denied any intention to do so and it was never likely to occur anyways. This position pleased the CPA, and may have helped refocus the party. The CPA elected to stand against the transfer of colonies back to Germany while also calling for democratic representation and an improvement of the living standard of “natives” in New Guinea. The party, realizing that

⁶⁵² SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 48, Folder – 1937, L.C. Rodd, B.A., “Australian Imperialism.”

⁶⁵³ SANSW, FM4-10415, 495-18-1212, 74-86.

⁶⁵⁴ There seemed to have been some discussion of the transfer of African colonies; Australia and its mandates were off-limits in negotiations. W. Roger Louis, “Colonial Appeasement, 1936-1938,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 49, no. 4 (1971): 1175-1191.

New Guinea should get more attention, resolved to visit New Guinea and establish local contacts to improve reporting of New Guinean issues.⁶⁵⁵

The party continued its support of immigrants as well. In light of the Japanese takeover of Chinese territory, the party linked its anti-imperial rhetoric with a fight against chauvinism and promoted the protection of foreign workers.⁶⁵⁶ Increased immigration of foreign workers in the late 1930s also led the party to reaffirm its goal to incorporate them into the party way of life. This position included refugees, many of whom were Jewish. To this end, the party criticized the quota the Australian government placed on Jewish immigrants, suggesting it benefitted richer Jews, not the working class, and thus hindered many political refugees. The party stood against any anti-Semitism generally, but also sought to ensure class equality in helping all Jews escape persecution.⁶⁵⁷ The CPA now had to deal with some of the same problems as the Communist Party of Canada had. With many different groups of foreign workers present in the country, the party wanted to ensure not only that they were organized, but also that they were properly supported by the party. In the second half of the 1930s, the Italian, Greek and Yugoslavian workers were the subject of discussions regarding the use of their

⁶⁵⁵ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Minutes of Political Bureau 8.11.38;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Minutes of Political Bureau 21.12.38.”

⁶⁵⁶ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/4, Minutes of Central Committee 1936-1940, “CC Meeting, 5th Session, 26 July 1936,” 556-574.

⁶⁵⁷ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “21.7.38 Minutes of Political Bureau;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936/16, Minutes of Political Bureau 1939, “Minutes of Central Executive 23.2.39,” 44-45.

languages in the party's general organization and publications.⁶⁵⁸ The party remained concerned that immigrants could have fascist leanings.⁶⁵⁹

“The New Deal for Aborigines”

Aboriginal work was limited in party circles, but it was not non-existent. The New South Wales Labour Council, led by the redoubtable Tom Wright, had sponsored Aboriginal activism since 1937. Wright organized Council meetings with Aboriginal activists. He also led the Council in its support of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) and called for an extension program for Aboriginal political, social and land rights. Wright spearheaded many CPA programmes on Aboriginal peoples and his most notable contribution was his pamphlet, “A New Deal for Aborigines” originally published in 1939 and republished multiples times in the following decade, established the CPA position on Aboriginal affairs.⁶⁶⁰

Wright redefined the issues. He first separated the issue of Aboriginal rights from the issue of mixed race Aboriginals. He recognized that although they were connected, they required different approaches, and concentrated on the former. The pamphlet suggested Aboriginal peoples had thrived prior to the arrival of white settlers before suffering devastation at the hands of the colonizers. The immediate context of Aboriginal

⁶⁵⁸ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Minutes of P.B., November 14 1936;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Minutes of Political Bureau, August 2, 1938;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Political Bureau Meeting, September 27, 1937.”

⁶⁵⁹ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, CPA Further records, 1920-1991, Box 15, Folder – P.B. Minutes – 1933-1938, “Minutes of Political Bureau, August 11, 1938.”

⁶⁶⁰ Boughton, “The Communist Party of Australia’s Involvement,” 38-39; Brown, 58-59.

relations to the Australian government appears to be the impetus for Wright's pamphlet. He argued that the government maintained old oppressive methods despite vowing to help the Aboriginal people. This position resulted from his interpretation of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities held in 1937. This conference saw state and federal officials meet to discuss Aboriginal affairs. There, Dr. Donald Thomson, a scientist commissioned by the government to produce a "scientific survey" of the Arnhem Land Aboriginals, argued for a series of recommendations, including cultural preservation and inviolable reserves. He also called for special courts. Wright however claimed that the government had largely ignored these recommendations and in February 1939, the government proposed the need to train Aboriginals to remove them from their "nomadic lifestyles." Religion, through its involvement in hospitals and schools, also remained a prominent characteristic of the Commonwealth Government's policy for Aboriginal peoples in remote areas.⁶⁶¹

Wright declared the government's position in early 1939 to be a restatement of the old policies. He highlighted that the government still wished to convert Aboriginals, destroy their culture and exploit their labour. These positions led Wright to advocate for "a new deal." It included ten reforms for full-blooded Aboriginals. These reforms called for inviolable reserves, including separate reserves for separate tribes. Ownership of these reserves, including mineral rights, would be transferred to the Aboriginals present. Missions and religious contact must cease; any necessary services must be secular. Wright also called for a consistent nation-wide policy, ending state by state management

⁶⁶¹ NBAC, P3 1/166, T. Wright, "New Deal for the Aborigines," (Sydney: Consolidated Press Limited, 1944).

of Aboriginal affairs. The Aboriginal peoples would also receive financial assistance to help establish their organizations.⁶⁶²

One other reform was unique. Wright called for the terms “Aborigine,” “Aboriginals” and “Natives” to “apply only to full-bloods and not to persons of mixed blood.”⁶⁶³ This linguistic shift reflected Wright’s opinion on the issue of mixed-bloods being different from those of full-blooded Aboriginals. In a brief section of the pamphlet, he argued that mixed blood Aboriginals should be given full and equal rights to any other Australian citizen. The reason for this position was based on the Australian government’s definition of mixed bloods. If they were born in wedlock, they already received the full rights of an Australian citizen. If not, the government oversaw their support. In 1937, citing the Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, delegates called for all mixed bloods to be given full equality. To Wright, the solution to their issues was simple; they were to be Australian. Aboriginals were to remain separate, unique and protected and therefore, the terms themselves needed to be protected as well.⁶⁶⁴

The CPA embraced Wright’s platform fully. It promoted the new deal understanding that the Aboriginal Question required prioritization. In the summer of 1939, before the pamphlet was published, the CPA felt the public was demanding full rights for Aboriginals. Through party organs, the CPA summarized public meetings

⁶⁶² NBAC, P3 1/166, T. Wright, “New Deal for the Aborigines,” (Sydney: Consolidated Press Limited, 1944), 1-30.

⁶⁶³ NBAC, P3 1/166, T. Wright, “New Deal for the Aborigines,” (Sydney: Consolidated Press Limited, 1944), 31.

⁶⁶⁴ NBAC, P3 1/166, T. Wright, “New Deal for the Aborigines,” (Sydney: Consolidated Press Limited, 1944), 29-30. For the Conference’s conclusions on this matter, see “The 1937 Conference” in Henry Reynolds, ed., *Aborigines and Settlers* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1972), 172-174.

regarding Aboriginal rights.⁶⁶⁵ It also printed summaries of Wright's pamphlet in party newspapers in order to ensure the widest readership.⁶⁶⁶

There had been an initial boost in discussions of Aboriginal living conditions in the immediate aftermath of the 1931 tactical shift, but during the war years, the CPA embarked on an extensive campaign to promote Aboriginal affairs again.⁶⁶⁷ Some reports merely detailed government appointments.⁶⁶⁸ Others were general informational articles, reminding readers and party members that Aboriginal peoples still needed attention. A series of articles in 1943 declared them a "forgotten people," reduced to chattel slavery in Queensland and the Northern Territory.⁶⁶⁹ Another highlighted that Aboriginal peoples needed help in the areas of medical care and agricultural methods.

The party was hesitant to explore giving Aboriginals a basic wage, fearing that they would turn to gambling or have nothing to buy, demonstrating that there remained a civilizing mission rhetoric even in the CPA's efforts at this stage.⁶⁷⁰ Another article was even clearer in expressing the need to raise the status of the Aboriginal peoples to that of whites. Citing that Aboriginals could adapt to the way of life of white Australians, the party suggested that Australia needed to be prepared for socialism, which unlike

⁶⁶⁵ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1939, "Huge Public Meeting Promises To Support Aborigines," *The Guardian*, No. 22, August 23, 1939 ; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1939, "Town Hall Packed for Aboriginal Meeting," *The Guardian*, No. 35, October 7, 1939.

⁶⁶⁶ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1939, "Sydney Backing for 'New Deal for Aborigines,'" *The Guardian*, No. 35, October 7, 1939.

⁶⁶⁷ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1940, "Aboriginal Deputation to Chief Sec.," *The Guardian*, No. 35, February 21, 1940.

⁶⁶⁸ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1940, "Aboriginal Deputation to Chief Sec.," *The Guardian*, No. 35, February 21, 1940.

⁶⁶⁹ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "Forgotten People of Australia," *The Guardian*, No. 121, December 10, 1943 ; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "Forgotten People of Australia," *The Guardian*, No. 123, December 24, 1943.

⁶⁷⁰ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "Diggers Want 'Fair Go' for Natives," *The Guardian*, No. 116, November 5, 1943

capitalism, would “give them the opportunity to attain intellectual and economic equality with white people.”⁶⁷¹ Reports were published about how soldiers saw Aboriginal assistance in the war effort as helpful, but that they “by no means” were at the same stage of development. They were described as intelligent, good “Cobbers,” charming or even-tempered. The party claimed all soldiers agreed that the Aboriginals needed to be protected.⁶⁷² The articles reflected civilizing mission rhetoric, racial inferiority, and a desire to improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples. There was an inherent contradiction between protecting their identity and assimilating them to the standard of whites.

A New Deal for New Guinean Workers?

New Guinean workers also became a prominent topic in CPA publications, something the CPA attributed to the war. With the war expanding to Papua New Guinea, Australian soldiers started to fight alongside Melanesian workers often helping them and more importantly vice-versa. The CPA initially defined them as another “forgotten people,” similar to the Aboriginal peoples. By 1943, CPA publications had reports and updates from their own correspondents and party members. Usually, these reports detailed the poor wages and standard of living, common in earlier reports, while also clarifying the position of the administration. In one example, the report sardonically concluded that an administrator’s conclusion that New Guinea was “a native paradise” was only the case if compared to Japanese brutality. Big business and its ability to

⁶⁷¹ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1944, “Emancipation of N.G. Natives: ‘Begin Long-Range Plans Now’,” *The Guardian*, No. 136, April 6, 1944.

⁶⁷² UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, “Diggers Want ‘Fair Go’ for Natives,” *The Guardian*, No. 116, November 5, 1943 ; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, “Soldiers’ Debate on Aborigines,” *The Guardian*, No. 123, December 24, 1943.

circumvent any guarantees for the Melanesian workers became another theme. But soldiers played the most crucial role in defining the CPA's rhetoric. One article suggested many soldiers were aware of the exploitation of New Guinean workers and required their rights upheld.⁶⁷³ Melanesian workers, much as Aboriginals, worked in slave conditions. Communists wanted a better postwar order to be established for them, again referencing the "new deal" rhetoric. This new deal included aims similar to its new deal for Aborigines: better medical service, minimum wages, and education. Again, the civilizing mission rhetoric is hard to ignore. The party called for "useful goods" to be available to prevent Melanesian workers from only buying liquor and wanted the government to take over the economic development of New Guinea from the big businesses and "make the future of the country its direct paternal concern."⁶⁷⁴ Despite being referred to as being as intelligent as whites in the same article, the Melanesians needed guidance to be lifted up to civilization in the same way Aboriginals were viewed.

Soon a tangible platform began to develop to combat the plight of Melanesian workers. Naturally, the CPA claimed that their equal status required socialism, but the party could play a role in preparing them in the interim. Worker unity reappeared, such as in an article by E. Laurie, calling for a policy all workers could get behind, but which ensured "liberation and complete independence" for New Guinea. Laurie continued by noting that indentured labour was a key feature of the New Guinean way of life. He argued for higher wages to ensure a higher standard of living. He also called for better

⁶⁷³ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "Labor Must Ensure Freedom to New Guinea People," *The Guardian*, No. 110, September 25, 1943.

⁶⁷⁴ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "New Guinea People Have Right to Freedom and Happiness," *The Guardian*, No. 111, October 1, 1943.

education of Australians on “New Guinea natives” and to end the use of any nicknames, such as “Fuzzy-wuzzies” to describe them. He concluded by outlining ten demands for a programme for New Guinea which sought to give Melanesians equal rights, higher wages, an end to the indentured worker system, medical services, educational services, better governmental oversight and cultural protection.⁶⁷⁵

Racial Equality and Anti-Imperialism during the Second World War

The war in general made the CPA more attuned to racial, national and imperial issues. When the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the party needed to make certain tactical adjustments. Initially, the CPA followed contradictory policies. The party argued that the Nazi-Soviet Pact was good for peace and could lead to a multi-party pact.⁶⁷⁶ It also called for the protection of Poland, argued that appeasement led to war, and proposed that all should rise up to fight fascism.⁶⁷⁷ After the Comintern corrected the CPA’s approach, the party agitated against Australian assistance for the British war effort and British imperialism. It also protested against Japanese imperialism and called for Indian independence.⁶⁷⁸ The party then defined the conflict as an imperialist war, one from which the Soviet Union stood aside, but that the British were exploiting to hold onto their colonies. Despite the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the party also

⁶⁷⁵ NBAC, P11 2/5, “A Democratic Policy for New Guinea,” *Communist Review*, No. 28, December 1943.

⁶⁷⁶ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, “Communist Party of Australia – further records,” Box 5, Folder 6, “August 23, 1939 – CPC CC; to all State Committees;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, “Communist Party of Australia – further records,” Box 5, Folder 6, “28th August 1939 – “Confidential for Immediate Attention” by CPA CC;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, “Communist Party of Australia – further records,” Box 5, Folder 6, “Circular of 4 September 1939.”

⁶⁷⁷ SANSW, FM4-10421, 495-14-308, “Declaration of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the War, September 3, 1939.”

⁶⁷⁸ SANSW, FM4-10421, 495-14-308, “Proposals for the CPA;” FM4-10421, 495-14-308, “General Line of the Australian CP on the War Question and Proposals (3.xi.39).”

continued to promote the fight against fascism and employed the slogan “Defeat Hitler”.⁶⁷⁹

The contradictory policies did some damage. Some long-time members, no longer able to tolerate such fluctuations, saw this as the last straw and left the party.⁶⁸⁰ However, by attacking Japanese and British imperialism and denouncing German fascism, the CPA retained some consistency in its racial and national policies. The CPA promoted colonial independence, maintaining its long held support for an independent India.⁶⁸¹ It supported the Communist Party of Malaya, offering advice and mentoring the new party in a series of correspondence.⁶⁸² The CPA upheld its progressive stance with regards to immigrants and nationalities within Australia.

For example, in 1942, CPA member J.D. Blake addressed a rally at the Princess Theatre in Melbourne. He reflected on the immediate war situation. Japan had begun its invasion of Papua New Guinea. The result was a significant rise in Yellow Peril rhetoric. To counter this, Blake called for an end to “anti-foreign talk.” He posed a simple question, “We are not fighting the Japanese because their skins are yellow; if we were, why do we fight Hitler and his Nazi hordes although their skins are white?” Blake pivoted to promote anti-fascism. He also pointed out the hypocrisy of the racialized rhetoric by comparing the skin colour of the allied Chinese and the enemy Japanese. Blake eventually

⁶⁷⁹ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 5, Folder 6, “1940 – Slogans for ‘6 Hour Day’.”

⁶⁸⁰ Davidson, 79.

⁶⁸¹ SANSW, FM4-10421, 495-14-308, “Proposals for the CPA.”

⁶⁸² SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 8, Folder 12 (CC Letters to Other Countries), “Letter to the CC of the CP of Malaya, January 22, 1940;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 8, Folder 12 (CC Letters to Other Countries), “Letter to CC of CPA from CC of CP Malaya, December 20, 1939;” SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 8, Folder 12 (CC Letters to Other Countries), “Letter to Secretariat of the CP of Malaya from CC Secretariat of CPA, November 20, 1939;”

made his point that White Australia also needed to be opposed as that slogan was an insult to Australia's allies. The war effort had no room for racial hatred, including anti-Semitism. In fact, the party did what it could to avoid racialized or national distinctions, standing against anti-Semitism or the treatment of Italians as enemy aliens.⁶⁸³ On this latter point, in Australia, many Italians were considered fascist until proven otherwise. The CPA was clear that all fascists should be arrested, but that every-day Italians should join the war effort.⁶⁸⁴

By 1944, the CPA made clear the importance of racial equality, nationality rights and anti-imperialism to its own programme. The CPA affirmed its new programme, adopted on 16 January 1944, taking ownership of the many different strands of thought on those issues and creating a single platform. The programme called for the application of the Atlantic Charter to India. It condemned anti-Semitism. It also accepted the New Deal for Aborigines in full. New Guinea and surrounding islands were to have their own "new deal." Private business should have limited interference and should be eventually banned, in favour of giving Indigenous peoples sole right to private enterprise. The government should provide instruction and material for agricultural and medical development and establish a proper education system, complete with instruction in native languages. Indentured labour needed to be terminated, replaced with full rights and the

⁶⁸³ UMA, 1991.0152, Unit 85, "A People's Defence of Australia."

⁶⁸⁴ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1943, "New Policy for Italians in Australia," *The Guardian*, no. 109, September 18, 1943; NBAC, P3 1/176, "Firm Stand by Communists Defeats Ban on Italian Workers," *Party Builder*, no. 6, November 1942.

extension of the Australian labour protection laws to Melanesian workers. For New Guinea, the end goal was self-determination and colonial liberation.⁶⁸⁵

The establishment of this platform confirmed many of the positions forwarded since 1939 and gave the CPA a strong promotional tool that clarified its stance on these issues. For example, the CPA praised the Northern Territory Development League for advocating a policy similar to that of the CPA.⁶⁸⁶ Following United Front tactics, the CPA supported the Labor government of John Curtin and called for Aboriginal rights to be placed under federal administration. The CPA argued that one federal plan would best protect Aboriginal peoples. Some started to speak of tribalized versus detribalized Aboriginals, although both required safeguarding from the excesses of capitalism, and needed to be granted civil rights, economic privileges and better medical care.⁶⁸⁷ Over the course of 1944, a series of connected articles by different authors, informed readers about the Aboriginal way of life and noted regional variations. Each reporter insisted the Commonwealth government should assume exclusive responsibility for looking after Aboriginal peoples. In some cases, the progressive ideas were tied to the war effort, comparing the treatment of Aboriginals in Australia to the racial policies of the Nazis, and calling for a universal end to racism.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁵ SANSW, MLMSS 5021 ADD-ON 1936, Box 49, Folder 1 – 1944, “Programme of the Australian Communist Party, 1944.”

⁶⁸⁶ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1944, “Good Policy for Aborigines,” *The Guardian*, No. 162, October 6, 1944.

⁶⁸⁷ NBAC, P11 2/5, Box 1, “On Policy for the Australian Aborigines,” *Communist Review*, no. 31, March 1944; NBAC, P11 2/5, “Some Clarity on the Question of Tribalized and De-Tribalized Aboriginals,” *Communist Review*, no. 34, June 1944.

⁶⁸⁸ NBAC, P11 2/2, “The Aboriginals,” *Communist Review*, no. 37, September 1944; NBAC, P11 2/2, “Aboriginals and Democracy,” *Communist Review*, no. 42, February 1945.

The party also considered the postwar order and especially colonial independence. It continued to publish articles calling for an end to old colonial regimes. Speculating that the Australian government would have a say in the future of the Dutch East Indies, the party urged independence.⁶⁸⁹ Communists watched certain Allied Conferences closely. The Cairo Conference promised independence to Korea and called for the restoration of China, but the CPA reminded readers that the position of Indo-China, Malaya, Indonesia and Burma remained ambiguous.⁶⁹⁰ The party claimed the Yalta Conference was a victory for democracy.⁶⁹¹ It occasionally promoted the positions of Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. With the Comintern disbanded in 1943, the party showed creative thinking on international relations. When attacking a fascist newspaper which defended Japanese colonial claims, the CPA responded by referencing the conclusions of the Quebec Conference, and Cairo Conference, which called for Korean and Chinese independence. The party referenced these conferences to underpin its positions on Aboriginal peoples and self-determination.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁹ NBAC, P11 2/2, "Australia and the Indonesians," *Communist Review*, no. 40, December 1944.

⁶⁹⁰ NBAC, P11 2/2, "Teheran, Cairo and the Colonies," *Communist Review*, no. 36, August 1944; NBAC, P11 2/2, "Australia and the Indonesians," *Communist Review*, no. 40, December 1944; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Qld. Unions Fighting For Indies Workers," *The Guardian*, no. 180, February 23, 1945.

⁶⁹¹ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Yalta Decisions Seal Doom Of Nazism," *The Guardian*, no. 179, February 16, 1945.

⁶⁹² UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "'Freedom' Wants Japs to Retain Colonies," *The Guardian*, no. 182, March 9, 1945. Attacks on Japanese imperialism continued in a series of articles regarding their control of Indonesia. UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Digger's Grim Picture of Native Suffering in Borneo," *The Guardian*, no. 208, September 7, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Kid Gloves For Jap Fascists: Iron Hand for Indonesians," *The Guardian*, no. 210, September 21, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Rottenness of Imperialism Exposed In Pacific," *The Guardian*, no. 210, September 21, 1945. As the situation in Indonesia evolved to see a new Indonesian Republic, the CPA backed independence. UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "'Hands of Indonesia' Demand Grows: Ship Tie Up," *The Guardian*, no. 211, September 28, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Terror Campaign Against Indonesians: Govts Aid Dutch," *The Guardian*, no. 212, October 5, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Solidarity Wins: Indonesians Are To Go Home," *The Guardian*, no. 213, October 12, 1945. On the links to the Aboriginal program, see UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Why Our Aborigines are 'Vanishing'," *The Guardian*, no. 183, March 16, 1945.

This interest in colonial liberation after the Second World War was limited in New Guinea. The former Dutch holdings remained an issue, tied to Indonesian independence. The CPA argued that New Guineans needed modern agriculture and technology. The civilizing mission impetus loomed large, however the CPA wanted to make sure New Guinea remained free from imperialism, demanding that slavery could not be used and that one should not “polish up their pidgin.”⁶⁹³ When considering Australian-controlled New Guinea, similar demands were made. The welfare of the Indigenous peoples of New Guinea remained the aim; self-determination or independence typically was not mentioned.⁶⁹⁴ This position was consistent with the CPA position on the treatment of Aboriginal peoples. The party suggested autonomy and inviolable reserves, a living wages and civilizing their ways, as long as their culture was maintained. This retreat on colonial liberation for Australian mandates was most likely a function of the CPA’s support for the Commonwealth Government of John Curtin and the Labor Party’s interest in improving the lot of Aboriginal and New Guinean peoples.⁶⁹⁵

In the final years of the war, the CPA focused on mainland Australia and its racial issues. Aboriginals remained a prominent topic, with continued support of the “new deal.”⁶⁹⁶ Tom Wright’s pamphlet was reissued in 1944 and again in 1946, with a new

⁶⁹³ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “Digger Urges New Deal for Papuans,” *The Guardian*, no. 176, January 26, 1945.

⁶⁹⁴ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “Whither Our Coloured People,” *The Guardian*, no. 182, March 9, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “New Guinea’s Population Is Dwindling Fast: Toll of War and Force Labor,” *The Guardian*, no. 197, June 22, 1945.

⁶⁹⁵ The CPA, for example, supported the Papua New Guinea Provisional Administration Bill introduced by Mr. Ward. UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “New Deal for N.G. Natives,” *The Guardian*, no. 200, July 13, 1945. See also UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “New Deal for N.G. Natives,” *The Guardian*, no. 203, August 3, 1945.

⁶⁹⁶ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “Whither Our Coloured People,” *The Guardian*, no. 182, March 9, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, “Why Our Aborigines are ‘Vanishing’,” *The Guardian*, no. 183, March 16, 1945; UMA,

foreword by activist Katherine Pritchard. Foreign workers and immigration also required attention. The party emphatically criticized racial discrimination and Nazi race laws.⁶⁹⁷ The CPA continued its calls for worker unity. One article noted many European groups wanted some cultural preservation, as well as being a part of the general worker's movement. The party urged workers to "pay more attention to their needs. Let us see that anti-foreign, anti-semitic [sic.] propoganda does not endanger the security and well-being of Australia."⁶⁹⁸ Any racial chauvinism or anti-alien policies was seen as equal to fascist thinking and the CPA stood against it.⁶⁹⁹ Finally, the CPA recommended a new immigration system.⁷⁰⁰ Seeking to replace the White Australia policy, and in the process, making it clear that the party saw the policy predominantly as an immigration policy, and not a general racial policy, the CPA promoted a quota system, which would allow workers to travel to Australia to work without causing a flood of immigrant labour.⁷⁰¹

Conclusion

The CPA on issues of race, nationality and imperialism seemed to be the Comintern's perfect partner. It never ran afoul of the Comintern on these issues, outside of being criticized for not focusing enough attention on them in the mid to late 1920s. The

80.162, 1, 1945, "Aborigine as Branch Sec." *The Guardian*, no. 185, March 29, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Services Shocked By Treatment of Aborigines," *The Guardian*, no. 201, July 20, 1945.

⁶⁹⁷ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Aryans and Eskimoes Are "Blood" Brothers," *The Guardian*, no. 178, February 9, 1945.

⁶⁹⁸ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Defeat Race Hatred," *The Guardian*, no. 185, March 29, 1945.

⁶⁹⁹ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Anti-Alien Drive by RSL Leaders," *The Guardian*, no. 192, May 18, 1945; UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Guardian Exposes 'Smiths,'" *The Guardian*, no. 198, June 29, 1945.

⁷⁰⁰ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1944, "White Aust. Policy Must Be Amended," *The Guardian*, no. 169, November 24, 1944.

⁷⁰¹ UMA, 80.162, 1, 1945, "Communists' Sensible Immigration Policy," *The Guardian*, No. 202, July 27, 1945.

party engaged in all of the major campaigns asked of it. The CPA promoted colonial liberation. It accepted Australia's imperial status and began to consider the ramifications for subject peoples on Australian territory. The CPA was slow to work out a credible set of proposals for improving the circumstances of Aboriginal and New Guinean peoples. Tom Wright's remarkable 1939 pamphlet gave the party a credible position and creative ideas. By the Second World War, progressive stands on racial issues were entrenched. Immigration proved a tricky subject, because the CPA had to find a middle path between denouncing the "White Australia" idea and recommending limits on immigration to drive up wages. The party sought to be the defender of foreign workers and incorporate them fully into the party. In many cases, the CPA had some of the most progressive policies in Australian politics. Even when the Comintern disbanded in 1943, the party, despite devolving into civilizing mission rhetoric, did ensure that its followers were knowledgeable of the plight of Aboriginals, Melanesian workers and foreign workers. The CPA could move forward without Comintern oversight.

The CPA was loyal to the Comintern and its directives. But whereas the party rarely clashed with the Comintern on the issues of racial equality or colonial liberation, it did expose some flaws in the Comintern policies. Aboriginal or Melanesian workers had no place in the "Theses on the Negro Question" or, at the very least, were not a consideration. The CPA did have moments where it may have drawn inspiration from those theses and attempted to employ them in the New Deal for Aborigines. Had these races been placed under the purview of those Comintern platforms, would the party have more adequately dealt with their issues earlier? Would the Comintern have proposed

doing more for them? Nonetheless, the Comintern's concern remained on the White Australia policy, a policy treated generally as an immigration policy and the CPA tackled it as a policy against foreign workers and worker unity.

Conclusion

By the end of Second World War, the CPC, CPSA and CPA demonstrated a firm commitment to a line dictated from Moscow. The German invasion of the Soviet Union that began on 22 June 1941 helped clear away the confusion over how to attack imperialism. International communism was able to again converge in its attack on fascism and Nazism. The CPSA, CPC and the CPA all promoted a need to turn the imperialist war into a civil war, forcing a communist revolution at home and retreating from a pacifist approach, as ordered by Moscow. The policies with which every party flirted in the late 1930s to attack fascism and imperialism returned against German, Japanese, and Italian aggression and imperialism specifically.

In their platforms, all three communist parties now merged their programmes on nationality and race with the urgent campaign against fascism. The fusion was natural; the general pattern was similar in all three cases. However, the national parties necessarily retained interesting traces of localism. The CPSA and CPA both saw fascism as a force of racial hatred that would ensure that the bourgeois nationalisms that international communism felt underpinned racial chauvinism and racist behaviour would prevail. Due to the significant black African population, the CPSA believed fascism guaranteed that South African blacks would continue to be exploited. Fascism also was seen as a threat to the Coloured worker population of South Africa. In Australia, similar concerns dominated much of the CPA's propaganda. Fascism was considered a threat to the many different nationalities and races present in Australia. Australia needed to oppose it for a myriad of reasons – to support its Chinese brethren, to promote unity and solidarity of workers,

especially due to large numbers of foreign workers, and to avoid succumbing to genocidal Nazism. A link was made to the British and Australian treatment of Aboriginal peoples. Italian immigrants represented a unique problem for the CPA. Their numbers as immigrant workers, and involvement in the sugar industry, meant that the party had to include them in its proletariat movement, while considering them susceptible to fascist ideas. In both South Africa and Australia, racial issues prominently figured in the message of communism during the Second World War.

In Canada, though the party typically promoted unity of all workers, foreign and native-born, and had a membership heavily balanced towards immigrants, it had some hiccups in its tactics during the Second World War. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour led the party to abandon its approach briefly and promote an anti-Japanese line, partially as a response to the concerns of British Columbian fishermen. Fascism was also a problem although one based on ethnicity instead of race. The attention was on French Canadian workers. The CPC resumed its protests of the ideology from the 1930s, but remained alarmed that French Canada was particularly susceptible to fascist ideas and general conservatism. Also hinting at the general concerns that fascism would threaten different nationalities and races living in harmony, the CPC redoubled its efforts to promote an ‘incorrect’ position, according to Moscow, of self-determination of French Canada. While this helped the party gain a stronger foothold in French Canada following the Second World War, the issue was still a divisive one for the party.

For a number of reasons, the invasion of the Soviet Union brought coherence to party propaganda. For the comparative analysis of these three parties, the invasion was a

point where the general Comintern platform was implemented through all three parties and with relative consistency, with some minor variations reflecting local conditions. Ironically, the Soviet Union dissolved the Comintern in 1943 in an effort to ingratiate itself to its wartime allies, Great Britain and the United States. The Comintern ended, succumbing to the interests of imperial powers and Soviet state priorities, suffering a similar fate as the original Second International during the First World War. The paths of all three parties diverged following the Second World War, as each party dealt with issues of race and nationality as dictated by its local conditions. Prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union, one can suggest a general Comintern line on race, nationality and anti-imperialism existed, but only to a degree. Local conditions mattered. Moscow also made its presence felt in each party, but to different degrees. The limits to what one can say about that general line is evident through the comparative and transnational lens used in this study.

The Divergences on Imperialism

From its beginnings, the Comintern established anti-imperialism as a central tenet in its worldview. Vladimir Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin, Gregory Zinoviev, Karl Radek, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin, among others, contributed to how communists understood the international situation and the horrors of imperialism. This commitment to combating imperialism was so important that it was the cornerstone of the Comintern's Manifesto in 1919 and its "Theses on the National and Colonial Question" in 1920 and referenced throughout its tactical shifts, including the Comintern's campaigns against fascism and

the “Theses on the Negro Question.” It started as an attempt to destabilize Britain by attacking its empire, before becoming a general protest of American, European, and Asian imperialism. The Comintern developed and supported front organizations, such as the League Against Imperialism (LAI) and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), to promote these issues. Though Moscow made it a primary consideration during the Comintern’s early years, the Communist Parties of South Africa, Canada, and Australia treated imperialism as a peripheral issue, if they considered it at all, until the Comintern directed otherwise.

The CPA and CPC, despite both being members of the Anglo-American Secretariat, were far more intrigued by trade union matters and local issues than undermining the British Empire. In both cases, the Comintern had to remind the CPA and CPC to do more to stand against imperialism and both parties referenced it in passing until the tactical shifts following the Sixth Comintern Congress when both parties made it prominent parts of their general platforms. This lack of attention was the case even though Australia and Canada were seen as potential battlegrounds for the rivalry between American and British imperialisms. Though first mentioned in 1922 at the Fourth Congress, in 1928, the Comintern redefined Canada and Australia’s status in the world. No longer were they considered part of the colonial world; they were secondary imperialist nations.

This shift confused both parties at first. The CPA, through Tom Wright, asked for clarification before falling into line and working the new designation into its propaganda and materials going forward. In Canada, Stewart Smith led the party into conflict with

Canadian comrades at the Lenin School and occasioned a Comintern reprimand. Smith's platform saw the CPC, briefly, promote Canadian nationalism and independence, initially with some Comintern approval. When tactics changed, Smith and the CPC were ordered to conform but instead opposed the new direction, criticizing the Comintern and leading to a yearlong back and forth. Following a reprimand from the Comintern, the CPC became much more cautious in its own methods, limiting its efforts to following direct Comintern orders. As a result, the CPC did not clash again with the Comintern until the mid-1940s but also failed to develop the unique platforms and responses to its local conditions as took place in South Africa and Australia.

The CPC was plagued by arrests during the first half of the 1930s, but through the decade, the party maintained campaigns on the Spanish Civil War and against Japanese and Italian imperialism in China and Abyssinia respectively. The CPA also followed Comintern orders on anti-imperialism but did so more enthusiastically. It maintained significant "Hands off India" campaigns, and because of a perceived leadership position in the Pacific, supported Chinese communism and attacked Japanese imperialism. Because of the significant Italian foreign worker population, especially in Queensland, the CPA also had to protect Italian workers from xenophobia while also combatting the appeal of Italian fascism. The CPA mentored the Communist Party of Malaya and maintained a strong interest in Pacific affairs.

Both parties linked fighting imperialism to the colonized peoples of their respective nations. In Canada, Stewart Smith and some members of the CPC briefly saw French Canadians as a colonized people and therefore wished to support their efforts for

independence. This support of French Canadian nationhood was short-lived as the Comintern corrected the CPC's approach; to Moscow, French Canada was not a separate nation and equally as imperial as its English counterpart. This position was revisited during the Second World War with greater attention. Although Tim Buck and the Comintern resisted the idea of French Canadian nationalism, there was considerable support from party members. The CPA meanwhile used its attack on British and Australian imperialism to highlight the plight of Aboriginal and Melanesian peoples in Australia and in Australian mandates. During the 1930s, especially towards the end of the decade, and into the Second World War, with Tom Wright's "New Deal for Aborigines" and calls for a "new deal" for Pacific Islanders, the National and Colonial platforms of the Comintern were observed by the CPA. Following the disbanding of the Comintern, the rhetoric of self-determination for Melanesian peoples was toned down in favour of something reminiscent of the civilizing mission. In both cases, the parties implemented these approaches, evolving the attack on imperialism to promoting self-determination of certain groups, unilaterally and with very limited direction from Moscow. If Moscow controlled all or was the impetus for the majority of prominent tactics employed by communist parties, the Australian and Canadian cases on these matters show important examples that run counter to that argument and highlight individual figures, Stewart Smith or Tom Wright, for example, who developed noteworthy platforms for both parties. Moscow often guided and advised, but the development of local tactics and detailed platforms frequently fell to each party.

The Differences of Race

The separation of the case study of the CPSA from those of the CPC or CPA is necessary when the dimension of race is added. This distinction is due to the attention the Comintern gave to the “Negro Question.” African American communists helped write the “Theses on the Negro Question” at the Fourth Comintern Congress, making racial equality, at least for blacks, a prominent concern for communists. They remained heavily involved as the Comintern gave them a platform for their ideas and some, such as Harry Haywood, were able to convince other communists of the need for self-determination for African Americans, and black Africans generally, at the Sixth Comintern Congress. These black communists ensured racial issues would not be ignored. The primacy of the United States in these issues cannot be overstated.

Secondary to the American context was South Africa. While the ITUCNW sought to deal with Pan-Africanism, the black Atlantic, and the rest of Africa as well, the Comintern prioritized the United States and South Africa regarding racial issues. The Comintern did not have a general platform for racial equality; it specifically singled out Africans. At most, one could say a general commitment existed. I would suggest that commitment should be attributed to international communism generally, instead of to the Comintern itself. Projects like the ITUCNW were poorly supported by the Comintern; James Ford and George Padmore each struggled to deal with racism and limited finances. It did not undermine their commitment to their principles however and by looking beyond the Comintern apparatus itself, one can find many examples of individuals whose personal commitment to racial equality or anti-colonialism was spurred on by

communism, but not tied only to the Comintern. Again, the importance of individual communists to putting a spotlight on the “Negro Question” and moving discussion along cannot be ignored.

Because of the prioritization of the “Negro Question” by 1928, South African affairs suddenly became important. Converging with this greater attention to racial issues was James La Guma’s trip to Moscow after serving as a delegate to the LAI. As a result of that trip, the CPSA was told by the Comintern that its previous tactics no longer were acceptable. CPSA leaders, such as Sidney Bunting, however, still believed in their approach. Bunting had also criticized some Comintern positions, including the applicability of the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question” to South Africa. They also felt the “Theses on the Negro Question” was not enough. The CPSA, under Bunting’s leadership followed an orthodox Marxist approach, seeing the racial struggle as part of the class struggle; if class division ended, racial divisions would be downplayed if not extinguished. As a result, focusing on the colonial character of South Africa was unnecessary, and at most, was one possible tactic to highlight the equality of all oppressed peoples. Of the three parties discussed in this study, only the CPSA defended its lack of attention to anti-imperialism. Following the Sixth Comintern Congress and Comintern interference, the CPSA reoriented to place greater attention on fighting British imperialism and promoting the rights of its black African population. The reorientation gutted the party as many party members flocked to other organizations that better represented their interests or left the CPSA in solidarity with expelled members. In 1935, the Comintern eased its interference, shifting tactics again during the Seventh Comintern

Congress. Comintern-supported leaders, such as Douglas Wolton, Molly Wolton, and Lazar Bach left the party or were caught up in the purges.

From Moscow's view, the racial dimension did not have as much importance outside of South Africa and the United States, even with the efforts of the ITUCNW. In Canada, despite minor calls for increased rights for Indigenous peoples, neither the Comintern nor the CPC ever seemed to consider their plight in a meaningful way. The closest that Moscow came to dictating matters in Australia seemed to be by mentioning Aboriginal peoples in passing at a meeting in 1925, and possibly through "Communist Party's Fight for Aborigines" author Herbert Moxon. The general campaign, however, was self-directed and reflected the party's growing interest in these affairs. Tom Wright, for example, made significant strides in promoting Aboriginal issues within the party and wrote the progressive platform of the "New Deal for Aborigines." The same could be said of the CPA's campaign for Melanesian peoples. These two efforts, for Aboriginal peoples and for Melanesian peoples, ran in parallel and mirrored each other in many ways. Moscow had little role in either, likely resulting from its limited knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and complete ignorance to Melanesian peoples. Furthermore, as there were no Aboriginal and Melanesian peoples visiting the Soviet Union as there were with African Americans or black Africans attending Lenin Schools or visiting Moscow after international Congresses, it is possible that there lacked a consistent lobby to consider their issues inside the Comintern apparatus.

Moscow did influence each party's appreciation of nationality issues. In South Africa, the Comintern tied nationality to race. Moscow also urged the CPC to increase its

reach among French Canadian workers. For all three parties, foreign workers and immigration were a reality of each country, and Moscow urged the CPC and CPA to act on this issue, albeit in different ways. The CPC consistently had to deal with a membership skewed heavily toward immigrants. The high numbers of Ukrainian and Finnish workers, along with Jewish and, later, Asian workers that the party had as members highlighted the limitations of a predominantly English leadership, the inability to make inroads into French Canada, and a need to increase English and French membership. As regards foreign workers, the Comintern did not want them to be ignored, but the issue was never an important one for the party. Instead, it would merely agitate on their behalf, noting that their immigrant status meant they were susceptible to deportation.

The CPA did not have the skewed membership issues of Canada, but had a much clearer policy to argue against – White Australia. The uniqueness of the Australian situation was clear in the CPA's own propaganda, as it highlighted that other dominions did not have similar policies in place. The Comintern however needed to repeatedly remind the CPA to attack the White Australia policy, making it one of the prominent concerns of Comintern officials during the 1920s. As a result, the CPA made an effort to support Southeastern European workers throughout the nation. Australian and Canadian communists also had similar fears regarding certain foreign workers; Italian or Japanese workers, respectively, were considered vulnerable to fascism and thus needed to be brought into party life and given support, ensuring they became good workers. Meanwhile, in South Africa, foreign workers always seemed to be on the periphery. Communists knew of their presence, but white or black African workers always took

precedent. For Coloured workers, many party leaders conflated black Africans and Coloured workers for simplicity.

Local Conditions Matter

When looking at the national, colonial, and racial questions and the Communist International, it is an oversimplification to speak of a rigid Comintern line. The Comintern did become a body that was more inflexible in its tactics and ideology over time. The free-wheeling debate evident in the Comintern under Lenin evaporated as time passed and Stalin tightened his grasp on the country. In Moscow, certain trends, such as self-determination of blacks, gained prominence, but to challenge these trends once they became orthodoxy was unwise. But even still, when it came to individual parties following it, a Comintern line only existed as a general platform of which certain key tenets needed to be followed to avoid running afoul of Comintern officials. In terms of the fight against imperialism, all parties were required to stand for colonial liberation, to protect oppressed peoples, and to support general campaigns against the various imperialisms the Comintern identified. Following the Sixth Comintern Congress, the secondary imperial nature of some British dominions, not all, was something that the Comintern was adamant member parties needed to follow. Each of these platforms was general in nature and parties were left to work out how to pass the message along to their members and workers alike, with varying degrees of intervention. The limits of Moscow on anti-imperial issues were most evident with the failed European Colonial Conference

of 1929, where European communists showed how little they prioritized colonial agitation amongst their own members.

Regarding national and racial issues, the power local parties had was far more considerable. All three parties discussed in this study ignored anti-imperialism as a major propaganda tool until at least the mid-1920s when the Comintern urged them to reconsider that line of thinking. For nationality issues, the support of colonial liberation and the self-determination of oppressed minorities were equally ignored during that early period. The CPC had to consider ethnicity as a result of its significant membership base and thus when it formed, it agreed to autonomous language groups. Though the Comintern called for their dismantling, the party attempted to ignore the demand before the Comintern eventually forgot about the matter; the Comintern, at one point, moved in favour of the language groups when it took issue with some of the expulsions from the party. On French Canada, the party and the Comintern disagreed. Despite seeing French Canadians as the “most exploited workers” in Canada, some members saw French Canada as a separate nation and the “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions” applicable. The Comintern forced the party to recant these beliefs. The convictions returned in the 1940s, and the Comintern, while not pleased with the shift, never was able to submit its concerns to the party before it was dismantled. Most crucially, the Comintern, despite the increased attention given to racial issues in the Third Period, ignored Indigenous peoples of Canada entirely and by itself, the CPC established its extremely feeble attempts to offer a position on the issue in 1937 and again in 1943.

The Australian case shows the limits of Comintern intervention further. It took multiple reminders from the Comintern for the party to deal with immigration and the White Australia policy. The Comintern seemed most concerned about foreign workers when considering the CPA's tactics regarding nationality and race. It offered very little guidance on racial equality for Aboriginal or Melanesian workers, even when it could have directly called upon the party to adopt the Native Republic Thesis or the applicable "Theses on the Negro Question". The Australian case exemplifies a party that put its best foot forward on many of the Comintern's campaigns. It also represents a party that was forced to develop its own policies. Even if one accepts that Herbert Moxon was the reason for the initial consideration of Aboriginal issues by the CPA, the party moved forward and created a platform of its own accord. Furthermore, the party drafted in-house its platform on Melanesian workers, which shows the initiative that Australian communists had and that communist parties were not simply mindless followers of the Comintern. The Comintern had its issues to which it would not tolerate opposition – the secondary imperialist nature of Canada or Australia, for example. But in many cases, the Comintern simply offered advice and sought to impress upon member parties its priorities; the Comintern only interfered if it had a clear tactic in mind, as was the case in South Africa.

The South African case shows what happens when a party clearly disagreed with what the Comintern deemed necessary. The Comintern determined that the Native Republic Thesis was required for communism to take hold in South Africa. Despite its total commandeering of the party leadership to force the proper interpretation of the

Thesis, it should be noted that this came after six years during which the Comintern not only ignored South African affairs, but Sidney Bunting and David Ivon Jones were two voices critical of the applicability of general approaches in the South African situation. They aired their grievances in Comintern meetings before the debates surrounding the Native Republic Thesis and received no reprimand. As a result, the CPSA carved its own path for the seven years of its existence before it was forced to succumb to the Comintern's dictates. When those leaders with clear Moscow ties left or fell out of favour, the party, through its own local membership, was able to rebuild and reorient the approach to its own service.

Priorities of the Soviet Union

How does one explain the inconsistency in the application of Comintern doctrine? The comparative framework of this study reveals the key to how the Communist International worked: it always had a list of priorities. This prioritization is revealed generally when one considers the Eurocentrism of the Comintern. It reflects all of the shifts in tactics, from the failed revolutions in Europe to the new attention on Asia and Africa to Socialism in One Country. It explains why foreign policy caused such wild fluctuations in doctrine in the 1930s through to, and including, the Comintern's demise in 1943. It also explains how certain regions were undoubtedly given greater attention than others. In the case of colonial liberation, China and India were always the links in the imperialist chain that needed to be broken. As a result, the efforts in those nations were always important. On racial issues, the United States was the Holy Grail, owing to its

economic and imperial ascendancy. It also helps explain the sudden interest in South Africa.

Timing is sometimes everything in the course of history and with many African American communists arriving in Moscow during the 1920s, the Comintern developed a sympathetic ear for the “Negro Question.” James La Guma’s visit turned the attention of some individuals, Nikolai Bukharin and Max Petrovsky, for example, to South African affairs. South Africa also was a convenient target for racial issues. Economically it was the most developed state in Africa with a significant proletariat. Racial issues were central to its politics and economics. While Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson argue that the number of documents on South Africa in the Comintern archive is a sign of South Africa’s importance, to the Comintern, South Africa was merely a country in Africa prior to 1927.⁷⁰² It was not a priority for the Comintern. It became one when South Africa became the best chance of implementing the Comintern’s hopes for racial self-determination outside of the United States. The CPSA had been relatively obscure, much like the CPC and the CPA had been, and it had been left to its own devices to that point. But when the Comintern saw a region as a battleground of increased importance, it then ensured that its tactics were followed, consequences be damned.

The prioritization of the Comintern also helps to explain why the Comintern only intervened when it did in Canadian and Australian party affairs. In the Canadian case, the Comintern had many reasons to enforce a correct interpretation of Canada’s position in the world. Canada was often positioned as a key battleground in the growing feud

⁷⁰² Filatova & Davidson, loc. 1716.

between American and British imperialisms. But when Canada was deemed a player on its own, the Comintern, to reinforce its own worldview, needed the CPC to fall into line. Stewart Smith's pamphlet "The Struggle against the Right Danger" undoubtedly helped precipitate intervention, as Lenin School students appealed to the Comintern, as did certain language group leaders. These issues were also central to the expulsion of Maurice Spector, noted Trotskyist, and the eventual expulsion of Jack Macdonald, who sympathized with some 'incorrect' views. The attention given to this issue, and the end to the calls for self-determination of French Canadians, were necessary for tactical coherence at the Comintern level. It also explains why Indigenous peoples were simply ignored by both the CPC and the Comintern. They were not a significant enough issue to warrant comment from Moscow. When the CPC had corrected its position, Stewart Smith was sent to Moscow for six months before returning to lead the party with Tim Buck. Despite the vitriol in Smith's criticism of Moscow, he remained part of the CPC's leadership. The CPSA found most of its dissenting leadership expelled from the party. The difference between the two parties was clear – the CPSA's Native Republic Thesis mattered more in the Comintern's international strategies than any Canadian issue. It needed to ensure the CPSA followed the right path; in Canada, despite concern, deviations were less serious.

The role of tactical coherence and consistency comes into play with the CPA and the need for it to accept the designation of Australia as a second-tier imperialist nation. That shift was far less difficult for the CPA to accept, even if the party did not fully understand it at first. The CPA never had need for extensive intervention from Moscow

on these issues. The CPA's immediate acceptance likely pleased Moscow. The bigger issue was that Moscow wanted to ensure Australia was fighting the White Australia policy, for a wide number of reasons, including a subtle attack on anti-internationalism and the feeling that the White Australia policy undermined Australia's potential to be a future leader in the Pacific. Tactically, though, the Comintern was inconsistent in offering solutions. Neither of these issues were enough to cause the Comintern to place much emphasis, if any, on Australia. The most prominent intervention came due to 'incorrect' tactics the CPA employed by cooperating with the Labor Party, and reflects a general commitment from the Comintern to implement the Third Period tactics of Class against Class after years of calling on parties to work with Labor.

The Aftermath – Epilogue

While this study has revealed and commented upon differences among the three parties during the interwar period, if one takes a longer look at their history, there is one important similarity. The CPSA, CPC and CPA built on the tactics developed during the interwar period and evolved or learned from them later in the twentieth century. It is important to note that these were new parties, trying to apply an ideology that seemed out of place in Russia to other places with very different labour movements and politics.

The most direct, and arguably most important, link between the interwar period and the Cold War can be seen in the role of the Communist Party of South Africa in combatting apartheid. The party that initially flouted any commitment to anti-imperialism eventually played a significant role in the destruction of arguably the longest lasting

colonial regime. The CPSA folded in 1950, citing its illegal status and difficulty in organizing. Members threw their support behind the African National Congress (ANC).⁷⁰³ When a communist party was re-established in 1953, as the South African Communist Party (SACP), its members worked with the ANC to undermine apartheid. CPSA members from the 1930s, including Moses Kotane, who was Party Secretary from 1939 until 1978 and also a member of ANC, and Sidney Bunting's son, Brian Bunting, were prominent communists who worked on the tactics used to protest against the regime.⁷⁰⁴ Yusuf Dadoo, a prominent member of the SACP and Chairman of the party during the 1970s, helped broker increased support from the Soviet Union for the ANC and for the struggle against apartheid.⁷⁰⁵ Finally, one cannot ignore the effect that international communism had on Nelson Mandela, who not only was a party member and became the face of the movement, but was also good friends with Joe Slovo, arguably the most important communist leader in South Africa during the apartheid era.⁷⁰⁶

The centrality of racial issues cannot be denied in the struggle against apartheid, but the remnants of South African communism, as developed during the interwar period, was the precursor to the anti-apartheid struggle. The SACP noted previous struggles under the auspices of the Native Republic Thesis. In 1962, affirming South Africa's colonial status, it promoted armed struggle while calling for equal rights for all peoples in South Africa. Later in 1969, the SACP thinking was evident in the ANC's tactics,

⁷⁰³ Clark and Worger, 59-60.

⁷⁰⁴ Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 239-242; Filatova & Davidson, Chapter 9 & 12.

⁷⁰⁵ Clark and Worger, 61; Shubin, 239-240

⁷⁰⁶ Ellis, "Nelson Mandela," 1-18; Filatova & Davidson, Chapter 9 & 12.

referring to the African population as the “most oppressed group.”⁷⁰⁷ Furthermore, the SACP continued to approach matters with Soviet guidance, but determined its own best policies, including the adoption of violent methods which underpinned the efforts of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.⁷⁰⁸

The Communist Party of Canada, for all of the faults of its interwar tactics, improved its position on Indigenous peoples and was able reach French Canada. Under its public face as the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), members continued to call for equal rights for Indigenous peoples. In 1954, as part of the party programme, the CPC finally had an actual plan which called for tribal lands to be returned to Indigenous tribes, full hunting and fishing rights, and cultural protection, something similar to what the CPA had been calling for a decade and a half earlier.⁷⁰⁹ In the 1960s, the CPC demanded the end to the Indian Act. By April 1969, this platform was more fully fleshed out with a Native Bill of Rights.⁷¹⁰

The CPC remained committed to avoiding the concept of French Canada as a separate nation following the corrective in 1944. The party, however, continued to maintain a presence in Quebec. There were problems. Quebec communists felt they should have more autonomy within the party to meet the unique challenge that Quebec posed and a brief split from the LPP occurred in 1947. The new Quebec-based party

⁷⁰⁷ Filatova & Davidson, loc. 6467-6536.

⁷⁰⁸ Filatova & Davidson, Chapter 12; Ellis, “Nelson Mandela,” 1-18; Stephen Ellis, “The Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle,” 657-676.

⁷⁰⁹ *Canada’s Party of Socialism*, 272.

⁷¹⁰ *Canada’s Party of Socialism*, 272-274. Ian McKay notes that the Left took a greater interest in the Aboriginal Question in the 1960s. McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 40-41.

struggled, owing to Quebec's Padlock Law.⁷¹¹ By the 1960s, the CPC had been gutted by the revelations of Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956. The Quiet Revolution had led to the growth of Quebec separatism.⁷¹² Support of communism waned, as other Marxist and Socialist trends became more popular, but the CPC acknowledged that its outdated position towards French Canada required a change. In January 1962, the CPC called for self-determination of French Canada, and reissued an edited version of Stanley Ryerson's *French Canada* to suit the tactical change. To show that its efforts were not merely lip service, the CPC also created a separate party for the Quebec "nation," le Parti communiste du Quebec (PCQ) in 1964.⁷¹³ Regardless of whether the CPC or communism was strong during these movements, some of its ideas were coopted or adopted by the growing movement at large.⁷¹⁴

In Australia, the CPA maintained a prominent role in the civil rights movements in Australia. The party's support of the Labor Government ended as John Curtin's successor, Ben Chifley, hoped to maintain British Preference and the White Australia Policy. The CPA maintained its stance against the policy, while beginning to call for a controlled immigration scheme which equally treated all races.⁷¹⁵ The CPA muted its own influence within Australia by continuing to follow Moscow repeating the line that communism promoted peace, whereas the "imperialists," led by Britain and the United States, would plunge the world into economic chaos. This position made the party a target

⁷¹¹ *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 258; Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 227-229; Avakumovic, 256-257.

⁷¹² Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 3-4

⁷¹³ Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 256-259; *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 259-271; Avakumovic, 257-259.

⁷¹⁴ McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 40, 183-192.

⁷¹⁵ Gollan, 196; Jordan, 160-245.

of government repression and censorship. The party's membership was also affected negatively by the Secret Speech.⁷¹⁶ It remained committed to the continued fight against the White Australia policy and to increasing the living standards of Aboriginal peoples. Through trade union activism and continued calls for increased rights, the CPA participated in movements for equal pay and increased rights for Aboriginal peoples.⁷¹⁷ For example, taking a page from the American Civil Rights Movement, the CPA organized Freedom Rides of its own for better treatment of Aboriginal peoples.⁷¹⁸ By 1967, it revised its positions and passed the programme "Full Human Rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders" where it stood against assimilation. The CPA remained focused on these issues, even joining in Aboriginal Rights' organizations.⁷¹⁹ The CPA's ideas and the attention given to these issues should not be ignored, especially its progressive nature during the interwar period and the continued prominence of Aboriginal rights as part of the CPA platform.⁷²⁰

These longer histories of engagement with colonial liberation, racial equality, and nationality rights are important parts of the history of international communism. Micheline Ishay has detailed the influence of socialism on foundational concepts of human rights, such as workers' rights, suffrage, and self-determination, before the First

⁷¹⁶ Davidson, 100-125, 147-162; Gollan, 284.

⁷¹⁷ Boughton, 40; Jordan, 246-306.

⁷¹⁸ Boughton, 42-43.

⁷¹⁹ Brown, 59; Boughton, 42-43; Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines & Activism: Race, Aborigines & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia* (Crawley: University of West Australia Press, 2008), 55-63.

⁷²⁰ For more on Aboriginal rights in Australia during the second half of the 20th Century, see Chesterman & Galligan, 156-192.

World War.⁷²¹ The interwar period was integral to the adoption of key planks of communist tactics and while communist parties may have had limited influence when their ideas were able to effect change, it would be misguided to ignore their role in providing new ideas or in consideration of some of these issues, especially as leftist ideas were evident in many of the civil rights movements prevalent throughout the world in the second half of the twentieth century. Historians should not ignore the human rights abuses of communism under the Soviet Union or other similar regimes; these governments undermined their own capabilities to be representative of the changes their ideas could make.⁷²² However, to limit the story of communism and human rights only to those excesses and horrors would be a disservice to a movement that was more than the Soviet government and, at times, genuinely influenced civil rights, human rights, and anti-colonialism in the second half of the twentieth century.

Writing a review article for the *London Review of Books* in April 2017, Sheila Fitzpatrick suggests that the Bolshevik Revolution's relevance is no longer clear. It was far clearer in the Cold War era; communism was a prominent issue, or threat, for the world and the importance of understanding the Bolshevik Revolution was self-evident.⁷²³ It is here I suggest that another similarity between all of the parties and the movements discussed in this paper should be noted. The Bolshevik Revolution ignited certain beliefs

⁷²¹ Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 118-172; Micheline Ishay, "The Socialist Contributions to Human Rights: An Overlooked Legacy," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 9, no. 2 (2005): 225-245.

⁷²² Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2010), 1-10, 84-176; Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 138-185.

⁷²³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, "What's Left?" *London Review of Books*, 30 March 2017, accessed April 28, 2017, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v39/n07/sheila-fitzpatrick/whats-left>.

and they were maintained in the CPSA, CPC and CPA and in international communism generally speaking. Lisa Kirschenbaum, Brigitte Studer, and others have noted the intense commitment communists had to communism.⁷²⁴ This study has shown that same commitment to the movement and what it represented. For example, Sidney Bunting's family felt that Edward Roux's biography of him, which was critical of Moscow, did Bunting no service, and still supported communism.⁷²⁵ He was a communist through and through and felt he was doing the right thing. Communism, generally speaking, helped engage individuals to care about anti-imperialism, colonial liberation, racial equality, and self-determination of nations. When looking at the long histories of civil rights or of imperialism, the role of communism should be given more credence and attention. Even if communism as envisaged during the twentieth century no longer exists, it and the Bolshevik Revolution are still relevant to those issues. The same debates and discussions continue to this day and these parties offered ideas and platforms, to varying degrees, that should be part of that lasting legacy.

⁷²⁴ Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, trans. Dafydd Rees Roberts (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁷²⁵ Brian Bunting later became one of the SACP's most prominent members. "Letter from Rebecca Bunting to Edward Roux, August 9, 1943," in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University; "Letter from A.H. Bunting to Edward Roux, December 31, 1943," in *South Africa: A Collection of Miscellaneous Documents, 1902-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Photographic Department, 1967), located at Hoover Library, Stanford University.

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