Unpacking 'Chauvinism': The Interrelationship of Race, Internationalism, and Anti-Imperialism amongst Marxists in Britain, 1899-1933

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Word Count: 79,998
Abbreviations

A. Archival Material Locations

BLIPI- British Library, Indian Political Intelligence Files
DCA- Digitised Comintern Archives
HHC- Hull History Centre
IISH- International Institute of Social History
LHA- Labour History Archive
LOCMD- Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division
LSEILP- London School of Economics, Independent Labour Party Collections
NA- National Archives
NLI- National Library of Ireland, Art O’Briain Papers
WYHC- West Yorkshire History Centre, Wakefield Archive Service

B. Political Organisations

AITUC- All-India Trade Union Congress
AOS- Anglo-Ottoman Society
BSP- British Socialist Party
BWL- British Workers’ League
CPGB- Communist Party of Great Britain
CUP- Committee of Union and Progress
ECCI- Executive Committee of the Comintern
ICB- International Colonial Bureau
ILP- Independent Labour Party
INC- Indian National Congress
ISDL- Irish Self-Determination League
LAI- League Against Imperialism
LMI- Liverpool Muslim Institute
LRC- Labour Representation Committee
NSDC- National Socialist Defence Committee
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSFU</td>
<td>National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSP</td>
<td>National Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCF</td>
<td>French Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACC</td>
<td>South African Conciliation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>Social Democratic Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNDC</td>
<td>Socialist National Defence Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Socialist Party of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Social-Democratic Party of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STW</td>
<td>Stop-the-War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUC</td>
<td>Trades Union Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDC</td>
<td>Union of Democratic Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMM</td>
<td>Woking Muslim Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWLI</td>
<td>Workers’ Welfare League of India</td>
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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between practices of internationalism, patterns of racialisation, and the politics of anti-racism and anti-imperialism in the revolutionary Marxist left in Britain between 1899 and 1933.

I focus on two organisations, the Social Democratic Federation and the Communist Party of Great Britain, examining how different racialised subaltern populations were represented in their publications and how this affected the anti-imperial advocacy and activism of these political groups. I am interested in how the writings of colonial nationalists, as well as the intervention of transnational activists, helped to shape this political praxis.

The thesis begins with a study of how positive racialisations, developed by colonial activists as a discursive means to argue for the inapplicability of the ‘civilising mission’ to their respective societies, were drawn on by SDF activists and figureheads such as HM Hyndman to bolster their increasingly oppositional stance towards the British Empire. Further chapters demonstrate how groups of border-crossing racialised outsiders, be they Russian-born Jews in the SDF or Indian activists in the CPGB, utilised a strategic universalism to overcome their marginalisation within the ranks of the revolutionary Marxist left, and to gain support for their respective communal concerns.

During the course of the time period covered within the thesis, the October Revolution, the rise of the Bolsheviks, and the foundation of the Comintern helped to reshape analyses of imperialism as well as practices and theories of internationalism on the British far-left. Particular attention is given to how activists either attempted to utilise or bypass this ‘official internationalism’ to promote their own international anti-imperial networks and discourse, and the efficacy of their efforts.

It is my hope that this study will be able to shed light on international influences on the British Marxist left beyond the Continental, provide a greater nuance to histories of Marxism and race in Britain, and demonstrate the variety of models and practices of internationalism available to these activists in the early years of the twentieth century.
Declaration

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I also would like to thank the numerous archivists, specialists, and institutional assistants whose helpfulness, advice, and knowledge of their collections have been immeasurably valuable in the process of researching this thesis. Dr Laura Miller of the Marx Memorial Library, Darren Treadwell of the Labour History Archive, and Erika Spencer of the Library of Congress have all played key roles which have helped to mould this thesis during my period of research.

Both within and beyond academia, my peers and friends, an ensemble of academics, activists, and autodidacts, have played a vital role as my support network. They have offered advice, allowed me to share my frustrations, and provided me much-needed breaks to rejuvenate and refresh. Nicola, Jess, Jacob, Antonia, Matt, Niamh, Josh, Cameron, Kate, and Louisa, I am forever indebted to you for how you have assisted me.

My family has played an immeasurably important role in supporting me, particularly these past few years. My brothers Tom and Matt have kept me grounded with their combination of cutting barbs, kind words, and fraternal advice. Their partners, Sarah and Miriam, have been welcoming and kind, and have been wonderful people to share the holidays with. My nephews Finn and Zack, whom I have consistently attempted to indoctrinate, have been an endless source of joy, and their sense of wonderment and kind-heartedness have provided me with vital breaks from the adult world. And of course, my parents, Tony and Diana, have been amazing throughout this process. They have encouraged me to follow my interests and supported me through some difficult times. They have offered sage advice, emotional comfort, financial assistance, and have always helped me to keep everything in perspective. I’m not sure I can find adequate words to express my gratitude for all that they have done.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my friend Gemma, whose bravery and encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration. You are always with me.
Introduction

The racial order or nomos cannot be undone by fiat, by charity, or by goodwill and must enter comprehensively into the terms of political culture.¹

In this thesis I examine the development of anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics within Marxist organisations in Britain, namely the Social Democratic Federation, the British Socialist Party, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, through a period beginning with the start of the Second South African War in 1899 and ending with the cessation of the ‘Class against Class’ period in 1933.² I pay particular attention to how transnational exchanges, in terms of texts, peoples, and political networks crossing borders, helped to forefront the concerns of different racialised populations and contribute to an erosion of a culture of “white labourism” within the British labour movement at the fin-de-siècle.³ I examine how these transnational exchanges impacted the rhetorical and discursive contours of advocacy, as well as the resistance that they faced to popularising their causes. The thesis is structured in such a way as to allow for a study of the influence of “racialised outsiders” on the theories and practices of internationalism and anti-imperialism within the Marxist left in Britain, and the extent to which they were either limited or supported by international institutions. I draw this term from Satnam Virdee’s work on racial exclusion and anti-racism within the British labour movement. It is used to indicate social groups who were deemed to be an external ‘other’ to the increasingly racialised legal, cultural, and political conception of Britishness throughout the nineteenth century. During this period the working classes were, through democratic and welfare reform, gradually socialised into national life, whilst those deemed outsiders on the basis of racial identity were excluded from this compromise.⁴

¹ Paul Gilroy, Postcolonial Melancholia (New York, 2005), p.36
² In 1911, the SDF fused with a number of ILP branches, local Socialist Societies, and Clarion Clubs to form the BSP. However, this did not significantly alter the political currents of the new organisation, with many of the organisation’s leaders drawn from the SDF Executive. Keith Laybourn, ‘The failure of Socialist unity in Britain, c.1893-1914’, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 6th Series, 4, (1994), pp.153-175
⁴ Satnam Virdee, Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider (Basingstoke, 2014), pp.1-12
Over four chapters my thesis examines the influence of racial ideology on SDF members’ anti-imperialism in Edwardian Britain, Jewish socialists’ struggles against anti-Semitism within the BSP, Arthur Field’s attempt to create a Communist-Islamic anti-imperialist alliance in the 1920s, and the work of Shapurji Saklatvala in forging transnational anti-colonial labour organisations during the interwar period. I contextualise each of these episodes through reference to inherited intellectual traditions, social histories of migrant communities in metropolitan Britain, and the development of activist networks and structures within and beyond these Marxist organisations which could give shape to the demands and interests of marginalised racialised communities.

The time period of this study has been selected for three purposes. The first is to examine the extent of continuity and change between the pre-war social-democratic organisations and the inter-war CPGB. Often the two organisations’ records on anti-imperialism are counter-posed to one another, with the SDF/BSP accused by their Communist near-contemporaries and later generations of historians of not embodying the ethos they professed. Furthermore, this periodisation, by drawing on two separate Marxist organisations’ approaches to the questions of internationalism, imperialism, and race, also allows for an assessment of whether forms of Eurocentrism found amongst sections of the Marxist left are the result of the direct intellectual legacy of Marx, as suggested by scholars such as Said. Finally, in line with approaches being taken by historians of liberal internationalism, such as Patricia Clavin, it allows for an examination of the extent to which internationalist thought developed through the Edwardian period was translated into structural forms through the inter-war years.

Since the transnational turn of the 1990s, there has been a growing body of scholarship on the histories of liberal internationalism and transnational exchanges in

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cultural, academic and governmental spheres. However the internationalism of the Communist and Social-Democratic movements has often not been a part of this picture, despite the overlaps and, at times, use of these models of internationalism as a foil. Whilst the practices of inter-war Social-Democracy and the labour movement are gaining greater historical attention, pre-First World War socialist internationalism has often fared badly in comparison. Scholars such as Donald Sassoon claim that internationalism was essentially a rhetorical flourish with little meaningful content amongst social-democratic parties. This is not exclusive to historians of internationalism; Martin Crick has similarly labelled the internationalism of the Socialist International a “sham solidarity” which crumbled once tested by global war. However, this negative appraisal may result from an attempt to measure the success of socialist internationalism by the standards of liberal internationalism, with the latter concerned with nation-building strategies and the former focussed on cohering workers across borders.

Martin Ceadel has explicitly chosen not to categorise those internationalists who did not engage with the League of Nations structures, or else advocated pacifistic foreign policies or strategies of war resistance, as being anything more than “little Englanders.” He has stated that Communist internationalism was more akin to a Soviet patriotism than any “true” internationalist affiliation. His presentation of Communist actors in Semi-Detached Idealists gives little room to dialogical exchanges between CPGB members and the Comintern, and instead a picture emerges whereby British Communists’ actions are merely reflections of Moscow’s orders.

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10 Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), pp.27-31
11 Crick, *History*, p.262
This thesis demonstrates that whilst the structural internationalism of the Second International was ultimately shallow, the centrality of internationalist identification had a significant impact on its adherents. Although the content of this identity was contested amongst SDF/BSP members, its symbolic weight was crucial to racialised outsiders’ appeals for inclusion, their identification with the Bolsheviks and the Comintern, and the initiation of their own transnational anti-colonial projects which helped shape the CPGB. There was no singular expression of internationalism within the interwar Communist movement, rather a range of individuals bringing their own practices into the CPGB and attempting to gain the support of the party membership and international structures of the Comintern itself.

Despite the lack of focus on these forms of labour internationalism, the developments of transnational histories have provided useful methodological insights for studies of anti-colonialism and anti-racism within the Marxist left. Fredrik Petersson’s study of the League Against Imperialism, a Communist-dominated international organisation headquartered in Berlin, provides an excellent example of this. His work assesses the relative political power of bureaucracies based in different local “hubs” and their ability to stimulate and solidify transnational connections through their local environments and institutional connections. There has been a growing historical interest in similar Communist transnational institutions, with recent works focussing on the International Workers’ Relief, and Brigitte Studer turning her focus on the apparatus of the Comintern itself. In this vein, Holger Weiss, Hakim Adi, and Minkah Makalani have turned their attention to the trans-Atlantic world of black Communists and their relationship to emergent pan-Africanist movements.

Weiss focuses on black activists’ attempts to sidestep the racial exclusion within national Communist Parties through intervening into the Comintern and creating transnational bodies which drew together black workers of the trans-Atlantic world,

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using a race-centred focus couched in the language of class. Adi similarly examines the extent to which groups of activists were attracted to the Comintern due to its theoretical centring of anti-colonialism, and the influence which black Communists could extend into the lives of national Communist Parties through their transnational organising. Makalani gives greater weight to the extent to which black radicals carried their own intellectual histories of radicalism into the Communist movement, shaping the institutional Marxism of the Comintern through collaboration with Asian radicals and ensuring an anti-colonial focus within the body. I develop this body of research by examining how individuals from other racialised populations sought to influence anti-colonial praxis and anti-racist thought within the CPGB by developing transnational networks beyond its remit, and their attempts to legitimise these projects within the Communist movement. Arthur Field attempted to draw together Irish Republicans and British-based Muslims alongside CPGB members and diplomats from majority-Muslim states in a failed attempt to launch solidarity campaigns with Islamic societies facing imperial encroachment. Saklatvala made use of contacts from the ILP, Indian trade union and nationalist movements, and the Battersea radical milieu to advocate for transnational anti-colonial labour coordination. His campaign gained resources from the Comintern and transformed the CPGB’s approach to anti-colonialism, but ultimately fractured due to both the growing disunity between international Social-Democracy and Communism and the decline of his independent power base.

I build upon this literature focused on transnational Communist racialised outsiders through drawing on newly-available and under-used archival sources. These include records of the Comintern which have been digitised and minutes from the CPGB’s leading bodies deposited in Manchester, which have been useful in assessing organisational responses to independent anti-racist initiatives and activists. Correspondence between activists has provided candid statements about racialised groups and personally-felt senses of identity, which I have been able to compare with publicly-available source materials such as Social-Democratic and Communist newspapers, pamphlets, and periodicals. Security Service files released in the past two decades have been useful in various ways. Firstly, whilst presumed connections and conspiracies can reflect officialdom’s paranoia rather than facts on the ground, the volume of correspondence between particular activists has enabled, alongside
personal correspondence and internal documents, a demonstration of links between different anti-colonial activist milieus. Secondly, transcripts taken from meetings, lectures, and rallies reveal moments of heated exchange and tensions which are not reflected in publicised accounts of the events studied.

This thesis, whilst utilising Marxists in Britain as a focal subject, attempts to draw away from methodological nationalism through emphasising the cross-border exchanges which shaped the praxis and discourse of far-left organisations. The writings of colonial nationalists shaped the early anti-colonial temperament of the SDF. Jewish migrant communities and their social and political recomposition within Britain influenced Jewish socialists’ approaches to combating anti-Semitism within the BSP. The relationships between groups of Muslims and Indians within Britain to the social and political developments of the Empire in the wake of World War One created both possibilities and barriers for the CPGB to develop a Leninist-influenced anti-imperialist praxis. The transnational movements of people enabled through British border policies and imperial patterns of communication, exchange, and migration allowed for the development of ideas and the arrival of individuals who cast their second sight on the practices of the existing labour movement.

This idea of a “second sight” amongst racialised outsiders has been expressed through different terminologies by different authors. Kevin Morgan refers to the “alien eye” which the British-born Indian-Swedish Communist theoretician Rajani Palme Dutt claimed kept him from identifying with the British nation.\(^\text{17}\) Manjapra refers to “transcolonial recognition” which saw individuals from colonised societies identify their struggles with those of other imperially-dominated peoples rather than forging an imagined community alongside the metropole.\(^\text{18}\) Here I use the term “second sight” based on Satnam Virdee’s use of the term, developed from Du Bois’ work, due to the dual outcomes he identifies as resulting from racial marginalisation within imperial heartlands:

> I contend that this experience of racism, combined with the vista it opened up on society as seen from its margins… produced two very different kinds of reactions among those racialised outsiders who moved

\(^\text{18}\) Kris Manjapra ‘Communist Internationalism and Transcolonial Recognition’ in K Manjapra and S Bose (eds), Cosmopolitan Thought Zones (London, 2010), pp.159-177
towards socialism in the imperialist centres of the West. For the first set, it led them to suppress and sometimes even dispense with any public embrace of the particularist racialised identity that had brought them to socialism in the first place, and replace it with the more universalist identification of class... the other set ... attempted to stretch socialism (and particularly Marxism) to accommodate a deeper understanding of racism and colonialism.\(^{19}\)

Virdee’s assessment is borne out by the case studies in this thesis. For many racialised outsiders coming to Social-Democratic and Communist politics in Britain, their experience of marginalisation left them less likely to identify with the increasingly racialised nationalism of the early twentieth century. This did not, however, intrinsically lead them to a particular political identity based on their ‘own’ communities. As will be seen, whilst Jewish members of the BSP generally eschewed identification with Anglo-Jewry due to their political divergences from the wider community, Saklatvala centred anti-colonialism and anti-racism in his political praxis, while drawing on a discursive strategy which emphasised subaltern strata within India as part of a universal proletariat. A shared common impact of their marginalisation, however, was that they held little belief in the Anglo-exceptionalism of the British labour movement.

Whilst Socialist and Communist models of internationalism have remained on the fringes of the new histories of internationalism, a remarkably similar process of transformation is evident to that which Clavin observes occurring amongst liberal internationalists through the inter-war period. The experience of the First World War, which shattered the semblance of internationalism within the Socialist International, also exposed the limits of the existing ethos of internationalism predicated on an international confederation of respective socialist patriotisms. This gave birth to a renewed urgency in the search for both ideals and institutions that could cohere and embody a cosmopolitan proletarian identity and set of interests.\(^{20}\) This internationalist spirit would gradually transform into a technocratic practice of internationalism through the course of the 1920s. This was driven from both above and below, as

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Comintern functionaries sought to extend their influence over British Communism, and CPGB members sought more systematised transnational bodies to translate ideals into action. In the immediate aftermath of the war and the opening years of the 1920s, a number of variations of internationalism were considered, including a critical support for Wilsonian ideals, and individuals and networks sought to establish their own projects. As the ideal of Communist Internationalism became ever-more entangled with identification with the institution of the Comintern and the interests of the Soviet Union, so these grassroots initiatives had to either be integrated within the commissions, bureaus, and secretariats of the Third International, or else find themselves isolated. Internationalist enthusiasm was eclipsed by a bureaucratic practice which could command greater far resources.

These patterns of ideological and structural internationalism should not be conflated with the transnational life histories of the subjects of this thesis. Ideological internationalism could be appealed to in an effort to gain support for anti-imperialist and anti-racist causes, and formal international structures could furnish these causes with greater resources, publicity, and contacts. Transnational movements of people created border-crossing networks of individuals capable of concerted activism and furnished with information which proved useful for these efforts. These networks were vital to coordinate the exchanges of funds, information, and ideas necessary to run these activist groups without institutional support. David Featherstone’s recent work theorising solidarity movements draws on this perspective, prioritising the interactions of communities and individuals who cross borders, rather than “formal internationalism” as embodied in the international congresses and conferences of the labour movement, and has helped shape the direction of this thesis.21

Furthermore, when international influences upon the British far-left have been considered, studies have focussed on the trajectories of ideas and exchanges developing through formal internationalist structures; the Continental connections in the case of the pre-war Social-Democrats, and the influence of Moscow in the case of the inter-war Communists.22 Whilst not eschewing these influences, in this thesis I lay

greater emphasis to the movements of people enabled by British Imperial structures and waves of migration. Some authors have claimed that the transformation of the BSP into the CPGB was effected by radical Jewish migrants effectively supplanting British radical traditions with those from their countries of origin. My research demonstrates that this group of activists were central to the delegitimisation of anti-Semitic theories of imperialism associated with the socialist nationalists of the SDF/BSP. However, I also maintain that this spurred on a re-evaluation of received intellectual traditions regarding the relationship between the nation-state and internationalism, creating an appetite for new theories of internationalism. This approach emphasises activists in Britain’s grassroots engagement with Moscow’s ideological output, contextualising this phenomenon within fluctuating patterns of rivalry, cooperation, and co-option between independently-generated transnational bodies and the institutions of the Comintern. It thus adds to the growing body of literature which eschews an over-fixation on the ‘centre-periphery’ question.

Distinguishing the difference between attitudes towards empire, engagements with ideological and structural internationalism, influences of racial ideology, the role of racialised outsiders, and the transnational histories of such actors, gains particular importance due to the need to unpack the term “chauvinism.” A number of the foundational studies on the history of the SDF/BSP and its influence on the young CPGB have treated racial ideology, support for imperialism, and socialist allegiance to the nation-state as a necessarily singular phenomenon, often labelling this cluster of ideas as chauvinism. This terminology has its roots in Lenin’s analysis of the Great

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23 Kendall’s account of the CPGB’s origins claims that this influence arrested an indigenous process of revolutionary development. Other authors, such as Burke, give a more positive assessment of their role whilst still emphasising their over-arching influence on British Marxism. Walter Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921 (London, 1969); David Burke, ‘Theodore Rothstein, Russian Emigré and British socialist’, Immigrants & Minorities, 2:3 (1983), pp.80-99

24 The ‘centre-periphery’ question focuses on the extent to which national Communist Parties were able to develop autonomously of the control of the Comintern, or whether their political histories can be explained through Moscow’s domination. I take my lead from Thorpe and Worley who emphasise a continuous dynamic of tension between the centre and periphery, whereby the political conditions of Britain allowed for relatively autonomous development, and that a voluntary subservience was punctuated by resistance to international edicts. Andrew Thorpe The British Communist Party and Moscow 1920-1943 (Manchester, 2000); Matthew Worley, Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars (London, 2002)

25 Alongside Kendall, Challinor’s history of the Socialist Labour Party and its accession into the CPGB similarly uses the term to describe Hyndman’s supporters. Even non-Marxist historians such as Pelling have employed the term. Raymond Challinor, The Origins of British Bolshevism (London, 1977); Henry Pelling The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile (London, 1975)
War, when he claimed that social-chauvinism was the most scientifically-precise term to describe the behaviour of socialist organisations which had supported their respective nation-states. He argued that this was borne of opportunism, a political desire of a section of workers to forge compromises with their respective national bourgeoisies, rather than to stand independently in the interest of the entire proletariat. Redfern’s history of the CPGB and its relationship to imperialism draws on this perspective. He asserts a fundamental connection between a reformist policy towards the state and a Eurocentric world-view, with its social roots in the material benefits received by British workers through the empire. Even Virdee, whose precepts have been central to this thesis, draws on this dichotomisation, portraying struggles of “socialist internationalists” against the predominant “socialist nationalists” as synonymous with attempts to rid racism from the movement. While socialist-nationalism certainly created a propensity towards racialised characterisations of populations and events (as shall be seen in the second chapter), this was by no means an essential prerequisite.

Increasingly studies of the British left and its attitudes towards empire are showing the difficulty of maintaining this rigid categorisation, with authors such as Morris, Claeys, and Ward noting how oppositional nationalism could be deployed in a critique of Empire, despite its increasingly racialised underpinnings at the fin-de-siècle. This thesis draws on these works, demonstrating how both Social-Democrats such as Hyndman and Ernest Belfort Bax, and Communists such as Arthur Field, could re-shape racialised imagery of subject populations to agitate against imperialist governance.

A further historiographical imperative behind the thesis lies in disagreement over the extent to which the CPGB was actively engaged in anti-colonial activism, and the degree to which their activism was self-directed or else the result of Comintern edicts.

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British Security Services and the Government of India portrayed the party as central to a highly-disciplined and closely-cohered conspiracy of anti-colonial activists, backed by the Soviet Union, which presented an existential threat to Empire. In fact there existed a number of overlapping and diffuse networks, which could alternate between collaboration and competition with one another.\(^{30}\)

Some authors have negatively assessed the party’s commitment to anti-colonialism in this period. Redfern alleges that the party would have lingered in Eurocentric ambivalence towards the cause of colonial independence had it not been for direct intervention of the Comintern in the 1920s.\(^{31}\) Sherwood likewise points to the invectives of leading Comintern figures which chided the CPGB for the lack of progress in their anti-colonial work, presenting this as evidence of a racist attitude which underpinned their aversion to working with and amongst non-white populations.\(^{32}\) White claims that Soviet pacts with the British government effectively disarmed the Communist movement from engaging in anti-colonial movements throughout the 1920s.\(^{33}\)

Virdee and Callaghan both give a more positive assessment of the CPGB’s anti-colonial work, with Virdee claiming the group as the only anti-racist and anti-imperialist movement within the inter-war labour movement, due largely to the leading roles of a number of racialised outsiders in the party leadership. He maintains that this tradition only ended due to the intervention of the Comintern with the advent of the Popular Front period, which saw anti-colonialism sacrificed in the name of European anti-fascist alliances.\(^{34}\) Callaghan maintains that the distinctiveness of the CPGB’s attitude towards colonialism within British politics was that, whilst most political currents maintained that social and economic development had to occur before political independence could be granted, the Communists were unique in calling for political

\(^{30}\) John Fisher, ‘The Interdepartmental Committee on Eastern Unrest and British Responses to Bolshevik and other Intrigues against the Empire during the 1920’s’, *Journal of Asian History*, 34:1 (2000), pp.1-34

\(^{31}\) Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation*, pp.40-43


\(^{34}\) Virdee, *Racism*, pp.74-97
independence as the prerequisite for such development.\textsuperscript{35} In a rebuttal of Sherwood, he emphasises the sacrifices made by CPGB members in working within the Indian labour movement, as well as the limited resources of the party which held back its capacity for establishing meaningful links with colonial nationalist movements. He calls attention to Communists’ portrayals of the Soviet Union as a society which had abolished racism in legislation and attitude.\textsuperscript{36} He further asserts that the party could not have stimulated nationalist movements in African territories due to the lack of social and economic conditions which could have created the classes possible for colonial and nationalist movements there.

As will be seen in Chapter Four, the party did not orientate their activism towards societies which they felt had not industrially developed to the point of being capable of delivering a nationalist movement within which they could work. It is difficult to see this position as anything other than a de facto organisational perspective that social and economic development had to occur before political independence could be meaningfully organised around. The patterns of anti-imperialist focus and activism seen within the CPGB may still be said to reflect the persistence of older racial hierarchies, reframed through the concept of socio-historical backwardness rather than biologically-grounded ideas of racial difference.\textsuperscript{37} As Karen Hunt has indicated in her work on gender and the SDF, “anti-racism” holds a specific meaning when applied to this era. While many activists in the pre-war Marxist left opposed anti-Semitism, African racial inferiority and cultural “backwardness” were treated as self-evidently true.\textsuperscript{38}

This is significant for understanding the development of the young CPGB’s anti-colonial politics. For the first four years of its existence there was little centrally-directed or party-wide anti-colonial work or particular enthusiasm about the topic. Opposition to different facets of racial exclusion, or advocacy for particular peoples still bound by


\textsuperscript{37} Ian Law, \textit{Red Racisms: Racism in Communist and Post-Communist Contexts} (Basingstoke, 2012), pp.144-6

\textsuperscript{38} Karen Hunt, \textit{Equivocal Feminists: The Social Democratic Federation and the woman question 1884-1911} (Cambridge, 1996), p.76
imperial rule, developed in a piecemeal fashion, with particular populations prioritised due to a perception of how “modernised” their societies had become, enabling the presentation of their populations as fellow-proletarians. These patterns were remarkably similar to those of its forerunner, the SDF, whose members’ ideas about the racially-determined capacities of various populations had been influenced by actors involved in colonial projects and marginalised groups’ re-elaboration of racial ideology to argue for better treatment within the empire.

At this point it is important to define what I mean by the term “race”. Histories and sociological studies of race often drawn a clear distinction between the “new racism” of the post-Second World War era, based largely on discourses of cultural difference, with the biologically-inflected variants of the preceding era. This categorisation has been criticised by theorists such as Stoler, who warns against a tendency amongst anti-racist historians to “flatten” older models of racism in the search for “pristine” biologically-rooted original racism. My research demonstrates that ideas of race could have pertinence in determining political attitudes without explicit reference to presumed biological underpinnings in the Edwardian and inter-war periods. Rather than relying on examples of vociferous racism or references to purely-biological readings of racial difference, I instead look to patterns of marginalisation, apathy, and the deployment of concepts which defined groups in line with patterns of broader social processes of racial formation.

My perspective here is informed by Hall, Gilroy, and Balibar’s respective works on race formation and racialisation. Stuart Hall drew on Althusser’s attempts to pull Marxist theorists away from ascribing an overdetermining role to the economic base in shaping social formations. Instead he emphasised that race relations are shaped not purely as responses to developments in the mode of production, but through an inter-relationship with political structures, existing ideologies, hegemonic social divides, and geographical factors. It is the interrelationship of these relatively-autonomous elements which produces fluctuations in racial thought.

The economic level is the necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining the operations at other levels of the society... We cannot assume an express relation of “necessary correspondence” between them.  

This understanding also appears in the work of Balibar, who emphasises the role that globally-segmented hierarchies of labour and relative relationships of economic power have in shaping the boundaries of racial groups. He nevertheless roots the ebbs and flows of race as an explanatory measure for social phenomena in the nature of localised political struggles, and especially in attempts by alienated classes to attain greater social power within the framework of the nation-state by appealing to the equalising nature of racial ties. Although Gilroy’s periodisation of racial thought does not necessarily apply to the subjects of this thesis, his understanding of race as “an impersonal, discursive arrangement”, structured through legal, spatial, and political differentiation, and susceptible to realignment in the face of social crises and war that would delegitimise particular forms of expression, adds weight to this approach. Likewise Tabili has highlighted the importance of not assuming the fixed nature of racial communities which could develop into inter-communal racial antagonism, instead emphasising how social and political changes created the idea of particular communities existing as ‘races’.

This understanding of race as not a series of fixed categories, but as a shifting discourse, shaped by political organisation, economic and legal differentiation, and for which content could be drawn from other social formations and divisions, is used throughout this thesis to establish how different groups could be ‘racialised’ at different points. I have given weight to the influence of subjective relationships, namely the ability of racialised outsiders to cohere in autonomous political formations, as well as the role of fluid interrelationships of ideologies of internationalism, nationality, and imperialism, in shaping perceptions of racial boundaries.

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44 Paul Gilroy, Postcolonial Melancholia, pp.36-42
I demonstrate through the course of this thesis that the patterns of anti-imperialism and anti-racism witnessed in both the SDF/BSP and inter-war CPGB are not as divergent as sometimes claimed.\textsuperscript{46} There existed a tendency to focus on particular populations due to the influence of racial discourses, which shaped perceptions of these groups’ capacity for political agency amongst British Marxists. The ability of racialised outsiders to cohere in autonomous political formations either within or alongside the parties they belonged to, and to utilise rhetorical strategies which could appeal to their comrades’ intellectual traditions and identities, would be key in overcoming exclusion and ensuring the accommodation of their interests. This practice often relied on the transnational lives of their subjects, which could furnish valuable connections and information to those outsiders in the British left seeking to make change, and could be either amplified or undermined by their ability to forge connections with the international institutions embodied in the Comintern and the Second International. Often the leaders of these struggles for inclusion came from relatively-privileged strata within racial minority groups, and were able to utilise their financial, political, and social resources to advance their cause within these Marxist organisations.

However these continuities should not detract from the wide-reaching change in the culture of the Marxist left with regards to anti-imperialist and anti-racist campaigning between 1899 and 1933. At the beginning of this period the abstract image of the universal proletarian was used to exclude non-white populations from the vision of international socialism. Whilst non-white populations played a crucial role in the economic life of Empire, the lack of a mature industrial-capitalist mode of production within colonised societies meant that British Marxists were often unfamiliar with the social stratification existing there. Resultantly these populations were not envisioned as belonging to the international proletariat, in spite of their role in the production process. Instead white workers were envisioned as the embodiment of economic modernity and historical progress, and their agency prioritised in socialist discussions of anti-colonial strategy.

This conception, based on anthropological, biological, and historicising knowledges often rooted in colonial projects, and which emphasised social development as a

\textsuperscript{46} Manjapra, \textit{Entanglement}, p.171
unilineal process upon which industrially-developed imperialist states and their respective populations had advanced furthest, would impact the political strategy and concerns of the Marxist left when it came to international relations and imperial power. Anti-imperialism was often emphasised as part of the socialists’ political arsenal due to the potential threat that imperialism posed to democracy and social progress within Britain itself. The strategy for ending Empire rested on the ability of white workers in the metropole to establish socialism domestically and subsequently liberate the colonies from without. In this model, violence and deprivation experienced by colonised populations was both lamentable and preventable, a demonstration of governmental and economic elites’ failure to live up to their proclaimed civilising mission and an exposure of their own savagery and backwardness. However the appeal against inequity was primarily targeted at white workers, whose interests and agency were prioritised.

Colonial expansion and war were seen as policies which abrogated the national traditions carried within the blood and culture of the British worker. Whilst British workers were simultaneously racialised and presented as embodying a universalist potential, racialised outsiders were presented as particular, their place in a future society unsegmented by class divisions uncertain. However, this did not inevitably lead to wholly negative characterisations. Colonised groups could be praised for their legal traditions, conceptions of property, literary achievements, political cultures, social divisions of labour, and even presumed shared ethnological origins. These positive representations, although still used to define the reified, timeless, essence of racialised populations and position them outside of the category of the universal worker, were used to illustrate these populations’ capacity for self-rule. Furthermore, these portrayals could be used to demonstrate the moral inequity of a continued denial of colonised populations’ autonomous political development, following the lead of sections of colonial nationalists.

Whilst Marxist universalism could furnish a tool for the exclusion of racialised outsiders who did not fit the assumed profile of the abstract proletarian, these groups took advantage of the concept to assert their place within the labour movement, within Marxist organisations, and within the world-historical process. Anti-racism and anti-imperialism developed in an episodic and uneven manner, often forced forward by
racialised outsiders drawing on their own transnational experiences and connections to engage in activities beyond the party’s purview. By 1933, the portrayals of certain groups formerly marginalised within the left had developed to the point where they were now identified as part of a universal subaltern class. A combination of grassroots anti-colonial campaigns alongside Comintern pressure helped foment this change in culture. Where these campaigns were most successful, their adherents deployed a discursive strategy of “strategic universalism,” popularising their causes within party ranks or gaining support from officials within the Comintern who could bequeath them resources and prestige. The growing centralisation of the Comintern throughout the 1920s put an end to these independent projects. They were either co-opted or else similar internationally-organised campaigns would be formed to take their place, gaining greater adherence from the party membership owing to the identification of internationalism with the structures of the Comintern. Where they were not able to cohere themselves with the organisational embodiment of internationalist ideology, they would fall by the wayside.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the relationship between anti-imperialism and racial ideology amongst leading members of the SDF/BSP in the wake of the Second South African War. The attitude that the SDF and its leading figures took towards imperialism has been debated by a number of historians of the labour movement. One of the weaknesses of this historiography has been the assumed symbiosis of racial ideology with support for imperialism. I attempt to counter this trend by asserting the centrality of racial ideology to the figures who dominated the literary culture of the organisation. This is evidenced by their interest in eugenics, their fears that emigration weakened the racial health of the British, and their references to racially-inflected anthropological texts which posited a uniquely British capacity for democratic egalitarianism. Building on this, I demonstrate how members of the group could rely on ‘positive racialisations’ which, whilst reifying the notion of inter-group difference and leaving little room for a universalist internationalism, could draw on arguments of

47 This term is drawn from Gilroy’s conception of a post-colonial anti-racist politics centred on a humanistic basis, encompassing a vision of totality which can incorporate the differences of lived experiences and shaped identities within divergent social and political conditions. Paul Gilroy, Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line (Cambridge, MA, 2000), pp.327-358
civilizational achievement, linguistic and legal traditions, and even shared ethnic roots to make the case for particular groups’ readiness for independence.

Developing Karen Hunt’s remarks on anti-racism amongst the group’s membership, I claim that while the organisation did not attempt to question the ontology of race, they did attempt to alter the taxonomical hierarchies of racial discourse. They challenged dominant perceptions of what it meant to be ‘civilised’ or a ‘savage’, sought to present the positive attributes of groups deemed incapable of self-rule, and inverted perceptions of a racial order in an attempt to advocate for colonised populations’ right to national self-determination. However, due to their continued belief in the logic and necessity of racially-distinct populations, this left the organisation with several inconsistencies in their pattern of anti-imperial advocacy.

Tellingly, few of their publications referred to the possibility of Africans’ independence and at times explicit statement of Africans’ racial inferiority were made by party members. Concurrent with this was a paternalistic view of anti-imperialism, which emphasised that the British working class must attain its own liberation before allowing the colonies an autonomous development. While the SDF/BSP had not explicitly called for exclusive solidarity of white labour, it is clear that they ascribed greater historical agency to both white workers in the colonies and Europe, and the British working class in particular as an embodiment of progressive traditions.

However, they did attempt to push at the boundaries of white labourism to ensure the inclusion of other racialised groups within the socialist movement, a perspective which can give greater context to the CPGB’s focus on particular populations.

The second chapter moves on to study the role of anti-Semitism within the SDF/BSP, and the tactics employed by Jewish socialists to both counter the anti-Semitism within the left as well as draw attention to the particular conditions of exclusion and poverty faced by migrant Jewish populations within Britain. I re-examine the 1916 split over the question of support for the war effort, paying specific attention to the role that anti-Semitic discourses played in crystallising and provoking the dispute. Traditionally, when anti-Semitism has been examined in the organisation, the Second South African War has been treated as the apex of this phenomenon, with the resultant grassroots revolt against Judenhass assumed to have prevented its future public proliferation, save a few sporadic utterances. However, through a reading of the party publications
during the course of the arguments of 1915, alongside reports made to the Security Services by pro-war BSP members and internal documents, I identify an outburst of a more-virulent strain of anti-Semitic argumentation. The abstract figure of the ‘Jew’ was replaced with a deliberate targeting of Jewish individuals who were seen to be destabilising not only the war effort, but the socialist movement itself. Whilst some scholars have alleged that this fixation with a conspiracy of Jewish financiers represents a direct legacy of anti-Semitic thought from Karl Marx through the organisations of the British left, I argue that the nexus of anti-Semitic anti-imperialist theories borrowed much from the anti-Disraelian Radical critique of empire and specifically the ideas of Henry Labouchère, with whom Hyndman was well-acquainted.

Drawing on the arguments of critical theorists of anti-Semitism, such as Werner Bonefeld and Marcel Stoetzler, I argue that both the South African War and the First World War represented crises of the ideal of the nation amongst leading SDF members. This caused a re-elaboration of socialist nationalism and a search for a homogeneous community to exercise popular sovereignty, necessarily positioning “international” Jewry as outside of the organic nation. Finally, this chapter examines the responses of Jewish socialists to these allegations which eschewed the previous model of positive racialisations. Instead Jewish involvement in working-class causes and movements was emphasised and a class-based universalistic appeal was made, prefiguring the approach that would successfully be adopted by racialised outsiders to draw attention to their causes within the CPGB.

The following two chapters, which address the inter-war Communist left, have been framed through a biographical approach, focusing on the careers of Arthur Field and Shapurji Saklatvala. Since the opening up of the Comintern archives in the 1990s, new source materials have allowed for a proliferation of Communist biography with a more nuanced analysis of personal networks, affiliations, and rivalries, which were previously unknown as Communist activists were often presented as idealised party archetypes. This approach allows for connections to be drawn between individuals and broader social and historical processes, and emphasises the role of individual agency and ability in a manner which can avoid the potential pitfalls of ascribing an over-
determining role to either broader economic shifts or the external diktats of Moscow. 48

Both the activists studied here found their varying levels of prominence in the Battersea labour milieu, known for its overlapping networks of trade unionists, Irish nationalists and Theosophists, which gave the local labour movement a pronounced anti-colonial ethos. The connection to the area allowed both of them to develop an independent practice of anti-racism rooted in political networks which they attempted to draw into the CPGB. Although they would collaborate on a number of projects, they ultimately diverged on issues of what identities could provide a successful basis for mass independence movements and which social groups to orientate towards within Britain.

The third chapter focusses on the little-studied labour activist and anti-imperialist Arthur Field, one of the founding members of both the ILP and the CPGB. Field’s connections to prominent Muslim activists in the Edwardian era are explored, and he is located as a figure that became central to a milieu which promoted an anti-racist Islamic universalism, despite never converting to the faith. Field would draw heavily from the political ideology of the Young Turks and Dusé Mohammed Ali, an early pan-Islamic and pan-Africanist activist whose central political concern was the political independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. He would shape Field’s understanding of imperialism as a political project based on the primacy of the white race and Christian faith. His connections to a number of South Asian Muslims and British converts from elite backgrounds before World War One influenced the political tactics he utilised as part of his anti-imperial activism. He focused on lobbying key government officials alongside dignitaries who emphasised themselves as legitimate partners in the imperial project, albeit with dissenting opinions on foreign policy. This background, whilst equipping Field with a political praxis that centred anti-imperialism during a juncture when many of his comrades eschewed such a focus, would also lead to his political isolation within the CPGB. Despite moments of engagement with other key activists who were influential within Comintern networks, Field insisted on the viability of religious identities as a basis for anti-colonial resistance. This insistence,

combined with the political eclecticism of the organisations he established and their reliance on intellectuals, left him marginalised during a period of growing ideological homogenisation and international centralisation within the Communist movement.

The final chapter draws on unused source material, predominantly from the Security Service files and materials emanating from the Comintern archives, to examine the transnational activism of Shapurji Saklatvala, one of the CPGB’s four successful parliamentarians, who represented Battersea North between 1922 and 1929. I examine the connections that Saklatvala was able to develop beyond the remits of the CPGB, drawing on personal relationships with fellow Indian émigrés, students, and barristers to develop a political network that could coordinate action between groups of activists in Britain and India. Whilst his efforts to gain support from the CPGB at the organisational level were largely unsuccessful in the party’s first years of operation, he used his own personal financial and political resources to root this network in both British and Indian labour movements. Using a discursive strategy which, whilst overstating the size of India’s industrial working class, was able to articulate a commonality of popular interests in both countries, Saklatvala stimulated greater labour attentiveness to the question of Indian independence. This allowed him to organise financial support for Indian strike waves and establish formal connections between British and Indian labour movements. I argue that Saklatvala only came to meaningfully engage with the international structures of the Comintern after this connection had been established and his resources diminished, complicating existing biographies of this leading Communist figure which portray a straightforward relationship with the CPGB. This shift from subaltern cosmopolitanism to formal internationalism only occurred once his independent activities had caused some of his political rivals to systemise their connections with the colonial world, and marks Saklatvala as a key figure in transforming the British Communists’ attitudes towards anti-colonialism.

Taken together, these four case studies demonstrate that the Marxist left in Britain gradually developed from a propagandistic to a pro-active approach in opposing racial marginalisation and imperial structures within this time period. This was not an innate result of the formation of the CPGB, as its wider membership often remained disengaged from anti-colonial campaigns. Instead the activism of racialised outsiders
will be shown to key to these developments in the 1920s. The success or failure of their initiatives to impact the broader party culture related to the extent to which they could successfully be integrated within Comintern structures, which was conditional upon the milieus they attracted, the ideas they propagated, and the networks of individuals involved.
Chapter 1: Racial Discourses and Anti-Imperialism in the Social Democratic Federation from the Second South African War to World War One

Human society, like everything else in the universe, is governed by the laws of evolution.  

Histories of the SDF have often treated racism and anti-racism in a dichotomised manner. A common narrative defines the organisational leadership as ‘Chauvinists’, a term encompassing virulent nationalism, racist and anti-Semitic thought, and pro-imperialism, and pits them against the ‘Internationalists’ who would guide the party towards its re-found as the CPGB in 1920. This chapter will challenge existing representations of this dichotomy by examining the omnipresence of racial ideology within the SDF, and demonstrating how its precepts could be drawn upon in the course of anti-imperialist agitation and visions of an internationalist society. It is my contention that racial ideology played a formative role in the politics of the SDF in the period between the Second South African War and the beginning of World War One. Racial precepts informed the anti-imperialism of leading members of the SDF, and their broader strategies for social transformation could be buttressed through appeals to popular racial ideologies.

This chapter will focus on several prominent SDF members, in particular Henry Hyndman, Harry Quelch, and Ernest Belfort Bax, and the extent to which racial ideology acted as both a determinant and means to express elements of their worldviews. It will establish how anti-imperialism was often posited on the basis of ‘positive racialisations’ which prioritised particular groups within the Empire, allowing for an examination in further chapters of the extent to which this paradigm was displaced by universalising discourses. It will also give context to the following chapter’s study of the opponents of anti-Semitism, demonstrating the extent to which they engaged in the broader culture of racial ideology prevalent within the SDF/BSP.

These figures have been chosen due to their differences in social background, international connections, and patriotic attachments, with the aim of demonstrating

49 Frank Tanner, Socialism and Human Nature (London, 1912), p.3
50 Redfern, Class or Nation, pp.43-6
the tractability of racial ideology which could be drawn on by adherents to different models of socialism and internationalism. Virdee claims that the growth of socialist racism had its ideological roots in socialist adherence to the nationality principle which became increasingly racialised through the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. However, the acceptance of racial segregation and the naturalisation of racial difference by self-described anti-patriots such as Bax necessitates examining other political influences on the activists involved in the SDF. These include the historicism implicit in their theories of civilizational development, their preference for elite agency over participatory politics, and their attempts to legitimise their politics through popular science. Although for Hyndman and Quelch racialised ideas were clearly linked to the centrality of nationality and a concept of the self-disciplined and rational citizen, the racial limits of Bax’s internationalist vision suggests that these were not essential prerequisites.

While some histories of the SDF have tended to conflate the views of the leadership and the organisation’s rank-and-file, this view has been challenged by accounts of SDF members’ grassroots interventions into the labour, suffrage, and unemployed movements. Despite the leadership’s monopolisation of control over party publications and nationally-espoused policies, there was a great deal of branch autonomy within the SDF, and many individuals held dual membership with the ILP, meaning the membership was not cloistered from the influences of the wider movement. This chapter is therefore not a comprehensive study of racial politics throughout the entire SDF. However given the prominence of these individuals within the organisation over three decades, their respective influences on its written culture, and their connections with the international movement, it would be impossible to ignore their influence over SDF theory or culture.

Hyslop has argued that the British working class cannot be understood within a methodologically-nationalist framework, and instead its ideology and tactics should be understood in the context of an imperial working class, whose patterns of migration

51 Virdee, *Racism*, pp.32-55
53 Johnson, ‘Social Democracy’, pp.81-83
and communication allowed for the development of a culture of “white labourism” which contained anti-capitalist critiques and racist assumptions. In this chapter I focus on how ideas which challenged racial taxonomies were drawn across similar axes, demonstrating that the conditions which gave birth to white labourism were also capable of producing challenges to its legacy. The ‘Old Guard’, whilst able to draw on the ideas and anxieties of the British middle-class social-reform movements, relied on the work of émigré nationalists and radical journalists based in the colonies to develop their understandings of imperial political life and social conditions. These were republished through their journals, newspaper, and the pamphlets of Twentieth-Century Press. While these ideas followed similar transnational patterns to white labourism, the inclusion of certain non-white racial groups within their racial solidarity suggests that race-as-colour did not define their limits.

The chapter begins with a brief history of the SDF, followed by an examination of four separate sources of knowledge which informed an overall concept of race, namely ideas of subjective agency, attitudes towards the nation-state, anthropological-historical discourses, and scientific and Darwinist influences. Following this is an examination of their approaches toward the Second South African War, the rising Indian Home Rule movement, and the prospects for revolution within Britain, to elucidate how these knowledges influenced the SDF leadership’s perspectives.

I demonstrate that a political anti-imperialism was developed by the leadership which drew on racialised identities often formed directly or indirectly through contact with imperial state-structures and intellectual knowledges developed by participants in colonial projects. The Boers could be envisioned as a prelapsarian pastoral people with socialistic tendencies in both law and property-holding, and Indians as the bearers of an intellectually-refined mature civilisation with the potential for communal ownership and political liberty (who could also provide a breaker on the rise of militaristic ‘Mongol’ societies). The African diaspora was often framed as evolutionarily under-

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developed, necessitating segregation, although this was couched in paternalistic phraseology. While explicit advocacy of racial identities as the basis for political action was discouraged within the SDF, the ideas of racial-cultural essences could be used in tandem with class-based arguments to develop an anti-imperial advocacy, and ideas of racial commonality were used to make direct arguments for political solidarity. The capacities of racial groups to autonomously govern themselves were determined by their presumed relationship to levels of civilisation and savagery. Although these levels were formally identified with Marxian notions of historical stages, defined by modes of production, often they were measured through reference to political institutions and cultural phenomena, reflecting an organisational tendency to focus on political reform as the solution to economic inequality.

As syndicalism grew within both the labour movement and the SDF, debates around the merits of industrial action could be infused with these racial precepts. Hyndman and the electoral wing of the SDF made reference to the racial health of the British working-class to bolster their arguments. Their perspective prioritised political action led by prominent members over the mobilisation of working-class individuals through industrial action, which was feared as potentially fractious to social unity. This approach could be justified through reference to prominent precepts of eugenics and the National Efficiency movements. White British workers could be portrayed as a population that had been racially degraded both morally and physically due to the slums’ influence, as well as one which was losing its most courageous and self-sacrificing members through emigration. This had rendered them a group who could not save themselves and thus required a socialist political revolution led from above. Furthermore, the SDF’s inability to sustain and consolidate new members could be justified through reference to these ideas.

**The ‘Old Guard’, Citizenship and Agency**

The SDF developed out of the Democratic Federation, a radical organisation concerned with land reform and widening democratic participation, established under the leadership of Hyndman in 1880. In 1884, the national conference adopted a socialist programme and the group was re-christened as the SDF. The organisation’s
membership initially drew heavily from London’s Radical clubs, and thus its ideological content bore a number of similarities to longer-standing British traditions of working-class radicalism which emphasised the need for greater democratic reforms to allow workers to wield the power of the state in their own interests. A number of prominent positivists were also involved in the organisation, such as FJ Gould, and debates and discussions between positivists and socialists were published in a number of the organisation’s journals.

While the group demonstrated a longevity that was rare for the various small groups of the British Marxian left, it also never proved able to consistently consolidate new recruits, leaving the organisation with a high turnover of members, and a leadership well-versed in dealing with challengers. Similar problems were faced in holding on to intellectuals, leaving its theoretical output somewhat scant when compared with its continental sister-groups or rival British socialist organisations. However, what its members lacked in theoretical depth they certainly made up for in self-belief, considering themselves to be the only true carriers of Marx’s legacy in Britain. While remaining formally on the periphery throughout the foundational years of the Labour Party, voting to leave the Labour Representation Committee after their annual conference in 1901, SDF activists still joined local LRC’s and took part in joint trade union activities. In 1911, after a conference where the group merged with sections of the ILP and several local socialist societies, the SDF was relaunched as the British Socialist Party, though the fusion had little impact on either the group’s theory or apparatus. In 1916 debates over the nature of the war and the organisations relationship to it forced a party split, during which the Old Guard of the organisation, including the much-venerated Hyndman, were expelled.

Hyndman may retrospectively seem an unlikely candidate to be the leader of the anti-colonial SDF. He was born to a family whose wealth was partially attained through investments in the slave trade, and throughout his life he sent his comrades letters written on the headed paper of the Ashanti Gold Syndicate on which he served as

56 Claeys, Imperial, pp.130-131
57 David Young, 'Social Democratic Federation membership in London', Historical Research, 78:201 (August,2005), pp.354-376
59 Laybourn, ‘Failure’, p.171
A self-confessed former “ardent imperialist”, whose political contemporaries accused him of directly profiting from the wars of empire, it is perhaps unsurprising that he has often been remembered as a Marxian apologist for empire. However, more recent studies have attempted to highlight countervailing tendencies within both his ideology and practice. Morris argues that Hyndman’s anti-Semitism, anti-Germanism, and jingoism during World War One have distracted historians from the consistent opposition to imperialism present in his work, which developed from a particular to a generalised critique of the phenomenon as profit-driven and key to capitalism’s expansion. Similarly Claeys has emphasised his connections with contemporary positivist theories of internationalism and sought to re-establish him as a figure in line with prevailing socialist thought on empire in pre-war Britain. Bevir’s emphasis on Hyndman’s deployment of Tory Radicalism to fill the “ethical gap” in early Marxian thought is of particular value, as it contextualises both Hyndman’s emphasis on the role of the statesman as well as the centrality of the nationality principle to his thought throughout his political career, spanning the 1880s to his death in 1921.

Hyndman cast a long shadow over the organisation, and a sizeable minority of the pamphlets published through its associated printing-house were directly written by him or were transcripts of the lectures he delivered. The centrality of the nation to his political philosophy is apparent, to the extent that it has been argued that he saw Marxism as a means of redeeming the British nation and preventing it from drifting into social chaos. Indeed he showed a strategic orientation towards existing British political institutions, emphasising the need for democratic control of state bodies to enable a disciplined move towards socialism through a tightly-managed revolution.

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61 LSEILP, ILP13/A contains leaflets which were purchasable in bundles of 1000, containing details of Hyndman’s colonial investments, namely ‘Hyndman’s Guns by Crastinus’, and ‘The “Father and Founder” of the Modern English Socialist Movement’. Hobsbawm, *Labouring*, p.234
62 Morris, ‘Anti-Colonialism’ pp.295-7, pp.311-4
63 Claeys, *Imperial*, p.157-8
64 Bevir, *Making* pp.78-81
Hyndman’s work evinces an ideal of responsible citizenship, with each individual disciplined and ready to serve the collective institutions of society above themselves. This becomes particularly evident in his discussions on violence within heated social movements. His image of “the mob” sharply contrasts with his notions of an effective, organised fighting force, described in militaristic terms. The former is composed of “half-drunk” men hired cheaply from the East End, who would throw knives and rocks in a cowardly manner, and were so ignorant as to be unable to tell one target from another.\textsuperscript{67} The latter however, were “men of peace” whose “disciplined relays” and “beautiful pummelling” could create an “admirably managed affair.”\textsuperscript{68}

As Stedman Jones has observed, the late nineteenth century was marked by a growing middle-class fascination with, and anxiety for, the working class’s material and moral health, spurring attempts not only to feed, clothe, and house the poor, but also to reform them in line with contemporary middle-class cultural and social values.\textsuperscript{69} Hyndman presented himself as a rival strain of this reforming spirit, engaging in public debates with such figures as Charles Bradlaugh, the veteran radical and secularist, and William Booth, the Methodist preacher and key figure of the Salvation Army.\textsuperscript{70} When commenting on the working-class autodidact Will Pearson, Hyndman would approvingly comment that he taught himself to speak with “as refined an accent and intonation as a thoroughly educated member of society”.\textsuperscript{71} Though Hyndman would often violently disagree with the ideas of the middle-class reformers, he shared their conception of remaking the working class into a body which could adhere to the morals and cultural tenets common to his own background.\textsuperscript{72} Hyndman’s proclivity for bombastic and revolutionary rhetoric, coupled with highly middle-class sensibilities, became a running-joke amongst contemporaries. George Bernard Shaw, in \textit{Man and Superman}, parodied Hyndman through the figure of Jack Tanner, a romantic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} HM Hyndman, \textit{The Record of an Adventurous Life} (London, 1911) \hfill \textit{https://www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1911/adventure/index.html} \hfill \textit{[Accessed 03/09/17]}
\item \textsuperscript{68} HM Hyndman, \textit{Further Reminiscences} (London, 1912) \hfill \textit{https://www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1912/further/index.html} \hfill \textit{[Accessed 03/09/17]}
\item \textsuperscript{69} Gareth Stedman Jones, \textit{Languages of Class: studies in English working class history, 1832-1982}, (Cambridge, 1983) pp.188-198
\item \textsuperscript{70} Social Democratic Federation, \textit{Will Socialism Benefit the English People? A Debate between HM Hyndman and Charles Bradlaugh} (London, 1907)
\item \textsuperscript{71} Paul Thompson, \textit{Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914} (London, 1967) p.121
\item \textsuperscript{72} James D Young, \textit{Socialism Since 1889: A Biographical History} (London, 1988), pp.44-6
\end{itemize}
revolutionary who could not escape the trappings of his background in spite of his protests that he was building a new way of being.73

Similarly, the strategy put forth by the leadership of the SDF for many years prioritised political reform over industrial action, based on a concept of social change reliant on the agency of elite actors to create socialism through parliamentary revolution, rather than working-class self-organisation. This notion was challenged during the Edwardian period from both within the SDF and without. The formation of the LRC in 1900 saw the ILP make headway with their strategy of orienting towards the trade unions. During the Edwardian period the trade union movement nearly tripled its membership, and industrial action became an increasingly-prominent feature of British economic and political life. The SDF did manage to grow, but often members left as quickly as they had joined, and numeric growth did not lead to either increased authority in the labour movement or a greater ability to effect political change.74 The conflict between unionist-inspired currents with the political actionists came into the SDF in the form of the Impossibilist revolt. The Impossibilists called for the foundation of revolutionary trade unions, an end to attempts at parliamentary reform and compromise with non-Marxist bodies, and the expulsion of the “diplomat” leadership of the SDF.75 A series of expulsions at the SDF’s conferences of 1903 and 1904 led to the exodus of the Impossibilists, however this was not the end of the conflict between relative emphases on trade unionism and political action. The formation of the BSP in 1911 saw the SDF merge with a number of ILP activists and members of smaller socialist societies. Though the new party had initially sought compromise it soon became dominated by the old leadership of the SDF and returned to its pre-existing policy, with Hyndman lambasting the syndicalists’ “floundering and hysterical propaganda” at the 1912 conference. This was confirmed by the release of an official BSP manifesto later that year, which emphasised the primacy of political action.76

Throughout this period, Hyndman was engaged in running battles with those who emphasised the agency of workers to create socialism, which contrasted his view with the working class requiring reform from external actors. In private he expressed his

73 Louis Crompton, *Shaw the Dramatist* (Nebraska, 1969) pp.80-83
74 Kendall, *Revolutionary*, pp.20-22, pp.25-28
75 Crick, *History*, pp.97-102, pp.165-9
76 Laybourn, ‘Failure’, pp.170-4
enthusiasm of the entry of the Countess of Warwick into the organisation, believing her presence to be a boon to the prospects of affecting change. Throughout his career he emphasised that even the attainment of social equality would not negate the necessity of authoritative leadership. In his strategy for the socialist conquest of power, the working class was to be educated in the tenets of socialism, which would be achieved by the exercise of the vote in favour of respectable socialist statesmen. As we shall see later in this chapter, this views would be both reinforced by, and at times expressed through, the precepts of eugenics and degeneration.

Harry Quelch was a working-class autodidact, an unskilled labourer who had worked in farms, biscuit factories and iron foundries. He taught himself French in order to read *Capital* in the early 1880s as no English translation was available, and later learnt German to better communicate with socialists overseas. A close ally of Hyndman’s, he certainly borrowed heavily from his views, although given that both were former-Conservatives and had been involved in the SDF in its early incarnation as the Democratic Federation, this suggests perhaps a similar outlook rather than mere copying from his more notable friend. On some questions he could veer to the left of Hyndman, for example taking a more hostile view of minimalizing socialist demands in the name of labour and socialist unity. Quelch had a direct influence on the articles published and republished in the SDF/BSP’s journal and newspaper. From 1892 to 1909, Quelch was the manager of Twentieth Century Press (which produced all SDF leaflets, pamphlets, journals and their weekly newspaper), and he also held the post of editor for both *Justice* and the monthly *Social Democrat* (which would become the *British Socialist* in 1911) until 1913, when his failing health prevented the fulfillment of his duties.

While space was opened for dissenting views, the materials published by Twentieth Century Press and the articles chosen for re-printing in both the *Social-Democrat* and *British Socialist* should be understood as representative of the opinions of Hyndman,

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78 Crick, *History*, p.23
79 Bax, ‘Henry Quelch’ in *Harry Quelch, Literary Remains* (1914), [https://www.marxists.org/archive/quelch/remains.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/quelch/remains.htm) [accessed 27/07/17]
80 Thompson, *Socialists*, p.125
81 Crick, *History*, p.315
Quelch, and their associates. Control of the press was not vested in the executive of the SDF; as a limited liability company its policy was determined by the directors who were elected by its shareholders. Initially, Hyndman owned over one-third of these shares, and he, Quelch, and HR Taylor were designated the trustees on behalf of the SDF, which owned less than one-fifth of the shares. Overall, the contributions from SDF members accounted for very little of the capital and resultant editorial control of the press’s publications. This singular control of the literary output of the organization was further evidenced by the refusal of the Old Guard to hand over control of Justice to the executive of the BSP after their 1916 split, and by the proliferation of anti-Bolshevik and anti-BSP pamphlets in the wake of the October Revolution.

Quelch’s writings, like Hyndman’s, gave a sense of the grave duty of responsible citizenship. His pamphlet, The Armed Nation called for universal military training, coupled with “proper education in the rights and duties of citizenship.” He hoped such schemes would lead to a sombre, respectful approach to warfare, rather than the “howling crowds ... in a frenzy of jingoist inebriety, [singing] bombastic songs of braggart imbecility” which he felt characterised British workers’ approach.

This combination of influences created an organisational leadership which viewed a socialist revolution as being a parliamentary revolution, one which could only be accomplished by a twofold strategy of educating the working class in the need for a collectivist ethic, and arguing for democratic reforms which would allow the workers’ representatives to enact socialism through parliament. Existing institutions and conditions were to be improved, not negated. Trade union, anti-colonial, and social movements, rather than being viewed as advancing a socialist or collectivist consciousness, were treated with distrust by the leadership for their ideological shortcomings. It was assumed that they would fight only for sectional and short-term goals, rather than the socialist reorganisation of society.

**The SDF, Nationality and Imperialism**

83 Tsuzuki, Hyndman, pp.278-9
84 Rothstein, House, p.71
85 Harry Quelch, Social-Democracy and the Armed Nation (London, 1907), pp.10-11
86 Bevir, Making, pp.81-82
The SDF leaders’ approach to imperialism and anti-imperialism would be shaped by their experience of war and frequently correlated with their approaches to the nation-state. A number of the founding members of the organisation had been adherents of James Bronterre O’Brien and his vision of radicalism which emphasised the centrality of democratic reform to achieving social reform. In many ways the debates which occurred within the organisation reflected an attempt to come to terms with the legacy of the advance of democracy and its associated ideological forms, including the centrality of nationhood to sovereignty. To many socialists, the idea of popular sovereignty and democratic rule was located in the kernel of the nation-state. To evoke the principle of nationality was to simultaneously call for democracy.

However, there was disagreement over the extent to which socialists should identify with the nation, whether there was such a thing as a truly national interest, and what the role of nationality would be in a future international commonwealth. Hyndman frequently invoked the concept of a national interest. His writings on the Boer War indicate a belief that imperialism was the creation of a cosmopolitan force and damaging to the entire British nation, stating that “an international gang of swindlers... was able to partly bribe and partly force the British Government... to the injury of the entire nation.” He publicly lambasted the International Socialist Bureau’s opposition to armaments spending, claiming that British national interests demanded a large navy to ensure the import of foodstuffs in wartime, thus ensuring national self-determination could not be violated. Other Hyndmanites promoted similar ideas; Harry Quelch at the 1911 party conference proposed a motion calling for a citizens’ army. His speech called on BSP members to be patriotic internationalists rather than “anti-nationalists”, decried imperialism as a violation of patriotic principles, and demanded national self-determination for Egypt, India, and England.

AP Hazell, a founding member of the SDF who regularly visited Marx’s house and had found prominence through both his widely-read pamphlet summarising Capital and work

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87 Bevir, Making, p.111.
90 HM Hyndman, Colonies and Dependencies: Report to the International Socialist Congress, held in Amsterdam, August 14th-20th, 1904 (London, 1904), p.9
within the Socialist Sunday School movement, would similarly present a patriotic vision of socialism. In a 1910 pamphlet on the historical development of capitalism, his treatise culminated by playing on an element of progressive patriotic mythology, exclaiming “Hurrah for John Ball and the Commonwealth of England!” Removing four words from Marx’s famous dictum, the pamphlet ended with “Workers! You have nothing but your chains to lose,” removing the cosmopolitan framing of one of socialism’s most famous slogans.

This was by no means universal, for Bax was a vocal anti-patriot within the party. Though the accusation of anti-nationalism would be levelled at a number of SDF members by Hyndman, Quelch, and their allies, Bax actively embraced the label. While Hyndman would centre the principle of nationality, Bax saw the ideology as having transcended its universalist and egalitarian conception evident during periods of the French Revolution. He felt it had become an idea which misdirected social movements towards creating further sub-divisions of humanity, and served as an ideological pillar of the bureaucratic state. He was privately-educated, well-versed in German philosophy, and fiercely anti-theistic, critiquing existing morality as a pure social construct grounded in Christian principles. His personal emphasis on the negation of existing circumstances and values gave him a greater theoretical basis to challenge the genealogical presentation of the nation. His counterposing of national affinity to an identification with humanity, as well as his early critiques of imperialism’s relationship to expanding markets, show hallmarks of his prolonged engagement with positivist societies. Of a similar social background to Hyndman, Bax was one of the few members of the BSP who consistently produced theoretical articles, and would work to combine strains of German idealism and French positivism into his work, ultimately suggesting the inevitability of socialism due to its rational nature, and the dialectical development of consciousness into a new faith of rationality. His relationship with the SDF leadership was at times tumultuous, having worked with William Morris to

96 Claeys, *Imperial*, pp.158-161
97 Bevir, *Making*, pp.51-55
split the group in 1885 and form the Socialist League over a dispute with Hyndman about nationalism. He grew disillusioned with the League’s drift towards anarchism and re-joined the SDF. Despite his differences with Hyndman, he remained a key part of the organisation until leaving with the leadership during the 1916 split, afterwards going on to reprise his role as loyal opposition in Hyndman’s short-lived National Socialist Party.

In an exchange of articles with the Positivist Professor Beesly, Bax criticised the idea of a national loyalty by contrasting contemporary nation-states with historic nations. He felt that previously the nation referred to a different social institution which was an outgrowth of the family principle, and thus held an “organic nature.” Modern nation-states, however, he linked with the development of capitalism, before asserting that any patriotic loyalty could only create divisions amongst the working class. He was not the only dissenter from the leadership’s nationally-focussed vision of socialism; the Central Hackney branch, which became one of the most ardently pro-peace branches during the wartime conflicts, even tried to change the name of the BSP to the International Socialist Party on two separate occasions.

The social-nationalists’ support for the universal idea of nationalism as guarantor-of-democracy would be coupled with a presentation of patriotism in the British context as particularly progressive. At the 1914 Conference the Chair called on participants to sink their differences and fight for unity, to allow “social-democrats here in Britain to ... secure the position in the Red International which our country’s traditions... make possible.” On several occasions the nationalists point to British political traditions of political asylum, of limited monarchy, and of a pacific expansion of democratic measures which had avoided Continental-style violent revolution.

The SDF professed a formal anti-imperialist stance, demanding home rule for all national groups and races within the British Empire. At the 1908 conference, party members expressed pride in their representatives’ intervention at the Stuttgart

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98 Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Love of Country’, *The Social Democrat*, 4:9 (September, 1900), pp.272-274
99 BSP, *Second Annual Conference*, p.11, BSP *First Annual Conference*, p.27
Congress of the International Socialist Bureau the year before. The Chairman favourably commended the resolution on colonialism, partially-drafted by Hyndman, which had condemned the existence of Empires and refuted the notion that socialists could manage colonial projects in the interests of colonised populations.\(^{102}\) However, whilst self-government for all was formally the position of the SDF, only those groups who were deemed to be civilizationally-mature were in practice advocated for by the British socialists. Morris’ assertion that in the wake of the Boer War Hyndman stopped qualifying which peoples were deserving of independence does not seem to hold up.\(^{103}\) Hyndman’s motion on colonial holdings to the Stuttgart Congress had largely drawn upon India as a case study in imperial cruelty and the illegitimacy, drawing on the suppression of native industry and the destruction of “ancient and beautiful arts and crafts”.\(^{104}\) When Home Rule was discussed in the newspaper or referenced in motions to conferences, only a few countries were ever listed by name; India, Egypt, China, South Africa and Ireland. The British Empire’s African holdings are conspicuous in their absence from party discussions on anti-colonialism. At the party’s 1909 conference only one motion mentioned imperialism; it was a message of “sincere greetings” to the people of India which wished them early emancipation from Imperial rule.\(^{105}\) In the run-up to the 1910 General Election, *Justice* contained articles on the crimes of both previous Liberal and Tory governments, and once again, the only colonial issues mentioned related to the Boers, the Indians, and the Egyptians.\(^{106}\) Similarly, during the BSP’s conference at Easter, 1914, delegates discussed issues of freedom of association and indentured labour within the Empire, but only India and South Africa were mentioned in relation to these resolutions.\(^{107}\) Although formally committed to Home Rule for all, only those populations whom SDF members felt comfortable asserting the cultural achievements of would receive much attention in their propaganda.


\(^{103}\) Morris, ‘Anti-Colonialism’, p.312

\(^{104}\) Hyndman, *Colonies*, p.11


\(^{107}\) Third Annual Conference (London, 1914), p.17, p.26
Darwinism and Eugenics; the biological contours of racial delineation

The scientific legitimacy of their branch of socialist thought was important to many SDF members. *Justice* would regularly carry articles from the Russian anarchist and zoologist Peter Kropotkin carrying a collectivist and mutualist conception of biological evolution in the 1880s.\(^{108}\) McLaughlin-Jenkins maintains that the editors of *Justice* merely drew on popular scientific theories as a legitimising strategy for their views, due to the high cultural authority of scientific knowledge. While she mentions the advertisement of Alfred Russell Wallace’s books on land reform in *Justice*, she does not elaborate on how his theories impacted the group’s politics.\(^{109}\)

The SDF membership were not ignorant of Darwinian thought, and a number of them tried to integrate it into their political outlook, even going as far as to host public lectures on the relationship between evolution and socialism.\(^{110}\) Authors in *Justice* would attack Herbert Spencer’s marrying of individualist liberalism with evolutionary precepts, claiming that both he and his adherents had omitted the fact that evolution’s culmination and guarantor would come in the form of socialism. Hyndman was an admirer of Wallace, the naturalist and biologist who opposed Spencerian evolutionary thought during the 1880s and declared himself a socialist in 1889, to the extent that in 1910 he even sent him a birthday card commending him on the political importance of his work.\(^{111}\) In Wallace’s younger days, when he had been a philosophical devotee of JS Mill, Hyndman had sought him to convert to socialism in a series of letters, although it was ultimately his reading of Edward Bellamy which brought him to the cause.\(^{112}\) Wallace’s view of evolutionary development relied on a more geographically-determinant basis than many of his contemporaries and would in the 1870s draw on climactic theory to assert the superiority of the “colder” European societies to those of the tropics. However, it should be noted that he did emphasise the complexity of “primitive” societies and renounced a unilineal view of social evolution into

\(^{108}\) Whilst Hyndman and Kropotkin rarely saw eye-to-eye, there was an overlap in their political outlook with both taking inspiration from the medieval commune as an example of a lost organic community. Matthew Adams, *Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism* (Basingstoke, 2015), p.25, p.86


\(^{110}\) LSEILP, ILP 13/1910/10, ‘Lantern Lectures on Evolution and the Coming of Social-Democracy’

\(^{111}\) Greta Jones, ‘Eugenics and Social Policy between the Wars’, *The Historical Journal*, 25:3 (September, 1982), pp.24-26

\(^{112}\) ‘Dinner to Mr Hyndman’, *The Times*, March 8th, 1912, p.7
increasingly-perfect forms along European lines.¹¹³ These theories would be deployed in overt manner to describe German political behaviour during the factional dispute of 1915-16, and can be implicitly seen in the SDF discussions on black Africans.

This Darwinian influence existed alongside an interest in eugenics, with the Eugenics Society delivering several lectures to BSP branches from 1909 onwards.¹¹⁴ Hyndman’s own rhetoric demonstrates a synchronicity with attitudes of the official Eugenics movement on the corrupting nature of contemporary life. Whilst claiming that human society had reached the potential to go beyond “survival of the fittest” as an organising principle, he maintained that it had impacted the culture, ideology, and physiology of the working class, comparing those who had survived the slums to vermin.¹¹⁵ As Stack notes, the language of eugenics was drawn upon by fin-de-siècle socialists to point to the dystopic nature of existing living and working conditions for sections of the population, and Hyndman it appears, was no exception.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Piers Hale observed the propensity for views on evolutionary development to influence the strategy of various socialist figures including William Morris and George Bernard Shaw.¹¹⁷ Drawing on this perspective, Hyndman’s advocacy of a parliamentary revolution led from above, which could lead to a renewed emphasis on the rights and duties of disciplined citizenship, can be seen as not only expressed through evolutionary and eugenic precepts, but actively reinforced by them.

SDF members were able to compartmentalise their views of human development to understand and explain social phenomena. Although they largely drew on economic theories of historical development, where none had been fully elaborated (as was the case with imperialist expansion) they used ideas of cultural and intellectual influences, which could be rooted in physiological difference, to augment their arguments. The notion of defending the race from degeneration, while not only reflective of an anxiety over working-class conditions and political potential, could also fall in line with a tenet

¹¹³ Jones, ‘Eugenics’ pp.26-31
of the mainstream Eugenics movement, of policing the boundaries of the British race from groups deemed lower on the racial hierarchy.  

**Anthropology and Historicism**

The BSP’s literature contains a number of references to racial groupings which, in their totality, demonstrate a worldview in which biological differences were influential while being potentially mediated through social conditions. These races were placed within a hierarchy based on the extent to which they were thought to have developed civilisation, which was measured through the development of a capitalist mode of production and social relations familiar to the British socialists.

In their frequently-reprinted *A New Catechism of Socialism*, Bax and Quelch described civilisation as being the stage of human development wherein a material surplus enabled the development of private property and class relations, contrasting this with “primitive, barbaric or tribal” societies which they felt expressed the primitive communism Engels had described.  

This pamphlet contains a number of references which contextualise Bax’s and Quelch’s views on culture, civilisation, and historical development. They unsurprisingly referred to Lewis Henry Morgan, whose work had been so influential in Engels’ approaches to historical materialism, and for whom cultural institutions and political cultures could be carried within the body itself, thus necessitating racial inter-breeding to raise the civilizational levels of non-white societies.

Sir George Lawrence Gomme’s work, which drew on legal codes as historical measures, and theorised that property rights’ development in England had been based on collective rather than individual holdings, was approvingly referred to. However, this unilineal model of social evolution was tempered by reference to Henry Maine’s work on *Ancient Law and Village Communities*. Maine’s work, emphasising the distinction between traditional and modern societies, with the former

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118 Dan Stone, ‘Race in British Eugenics’, *European History Quarterly*, 31:3 (July 2001), pp.397-400
121 Bax and Quelch, *Catechism*, pp.21-22
based on customary arrangements and the latter dominated by a developed legal coda necessary to eclipse the binding principle of kinship, was to lay the basis for a number of colonial administrators to justify the policies of Indirect Rule.\textsuperscript{122} Similarly, the work of William Robertson Smith, a pioneer of the comparative study of religion, was also positively recommended. Smith’s writings, based on travels in the Near East, affirmed the supremacy of Western European and specifically Protestant cultural habits, but rooted the development of all faiths from a shared phase of totemic worship. While by no means a cultural relativist, his outlook was premised on the possibility of development within non-Western societies, but only if they received proper tutelage, something which he felt was sorely lacking in exploitative European imperial policies.\textsuperscript{123}

Taken together, these sources point to a viewpoint based on a unilineal model of social development, whereby societies grew in complexity and size, assumedly to a point where they would culturally, politically, and economically resemble the liberal-democratic capitalist states. However, the racial temperaments of populations were assumed to play a factor in determining the pace at which this happened, and could potentially limit the historical stage which societies could advance to. Combining these notions with Marxian historical materialism, social groups would be linked to phases of economic development, which were ultimately judged through characterisations of political and social culture, and reflective of racial-cultural essences.

These ideas were bound together with the evolutionary precepts outlined in the previous section to create a contradictory view of social development. On the one hand, capitalism’s inevitable decline was located in its contradiction of socialised production and individual ownership, forcing class conflict. On the other, the influence of human intelligence, passed on through culture and race, was seen as determining the complexity of given societies and the progress of peoples along a fixed historical timeline. Two pamphlets by Frank Tanner give an example of how one individual could compartmentalise these different understandings of social evolution. Socialism and the Individual presents in the main a classically Marxist theory of social change based on

\textsuperscript{122} Karuna Mantena, \textit{Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism} (Princeton, 2010), pp.148-150

\textsuperscript{123} Bernhard Maier, \textit{William Robertson Smith: His Life, His Work and His Times} (Tübingen, 2009) pp.163-179
class conflicts innate in different modes of production, with ideology reflecting the material needs of given classes. Socialism and Human Nature, however, gives more weight to the subjective influence of human intelligence and “enlightenment” in changing socio-cultural practices such as slavery and cannibalism.

**Defining and Defending ‘The Boer’**

During the course of the Second South African War, pro-war advocates drew on themes of imperial identity and inclusion to present the British efforts in a positive light and win both public and international support. In keeping with the imperial mantra of colonial expansion to civilise and end slavery, British imperialists and their supporters attempted to present the war as part of a campaign for African rights. From social reformers such as Josephine Butler to Edward VII in his 1901 parliamentary opening speech, a broad coalition unified in support of a war to secure Native rights and place all white colonists on an equal democratic footing. The enfranchisement of the Uitlanders was highlighted as a key war aim by state propaganda, with Chamberlain making the case that this would lead to better opportunities for British working-men in the Cape.

Opposition to the war was given organisational form by several organisations including the Transvaal Committee, the South African Conciliation Committee, and Stop-the-War. The Transvaal Committee was established and organised largely by members of the caucus ‘Liberal Forwards’, which had been established in 1896 to promote a Gladstonian conception of foreign policy based on the defence of Christian populations. It managed to draw only fourteen Liberal MPs into its ranks, largely from the fringes of the party, although they were joined by CP Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian, and several Irish nationalist MPs, whilst forging connections with representative of Kruger’s government based in Britain. Their attempts to mobilise the public to

124 Frank Tanner, Socialism and Individual Liberty (London, 1911) p.6-9
125 Frank Tanner, Human Nature, p.3, p.8
126 Donal Lowry, ‘The Boers were the Beginning of the End?: The Wider Impact of the South African War’ in Donal Lowry (ed.) The South African War Reappraised (Manchester, 2000), pp.205-7
prevent the outbreak of war were unsuccessful, though they continued addressing radical and working-men’s clubs throughout the war, calling for any peace to be a just one.\textsuperscript{130} The SACC pursued a similar agenda of countering government propaganda and attaining an early peace, though it eschewed working amongst the labouring classes. Instead they preferred to initiate humanitarian appeals and issue exposés of Boer women and children’s ill-treatment inside the concentration camps.\textsuperscript{131} The Stop-The-War movement, established by dissident Methodist minister Silas K Hocking, and led by journalists WT Stead and WM Crook, was to take a more vociferous opposition to the war, attacking Liberals and Tories alike for their part in it. Though more detached from the party politics than the Transvaal Committee, its Methodist founders influenced the rhetoric of the organisation; their leaflets and communiques often expounded the moral necessity of opposing a war which, to their minds, disgraced Christendom. They advocated for the Boers on the basis of white racial-solidarity and a shared Christianity.\textsuperscript{132}

It was not just the Radical wing of the Liberal Party or the predominantly middle-class Evangelical movement which would oppose the war. Over 100 labour leaders would sign a joint statement condemning it as a manifestation of capitalists’ desire for cheap labour. George Cadbury, noted Quaker and Chocolatier, was so impressed with the statement that he funded the printing and distribution of over three million leaflets featuring its text.\textsuperscript{133} Collaboration with Radical members of the Liberal Party in shared organisations was to prove controversial, with some SDF members at the 1900 party conference arguing against any collaboration with Liberals, and still others calling for electoral support for those who were anti-war and in favour of particular domestic reforms.\textsuperscript{134} Nevertheless, SDF members would campaign through STW, and in several local branches such as Northampton and Battersea, would form the group’s activist base. Over 300,000 copies of the SDF’s anti-war manifesto were distributed, speakers’ tours were held, and numerous articles in the party publications were given over to

\textsuperscript{131} Paula Krebs, Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War (Cambridge, 1999), p.71. Price, Imperial, p.235
\textsuperscript{133} Davey, Pro-Boers, pp.124-5
\textsuperscript{134} Social Democratic Federation, Report of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Social Democratic Federation, 1900 (London, 1900), pp.7-11
criticism of the war. However, the SDF did not develop a distinct anti-war argument from those organisations born of the Liberal Party or the Evangelical movement, often relying on defences of the Boer Republics couched in terms of morality or based on the political culture of the Boers. 135 This was not unique to the SDF within the labour movement. Keir Hardie would praise the Boers’ republican government and comment that their economic system was far closer than Britain’s to the socialist ideal, while Edward Carpenter would claim that they were descended from “some of the best people in Europe”, and that their puritanical religiosity did not detract from their idyllic, pastoral lifestyle. 136

Given the role of nationality as the basis for demanding political and social reforms, it is unsurprising that the SDF’s approach to the war was dominated by an anti-imperialist perspective which posited itself as the true patriotism. 137 An article originally published in Vorwärts, the SPD’s newspaper, reprinted in the Social Democrat, warned the English of the danger of engaging in a protracted campaign against the Boers. The reader was implored to acknowledge “that the interests of England demand that the war should come to an end”, and that any protracted campaign in South Africa could leave the Empire open to Russian attack. 138 Another article from 1901 warned readers that the danger of imperial war was the risk of causing their own civilisation to collapse, threatening to bring barbarism home. 139 The SDF complained of pro-war advocates’ “abnormal amount of conceit which is generally mistaken for patriotism”, rejecting accusations that they were traitors to the nation by maintaining that they were merely warning fellow Britons’ of the dangers of imperialism. 140

In this environment, the SDF’s response to the war was to present a counter-narrative of the cultures of Boers, Brits, and Black Africans, venerating Boer culture and presenting them as a more egalitarian and democratising cultural group. While Kaarsholm identified this romanticist tendency within the ILP, his characterisation of the SDF as developing a more-consistent opposition to imperialism based on anti-

135 Crick, History, pp.161-2
136 Koss, Pro-Boers, pp.54-5
137 Ward, Red Flag, pp.74-5
139 ‘Imperialism and the Coming Crisis of Democracy’, Social Democrat, 5:9 (November, 1901), pp.286-7
140 ‘Waking up John Bull’, Social Democrat, 5:10 (October, 1901), pp.299-301
capitalism draws in the main on works from Rothstein and Bax.\textsuperscript{141} SDF publications were able to draw together an opposition to imperialism as capitalist expansionism alongside a racial-cultural veneration of the Boers. In an article originating in the \textit{Westminster Magazine} but republished in the \textit{Social Democrat}, the author criticised the perception of the Boers as “rude and inhospitable”, asserting their lack of class distinctions and openness. Hinting at a climactic determinism, the author states that if the Boers appeared uncouth “we may safely attribute it to the rough, half-civilised condition of the country, and its lack of refining influences”.\textsuperscript{142} Another re-printed article by the American pro-Boer Webster Davis claimed the Boers demonstrated numerous admirable traits, “good nature... generous spirit... affection for their families and ... frank and manly independence” before moving on to describe how they were “neat and clean in appearance” and took pride in the order of their homes and their public spaces.\textsuperscript{143} This cultural adulation was commonplace in the SDF’s journal during the war. In a short article written solely to improve Hyndman’s mood during a pessimistic turn, he was encouraged to “fight like a Boer republican!”.\textsuperscript{144}

During the war Twentieth-Century Press would publish a number of pamphlets by the British-Born Radical Liberal and anti-imperialist Francis Reginald Statham. Statham, who had worked as a journalist in South Africa for some twenty years before the war, was paid a monthly stipend by the Kruger government both throughout the war and the four years preceding it, to produce articles, books, and lectures which could counteract the negative images of the Boers presented in the British press.\textsuperscript{145} Statham would valorise the role of the Boers in the region, claiming:

These are the men to whom South Africa owes its civilization. But for their endurance and courage as pioneers, South Africa would still be a waste and howling wilderness, peopled only by wild beasts and savages.\textsuperscript{146}

In an article originally written for the \textit{Social Democrat} he would also praise what he saw as the multi-racial origins of the Boers, claiming that their various origins had

\textsuperscript{142} Julian Jenkins, ‘The Boer’, \textit{Social Democrat}, 4:7 (July, 1900), p.174
\textsuperscript{143} ‘The Boers as seen by Webster Davis’, \textit{Social Democrat}, 5:11 (November, 1901), pp.341-2
\textsuperscript{144} ‘Apathy Regarding Social Conditions’, \textit{Social Democrat}, 5:10 (October, 1901), p.309
\textsuperscript{145} Davey, \textit{Pro-Boers} pp.44-45, p.119
\textsuperscript{146} F Reginald Statham, \textit{South Africa and the Transvaal: The Story of a Conspiracy} (London, 1900), p.16
endowed this population with “the piety of a Scotchman, the patience of a Hollander, and the patriotism of the old-world Englishman.”\(^{147}\) The article linked Boer culture to the spread of civilisation, declaring the Boers an active racial group in contrast to passive, static African society. Statham drew on the theories familiar to SDF members, of cultural traits being passed on through bloodlines, of the advance of developed and more-egalitarian civilisations being associated with ethnically-defined racial groups, to advocate on the Boers’ behalf.

According to Hirshfield the flipside of Boerophilia was Negrophobia, and a minimising of black Africans’ marginalisation within Boer society.\(^{148}\) Statham certainly embodied this idea, stating that although black Africans were an inferior race in the eyes of the Boers, their consistent firm treatment was far better than the British approach of alternating between “coddling” them and “shoot[ing] him down for being ‘cheeky’”.\(^{149}\) This approach advocated a paternalistic control over Africans, prioritising the white Boer population.

Bax would rail against attempts to draw on Boers’ treatment of Black workers as a justification for war, and in the process would minimise their mistreatment. Referring to the crimes of the British Empire against black African populations, he asserted that the Boers treated them well, even attempting to prevent their over-exploitation.\(^{150}\) Bax had consistently advocated an approach of non-intervention into “barbarous and savage” parts of the world, drawing him into conflict with the colonial paternalism of elements of German Social-Democracy.\(^{151}\) He had even advocated an alliance between European workers and native populations in a common struggle against their mutual exploiters.\(^{152}\) In an article for *Justice* in 1899, he criticised workers who voted for imperialist parties, supported “forward” policies abroad, or celebrated heroes like

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\(^{149}\) Statham, *The Truth*, pp.9-10

\(^{150}\) *Justice*, August 3rd, 1901. *Justice*, 27th July, 1901


\(^{152}\) Crick, *History*, pp.158-159.
Kitchener, as they were complicit in the murder of native peoples and the creation of fresh chains for the working class.\textsuperscript{153}

Bax displayed sympathy for the non-white subjects of empire, but his aforementioned debate with Professor Beesly provides greater context to his views. In arguing against the national-principle he stated “If we can love a nation of forty millions we can love humanity at once, or at least that section of humanity which stands on the same general level of development as ourselves, viz, the European peoples and their offshoots.”\textsuperscript{154} This quote reveals the limits of Bax’s inter-racial vision; while seeing the potential of a common anti-capitalist alliance, he could not envision a non-white socialist society emerging as a result of non-intervention. In the following years he would go further, demonstrating a biologically-deterministic view of race-as-colour when it came to discussing the African diaspora. In a speech given to the central branch of the SDF, he called for the division of the USA into two separate nations, one in which black people would have no vote, and one in which white people would have no vote. He claimed that

[The] lower races stand in the same relation to higher races that children do to adults. Their minds are so far different from the former, that there is no basis of organic equality between the two. In this case, of course, of lower and higher races, while the attempt to amalgamate them in one commonwealth can only be productive of mischief, the true solution is that the organically lower race should be left to itself to work out its own social destiny.\textsuperscript{155}

Whilst advocating black African political autonomy, Bax grounded this in a belief of innate biological inferiority which was expressed through social structures, and ensured that multiracial societies would lead to social division which were liable to capitalist exploitation. His policies of liberation rested on the necessity of segregation.

Bax was not alone in using this metaphor of the life-cycle to describe racial difference amongst labour movement intellectuals. The Webbs employed similar phraseology to describe non-white populations, arguing that such differences in “maturity” necessitated the continuation of imperial control, albeit refocussed on tutelage rather

\textsuperscript{153} Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Imperial Extensions and Socialist Intentions’, \textit{Justice}, (May 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1899).
\textsuperscript{154} Bax, ‘Love of Country’
\textsuperscript{155} Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Female Suffrage and Its Implications’, \textit{Social Democrat}, 8:9 (September, 1904), pp.533-545
than exploitation. Their belief that populations’ capabilities could be developed through a benevolent subordination contrasted with Bax’s scepticism of the possibilities of an externally-induced improvement. Whilst Bax advocated a greater autonomy for the non-white world, he was simultaneously more pessimistic about its social development. This segregationist urge complicates existing readings of Bax as straightforwardly anti-racist. Given that he grounded his opposition to sexual equality in biologically-deterministic views of gendered difference, it is perhaps unsurprising to find him drawing from the well of scientific racism.

This attitude regarding Africans and the diaspora as a potential block on socialist development can be found throughout the SDF. An article on lynching in the United States, although sympathetic to the victims of racial violence, claimed that the presence of black people in an area was enough to foment tension, and called for segregation. The otherness of the African was further evidenced in their objectification; at the BSP’s 1909 Grand International Bazaar, the guide to the stalls informed participants they could play “negro head football” to win prizes. A short article in the Social Democrat even felt it necessary to point out that black people were not dying out in post-emancipation America as some had expected. Whilst SDF members could oppose the ill-treatment meted out on colonised black populations and the marginalisation they faced within metropolitan settings, their portrayal as outside the boundaries of “progressive humanity” precluded a desire for integration or a belief in the possibility of autonomous black-led socialist societies.

Karen Hunt has observed that the retrospective labelling of members of the organisation as anti-racists is only meaningful in that they opposed anti-Semitism, but that consciousness of anti-black racism was minimal. Indeed, while Hyndman supported the Zulu people’s right to pre-eminence in South Africa, and refuted claims made by his comrades at the 1900 SDF conference that they were “inferior” and “like

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158 Hunt, *Equivocal*, pp.49-50
159 ‘Statistics of Lynching’, *The Social-Democrat*, 5:3 (March, 1901), p.79
162 Hunt, *Equivocal*, pp.70-76
wild horses”, he still posited a racial-scientific differentiation, claiming that the “negro’s brain was not constructed like that of a white man.” This did not go unchallenged. George Ferdinands, a doctor based in Aberdeen and born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), wrote to Justice to inform Hyndman that this idea was as fantastical as that of physiological differences between workers and aristocrats, and that it was propagated to justify the exploitation of non-white populations. However, as the war continued and the pro-Boers made little headway, Hyndman justified his growing discontent with anti-war campaigning on the basis that South Africa belonged to the Zulu people, rather than the Boers. His biographer Tsuzuki describes this as a consequence of his innate sympathy for subject peoples. However, this innate identification with those peoples displaced through colonial expansion is called into question by his praise for the Mormon community’s displacement of indigenous Americans. Echoing Wallace, he drew parallels between the “redskins” and both a harsh, unforgiving landscape and regional wild animals. His sympathy for the Zulu people was not an innate result of his broader sympathies, and therefore demands contextualisation through his characterisation of them.

Representations of the Zulu people by Hyndman and other SDF members drew on both evolutionary rhetoric and political-economical framings to characterise them. In an article refuting the Boers’ right to a South African republic, Hyndman claimed that the Zulus had the greatest right to hold land in the region, and described them as “the finest workers in South Africa.” In his autobiography nearly a decade later, he would go on to praise the “Kaffir Kingdom” for its “fine fighting organisation”, and claimed that the Anglo-Zulu war regretfully paved the way for Boer supremacism and anti-British sentiment to spread in the region. In these descriptions, Hyndman echoed commonplace British ideas of the Zulus as a “martial race” whilst undermining the widespread notion that they were a lazy and unproductive people, simultaneously drawing on and refuting elements of imperial-inspired racist discourse. In this

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163 Claire Hirshfield, ‘Blacks, Boers’, p.32
164 Tsuzuki, Hyndman, pp.129-130
165 Hyndman, Record, Chapter 11
166 Hirshfield, ‘Blacks, Boers’, p.24
167 Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, Chapter 7
instance his approach is similar to that of Olive Schreiner, the South African anti-war activist and author, whose writings were prominent in Britain in both the years preceding and during the war. While positing the possibility of a united South Africa with Boer, English, and indigenous African populations, she held that the latter group would function as the working class, who could be educated to a higher level of civilisation through greater contact with white populations.\footnote{169 Krebs, Gender, Race, pp.124-7}

The Boer War would be a formative experience in the organisation’s collective perception of anti-imperialism. Hyndman would draw on its legacy to motivate a resolution condemning secret diplomacy at the 1908 party conference, while Quelch would justify his later anti-German position as one of defending small nationalities, referring to the organisation’s pro-Boer stance to justify his position.\footnote{170 BSP, First Annual Conference, pp.20-1} Not only would it serve as a referent point, but the culturally- and racially-grounded opposition to empire, on the basis of a social group’s capacity for autonomous self-rule, would be a key feature of future agitation against imperial consolidation and expansion.

\textit{Indian Home Rule as an Expression of Civilizational Worth}

Hyndman’s earnestness in the cause of Indian independence is not in doubt. It was a consistent theme of his political career and he personally associated with leading British-based Indian members of the movement. He provided letters of introduction for Shyamji Krishna Varma, founder of India House and the Indian Home Rule Society who fled England to escape prosecution in 1907, to give to continental socialists as a means of accreditation.\footnote{171 IISH, Jules Guesde Papers, 391/2, ‘Hyndman to Guesde’, June 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1907.} His advocacy on behalf of Indian independence mimics patterns of advocacy established through the pro-Boer campaign, refuting accusations of cultural unsuitability for self-rule, and framing this cultural defence in racial terminology. Before the pro-Boer movement, Hyndman called for Indian Home Rule but still envisioned a role for British administrative supervision of the country.\footnote{172 Graham Johnson, Social Democratic Politics in Britain 1881-1911 The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation, (University of Hull, PhD Thesis, 1988), pp.207-210} However, his demands for independence would be made more forcefully in the wake
of the war, demonstrating an increasingly-negative appraisal of the prospects of empire in the official SDF mind-set.

In his earlier works such as *England for All*, Hyndman had prioritised the “Anglo-Saxon peoples” as the racial group with the political culture and social capability most suited to socialism.\(^{173}\) However, in line with Rich’s observations of political Anglo-Saxonism being displaced by an increasingly racialised nationalism, his post-Boer War writings contain scant reference to this group.\(^{174}\) Instead his critique of British rule in India contained references to the racial differences between Britons and Indians. In the course of both critiquing British cultural arrogance and its ruinous effect on the Indian agricultural sector, and revering Indian civilisation and history (with particular reference to its legal culture), Hyndman still emphasised the fundamental differences in “energy” and “capacity” between the two groups.\(^{175}\) While Marx had criticised the brutality of British rule in India, but ultimately concluded that British colonialism was playing a progressive historic role through developing a social system and economy on a grander and modern basis, Hyndman inverted this perspective.\(^{176}\) He commended British cultural influence, echoing such colonial tropes as the ending of *Sati* and the putting down of the Thugs, while accusing them of economically ruining India. He rooted this in both excessive taxation and the creation of a European administrator-class whose high incomes and pensions were spent and invested elsewhere.

Hyndman’s economic views on India were strongly influenced by his association with Dadabhai Naoroji, and shares many hallmarks of his “drain of wealth” theory, although Hyndman tended to directly refer to primary source materials from anxious colonial administrators and governors rather than making the connection with Naoroji’s text.\(^{177}\) It was a theme he continued to evoke during discussions on India, both public and private, throughout his career. In a pessimistic piece penned for *Justice* in January 1903, Hyndman decried the imperial pomp and opulence of Lord Curzon’s entry to Delhi, alleging “India is ruined. Bled to death, surely the final collapse cannot be long

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173 Morris, ‘Anti-Colonialism’, pp.303-4
delayed.” A letter he wrote to Karl Kautsky in 1907 argued that the size of the European bureaucracy was not causing the drain of wealth from India, instead it was the exceedingly high salaries and pensions which they received and would then spend outside the country.

In the wake of the Second South African War, Hyndman’s discussions of Indians and the desirability of their independence relied much less on the idea of innate differences between Brits and Indians, with greater emphasis instead being given to their common racial origins and a cultural-relativist defence. Articles in *Justice* and *Social Democrat* criticised narratives of Indian poverty which blamed indigenous cultural practices such as large weddings. In the course of a 1907 lecture Hyndman emphasised the indebtedness of British culture to Indian origins, stating “We owe much of our science, much of our mathematics, much of our religion, and much of our laws to these people.” In a pamphlet prepared for the Stuttgart Congress, he referred to the common origins of European and Indian civilisations, and criticised popular imagery of India as propaganda created by former-administrators of the country.

The pernicious nonsense supplied by Anglo-Indian pensioners and others to the press in India and in England concerning Indian cowardice, ignorance, slavishness and incapacity is written wholly and solely with the object of upholding a nefarious despotism… [The] peoples of India are still capable of great work in every field of human endeavour. Wherever they are allowed a free outlet they display the highest faculties.

In the following years this theme would become more explicit, with Hyndman referring to India as one of the “great centres of human civilisation,” alongside Europe. In a 1909 article he wrote about the assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie. He claimed that the colonial official and his Oxbridge-educated coterie had been responsible for the

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178 *Justice, January 3rd*, 1903
179 IISH, Karl Kautsky Papers, DXIII/ 233, ‘Letter to Karl Kautsky’, December 13th, 1907
180 ‘An Empire Adrift’, *Social Democrat*, 4:12 (December, 1900), pp.378-80
181 HM Hyndman, *The Unrest in India: Verbatim report of a speech delivered at Chandos Hall, Maiden Lane, London, on May 12th, 1907* (London, 1907), p.8
183 HM Hyndman, ‘Russia Germanised or Independent’, *Justice* (September 2nd, 1915), p.3
outcome, lambasting his patronising and punitive rule as an insult to the “high-spirited, proud, high-bred and highly-educated race.”184

In the course of his writings he remains uncertain over whether to describe Indians as a unified race or a national grouping of sub-races.185 This is unsurprising given that contemporary Orientalists and ethnographers were debating whether the separate castes of India were defined by occupational or racial differences.186 However, a view of Anglo-Indian racial unity was consistently present in spite of the difficulty of asserting racial boundaries within the Indian subcontinent, with Hyndman describing his preference for Indian over Japanese hegemony in Asia in the following terms.

The population of India is in the main Aryan. At the present moment the Mongolian in the East is rising up- I do not say he is not justified, because I am glad he should; but I think it would have been a fine thing if the great Aryan population of India had been able, as an independent Empire, to say to the Mongolian, ‘Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.’187

Despite designating the Indian population as Aryans, his admiration for India was not explained in terms of the physiological nature of the Indian’s body and mind, but through reference to India’s collective civilizational accomplishments. Frequently he praised the longevity and sophistication of Indian civilisation, remarking on their legislative, economic and literary traditions as a mark of savoir-faire.

In his 1904 report on colonialism to the International Socialist Congress, which became the basis for a resolution enshrining opposition to social-imperialism as Second International policy, he dedicated far more attention to India than any other colonial territory. Again, appeals for independence were grounded in a reverence for Indian society, stating:

[Indians] are industrious, patient, temperate, thrifty and contented. Great arts, great literature, great buildings, great industrial works, great military prowess, great laws, great financiers, and great law-givers, illustrate its long annals…. It is a civilised, not a barbarous, population as a whole.188

184 ‘Snob Rule and Job Rule in India’, Justice, July 17th, 1909, p.1
185 HM Hyndman, The Unrest, p.1, p.9
187 Hyndman, Tariff Reform, p.18
Hyndman’s writings on India from this period also contain numerous direct and indirect references to the 1906 text *Hindu Superiority* written by Har Bilas Sarda, which would find prominence amongst German Romantic Orientalists and receive praise across Europe. Sarda, a member of Arya Samaj, was part of a movement to locate demands for Hindu autonomy within an ethnic-nationalist paradigm which drew on the historicism and myth-making central to European nationalist projects. Hyndman’s association with this newly-assertive Hindu nationalist project is perhaps unsurprising, given the disappointment he had privately expressed over the loyalism and moderation of the INC in the preceding decades. The movement’s developing “strategic syncretism” delivered Hyndman a discursive tool for directly comparing European and Indian histories and making the case for Indian independence.

Hyndman was not alone in qualifying the Indian as ready for self-government based on his racial capacity. Contrasts were made by pro-Independence advocates between the capacity of various African ‘races’ and Indians. The British Committee of the INC complained about anti-Indian legislation in South Africa despite their being “of Aryan stock”. Similarly, several nationalist Bengali newspapers complained about the inappropriateness of being compared to African groups, commenting that a “tear comes to our eye to see the Indians compared to the Zulus... Civilisation consists not in complexion, but in the excellence of the soul and heart.” Indian activists in South Africa attempted to win reforms through emphasising their distance from the “kaffirs”, in an attempt to cross the social boundary and be included in the category of “colonial subject” alongside white workers. This distinction was also to be found in imperialist discourses themselves. Professor Seeley’s influential 1881 tome *The Expansion of England* (which would not go out of print for 75 years), commented on the distinction between the “heathen” of Africa and the Hindu people, claiming that the latter would not be as easily “astonished”, and thus needed to be inspired into belief in the Imperial

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mission. Similarly, Whiting points to an official British mind-set in which Indians were distinguished an imperial exception, a people being prepared for self-rule, although the timings and mechanisms for doing so would prove contentious.

Hyndman was taking his lead on Indian politics directly from Indian activists themselves, who responded to and forced shifts in imperial policy. The shared source material, both political and anthropological, between the SDF and liberal critics of empire can contextualise this post-war shift to a more vociferous anti-imperialism. As advocates of Indirect Rule increasingly argued that western education had failed to produce loyal subjects in the colonies and risked the security of the imperial project, so too did the Social Democrat make similar arguments, claiming that the “Europeanisation” of Asia had not been successful, and that British rule in India was untenable due to the lack of local support. The same sense of imperial crisis which would spur the move towards Indirect Rule forced a reappraisal of the paternalistic benefits of Empire, and helped foment the development of anti-imperialist perspectives, often resting on a narrative of the capacity of non-whites’ independent racial development. The Social Democrat would also host articles by Indian emigrants such as Saint Nihal Singh, providing a direct platform for the transnational crossing of Indian nationalist ideas into the British movement.

Singh’s articles are further evidence of this project of cultural legitimisation. In one article he claimed that the English squandered the opportunities for cultural improvement in India, stating that they left people illiterate rather than introducing them to classical education. While critical of the 1857 Indian Rebellion, which he described as an outbreak of religiously-inspired superstition, he maintained that the contemporary Indian protest movements were European-inspired and legitimate in their demands. In another article he criticised the soul-affinity colonies of the United States, firstly for re-producing the worst relationships of the “Oriental harem”, and secondly for encouraging young men to reject modern civilisation and to instead

194 Thornton, Imperial Idea, pp.50-52.
196 Mantena, Alibis, pp.170-2; ‘Europeans in Asia’, Social Democrat, 2:5 (February, 1901), p.60
197 Saint Nihal Singh, ‘The Spectre of Revolt in India’, Social Democrat, 12:7 (July, 1908), pp.312-316
seek the “uncouth ways of farmer-folk”. Singh’s articles for The Modern Review demonstrate the centrality of this theme of social equality being predicated on cultural modernity; when discussing the marginalisation of African-Americans, he advocated a strategy of cultural improvement directed by benevolent white Americans as a means to combat the moral degradation which had resulted from slavery. Similarly, in an article on emigration and patriotism, he chided Indians’ non-national identities of caste, religion, and region, as parochial and backwards, making them “appear ridiculous” and doing their democratic cause no favours. He valorised Indian emigrants as the true patriots, for their “new friends and acquaintances [would] laugh [them] out of this narrow-mindedness.” Singh’s articles call for western cultural tutelage, but where he felt this had been accomplished, as amongst sections of India, self-rule was a right.

Indians were not the only social group whose political movements and institutions were seen as reflective of their racial temperaments and capacities. Events in East Asia were often interpreted through perceptions of the ‘Mongol’ race, and advocacy on behalf of the Indian population could be framed in terms of their relationship to the potential strength of both Japanese and Chinese societies.

The growing imperial and economic power of Japan was often framed in racial terms. During the Russo-Japanese War Hyndman and Quelch would offer their support to Japan, with Hyndman locating their rapid economic development within an innate determination and intelligence, and marvelling at their potential to rapidly develop socialism. He defended their right to autonomy by including them within the category of civilised peoples. However, his support for the Japanese against the Russians was tempered by a fear of the Mongols’ capacity for expansion, necessitating an early independence for India. The ‘Mongol race’ would be described by Justice contributors as ambitious, but burdened with excessive arrogance.

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198 Saint Nihal Singh, ‘As a Hindu sees “Soul-Affinity” in America’, Social Democrat, 12:12 (December, 1908), pp.533-541
200 Hofmeyr, ‘The Idea’, p.69
201 HM Hyndman, Death and the Socialist Ideal (London, 1904), pp.3-6, p.10
202 Hyndman, Social Democracy: The Bases, p.9
203 ‘Another Dilemma for the Duel Monarchy’, Justice, (January 21st, 1915), p.1. The ‘Mongol Race’ was a racial categorisation applied to a number of East Asian populations between the mid nineteenth century and the 1930s. Its boundaries were loosely-defined and both anthropologists and racial scientists, influenced by contemporary political circumstances, questioned whether the Japanese were truly a part
understandable, given Hyndman’s fear of the displacement of progressive British traditions, that he hoped his fellow-Aryans in India would gain the independence necessary to prevent Japan from expanding too far.\textsuperscript{204}

Quelch would be more explicit on this matter. In article lambasting Russophiles and the idea of a “yellow peril”, Quelch made his support for the Japanese on racial grounds, claiming that the Russians were incapable of bringing anything but the worst horrors of both feudalism and capitalism to Asiatic holdings, and concluding:

“The question resolves itself simply into one of race and of race supremacy in the Far East... there appears to us a far greater danger... from the suppression of the natural national aspirations of this [Mongolian] race than by permitting them free outlet ... The real yellow danger is to be apprehended from the yellow race being added to the list of subject races. It is precisely these subject races which constitute the chief menace to future social progress.”\textsuperscript{205}

In this quote the influence of Hobson is discernible. He had warned two years previously that the greatest threat China presented was in her subjugation and a resultant influx of cheap Chinese goods and labour into British markets which would keep prices and wages low.\textsuperscript{206} Quelch eschews the idea that oppressing another race would be innately wrong, instead focussing the moral dimension of the question around whether imperial dominion over China or Japan would negatively impact European workers’ ability to organise and advance towards socialism. Once again imperialism is framed as primarily damaging to British workers, rather than those subjected to its rule. Furthermore, there is an undercurrent of physical threat within this statement. The Russo-Japanese War had been an event which had unsettled myths of innate white supremacy, and had demonstrated the martial capacities of other populations.\textsuperscript{207} It is certainly possible that Quelch was not only referring to the detrimental effects of cheap non-white labour, but also the potential enmity being created amongst the Mongol population for those who attempted to subdue them. Should their military abilities continue to grow under Japanese regional hegemony,

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\protect\textsuperscript{204} Hyndman, \textit{The Unrest}, pp.8-9
\protect\textsuperscript{205} Harry Quelch, ‘The Yellow Danger’, Social Democrat, 8: 3 (March, 1904), pp.137-141
\protect\textsuperscript{207} Alastair Bonnett, ‘Whiteness and the West’, in Caroline Bressey and Claire Dwyer (eds) \textit{New Geographies of Race and Racism} (Aldershot, 2008), pp.19-20
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then imperialism risked creating a belligerent, capable, population who could ultimately threaten European civilisation.

A fear of the impact of the Chinese ‘coolie’ on wages was frequently evident in the SDF. Often they were referred to as the ultimate example of what could become of British working-conditions, a negative example of the results of not being organised. In a pamphlet which contained extracts of Karl Kautsky’s Erfurt Programme, the author complained that the imperial project, while damaging indigenous societies through the introduction of diseases, alcohol, and violence, simultaneously brought “hordes” of “frugal, enduring, and unresisting... barbarians” back to the metropole. Organising these non-white workers was not countenanced, instead the demand was made that they be kept out of Europe. As in the case of Bax and black Africans, a regressive characterisation and call for segregation was accompanied by a claim that such a policy was in the best interest of all. In this case, imperialism is presented as harmful to non-white societies and non-white workers are alleged to have no need or will to resist their lower working conditions, thus enabling capitalism to drive down the costs of European labour.

However, the 1911 Chinese Revolution excited the SDF and prompted a shift in the interpretations of the Mongols, reducing the anxieties which had developed in the wake of Japan’s emergence as an imperial power. The Chinese were claimed to be culturally and intellectually inclined towards socialism due to the dual influences of Buddhism’s emphasis on individual rights and Confucianism’s prevention of land monopolies. It was even noted that their revolution had succeeded in uprooting the aristocracy, rather than satisfying itself with curtailing their powers as in Britain. In this case attitudes were transformed by the development of political movements, rather than political institutions or social practices, with which the SDF could identify and make parallels with British experiences.

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208 IISH, Collection Documentation and Leaflets Great Britain, 356, ‘An Appeal to Soldiers’, SDF leaflet
209 Karl Kautsky, *The Proletariat (From the Erfurt Programme)* (London, 1908), pp.11-12
210 It is worth noting that this attitude extended to other marginalised groups, such as women workers. A number of leading male trade-unionists felt that women could not be organised and would consistently play the role of scabs within the workforce. Hunt, *Equivocal*, pp.132-8
211 ‘China and The Coming of Socialism’, *British Socialist* 1:12 (December, 1912), pp.569-70
Continuing in the cultural model of anti-imperialism, the SDF approvingly re-printed an article which rooted the revolution in Chinese patriotism and disgust with the imperialist-sponsored importation of opium, whilst refuting accusations of Chinese fanaticism, comparing this to hysterical allegations that the Chinese ate rats. The Chinese character was being shown in a new light due to the “moral and physical energy” demonstrated in their anti-opium campaign, as well as the revolutionaries’ pacific treatment of foreigners resident in the country.212 Demonstrating just how far attitudes had shifted, some felt that a Sino-Japanese alliance or confederation would be the natural outcome of the process due to the assumed shared racial basis of both nations, and welcomed such a prospect.213 SDF members may have felt anxieties over the rise of the Mongol race, but after a demonstration of revolutionary potential, Chinese civilizational heritage was treated with greater sympathy.


Bonnett writes that the period of 1890 to 1930 should be considered a period of “white crisis”. During these years, while white identity was arguably at its political apex, it was simultaneously understood to be under threat, and its limitations as a form of social solidarity caused apprehension for a number of authors. It was threatened from without by the military and political challenges posed by non-white nations such as Japan, and threatened from within by the degeneration of the working class.214 This could find its expression in the language of eugenics and national decline, both of which would feature in the SDF/BSP literature of the period, particularly in Hyndman’s discussions of the working classes. The popularity of these ideas within the SDF demonstrate that racial rhetoric was not merely a discursive strategy to counter prevailing imagery of colonised populations, but reflected the influence of racial precepts in shaping members’ political outlooks.

In the wake of the Second South African War, the question of the racial health of the British population became a much-discussed issue. The SDF was not unusual in its

embrace of eugenic thought. As Frank Dikötter points out, most of the great modernising movements of the inter-war period adopted the phraseology of the movement; it was less a clear set of scientific principles than a way of discussing social problems using the new biological language of modernity. Stack likewise argues that the left’s use of eugenics should be understood primarily as a social critique rather than a demand for racial exclusion. Freeden asserts that a number of socialists embraced the collectivist and scientific emphasis of the eugenics movement, seeing the subordination of individual sexual behaviour for the good of the collective whole as a socialistic measure. However, in Greta Jones’ critique of Freeden, she emphasises the compatibility of eugenicist philosophy with the tenets of new liberalism, the content of which is also evident within the BSP. Both eugenicists and new liberals placed a great emphasis on the moral ideal of citizenship, rather than treating it as an innate right, and scorned those who failed to reciprocate service in exchange for rights. Given the segregationist approaches to non-white labour and the veneration of a uniquely-progressive British culture passed down through bloodlines within the SDF, their use of eugenics should be understood to as simultaneously policing the boundaries of racially-defined Britishness and exhorting the ideal model of citizen.

The rhetoric of white crisis provided the SDF a language for critiquing British social policies and the resultant proliferation of an underclass. However, the language of decline was also useful for the group’s leadership to explain their isolation from the wider working class. In spite of references to the “hooliganism” and “jingoism” of the slum-dweller, given that there was minimal involvement of workers in the attacks on pro-Boers, this fear of degeneration drew more directly on a phenomenon Stedman Jones identified. Namely, the economic, spatial, and cultural segmentation of the working class throughout the late-Victorian era had divided artisans from unskilled workers, leading to a rise of sectional identification over class-consciousness, and a

216 Stack, Darwinian, pp.86-97
219 Dan Stone, Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, race and eugenics in Edwardian and interwar Britain (Liverpool, 2002), pp.94-114
resultant decline in sympathies for socialist ideals.\textsuperscript{220} Degeneration rhetoric legitimised a strategy for change from without, and explained popular indifference to SDF ideology.

Nevertheless the war did act as a catalyst for these grievances. Hyndman’s attitude to the war, despite his glancing over the issue in his autobiography, was mixed, as he saw few prospects for recruitment through anti-war campaigning due to the assumed pro-imperialism of the British working class. He eventually turned his back on the pro-Boer campaign and encouraged the SDF to do likewise.

Rather than questioning why the rhetoric of the pro-Boer movement had failed to mobilise latent anti-war tendencies of the wider population, the political attitudes of the working class were seen as abdication of rationality expressive of a faltering racial health. In a 1902 letter to Kautsky, Hyndman, normally keen on extolling the virtues of the British character, ominously described his country as “Chamberlain’s Stronghold”.\textsuperscript{221} In an article on India written in the wake of the Mafeking celebrations, he refuted the Brits’ right to populate South Africa, sarcastically remarking that the British “are a great imperial race- that must be obvious to anyone who has witnessed the rowdy hooliganism of the last few months in our great cities.”\textsuperscript{222} He later reflected on the Mafeking celebrations as a scene of “hysterical and even maniacal joy and exuberance… surpass[ing] in unseemly indecency anything I could have imagined. The whole manifestation spoke of a people in decay.”\textsuperscript{223} Likewise HW Lee in a 1903 pamphlet spoke of the ease with which the masses were moved to “mafficking”, and complained that they now believed every word that the imperialists told them, even delighting in the macabre tales of other peoples’ savagery towards travelling Brits.\textsuperscript{224}

This political isolation was compounded in the decade following the Boer War, punctuated as it was by the Impossibilist revolt and growth of syndicalism.\textsuperscript{225} The precepts of eugenics were drawn upon to explain the objection of the working classes

\textsuperscript{220} Stedman Jones, \textit{Languages of Class}, pp.181-5. This is attested to by studies of SDF membership, which indicate that nearly 70% of the group worked in artisanal trades or were lower-rank professionals. Young, ‘Social Democratic Federation Membership’

\textsuperscript{221} IISH, Karl Kautsky Papers, DXIII/ 231, ‘Letter to Karl Kautsky’, February 2nd, 1902

\textsuperscript{222} ‘The Ravages of Empire’, \textit{Social Democrat}, 4:6 (June, 1900) pp.163-166

\textsuperscript{223} Hyndman, \textit{Further Reminiscences}, Chapter 7

\textsuperscript{224} HW Lee, \textit{Social Democracy and the Zollverein} (London, 1903), pp.3-4

to socialism and their failure to build a strong social-democratic party, with members of the SDF emphasising that socialist transformation could only be accomplished through a racially-vitalised and energetic working class. In a 1904 lecture on the principles of socialism, Hyndman explained why he felt social-democracy was less popular as an ideology in the UK than in mainland Europe or America. He referred to the racial health of his countrymen, stating;

There has been a physical deterioration in the mass of the people. Taking one thing with another, a man physically well-developed is mentally and morally stronger than the man who is not... Unfortunately, the inhabitants of our great cities have undergone an amount of physical deterioration which renders it extremely difficult for them to have initiative in any direction whatever. 226

This fear of the declining quality of British racial stock and the limitations this posed for socialists also lead Hyndman to oppose emigration. Later in 1904, in a report to the International Socialist Congress in Amsterdam, he told the participants that the British working class “do not yet see that the emigration of their most vigorous members ... strengthen their enemies of the landlord and capitalist class... and at the same time weaken their own powers of resistance.” 227 This was not a temporary fixation for Hyndman. During a 1910 lecture on tariff reforms he commented that degeneration was the greatest challenge facing the socialist movement, and that social evolution was stunted by slum life.

Bad food, bad lodging, bad clothing, bad air, bad training, and bad everything that goes to make up human life, must produce a degenerate population. When we talk of survival of the fittest, we mean the fittest to survive; but the fittest to survive in the slums mean the slum-dwellers, because their surroundings necessarily develop an anaemic and miserable physique, and a wretched population. 228

It is perhaps a testament to Hyndman’s arrogance that he understood his organisation’s marginalisation during the pro-Boer movement and unpopularity in the era of rising labourism as indicator not of their own flawed strategies or precepts, but of the physical and mental degeneration of British workers.

226 HM Hyndman, Social-Democracy: The Bases, p.3
227 HM Hyndman, Colonies, p.3
228 HM Hyndman, Tariff Reform, pp.3-4
Quelch’s approach to eugenics may be gleaned from the articles on the topic which he published in the SDF’s journal. Rarely written by members or associates of the organisation, they were often reprinted without any form of commentary. His successor, HW Lee, explained in 1913 how both he and Quelch shared a perspective on the reprinted extracts in the journal, namely that they were of the “greatest historical interest and value.”

Articles published in 1901 by ‘Dr Zed’ suggest an affinity with a reform-eugenics perspective. His pieces coupled together complaints about contemporary English education with references to French psychiatrist’s Valentin Mangan’s work on the hereditary nature of alcoholism. He stated that English workers were losing their “vitality” and “energy”, causing political apathy. He implored socialists to draw on the ideas of Spencer (his individualist political philosophy went unmentioned on this occasion) and understand that contemporary childhood education overexcited the nervous system leading to mental degeneration, nervous diseases, and potential infertility. Lamenting this state of affairs, the author noted that an overworked field would regain its fertility if left fallow, but “the exhausted race is doomed to a more or less rapid disappearance.”

This theme continued up until the advent of World War I. A piece from Dr Max Nordau in 1912 explained historical development as a result of the degeneration of successive ruling-class families, necessitating a strengthening of bloodlines through drawing in new members from lower-rank aristocratic families. However, Nordau warned that this degeneration was now impacting all classes of society due to mass urbanisation, making regeneration near-impossible. The extracts from Nordau and Dr Zed both emphasised that the loss of racial vitality began in the upper-classes, mirroring the wider bourgeois critique of aristocratic whiteness, and demonstrating how socialists used racial virtues to critique the ruling class whilst asserting the centrality of social

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230 Dr Zed, ‘General Science and Social Science’, The Social Democrat, 5:3 (March, 1901), pp.74-78

231 Dr Zed, ‘General Science and Social Science’, The Social Democrat, 5:4 (April, 1901), pp.112-7

232 ‘Reviews- Degeneration’ The British Socialist, 1:8 (August, 1912), pp.375-7. This was not the first time that the Jewish scientist, whose work attempted to demonstrate that anti-Semitism was a product of a racially degenerative society, was drawn on by anti-Semitic theorists. See, Johannes Hendrikus Burgers ‘Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology’, Journal of the History of Ideas, 72:1 (January 2011), pp.119-140
These ideas were not uncommon in the wider socialist movement either, with Sidney Webb similarly worrying of the white race withering “from the top-down” in 1907. In 1912, the founder of the Eugenics Education Society, Montague Crackenthorpe, published a critique of contemporary socialism in which he appealed to adherents to acknowledge the principle of heredity in their political programmes, and lay greater emphasis on racial-biological factors which could improve British society. This combination of the themes of education, heredity and degeneration would be crystallised in a pamphlet of the same year on Socialism and Eugenics. The author, George Whitehead, was involved in the Socialist Sunday School movement, and had previously declared his adherence to scientific determinism. In the text he emphasised a dual programme of social reform and negative-eugenic measures, stating

My quarrel with the average Eugenicist is that he does not bother overmuch about the social and economic encouragements to degeneracy, but confines his attention to the breed of the individual, forgetting that heredity is only one part of the subject. The social reformer goes to the other extreme, and only considers the environmental factor, and very often but superficially at that.

Whitehead stated that there are thousands in Britain whom, even under socialism, could not be transformed into “decent citizens” due to their mental and physical health problems. While discounting the possibility of mass executions, stating “the nation as a whole would not tolerate such forcible methods”, he looked with admiration to laws passed in Indiana and Connecticut allowing for forced sterilisation, and approvingly noted that some African societies even slit the urethras of men considered unworthy to reproduce.

In an article from 1900, Dan Irving, a former utopian-socialist railway worker and future Labour MP, demonstrated Wallace’s geographically-deterministic influence on

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234 Bonnett, ‘White to Western’, p.327
235 ‘Friends and Foes of Eugenics’, The British Socialist, 1:10 (October, 1912), pp.474-6
236 Anna Vaninskaya, William Morris and the Idea of Community: Romance, History and Propaganda, 1880-1914 (Edinburgh, 2010), pp.141-4
some members’ perceptions. Drawing on the trope of the 8000 Mancunian volunteers turned away from the army due to ill-health, he elaborated that the placement of schools amidst the “evil surroundings of town life” was contributing to the production of generations who could not be active citizens.\(^\text{238}\)

SDF members were not the only socialists to take this approach. ILP activists such as Margaret Macmillan were able to utilise concepts popularised by the post-Boer War anxieties over racial health to draw attention to the cause of social maintenance of working-class children.\(^\text{239}\) Eden Paul, a medical doctor who lectured for both the ILP and BSP and who would join the latter during World War One, attempted to promote a social-eugenics programme within the labour movement. He argued that socialist governance should be based on the election of “men of science”, and recommended authors such as Karl Pearson and Havelock Ellis.\(^\text{240}\) He claimed that Marxists had over-emphasised the influence of economic interests on social development, and that organic desires and biological urges had been key to human history, a fact which was crucial to developing socialist strategy.\(^\text{241}\) ILP member Helen Crawfurd took particular note of the ugliness, drunkenness and physical degradation of Glaswegian workers. She noted her shock when she first moved to the city, and said it drove her to the cause of social reform as she felt “a supreme pity for the oppressed and the ugly.”\(^\text{242}\)

Zelda Kahan, one of the most vocal critics of the leadership’s nationalist leanings and its latent anti-Semitism, also felt that unemployment was leading to “the physical degeneration of the race.”\(^\text{243}\) Kahan was emphatically everything that the leadership of the organisation was not. A young Jewish émigré who came from a family well-versed in socialist ideas and had fled the pogroms of Russia, she maintained a consistent stance against racial prejudice within the organisation, having faced it within Russia and Britain. Given her background, is improbable that she was arguing for racial particularism, highlighting a more universalistic conception of the term “race” in this


\(^{239}\) Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? :The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), p.116

\(^{240}\) Eden Paul, *Socialism and Science* (Keighley, 1909), pp.6-7

\(^{241}\) Eden Paul, *Karl Marx and Modern Socialism* (Manchester, 1910), pp.13-16. Paul also had close contact with members of The Malthusian League and had lectured and written for the organisation as it attempted to become more politically-pluralistic. Sue Bruly, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women’s Movement in Britain*, 1920-1939 (Abingdon, 2013), pp.72-6


instance. However, the language deployed here demonstrates the versatility of eugenicist rhetoric, and the fact that although their concepts may have been influential, this did not necessarily indicate an acceptance of its core ideals. Even Dora Montefiore, who has become retroactively acknowledged for her pioneering feminist and anti-racist models of internationalism, showed interest in the works of the eugenicist and self-declared socialist Karl Pearson. In an article refuting Bax’s opposition to women’s suffrage she referred readers to Pearson’s work on physiology and sexual difference to affirm her claims for women’s capacity to engage directly in political action.

Bax had little time for eugenics. In two articles in 1903 he reproached the simplistic worldview propounded by its enthusiasts, in particular Shaw, noting that there was little scientific consensus around notions of inheritance and genius. He countenanced that though agricultural stirpiculture had demonstrated the ability to alter sizes and weights, the complexity of personality and the hazy nature of understanding the inheritance of traits made the idea of a “superman” utopian. He went on to say that were it possible to produce such an individual, their economic circumstances would invariably determine their approach to human society. Likewise the Hackney branch of the SDF would emphasise the importance of economic influences on personality traits and social questions, particularly with regards to alcoholism. Their local edition of *Justice* featured articles rebuffing accusations that poverty was a result of an innate tendency to alcoholism, and even made use of letters from unemployed readers to demonstrate that alcoholism and unemployment were not intrinsically linked.

**Conclusion**

Racial ideologies were influential on the rhetoric and politics of the Edwardian SDF, and a consistent feature within the party’s literary culture. There was not a specifically

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246 Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Letters- The Breeding of Genius’, *Justice*, (November 14th, 1903), p.6
247 Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Man and Superman’, *Justice*, (October 24th, 1903), p.2
Marxian model of racial difference, rather an assemblage of different intellectual sources which had developed through colonial projects associated with race formation. The historicism of strands of British anthropology, which emphasised different racial groups as more or less “adult”, alongside Wallace’s climatically-deterministic concepts of evolution, could be drawn into an anti-imperialist politics which countered civilising mission narratives through asserting the civilizational accomplishments of indigenous societies. However, this also had a fatal weakness. Where members were unfamiliar with the histories and cultures of subaltern populations, this cultural anti-imperialism predicating on positive racialisations became a more difficult task, meaning Africans were often left out from broader anti-colonial discourses. However, Bax’s anti-imperialist stance with regards to Africa demonstrates that negative assessments did not invariably lead to demands for external control. His emphasis on African biological inferiority to whites created a logic of social segregation which could only come through the end of European encroachment.

Whilst detached from the hard boundary of race-as-colour evident in white labourist ideology, ideas of different peoples’ racial worthiness followed similar geographic patterns enabled through imperial exchange, drawing on the movement of radical journalists and activists between Britain, India, and South Africa. Bonnett noted that the period which marked both the apex and simultaneous undermining of white identification saw a tandem development, of a racialised notion of “civilisation”.\(^{249}\) The SDF leadership provide one example of this. What they deemed as worthy civilisations, marked through political institutions and movements, literary and legal culture, and economic modernity, were often portrayed as a testament to a population’s innate racial capabilities, with a slippage evident between racial-biological and cultural discourses. These characterisations were liable to shaping by political developments; the rise of Imperial Japan and the growth of the Chinese revolutionary movement both impacted the organisation’s perceptions of the Mongol race, and called into question previous racialisations. Likewise, Hyndman’s familiarity with the growing forces of Indian nationalism, alongside his cultural appreciation for the subcontinent, undoubtedly impacted his sense of racial kinship.

\(^{249}\) Bonnett, ‘White to Western’, pp.332-5
Similarly, various political concepts which were increasingly contested by emerging syndicalist currents and rival internationalisms within the SDF/BSP could be expressed through socially-omnipresent racial rhetoric as a means of legitimisation. Hyndman and Quelch’s patriotic socialism could be bolstered through reference to racialised conceptions of Britishness, whilst their emphasis on the primacy of political over industrial action could be affirmed by evoking the degeneration induced by slum life and emigration. The positing of a racial community which had lost its active capacity to affect progressive social change could be a rhetorical tool enabling a social critique which demanded palliative reforms. It could also explain the alienation of the SDF from the political tendencies of the wider working class and deflect criticism of the leadership. However, as Stone has noted of the wider eugenics movement, to ignore the tenets of racial division in favour of the influence of class on this ideology is to accept a historiography of eugenics promoted by eugenicists themselves, who sought to distance themselves from the legacy of the Holocaust. Given the accepted need for segregation between different groups evidenced in SDF publications, the rhetoric of racial decline provided a call-to-arms to British workers to reclaim their place as the most progressive, active, and resilient national-racial section of the international working class. The racialised concept of Britishness, and the desire to preserve its legacy amidst the rise of popular imperialism, would become key components of the anti-Semitic theories of anti-imperialism examined in the following chapter.

250 Dan Stone ‘Race in Eugenics’, pp.397-402
Chapter 2: ‘The Whisper About the Jews’: Shifting Patterns of Anti-Semitism in the British Socialist Party and their role in the 1916 Split

In the spring of 1916, the BSP would host its final conference in the presence of the Old Guard. Some of the most dominant figures of the party, associated with Hyndman, who had for thirty years managed to outmanoeuvre their rivals for authority and influence, found themselves in a minority for the first time. Since the growth of Anglo-German commercial and military rivalry, the Hyndmanites had firmly backed the British state against the growing influence of the German Empire, calling for increased naval spending and the development of a citizens’ army. German militarism was posited as the greatest threat to national independence, democracy, and social progress across Europe.

Starting with the outbreak of the war, all sections of the labour movement had to determine their reaction, not just to the war effort, but to the social and political changes which accompanied it. The BSP would not stand aloof from this controversy. Members argued about conscription, their ideal war terms, changes to the labour market which integrated women and colonial workers into the metropolitan economy, the political repression enabled through the Defence of the Realm Act, the introduction of conscription, and the attempted enlistment of foreign residents.

Throughout the latter months of 1914 and the whole of 1915, these questions were prominent amongst members’ concerns, and although debates were initially avoided in the hopes that an early end to the war would allow for renewed party unity, the truce could not last. Whilst the Hyndmanites had control of the National Executive Committee during these years, the bulk of the membership came to oppose the war. Crick has distinguished four factions operating; the “Sane Patriots” of Hyndman and his followers, the “Ultra-Patriots” who grouped themselves around Victor Fisher, “Centrist” anti-war elements led by Joe Fineberg, EC Fairchild, and H Alexander, and the “Revolutionary Defeatists” based around John Maclean in Scotland.¹ In certain histories, the pro-war and anti-war positions have been posited as a struggle between

¹ Crick, History, pp.272-4
“chauvinists” and “internationalists”. However, the ideological boundaries between the factions were not rigorously defined, with many members opposing the war whilst remaining wary of campaigning against it. Further complicating this narrative of “chauvinism” and “internationalism” colliding, anti-war adherents would draw on racist stereotypes for their arguments, and the pro-war members in the main held a keenly-felt sense of internationalism alongside their patriotism. Given the lack of definite boundaries between stances, this raises the question of why the split occurred when the BSP had previously managed to contain divergences of opinion on a number of issues.

It is telling that the debates in the party press and at the 1916 Conference more often hinged on the conduct of the pro-war faction towards their opponents and the innuendos they were making, rather than their attitudes towards the war or the necessity of internationalist organisation. In particular, Victor Fisher’s employment of off-duty soldiers to assault socialist and pacifist hecklers during a Socialist National Defence Committee (SNDC) meeting came under fire, and this body’s initial association with the “Sane Patriots” would drive swathes of members into the anti-war factions. The anti-Semitic allegations of the pro-war factions would likewise attain a definitional status in the post-split BSP. Similarly, accusations that the leading members of the pro-war faction were collaborating with the state and enabling the political persecution of foreign-born Jewish members helped to create an atmosphere of irreconcilable hostility.

At the 1916 Conference these issues came to a head. The anti-war factions, who gained control of the Executive at elections held during a series of Divisional Conferences in 1915, commanded a majority of the delegates. They proposed having a closed conference with no press presence, arguing that a frank expression of their views could see them prosecuted under DORA regulations. The pro-war minority dissented, and proposed that Hyndman be allowed to address the assembly on the issue. Their request was voted down and the Hyndmanites left the conference in apparent disgust at the father of their movement being denied the floor, whilst their opponents burst into a spontaneous rendition of ‘The Red Flag’ and applauded the exodus. The “Sane Patriots” launched a rival organisation, the National Socialist Party,

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which affiliated to the Labour Party, whilst the “Ultra-Patriots” around Fisher remained with the SNDC. The SNDC soon renamed itself the British Workers’ League and sought to electorally unseat pacifist Labour MPs, capturing ten seats in the 1918 general election under the name of the National Democratic and Labour Party.

This chapter will examine the under-studied anti-Semitic politics of the BSP-at-war which I argue were key to provoking both the split and the change in historic leadership, as well as the response of both Jewish socialists and their allies to these allegations. The central focus of the chapter will be the arguments held in the pages of Justice between the various pro-war and anti-war factions of the party during World War One. Though editorial control of the party newspaper was firmly in the hands of the established leadership through the influence of HW Lee, its pages allowed for dissenting opinions and a struggle for control of the content was evident between 1914 and 1916. These debates will be contextualised through a survey of the pre-war development of anti-Semitic anti-imperialist theories of Hyndman and his followers. The political challenges Jewish socialists posed to both these allegations and the political methodologies of the leadership will also be presented, with the aim of demonstrating the utility of anti-Semitism to the Old Guard as means of quelling dissent. The increased frequency of racialised narratives which emerged amongst the various factions of party during the war will be charted, to establish the context in which the pro-war sections felt secure in deploying anti-Semitic tropes both to discredit their opposition and as an explanatory mechanism for the problems of the socialist movement. Finally, the chapter will end with a survey of the post-split BSP, and the extent to which the challenge to anti-Semitism left a broader legacy on the racialisation of different social groups.

This chapter will posit that the emergence of an anti-Semitic anti-imperialist tendency within the SDF was due to both the centrality of a socialist nationalist mythology to the political vision of the Hyndmanites, and the utilisation of Radical-inspired anti-imperialist arguments. As seen in the previous chapter, a tendency to anchor visions of a future socialist society in a patriotic mythology of British progressivism with its origins in the Anglo-Saxon commune, and carried in the bodies of British workers, had a strong influence within sections of the BSP. With the rise of popular imperialism during the fin-de-siècle, this ideological tendency had to defend their particular
interpretation of Britishness as nationalism became a contested category. Imperialism was emphatically presented as non-British, an aberration of long-standing traditions, a political tendency based in antinationalism, rootlessness, and ultimately, Jewry. This analysis was legitimised by the prevalence of numerous varieties of anti-Semitic anti-imperialism forwarded by non-socialist critics of empire.

However, two further factors led to the development of these anti-Semitic tropes and their redeployment in a more virulent form during the war. These were a growing tendency to identify with the British state during the period of tension leading to war with Germany, and the political challenges that Jewish socialists posed to the long-standing leaders of the organisation. Anti-Semitism transformed from its anti-imperialist incarnation characterised by an obsession with the supposed anti-nationalism of wealthy Jews into an all-encompassing and violent manifestation which targeted the wider Jewish community. Jews became potential traitors to Britain and threats to national sovereignty, to be corralled by punitive state action.

Ultimately this development exacerbated the tensions growing around the issue of the war, and played a significant role in cementing the split. The opponents of anti-Semitism, however, did not launch an attack on wider racial discourses within the organisation, utilising several racially-exclusionary discursive strategies to press the case for peace. Whilst the curtailing of negative characterisations of Jewish people did not impact perceptions of other racialised groups, a consequence of the split was the re-evaluation of the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. This process would lead to the development of ideas on political and social organisation which would be crucial for other groups of racial outsiders to fight for their inclusion within the visions and politics of the Marxist left in Britain.

The anti-Semitic themes which punctuated the pro-war factions’ arguments have received little attention either from historians of the SDF/BSP, Hyndman’s biographers, or in studies of British political anti-Semitism. Although Crick’s study of the split displays a greater degree of nuance than earlier histories, it offers little commentary on the anti-Semitism which characterised it, collapsing this phenomenon into the

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3 *Ward, Red Flag*, p.59
broader category of anti-alienism. Marcus Morris, whilst certainly not failing to address Hyndman’s anti-Semitism, only examines his utterances during the Boer War. He describes it as part of a longer-standing British tradition of “anti-Semitism masquerading as anti-capitalism [which] had been established with William Cobbett and had even been powerfully reinforced by Marx.” Ultimately he argued that it has distracted historians from the economic critique of imperialism which Hyndman developed, upon which anti-Semitic tropes were superimposed. This is perhaps unsurprising given that previous accounts, such as that of Etherington, whilst crafting an accurate portrait of Hyndman’s anti-Semitism during the Boer War, doubted the sincerity of his anti-imperialist credentials. These studies ultimately have not elucidated the centrality of anti-Semitic conspiratorial ideas to Hyndman’s anti-imperialism, or else have not acknowledged how the tropes were re-deployed in an attempt to police the BSP membership during the split.

Brustein and Roberts’ study of European patterns of leftist anti-Semitism paints a more accurate picture, with its assertion that within Britain, political anti-Semitism largely manifested as anti-Jingoism. However, they also maintain that the Boer War represented the apex of anti-Semitic thought amongst labour movement activists, as it brought accusations that Jewish financiers’ control over the levers of state policy had fomented war both to discredit the British nation and extend their control over valuable raw materials. Against this perspective I would argue that the anti-Semitism witnessed during World War One, differentiated from earlier incarnations by its broader scope and weaponisation against party members, represented the zenith of socialist anti-Semitism within the SDF/BSP. The allegations of a Jewish financial cabal which fostered imperialist policies flared up during times of colonial war, but during the First World War the rootlessness of the Jews was said not just to bring war, but to threaten British national independence and the viability of socialism. Whilst Cohen in his history of leftist anti-Semitism asserts that “the form of anti-Semitism as ideology may change but its essence remains intact”, the conspiratorial allegations which were espoused during the Boer War and those which were made during the split, though

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4 Crick, History, pp.270-2
6 Etherington, ‘Hyndman’, p.90
drawing on similar imagery and allegations, are very distinct. The shift from anti-Semitic anti-imperialism to a focussed attack on Jewish members for the crimes of “anti-nationalism” and traitorous activities, coupled with a willingness to appeal to the security services to police Jewish members, marked a serious upturn in the tenor and ferocity of socialist anti-Semitism.8

Some authors maintain that there is an innate relationship between the Marxist left and strains of anti-Semitic anti-capitalism. Brustein feels that an antipathy to the Jews has been an integral part of the European Marxist left since its inception.9 Edmund Silberner proposes that a heritage of socialist anti-Semitism has its roots in Marx’s own pronouncements on the Jewish community, which have become ingrained Marxist organisations.10 Following in these footsteps, Wistrich’s Socialism and the Jews claims that Marxists in Germany and Austria-Hungary, influenced by Marx’s characterisations of Jews as regressive and parasitic, were initially ambivalent towards Jewish communal interests, and that they only began to oppose anti-Semites due to their political association with anti-democratic and anti-Socialist forces, not because of an opposition to their characterisation of Jewry.11 He has developed this thesis across other works, and his argument has developed into one that locates anti-Semitism as an innate tendency of both the contemporary and historic far-left. He roots this in the “poisonous anti-Jewish legacy” of socialism’s founding fathers whose anti-Jewish tendencies were born of economic populism and militant atheism, providing substantive tropes re-elaborated by successive generations of socialist theorists.12 Jacobs’ analysis of socialists and the “Jewish Question” focused largely on members of the German SPD, and while he identifies strong tendencies towards anti-Semitism, when addressing the broader question of whether Marxist ideology had an innate susceptibility to anti-Semitic precepts, he preaches an agnosticism, stating “there was not a Marxist attitude to the Jews, but a spectrum of Marxist (and socialist) attitudes towards the Jews.”13 Whilst not discounting the existence of these tendencies, it is

8 Steve Cohen, That’s Funny You Don’t Look Anti-Semitic: An Anti-Racist Analysis of Left Anti-Semitism (Leeds, 1984), p.5
9 Brustein and Roberts, Socialism, pp.4-7
10 Edmund Silberner, ‘Was Marx an anti-Semite?’, Historia Judaica, 11 (1949), p.52
12 Robert Wistrich, From Ambivalence to Betrayal, (Lincoln, 2012) p.xii
13 Jack Jacobs, On Socialists and “the Jewish Question” after Marx, (New York, 1992), pp.1-5
hoped that through this chapter I can demonstrate that anti-Semitic ideas within the SDF/BSP were focussed in the main around discussions of imperialism, due to the crisis this presented Marxists who still lent on the patriotic heritage of an earlier generation of labour radicals.

Against the flattening of Marxist anti-Semitism, I maintain that an approach drawing on the analyses of Bonefeld and Stoetzler can provide a greater understanding of why certain influential British Marxists turned to anti-Semitism during moments where their conception of the national community and relationship with the nation-state came into crisis. Both these theorists draw on Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to examine the rise of anti-Semitism across social movements and societies. Bonefeld’s analysis of the adoption of national principles by social movements is particularly instructive. He argues that where the nation-state is adopted as a political principle and social reality as a bulwark against international capitalism, its advocates seek to externalise lived conflicts and disappointments onto external actors who do not belong to the nationalist search for a homogeneous community upon which egalitarianism can be built.14 Similarly Stoetzler’s study on the relationship between the nation-state and multiculturalism is informative. He opines that as societies ordered along liberal-nationalist lines experience crisis, the necessity of the unity of the state demands a curtailing of internal differences, particularly of minority groups who are seen to embody different cultural, social, and economic orders. This necessity of homogenisation negates the liberal toleration of difference in favour of the preservation of the organs of social order.15

As the Marxist pro-war advocates increasingly identified with the existing nation-state as defender of the national community, calling for enlistment, militarisation, increased armaments, greater vigilance against internal enemies and a moratorium on labour disputes, so they had to neuter their critique of capitalism whilst still giving credence to the social grievances of those they hoped to recruit. Anti-Semitism, as Bonefeld argues, can function to channel discontent with social conditions into a blind

resentment against the projected external enemy within; it makes anti-capitalism a force reconciled with the capitalist order. He further ties anti-Semitism to a broader political program which seeks a uniformity of labour and living conditions, and effectively calls for the militarisation and disciplining of labour and humanity. It belongs to a political outlook in which uniformity and homogenisation are emphasised along national lines, and which identifies differences which suggest a different purpose of social existence as fundamentally threatening. Certainly as the pro-war advocates grew enthusiastic that the greater militarisation, centralisation, and industrial coordination under state control induced by the war represented a move towards socialism, those groups and individuals who seemed to exist outside of this worldview or unassimilable within it, represented a greater threat.

My approach is augmented by the suggestions made by David Seymour in his critique of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. He argues that the authors focussed too much on how individuals developed into anti-Semites and created an image of “the Jew” to serve their social interests, a perspective in which “The Jews as Jews (in their flesh and blood) disappear from view and are replaced by a concept of ‘the Jews’.” Instead, he proposed an interactionist approach which examines the development of anti-Semitism in the context of the experiences and influences of Jewish communities. With this in mind, this chapter will also ground the responses of Jewish socialists to the anti-Semitism of the SDF/BSP leadership within the social and political conditions of British-based Jewry at the *fin-de-siècle*. I ground their universalist response which emphasised Jewish proletarian credentials in the lack of success of pre-war Jewish socialism, and the stratification of Jewry within London. Furthermore, the challenge that prominent Jewish socialists posed to the leadership’s political perspectives and position of influence will also be considered in how this shaped the anti-Semitic tropes and accusations of Hyndman and his supporters. This buttresses one of the underpinnings

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18 Crick, *History*, p.269
of this thesis, namely that racist discourses served as ideological augmentations for existing political leaderships to attempt to steady their rule during crises of control.  

The Anti-Semitic Anti-Imperialism of Henry Hyndman

The SDF/BSP had a long history of anti-Semitic discourse establishing the patterns of accusations, tropes, and caricatures which re-emerged in such a vociferous manner during the war. Hyndman influenced a number of his followers with his anti-Semitic anti-imperialism which predated the Boer War by nearly two decades. Morris claims that his economically-rooted critique of imperialism which developed through the course of the Boer War has been overlooked by other historians, often blinded by his anti-Semitism and the nationalist tenor of his politics. However, this reduction of Hyndman’s anti-Semitism to an epiphenomenon appearing at that time largely due to the prevalence of anti-Semitic arguments amongst the pro-Boers, is to minimise the central role it played in his thought. Hyndman’s biographer Tsuzuki also skirted over this prejudice, understating both its frequency and tenor in his public utterances. Claire Hirschfield’s treatment of his anti-Semitism gives greater emphasis to both its vigour and its coexistence with his opposition to empire, and will be drawn upon here. Hyndman’s anti-Semitic anti-Imperialism can be understood as a means through which he could preserve the legitimacy of the notion of British cultural superiority and unique progressivism. Imperialism was something visited upon the British nation, not born of it, a cosmopolitan profit-driven policy which had been shoehorned into state practices by rich Jews and their associates.

It is difficult to state with certainty where the origins of Hyndman’s anti-Semitism lay. As a German-speaker, it is possible that he had drawn on Marx’s writings on the “Jewish Question” which were not translated into English during his lifetime. Marx’s own ideas had developed through the course of his career, with his early attention to

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22 Tsuzuki described Hyndman’s anti-Semitic allegations during the Boer War as “somewhat chauvinistic utterances,” and also refuted that he was Germanophobic based on his refusal to join the Anti-German League. Tsuzuki, H.M. Hyndman p.128, p.221
Jewry defining their “real essence” as one of “huckstering and money”, a spirit which had spread into Christendom with the rise of capitalism. His later writings ascribed Jewish merchants and “usurers” a key role in developing capitalism which had been largely superseded by their gentile counterparts. However, Hyndman’s writings made no reference to Marx’s views on Jewry. It is possible that he plagiarised him, as he had done with elements of Capital for his own text England for All, but his line of argument was very different to that of Marx’s. For most of his political career, Hyndman’s anti-Semitic analysis was confined to his understanding of imperialism. It bears much greater resemblance to the conspiracies of prominent Radical opponents of empire, in particular Henry Labouchère, who from 1878 had launched a series of anti-Semitic critiques of Disraelian foreign policy.

Labouchère, a Gladstonian Liberal, alleged the existence of a Jewish financial cabal with interests in Turkey that had directed Disraeli to seek rapprochement with the Ottomans during the Eastern Crisis of the preceding three years. He soon turned his attention to the “Hebrew Barons” whose control of the press he felt was hidden beneath Anglicised surnames, before moving on to attack the close connections he felt these Jews had with Germany, and their cowardice in allowing British soldiers to die on behalf of their interests. As we shall see, these were prominent features within the Hyndman’s anti-Semitic paradigm. As mentioned in Hyndman’s autobiography, he had a long-standing association with Labouchère. He sparred with him in public debates on collectivism and individualism and shared platforms with him in the pro-Boer movement, but all the while on friendly terms. They had shared conversations, dinners, and social engagements, which Hyndman recalled with fondness. He heaped praise on the intellectual capacity of this fellow journalist-cum-politician from a similarly moneyed background. He would even mention his indebtedness to Labouchère over his analysis of the South African War, due to the latter’s great knowledge of the “financial rascality” which underpinned the campaign. Indeed, whilst Hyndman had been a firm believer in the value of empire in earlier days, his first turn to anti-colonial...
politics came during an atmosphere of anti-Semitic critiques of imperial policy, largely utilised by Radicals to attack Disraeli’s approach towards Russia and the Ottoman Empire.27 This brand of anti-Semitic conspiratorial thinking was a prominent theme of his critiques of imperial and foreign policy throughout his political career, dating as far back as the foundation of the SDF. During the Egyptian conflicts of the 1880s he drew on the imagery of Christian anti-Semitism to publicly denounce the “international clique” of “usurers and bondholders” whom he held responsible for the wars.28 By the early 1890s Hyndman, echoing Labouchère, had taken to warning audiences of the growing influence of Jewish newspaper owners, claiming that they were “poisoners of the well of public information” who promoted the interests of Jewish financiers under the guise of patriotism.29 This is a testament to Adorno and Horkheimer’s statement that for secular anti-Semites, religion had not been abolished, but merely incorporated as part of a cultural heritage which could give way to racialised expressions of these religious themes.30 It was during this pre-Boer War period in which he drew on Christian Judeo-phobic imagery, that Hyndman gave specific warnings about the potential of a British takeover of South Africa on behalf of the Jewish cabal.

When war broke out in October 1899, to Hyndman this was evidence of the prescience of his position, and he quickly set about evangelising on the need to recognise the true culprits behind the conflict. The first mention of the war in the party press was in a full-page article under the banner of “The Jews’ War in the Transvaal”, in which it was alleged that the only reason the war was gaining popular support was due to the power of the “Jew-Jingo Press.”31 Hyndman would further allege that Jewish capitalists were worse than their gentile brethren due to their lack of religious compassion, and even claimed that the violent mobs which had begun to attack pro-Boer meetings were the product of this clandestine cabal’s machinations.32 Both Hyndman and Quelch filled pages of Justice with articles condemning the construction

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28 Crea, Imperial, p.146
29 Justice, 23rd January 1893, quoted in Hirschfield, ‘British Left’ pp.97-98
30 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, 2002) p.144
31 Ward, Red Flag, pp.65-6
32 Hirschfield, ‘British Left’ pp.98-99
of an “Anglo-Hebraic Empire”, with the latter penning an official statement on behalf of the newspaper which clarified that although it was a “Jew capitalist war”, they did not support the mobilisation of an anti-Semitic movement as it would be injurious to the socialist cause.  

This escalation of anti-Semitic rhetoric occurred in a context whereby anti-Semitic utterances had become increasingly acceptable in the leftist anti-imperialist milieu. In a parliamentary intervention in February 1900 John Burns, the lib-lab MP from a trade unionist background, declared that the war had been inspired by the predictable behaviours of the “financial Jew”.  

Edward Carpenter, the socialist philosopher and author, in a pamphlet on the war’s origins in the same year, lamented the discovery of gold in the region as Johannesburg had become “a hell full of Jews, financiers, greed, speculators… every invention of the devil.”  

Both ILP News and the Labour Leader published articles lampooning the patriotic fervour accompanying the war, and alleged that Jewish magnates and financiers started the war to gain South Africa’s mineral wealth. At the TUC annual conference in September 1900 a resolution moved by John Ward was narrowly passed, stating that the war was being fought to secure gold fields for “Cosmopolitan Jews” who had no sense of patriotism and would oversee the degradation of labour conditions. Most infamously, J.A. Hobson’s dispatches from South Africa were filled with venom for the Jewish financiers he held responsible for the conflict, adding an air of respectability to the conspiracy. Even such influential figures as Keir Hardie were swept along in the anti-Semitic furore of the anti-war movement.  

However Hyndman had been developing his ideas on the role of Jewish influence for some twenty years prior to the outbreak of war, and had previously concluded that any war with South Africa would be the result of Jewish manipulation, with the manufactured compliance of the Jewish press. Although he may have been influenced by pro-Boer anti-Semitic theories, his ideas had been firmly set in place before the

33 Chris Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939 (London, 1979) p.69  
34 Bernard Porter, Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge (London, 2008), pp.127-8  
35 Koss, Pro-Boers, p.55  
36 Ward, Red Flag, pp.67-8  
37 Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings from the 1900 Conference, pp.54-5.  
38 Hirschfield, 'British Left', pp.101-2
war’s outbreak. Whilst the proliferation of anti-Semitic analyses may have added legitimacy to his claims in the eyes of a section of the SDF membership, ascribing his ideas purely to the anti-Semitism of the pro-Boer movement ignores this context.

A number of SDF members, most prominently Bax and Theodore Rothstein, would rally against the conspiracies and caricatures filling the party press. They asserted the proletarian credentials of the majority of the Jewish population, and pointed out that enmity focussed on rich Jews would invariably end up having far more negative consequences for poor Jews than those the socialist anti-Semites claimed to attack. With a number of majority-Jewish branches in London, and even several entirely-Jewish branches such as Whitechapel, Jewish members were able to coordinate a response to this negative racialisation which spread into a grassroots rebellion, eventually forcing Quelch to shut down conversation on the topic. Justice was inundated with letters from Jewish party members complaining of the potential ramifications of these accusations, temporarily halting the paper from focussing on much beyond the question of the extent of Jewish power. The pressure they placed on the organisation was irresistible, and after November 1899 Quelch was forced to stop placing either anti-Semitic articles or their denunciations in the pages of Justice. The controversy would impact the SDF’s relationship with the larger Jewish public. In the London School Board Elections of December 1900, SDF votes dropped by over 2000 in areas with a large Jewish presence, and canvassers reported that they were increasingly getting negative responses from the Jewish community. In the wake of the anti-Semitic controversy, Rothstein was elected onto the National Executive, and the strength of the backlash against Hyndman led to his temporary resignation. Severely chastened, Hyndman would have to rein in his public expressions of anti-Semitism lest he face another rebellion.

This brand of anti-Semitism came with qualifying factors, and was not uniformly applied against all Jews. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the British labour movement increasingly took a stance in favour of restrictive laws on migration, aimed primarily against Jewish arrivals from Eastern Europe. They alleged that newly-arrived Jewish workers, who accepted “sweated” conditions and were not a

39 Hunt, Equivocal, pp.73-6
40 Hirschfield, ‘British Left’ pp.99-100
part of the labour movement, were responsible for the undercutting of British wages and conditions, spurring on a new ruthlessness in industrial relations. Whilst Holmes has called for this attitude to be understood as part of a general anti-Alienism present within labour circles, justificatory discourses often included allusions from a broader constellation of anti-Semitic themes, which alleged communal self-segregation and Jewish landlords’ and financiers’ economic power.

Hyndman and the SDF spoke out against anti-alien legislation, and condemned as “unsocialist” an anti-immigration resolution adopted at the 1903 TUC conference. This was not a singular remark, this was a position which had been developed since the mid-1890s. Indeed, Hyndman’s patriotic mythology laid great emphasis on the right to asylum which had seen some of his idol’s such as Marx, Victor Hugo, and Mazzini all reside in Britain. The SDF was also involved in solidarity protests against the pogroms in Russia, calling for an end to state discrimination against the Jews and in favour of their right to settle in Britain. After the infamous Kishinev pogrom of 1903, the SDF were involved in the planning process of one such demonstration. However, their representatives’ demands that Zionists be excluded, and their subsequent threats to denounce the London-based Jewish trade unions within the Russian socialist press should they be ignored, led to their marginalisation from the anti-Pogrom movement.

Counterintuitively, Hyndman’s anti-Semitic anti-imperialism did not impact his fondness for Benjamin Disraeli himself. In Hyndman’s Record of an Adventurous Life he recounts an interview he had conducted with the former Prime Minister, and accorded him a great deal of respect for overcoming the anti-Semitic barriers placed in the way of his political career. He also expressed admiration for the “manifest sympathy for democratic and social progress” he saw both in his legislative efforts and literary output. Whilst Hyndman’s conspiratorial theories had emerged from the anti-Disraelian milieu, his targets remained selective, and his allegations were often vague.

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42 Holmes, Anti-Semitic, p.22
43 David Murray Young, People, Place and Party, pp.203-5
45 Fishman, East End, pp.250-251
accusations against shadowy figures rather than specific attacks on particular Jews. The rise of prominent Jewish opponents to his ideas and leadership would prompt both Hyndman and his followers to name their enemies during the political crisis prompted by the outbreak of European war.

**The Jewish Socialists’ Challenge**

The SDF had recruited a number of Jewish socialists since its inception. Several of the London branches such as Whitechapel and Central Hackney had a large Jewish presence, with the former conducting meetings in Yiddish. An East London (Jewish) Branch was even established in 1903 to combat the growing anti-alien agitation taking place in the area.\(^47\) Jewish socialist groups would work alongside the SDF/BSP and help the organisation publicise in areas with large Jewish populations during elections.\(^48\) This section will examine how three prominent Jews, Zelda Kahan, Peter Petroff, and Theodore Rothstein contributed to the political challenges to the Hyndmanites. Jewish socialists within the SDF not only criticised elements of the Hyndmanite perspective as it pertained to issues of militarism, imperialism and anti-Semitism, but were also part of a broader opposition that criticised the parliamentarian perspective of the leadership. The anti-Semitism of the Old Guard can be more clearly understood from establishing how they were confronted on several fronts by Jewish members, thus making their allegations a powerful tool in delegitimising challenges to their authority.

The influence that Jews had on the SDF/BSP has been contested. Kendall laid particular emphasis on the influence of Russian-born Jews in transforming the political culture of the BSP and pushing the organisation along the path which ensured it became a major component of the CPGB at its foundation in 1920. To him they were essentially proto-Leninists.\(^49\) This view has been challenged more recently, with Morgan laying emphasis on the Continental influences on particular Jewish members as well as the process of

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\(^{48}\) SDF, *Twenty-Eight Annual Conference*, p.14

\(^{49}\) Walter Kendall, ‘Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism’, *International Review of Social History*, 8:3 (December, 1963), pp.351-378
exchange that occurred between British and Russian socialist movements.\textsuperscript{50} There was no uniform Russian-Jewish influence on the SDF/BSP, with a number of the participants holding divergent views on such key questions as socialist unity and working within the Labour Party.\textsuperscript{51} Likewise, a series of conflicting attitudes were evident amongst the Jewish members about the prospects of recruiting migrant Jewry to socialism. Rothstein, for example, was unoptimistic about the prospects of a Jewish labour movement achieving longevity within Britain due to what he felt was a lack of proletarian socialisation or psychology amongst Russian-born Jews.\textsuperscript{52} Petroff, on the other hand, was enamoured with the émigré Russian Jewish culture and political life that he witnessed developing in the East End, and held Rudolf Rocker, the German gentile anarchist organising amongst the Jews, in high esteem.\textsuperscript{53}

However, despite their variations, several prominent Jewish members did make similar critiques of the Hyndmanite methodology. Challenges were posed on three issues. The first of these was an emphasis on the necessity of socialist intervention within trade unions and industrial disputes, against the leadership’s dismissive approach which emphasised propaganda and elections as the key arena for the advancement of socialism. The second was a critique of the anti-Semitic anti-Imperialism being voiced in the public sphere by, most prominently, Hyndman and Quelch. The third surrounded the growing tensions between Germany and Britain, and the resultant military build-up and diplomatic interrelations fostered in this environment, which soon developed into a broader organisational questioning of the relationship between nationalism and internationalism.

As mentioned previously, the Jew-baiting articles published by Quelch and written by Hyndman in the midst of the Boer War elicited a furious response from members of the party, both Jewish and gentile, which would eventually force a halt to their publication. The substance of these letters sent in to the pages of *Justice*, was to reassert the primacy of class in socialist theory. Rothstein accused Hyndman of

\textsuperscript{50} Kevin Morgan, ‘In and out of the swamp: the unpublished autobiography of Peter Petroff’, *Scottish Labour History*, 48 (2013) pp.23-51

\textsuperscript{51} During the 1914 party conference, as members discussed a resolution proposing affiliation with the Labour Party, Fineberg was strongly in favour of the prospect as a means to win workers to socialism, whilst Petroff felt it would lead to a dilution of political principles. See BSP, *Third Annual Conference*, pp.13-15

\textsuperscript{52} Fishman, *East End*, p.122

\textsuperscript{53} IISH, Peter Petroff Papers, 8, Chapter 8 ‘In Exile’, p.14
forgetting about the principle of class in his rush to ascribe blame for the war on rich Jews. He labelled his analysis “unsocialistic” and said that it was a blessing that *Justice* had such limited circulation, lest it foment the rise of a pogromist movement within Britain. Other Jewish socialists pointed to the class composition of British Jewry, asserting that the majority of Jews who would suffer the violent ramifications of Hyndman’s political influence were in fact working-class. One member wrote “I have seen with my own eyes that the result of such an agitation was the loss of life and property of the poor Jews.” This was not a philosemitic response in the same vein that the publications of the SDF and Twentieth Century Press had defended the Boers through praising particular cultural traits of theirs. Instead a class-based universalism was posited that asserted the mutual exclusivity of anti-Semitism and international socialism, and advocated on behalf of working-class Jewry.

Jewish socialists’ responses to the allegations levelled against the Jewish people were predominantly based in publicly disavowing the notion that they held a totalising Jewish identity which defined their political and cultural characteristics, instead emphasising their place within a universal proletarian culture. They asserted that their cosmopolitanism did not result from a unique Judaic history of diaspora, travel, and trade, but due to their conscious identification with the international working class. Andrew Rothstein was fervent that his father had little contact with established Anglo-Jewry, and that he instead identified as a revolutionary Social-Democrat, which formed the basis of his associations and political outlook.

In the vein of much of European Social-Democracy, these Jewish socialists had hoped that the liberation of humanity from the social and economic stratifications of capital, would also ‘free’ the Jews from their own Jewish identity and therefore their separation from their fellow proletarians. To them this task required not only a broad social and political struggle against capitalism on behalf of all workers, but a concerted

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54 Bill Baker, ‘The Social Democratic Federation and the Boer War’, *Our History*, 59 (Summer, 1974) p.6
55 ‘Jews, Boers, Patriots’, *Justice*, 21st October 1899
56 *Crick, History*, p.159
57 *Justice*, 7th October 1899, quoted in Hunt, *Equivocal*, p.74
59 Virdee, ‘Socialist Antisemitism’, pp.362-7
effort by the Jewish proletariat of all countries to acclimatise themselves to a proletarian worldview and psychology, to become what Deutscher would later term “the non-Jewish Jew.”

This is perhaps unsurprising. The experience of Jewishness in London was one stratified by culture, faith, national origin, political ideology, and social position. Unlike the more homogeneous Jewish communities of the provinces, London Jewry not only manifested as a divided series of communities, but also proved to be infertile ground for Jewish socialists in terms of recruitment. Many of the Jewish socialist pioneers of the mid to late nineteenth century had to confront the reality that large swathes of the established Jewish population were not part of a manual proletariat whose experiences made them amenable to socialist ideas. The growing Jewish working class in Britain often faced exclusion from British trade unions, and in London they found themselves increasingly pushed into smaller workforces and sweated conditions. Throughout the late nineteenth century as the migrant Jewish proletariat grew in numbers (over 130,000 Jews settled in Britain between 1870 and 1914, with over 500,000 staying temporarily before migrating again), a vibrant Jewish trade union movement developed. The London-based movement tended to fluctuate in strength owing to the difficulties of organising amongst such a diverse range of conditions and between the atomised employees of small concerns. While Jewish trade unionism and socialist clubs were flourishing to various degrees in the East End, and gaining an impressive reputation in the provinces of Leeds and Manchester, Jewish socialists found it difficult to recruit to the socialist organisations themselves. Cultural cleavages, such as the recent arrivals’ more-orthodox practice of Judaism, divided them from Anglo-Jewry but also created friction with the anti-clerical Jewish socialists. At a 1907 London conference of Jewish socialists, Jacob Lestchinsky complained that only 200 Jews had joined the ranks of the movement.

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63 Fishman, East End pp.42-3  
65 Alderman, Jewish Community, p.54  
Amplifying this sense of division, many prominent individuals and institutions of Anglo-Jewry had received the arrival of Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe with a mixture of ambivalence and disdain, fearing that their alien cultural traits and poverty would bring the entire Jewish community into disrepute, enabling anti-Semitism to threaten the gains of the previous century.\textsuperscript{67} Their poverty and discernible alien characteristics were seen as embarrassing moral failings which threatened to isolate all Jews from British society. Adverts were placed in the Yiddish press across Europe warning of the poverty and exclusion that awaited potential arrivals in Britain, funds were established to encourage newly-arrived Eastern European Jews to travel on to the United States, and charity was withheld from new arrivals, lest communal generosity encourage further migration. For many of the migrants, the joint efforts of the Jewish Board of Guardians and the Russo-Jewish Committee to encourage them to return to the Russian Empire in spite of the repression there exemplified the disdain of Anglo-Jewry to their plight.\textsuperscript{68} These endeavours saw 31,000 immigrant Jews paid to return between 1881 and 1906, with many dropped in Germany without the funds to their journeys. Prominent Jewish political figures such as Benjamin Cohen, the Conservative MP for Islington East between 1892 and 1906, even publicly lobbied for legal measures to reduce the number of migrants.\textsuperscript{69} A cleavage between migrant Jews and established Jewry seemed to preclude the idea of a unified communal response to anti-Semitic agitation.

The established Jewish community had also swung increasingly towards the Conservatives through the course of the late nineteenth century. This was due to a combination of factors including a growing Conservative support for liberal economics, Jewish sympathy with Conservatives’ anti-Russian foreign policy, a desire to demonstrate communal gratitude for the repeal of discriminatory measures, and the rise of Disraeli demonstrating a greater degree of toleration within the party that had once stood for Protestant supremacy.\textsuperscript{70} This political orientation was at odds with many of the new arrivals. The Russian-Jewish intelligentsia had come from a political

\textsuperscript{67} Alderman, \textit{Jewish Community}, p.53
\textsuperscript{70} Gartner, \textit{Jewish Immigrant}, pp.49-55
and social context where liberal tenets that had appealed to emancipated Jewish populations held little relevance or utility, and instead ideologies predicated upon social revolution or various forms of Jewish nationalism had a much greater hold, particularly in the wake of the 1905 revolutionary movement.⁷¹ For the Jewish socialists of the SDF/BSP, identification with these groups was neither feasible nor intuitive. Whilst Jewish trade unionism had proved successful and had its roots amongst pioneering Jewish socialists, the divided and evolving Jewish community had yet to take up socialism with any vehemence in Britain.

It is perhaps with this experience of the significance of trade unionism in developing a working relationship with the émigré Jewish population, that Rothstein and Petroff both placed greater value in direct action than the Old Guard. Rothstein, although attached to parliamentarianism, emphasised the necessity of intervention within the trade unions to win adherents from liberalism through concerted action, rather than propagandising with a purely electoral aim. The prospect of liberals supporting strikes while social-democrats stood aside was an abandonment of struggle in his eyes.⁷² During the height of the Boer War Rothstein said the party behaved more like a sect than a party, standing aside as mere “intelligent onlookers.” He called for “practice, enthusiastic work, [and] martyrdom” alongside the workers within the unions and beyond the confines of economic issues.⁷³ Similarly, Kahan would challenge the leadership over not just the question of armaments but the role of industrial disputes in propagating the class consciousness necessary for the coming revolution.⁷⁴

Petroff took several opportunities to critique what he saw as the “propagandising” focus of his comrades, and would clash with the leadership over its scepticism over the role of the trade unions could play in advancing socialist consciousness.⁷⁵ Petroff accused the Executive Committee at the 1910 Conference of behaving “as a sect”, and recalled an attempt to “boycott” him by the Hyndmanites in response. During the 1911 national railway strike, he suggested to HW Lee that Justice be temporarily

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⁷⁴ Laybourn, ‘The Failure’, p.168
⁷⁵ Morgan, ‘In and Out’, p.30
transformed into a daily bulletin to provide an organ for the strikers. His request was met with “a horrified gaze” as Lee continued to chase up branches that were in arrears, leading Petroff to conclude “with these sectarians there was nothing to be done.”

After studying the growing economic competition Britain faced from rival manufacturing nations, he concluded that the conditions were perfect to build a strong socialist party through the unions. However, he felt that the SDF/BSP “had got accustomed to preaching Socialism in the desert as [a] true sect... [and] they found it difficult to adapt themselves.” He attempted to publish a series of articles on the subject in Justice but was informed by the Executive he would have to remove his critique of the party, a demand he refused to acquiesce to, leading him to send his articles to the Russian and Austrian socialist press instead.\footnote{IISH, Peter Petroff Papers, 11, Chapter 11 ‘In the Ranks of British Labour’pp.12-22}

Kahan was more in line with the prevailing perspectives which emphasised parliamentary reform over industrial action as the best means for palliative reform and social revolution. Her *Principles of Socialism* pamphlet from 1908 makes little mention of the role of trade unionism, and roots the rise of social liberalism in the pressure exerted by the independent Labour grouping inside the House of Commons, demonstrating the importance of political over industrial action in her analysis.\footnote{Kahan, *Principles*, pp.24-27}

However, her threat to the Hyndmanite programme became far more discernible in the years immediately preceding the Great War. Between 1911 and 1913 she was a leading figure in the attempt to commit the BSP to an anti-militarist position in a move that would draw the ire of the Hyndmanites. Her first attempt to do so was at the 1911 national conference where her branch, Central Hackney, had proposed a resolution opposing increases in armaments spending, colonial rivalries, and economic aggression between states. Her motion narrowly fell in a debate which saw Quelch and others respond by drawing on internationalist lines of argument, namely that an expanded British navy would prevent the domination of smaller nations by Prussian militarism, a motif that would be deployed forcefully during the early months of the war.\footnote{Vladimir Lenin, ‘Conference of the British Social-Democratic Party’, 1911,\url{https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1911/apr/16b.htm} [accessed 12/08/17]} The following year, Quelch would go on the offensive at the first conference of the BSP, putting forth a motion calling for a Citizens’ Army. Although it did not call for an
increase in the size of the navy, the position Hyndman had advocated, it gave organisational approval to the line of argument seen at the previous conference, namely that internationalism rested on a universal right to national self-defence.\textsuperscript{79}

However, this was by no means the end of the conflict, as Kahan would utilise her organisational prominence to push against the position. In December 1912, Kahan proposed a motion on the BSP National Executive which committed the BSP to opposing government spending on armaments, and condemned the public statements Hyndman had made on the topic. The motion passed by a single vote, prompting Victor Fisher to temporarily resign from the Executive complaining that Kahan’s views resulted from her being “alien in race and blood”. Remaining Hyndmanites on the Executive overturned the result in February 1913 at a particularly poorly-attended meeting, claiming that the motion needed to be affirmed by a national conference.\textsuperscript{80}

At the 1913 annual conference, Kahan spoke against a motion from the Tunbridge Wells branch which affirmed Hyndman’s and other members’ rights to publicly advocate increased naval spending. She asserted that opposition to militarism was not only a fundamental socialist principle, but also a key policy of the International which Hyndman was now contradicting.\textsuperscript{81} The motion was withdrawn, and a counter-resolution from the Hampstead branch was put forth pledging opposition to any increase in military spending, passing with only nine dissenters. In a symbolic gesture of unity which would soon be proved hollow, Hyndman and Kahan shook hands.

Kahan had spearheaded a successful opposition to the Old Guard, demonstrating that the largely-gentile party membership was closer to the political perspectives of the prominent Jewish figures than they were to the traditional leadership. The debate indicates that as international tensions were increasing, the abstract ideal of internationalism was coming under increased scrutiny. Kahan referred to a supranational working-class interest, and a practice defined by the international institutions of Social-Democracy, whilst Hyndman and Quelch advocated an internationalism defined as the non-domination of certain nations by others, and

\textsuperscript{79} BSP, \textit{First Annual Conference}, pp.20-22
\textsuperscript{80} Crick, pp.251-2
\textsuperscript{81} BSP, \textit{Second Annual Conference}, pp.16-18
which could only be protected through mobilising the resources of existing nation-states.

**The Outbreak of War and the Role of Racialised Narratives**

The outbreak of European war saw resurgences in racialised rhetoric and analysis within the BSP. The debates over questions of national defence, militarism, socialist patriotism, and the role of the International, erupted into a factional dispute for control of the organisation and the party press. Initially the majority on both sides hoped that the war would end quickly, and held back from attempting to commit the party to a singularly anti- or pro-war outlook. By the end of 1914 this truce would break, as the Executive released a manifesto calling for socialists to take part in military recruitment campaigns.

The factions disagreed over the causes of the war, with those opposed to the war effort more frequently rooting the conflict in disputes over trade and colonies, whilst those who supported the Allies located its origins in German expansionism negating Belgium’s right to national sovereignty, a sacrosanct principle of their version of socialist internationalism. In trying to explain the cause of the German territorial aggression, pro-Allied members used racialised narratives to explain the war’s origins and to characterise their enemies.

In a front-page article for *Justice* in January 1915, Polish nationalist leader Roman Dmowski alleged that historic Germany had been a boon to the civilisation of Europe, but that its turn to aggressive policies had been the result of the ascent of the Prussians, a group of “half-barbarous tribes” who had used “intrigue, lies and robbery” to usurp the leadership of the unified German state. In the same edition, a favourable review was given regarding a Havelock Ellis article in the *New Statesmen*, in which he had claimed that the Prussian character had remained unchanged for two millennia, stating that although they were an energetic race they had no history of constitutional traditions to lay the basis for a civilised society. Later in the year Bax would give a fuller elaboration on this subject. He make a distinction between the

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82 ‘Prussia and Germany’, *Justice* (January 7th, 1915), p.1
83 ‘Havelock Ellis on “Kultur”’, *Justice* (January 7th, 1915), p.3
Prussian leadership of Germany and their aggressive characteristics, and the Middle Germans or Saxons, whom he claimed had demonstrated a “desire for Brotherhood,” and for whose culture he had “nothing but praise.” Given his lifelong love of German philosophy and culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that he demonstrated this sympathy, however he also displayed frustration. He alleged that the majority of Germans had become enamoured with their Prussian rulers, necessitating external intervention to rid them of their ruling-class. This was a prospect for which he displayed some relish, claiming “Should they still crouch before the Prussian jackboot rather than stand up like free men on their own footing, then woe to them!”

Hyndman escalated anti-Prussianism to conspiratorial levels. He alleged that German infiltration of the Foreign Office had resulted in the prolonging of the war to the disadvantage of the Allies and the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. Sir Eyre Crowe was singled out for particular suspicion, with Hyndman noting “Crowe’s mother was a German, his wife is a German and he speaks English with a German accent.” He obsessed over the idea that the war was being prolonged due to German infiltration of government circles and military leadership. When the American socialist and muckraker journalist Charles Edward Russell visited Britain in 1915, Hyndman even managed to convince his long-time correspondent that the German U-Boat campaign continued only due to infiltration of British High Command.

Cumulatively, these discussions of Prussian character and German influence were not mere anti-alien outbursts, but instead presented a static and essentialised view of Prussian behaviours, one not only outside of the influence of historical and social contexts, but which actively shaped them.

However, the anti-Germans of the BSP did take efforts to distance themselves from the prevalent xenophobia that was growing across the country. In February 1915 HW Lee warily pointed to the formation of a “British Anti-German League” and wished it a hasty collapse into irrelevance. Hyndman himself advocated a boycott of this “bourgeois” organisation due to his belief that it would encourage perpetual enmity.

84 Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The German Situation', *Justice* (October 7th, 1915), p.2
85 HM Hyndman, 'Caesar’s Wife' *Justice* (October 14th, 1915), p.5
86 LOCMD, Charles Edward Russell Papers, Box 24, Folder 3, 'Diary of an Amateur Diplomat', May 2nd, 1915
87 ‘From Various Sources’, *Justice* (February 11th, 1915), p.5
amongst nations. This was not universal. Rosalind Travers Hyndman, Henry Hyndman’s wife, also criticised the Anti-German League. Her critique however was aimed at their ineffective tactics, and she suggested that they boycott firms who had provided poor supplies to the army or traded with Germany. She identified a growing phenomenon of “middle-class patriots”, whom she accused of boycotting German music, verbally attacking any aliens on the grounds that they could be German, and breaking German-owned shop windows. While she did not personally advocate these tactics, it was only on the grounds of efficacy, claiming “let us welcome these efforts, so long as they are not harmful, for they add to the gaiety of nations!”

This discursive strategy did not come without risks. Albert Ward, who would join the BSP Executive in the wake of the split, wrote a letter in defence of German culture in response to the characterisation of Prussians as innately expansionist and militaristic. He opined that they could at least claim to have formed a “well-educated, virile proletariat, imbued with the fighting spirit” necessary to create socialism. He warned that a British victory would not create conditions favourable to socialist revolution, as British socialism was of a “come-to-Jesus brand saturated with the Nonconformist conscience…. which side-tracks and paralyses every militant move.” While the pro-Allied socialists often derided their opponents as “pro-German”, this was one of the few occasions where that label proved apt.

As well as creating the conditions for a racialised anti-Prussianism, the war also saw the renewal of concerns over the racial health of the British working-class. As seen in the previous chapter, there was a strong vein of reform-eugenics running through the BSP as well as wider layers of the labour movement and socialist left. Before the organisation’s split, these ideas were largely drawn on by the pro-Allied faction in the party, who feared that voluntary enlistment would see the British working class lose its most courageous and energetic members on the front lines, whilst degenerates would proliferate without contributing to the war effort. A cartoon in *Justice* in 1915 titled “Efficiency” succinctly illustrates this fear of the war’s effects on racial vitality. Europa stands aloft a soap-box, holding “plans for [the] future of the race”. To her right, a group of muscular, square-jawed men are being sent to the trenches, while on her left

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88 Tsuzuki, *Hyndman*, pp.243-4
89 Rosalind Travers Hyndman, ‘Eccentricities of Patriotism’, *Justice* (September 9th, 1915), p.2
90 Albert Ward, ‘Correspondence: “Justice” and the War’, *Justice*, February 11th, 1915, p.7
stands a group labelled “The Unfit”, many of whom resemble Oriental and Semitic caricatures and are either spindly or short and stocky. Europa instructs the fit that they are to fight and die while the degenerates will “build up the new civilization.” This cartoon reflected the growing calls for conscription and further-reaching recruitment within the pro-war sections of the BSP. Just as Hyndman had previously feared that emigration would take the most energetic and vital of the British working-class movement away, hindering the progress of socialism, the same logic was applied to the voluntary army. This view had the support of HW Lee, the editor of Justice since Quelch’s death in 1913. He would review IM Clayton’s The Shadow on the Universe, a pamphlet which emphasised the physically degenerative impact of war and called for pregnant women to consciously will their children to become great reformers, thus imbining the race with a more potent spirit. Lee criticised the idealist nature of this recommendation but agreed with the notion that the race would become “hopelessly malformed creatures” if large-scale wars were allowed to continue. Drawing on the popular eugenicist trope of “race suicide”, the existential threat posed to whites should their numbers or strength decline in relation to non-white races, implicit within this review was the notion that German militarism could threaten the racial basis of both the British population and wider European civilisation.

The pro-war sentiments also led to a cessation of anti-imperial propaganda in the pages of Justice. An editorial response to the proposals of the pro-war majority of the German SPD who had called for equal access to colonial markets, fumed at the idea of allowing Germany access to the British imperial economy, whilst making no statement about the political desirability of imperial holdings themselves. An article by Archie Robertson, a close associate of Hyndman and civil servant who wrote under the pseudonym Robert Arch, likewise mused on the potential value of annexing Germany’s colonies. Alf Barton, a BSP councillor in Sheffield, wrote a letter to Tom Smith, a pro-war BSP member and organiser of the Wakefield branch, thanking him for nominating him to the BSP Executive Committee. He elaborated how he felt the war could be ended with haste and on equitable grounds; whilst emphasising Belgium’s right to

91 ‘Efficiency’, Justice, (February 18th, 1915), p.1
92 HWL, ‘Race Suicide Through War’, Justice, (June 17, 1915), p.3
93 Marius Turda, Modernism and Eugenics (Basingstoke, 2010), pp.28-9
94 ‘“Official” German Socialist Peace Proposals’, Justice (September 2nd, 1915), p.3
95 Robert Arch, ‘Prussians, Pacifists and Peace’, Justice (October 14th, 1915), p.2
national self-determination, he felt that the war could be ended if Germany were given the right to control and capitalise “undeveloped” areas of the world. In this sentence Barton reveals his connection to the broader visual culture of empire, wherein British unfamiliarity with the forms of farming, cultivation, and land management used by different peoples led to assumptions that no indigenous development had occurred there. They were merely unused lands to be settled by a higher culture. Given the Hyndmanite perspective that any value the British Empire held was in its potential to spread the particularly progressive political-cultural values of Britain, as well as the perception that Prussian cultural and racial virtues had caused the war, the desire to hold on to the colonies as a bulwark against becomes understandable. The call for an end of exploitative imperialism would have to wait until Prussian expansionism was defeated.

The pro-war faction was not solely responsible for the growing racialisation of political arguments. Anti-war members also used racially-exclusionary ideas to justify their opposition to the war and critique of the social changes which it had induced. During 1915 this was largely focussed on the growing use of non-British labour in the shipping industry as greater numbers of British workers enlisted. Throughout 1914 and 1915, the President of the nascent Republic of China, Yuan Shiki, repeatedly offered to join the war on behalf of the Allies in the hopes of gaining a greater say in international affairs, however his offer was firmly rebuffed by the British. Instead the Chinese republic offered to send labourers to work in France and Britain so that the European powers could free up men to serve in the armed forces. From 1915 this policy was enacted, and by 1916 the Chinese Labour Corps had been formed. Both Asquith and Lloyd George’s coalitions were wary of the potential friction this would cause with the British labour movement and so, in concert with both the French and Chinese governments, attempted to minimise public knowledge of it. However, word of the project began to spread throughout the British trade unions, and socialist anti-war activists picked up the issue to further their cause.

98 Guoqi Xu, Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War (London, 2011), pp.6-7, pp.10-37
Tom Quelch, the son of the recently-deceased Hyndman ally Harry Quelch, had taken a strong anti-war stance, and would become a prominent figure in the post-split BSP and a key industrial organiser in the young CPGB. During 1915 he wrote a letter to Justice condemning the ruling-class for their employment of “representatives of the yellow peril” on their ships. 99 He argued that this belied the hollowness of their exhortations to patriotism, and that the continued employment of “Chinese coolies or Mexican peons” would undermine the wages of British workers. He quoted directly from a publication of the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union (NSFU), which had only two years previously had drafted a manuscript warning of the coming “Chinese invasion of Great Britain.” 100

Quelch’s piece prompted a flurry of responses over the following weeks which would similarly make the case against employing Chinese workers in the shipping industry. However, the contributors could not agree on the precise reasons that the Chinese were being hired. One claimed that they were preferred to British workers because they were soberer, cleaner, and more conscientious. 101 This letter was furiously responded to by JH Borlase, an official for the NSFU, who claimed that Chinese seaman were hired primarily because they never sought better wages. He noted, however, that Chinese sailors, unlike their British counterparts, had often been sent to gaol “for running amok, threatening and assaulting their officers”, and inferred that ship-owners covered up these instances of bad behaviour to continue employing this cheap labour. 102 This is an example of a facet of racial history Kenneth Lunn has emphasised, namely that immigration discourses were frequently racialised in line with wider economic changes, in this instance the growing internationalisation of shipping workforces in the context of war. 103

This growing racialisation of political discourse created a salient environment in which the Hyndmanites could once again openly deploy anti-Semitic tropes, and utilise their opponents’ cultural and ethnic backgrounds in an attempt to delegitimise their views.

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99 Tom Quelch, ‘The World of Labour’, Justice (June 29th, 1915), p.6
102 JH Borlase, ‘Correspondence: Chinese Seamen’, Justice (August 26th, 1915), p.8
Whilst their previous public allegations of Jewish rootlessness and conspiracies had raised vociferous objections from the membership, both the wider political crisis and the turn to racialised themes suggested that perhaps in this instance it could successfully suppress dissent.

**The Anti-Semitic Campaign**

The pro-war BSP members would utilise anti-Semitism to discredit their opposition in the charged atmosphere of the war, at a moment where racialised explanations of national policy were becoming ever-more commonplace. There were several component threads to this anti-Semitism, which would draw on tropes of the previous anti-Semitic campaign around the Boer War. The first was the conflation of Jews and Germany; the Jewish population was in bed with the enemy and potentially even engaged in financial exchange with it. The second was less condemnatory, it was the allegation that Jews could not abide being on the same side as Russia, and thus were shying away from a progressive war in the name of sectional interests. Finally, it was claimed that Jewish socialists were corrupting the movement as their collective history prevented them from identifying with patriotism and the national principle. Once again Jews were presented as rootless outsiders to the nation, more interested in finance than social progress, only on this occasion rather than provoking an unjust war, they sought to undermine a just conflict. Variations of these allegations were espoused by most leading members of the group which would break away to form the NSP, as well as Fisher.

While Brustein saw the Boer War as the height of socialist anti-Semitism in Britain, this moment marks a qualitative escalation from the anti-Semitic anti-imperialism of prior decades which had focussed on “rich Jews” whilst expressing sympathy with migrants from Eastern Europe. The anti-Semitic conspiracy had widened in scope, and was now being focussed upon the BSP membership itself. No longer was class position a means to avoid the accusation of undermining the national polity, rich Jew and poor Jew alike were undermining both the viability of socialism and the right to national self-determination. Their destructive behaviour was not argued to be a religious outgrowth, but a result of their alien status and diasporic history, social circumstances beyond
their control. Their political attitudes were the result of their essence rather than their beliefs. What is more, the crime of which the Jews were accused had become graver; whilst during the Boer War Jewish imperialists were portrayed as conquering a semi-capitalist nation with a particularly progressive culture, now they were undermining the potential of socialism. Not only was this a graver charge, but in this instance collaboration with the state was utilised as a weapon against foreign-born Jews.

This attack on Jewish members of the socialist movement was not a new phenomenon within the group, although it had rarely been made publicly before. During the preceding years, when Hyndman and Rothstein had clashed over the policy of armaments, their arguments had spilled out into the foreign socialist press. Hyndman, angered that Rothstein’s articles were being republished in Die Neue Zeit, the journal of the SPD, wrote a furious letter to Karl Kautsky in which he stated:

I cannot imagine why you let Mr. Theodore Rothstein, a Russian Jew Refugee, here, writing regularly as an anonymous contributor to hack liberal papers, to publish a whole lot of lies about me... I do not consider it worth my while to enter into any public disputation about myself with Mr. Theodore Rothstein.104

Likewise, Victor Fisher had insinuated that Kahan’s politics were due to her alien status and racial identity. But the former had occurred behind closed doors, while the latter had been met with revulsion from the rest of the organisation, and an apology demanded. What was different in this context was that the ‘whisper about the Jews’ had turned into a cacophony of screamed accusations. The taboo had been broken.

As mentioned earlier, Hyndman had a long history of anti-Semitic critiques of imperialism, and had coupled this with refutations of racial prejudice by pointing to his support for migrant Jews, protests against pogroms, and his opposition to anti-Semitic legislation. This furnished him with both a constellation of anti-Semitic tropes which could be redeployed, and an awareness of the potential harm to his reputation if he appeared to engage in too-rigorous a condemnation of too broad a cross-section of Jewry. Whilst other pro-war socialists would engage the Jewish anti-war socialists in an accusatorial manner, Hyndman offered a more conciliatorily-worded approach. In a letter to Justice, he stated that were he Jewish, he would find it difficult to support

104 IISH, Karl Kautsky Papers, DXIII/ 236, ‘Letter to Karl Kautsky’, May 15th, 1911
fighting alongside Russia, claiming that “the horrors of Kisheneff [Kishinev] are still in my mind”. He implored the Jewish socialists to support the Allies, however, claiming that a Turco-German victory would see pogroms launched not only against Jews, but against every Social-Democrat in the territories they conquered.\footnote{105} HW Lee, editor of Justice, made similar arguments in an official statement of the editorial stance of the newspaper, stating that he understood why “our Jewish friends” wouldn’t side with Russia as it “persecutes one subject race after another.”\footnote{106} In these instances, accusations that the Jewish community was anti-war were framed in a sympathetic manner, helping to distance the authors from allegations of stereotyping whilst still allowing them to characterise anti-war socialism as a Jewish outgrowth.

Other members, rather than following this conciliatory anti-Semitism, utilised innuendo to put across their message. Tom Smith, in a bid to get elected onto the Executive, asserted his ethnic Britishness in his appeals. He declared that “I am implacably opposed to the Fineberg-Fairchild supporters and their Pro-German propaganda. In short, I am a British Socialist.” The placement of Fineberg’s name so close to his own statement of emphatic national belonging, coupled with the allegation of support for Germany, demonstrates an increasingly-exclusionary vision of British identity being asserted against an assumedly traitorous Jewish membership.\footnote{107} The correct politics, it seemed, would only be enacted by the correct ethnic leadership.

Such insinuations were made publicly as well. HW Lee was responsible for the inclusion of a number of articles and letters which promoted a conspiratorial view of the Jewish influence within the socialist movement. In a letter published on the front page of Justice in October 1915, an anonymous member of the SPA, which had taken an anti-war stance, claimed that the party’s position was directly due to both Jewish control and the ethnic make-up of the membership.

The New York Call is completely controlled by the Russian Jews... who are more pro-German, if that were possible, than the Germans themselves... We who are Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent are in the minority ... [but] there is a strong movement now on foot to Americanise the movement\footnote{108}
Joseph Nelson, who had previously written articles for the BSP and SDF’s journals, also wrote to the paper alleging that “the Russian and Polish Jew element exerts a big influence” within the BSP, and that they were responsible for the “anti-nationalism” now emanating from the group. Whilst Hyndman muted his own anti-Semitic public utterances during the war, perhaps recollecting the furious responses he had received fifteen years earlier, other pro-war advocates could be much more forthright in their allegations.

Victor Fisher remained separate from the rest of his pro-war comrades, eschewing joining the NSP for his own organisation in the wake of the split. His writings during the faction fight remain some of the most explicit in alleging an innate incompatibility of Jewry with British values. He became particularly prominent in the dispute for his pronouncements, and was the only member of the BSP to face expulsion during the 1916 conference, namely for his use of off-duty soldiers to “attack and intimidate” anti-war hecklers at the inaugural meeting of the SNDC. Whilst prominent pro-war members of the organisation such as Hyndman and Will Thorne addressed the meeting, EC Fairchild heckled from the floor, and Fisher called on uniformed soldiers to clear out the anti-war agitators. In the violence of the attack, several BSP anti-war oppositionists were thrown bloodied from the hall.

In January 1915, as preparations for the Divisional Conferences took place, Fisher made a definitive statement on the relationship between nationalism and internationalism within socialism. He alleged that the prominence of Jews “without any strong attachment to European nationality” amongst the founding figures of the socialist movement had left it practicing a “nebulous cosmopolitanism” which drove away thousands of workers from its ranks. He maintained that historical progress would develop along the lines of “national genius”, necessitating an internationalist vision based on the cooperation of distinct national socialist polities. He claimed that for socialism to be successful the movement had to acknowledge:

This community of blood, of tradition, of glory and victory, of defeat and suffering, this common tie of language, of literature, of habit and

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111 Challinor, Origins, pp.162-4
institutions, this sense of a birth land... this larger family divided from the other families of men by the very lines of national and racial life.\textsuperscript{112}

This is perhaps the BSP’s most explicit statement of a blood-and-soil vision of nationalism, one rooted in the ideal of the concrete community grounded in tangible properties, which necessarily pitted itself against the “rootless” and abstract figure of the Jew.\textsuperscript{113} In Fisher’s vision there was little that the Jew could do to be integrated into British society. He was a figure whose racial traits and connection to the land marked him apart, with a subsequent impact on identity and ideology. This same logic was evident in his 1913 remarks about Kahan, the public condemnation of which had created vigilance amongst the membership about his proclivities.\textsuperscript{114}

In June of 1915, he was denounced for his anti-Semitic allegations at a public meeting by other party members, and subsequently wrote a response elaborating his position. He pointed to articles he had written condemning the Dreyfus Affair, and his role in speaking at a Hyde Park demonstration against the Russian pogroms. However, he added, “the Jew is not sacrosanct and above criticism,” before alleging that those Jews who were anti-war “whether naturalised or not, are Jews first and Britons a long way afterwards.” He alleged that they were abusing British “liberty and toleration” to utilise “all the acuteness of their race [to] agitate... for a policy contrary to the overwhelming sentiment of Britons.”\textsuperscript{115} In this second article Fisher’s vision of a racial incompatibility between Jews and Britons is less pronounced, with an explicit claim that genuinely Anglicised Jews were not “pro-German.” However, his view of a Jewish predilection towards disruptive agitation, and a disloyalty to Britain which could only be disproved through quiet complicity with prevailing state imperatives, demonstrate a continued anti-Semitic world-view in line with prevailing anti-Semitic accusations which tied the Jewish threat to the German enemy.\textsuperscript{116}

Fisher had demonstrated perhaps the greatest propensity for embodying the political spirit and programme identified with anti-Semitism in the vain of Bonefeld’s analysis. In April 1915 he had been one of the key figures in forming the SNDC, which within a

\textsuperscript{112} Victor Fisher, ‘Readjustment in Socialist Thought and Spirit: Nationalism and Internationalism’, \textit{Justice}, (January 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1915), p.3
\textsuperscript{113} Bonefeld, ‘Power of Abstraction’, pp.322-4
\textsuperscript{114} BSP, \textit{Third Annual Conference}, p.11
\textsuperscript{115} Victor Fisher, ‘Anti-Semitism’, \textit{Justice}, June 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1915, p.8
year had renamed itself the British Workers’ League and published a manifesto calling for the permanent militarisation of society through conscription and compulsory military training even in peacetime. It limited its membership to British subjects only, and emphasised both the necessity of imperial tariff reform to develop an autarchic empire, and of organising the labour movement on imperial lines. The BWL drew on a number of ideas developed by other SDF leaders, for example echoes of Quelch’s earlier calls for a citizens’ army are discernible within these proposals. This demand for a militarised Empire-wide socialism was more far-reaching than those which had preceded it. Striking common ground with the Conservatives, the BWL developed the aim of displacing the Labour Party, launching their own political party which was described in The Times as “the authentic voice of the working class.”

In the 1918 General Election the group managed to win nine seats (they only faced Conservative opposition in one of the twenty-eight constituencies they stood candidates in), although they would lose them all by 1922. During the course of the war the group was able to develop close links to elements of the establishment. Lord Milner, who had been prominent as the High Commissioner of South Africa during the Second South African War, and had been brought into the War Cabinet by Lloyd George, gave a great deal of support to the group. Milner met regularly with Fisher, helped him secure lucrative funding from wealthy sponsors, and even took on board suggestions from Fisher on how to suppress labour disputes and unrest during the war. Milner went as far as to arrange meetings between Fisher and Lloyd George in the wake of the Russian Revolution to prevent anything similar from occurring in Britain.

The attack against pacifist agitators which saw Fisher expelled from the BSP was described by Petroff as “a worthy forerunner of Mosley meetings. Here for lack of arguments... truncheons were brought into play against opponents of the war,” all whilst Ben Tillett harangued the pacifists from the meeting’s chair. This was not their only violent outburst. In November 1916, a crowd of 1500 “patriots” including members of the British Empire Union and the BWL, led by a contingent of ex-soldiers, would storm police barricades to break up an anti-war meeting in Cory Hall, Cardiff.

117 Alan Sykes, The Radical Right in Britain: Social Imperialism to the BNP (Basingstoke, 2005), pp.35-9
119 IISH, Peter Petroff Papers, 12, Chapter 12 ‘WAR Against WAR’, p.10
which had been due to be addressed by Ramsay MacDonald. Fisher had been on the front-lines of the attack, telling the gathered crowd that the pacifists were “dastards and cowards”, “paid agents of the enemy”, and “traitors not only to their country but to civilisation.”

Whilst Sykes makes the claim that Fisher and the BWL’s deployment of the slogan “Britain for the British” was essentially anti-capitalist and not racist in nature, in light of his anti-Semitic pronouncements this is dubious. As Fisher deliberately tailored his anti-capitalist critique to ensure it would not disrupt the state’s war effort, so he had to define the national community upon which his claims of the state’s legitimacy rested. He sought both a political and racial-cultural homogeneity as the unifying essence upon which he could build his pro-war claims, and repeatedly utilised violence against those who threatened this vision. Demands of minority groups to assimilate or leave, imagined conspiracies of pacifists working for foreign powers, and violent threats against political opponents were drawn together into his political praxis.

Although Fisher was the figure who perhaps best embodied the politics later theorists identified with programmes reliant on anti-Semitism, he was by no means an outlier in terms of his attitude to Jewish “cosmopolitanism”. Frederick James Gould, one of Britain’s most prominent secularists and educational authorities, would also be drawn into the conversation, expressing a viewpoint very similar to Fisher’s. Gould was widely-respected, he had been a key figure in cohering local Ethical Societies into a national movement, establishing Progressive Sunday Schools, and founding the Rationalist Press Association, in a process which had cemented his connections with other influential socialists and secularists of the period. A Positivist-inspired former teacher whose ideas on secular moral education had been debated in the Houses of Commons, and gained such wide acclaim that he was regularly invited to lecture across

120 Brock Millman, Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain (London, 2000), pp.138-166
121 Sykes, Radical Right, pp.40-42; It is noteworthy that this slogan had been the title of the social-imperialist Robert Blatchford’s most popular book, and would be picked up again by Harry Pollitt in his drive commit the CPGB towards a pro-war position in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on the basis of “English common sense.” Kevin Morgan, Harry Pollitt (Manchester, 1993), pp.107-113
122 Stoetzel, ‘Cultural’ pp.271-3
Britain, and even on occasion in both the USA and India, his intervention would have likely been seen as a *coup de grace* by pro-war socialists.¹²⁴

“We have to remember that Marx was a Jew” he opined in the pages of *Justice*, “he had the characteristic Hebrew detachment from national feeling. Hence, his summons to the workers was too cosmopolitan.” Evoking Wallace, he ascribed the distinctness of national cultures to the climactic differences of the lands they inhabited. He then presented a vision of an international commonwealth in which labour would be divided on a national basis, with each nationality specialising in line with their racial strengths to accomplish “industrial efficiency.” He called on the Jews to join his vision. While he claimed that perhaps some section of Jewry would establish itself as a nationality in Palestine, he urged the Jews of Europe to “lose their racial sectarianism, and mingle [their] blood and all [their] splendid qualities with this or that nationality.”¹²⁵ This call for Jews to assimilate or emigrate, coupled with an explicit vision of national separation (Gould went as far as to say that while it was fine to holiday abroad, nobody should live amongst other nationalities) demonstrates his essential hostility to the continued existence of Jewish identity and culture within the framework of common nation-states. Egalitarianism could only come with the correct racial groups inhabiting their proper formative lands, and socially labouring in the manner best suited to their racial temperaments. As Bonefeld said:

> Antisemitism manifested a perverted urge for equality. It seeks an equality that derives from membership in a national community, a community of *Volkgenossen*. This equality is defined by the mythical “property” of land and soil based on the bond of blood¹²⁶

Gould’s approach to Jewry matched that of Fisher, the organisational outlier who did not join the NSP, and yet according to Gould’s autobiography, he played a key role in fomenting the BSP split and the creation of joint literature alongside Hyndman, Lee, and others.¹²⁷ It seems unlikely that the leaders of the “sane patriots”, coordinating their intervention, did not approve of the stoking of racial hostility as a factional tactic. AS Headingley, another prominent pro-war member who was condemned but not

¹²⁶ Bonefeld, ‘Power of Abstraction’, p.322
expelled at the 1916 party conference, similarly alleged that the “anti-nationalism” of the labour movement was the result of Jewish socialists. He felt they had demonstrated “strong racial feelings” and a “clannishness” which prevented their integration into national communities, and thus they could not understand the appeal of patriotism to the average British worker. He went as far as to accuse them of being pro-German because in Germany they had been successful as capitalists.128 Headingley’s denunciation is particularly interesting due to his opposition to Hyndman’s anti-Semitic anti-imperialism during the Boer War, which he had labelled “a foul smelling herring dragged...across the path of socialism.”129 This shift on Headingley’s behalf demonstrates the extent to which the Great War posed a crisis for the BSP’s perspective on nationality, forcing some into positions they had once abhorred to justify the patriotic candour of the BSP Executive. Petroff however, had other reasons to explain this shift. He would later reflect on his contempt for the “cynical, insincere” Headingley, claiming that he “hated that man” for his opportunistic collaborations with Hyndman.130

One of the major factors that differentiated the anti-Semitism which was mobilised around the split with the anti-Semitic anti-imperialism that preceded it, was that this round of allegations were accompanied by calls to remove Jewish members from the ranks of the organisation, and the use of wartime legislation and state power to police the membership. The accusations of illegality and treachery came in atmosphere of growing official distrust for Jews of Russian origin, whereby their presumed affiliation to Germany had increased the scrutiny they received from both the security apparatus and the political right.131

Hyndman, having moderated his public anti-Semitism, pursued an agenda of working alongside state departments in an attempt to see those Jews whom he felt were working for the enemy imprisoned, deported, or neutralised. Rothstein, who worked for the Foreign Office translating articles from the Russian press, was the first to feel Hyndman’s force. In a letter to Bertrand Russell, Hyndman revealed that he believed Rothstein was spying on Germany’s behalf, and that he was working to have him

129 Clare Hirschfield, ‘British Left’, p.100
130 IISH, Peter Petroff Papers, 11, Chapter 11 ‘In the Ranks of British Labour’, p.18
131 Kadish, Bolsheviks, pp.239-252, p.243
discharged.\textsuperscript{132} This was no mere bluster to scare the anti-war Russell into joining him. MI5 reports indicate that in May 1917 Hyndman contacted RW Seton-Watson, a British activist who had campaigned for national self-determination within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a member of the Enemy Propaganda Department of the Intelligence Bureau, warning him of Rothstein’s threat and offering further information on his erstwhile comrade and his associates.\textsuperscript{133} There were no immediate ramifications as Lieutenant-Colonel Wake, the head of MI7, felt that Rothstein’s work was too valuable and that his minimal access to sensitive information meant that he posed little threat. However, this accusation alongside another made by Liberal MP Sir Donald Maclean would be used in 1918 to justify arranging for Rothstein’s deportation from Britain.\textsuperscript{134} Hyndman’s report came only a year after Headingley publicly alleged that Rothstein was a paid agent of the German government, which led to MI5 authorising the opening of his correspondence, and would precede the denial of Rothstein’s request for naturalisation.\textsuperscript{135}

Rothstein would not be the only foreign-born Jew to incur the ire of the state in the wake of the Hyndmanites’ denunciations. In an article titled ‘Who and What is Peter Petroff?’, the Jewish trade unionist’s intentions and actions were subject to a series of innuendos. Specific reference was made to his organising activity in the tumultuous atmosphere of the Clyde, as well as his alien status, and allusions made to a nebulous and nefarious intention which he was hiding.\textsuperscript{136} He was arrested shortly afterwards on the grounds of having failed to register in a “prohibited area,” and his imprisonment was prolonged by accusations of having held “hostile associations”, allegations made on the basis of his partner’s German nationality.\textsuperscript{137} Whilst in his autobiography Petroff paid little attention to the idea that Hyndman held any responsibility for his arrest, to his comrades in the anti-war faction this was not the case.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{132} Tsuzuki, \textit{Hyndman}, pp.243-4
\textsuperscript{133} NA, KV2/1575, 181609, ‘Letter from Hyndman to Seton-Watson’, May 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1917
\textsuperscript{134} David Burke, \textit{The Lawn Road Flats: Spies, Writers and Artists} (Woodbridge, 2014), p.72. Maclean stated his source was a “high official of the London Labour Movement”, suggesting that the origin of his accusation could be from within the London-based Hyndmanite faction
\textsuperscript{135} NA, KV2/1575, ‘Biographical Summary’, 1917
\textsuperscript{136} ‘Who and What is Peter Petroff’, \textit{Justice} (December 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1915), p.4
\textsuperscript{137} IISH, Peter Petroff Papers, 13, Chapter 13, ‘Struggles on the Clyde’ pp.29-41
\textsuperscript{138} Petroff’s secret service file will not be made public until 2033 so the veracity of this connection has yet to be confirmed or denied. A more detailed account of the arrest of Petroff and the legal technicalities of his case can be found in, J. McHugh and B. J. Ripley ‘Russian Political Internees in First
After his arrest, the tone of Justice changed. Petroff was portrayed as a poor hapless alien, whose incarceration was caused by Scottish militants and anti-war socialists, such as John MacLean, leading him astray. His alien status, it was reasoned, meant that he was particularly vulnerable to detention and expulsion, a fact ignored by the overzealous Scots of the BSP. Whilst the original accusations against Petroff made no reference to his Jewish background, and indeed Petroff himself made no direct statement on the possibility of an anti-Semitic motivation behind the allegations, his vilification and then veneration bears the hallmarks of the Hyndmanites’ broader approach to Jewry. Whilst accusations against non-Jewish anti-war members could certainly entail claims of national betrayal and German sympathies, Petroff’s non-British roots were highlighted, his machinations and motives presented as unknowable, and it was suggested that his control over the situation occurred without the participants’ knowledge. This is the core of what differentiates anti-Semitism from other forms of racist scapegoating. The Jew is not an incomplete human on the level of non-whites, instead they are organised, powerful, transnational, and working towards an unknowable agenda through shadowy conspiracy. That he could so quickly be reduced to a hapless victim without agency is reflective of wider cultural representations of Jews in an environment where they were viewed as simultaneously threatening and pitiful. BSP members wrote in a context in which Bram Stoker’s Dracula evoked sexual fears about the socially-ruinous bodily threat embodied in the Eastern European interloper, whilst popular newspaper accounts of migrants’ journeys concurrently presented them as exploited, voiceless, and vulnerable. Just as the cultural figure of The Wandering Jew was being re-imagined as a romantic icon representing a life-in-flux, yet still bound up with notions of a unique Jewish sin, so too were foreign Jews simultaneously venerated and feared, the objects of both pity and enmity.

However, Jewish émigré members of the party did not remain silent, and used both the newspaper and the national conference of 1916 to condemn the portrayal of

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World War Britain: The Cases of George Chicherin and Peter Petroff, The Historical Journal, 28:3 (September, 1985), pp.727-738
Bonefeld, ‘Nationalism’, p.150
Hannah Ewence ‘Between Daydream and Nightmare: Fin-de-Siècle Jewish Journeys and the British Imagination’ in Geoffrey Alderman (ed), New Directions in Anglo-Jewish History (Brighton MA, 2010), pp.9-15
Jewish people as nefarious cosmopolitan wreckers, German spies, or apolitical hucksters. Rothstein, at this time working in the War Office, made little contribution to the debate, wary of his precarious position in the country given both his alien status and political convictions. Petroff was still imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle during the bulk of this debate. It therefore fell to a young Joseph Fineberg and several non-Jewish comrades to counter the arguments of the anti-Semites. Fineberg, a Jewish tailoring worker whose family had moved from Russian Poland to Britain when he was just 18 months old, was around thirty years younger than the leadership of the party and a leader of the BSP’s Jewish section. He would rise to prominence during World War One as a leader of the anti-war faction and a prominent defender of Jewish people against these allegations.

Fineberg’s first response to accusations of Jewish cosmopolitanism and treachery was not to point to a particular predilection of the Jewish population to socialism; he did not follow the discursive patterns of defending racialised outsiders that had been so common to the strands of SDF/BSP anti-imperialism. Instead, following in the anti-clerical traditions of the Jewish socialists of the late 19th century, he took aim at the idea that Jews were not nationalistic, and claimed that a theistic nationalism was all-too-common amongst the “Chosen People,” and that exiles were not innately cosmopolitan. He accused the BSP leaders of scapegoating Jews to distract from their own mistakes, stating that while they were not the cosmopolitans of the Hyndmanites’ caricatures, they should be. He lauded the value of cosmopolitan socialism, arguing that as capitalism operated internationally it had to be fought internationally. Whilst Fineberg supported oppressed groups’ nationalisms, he stated that even they must ultimately be overcome through different racial groups agreeing to work together, as national cultures were invariably the products of national ruling-classes. This viewpoint was not assimilationist, it did not call for the end of Jews as Jews, but instead envisioned a unifying proletarian identification between the workers of different racial groups.

Having been painted by the pro-war socialists as the leader of the anti-war faction, and his politics ascribed to his Jewish heritage, Fineberg responded by disparaging the idea

141 Burke and Lindop, ‘Theodore Rothstein’, p.56
that one needed to be Jewish to oppose the war, or that the Jews as a community were even innately anti-war. Indeed Fineberg had grown up in an environment where Anglo-Jewish leaders had emphasised their community’s role in the army as a means to deflect accusations of national disloyalty. He mocked the idea that Jews were secretly working for a German victory, quipping “let me hasten to assure comrade Hyndman that I am not hankering for the sight of my kiddie stuck on a German bayonet.” In both these articles, Fineberg challenged the characterisation of the Jewish community whilst simultaneously emphasising his distance from the dominant political trends within it. In both instances, he took aim at prevailing theories of internationalism and its relationship to the nationality principle, and called for the end of identification with nation-states.

Another critique, this time aimed at Headingley, came from an anonymous émigré Jew who wrote under the pseudonym of Le Vin. This article bore many similarities to classical European social-democratic analyses of anti-Semitism, namely that Jewish diasporic history and economic marginalisation had forced them into trade and money-lending, which had become the basis of anti-Semitic caricature. Against this image the author claimed Headingley had no understanding of Jewish social conditions and pointed to the existence of a large Jewish working class, and an international Jewish socialist movement which, the author pointedly mentioned, was far larger than the support base of the BSP. He would also refer to Jewish involvement within the various national armies, pointing to a plurality of different Jewish patriotic expressions and political opinions. He alleged that Headingley was resting on bourgeois anti-Semitism and political concepts, and instead called for an acknowledgement of mutual proletarian interests.

H. Alexander also emerged as a prominent opponent of anti-Semitism within the organisation. In response to Fisher’s articles, he wrote a furious response which accused him of living in a fantasy world in which “a whole horde of wicked, designing

144 Joseph Fineberg, ‘The War, Russia and the Jews’, Justice (June 24th, 1915), p.8
145 Ron Grant, British Radicals and Socialists and their Attitudes to Russia, c.1890-1917, (University of Glasgow, PhD Thesis, 1984), p.220
146 Jacobs, On Socialists, pp.13-14
Polish and Russian Jews... are plotting the downfall of Britain.” Whilst lampooning Fisher’s paranoid worldview, Alexander qualified his defence of the Jewish community, stating both that any foreign nationals should remain quiet during the war due to the climate of xenophobic mistrust. He further claimed that he would not have taken offence at Fisher’s statements if his critique had been limited to “rich German Jews.” Instead, Alexander feared, the writings of Fisher would ultimately come to be used against the majority of working-class Jews rather than Jewish capitalists. Alexander’s attitude that all foreign-born residents should remain silent can be understood given his attitude towards nationalism. Whilst stating that the working class was the same “across Europe” and that social-democrats must be internationalists who strove for a federated European commonwealth, he also said that given the strength of nationalism amongst the communities socialists were attempting to transform, its emotional appeal had to be respected. As long as Alexander accepted the nationality principle, however begrudgingly, he felt compelled to adhere to the homogenising logic which underlay it. It was a tacit acknowledgement which allowed for only a partial defence of Jewish rights in the context of rising jingoism.

**Internationalism and Race in the Wake of the Expulsions**

In the wake of the split, the rump BSP took a vocal stance against anti-Semitism. At the 1916 National Conference a motion was put forward condemning the “public conduct of prominent members” who had publicly attacked the anti-war viewpoints of the Executive elected in 1915 in the wake of the divisional conferences. The discussion of this resolution did not centre the patriotic or pro-recruitment sentiments of the Hyndmanites, instead Alexander and Fineberg took the opportunity to denounce the anti-Semitic remarks. Somewhat ironically, Alexander complained that the pages of Justice had been filled with insinuations that the foreign-born and Jewish members of the party had no right to speak their mind, and that Lee, Hyndman, Irving and Gould had not distanced themselves from such remarks. Fineberg added that he was not so worried about the personal attack on him, but on the logic of such remarks and how it would encourage mob violence in the East End, Manchester, and Leeds. Other

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149 H Alexander, ‘Socialism, Nationalism and Internationalism’, *Justice* (February 11th, 1915), p.2
members similarly recalled their experiences of being accused of being paid German agents, or else of being foreign-born.\textsuperscript{150} The motion was passed with only five dissenters.

Two years later at the 1918 annual conference, a conflict emerged between the opponents of anti-Semitism, centred on Zionism and Jewish racial origins. A proposed motion, similar to Bundist approaches to Zionism, criticised the movement as both utopian and a potential tool of British imperialists extending their rule in the Middle East through creating a dependent Jewish population. The motion reaffirmed the centrality of the struggle against anti-Semitism to the socialist movement, labelling it “reaction in its worst manifestation”. It framed the solution for anti-Semitism in both the establishment of socialism and the right of national self-determination and cultural autonomy for Jewish populations in racially-heterogeneous nations. H Alexander seconded this resolution, but made some peculiar qualifying remarks, stating that although he did not support the establishment of the Jewish state, he did want to see Jewish migration to Palestine and their protection under Ottoman rule. He justified this on the basis of innate racial irreconcilability:

\begin{quote}
The Jews were exotics on European soil, and the proper place for a Jew who’s remained a Jew was in the country of his traditions. The resolution suggested that the Jews might have self-determination like the Czechs, Slovenes, or Ruthanians; but the Jews were not Aryans, they were Semites, and had a country of their own in which they could work out their own educational or cultural conditions.
\end{quote}

Fineberg expressed amazement with Alexander’s comments, stating that for many contemporary Jews, their homeland had been Eastern Europe, not Palestine, and that it was oppression that had both compelled them to flee and that continued to mark them as outsiders.\textsuperscript{151} Support for the motion was unanimous, and no one else would argue along Alexander’s lines.

Alexander’s stance continued to harden in favour of Zionism, however. In a meeting of the Central London branch in September 1918, he delivered a lecture in which he denounced the conference resolution. The new BSP newspaper \textit{The Call} gave little room for his comments, but far more to those of Arthur Field, who argued that a

\textsuperscript{150} BSP, \textit{Fifth Annual Conference}, pp.27-30
Jewish state would be used as British tool to “break up the empire of Revolutionary Turkey”. However an undercover police officer took down the arguments of the meeting in much greater detail. Alexander began by lambasting anti-Semitism in society and the labour movement, but he then elaborated on the idea he had espoused at the previous conference, namely that though he may be oppressed, the Jew remained a foreigner within the European nations. Even when assimilated he would always “provoke trouble with his presence.” It was time, he concluded, for the Jews to be allowed to return to the land of Abraham.

Again Alexander’s argument focused on the figure of the Jew as one innately outside of the national community. Similar to Bax’s approach to the African diaspora, he placed no direct blame on the community for their marginalisation, but he emphasised that innate racial incompatibility meant that any attempts to forge a mixed society were doomed to failure. Whilst demonstrating sympathy with the victims of anti-Semitism, his cultural nationalism, which he defined as one of “literature and a common social history... of association which had been habituated to by generations of custom,” ultimately lapsed into one which associated racial traits with tracts of land.

Having declared himself against national enmity years before, his foundational belief in the national principle could not accommodate a heterodox society of unassimilated minorities. Difference had to be expunged beyond the boundaries of the state for the continued harmony of the national community which underpinned it, as the individual could not help but be limited by their racial origin. In ideas not far from Gould’s, the international socialist commonwealth would be secured if its constituent nations were racially-delineated and internally-cohesive, a feat which required cooperation but not combination.

Alexander would soon leave the BSP, alienated by its support for the ideal of Soviet power whilst he still remained attached to parliamentarianism. His attempt to shift the organisation towards supporting Jewish colonists would remain similarly unfulfilled, with the BSP passing another motion at their 1920 National Conference reaffirming their opposition to the Zionist movement on the grounds that it denied national self-

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152 ‘The BSP Movement’, The Call (September 19th, 1918), p.6
153 NA, KV2/1654, 4, ‘British Socialist Party meeting’, September 13th, 1918
154 BSP, Fifth Annual Conference, p.10
155 Stoetzler, ‘Cultural’, pp.272-4
determination to Arabs.\textsuperscript{156} Alexander’s opposition to anti-Semitism still contained an essentialisation of difference. The majority BSP approach, meanwhile, relied on universalist perspectives which acknowledged the political and economic marginalisation of Jews and yet still emphasised their shared interests as part of the working class.

However, whilst the struggle over anti-Semitism had left an indelible mark on the BSP and would be a prominent theme of the nascent CPGB, this did not indicate an end of racialised exclusion within the movement. As previously stated, to characterise the wartime split of the BSP as one between “chauvinists” and “internationalists” is to overlook the extent to which racial narratives were utilised by the anti-war insurgents. Whilst the organisation could point to racial hatred as incompatible with, and a barrier to, socialist consciousness, this was identified largely within the realm of Jewish-gentile relations.

The theme of threats to racial harmony created by the employment of colonial troops and non-white workers would become amplified in the re-energised anti-war BSP to make the case for the necessity of immediate peace. Drawing on the anxieties of “race suicide” discourse, both the industrial displacement of whites and the propensity for inter-racial sexual contact were used to argue for peace. EC Fairchild, a younger activist who had been another prominent leader of the anti-war faction, and would in due course also leave over the question of soviets and parliament, drew on both degenerative fears and a racialised fear of black masculinity to oppose the war. In one of the first pamphlets produced by the post-split BSP, Fairchild explained the declining popularity of the war by alluding to how it had shifted the balance of power between races, threatening the future of civilisation;

\begin{quote}
The Great War has convinced the peoples of Europe and America that recurrence of the struggle must result in the destruction of the white race. Millions of men, physically the best, have died on battlefields... millions more are unfitted by wounds or nervous disorder, unable to carry on the work of the race and raise its standard of physical capacity. The races of Africa are armed by civilised Governments, for participation in wars between nations that have done nothing for the black man, except exploit his labour and steal his land. He has a long account to settle. His masters,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{156} Paul Kelemen, \textit{The British Left and Zionism: History of a Divorce} (Manchester, 2012), p.13
for their own ends, instructed him in the business of war! He may learn the lesson too well. He may yet take reparation for the crimes of slavery.\(^{157}\)

While Fairchild displays sympathy with the African diaspora, his fear of white degeneration and a perceived black propensity for violence led him to conclude that intermixing would have disastrous consequences for social and historical progress.

There was interplay between the fear of the potential racial degeneration wrought by war and the growing internationalisation of the industrial labour force. The idea of an African presence in Europe was still considered inherently damaging by a number of British socialists. In an August 1916 article for *The Call*, Tom Quelch showed a paternalistic pity for Africans drafted into the British army, describing them as “the children of the planet.” At the start of the following year the proposed introduction of colonial workers into the industries of mainland Britain was denounced, not only for the alleged attempt to introduce cheap, compliant labour, but for introducing hypersexual black men into the country at the same time that the “sex appetites of the women are being starved.” *The Call* declared it a “recipe for trouble.”\(^{158}\) Indeed, through the course of the race riots of 1919 in Liverpool, Cardiff, and Glasgow, *The Call* offered no commentary or condemnation of events.

Eugenicist tendencies were also far from buried within the party. A calendar sold to raise funds for the party, edited by Dora Montefiore, demonstrated the extent to which fear of racial decline was linked to the necessity for peace and socialism, even amongst the BSP’s most vocal anti-racist activists. Each day contained a different quote from a popular left-wing figure, among which were calls for a “eugenic revolution [to] save our civilisation” from GB Shaw, and a demand for British investment into eugenic research from Professor Thomson, spokesman of the Eugenics Society. Karl Pearson, a prominent advocate of racially-exclusive eugenic measures, was also positively quoted.\(^{159}\) The rhetoric of eugenics also emerged in *The Call*. In an article critiquing nationalism as a capitalist tool to halt the development of a socialist consciousness, Almey St John Adcock recommended pan-European internationalism as the means to counter national-identification, and maintained that in this context socialism was the


\(^{158}\) Redfern, *Class or Nation*, p.62

\(^{159}\) Dora Montefiore, *The People’s Calendar 1919*, (London, 1918), pp.38-39, p.44
only way to “save the race.”

Despite opposing the war, Adcock’s wording hinted at the theme of “race suicide” which had animated HW Lee a few years earlier.

These examples demonstrate that although anti-Semitic prejudice had been made untenable as a public stance within the BSP through the inclusion of Jews within a universal proletarian identity, the contours of this identity were still firmly shaped by white labourism. Internationalism was often limited to the European context, eugenics was still countenanced, and intermixing with non-whites still contained the threat of civilizational catastrophe. The accession to an accepted proletarian identity coded by whiteness was accomplished by Jewish members asserting the history of Jewish trade unionism and socialism as a demonstrable effect of the existence of a large Jewish proletariat. Furthermore, the exodus of the Hyndmanites who had deployed anti-Semitic motifs to discredit their opponents, and a turn away from a concept of internationalism which rested upon a mutually-respected series of distinct nation-states, had led to a departure from the homogenising logic which underpinned the BSP’s anti-Semitism.

Conclusion

There was no innate disposition towards anti-Semitism amongst British Marxists, as Brustein, Silberner, and Wistrich have claimed. Although it was a prominent ideological strain within the BSP, its concrete expression led to membership revolts on two occasions, ultimately forcing the Hyndmanites from the group they had founded. It was more popular with those who dominated the print culture than the party rank-and-file, demonstrating the problems of relying solely on socialists’ published works to gauge the internal culture of their organisations. Its emergence during two periods when patriotic identification was particularly highly-valued demonstrates the validity of Bonefeld’s observations of anti-Semitism’s function within nationalist ideology, of delineating the organic from the abstract, and legitimising a militaristic and homogenising logic.

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160 Almey St John Adcock, ‘Camouflage and Capitalism’, *The Call* (October 17th, 1918), p.4
Hyndman’s anti-Semitism stemmed from his concurrent embracing of modernist precepts of an organic national community which should be sovereign onto itself, as well as his rejection of the economic impact of modernity which disrupted this community of national interests through socially marginalising the working classes. Hyndman’s socialism took inspiration from the ideal of the Anglo-Saxon commune and a history of folk collectivism within Britain. To preserve the sanctity of this idealised notion of the national community, its most egregious and viscerally-emotive effects were pinned on an interloper, an outsider, a community which could and would not be a part of the British people. For Hyndman, the wars of Empire, far from being a natural continuation of earlier economic, military, and political choices, were in fact motivated by nefarious outsider influences. The Empire’s civilising mission had been corrupted by the abstract Jew and their international conspiracy; their rootlessness meant they felt no connection to rebuilding the British national community which Hyndman hoped socialism could accomplish. In fact arguably it is this adherence to the notion of innate British political characteristics which led Hyndman to take a sympathetic approach to the Jewish migrants coming from the Russian Empire. He had publicly and privately defended the traditions of British asylum, and felt that the granting of political refuge was a defining facet of British progressive patriotism. His anti-Semitic anti-imperialism bore the imprint of the milieu of the critics of empire he first came into contact with during the early 1880s, rather than the regressive characterisations of young Marx.

Hyndman drew on a range of assumptions and precepts which were common in the labour movement, and was subsequently able to popularise his interpretation amongst a section of the membership. However, while the Hyndmanites dominated the print culture of the SDF/BSP, their views were not necessarily reflective of the majority of the membership. Whilst they had been resolutely opposed to direct action as a means of socialist politics, this was not a perspective shared by the bulk of the members. Petroff stated that numerous members of the Kentish Town Branch were drawn from the “most progressive elements of almost every local trade union.” Authors such as Hunt, Crick, and Kidd have demonstrated the propensity for the SDF/BSP local activists

161 IISH, Petroff, ‘British Labour’ p.6
to engage in the grassroots of social and labour struggles rather than relying on the espoused electoralist perspective of the leadership.¹⁶²

This similarly applied to their portrayal of Jews as rootless anti-nationalists who corrupted both the state and the socialist movement. As Kushner has suggested in his study of fascism’s failure in the East End, whilst formal anti-Semitic ideology could certainly motivate the dispossessed, the experience of day-to-day interactions between Jews and gentiles offered some insulation against the mobilisation of movements on an anti-Semitic basis.¹⁶³ For many BSP members, there was too direct a history of fruitful interaction and too great a knowledge of Jewish trade unionism and socialist involvement for a sweeping anti-Semitism to be popular. Gould in his autobiography recalled the small numbers of pro-war enthusiasts who would gather through the course of 1916 in an attempt to “rescue” the image of socialism from pacifism and “pro-Germanism”, noting “at times we dwindled to three or four. We were scant.”¹⁶⁴ The anti-Semitic campaign had been more vociferous than that of the Boer War, and the backlash was even greater than before.

The anti-war factions refuted the conspiracies and chided the Hyndmanites’ for their negative stereotyping of the Jews, as well as their courting of state power. Given that a number of party members initially did not fall into either distinctly pro- or anti-war categories, and that membership of the factions was fluid, it appears as though these racially-driven public condemnations of their comrades played a key role in cohering an anti-war majority. With the exception of Alexander, the opponents of anti-Semitism did not follow the pattern of anti-imperialist argumentation of previous years. Instead they would emphasise the existence of a Jewish proletariat and labour culture, making the case that united political and economic struggle was possible and desirable. Whilst this was laudable, it did not translate into a countering of other examples of racist stereotyping. There was no debate over the comments of Fairchild or Quelch, or a public refutation of the eugenicist ideas which still held appeal for sections of the membership. One grouping of racialised outsiders, through their prominent

¹⁶² Hunt, *Equivocal*; Kidd ‘Social Democratic Federation’; Crick, *History*
¹⁶⁴ Gould, *Life Story*, p.162
engagement with the Marxist left, had successfully defeated the ambivalence, prejudice, and exclusion they had faced, but for other racial groups this struggle was still taking place. The split was less one between chauvinists and internationalists, than between anti-Semites and their opponents.
Chapter 3: ‘I tried to do too much and only wrote my name on water’; Arthur Field and the Failure of Religious Anti-Imperialism in the CPGB, 1921-7

This chapter focuses on Arthur Field, a member of the SDF, ILP, and CPGB, who attempted to bring together CPGB members and Islamic activists into an anti-imperialist network in the inter-war period. Field has received little attention from historians of either labour or anti-imperialist movements. His entry in the Dictionary of Labour Biography spans only five pages and largely focuses on his fin-de-siècle activism inside the labour movement, with little space given to his connections to his anti-colonial activism. He receives occasional mentions from historians of Islamic communities in Britain and studies on Pan-African movements. However, despite his connection with a number of transnational anti-imperial networks, association with prominent individuals and presence at significant historical moments, little attention has been paid to him by historians of the Communist movement.

Although Field was ultimately unsuccessful in his endeavours to bring together Muslims and Communists, ending up a marginal figure, his biography evidences the multiple internationalist influences and understandings of anti-racism available to Communists in the early years of the party, and the extent to which these were drawn through both individuals and ideas crossing borders. Tracing his networks can also shed light on the extent of collaboration and intermingling amongst different anti-imperial milieus in Edwardian and inter-war Britain, following in the work of historians such as Kate O’Malley. It further provides a case study of a racialised outsider drawing on their own sense of marginalisation to engage in anti-colonial activities on behalf of other communities they identified with, demonstrating Virdee’s concept of the second sight in practice. Concurrently, the reluctance to adopt and promote his politics within the party ranks also gives some insight into the ways in which particular anti-

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1 Bruce Aubry, ‘FIELD, Arthur George’ in K. Gildart and D. Howell (eds), Dictionary of Labour Biography, Volume XIII, (Basingstoke, 2010), pp.141-145
3 Kate O’Malley, Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919–64 (Manchester, 2008)
imperialist causes could be successfully popularised within the CPGB, and the identities with which Communist activists could identify and mobilise around.

His failure to convince his fellow comrades of his perspective, or to secure himself an authoritative position within the CPGB’s anti-colonial work with regards to Islamic populations, can be attributed to four major factors. Firstly, unlike the Jewish or Indian Marxists studied in other chapters, there was no significant presence of self-identifying Muslims within the CPGB who pushed for their interests to be recognised as valid or taken up amongst the membership. Secondly, whilst both Jewish and Indian writers would utilise a strategic universalism which emphasised not only the particularities of economic and social marginalisation they faced, but also their identities as proletarians and the commonality of their oppressors with those of the British working-class, Field eschewed this approach. His framing of anti-colonialism found little uptake amongst Communist activists due to his emphasis on faith-based identity and particularism, which disregarded the centrality of oppressed nationalities to Leninist analyses of imperialism. He maintained that populations who were marginalised on the basis of their faith could unify around that faith for a progressive purpose, which contrasted with the increasingly-militant atheism of the Communist movement. He developed a model of ‘positive Orientalism’ which would underlie his advocacy, and would become fundamentally incompatible with a growing image of Islam as the epitome of backwardness within the Soviet world. Thirdly, the political tactics and alliances that Field attempted to develop, based on his previous advocacy on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, were alien to the united front praxis of the wider party membership. Finally, Field himself was not well-placed to cohere and build an effective network; despite his extensive range of contacts, his past political associations had tarnished his reputation, whilst his personality led many to not view him as a credible potential leader.

Field was an unorthodox Communist who ultimately could not adapt to the shift from the looser Marxist political associations of the pre-war period to the increasingly centralised organisation and totalising political philosophy of the interwar CPGB. He spent most of his life living in two areas, Battersea and Kent, which had strong histories of cooperation between Liberals and labour movement activists.4 His cross-

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class advocacy would be strengthened through his association with Henry Hyde Champion in the early 1890s, and engagement with pro-Ottoman campaign groups in the years preceding World War I, whose lobbying techniques were predicated upon the visibility of elite actors. His political influences were eclectic and his rhetoric of positive Orientalism placed him outside of the conventions of Communist analysis and discourse.

Orientalism is understood by Said to exist as a mode of representation and discourse which existed on the basis of uneven power relations between European societies and their Eastern neighbours, a way of producing images of ‘the Orient’ that had flourished due to the social, economic, and political imbalances exemplified by the colonial penetration of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In *Orientalism* Said paid scant attention to how anti-imperialists could utilise these discursive constructs to make their case for the autonomy of colonised populations from Western control. However, in his later work *Culture and Imperialism* he did speak to the simultaneous “imperialism and anti-imperialism” of authors such as Joseph Conrad, who could condemn the atrocities of colonial rule but see little alternative given the cultural and scientific superiority of Europe. Whilst Western-developed concepts of Eastern societies’ inadequacies and inability to historically progress were easily drawn upon to legitimise imperial rule, they also provided a basis through which colonised populations and their supporters could advocate for independence. Namely, they could ascribe the characteristics deemed exclusively-European to their own societies, histories, and faiths, in a process that could draw together metropolitan activists dissatisfied with their own governments’ shortcomings, as well as rising nationalist forces led by subaltern actors. This was a process Bevir has observed operating within the Theosophy movement, which provided a number of leaders and supporters to the early history of the Indian National Congress (INC). It is perhaps unsurprising to note that Field had connections with the Theosophists, and used similar discursive strategies to advocate for the autonomy of Islamic societies, drawing on themes of women’s liberation, minorities’ rights, and propensities for social reform.

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Field developed his own positive Orientalism, an understanding of Islamic societies which, whilst reifying notions of difference and separate development, sought to undermine the racial and religious discourses that justified continued European domination. Although he never converted to Islam, he maintained that Islamic belief and Muslim polities provided the basis for an egalitarian modernisation which was largely-absent from European and Christian cultures. Field was part of a marginal current of Orientalists who did not attempt to use their knowledge for the expansion of the Empire or define Islamic culture as innately inferior to their own. Instead, although not utilising a different interpretative framework from the hegemonic work in the field, this current portrayed Islam far more sympathetically and rejected the notion that European control would advance the Islamic world.\(^8\)

I will demonstrate that his understandings of Islam and anti-racism were drawn in the main from his political relationship with Dusé Mohamed Ali, as well as engagement with the Woking Muslim Mission (WMM), one of Britain’s earliest Islamic communities. His ideas on Islam were therefore not wholly drawn from European sources as with many Orientalists, instead being influenced by the Egyptian Ali, the South Asian dominated WMM, and the influence of Turkish modernisers in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). These ideas were the products of transnational actors crossing borders, re-presenting their ideas to British audiences, combined with his own ideological vision of socialist internationalism and experience of being a racialised outsider of Irish descent.

This chapter will begin with a brief survey of Britain’s Muslim communities at the fin-de-siècle, before moving on to examine how both before and during the course of the Great War, Field would come into contact and engage with joint activism with them. I will then illustrate Field’s attempts to continue this work after he joined the CPGB in 1920, assessing his success amongst the party membership, before looking at the religious dispute which lead him to leave the organisation he was becoming increasingly estranged from.

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Islamic Communities in Britain at the Fin-de-Siècle

There was no singular Islamic community within Britain during the Edwardian and inter-war period. There were a number of Muslim working-class individuals and groups across the country. Within port cities, Arab and Indian sailors were regular visitors, with small populations establishing themselves on a more permanent basis, often working on the docks or else as traders or lodging-house operators; as early as the 1860s Yemeni sailors in Cardiff’s Tiger Bay had requested the right to establish a local Mosque. Abdullah Quilliam, a Liverpudlian solicitor raised on the Isle of Man who converted to Islam in 1887, established the Liverpool Muslim Institute (LMI) that year. Quilliam focussed on converting working-class Liverpool residents to Islam, continuing the outreach he had formerly engaged in through both trade unionist and temperance movements. His outreach consisted not only of public lectures which presented a liberal, rationalistic, and non-sectarian vision of Islam capable of appealing to nonconformist Christians, but also social provision, with the LMI establishing both a school and an orphanage for local children. He also provided shelter to Muslim lascars who were temporarily in Liverpool, and hosted professional and middle-class Muslim visitors who often began their visits to Britain with a stay at the LMI. His focus on a populist dawah bore modest success, with Quilliam claiming 600 converts to the faith by 1906. Recent studies have challenged this figure, instead claiming that around half that number would be more accurate. Of those known to researchers, the majority of the Liverpool Muslims came from working-class backgrounds.

Quilliam’s work gained international acclaim from Islamic leaders. The Persian Shah visited Liverpool in 1889 and pronounced him the Persian Consul in Britain, the Ottoman Caliph bequeathed him the title Sheikh al-Islam in Britain in 1894, and the Emir of Afghanistan’s son gave the LMI a gift of £2,500 on behalf of his father a few years later. Quilliam fled Britain in 1908 due to an instance of professional impropriety, and would return under the pseudonym Henri de Leon. During his

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10 Khizar Humayun Ansari, The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800 (London, 2004), pp.124-6; Ron Geaves, Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam (Markfield, 2010), pp.96-100
12 Ansari, Infidel, p.123
absence, the Liverpool Islamic community lacked the resources to cohere itself together, leading many converts to lapse from the faith.

This may be contrasted with the community developing on the outskirts of London, based around the Woking Muslim Mission. The WMM had been founded by GW Liebner, a former University of Punjab registrar, in 1889 and was intended to be a research facility open to resident Indians from “good families.” In 1913, following Liebner’s death, it was taken over by the Indian barrister Khwaja Kamaluddin and converted into an active mosque with its own outreach program. There were similarities between the Liverpool and Woking initiatives. The latter was influenced by the anti-sectarian Ahmadiyya branch of Indian Islam, and similarly developed a form of faith and practice which could appeal to liberal Christians, which emphasised modernisation, opposition to racial discrimination and the subjugation of women, and a rationalistic argument for the validity of the faith. However, there were divergences between the two organisations on the methods and focus of outreach.

Unlike the LMI, WMM outreach focused on British elites. Members of India’s rising professional classes, including a number of prominent Indian barristers such as Syed Ameer Ali, the first ever Indian member of the Privy Council Judicial Committee, were involved in the organisation. Notable British converts included the Cambridge-educated Lord Headley, Marmaduke Pickthall, the ex-Harrowian compiler of the first English translation of the Quran, Lady Evelyn Cobbold, a Scottish noblewoman and the first British woman to attend the Hajj, and Khalid Sheldrake, son of a prominent pickle manufacturer. The professionals and minor aristocrats of the WMM would present themselves as loyal partners in the imperial project through adopting or emphasising their English cultural traits and social etiquettes. They would regularly host dinner parties where government ministers and colonial officials could rub shoulders with both Indian and British Muslims. Quilliam, having returned from the Ottoman Empire in the wake of Abdul-Hamid II’s overthrow in 1909, would become active in the WMM, although his influence was now diminished and his populistic approach was not

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14 Ansari ‘Woking Mosque’, pp.8-10
This orientation would also influence the tactics of the political networks which emerged from the Woking milieu.

The Woking community’s desire to present themselves as a part of elite British society is understandable given both official and popular attitudes towards Islam around the turn of the century. In the wake of the 1857 Indian Rebellion, in which Muslims had played a leading role, British officialdom had become increasingly wary of Islamic populations, who were understood as potentially hostile to the British imperial project and capable of uniting on a religious basis to unsettle it. These official anxieties were increased throughout the late nineteenth century. Occupations in Egypt and the campaign against the self-proclaimed Sudanese Mahdi increased public awareness of the British Empire’s growing conflicts with majority-Muslim populations. The death of General Gordon was cast as an example of the heroic English Christian being overwhelmed by the “hordes of Islam”, and gave way to a renewed vigour in anti-Islamic temperament. The military engagement with the Dervishes was recast as a struggle between Christianity and Islam, with missionary accounts, the popular press, and even commercial advertising playing a role in framing Muslim subjects of Empire as requiring conversion in the name of civilisation. As Humayun Ansari has put it, “The generation of certain images of the ‘Orient’ was linked with the parallel growth of European control over Muslim peoples.” These images, generated in the colonial context, impacted the lives of Muslims within the UK. Islam was portrayed as incompatible with Britishness, impacting popular attitudes towards its adherents. White Britons who converted often faced social marginalisation and hostility, the LMI was repeatedly vandalised, and its adherents were physically attacked by crowds shouting anti-Ottoman slogans as they preached on the city streets.

For the lascar communities based in port cities, their experiences of being a Muslim in Britain were different from those of the White British converts. Although many

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19 Ansari, ‘Muslim World’, pp.80-1
20 Gilham, ‘Upholding’, pp.28-31
Muslims in Britain faced discrimination in housing and employment, as well as accusations of sexual impropriety towards white women, this was often legitimised on the basis of their skin colour rather than religious faith. In 1919, race riots broke out in a number of port cities across Britain, with young white men who had recently been demobilised turning on non-white populations, whom they blamed for their state of post-war unemployment. In places such as South Wales and Liverpool, this included Arabs who had been employed in the shipping industry through the course of the war, an employment practice which the NSFU had campaigned against. In contemporary reports, both riot participants and the press emphasised the racial background rather than religious identity of the targeted individuals, and combined this with an insinuation that they had brought this violence upon themselves through their sexual advances towards white women. Through the course of the 1920s, colonial racial categorisations were enforced within Britain, and Britishness was increasingly defined through racialised characteristics, primarily skin colour, under the pressure of sections of the labour movement in conjunction with elements of the Conservative Party. This process culminated in the legal sphere with the introduction of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) in 1925, legitimising private measures of discrimination which had separated British subjects on the basis of racial origin and heritage. For many of those sailors originating in North Africa, India and the Middle East, they were now labelled as outsiders on the basis of their faith and skin colour. The tropes of biological racism could be reinforced and built upon by this tendency of cultural racism, which was predicated upon an essentialised and flattening view of Islamic behaviour, and a slippage was observable between the two.

Field’s Early Career and Connections to Islam in Britain

Born into a London-Irish family in 1869 who moved to Maidstone, Kent, shortly after his birth, Field came from a background of racialised outsiders with close connections to both the labour and secularist movements. His maternal grandfather had been a

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22 Laura Tabili, “We Ask For British Justice” *Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (New York, 1994), pp.113-134
Chartist, and his entire family would be influenced by the work of Charles Bradlaugh. Both his brothers ended up working as printers for the prominent secularist, and it was at a National Secular Society meeting in 1883 that Field would first encounter socialist pamphlets and meet William Morris, leading to him joining the SDF. He was a life-long atheist, and refuted the notion throughout his life that only the religious should defend the right to freedom of worship.24 His father worked as a photographer and cabinet-maker, owning his own workshop, and Field would help run the family business.25 He became notable in his field; having attended the City and Guilds Institute and receiving awards for his work, he would go on to give public lectures on new photographic techniques.26 He was a competent administrator, serving in secretarial positions and as treasurer for campaign groups throughout his life, and his technical education and early experience of the day-to-day activities of running a business may be at the root of this.

For a brief period in the early 1890s, his passion and technical skills would land him paid organising work for Ben Tillett’s Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union. However this did not last long. His district’s membership declined and the local branches collapsed by 1892. His economic circumstances fluctuated throughout his life, and he would report to comrades that he was in serious financial difficulties both in the mid-1920s and 1931 during periods of ill-health and unemployment. However his financial resources, technical abilities, and connections developed through self-promotion enabled him to briefly rise through the ranks of the New Unionist movement.

He joined the SDF in the early 1880s before leaving the organisation to support Henry Hyde Champion’s attempts to mobilise the labour vote behind Liberal and Conservative candidates who supported certain policies such as the 8-hour day.27 His association with Champion led him to become one of the delegates at the founding conference of the ILP in 1893, even gaining a seat on the National Administrative

25 Aubry, ‘FIELD’, p.141
26 ‘Maidstone Intelligence’, South Eastern Gazette, September 29th, 1903, p.5
Committee as the Leicester representative despite still living in Maidstone. His relative prominence within the party would lead to him becoming a representative of the ILP at the Zurich Congress of the Second International later that year. Although he would re-join the SDF before the outbreak of World War One, his association with the Championites during a period in which SDF orthodoxy had emphasised distance from both the Liberals and also the Labour Party left him a marginal figure, giving him impetus to focus on causes beyond the purview of party activities. Throughout the 1890s he established a reputation amongst labour activists in Maidstone, having helped establish the local Trades Council, before moving to Battersea just after the turn of the century. However, he would lose allies in the process due to his public savaging of labour councillors he felt were corrupt, his zealous advocacy of Championism even after Champion had left the country, and his propensity for disruptive behaviour. By 1893 Keir Hardie had come to view him as a troublemaker, and Engels had labelled him “a good chap” but ultimately “a disservice to the cause”.

Field’s Irish heritage would play a formative role in his political development, both in shaping his political identity and giving him access to anti-colonial activist networks amongst the London-Irish. It provided him with consolation and community during difficult periods of his life. During a low mood in 1924, he would reflect on his heritage and its interweaving with his melancholic state, recalling to the deported Irish nationalist Art O’Briain that “we were born to sorrow we people. Our laughter is an episode; our suffering is our history.” In 1930 he became the secretary of the Irish Self-Determination League, although it appears to have occurred through some sort of administrative error. He had been involved in the group and the cultural-nationalist Gaelic League since 1920, supporting Irish Nationalist prisoners. He had even arranged for a doctor to visit Terence MacSwiney, the former Lord Mayor of Cork, in Brixton prison just a few days after his internment for seditious activities in 1920. During his tenure as secretary, he would Gaelicise his name to ‘Art ua Fithcheallaigh’ (‘Arthur of Whiskey’) in letters to his Irish comrades, and listed this as his name on circulars sent

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29 Aubry, ‘FIELD’, p.143  
30 NLI, MS8460/23, ‘Letter from Field’, November 10th, 1924  
31 NLI, MS8425/30, ‘Letter from O’Briain to Field’, March 16th, 1931  
32 NLI, MS8444/12, ‘Telegram from Field’, August 19th, 1920
to the membership.\textsuperscript{34} In a letter to O’ Briain in 1931 he lamented his lack of knowledge of the Gaelic language, and resolved to attend classes to learn hymns in what he considered his ancestral tongue. However this did provoke some anxiety that his irreligiosity may separate him from countrymen, noting “I will see if I can at least give some outward sign of inward spiritual grace.”\textsuperscript{35} He also mentioned his Irishness in relationship to his economic exclusion, telling Rajani Palme Dutt that when he was fired from his job at a Turkish import firm in 1924, that he was insulted on the basis of his heritage.\textsuperscript{36}

Three factors within this biography are telling to the internationalist identity that would inflect Field’s politics. Firstly, his Irish heritage marked him as an outsider in a context whereby Irishness was a marginalised racialised identity upon which anti-Catholic tropes were imposed, leaving him little sympathy with Anglo-exceptionalism and an awareness of how attacks on minority faiths could be drawn into racialised discourses.\textsuperscript{37} Secondly, the conferences of the Second International were often dominated by a small body of largely Western European cosmopolitan socialists with a measure of émigré involvement from Russia and Poland. Although the precise theoretical basis of internationalism was never fully-elaborated within the group, an institutionally-derived internationalist loyalty and sense of self formed a part of Field’s political background.\textsuperscript{38} Thirdly, his move to Battersea is telling; the area’s large Irish population and their involvement in local Labour politics had been translated into a broad-based opposition to Empire, leading the area to become a hotbed of overlapping anti-colonial networks.\textsuperscript{39} The area would provide him access to Irish nationalist groups and activists, whom he would work with and attempt to recruit to his own projects. Taken together, these factors can contextualise why Field would have such a strong proclivity towards anti-colonial internationalist and even supranationalist projects throughout his political career.

\textsuperscript{34} NLI, MS8425/30, ‘Circular from Arthur Field to ISDL’, 1931
\textsuperscript{35} NLI, MS8425/30, ‘Letter from Field’, March 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1931
\textsuperscript{36} LHA, CP/IND/DUTT/05/07, ‘Letter from Arthur Field to RP Dutt’, January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1924
\textsuperscript{37} Michael W de Nie, The Eternal Paddy: Irish identity and the British press, 1798-1882 (Madison, 2004), pp.267-278
\textsuperscript{38} Dogliani, ‘Socialist Internationalism’, pp.46-47
\textsuperscript{39} John Hutchinson, ‘Diaspora Dilemmas and Shifting Allegiances: The Irish in London between Nationalism, Catholicism and Labourism (1900–22)’, Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism, 10:1 (April 2010), pp.114-117
From 1908 Field turned his attention to promoting better relations with Turkey, Arab populations, and Islamic communities within the Empire. It is not known what caused this sudden turn towards Islam, but his politics had certainly contained a strong anti-imperialist ethos dating from at least the Boer War. He offered his services as a steward to protect anti-war Battersea MP John Burns during the pro-Boer movement, stating in a letter “I want to offer myself as a fighting volunteer if you are going to hold a meeting where stout gas pipes will be of use.”

In later articles he would talk of the influence of secularism in his childhood home, and Battersea had been one of the stalwarts of the secularist movement in the 1880s, before a number of its adherents took an interest in Theosophy under the influence of Charlotte Despard. Field regularly attended the lectures of this influential Theosophist and Irish nationalist, who would be selected at the Labour parliamentary candidate for the area in 1918, and it was potentially this connection which sparked his interest in Eastern faiths. Field soon displayed an interest in Islamic poetry, particularly that of Omar Khayyam, whom he would write about on several occasions throughout his career. This interest in Islamic culture, combined with his long-held anti-imperialist sentiments, drew him into the activism that became central to his life. His developing beliefs in socialist rationalisation and defending Islamic populations led to him becoming sympathetic with the modernising Young Turks. He soon began to involve himself in the transnational networks of Islamic activists which were developing throughout London, attempting to draw links between these groups and the labour movement.

Field’s entry into Islamic politics came at a turning point for pan-Islamism. The Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Hamid II had emphasised his spiritual role as Caliph to influence the British Empire’s Muslim populations, thus accruing greater leverage in his attempts to re-forge an Anglo-Ottoman alliance. However, after the rise to power of the Young Turks, anti-racist themes would become more prominent in their ideological output, even as they sought to pursue a similar alliance with the British state. They emphasised

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42 NLI, MS8460/23, ‘Letter from Field’, November 10th, 1924
43 Arthur Field, ‘A Night in Old Iran’, *African Times and Orient Review*, 2:18 (December, 1913), p.179. This poem written by Field directly refers to Khayyam’s work and takes clear inspiration from his famous *Rubaiyat*, even utilising the AABA quatrain rhyme scheme of Edward FitzGerald’s translation.
the Ottoman Empire not as part of the family of European Empires, but instead identified it as part of a victimised and colonised East. Pan-Islamism was not anti-imperial, but anti-imperial-racism. Its allies could find space in this ideology to either promote their own anti-imperial politics or to call for the improvement of inter-imperial relations, ostensibly in the name of egalitarianism.\footnote{Cemil Aydin, \textit{The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History} (London, 2017), pp.82-83, pp.100-105}

Field’s approach to the Turkish question, as well as his broader attitude to the relationship between Eastern faiths and colonised populations, shares many hallmarks with the Pan-Islamist and Pan-Africanist Dusé Mohamed Ali as well as those of the CUP. Ali, the son of an Egyptian army officer and his Sudanese wife, had moved to Britain following the 1882 bombardment of Alexandria, and was an actor, journalist, and playwright by trade. From 1909 he authored articles in \textit{New Age} which attacked colonialism, called for Egyptian independence, and decried popular notions of white racial supremacy.\footnote{Hakim Adi, Marika Sherwood. ‘Dusé Mohamed Ali’ in H. Adi and M. Sherwood (eds) \textit{Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787} (London, 2003), pp.1-2} He became prominent in the wake of a speech delivered by Theodore Roosevelt in Guildhall in 1910, in which Roosevelt praised the British for being firm with the “uncivilized” Egyptians.\footnote{Roger Adelson, \textit{London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922}, (London, 1995), p.81} Ali published \textit{In the Land of the Pharaohs} as a rebuttal the following year, receiving critical acclaim internationally for his defence of Egyptian society. In 1911 he attended the Universal Races Congress, an international conference which aimed to define cultural pluralism whilst affirming a common essence of humanity, and an arena in which he would feel comfortable adopting a cosmopolitan identity.\footnote{Alex Lubin, \textit{Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary} (Chapel Hill, 2014), pp.51-56} From 1912 he would mobilise on the basis of this identity, establishing a network of newspapers and London-based advocacy groups which called for international cooperation and unity to end European domination of non-white societies.

He advocated for unconditional solidarity with those states outside of white imperial control, giving particular attention to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. He attempted to appeal to Muslims in particular, and non-white populations in general, to rally in defence of the beleaguered imperial state and its religious authority.
embodied in the Caliph.\footnote{Duffield, ‘Afro-Asian solidarity’, p.129, p.142} He also defended Islamic societies from accusations of widespread misogyny, often pointing to the existence of social reform movements calling for modernisation and equal rights which had developed autonomously within Islamic societies such as Egypt.\footnote{Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh ‘Modernist freewomen between public and domestic space in London around 1910’, in M. Camboni (ed) Networking women : subjects, places, links Europe-America : towards a re-writing of cultural history, 1890-1939 : proceedings of the international conference, Macerata, March 25-27, 2002 (Rome, 2004), p.307} His advocacy of an autonomous modernisation project within Islamic societies, which he felt was held back by European influence, was not limited to cultural and social spheres. He established a number of business ventures designed to connect African producers with black consumers in the United States, and secured credit for the exporters from non-European financiers and banks.\footnote{Ian Duffield, ‘The Business Activities of Dusé Mohammed Ali: An Example of the Economic Dimension of Pan-Africanism, 1912-1945’, Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 4:4 (June 1969), pp.571-600}

Field’s association with Ali seems to have begun in the summer of 1913, after he had written a letter to the press protesting Anglican support for the Balkan League during the course of the First Balkan War. A friend recommended he contact Ali, and the pair organised a meeting at Caxton Hall in August aiming to build support for Ottoman territorial integrity against Christian nationalist uprisings.\footnote{Arthur Field, ‘The Ottoman Committee’, African Times and Orient Review, November-December 1913, p.185} At this meeting Field proposed the idea of a permanent organisation to advocate on behalf of Turkish claims, and approached Ali to organise, publicise, and utilise his international links to ensure a successful start for the project. The Ottoman Committee was born and would regularly host large events at Caxton Hall, make appeals to officialdom on the topic of foreign policy, and would translate Pierre Loti’s \textit{Turkey in Agony}. Copies would end up in India, much to the consternation of the Government of India, who feared it would antagonise their Muslim subjects.\footnote{Ian Duffield, \textit{Dusé Mohamed Ali and the Development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945}, (University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis, 1971), pp.448-9}

As will be seen in the following section, when the Committee split in the course of 1913, both Field and Ali played leading roles in establishing a successor organisation. They would also set up a number of other short-lived groups together, including the League of Justice. This League was an anti-imperialist organisation which relied on Ali’s newspapers to publicise its activities, and which primarily defined imperialism as a...
project of racial domination. Taking a lead from Ali’s ideas, the organisation called on its supporters to stand in solidarity with independent and recently-colonised non-European states, with a particular focus on Turkey and Egypt.  

Ali was not Field’s only Islamic associate, as he appears to have been well-known to the Woking congregation. Several of the organisations he and Ali belonged to had gained support from the Woking adherents and their prominent members. Ali’s newspapers and books were being advertised in the *Islamic Review*, the mosque’s monthly publication, indicating a level of contact between the pan-Africanist and the WMM. Through the course of 1916 Ali’s engagement with them increased, writing articles for their journal on issues as diverse as the relationship between Islam and scientific enquiry, and how the anti-racist message within Islam ingratiated the faith to Africans.  

Through the course of the war Field’s contact with the WMM increased in line with the adherents’ engagements with Ali’s activist network, helping to shape the praxis and outlook of both Field and these organisations. Field was highly regarded within the WMM. Despite never converting, he wrote for *The Islamic Review*, regularly gave talks at the Mosque and attended their social events. He was such a regular that his absence from a celebration of the Prophet Mohammed’s birthday in 1919 was dolefully noted in the *Islamic Review*.  

Despite doctrinal differences, he was clearly seen by a number of Muslims as a valuable ally and part of the community given his interest in Islamic culture. In May 1922, Field delivered a lecture on Islam and Scepticism to the Woking congregation, in which he attempted to identify an atheistic current within the works of Islamic mystical poets such as Omar Khayyam. Although the mosque leadership disagreed with his thesis, they still heaped praise on both his temperament and credentials.

Mr Arthur Field is the Hon. Secretary of the Anglo-Ottoman Society, a sceptic by profession, but to us a prospective Muslim of the noblest stamp. He is a sincere admirer of the Holy Prophet Mohammed and a fellow brother.

54 Duffield, *Development of Pan-Africanism*, pp.523-8
57 ‘Other Activities’, *Islamic Review*, 10:5, (May, 1922), pp.196-7
Field was also regarded with great esteem by Marmaduke Pickthall, who claimed Field as a great friend and stated that although Field considered himself an atheist, his activism demonstrated that he was truthfully a “faithful servant of Allah.” Whilst Field held little prestige within the labour movement, by the end of the war he had accrued high esteem amongst British Muslim communities, laying the basis for the anti-imperialist and anti-racist campaigns he hoped to popularise.

By 1913 Field was embedded within overlapping networks of prominent Muslims based in Britain, many hailing from elite backgrounds. Through the course of the war he would cement his relationships with them through shared activism, before attempting to bring them into common action with members of the CPGB in its wake. However, the tension between their elite model of lobbying with the mass mobilisation valued by labour militants would continually frustrate his attempts to cohere these two groups together.

**The Anglo-Ottoman Society and Field’s Wartime Activism**

The Ottoman Committee was by no means an anti-colonial organisation. It drew together a number of English political notables such as Lords Newton and Lamington (a diplomat and former Governor of Bombay, respectively), as well as Aubrey Herbert, Conservative MP for South Somerset and advocate of Albanian nationalism. Alongside these figures were a number of British, Egyptian, and Indian Muslims, who were able to draw on their connections to Turkish diplomats to secure funds for the organisation. A number of its members were sentimentalist pro-Turks and individuals with business connections to the Ottomans, rather than political advocates of the Caliphate. The organisation brought together an unstable coalition of both those who wanted to strengthen the British Empire through changing diplomatic policy and working closely with its Muslim subjects, alongside those who such as Ali and Field who aimed to halt European imperialism through strengthening what they saw as bulwark to its expansion.

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59 Gilham, *Loyal Enemies*, pp.218-219
Field would write on behalf of the organisation in the pages of *The Asiatic Quarterly Review* and attempted to draw together these perspectives. Whilst careful to distance the group from “extremists”, he alleged that the British policy of supporting separatist movements amongst Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire was a product of both religious prejudice and commercial interest. Labelling Turkey “the hope of the East,” he emphasised that the modernising spirit of the Ottoman Turks and the historical tolerance of Islam meant that the multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations of the Empire would fare best under Turkish control. He claimed that the Empire was promoting a democratic spirit and respect for women, and producing a sober, physically-fit population. He alleged it was precisely this modernising strength, rather than parochial backwardness, which so terrified Christendom. Field further framed Anglo-Turkish enmity as a threat to the British Empire, as it endangered British trade with Turkey, created discord amongst Indian Muslims, and allowed Russian expansionism to go unchecked. This article was accredited to Field as a representative of the Ottoman Committee, suggesting that its combination of vehement critique of British policy and concurrent warnings of the peril facing the Imperial mission were an attempt to satiate the varied perspectives of those who made up the group.

This attempted blurring of perspectives would not be enough, and the Committee split almost as quickly as it was founded, with many of the notables forming the commercially-focussed whites-only Ottoman Association. The Association’s constitution declared that membership was restricted to Britons of European heritage, and explicitly rejected popular mobilisation in favour of forming a “select and influential” group which could lobby effectively. Field protested the exclusiveness of the new organisation, and helped to found the Anglo-Ottoman Society alongside Dusé Mohamed Ali. The organisation drew in several prominent British Muslims, such as Marmaduke Pickthall, who helped to publicise the group. The new organisation was explicitly open to members of any race, religion, or heritage. Though it contained the more radical elements of the earlier Committee, it was still very much a pluralistic organisation, able to accommodate monarchists such as Pickthall, socialists such as

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61 Ansari, *Infidel*, p.128
Field, and moderate pan-Islamic activists such as Quilliam.\footnote{Gilham, Loyal Enemies, pp.81-82.} It was through the AOS that Field had his first known contact with Quilliam. Still using his pseudonym of Henri de Leon, he was even listed as the organisation’s vice-secretary during its first year of existence. Field’s socialistic influence on the AOS was discernible in an article he wrote in December 1913 announcing the new organisation. While the group still welcomed the notables who had filled its previous incarnation, he claimed this new organisation “will make a special appeal to the mass of the middle and industrial orders, who after all are, if they wish it, the rulers of the country.”\footnote{Arthur Field, ‘A “Coup d’état” in the Ottoman Committee’, African Times and Orient Review, November-December, p.184}

This plurality was challenged during the war. Quilliam resigned from the group in November 1914, dismayed by the Ottoman Empire’s collaboration with Germany.\footnote{Ron Geaves, ‘Abdullah Quilliam (Henri De Léon) and Marmaduke Pickthall: Agreements and Disagreements between Two Prominent Muslims in the London and Woking Communities’ in G.P. Nash (ed) Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World (Leiden, 2016), pp.84-5} Almost immediately after the Russian declaration of war on the Ottomans he offered his services to the Foreign Office, attempting to demonstrate his loyalty. This was a dilemma common to Muslims in Britain during the war, who often felt pressured into between siding between the Empire and the \textit{Ummah}, leading them to moderate their politics.\footnote{Khizar Humayun Ansari, ‘Making Transnational Connections: Muslim Networks in Early Twentieth-Century Britain’ in N. Clayer and E. Germain (eds) Islam in Inter-war Europe (London, 2008), pp.33-34} Many of the group’s members, as well as the broader British community of Turkophiles, supported the Allies whilst still hoping that an agreement could be made between the British and Ottoman Empires, leaving the group behind and abandoning it to the anti-imperialists such as Field and Ali.\footnote{Jonathan Schneer, The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (London, 2010), pp.246-249}

The AOS leadership, wary of the hostile political atmosphere and potential for suppression, changed its motto to “For Peace and A Better Understanding”, and stressed that its objectives were neither “illegal nor unpatriotic.”\footnote{LSEILP 13/1910/10 Anglo-Ottoman Circular 27a, ‘An Appeal to the Allied Conference’, August, 1917} This was potentially a response to the negative coverage the group received. In 1915 the AOS and Women’s Union for Peace co-hosted a meeting at which the colonial records of the Allied Powers were lambasted, and used to justify opposing the war. \textit{The Daily Express} covered the meeting, and urged readers to send them advance notice of any others
organised so that they could be exposed. Rather than style themselves as an anti-imperialist group that saw the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against potential colonial entrenchment in the post-war order, they adopted the manner of the pre-war Ottoman Committee, presenting themselves as initiators of dialogue rather than an activist circle. To this end, Field also established several other organisations which could host more overtly-political meetings, such as the East-West Circle and *Cercle d’Études Ethnographique*, ensuring the AOS could operate within the remits of the Defence of the Realm Act.

This self-moderation is understandable given the potential repression the organisation faced. Field’s political advocacy on behalf of the Ottomans came amidst heightened concerns within the security services over the tenor and tactics of Muslim populations who opposed Imperial domination. Even relative moderates, such as the aforementioned Privy Councillor Syed Ameer Ali, received warnings about publicly engaging in politics. A leadership dispute between Ali and his radical opponent Mohamed Ali Johar for control of the London Muslim League in 1913 gained the interest of the Government of India, worried about the potential eclipse of empire loyalism by more radical anti-imperialist forces. Field’s involvement with Ali and the WMM soon gained him the attention of both the Special Branch and the Security Service. The latter, although never opening a dedicated file on Field, were monitoring his correspondence, keeping tabs on his movements, and were tracing his international connections. He was also known to the Department of Central Intelligence, the agency responsible for monitoring political subversion within India, who took a keen interest in his correspondence with Indian labour activists and Muslim figureheads.

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69 NA, KV2/611, 260178, ‘Extract from File I227 vol.1 Anglo Ottoman Soc’, February 18th, 1918; NA KV2/611, 7, ‘Extract relating to Saklatvala’, September 27th, 1918
71 Gilham, *Loyal Enemies*, p.228
72 For Example, NA, KV2/611,3, ‘Extract Relating to Saklatvala’, September 16th, 1918 displays fear that Field will be “the power behind the throne” if Saklatvala enters parliament, whilst numerous files in L/P&J/12/226 indicate that Scotland Yard was aware of the addresses of both his office and home.
73 Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India* (Calcutta, 1979), p.49
But this did not halt the AOS’ activities, and the organisation seems to have made a concerted effort to live up to Field’s promise to turn towards industrial workers. In August, 1917, members of the group intervened at the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference in London, handing out a memorandum which criticised the Labour Party’s proposals on the terms of peace and called for a number of revisions. The prose of the document was oriented towards a labour audience, asserting the existence of a strong labour guild movement within Turkey, and further that “Eastern Labour is more akin to Western than your rulers and leaders want you to think.” Reflecting Field’s pro-CUP sympathies, it claimed that the organisation was the chief political force in Turkey, labelling it “a Socialistic body with two million members.”

Telling of the organisation’s new orientation, John Arnall, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was now listed as the AOS Organiser. Arnall was a Cornish-born Irishman who had travelled to Dublin in 1901 and worked for the Irish Republican Socialist Party and later the Socialist Party of Ireland. He was a leading figure in both organisations, noted for his work as a photographer, organiser, and open-air-propagandist, who returned to Britain shortly before the outbreak of war. It is unknown how Field and Arnall came into contact, but it is notable that Field’s access to Irish anti-colonial socialists bolstered the strength of his organisation.

In October, 1917 a publication by the group denounced the Union of Democratic Control’s proposed peace terms, and by proxy the planned post-war international order. The AOS targeted the UDC’s proposals that Constantinople be taken under international control by the as-yet-unformed League of Nations and that the administration of the former Ottoman Empire be determined by international committee. The AOS condemned this vision of the League as a new “Holy Alliance”, and criticised the religious and racial supremacism of the idea that Ottomans should be treated differently from defeated European Empires. The AOS also made the case for the territorial integrity and right to popular sovereignty in terms that would be familiar to pre-war anti-colonial socialists. They declared that the Turks were “administrators and rulers like ourselves, not hordes of savages”, and claimed that a more egalitarian

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76 LSEILP 13/1917/3, Anglo-Ottoman Circular 27b, ‘Counter-Suggestions on the Terms of Peace’, October 1917
state in terms of social welfare or gender relations could not be found in Europe. By pointing to the strength of progressive movements and markers of modern economic development, such as recent irrigation projects, the AOS stood in a tradition of anti-imperialism which allowed for the secession of nations from empires on the basis of their assumed cultural maturity.\(^77\) While these two publications contained elements of the strategic universalism deployed by Jewish and Indian Marxists, they were much closer to Hyndman’s anti-imperial advocacy. Perhaps tellingly, their materials were still being printed by Twentieth Century Press, the printing press owned and operated by the Hyndmanites, and AS Headingley had even been a group member.\(^78\)

By the end of the war, Field had been exposed to a vastly different series of international connections and internationalist politics to many of his fellow BSP members, gaining prominence amongst the Islamic community of London and the Turkophile political networks. While even those members who had fought the anti-Semitism of the BSP’s former political leadership had drawn on images of black savagery and concepts of racial vitality to frame their opposition to war, Field’s anti-war temperament was clearly influenced by the Turkophile milieu around him. His assertion of Turkey’s democratic and egalitarian superiority to any European nation, and broad identification with the non-white subjects of empire and the Islamic faith, meant that unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not look to Europe as the natural grounds for the spreading of revolution.\(^79\) While many Marxists in the West had been attracted to Lenin’s imperialism thesis because of its critique of the total war and the impact of militarisation on the home front, Field shared the attraction it held to activists in the colonial world, namely its critique of imperial plunder and national exclusivity.\(^80\)

\(^{77}\) Claeys, Imperial, pp.138-139.
\(^{78}\) Duffield, Development of Pan-Africanism, p.453
\(^{79}\) Thorpe, British Communist Party, pp.8-9
Internationalism, Identity, and the Rise of the Comintern

During the course of the war, as Field was developing a network of pro-Turkish and Islamic activists, shifts within the socialist left at a national and international level would impact his efficacy amongst labour movement militants. As seen in the previous chapter, although the anti-Semitism of the pro-war sections of the BSP had proved polarising and provoked a widespread defence of the Jews’ role within the movement, it had not yet been translated into a generalised anti-racist ideology. The arguments over both the war and the relationship between nation-states and the working-class had also called into question to the ideas and practices of internationalism of British social-democracy.81

During the faction fight, the anti-war majority had attempted to present their arguments as the natural continuation of the pre-war tradition of socialist internationalism, and those of their opponents as chauvinistic aberrations from this heritage. With their opponents’ development into an openly-nationalistic political force, a renewed emphasis on internationalism was considered vital as a corrective to a labour movement seemed to have been corrupted by jingoism. This reinvigorated internationalist spirit was at first manifested largely at the symbolic level. Badges were printed and sold which featured the faces of imprisoned German anti-war SPD members such as Karl Liebknecht.82 In Openshaw, a minutes’ silence at a BSP memorial meeting on the anniversary of Marx’s death was even explained to attendees as a demonstration of internationalism in practice.83 The 1918 conference saw a near-unanimous vote in favour of all branches establishing Esperanto classes.84

Pre-war internationalism in the SDF/BSP drew on the radical patriotism which had been one of the enduring legacies of the Chartists through figures such Bronterre O’Brien and the networks of radical clubs. Subsequently, popular internationalist ideology combined an emphasis on national sovereignty with international

81 The debates running in the pages of the party newspaper Justice, particularly during the course of January-February 1915, are a testament to this. They featured discussions of the relationship between race and nation, whether socialists could pay allegiance to the nation-state, and the role of nationalism in internationalism.
82 LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/03/05, British Socialist Party, Openshaw Branch Minute Book, 1914-1920, September 7th, 1916
83 LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/03/05, ‘British Socialist Party, Openshaw Branch Minute Book, 1914-1920’, May 5th, 1918
84 BSP, Seventh Annual Conference, p.33
coordination and mutual support between socialists of different European nations. However, between 1916 and 1920, in the context of a renewed emphasis on internationalist temperament, as well as the recent example of how that ideology could be utilised by social-nationalists, members of the BSP increasingly looked to different models of internationalist organisation and identity. Before the formation of the CPGB, articles in *The Call* would welcome the spirit of Woodrow Wilson’s 14 Points whilst simultaneously declaring a mistrust of his ability or desire to see them enacted for the world’s colonised populations.\(^{85}\) Other articles demonstrated a restrained enthusiasm for a potential League of Nations, applauding its espoused mission of ensuring national sovereignty and international arbitration, whilst warning that it could be transformed into a capitalist institution and urging the formation of a “League of Workers” to guard against any reactionary turn.\(^{86}\) A tempered support for an international order involving supranational arbitration, open diplomacy, and guarantees of national autonomy clearly held sway over a section of the BSP membership.

However, the developments in Russia; namely the shocking success of the Russian Revolution, the growing prestige of the Bolsheviks, and the foundation of the Third International (Comintern), would change the dynamic of this search for a new internationalism. For many, the Russian Revolution had challenged the formerly-prevailing historically-deterministic view of social progress and the relationship between industrial capitalist development and socialist revolution.\(^{87}\) The most backward nation in Europe had overthrown their ruling-class before the Germans, French, or British, suggesting the possibility that revolution in the colonised world was a more immediate prospect than many had imagined previously. During the latter half of 1918 and throughout 1919, the mediated enthusiasm for liberal internationalist projects would disappear, as the League of Nations was recast in BSP writings as a capitalists’ project which would re-entrench the colonial order and potentially provide the basis of an international alliance against the increasingly boisterous European and

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85 ‘The Prospects of Peace’, *The Call*, October 3rd, 1918
86 EC Fairchild, ‘A League of Nations’, *The Call*, October 17th, 1918
Russian revolutionary movements. At the level of political praxis, support for revolutionary Russia was increasingly defined as a core feature of this reinvigorated internationalism. The BSP threw its weight behind the People’s Russian Information Bureau, and Hands Off Russia, aiming to popularise and defend the Russian revolutionaries’ cause. In the wake of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks and Lenin were held in high political esteem, with their ideas soon on the ascendancy across the British left. The Call’s available range of pamphlets were increasingly drawn from Russian, German, and Eastern European sources. Texts from Bela Kun, Karl Radek, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin replaced those of Bax, Hyndman, and Quelch in the party newspaper’s adverts. BSP-printed copies of Lenin’s State and Revolution were even distributed amongst British troops during the Russian Civil War, and local branches attempted to win over servicemen due to be posted in Russia.

At the Comintern’s Second Congress in 1920, two major developments would help transform the sense of internationalism and the prospects for racial outsiders to draw attention to their causes within the ranks of the Communist movement. These were the adoption of the “Twenty-One Conditions” which any national section had to adopt to gain Comintern membership, and the approval of the “Theses on the National and Colonial Question”, drafted through collaboration between Lenin and the Indian revolutionary MN Roy.

The twenty-one conditions of entry included several which would lay the basis for a redefinition of internationalist politics of those organisations which sought affiliation. These included an opposition to “social-patriotism” and the League of Nations, and a commitment to support colonial national liberation movements in both words and deeds. At the level of the institutional, a supranational leadership and working-practice was to be developed and the looser system of coordination witnessed in the Second

89 LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/03/05, British Socialist Party, Openshaw Branch Minute Book, 1914-1920. From January 7th, 1919, discussions of the Hands Off Russia become near-weekly
91 The Openshaw Branch attempted this through hiring their halls out to veterans’ groups at a discounted rate, despite the branch’s financial difficulties. LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/03/05, British Socialist Party, Openshaw Branch Minute Book, 1914-1920, August 26th, 1919 and September 9th, 1919. Members in West Yorkshire took to leaving leaflets outside troops’ billets at night. NA, KV2/1654, 9, ‘Letter from 23rd Army Corps’, February 8th, 1919; NA, KV2/1654, ‘Letter from Major Phillips to the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police’ August 20th, 1920
International was rejected.⁹² The Comintern presented a more radical vision of internationalist organisation than that of the liberal or social-democratic movements with its call for an internationally-centralised organisation.⁹³ As we shall see in this chapter and the next, although these principles were not consistently adhered to, they provided a reference point that activists could draw upon. They also drew support for the new Communist movement amongst groups of racialised outsiders who would push for a more consistent anti-imperialist stance throughout the movement than that witnessed within pre-war social-democracy. While the pre-war socialist movement had often framed imperialism as an international phenomena that was forced upon Britain, the Leninist analysis directly framed Britain and segments of the British working-class as the benefactors of Empire. There was little room for the Anglo-exceptionalism which had often dominated the SDF/BSP’s perspective.

Despite the supranationalism of organisation, the National and Colonial Theses would legitimise national identities in the colonial world as a progressive marker. National self-determination based on cross-class coalitions could be encouraged, supported, and entered provided that they weakened the power of the Imperialist states, and allowed greater space for Communists to organise amongst their respective national working-classes. However, these theses also established that a colonial liberation movement could be supported on the basis of it proclaiming a national identity. The idea of a transnational racial or religious identity providing the basis for a resistance movement, as Field had advocated, was not yet theoretically developed.⁹⁴ The nation-state was seen as a key stage in socio-historical development, from which an internationalist proletarian identity could evolve.⁹⁵ Where a subaltern social group was determined as not having developed a national consciousness yet, this created a problem for Communists. Throughout the 1920s, the Comintern developed the “Black Belt” thesis and the “Native Republic” thesis in response to racial oppression in South Africa and the United States. Both these analyses framed black subjects of these states as nationalities-in-the-making who could demand the right to self-rule based on the

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⁹² Dogliani, ‘Socialist Internationalism’, pp.47-8
⁹⁴ Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, pp.27-31. Many Communists throughout the 1920s tried to address the ‘Negro Question’ not as a racially-derived oppression, but an issue of national liberation.
denial of their national rights. Hakim Adi is right to emphasise both the uniqueness of these positions in emphasising black peoples’ agency amongst contemporary political movements, and simultaneously their attempt to ‘nationalise’ racial oppression within a social-evolutionary framework. This bypassed any idea of racial consciousness, which had not been theorised as having a relationship to anti-imperialism within the Marxist left.96

Similarly, whilst the Bolsheviks had defended the rights of religious minorities in Tsarist Russia, religious identity as the basis for political action was not, at the level of orthodoxy, something to be valorised or encouraged. Religion had long been understood within the party as the result of oppression, degradation and depravation, and the seeming powerlessness of workers and peasants in the face of their social conditions.97 During the illegal period of the Russian revolutionary movement, they had attempted to win over members of persecuted Christian sects in the context of an Orthodox religious monopoly.98 Appeals to these groups had not been made on the basis of their faith-based identity, but on the understanding that their conversions to a minority faith had been a protest against their lived reality of subjugation. It was hoped that a greater consciousness of their political power would help them transcend their religious identifications.

However, the Bolsheviks and the Comintern were not straightforwardly anti-theistic. In the immediate wake of the October Revolution, Muslim populations were seen as potential revolutionary agents due to the growing influence of pan-Islamic politics and the emergence of modernising movements in a number of largely-Islamic countries. In December 1917 an appeal authored by Lenin was published addressed to the “Muslim toilers of Russia and the East.” This appeal condemned the attacks on their right to worship that had occurred under the Tsar and guaranteed that the new socialist state would respect Muslims’ right to “organise your national life freely and without hindrance.” This appeal was initially drafted by prominent Communist Muslims such as

Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev with the intention of winning over Islamic populations within the former Russian Empire, whom it was feared may side with anti-Bolshevik clerics. This was not purely a defensive appeal to safeguard Soviet territory, it also had an offensive purpose, calling on Muslim populations in colonised and threatened countries, such as Persia, Turkey and India, to rise up against colonial rule. Sections of the Russian Communist Party, particularly those based around Sultan-Galiev, held great hope for the growing pan-Islamic movement, and attempted to frame struggles waged by Muslims for colonial liberation as inextricably tied to workers’ revolutions. They had called for colonised nations to be understood as “proletarian nations”, legitimising an allied struggle alongside national bourgeoisies against imperial occupation and control.

This perspective was influential, and the National and Colonial Theses passed at the Second Comintern Congress essentially conformed to this perspective of cross-class alliances in the colonial context, despite the opposition of figures such as MN Roy, who had hoped for revolutions purely based on the subaltern classes of workers and peasants. Following this Congress, The Congress of the Peoples of the East was held at Baku in September 1920. This conference gave hope to a number of leading Communists, including Zinoviev, the chair of the Comintern who had believed that the revolutionary uprisings would start in Europe before spreading across Asia, about the immediate hopes of colonial insurrections which could transform into workers’ and peasants’ revolutions. This enthusiasm had been bolstered by the recruitment of a number of Indian members of the Khilafat movement which intended to defend the Caliph’s sovereignty and Ottoman unity, into the Indian Communist Party.

However, this excitement over the prospects of a revolutionary “army of God” soon faded. By 1921, Enver Pasha, a leading member of the CUP who had attended the Baku Congress, was leading anti-Bolshevik rebellions amongst Turkic Muslims within

99 Ruth T McVey, The Rise of Indonesian Communism (Jakarta, 2006), pp.53-57
101 Jon Jacobson, When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics (London, 1994), pp.52-3
102 Robert JC Young, Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction (Chichester, 2016), pp.174-5
103 Jacobson, Soviet Union, p.57
104 Tooze, Deluge, pp.414-416
the Soviet Union, and the Kemalist nationalists had proved more amenable to cooperation than their pro-Caliphate rivals.\textsuperscript{106} Likewise, Roy’s Indian Muslim recruits soon proved to be uninterested in the ideals of Communism and, as will be seen in the next chapter, the Indian nationalist and labour movements seemed to provide a far more amenable network for the establishment of a Communist Party on the Indian subcontinent. Explicitly confessional anti-colonial forces were proving to be far less reliable as allies than secular nationalist movements. Not only did the Communists not have a theoretical justification for utilising religious identities as the basis for social revolts, in practice their attempts to ally with pan-Islamic movements proved unreliable.

The Bolsheviks’ perceptions of Islam were largely formulated in relation to their knowledge of Central Asian societies. Whilst there had been some hopes within the Comintern about the potential of mobilising Muslim identity for anti-colonial purposes, these had petered out. Furthermore, increasingly Islam was being defined as the epitome of backwardness within the Soviet realm. Minority religious communities had been encouraged in the early years of the post-revolutionary Russia, with the aim of enlisting their support in the campaign to suppress the social power of Russian Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{107} However, Soviet planners’ strategies of reform and rule in the Central Asian republics were increasingly focused on the structuring limitations of sharia codes, particularly with regards to women’s segregation and marginalisation. Islamic practice was viewed as limiting opportunities for social development, educational improvement, and employment for Muslim women, and strategies were developed to mobilise women from Islamic backgrounds to counteract patriarchal rule in the region.\textsuperscript{108} These ideas were increasingly embodied in the form of the veil, which for many Communists symbolised backwardness, poverty, degeneracy and primitivism.\textsuperscript{109} Beginning in 1927, mass unveiling campaigns were launched, marking a pivotal turn in the relationship

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\item \textsuperscript{106} Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, ‘Kemalism and Communism: From Cooperation to Complication’, \textit{Turkish Studies}, 16:4 (2015), p.515
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between European Communists and Islamic communities in the Soviet Union. As industrialisation was pursued at the end of the 1920s, so too were attempts to restructure the ideological and social order of society on a uniformly atheistic basis. Although Field’s early attempts to mobilise Islamic identity for anti-imperialism may have been in line with prevailing Communist thought, by the end of his time in the party, his viewpoint was incompatible with the increasingly-militant atheism of Communist orthodoxy.

**Field’s Attempts at a Communist Pan-Islamic Advocacy**

In the wake of The Great War, Field would continue his campaign for Turkish territorial integrity and a renewed diplomatic engagement with the heirs to the Ottoman Empire. He took particular interest in preserving the Turkish right to hold onto Palestine in the context of growing labour support for Zionism. He had addressed this issue during his wartime involvement in the AOS. At a June 1917 meeting of the Central Islamic Society addressed by Pickthall on the question of ‘Muslim interests in Palestine’, Field contributed from the floor. He argued that Islamic acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the revelations of Judaism and Christianity, combined with the Turks’ modernising spirit, made them the best rulers of the region. He further feared that the Zionist movement would bring with it “the worst features of our civilization”, namely the racial exclusion of Arabs and their reorganisation into a politically-marginalised proletariat. Finally he alleged that the support being given by Britain to the Zionist movement was an attempt to recoup the fiscal losses of the war through “further enslavement of the East.”

As seen in the previous chapter, he also attempted to promote this position within the BSP. Whilst he had grounds for believing his argument might be popular within the group due to the anti-Zionist temperament of his comrades, his argument in favour of continued Turkish control over Palestine found little support. The BSP conference of 1918 unanimously approved an anti-Zionist motion, but the arguments made in favour

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111 Kelemen, *British Left*, pp.11-43
of adoption as well as the text of the resolution made no references to Turkish benevolence or the desirability of a unified Islamic state in the region, instead focusing on an opposition to colonialist projects and the “utopian” nature of the Zionist movement.\textsuperscript{113} Indeed, members of the now-anti-war BSP were wary of any potential rehabilitation of the defeated Ottomans’ reputation, fearing it laid the basis for an Anglo-Turkish alliance geared towards defeat of the Communist movement.\textsuperscript{114} Field’s belief in the necessity of a non-white imperial unit as a counter-balence to European empire-building stood in stark contrast to the anti-imperialist sentiments of the organisation.

Field also looked to the Workers’ Welfare League of India (WWLI), an organisation established by Shapurji Saklatvala and himself during the war, as a potential body to create connections between Khilafat activists in India, Turkish officials, and British trade unionists. This proposed strategy won little sympathy, particularly from Saklatvala, and he dropped this idea, instead allowing the group to focus on connecting Indian and British trade unionists.\textsuperscript{115} A security report from 1919 noted that Saklatvala was agitated by the Muslim contacts who Field was attempting to draw into the East-West Circle and the WWLI. Saklatvala expressed disdain for Quilliam, whom he accused of hypocrisy by attempting to stay on the right side of the law whilst proposing that others take potentially-incriminating actions.\textsuperscript{116} It is telling that of Field’s Islamic contacts, only two continued with the labour organising through the WWLI that Field was pursuing. Khalid Sheldrake would remain in the role of treasurer until 1928.\textsuperscript{117} Sheldrake had written previously on the unity of spirit in the internationalist aspirations of both Islam and the Esperanto movement, as well as the consanguinity of Islamic and socialist ideals.\textsuperscript{118} He had attempted to establish welfare organisations for Arab sailors in South Shields throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, and campaigned against their exclusion by the National Union of Seamen, demonstrating a keen interest in anti-racist trade unionism.\textsuperscript{119} Likewise Pickthall, although not directly involved in the group having moved to India, was happy to

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\textsuperscript{113} BSP, \textit{Seventh Annual Conference}, pp.13-14
\textsuperscript{114} KS, ‘While Our Planet Turns’, The Call, September 19th, 1918, p.6
\textsuperscript{115} NA, KV2/611, 16, ‘Workers Welfare League of India’, January 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1919
\textsuperscript{116} NA, KV2/611, 33, ‘Muslims in England’, 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 1919
\textsuperscript{117} LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/12 ‘Workers Welfare League Annual Report’, March 1928
\textsuperscript{118} See Sheldrake’s articles in both the July and August, 1914 editions of the \textit{Islamic Review}
\textsuperscript{119} Ansari, \textit{Infidel}, pp.136-7
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publish the group’s statements in the nationalist newspaper he edited.¹²⁰ Many of the Muslim activists he had attempted to cohere into a network were simply not interested in organising amongst the labour movement.

This did not end Field’s attempts to win support for the propriety of Turkish role over the former Ottoman lands within the British labour movement. He continued to forward the idea that Islamic adherents and the Turkish people had a history of tolerance far greater than that of Europe or Christendom, thus legitimising their control of a multinational state.¹²¹ Field’s vision of a modernising Caliphate was, however, soon to be dashed by the course of events within Turkey. By November 1922, the Kemalist nationalists had secured enough strength to abolish the position of the Sultan, throwing the viability of the Caliph’s position into doubt.

Field, potentially frustrated with the lack of uptake for his ideas amongst his comrades, sought to gain support for his ideas from internationalist feminist organisations, with which he had developed contact during the war. He wrote an article for the October, 1923 edition of Jus Suffragii, an organ of the International Woman Suffrage Association which had taken an anti-war and pro-Russian Revolution stance. In this piece he attacked the notion that women in the Muslim world were more oppressed than their European cousins.¹²² In another article for the journal, Field described how feminist ideas were becoming increasingly popular amongst Turkish women, which was reflected in an increasingly-feminist Turkish political leadership.¹²³ In both these articles Ali’s influence is discernible, with their emphasis on the independent development of feminist politics within Islamic societies and the refutation of the idea that a modernising colonialism could liberate Muslim women.

While Field was opposing one of the core tenets of imperial ideology, in the form of “white men saving brown women from brown men” it would be wrong to frame this as

¹²⁰ Kaye, Communism in India, p.49
a total rupture with Orientalist ideas.\textsuperscript{124} Despite his 1923 articles on the liberation of women occurring within Islamic countries, just one year later he would attempt to appeal to a presumed conservative sexual morality amongst British-based Muslims whilst trying to promote support for the Soviet Union. In an article for the \textit{Islamic Review} he defended the Bolshevik’s approach to marriage and women, pointing to instances of expulsions from the party of prostitutes and those considered of “sexual laxity”, before going on to praise the “clean and orderly” society the Bolsheviks were building.\textsuperscript{125}

In early 1924, just months before Ataturk would abolish the Caliphate, Field expressed his anxieties on the potential end of the Caliphate in a letter to Rajani Palme Dutt, editor of the \textit{Labour Monthly} and coordinator for the Comintern’s international contacts. Field said he was worried about the move, claiming that it would engender the end of Turkish hegemony over the Orient which provided a powerful anti-imperialist bloc, thus benefitting the Communist cause.\textsuperscript{126} Indeed, Field’s position shared strong similarities with those of the editors of the \textit{Islamic Review}, who issued an open warning to the Turkish Republic that abolition of the position of the Caliph could endanger fellow-Muslims and leave them open to imperial advance.\textsuperscript{127} Interestingly, in this letter, Field criticised Saklatvala’s support for the secularisation of the Turkish state, with Field claiming that his ally no longer identified with an Oriental but European mind-set. As will be seen in the following chapter, Saklatvala was one of Field’s closest associates within the CPGB, with both sharing a strong interest in promulgating anti-racism and anti-imperialism within the group, but even he would not stand with Field in his Turkish advocacy. In a telling letter a few days later, he acknowledged that his position was not in line with Communist orthodoxy on the Turkish question, but still attempted to enlist Dutt’s support for his efforts. The AOS was due to host a reception for a visiting Turkish diplomat who was seeking to take over the former Ottoman embassy for the new republic, and he requested Dutt’s support.

\textsuperscript{124} Gayarti Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds) \textit{Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture}, (Urbana, 1988) p.296
\textsuperscript{125} Arthur Field, ‘The People of Tripolitana’, \textit{The Islamic Review}, 12:12 (December, 1924), pp.446-447
\textsuperscript{126} LHA, CP/IND/DUTT/05/07, ‘Letter from Arthur Field to RP Dutt’, January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1924
We may lose all our Tories and split up our society. Well, we will convert it into an extremist-ruled body and scrap the reactionaries! I insist you support our dinner and reception.  

In this letter he also criticised the ideas of MN Roy, who had opposed cross-class alliances in the colonial world, and claimed that if his policies were adopted by the Comintern then he would be labelled a heretic. What can be gleaned from these letters was that Field was still acting on the ideas he had learned through his wartime work with the AOS and association with the elite Muslims of the WMM. Namely, he was attempting to cultivate ties with Turkish officialdom, seeking collaboration with elites, and focusing on respectable political activities. Field attempted to maintain this relationship with Turkish officialdom, despite the lack of enthusiasm amongst other party members. He attempted to organise a similar event the following year, but the Turkish minister he had promised his audience was unable to attend, sending a dossier of information on Turkish reforms and diplomatic relations in his stead. Although the material made the basis for a fine lecture, Field dolefully admitted that it was neither as “important [n]or interesting as the [proposed] minister’s attendance and speech.”

Field made these appeals for support at a time when the Comintern was growing wary of the Turkish state. There had been a degree of Communist enthusiasm for Kemalism in the first years of the 1920s due to the movement’s democratic program, its hostility towards Western intervention, and the reverence displayed towards the October Revolution. However this relationship had soured by the mid-1920s, due to fear that Ataturk’s movement was seeking Western economic cooperation, and that pan-Turkism could inspire further uprisings within the Soviet Union. In 1922 Ataturk suppressed the Turkish Communist Party, a measure which provoked a change in attitude within the Comintern leadership, and by the time of the Fifth Congress in 1924, Kemalism was pilloried a repressive bourgeois movement. Turkish Communists were encouraged to retain their independence from the now pro-Western Turkish leadership.

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128 LHA, CP/IND/DUTT/05/07, ‘Letter from Arthur Field to RP Dutt’, January 14th, 1924
129 NLI, MS8438/1, ‘Letter from Field’, December 31st, 1924
130 Ter-Matevosyan, ‘Kemalism and Communism’, pp.513-4
In 1925, Field attempted to revive the AOS, and although Saklatvala and the Liberal politician Commander Kenworthy would attend some of the group’s meetings, it appears as though the organisation was not able to hold itself together, with the Secret Service deciding it was too insignificant to continue to observe. However, the AOS was not Field’s only outlet. In 1924 Field and Saklatvala relaunched the East-West Circle. This organisation appears to have received greater interest within Communist circles than Field’s previous endeavours, and its foundation came just after the CPGB had been chided by the ECCI for its lack of anti-colonial work, boding well for its potential securing of party support. Kate O’Malley has noted how the group was able to provide a hub for meetings between Communists, Indian nationalists and Irish republicans, allowing for the sharing of funds, strategies, and resources. A number of Communist notables attended its inaugural meeting including Willie Gallacher, famed for his involvement in the Red Clyde movement and an organiser of the CPGB’s Colonial Bureau who had complained to the Political Bureau that its work wasn’t being taken seriously. Clemens Dutt, Rajani’s brother and another sitting member of the Colonial Bureau, reported to the British Secretariat of the Comintern in 1926 that they had hoped to use the body to organise a conference of anti-colonial contacts, although they had ultimately abandoned the idea owing to passport issues. However, Dutt would go on to describe the organisation as a “neutral body” with “very few members, most of which are intellectuals,” which is telling of the group’s trajectory.

At the inaugural meeting of the Circle on November 5th, Field and Saklatvala both began by giving statements on the necessity of this organisation as a body within which to draw together “our friends from the East, whether from Egypt, India, Persia, Afghanistan or Turkey” to discuss the aims and practices of Communism, and help sow the seeds of “a world-Soviet.” Field, who had invited a member of the Afghan legation to the meeting, launched into a long speech during which several people left. He was eventually interrupted by Gallacher, who stated that enough talking had been done, and that it was time for something concrete. He organised a whip-round to send

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132 NA, KV2/614, 347a, ‘Extract from Secret Sources’, March 17th, 1925
133 Aubry, ‘FIELD’, p.144
135 LHA CP/CENT/PC/01/05 ‘Political Bureau Minutes’, November 21st, 1924; CP/CENT/PC/01/06, ‘Political Bureau Minutes’, December 2nd, 1924
136 DCA, 495/ 72/ 14, 65-77, ‘Minutes of the British Secretariat’, April 24th, 1926
137 BLIPI, L/P & J/12/226/ 1525, ‘Extract from Report of New Scotland Yard’, November 19th, 1924
a telegram of solidarity to the Indian Communists who had been arrested in Kanpur earlier that year. Although this was an inauspicious start, Field clearly had loftier aspirations for the group. Just as Willi Münzenberg would two years later attempt to create a hub in Berlin for different individuals to enter into a single anti-imperialist movement, Field was attempting to create a similar organisation in the heart of London.  

Field took responsibility for the secretarial work of the Circle, and used this position to turn the organisation to colonial questions affecting former Ottoman lands. Its second public meeting focussed on the question of Egyptian independence and the punitive stance taken by the British in response to the assassination of the Commander of the Egyptian Army, Sir Lee Stack. A number of prominent Muslims attended, including Quilliam/Leon, Sheldrake, and Princess Ola Hassan, an American actress who had married the cousin of the Khedive of Egypt in 1911 and settled in London. Representatives of Indian nationalist newspapers including Benjamin Guy Horniman of the Bombay Chronicle and MG Desai of The Voice of India, as well as several CPGB members were present. Field began by giving apologies of absence from Margaret Corbett Ashby, the Cambridge-educated president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance who had published Field’s articles, as well as William Gallacher and Art O’Briain. Clearly, this was meant to be a gathering of notables. Leon and Saklatvala gave introductions on the topic of Egypt and British Imperialism, with Field then proposing a motion which called for a British evacuation of Egypt and the Sudan which was unanimously adopted. He did this in spite of Saklatvala, who before leaving the meeting early due to health issues, implored that resolutions were easily deflected and instead urged the room to organise some form of protest. It seems that without either of the Political Bureau members present, Field was quite content to revert to a form of political practice more familiar to him.

Field brought more of his contacts into the group. Having considered Saklatvala for president, he selected Pickthall for the role, lest the former’s recent expulsion from the

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139 BLIPI, L/P & J/12/226/ 1720, ‘Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard’, December 3rd, 1924

140 BLIPI, L/P & J/12/226/ 1831, ‘Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard’, December 17th, 1924
Labour Party scare away moderates.\textsuperscript{141} It had quickly morphed into a discussion group rather than an activist body, hosting talks by authors such Mary Edith Durham, a supporter of Albanian nationalism who wrote anthropological accounts of the country based on her travels there.

Field would re-orient the group once more, attempting to partner the organisation with the ideologically-eclectic Rif Committee.\textsuperscript{142} The Rif War had begun in 1921, when Berber inhabitants of the Rif region of Morocco, under the leadership of Abd el-Karim, had rebelled over Spanish attempts to enforce their previously-theoretical control of the region, and established the Republic of the Rif. The situation escalated in 1924, when the Riffian forces attacked nearby French soldiers who were occupying disputed territory, leading to joint military operations by the French and Spanish to re-absorb the region into their respective Moroccan holdings. The Rif Committee bore similarities to the pre-war Ottoman Committee, with prominent figures such as Captain Gordon-Canning and Captain Gardiner (both of whom had gained commercial concessions from the Rif leader Abd el-Karim, and the former of whom would go on to become one of the leading lights of the British Union of Fascists), giving the group a veneer of establishment respectability.\textsuperscript{143}

The group lobbied the British state to recognise the new Republic and encouraged the breaking of the Spanish and French blockade of the region. Field attempted to use his friend Horniman’s links with Indian Muslims to raise funds for humanitarian relief for the Rif on the subcontinent, in an effort which would have some mixed results. Although he could not gain support from his Indian connections, he was able to collect charitable donations in time for the launch meeting of the Committee.\textsuperscript{144} Arnall asked Field to arrange for a reception for a visiting Riffian diplomatic delegation through his Muslim contacts.\textsuperscript{145} Arnall was acting in his role as a Riffian diplomat; from 1922, he repeatedly lobbyed the League of Nations in an attempt to get the Spanish government’s use of chemical weapons raised in the Assembly. He stated that he was

\textsuperscript{141} BLIPI, L/P & J/12/226/ 30, ‘Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard’, December 31\textsuperscript{15}, 1924
\textsuperscript{143} CR Pennell, A country with a government and a flag: the Rif War in Morocco, 1921-1926, (Cambridgeshire, 1986), pp.210- 212.
\textsuperscript{144} Dirk Sasse, Franzosen, Briten und Deutsche im Rifkrieg 1921-1926: Spekulanten und Sympathisanten, Deserteure und Hasardeure im Dienste Abdelkrim (Munich, 2006), pp.78-80, pp.332-3
\textsuperscript{145} Sasse, Franzosen, pp.278-82
English representative of the Rif Government but League officials, wary of his political connections, refused to acknowledge his claim or act on the reports he provided.\textsuperscript{146}

At the Circle’s meetings on the topic, roughly one-third of the audience were estimated to be Egyptians by a police informant, demonstrating that even if the group had little practical success, it was making modest steps towards its goal of cohering different colonial nationalists together. The participants of one meeting in March 1925 gave particular emphasis to the role of racial prejudice in influencing the British government’s actions during the crisis. Saklatvala claimed the refusal of the British to give medical assistance to the Rifs was based on a “preference of white for white” and declared that this abrogation of humanitarian obligations was an “issue of race”, with others in the room also contributing on the topic of white racial animosity against “Orientals.”\textsuperscript{147} The Circle passed several resolutions on the crisis which demonstrated the flexible approach with which Field could orient towards hegemonic and non-Communist forms of internationalism. Although Field had shown antipathy towards the League of Nations in AOS publications, a resolution passed in a meeting of October 1924 called on supporters to petition the organisation to give the Emir of the Rif Republic an audience to argue for international recognition of the young state.\textsuperscript{148}

Certainly this diplomatic and humanitarian focus was not what was expected from within the Communist movement. The French Communist Party (PCF) had taken the lead in organising a range of protests over the deployment of French troops, helped to foment a number of naval mutinies against the war, and even successfully organised a twenty-four hour general strike in October 1925 in protest.\textsuperscript{149} Meanwhile Field, with his international network of Islamic and anti-colonial contacts, had managed to organise little of tangible public impact, whilst building alliances with both Liberal and Conservative politicians and military figures. Moreover, the rhetoric and analysis of the Circle’s meetings bore little similarity to that occurring amongst other party members. While the East-West Circle had located the conflict primarily in a racial preference of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{146} Pablo La Porte, ““Rien a`ajouter”: The League of Nations and the Rif War (1921–1926)”, \textit{European History Quarterly}, 41:1 (2011), p.72, pp.75-76
\bibitem{147} BLIP, L/P & J/12/226/ 430, ‘Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard’, March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1925; L/P & J/12/226/ 486, ‘Extract from Report by New Scotland Yard’, March 25\textsuperscript{th}, 1925
\bibitem{148} ‘Anglo-Turkish Society and the “East-West Circle”’, \textit{The Islamic Review}, 12:12 (December, 1924), p.413
\end{thebibliography}
the British for their fellow-Europeans, this viewpoint stood outside prevailing orthodoxy on the origins of the conflict. Alan Hutt, a young journalist who had recently joined the CPGB, located British state policy within two contradictory imperialist desires. Namely the desire to weaken French holdings in Morocco, allowing for British advance, and urge to prevent el-Karim’s movement from inspiring a pan-Islamic uprising against imperialism. Likewise Jacques Doriot, a prominent member of the PCF, located Britain’s wavering attitude to both the French and the Rifs in her desire to hold on to Gibraltar. Both these authors felt that British refusal to recognise the Rif Republic was motivated by an attempt to increase her own overseas holdings, in line with a Leninist analysis of the objective necessity of imperialist expansion creating inter-imperial conflict.

The East-West Circle’s intentions had inspired some interest from fellow party members and even led activists in the CPGB’s Colonial Bureau to consider how they might effectively use this new initiative. However, the audiences that Field was able to attract through his networks, his choice of political partners within the project, the ideals propagated within its meetings, and its lack of effectiveness in achieving even its stated intentions soon lead to the organisation petering out, and the CPGB looking for alternative outlets to organise its anti-colonial work.

**Field Leaves the CPGB**

Field’s continued interest in Eastern faiths and his assertion of religious identity as a valid basis for anti-colonial movements and activists would eventually cause him to part ways with the CPGB. He left in 1927 in protest at the public censuring of Saklatvala for organising a Navjote ceremony, an induction ceremony for the Zoroastrian faith, for his children. Field had been invited to the ceremony both as a friend of Saklatvala’s and as a photographer and journalist for the Indian National Herald. In his article on the ceremony he had attempted to cut through the Orientalist tropes of exoticism around alien faiths. He noted that “the proceedings were a reproduction of daily occurrences... in Bombay,” and chided the Daily Mirror’s reporter who claimed

152 Arthur Field, ‘London Letter on Mail Week Topics, Indian National Herald* (September 4th, 1927), p.8
that none of the attendants knew anything of the symbolic meanings of the ritual offerings, hinting a primitive religious fetishism.\textsuperscript{153}

Rather than defending their prominent comrade’s right to a private life or denouncing this exoticised portrayal of the event, the CPGB Political Bureau denounced Saklatvala’s “infringement of Communist principles” in the party press, and Saklatvala publicly apologised.\textsuperscript{154} Saklatvala explained to the leadership that the ceremony had essentially been a cultural initiation arranged to ensure that his children would not be cut off from familial inheritance, but that he accepted their decision and agreed not to publicly make this argument.\textsuperscript{155}

The principle of militant atheism took precedence over the defence of colonial subjects’ faiths as a principle of anti-imperialism, and while the CPGB did not view religious identity as an element in processes of racialisation, Field did. He felt that, as the Bolsheviks had had to make compromises with peasant property holdings in the construction of a socialist state, so too would Communists in the East be forced to make compromises with religious groups. This incident was particularly embarrassing for Field as only a month previously he had defended the CPGB against claims that it was a militantly atheistic body, an argument which was being used within Battersea in an attempt to reduce Communist influence amongst Irish workers.\textsuperscript{156} He would write about the incident four times in the \textit{Indian National Herald}, an Indian nationalist newspaper published in Mumbai by Horniman, and edited by Pickthall, in the fortnight after his resignation. He claimed that the Communists’ “war on religion” would destroy any chance of united front work or building Communist Parties in “Eastern societies”, and that expecting people to abandon their religious cultures was to underestimate the centrality of religion to the daily experiences of swathes of the world’s population. He further alleged that it was a hypocritical policy given that the USSR had allowed its own Muslim adherents to publicly engage in demonstrations of faith as a means of gradual conversion to atheism.\textsuperscript{157} Whilst never adhering to religious belief, Field felt

\textsuperscript{154} ‘S Saklatvala MP and Religion- Communist Political Bureau’s Censure- “Sak” Agrees’, \textit{Workers Life} (August 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1927)
\textsuperscript{155} DCA, 495/ 72/ 27, 10-18, ‘Anglo-American Secretariat Minutes’, August 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1927
\textsuperscript{156} Arthur Field, ‘London Letter on Mail Week Topics’, \textit{Indian National Herald}, (July 31\textsuperscript{st}, 1927)
\textsuperscript{157} See Field’s articles in the \textit{Indian National Herald} of September 5\textsuperscript{th}, 11\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1927
that the enforcement of atheism could not be accomplished from above, and would only serve as a barrier to socialist consciousness amongst colonised populations.

This split led to a parting of ways for Field and the bulk of the CPGB. In spite of his transnational connections and the anti-imperial and anti-prejudicial focus of the bulk of his campaigning, he was not invited to the conference to organise a leadership for the British section of the League Against Imperialism, and appears to have not engaged with the organisation. However, this was not the end of his campaigning, as he continued in the WWLI, redoubled his commitment to the ISDL, and even attempted to revive the East-West Circle once again. In a testament to the importance of his Irish identity in grounding his political perspectives, even after resigning from the CPGB and publicly polemicizing against them, he would deliver lectures in 1931 for International Labour Defence, a Communist front organisation, at protest meetings demanding the release of Irish Republican prisoners. This came only a year before he would attempt to proscribe the LAI and involvement with Communist-dominated groups within the WWLI, an episode which will be explored in the next chapter. Setting aside his hostility to the CPGB would have been no easy task for him, and is indicative of his political priorities.

**Conclusion**

Arthur Field’s absence from political histories is in many ways unsurprising. He managed to come close to prominence without ever attaining it, and throughout his life he became increasingly peripheral to the causes he valued. He displayed a remarkable propensity for severing valuable political relationships. By 1933 he had called Saklatvala corrupt and conspiratorial, offended Art O’Briain by publicly naming him a defeatist, denounced the CPGB in the press, been branded a troublemaker by Keir Hardie, accused Quilliam of being a spy, and had been labelled counter-productive by no less an authority than Engels. By the time of his death, there were few left to

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158 HHC, UDBN/ 25/4, ‘List of those to be invited to a conference with a view to appointing an Advisory Council for the British Section of the LAI, undated’
159 NLI, MS8425/30, ‘Letter from Field’, March 13th, 1931
160 *The Daily Worker*, May 15th, 1931, p.2
write him a hagiography. Where he has been referenced by historians, he is often defined by his eccentric character rather than his political connections or beliefs.

Field was an unorthodox Marxist. His socialism was strongly influenced by his connection to Champion and his engagement with pro-Ottoman activism, leaving him with a strategic orientation towards cross-class alliances and lobbying state institutions. His connection to Ali and the Islamic community in Woking infused his socialist politics with an Islamic universalism drawn from the ideals of the Young Turks. He saw Islam as anti-colonial, anti-racist, and modernising faith, and looked to the Ottoman Empire and the Caliph, and then secular Turkey as a bulwark against imperialist encroachment globally. His Irish identity, clearly key to his sense of self particularly in moments of isolation and despair, helped drive him to articulate a total opposition to the British Empire rather than seeking reform or equality within its framework. The centrality of anti-colonialism to his politics goes some way towards explaining how he ended up in the militant wing of the labour movement in spite of his moderate tactics, white-collar background, and reverence for elite figures. He helped bring together individuals from various anti-colonial causes and encouraged solidarity and support amongst different networks of activists. Although he was unsuccessful in persuading fellow CPGB members of his version of anti-colonialism which drew on Islamic universalism, his efforts were bold and contained an unrealised potential.

Field’s desire to see anti-imperialist struggles emanating from predominantly-Islamic societies supported by the CPGB was certainly no pipe dream. In 1925, at the prompting of the Comintern, the CPGB would send Manchester branch organiser James Crossley to engage in clandestine work in Egypt, helping the oft-suppressed Egyptian Communist Party establish an underground apparatus between different urban centres and forge connections with its Palestinian sister party. The CPGB would attempt to organise a number of Muslim sailors of Arabic, Indian, and North African backgrounds through the International Oriental Seafarers Union during the

1920s.\textsuperscript{163} The LAI, a CPGB-dominated group, would agitate against British involvement in Iraq during the early 1930s.\textsuperscript{164}

What marked Field’s efforts as separate from these endeavours were both tactical and discursive divergences from the strategies which were capable of winning greater support from within the ranks of the revolutionary left. Tactically, his engagement with officialdom and alliances built with professionals from the Muslim community in Britain as well as Islamic dignitaries and diplomats was far from the labour-focussed engagement drawn on by Jewish and Indian members within the party. Whilst he was able to draw on his history in the labour movement to engage some local trade union leaders in his campaigns, ultimately his orientation was not towards these audiences. At the discursive level, his belief in the primacy of Turkish suzerainty over the principle of national self-determination, and an anti-imperialism grounded in the defence a confessional state, found few supporters in a party dedicated to secular anti-colonial nationalism and a distrust of religious movements baring similarities to those within the Soviet state.

Field was in many ways still utilising the pre-war template of how anti-imperialist agitation should be conducted, relying on similar techniques to the ‘positive racialisations’ seen in the first chapter. He sought to defend Ottoman territorial integrity in the face of potential dismemberment by asserting the progressive nature of its rule, the Empire’s potential for modernisation, and the religious links that could inspire other peoples of the East. Had he instead oriented towards Muslim communities based in the port towns, emphasised the working-class identities of the groups he sought to defend, or else ‘nationalised’ the faith-based groups then he may have found greater success. Field’s forceful personality and unorthodox Marxism led to his marginalisation within the CPGB’s anti-colonial activism, the party itself, and eventually other anti-racist labour bodies. He would never become the threat to British Empire’s integrity that the security services had once feared.

\textsuperscript{164} Reginald Bridgeman, ‘The Assyrians in Iraq’, \textit{The Labour Monthly}, (October, 1933), pp.627-632
Chapter 4: The Subaltern Cosmopolitanism of Shapurji Saklatvala and its Impact on Anti-Imperial Advocacy in the CPGB 1921-1933

Clearly there is no single cosmopolitan vision, but a plurality of competing cosmopolitan projects.¹

When Shapurji Saklatvala was elected as the MP of Battersea North in 1922, he became the third Asian MP to sit in the Houses of Commons. After his defeat in 1929, no other non-white MP sat until 1987. A member of both the Labour Party and the CPGB, and the great-nephew of Nusserwanji Tata, the prominent Indian industrialist, Saklatvala was by no means a typical MP, Communist, or Indian nationalist. As one of only four CPGB MPs to have ever sat in Parliament, and as a pioneering anti-colonial activist, Saklatvala has been an inspirational figure for a wide range of people, from the British members of the International Brigades who named their battalion in his honour, to the current Mayor of London Sadiq Khan who presented a radio show on his legacy.²

Studies of his life have generally focussed on his parliamentary career and work through the CPGB and Communist-dominated organisations such as the LAI. This chapter provides a corrective to this narrative, demonstrating that his influence within the Communist movement owed much to his cultivation of political networks beyond its ranks and across borders. Furthermore, it demonstrates the capacity of members of the nascent CPGB to launch their own internationalist projects, and provides an example of how racialised outsiders pushed forwards an anti-imperialist and anti-racist political praxis from the party grassroots. Whilst Arthur Field’s attempts at incorporating his own internationalist projects into the CPGB’s political culture floundered, Saklatvala was to find greater success due to his leveraging of strategic universalist discourses, his political orientation towards the British labour movement, and the financial resources and social networks his background afforded him.

¹ Daniele Conversi, quoted in Gilbert Achcar, Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism (London, 2013) p.152
² Sadiq Khan, Britain’s White House (September 9th, 2009), http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00mgwj0 [accessed July 4th, 2017]; A year after Saklatvala’s death, the British and Dominion volunteers who fought on behalf of the Spanish Republic during the Civil War were initially named the ‘Saklatvala Battalion’, although the name never caught on with non-Communist members or audiences. James Hopkins, Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War (Stanford, 1998), p.154.
This chapter will focus on the catalysing role Saklatvala played in the CPGB, spurring on the party’s agitation for Indian independence and improved democratic rights and labour conditions for the subcontinent. It examines his model of transnational organisation embodied in the Workers’ Welfare League of India as an example of what Featherstone has termed ‘subaltern cosmopolitanism.’ It shows that his internationalism was shaped by the practices of subaltern groups such as seafarers, political exiles, and migrant workers, rather than being dependent on the formal internationalism embodied in the international conferences and transnational structures of the Comintern. This praxis presented a rival stream of internationalist activism, more focussed on the colonial world, than that which was predominant within the CPGB until 1924-5.

The political contacts Saklatvala developed during his time in Britain, alongside his familial wealth and public prominence, allowed him to pursue a different approach to anti-imperial advocacy through the WWLI than that of the majority of the CPGB, causing consternation for several leading members of the party and the Comintern. His detractors feared his proximity to Social-Democracy as well as his lack of public adherence to the political lines or internal discipline of the organisation. Whilst in the main focussed on India, Saklatvala mobilised an identity of political blackness and attempted to coordinate with labour organisations and activists from African colonies at a period where others in the party argued against the possibility of organising these forces. His own experiences of racial exclusion helped to cement the value of anti-racist politics within the heart of his work. While this influence is evident in his activism, he was able to utilise prevalent universalising identities of abstract proletariatism to connect local struggles to a global context, a key facet of internationalist practice.

This approach is contrasted to the anti-imperial activism that developed primarily through collaboration between the Dutt brothers, MN Roy’s International Colonial Bureau, and figures based in both the Comintern and Profintern apparatus, which were rooted to a far greater extent in the bureaucracy of the Communist movement. This model similarly received lukewarm support and participation from the wider CPGB, but the greater resources available to the individuals involved allowed for greater

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3 Featherstone, *Solidarity*, p.48
4 Featherstone, *Solidarity*, pp.53-4
consistency in organisation. Saklatvala initially remained aloof from this process, but between 1925 and 1927 his dwindling resources, decreasing ability to mobilise through his personal networks, and growing disconnect from rival political organisations (a result of pressure from both within the Communist movement and without), led him to engage with the structures he had shown a wariness towards in his first years of party membership. This in turn impacted the scope of the WWLI to take autonomous action or form activist coalitions extending beyond the Communist periphery. With the establishment of the Communist-led LAI, Saklatvala transferred his loyalties to this new vehicle for anti-imperialist activism which proved to have greater success in mobilising the wider party membership.\(^5\)

During this period there was a marked change in the party’s perspectives on, and practice of, anti-imperialism. The CPGB had inherited a dual legacy from the radical labour milieu it emerged from. The first element was an emphasis on imperialism in India as particularly degrading and dangerous due to its suppression of an advanced civilisation, its potential to train a caste of violent and tyrannical rulers within the metropole, and the ill-will it created towards Britain amongst other nationalities. The second element was a strong vein of white labourism with its associated legacy of historicism. This emphasised that the most industrially-advanced societies and the peoples who inhabited them were those ripest for revolutionary possibilities and the development of socialism, thus negating the revolutionary possibilities amongst colonised populations.\(^6\) Consequentially, early CPGB activists could draw on India as an example to indict the brutality of capitalist rule, whilst offering little support to the Indian independence movement, instead emphasising the centrality of organising British workers to overthrow the imperial state, thus freeing the Indian population from without. It would be wrong to deny the existence of a strong culture of ideological internationalism within the CPGB and grassroots identification with the Comintern as an embodiment of this ethos. However, the political focus evident within this tendency centred upon defence of the USSR, coupled with a prioritisation of European and white colonial workers as the agents of revolutionary change.

\(^5\) This relative success can be understood in terms of the membership’s prevailing internationalist identity which equated internationalism with loyalty to both the USSR and the structures of the Comintern. Callaghan, ‘Communists and Colonies’, p.4; Morgan et al, British Society, p.211

\(^6\) Hyslop, ‘Imperial Working Class’, p.417
This perspective was challenged due to three major factors. The first was the development of transnational anti-colonial bodies under the auspices of the Comintern which could chide and critique the parties in imperial states for their lack of attention to colonial politics. Though they had little direct control of the British party, they helped foment a culture shift by empowering local activists and transmitting different perspectives on revolutionary possibilities within the non-white world. The second was the recruitment of racialised outsiders who developed an anti-imperial praxis, often drawing on and developing activist networks beyond the official contacts and connections of the CPGB at an institutional level. The third was the gradual accession of a theory which laid greater emphasis on the proletarian characteristics of the Indian subcontinent, and which drew on experiences of the Russian Revolution to emphasise the revolutionary possibilities beyond the spatial parameters of Europe and racial parameters of white populations, largely through greater emphasis on the role of the peasantry.

However, these theoretical and organisational developments faced a number of barriers to their effective implementation. The period of ‘Class against Class’ saw a number of transnational connections between British-based Communists and Indian nationalists and labour activists severed, hindering the capacity of Saklatvala’s work in the WWLI. Similarly the formation of the LAI and the prioritisation of the group both reduced the political space for the WWLI to operate within, created fissures amongst its ranks, and ultimately led to its downfall.

Through the course of this chapter it will be argued that Saklatvala’s practice through the WWLI and writings in the various platforms associated with the CPGB played a key role in all three of these transformative factors. His transnational organising through the WWLI, unmediated by official Comintern or CPGB structures, was an anathema in the wake of the post-1924 drive to ‘Bolshevise’ national Communist Parties. It had, however, provided the only consistent vehicle to gain independent information on Indian social movements, advocate on behalf of Indian concerns, or organise solidarity efforts with Indian actors. It provided an impetus for those closer to the Comintern to forge more cohesive links between the CPGB, Indian revolutionaries, and the official structures of the movement. This synergetic process however, was frustrated by ideological and personal differences which at times centred on Saklatvala.
The study of Saklatvala’s role in this process is made pertinent by the lack of developed biographical material on him. Despite his contemporary influence and symbolic role within the Communist movement, the biographical literature on Saklatvala is scant when compared with other leading Communist figures of the period. Panchanan Saha provided the first biography, with Rajani Palme Dutt writing the introduction, in 1970. The book canonised him, with Saklatvala’s role in the party largely represented through party members’ eulogising accounts or lionising descriptions from the party press. In the wake of the 1987 entry into the House of Commons of the first Asian MPs to sit since Saklatvala, there was a flourish of interest in him, with three separate biographies published through the course of the 1990s. Of these, Sehri Saklatvala had access to some more unique sources, including letters written to her brother by Arthur Field reflecting on their joint activism together. Though the work suffers from an incomplete picture of Shapurji’s background and doesn’t flesh out a number of his campaigns or connections, it remains valuable in terms of these previously unpublished materials. Wadsworth’s and Squires’ accounts provide useful biographies of his political career, the former emphasising his utilisation of ‘political blackness’ in understanding empire and the latter giving emphasis from his gradual shift from reformist to revolutionary approaches towards India. While Squires gives due weight to Saklatvala’s differences from the Comintern, this is often accomplished through highlighting differences with MN Roy’s political perspectives and conflating these with those of the international body. This reduction of conflict to the realm of formal politics is understandable given that both authors relied principally upon published works, activist memoirs, reports of meetings, and the like.

Security Service files on Saklatvala’s activism were released in 2000, allowing historians greater access to more nuanced information on his relationship with different individuals and campaigns both locally and globally. These are augmented by recently digitised documents from the Comintern’s archives, now based in the Russian State

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7 Panchanan Saha, *Shapurji Saklatvala, A Short Biography* (Delhi, 1970)
9 ‘Political Blackness’ refers to a unifying ‘black’ identity which can be adopted by all communities and individuals who have experienced racism, regardless of ethnic background or cultural identification. While particularly popular in the British anti-racist movements of the 1980s it has become an increasingly-contested concept. See Kalbir Shukra, ‘A Scramble for the British Pie’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 30:1 (1996), pp. 28-36
10 Squires, *Saklatvala*, pp.265-7
Archive of Socio-Political History. Drawing on these records alongside published sources and documents of the CPGB itself, a more coherent picture of the bases of his power, the activist networks he fostered, and his relationship to the broader Communist movement can be sketched out. These have been particularly significant as Saklatvala’s own correspondence was ultimately buried with him after his death in 1936, alongside the shoes his wife had worn on their wedding day.\(^\text{11}\)

In the first biographical piece written on Saklatvala in the wake of the release of these papers, Rozina Visram included a profile of the Communist MP in her book, *Asians in Britain*. Unfortunately she did not make use of these documents, instead relying on a combination of printed materials and the former wave of biographies. Her work subsequently places Saklatvala as an impeccable loyalist to the Comintern line and structures, thus leading to the downfall of his own political career.\(^\text{12}\) Kate O’Malley has very effectively drawn on these new documents, using them to focus on his work with Irish communities and the connections he fostered between Indian and Irish radical critics of empire.\(^\text{13}\) Ultimately, of the recent works on his career, Pennybacker’s chapter on his agitation around the Meerut trial gives far greater weight to both Saklatvala’s ecumenism and the unique centrality of anti-colonialism to his vision of communism within the British context.\(^\text{14}\)

This chapter has five sections. The first contextualises Saklatvala’s career in the CPGB and labour movement’s attitudes towards Indian nationalism in the inter-war period. The second examines the early political experiences of Saklatvala and their impact on his ideals and political tactics. The third focuses on the activities of the WWLI, its efficacy, and its relationship to the Communist movement. The fourth studies the decline of Saklatvala’s independent political power due to shifts in the Comintern, his own personal circumstances, and the labour movements of both Britain and India. The final section shows how Saklatvala accommodated to these shifting circumstances and became a party loyalist.

\(^{11}\) Saklatvala, *Fifth Commandment*, p.50
\(^{14}\) Pennybacker, *Scottsboro*, pp.146-199
The Labour Movement Looks East

The CPGB inherited a legacy from the pre-war socialist left which laid emphasis on the ‘civilised’ nature of Indian society, drawing on its legal, political and cultural histories to emphasise the denigrating impact of imperial rule. Economic theories of British-Indian relations drew on the “drain of wealth” theory, with its emphasis on the deliberate underdevelopment of Indian social relations. Strategies for overcoming the power structures of empire relied on the action of metropolitan workers to democratise the institutions of foreign policy and to take political control within Britain, and a close post-colonial relationship was imagined whereby a British-Indian economic and political partnership would continue.  

Within the inter-war labour movement there was no universal consensus on Indian political development. Some trade unionists were wary of the potential threat posed to their members’ conditions through the sweated labour of burgeoning Indian industries, and thus sought social reform on the subcontinent. Members of the Indian Home Rule League tried to capitalise on this desire for social reform, emphasising amongst Labour audiences that it could only be attained through granting India Dominion status. However, many of the Fabian-leaning individuals who dominated the Labour Party’s committee on international questions stressed that a British paternalistic trusteeship would be essential for some time before independent self-governance could be granted to India. They warned that immediate independence would allow an Indian elite to monopolise power due to the “non-adult” stage of development that Indian civil society had reached. The development of Indian nationalism was often framed as a latter-day re-enactment of the same social and political processes which had led to the formation of the Labour Party in Britain, in an example of false universalisation which ignored the structural differences between the two societies.

This universalisation did not just occur within the Labour Party or the trade unions. Young asserts that across the entirety of the inter-war British left there was an increasing tendency to politically self-define on the basis of “an abstract proletarian universalism which eschewed any recognition of national differences of language, culture or class.”\textsuperscript{18} This self-identification contextualises the CPGB’s growing focus on India throughout the 1920s as figures such as MN Roy, Shapurji Saklatvala, and Rajani Palme Dutt all emphasised that the country had been through a phase of rapid industrialisation. This, they stressed, laid the basis for an industrial working class capable of leading a revolutionary struggle for national independence alongside the agrarian masses, the intelligentsia, and sections of the bourgeoisie who found that imperialism constrained their own economic interests.\textsuperscript{19} This was not unique to advocacy of oppressed racial groups within India. Pennybacker’s analysis of the Scottsboro defence campaign demonstrates that the CPGB had a propensity to alter the wording of statements of the defendants to emphasise the proletarian identities of the accused over their racial backgrounds, in an effort to garner greater support from the labour movement.\textsuperscript{20} Certainly British Communists looked to industrial workers as the natural social group to organise in the colonies and their campaigns and propaganda often highlighted those they could identify as proletarians.

Not until 1924-5 did the CPGB begin the task of systematising their anti-colonial work and developing anti-imperialism as a mainstay of party politics. At the Second Comintern Congress of 1920, Tom Quelch, then still a representative of the BSP, infamously argued that British Communists could not be expected to engage in anti-imperial agitation or organisation, stating that it would doom the party to irrelevance in the eyes of most English workers who would see it as treasonous.\textsuperscript{21}

An article by John Langland for \textit{The Communist Review} in 1921 encapsulated the overriding perspective of the CPGB in its early years. Langland criticised the pre-war Social-Democratic parties for their approach to empire, claiming that while they sympathised with its victims they had no strategy for its overthrow. Directly quoting

\textsuperscript{19} Callaghan, \textit{Dutt}, pp.87-91
\textsuperscript{20} Pennybacker, \textit{Scottsboro}, pp.40-41
\textsuperscript{21} Redfern, \textit{Class or Nation}, p.59
from Lenin, he called for an alliance between the industrial proletariat and nationalist agrarian and non-proletarian forces across the British Empire as the means for advancing socialism. His article called for this international movement to come under the leadership of the British working class as the only consistent revolutionary force, and envisioned a Metropolitan dictatorship of the proletariat leading newly-freed peoples to gradually establish socialism in their own societies. 

This perspective legitimised a prioritisation of campaigning on domestic rather than imperial questions, based on the revolutionary potential of metropolitan workers over colonial subjects. While avoiding explicit linkages of assumed racial qualities to revolutionary potential, its historicist underpinnings make clear that, although ties should be sought with colonial nationalist movements, organising British workers should take priority due to their greater proximity to achieving socialism.

The CPGB was certainly critical of empire in its fledgling years. However, the focus of many of their pieces on the British role in India was on the violence of the colonial state and its detrimental effect on both British and Indian subjects, with little proffered on the possibility of Indian independence or the means through which it could be attained. In November 1921, Prince Edward would visit India and Nepal during the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement, for a visit that would include the inspection of native troops and a tiger hunt. These hunts had long been emphasised by British colonial elites as a demonstration both of their benevolence towards their Indian subjects and of the superiority of British masculinity.

In an article for *The Communist*, ‘Moby Dick’ lampooned the Prince for this stage-managed spectacle, and in particular his decision to carry on this voyage several lucky black cats. Every page number in the issue was even adorned with a black cat smiling vacuously, an honorific title such as ‘OBE’ emblazoned on their collar. The author praised the tenacity and potential strength of the Indian protestors, comparing them to tigers. However, little strategic analysis was offered on how the unified movement could overthrow the institutions of colonial power, or how British workers could support their actions.

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22 John Langland, ‘Our Imperial Responsibilities’, *Communist Review*, 1:2 (June, 1921), pp.4-8
24 *The Communist*, November 19th, 1921, p.3
This vague approach was not universal in all articles on the topic. One entitled ‘The Truth About India’ which, although anonymous, bears the hallmarks of Saklatvala’s writing, offered a fuller account of the development of the Non-Cooperation Movement and the splits within the Indian nationalist movement. It complimented Chaman Lal as the “peripatetic and energetic” leader responsible for the emergence of an organised labour movement, and even limited critique to Gandhi to the nonviolence of his philosophy. It encouraged the nationalist movement to consistently engage in labour organisation, and inferred that such a development could lead to victory over the British. It encouraged British audiences to offer support to the Indian nationalists, but not to assume leadership over them, identifying the racial exclusion which had triggered the rise of the movement.25 While both this and the aforementioned article on the Prince’s visit condemned imperialism, this anonymous article clearly was designed to alter British and Indian activists’ perspectives, whereas the ‘Moby Dick’ piece employed the spectacle of Indian protest for propaganda value.

This perspective stood in stark contrast to the friction between non-Communist British labour figures and Indian nationalists throughout the early 1920s. The Government of India Act 1919 had created a series of democratic reforms within the imperial apparatus, providing the basis for limited election into a number of administrative and governing bodies. However, these reforms were also accompanied by the passage of the Rowlatt Act of 1919. This act provided the basis for juryless trials, detention without charge, and crackdowns on the press and civil society. That same year saw the Amritsar Massacre, where over 1,000 unarmed pilgrims were massacred in the Punjab in the midst of a local protest movement. The coalescence of these factors led to the rise of the Non-Cooperation Movement and a boycott of the political institutions created that year. As Labour edged closer to winning power in the wake of World War One, leading members sought to professionalise its image in the hope of winning over former Liberals, and urged the Indian movement to do the same. It was reasoned that if they were ever to be granted independence, it would be because of the

25 The Communist, January 7th, 1922
demonstration of their ability to govern soberly and professionally, as the British movement had previously done.  

_Saklatvala’s Early Political Trajectory_

Saklatvala was by no means a typical member of the Communist Party. Coming from a wealthy background through his familial connection to the Tata Group, and part of the Parsi community, a minority ethno-religious grouping in India which had flourished under British rule, he seems an unlikely candidate to become a leading figure of the radical wing of the labour movement.  

While his daughter Sehri ascribes his sympathies with the poor to both his youthful religiosity and his sympathetic relationship with his father who was marginalised from the family’s fortunes, other biographers have laid greater emphasis on his first-hand interactions with the impoverished in the slums of Mumbai (then Bombay), where he spent time as a volunteer inoculator during the plague epidemic which struck the city from 1896.  

During this period he worked alongside Professor Haffkine, a Jewish microbiologist and radical who had left Russia in the wake of the repressive policies enacted by Alexander III. Tellingly, at his first meeting with Haffkine, due to be conducted at the European Club, he was barred entry due to his race. He had to be let in through an underground entrance around the back of the building. RP Dutt, recalling a discussion with Saklatvala, explained that the latter had come to Marxist politics in stages, initially hoping that religiosity would give Indians the moral courage to end poverty, then hoping that scientific progress could alleviate suffering, before turning to an examination of political structures which brought him to an anti-imperialist stance.

Before joining the CPGB Saklatvala was no stranger to either the British or Indian labour movements. Having moved to England in 1905 as the departmental manager of the Manchester branch of the Tata firm, he quickly joined the Liberal Party, although soon became disillusioned with prevailing gradualist perspectives on Indian independence. In 1907 he joined the SDF and in 1909 the ILP. Though occasionally

27 Saklatvala, _Fifth Commandment_, pp.8-11
28 Wadsworth, _Comrade Sak_, pp.17-31
29 Panchanan Saha, _Shapurji_, pp.vi-vii
speaking at meetings of the former, it was in the latter that he spent more time organising, joining the Left-Wing Group which agitated for affiliation to the Comintern after its 1919 foundation. During this period he made his first efforts to draw the attention of the British labour movement to the cause of Indian working-conditions and the limitations that imperial control placed on their improvement. In March 1911 at a meeting of representatives of both British trade unions and Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha, a newly-established Mumbai-based union for mill-workers, Saklatvala was elected to a committee to establish a labour organisation to support Indian workers’ struggles.  

He subsequently wrote a series of letters making proposals for the establishment and funding of such a group to leaders of the Labour Representation Committee and the Trades Union Congress, but his appeals for help elucidated only disappointing and disillusioning responses. Despite his lack of progress, the attempts still garnered attention, eliciting ridicule and scorn in the *Indian Textile Journal*, an English-language magazine published by Indian mill-owners.

Throughout World War One he continued to agitate in favour of independence, and alongside fellow ILP member Arthur Field, established several organisations to propagate anti-colonial politics, including the WWLI, the East-West Circle, and the *Cercle d’Etudes Ethnographique*. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the British left during the war created a testing atmosphere for anti-racists, as pro-war socialists called for imperial loyalism and attacked their opponents with anti-Semitic innuendos, whilst anti-war activists drew on racialised fears of non-white soldiers, foreign labour, and racial degeneration to gain support. This would not do for Saklatvala. In 1918 during a public meeting of the East-West Circle, he declared that he opposed any vision of socialism which excluded Africa or Asia from its remit. At a meeting the previous year he argued against the idea that ethnological divisions merited differential political treatments, instead asserting that the only racial division was that between labouring and non-labouring peoples, effectively subverting the etymology of race to assert the centrality of class to his worldview.

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30 Visram, *Asians*, pp.305-6
31 Saklatvala, *Fifth Commandment*, p.57
33 NA, KV2/611, 7, ‘Extract Relating to Saklatvala’, September 27th, 1918
34 NA, KV2/611, 233394, ‘Extract Relating to Saklatvala’, November 18th, 1917
socialist movement would leave an imprint on Saklatvala. In a private letter to Field he described the British Labour world as completely “rotten”, filled with self-serving careerists “on the make” with no commitment to ideals of liberation.\(^{35}\)

In the immediate post-war period, Saklatvala’s oratory ability and proximity to the Non-Cooperation Movement would earn him a reputation as one of the socialist movement’s most impressive speakers. Most weekends he would travel across the country to speak at ILP branches, local trades councils, League of Nations Union chapters, and socialist societies. He was a tireless agitator who spoke frequently on conditions in India, but was also regularly asked to contribute on discussions of the Russian Revolution.\(^{36}\) His agitation against British rule in India and outspoken support for the Bolsheviks would quickly see him labelled as a dangerous influence by security services. He was to face near-constant monitoring by both the Special Branch and MI5, with his correspondence opened, his speeches observed, his movements followed by officers, and his home searched on several occasions. After the latter organisation conducted a search of his home in October 1920, Sir Basil Thompson, then Director of Intelligence at the Home Office, wrote to the Director of MI5, Vernon Kell, requesting greater coordination of their efforts to monitor Saklatvala. He feared that a recent search of his home had been premature and hindered the legal case against the Indian-born revolutionary. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, made personal inquiries into the possibility of arresting Saklatvala after the raid, however this did not materialise due to the lack of any evidence of criminal conspiracy.\(^{37}\)

It was during this time that Saklatvala began making connections with prominent figures in the Battersea labour milieu. Arthur Field had introduced him to Duncan Carmichael, secretary of the London Trades Council and a councillor in the ward. They invited him to deliver meetings to support their unemployment campaign in October 1920, and he soon established a strong reputation in the area, known for its militancy, anti-imperialism, and anti-racism. It had been a stronghold of the pro-Boer movement,

\(^{35}\) NA, KV2/613, 205, ‘Letter to A.G. Field’, February 4\(^{15}\), 1921


\(^{37}\) NA, KV2/612, 122-149. These documents contain details of the raid, as well as records of the pamphlets and letters seized from his house, and the disputes over which agency should take the lead in keeping checks on him.
and the local population had elected Britain’s second black mayor in 1913, John Archer, a professional photographer of both Irish and Barbadian heritage who was involved in both trade unionism and the pan-African movement.

By the time Saklatvala had joined the CPGB in 1921, he had developed his own extensive network of connections throughout and beyond Britain to the subcontinent itself. His prominence, familial income, and connections in India and Britain to both labour movements and Indian nationalist currents, afforded him an independent powerbase that few members of the nascent CPGB could claim. Indeed, one of his fears before joining the party was that his views would be “crowded out” by Moscow.\(^3^8\) He had shared a house and developed a close friendship with Chaman Lal, an Oxford-educated Indian barrister who would be instrumental to the establishment of the All-India Trade Unions Congress and eventually become a close associate of Motilal Nehru and his family. Saklatvala had direct connections to several prominent figures of the burgeoning Indian labour movement which did not require mediation through the Comintern’s structures or individuals.\(^3^9\) Through the WWLI he had fostered connections with both labour activists and members of the ILP and BSP, and with Indian labour activists based in both Britain and India. Chaman Lal was a particularly strong ally to have. His involvement with the North Western Railway strikes of 1920 provoked anxieties within both the British and Indian Governments, and increased the interest of the Security Services in Saklatvala’s correspondence.\(^4^0\) His key role in AITUC helped to create an organisational connection to the WWLI through Saklatvala for years to come.

Saklatvala was also in contact with the British-trained barrister Mukandi Lal, even acting as a conduit for the transference of funds to Lal’s wife while the pair were temporarily separated.\(^4^1\) Mukandi Lal would become an active INC legislator, serving as deputy leader of the Uttar Pradesh Legislature Party between 1926 and 1929, and defending Chandra Singh Garwhali, who broke command by refusing to order his unit of the Garhwal Rifles to fire on protestors in the North West Frontier Province in

\(^{38}\) NA, KV2/613, ‘Letter to Saklatvala from Edgar Whitehead’, July 26\(^{th}\), 1920
\(^{39}\) Saklatvala, *Fifth Commandment*, p.57.
\(^{40}\) NA, KV2/611, ‘Letter to Captain Stephen’, May 22\(^{nd}\), 1920
\(^{41}\) NA, KV2/611, ‘Letter to Mrs Lal from Mukandi Lal’, October 28\(^{th}\), 1919
1930. He would become another of Saklatvala’s sources of information, particularly on the developments within the Non-Cooperation Movement.

In 1921, his Battersea connections and work in the area bore fruit, as he was successfully chosen as North Battersea’s Labour parliamentary candidate for the 1922 election. This was no foregone conclusion, as he had strong competition from Charlotte Despard. Some members of the Battersea Labour Party had also argued against his selection due to his racial background. Saklatvala won the election, becoming the third Indian to ever sit in the Houses of Parliament. Though by now a member of the CPGB, his victory was by no means owed to the party. He had been backed by the local Labour Party and Trades Council, and by leading figures in the local labour movement, including Archer. His leaflets carried an endorsement from Despard, calling on the local Irish community to back him. When he was selected as the parliamentary candidate in 1921 there wasn’t even a Communist Party branch in the area. He was able to source funds for his campaign not only from the local movement but also supporters in India, with Chaman Lal acting as an intermediary and debt-collector on Saklatvala’s behalf. He would state this in the Commons several years later, after it was alleged that his campaigns had been subsidised by the Soviet Union through the CPGB;

During my first two elections, I had not received, nor required to receive, any assistance from the Communist Party of Great Britain, as my private resources, and the assistance purely of my countrymen, and Indian friends and relatives, was sufficient.

Saklatvala turned this into a running-joke. When Kensington’s Conservative MP, William Davison, questioned the Secretary of State as to whether it was possible to impound five tons of Russian gold bullion being transported on British ships as compensation for defaulted loans, Saklatvala sardonically questioned the minister as to whether this gold was not actually intended to run his next electoral campaign.

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43 NA, KV2/613, 203, ‘Letter to Mr Saklatvala from William Louis Coltman’ February 2nd, 1921
44 O’Malley, *Ireland, India*, p.26
45 Wadsworth, *Comrade Sak*, p.45
46 NA, KV2/614, 313, ‘Letter from Chaman Lal to Saklatvala’, February 17th, 1922
47 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 197, columns 1163-6 (June 30th, 1926)
48 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 216, columns 1718-9 (May 2nd, 1928)
His 1922 campaign’s reliance on non-Communist activists and funds, as well as the foregrounding of his Labour endorsement during his campaign was a concern for other party members. JT Walton Newbold, the only other CPGB member elected in the 1922 election, expressed doubts over the sincerity of Saklatvala’s commitment at the Comintern’s 1923 English Commission.\(^{49}\) RP Dutt and Harry Pollitt would go a step further, stating “It is our considered opinion that Saklatvala will never be of service to the Communist Party in the House of Commons, and we believe that the International should definitely instruct him to obey Party discipline and policy.” They further commented that his refusal to accept Communist discipline and would have rightfully led to his expulsion had the party been a larger force with a stronger leadership.\(^{50}\)

Saklatvala lost his seat in 1923 before regaining it the following year. He did this in spite of the anti-socialist climate created in the wake of the release of the Zinoviev Letter, the lack of a third candidate to split the vote locally, and his lack of endorsement from the national Labour Party.\(^{51}\) However, despite this impressive success for a Communist parliamentarian, he still received little acclaim for his feats within the movement. The representative of the PCF, Joanny Berlioz, accused Saklatvala of sowing “parliamentary illusions” amongst the masses, having observed the campaign first-hand.\(^{52}\) The ECCI would echo this critique in a letter to the CPGB leadership, lambasting Saklatvala’s failure to use their slogans during the campaign.\(^{53}\)

In both the CPGB and the Comintern, Saklatvala remained something of a mistrusted figure, a prominent Communist who utilised neither the economic or discursive resources of the movement, and yet conversely his propaganda value and connections made him hugely useful as a symbol. His international fame was such that even in the United States, African-American newspapers celebrated his parliamentary victories, expressing hope that his radical politics and racial background would ensure that he pressured Labour for a more humane policy towards non-white subjects in the British

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\(^{49}\) DCA, 495/38/1, 1-22 ‘English Conference’, June 19\(^{th}\) 1923  
\(^{50}\) DCA, 495/38/4, 172-182, ‘Statement from RP Dutt and (on behalf of) Harry Pollitt to the Presidium of the ECCI’, Undated  
\(^{51}\) Hogbin ran as a Constitutionalist candidate in 1924, having previously been a Liberal who had won the support of the local Conservatives in an anti-Saklatvala alliance. See The Times, 23\(^{rd}\) October, 1924, p.10  
\(^{52}\) DCA, 495/38/7, 85-94, ‘Report on the election campaign of the British Communist Party and criticism based on the theses of the French Party’, November 3\(^{rd}\), 1924  
\(^{53}\) DCA, 495/38/7, 225-234, ‘ECCI secretariat to the CPGB’, December 1924
Empire. At the 1925 American Negro Labor Congress, a portrait of Saklatvala hung from the halls of the wall alongside prominent black revolutionaries such as Toussaint L’Ouverture and Nat Turner.

Saklatvala’s observations of poverty across the empire, along with his direct experiences of racial exclusion and state harassment helped contribute to the anti-imperial and anti-racist focus of his campaigning. Against the particularistic advocacy for India seen amongst British socialists such as Hyndman, he would espouse a class-based universalist politics. He emphasised the unity of economic interests between British and Indian workers, whilst simultaneously highlighting the impediments imperialist political structures presented to colonised populations. His analysis of imperialism perhaps owed more to Hobson than Lenin, as he emphasised not the material benefits of empire to a British labour aristocracy but instead its role in undercutting wages and conditions within the metropolis.

Saklatvala was certainly a ‘Westerniser’, an individual who saw a more-or-less straightforward and singular pathway to modernity drawing on British labour history and social progress in the USSR. However, he simultaneously did not place the emphasis on imperial structures to induce Westernising processes, instead seeing greater hope in a coalition of British labour and the Indian population. He did not place hope in Indian familiarisation with the limited opportunities for self-governance premised within 1919 imperial reforms, as was common amongst Labour colleagues. Instead, he sought greater legal scope for political activity and labour rights, raised standards of living, and greater access to education to aid the Indian population to assert themselves against British hegemony and modernise of their own accord. His approach bore similarity to historic ILP strategies for social change within Britain, but reworked for the particularities of colonised societies. This was certainly a historicisation of political and social development, but one which optimistically looked to Indian agency as a means for ameliorating social ills.

54 ‘Colored Population Elated over Labor Victory’, The Savannah Tribune, November 30th, 1922
56 This theme was given particular expression in his correspondence with Gandhi. Saklatvala attempted to dissuade him from promoting boycotts of British exports and rejection of industrial development, instead advocating stimulating greater consumer demand and the social redistribution. See Shapurji Saklatvala, Is India Different?, (London, 1927) pp.10-11
In a forty-minute speech in the Commons in July 1925, Saklatvala would draw out this point. He condemned prevailing attitudes towards Indian reform within the parliamentary Labour Party, calling the gradualist and top-down approach unworthy of consideration by socialists.

You say, "Oh, no, let the Indians educate themselves," which for the last 150 years you have never permitted, and "Let them organise themselves," which for the last 50 years you have not been anxious to permit. "Let them sit at their roll-top desks with their monthly circulars, and then in the next 250 years they will have the same rights as the workers of Lancashire." I put it to you that that is a very cowardly game. I do not impeach your intention, but I do impeach your habit of mind.57

He further claimed that every democratic right and improvement in labour conditions on the subcontinent had been the result not of British benevolence, but of Indian resistance. He recalled revolutionary and anti-monarchical movements in Persia, Turkey, and China, to rebuke notions of an innate Oriental deference to tyrants. He rejected the racialised narratives of social difference underlying imperial projects, and, as shall be seen later, countered the differentiation between various racial groupings that occurred within the CPGB.

The Growth of the Workers’ Welfare League of India

The WWLI was formed in 1917, with Saklatvala and Field playing a key role in its inception and early history.58 Based in the premises of the AOS, in its early days it bore similarities to Field’s previous organisations, drawing on a number of individuals from a wide range of political backgrounds with a focus on lobbying state institutions to influence policy. Early adherents included Charles Ryder, a master of hounds who funded its initial activities, Benjamin Guy Horniman, editor of the Bombay Chronicle, John Arnall, and Saklatvala, then part of the ILP.59 A number of its early supporters and

57 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 186, columns 631-751 (July 9th, 1925)
58 Saklatvala, Fifth Commandment, p.95. It should be noted that both the founding-date of the organisation and its founders remain contested, with Field asserting that he had set up the group in 1917 and Saklatvala claiming it had been formed in 1916 by a joint group of British and Indian trade unionists. See Shapurji Saklatvala, ‘India in the Labour World’, Labour Monthly, 1:5 (November, 1921), pp.440-451
59 Aubry, ‘FIELD’, p.144
contacts were drawn in through Field’s connections to the Theosophical Movement as well as the links Saklatvala had forged with Indian labour activists and nationalists.

The WWLI did not immediately put forward a goal of total independence for India, instead focusing on legislation that would improve the political and labour rights of Indian subjects and extensive programs of mass education and more comprehensive self-governance, whilst simultaneously acting as a forum for coordination between British and Indian trade unionists. In 1918 the body lobbied the Indian Office for the inclusion of British trade unionists within the committees preparing the terms of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Bill.\(^\text{60}\) Despite being unsuccessful on this front, they still continued their attempts to influence legislation, with Saklatvala using his parliamentary position to support this through calling for state inquiries into labour conditions and political conditions in India.

Unlike Field’s previous groups, the WWLI directly orientated towards the labour movement, seeking affiliation from both British trade unions and those of the nascent Indian labour movement. This was not a straightforward task due to the aforementioned rift that was developing between the British labour movement and the forces of Indian Nationalism. Compounding this was wariness amongst British trade unionists regarding the leaders of the Indian trade union movement, many of whom were Indian nationalists with professional backgrounds. It was feared that the members would be mobilised for causes of political reform rather than social reform.\(^\text{61}\)

Nevertheless, the organisation showed some notable early successes. Martin Pugh of the Iron and Steel Workers’ Confederation affiliated his union, and leading figures of the Leicester Trades’ Council and the Boot and Shoe Union were early adherents. By 1921, the WWLI was regularly engaging with the TUC, with its Congress at Cardiff that year seeing delegates receive copies of the WWLI manifesto as well as statements on the aims and objectives of the group.\(^\text{62}\)

Throughout the early 1920s the League was able to bring news to labour audiences of the growing Indian industrial movement, primarily through Saklatvala’s connections to

\(^{60}\) Gupta, *Imperialism*, pp.43-44
\(^{62}\) NA, KV2/614, 275-277, ‘From J Potter Wilson to Saklatvala’, 24\(^{\text{th}}\) September 1921
a number of figures involved in the INC and AITUC. As well as his old friend Chaman Lal, he was in direct contact with Narayan Malhar Joshi, the moderate leader of AITUC. By 1923 the WWLI had become the official representative of the AITUC in Britain, and even claimed that it had helped inspired its formation. Saklatvala was able to garner information from his Indian contacts, whilst raising funds through individual and branch subscriptions to the League to support the burgeoning Indian unions.

Saklatvala called out to British workers who were employed in the same industries to those developing in India, arguing that it was in their interests to join the league and encourage their unions to organise internationally. In 1923, as industrial militancy was rising in Dundee’s jute factories, he delivered large meetings in the city on behalf of the WWLI, arguing that one of the best means to fight employers’ attempts to speed-up work and reduce pay was to ensure that Indian workers were on the same conditions and so could not be used to undercut them. In his words, they needed “trade unionism without race or colour consideration”. He also took this message to the leadership of the movement, advocating at the 1924 Scottish TUC conference that representatives should be sent to India to forge connections with the growing jute-workers unions.\(^{63}\)

In 1921 there was coordination between the TUC, WWLI, and Annie Besant’s Home Rule Movement. B.P. Wadia, an organiser of the Madras Labour Union and close associate of Ms Besant through the Theosophy Movement, had been successfully prosecuted for picketing by Buckingham Cotton Mills, in a case which threatened the viability of Indian trade unions’ industrial action.\(^{64}\) While Wadia and Besant negotiated with the company in Madras, seeking union recognition and for the case to be dropped, the WWLI would furnish Charles William Bowerman of the TUC parliamentary committee with statistics and information on conditions of trade relations between India and Britain, as well as labour conditions in the former country. Bowerman held a meeting with Lord Montagu, Secretary of State for India, accompanied by J Potter-Wilson, the WWLI British Section’s secretary, and another ILPer who would join the CPGB later that year, while Arthur Pugh lobbied Lord Reading, Viceroy of India. The mill owners dropped the claims against Wadia, but Saklatvala was soured by the

\(^{63}\) Anthony Cox, *Empire, Industry and Class: The Imperial Nexus of Jute, 1840-1940* (London, 2013), pp.139-141

\(^{64}\) Gupta, *Imperialism*, p.48
experience; he maintained that the Theosophists had only legitimised a company-union rather than an independent trade union, and complained to Potter-Wilson that Indian trade unionism was being exploited for their own agenda. He advised distancing the WWLI from their efforts, in order to maintain more effective contact with the “official” trade union movement of India.65

During the early years of the Communist movement, those considered experts within particular fields were given significant leeway to organise party work on these issues. Saklatvala and Field’s campaigning during the early 1920s stand within this tradition, with the Political Bureau paying little attention to either the WWLI or the East-West Circle. In 1924, Saklatvala appealed to other members of the CPGB Political Bureau to support the work of the WWLI, tabling a proposal to direct individual party members to sign up to the organisation en masse. While the leadership positively responded to the suggestion, only two members, Charles Ashleigh and R Bishop were directed to join the campaign.66 The Communist press made scant reference to the WWLI, with Workers’ Weekly rarely publicising its activities, meetings, or propaganda, in stark contrast with other Communist-led organisations such as the International Class War Prisoners Association and the Workers’ International Relief.67

As previously mentioned, Saklatvala’s anti-colonial focus was not limited to the cause of the Indian subcontinent, and the WWLI attempted to support efforts by other colonial populations to organise trade unions, although ultimately with far less success. Before the end of the decade they would make an attempt to coordinate with Nigerian trade unions and held a meeting with a representative in 1929.68 By contrast, little attempt was made by the Communist-controlled National Minority Movement to forge contacts with workers from this particular colony, much to the chagrin of figures within the Comintern.69 Only two years earlier, Emile Burns, a prominent figure directing the CPGB’s international work through the LAI, had specifically argued against the desirability of using party resources to make contact with populations in the West

65 NA, KV2/613, Letters and memoranda between 210 and 215
66 LHA, CP/CENT/PC/01/13, Political Bureau Minutes, June 18th 1924.
67 In 1924 the only mention reference made to the organisation was the fraternal greetings the league sent to the CPGB’s annual conference, in spite of numerous articles on India appearing, particularly around the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Workers Weekly, May 23rd 1924, p.3
68 LHA CP/ORG/MISC/06/10, ‘Draft Annual Report for WWLI 1930 Conference’
69 Weiss, Framing, pp.205-209
African colonies, claiming that there was no economic basis for either a significant labour or nationalist movement in this part of the world. There were a number of means through which contact with Sub-Saharan African communities based in Britain could have been established in the 1920s. However CPGB members did not take advantage of these opportunities, with visiting black Communists from abroad often being the first to make connections with the students and sailors who made up these communities. This was in spite of the anti-colonial and labour developments occurring in West Africa throughout the inter-war period. The National Congress of British West Africa had been founded in 1920, drawing together colonial nationalists from both French and British territories with the aim of ending imperial rule in the region. In 1929, women from a range of ethnic groups combined to launch the Women’s War in South Eastern Nigeria, aimed at preventing the further entrenchment of colonial authority in the region and seeking the transformation of the region to a post-colonial society.

This is a potential instance of British racial hierarchies being reworked through the linguistic and ideological categories of Marxism-Leninism, with socio-historical categories of “backwardness” replacing biological theories of innate differences. It is perhaps telling that in the polemical exchange between Marika Sherwood and John Callaghan over whether the young CPGB should be categorised as a racist organisation, that the former argued in the positive based largely on experiences of African workers and sailors with the party, whilst the latter in the main pointed to the party’s activism with regards to India to disprove the allegations. Ultimately both these attitudes could coexist within the same organisation, reflecting wider societal perceptions of Indians’ and Africans’ relative racial capacities.

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70 Burns would debate this subject across the pages of The Communist Review with Hugo Rathbone throughout the course of 1927. See Vol 2, nos 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9
73 Ian Law, Red Racisms, p.18. There is evidence that CPGB members had some knowledge of theories of biological difference. The Communist Bookshop had advertised texts on human evolution in the mid-1920s such as Savage Survivals and The ABC of Evolution which Africans were labelled as “child races” and described as being evolutionarily under-developed. See The Workers Weekly, April 9th, 1925.
74 Sherwood, ‘The Comintern’; Callaghan, ‘Colonies, Racism’
Saklatvala did not agree with this differentiation. Alongside the aforementioned attempts to support Nigerian trade unionists, he consistently argued against the separate organising of sailors of different colonial national origins within Britain. Instead, he emphasised their shared experiences as outsiders within the metropole, and their potential strategic value in contributing to international anti-imperialist organisation.\footnote{DCA 495/4/289, 17-21, ‘Letter from Shapurji Saklatvala to ECCI Political Committee’, undated.}

Interestingly, Saklatvala and the WWLI paid comparatively little attention to the conditions of non-white workers based in Britain, demonstrating his sense of a causational relationship between imperialism and racist ideology. In 1923 he had received instructions from the Profintern to focus on building an Indian Seamen’s Union, with the intent of organising Indian port workers and sailors based in Britain into a Communist-affiliated union.\footnote{Marika Sherwood, ‘Lascar Struggles against discrimination in Britain 1923-1945: the work of N.J. Upadhyaya and Surat Alley’, The Mariner’s Mirror, 90:4 (2004), p.439} However, he continued to put more effort into building his own organisation rather than that sanctioned from above. In 1926, police spies monitoring a strike of Indian seamen in Liverpool noted that Saklatvala’s emissaries were attempting to get strike leaders to join the WWLI rather than the ISU, and that it was through League publications that funds were being raised for the strikers.\footnote{BLIPI, L/P & J/12/143/7890, ‘Indians in London’, May 18th, 1926} Other reports also noted that Saklatvala’s interest in colonial sailors was at least partially as couriers for Communist and League propaganda between the India and Britain.\footnote{BLIPI, L/P & J/12/143/2181, ‘Indians in London’, May 25th, 1923}

Whilst supportive of strikes of non-white Seamen (notably attending and addressing pickets in South Shields and Liverpool), Saklatvala’s parliamentary speeches made scant reference to the conditions of Indian workers within the UK. He made no parliamentary intervention on one of the key pieces of legislation aimed at non-white workers in the UK, the 1925 Aliens (Coloured Seaman) Order. Indeed, when reading through his parliamentary contributions as transcribed in \textit{Hansard}, it is striking that most of Saklatvala’s references to Indian labouring conditions pertain to differences between Britain and India, rather than alluding to Indian workers’ conditions within Britain.
This is not to say that Saklatvala was unsympathetic to non-white communities within Britain. In 1923 he spoke out in parliament against the actions of the Liverpool-based Elder Dempster Company, which had reduced the wages of its Asiatic and African employees, and pressed the Minister of Labour for an equalisation of wages regardless of racial background. He further criticised the refusal of the local Labour Exchanges and board of guardians to grant relief to several hundred colonial sailors recently laid off by the company.

Saklatvala took particular interest in the conditions of those Indian students based in Edinburgh, whom he was attempting to cultivate as potential supporters of an alliance between Indian labour and nationalism who could take up the cause upon finishing their degrees. Through his interactions with these students he learned of a colour bar operating in a number of restaurants and dancehalls throughout the city. He raised the issue in parliament, calling attention to the fact that both Asiatic and African residents had been excluded from these venues. His question drew public support, and a fortnight later he was to raise the issue again, providing supplementary examples that these colour bars had been in operation in a number of Scottish cities including Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee based on letters he had received. Mirroring his presentation of colonial sweated conditions as a potential threat to the salaries and conditions of British workers, he asserted that the continuation of these policies could potentially lead to recriminations and exclusions targeted against white British citizens in overseas colonies. The complaints, coupled with those of the Edinburgh Indian Association, Manchester Guardian, and the General Assembly of the United Free Church, were effective, leading to the unanimous decision of the Edinburgh Town Council to condemn the colour bar. The Lord Provost met with local dance hall managers and Indian student representatives, resulting in a loosening of restrictions on racial intermixing.

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79 Interestingly, the company’s non-white sailors were in the main West African rather than Asian, again demonstrating his support for organising all forces of colonial labour. See, Tabili, British Justice, pp.68-75
80 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 163, columns 2334-5 (May 9th, 1923)
81 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Series 5, Vol. 206, columns 1370-2 (May 19th, 1927)
This instance of objection to racial exclusion within the heart of Britain demonstrates several facets of Saklatvala’s ideology, perception of identity, and political strategy. It is indicative of his rhetorical flexibility, as his parliamentary intervention employed rhetoric likely to find sympathy amongst fellow MPs, stating the potential risks posed to participants within colonial governing structures. His reference to the discrimination against both Asian and African subjects, despite the exclusion being geared predominantly to the former community, indicates the value he attached to political blackness and his personal refusal to prioritise the concerns of one colonial nationality over another. Finally, the fact that this was one of the few occasions where he spoke out on the treatment of non-white subjects in Britain, combined with his aspiration to develop transnational activist networks based on this particular group of Indian students, demonstrates the primacy of imperialism in his understanding of how systems of racial discrimination were formed and maintained. To Saklatvala, these students were potentially key figures in the development of Indian Communism, so by championing their issues whilst they were resident in Britain he could attain the requisite political confidence to ensure a continued relationship once they had returned to India. His anti-racist campaigning had an anti-imperial intent.

**The Decline of Saklatvala’s Independence**

Saklatvala’s reign as the effective director of the CPGB’s international work with regards to India was to face challenges, and eventually led to the formation of a network which could operate without his contacts. His dislodging from this position came due to the decline of his own independent power and the utility of his connections, as well as challenges from within the CPGB and Comintern, and shifts in power in the wake of both the formation of the LAI and the Comintern’s Sixth Congress. Vizram’s account portrays Saklatvala’s increasingly hostile approach to the Labour Party as a by-product of the Comintern’s turn to Third Period tactics and rhetoric, and maintains that it was this increasingly belligerent attitude towards the mainstream currents of the labour movement which lost him his seat in 1929. In her biography, Sehri Saklatvala takes a similar view, and ties his electoral loss of 1929 to the increasingly cautious attitude of working-class voters towards Communists in the wake...
of the failed 1926 General Strike and amidst rising unemployment.\(^{84}\) However, Saklatvala had been an independently-driven activist and speaker for a number of years, even earning the ire of both Comintern officials and prominent CPGB activists, suggesting that his shifting ideas were not merely an internalisation of the official line of the party. Instead this shift can be located within two factors; namely Saklatvala’s growing frustration with the labour movement’s approach to India, alongside the diminishing capabilities of his own personal networks, necessitating a rapprochement with the structures of the Comintern.

It is pertinent to first mention the rift which developed between Saklatvala and the Labour Party. By 1924 the Party’s National Executive Committee had withdrawn their support for his candidacy, but the local Labour and Trades Council supported his effort to regain his seat and refused to put up a rival candidate. However, between 1924 and 1929 this relationship soured at the local level as well. In the wake of his electoral success, Saklatvala would face opposition on the streets of his constituency. The Anti-Socialist Union, a group with close links to the British Fascists and the emergent far-right, held weekly meetings and demonstrations in Battersea in an attempt to oust the MP.\(^{85}\) These meetings bore success, with over 2000 constituents signing a petition condemning Saklatvala’s “disloyal and revolutionary” utterances and calling for a public meeting to discuss the issue. The Labour-dominated local council allowed the petitioners Battersea Town Hall for a public meeting, though little developed in the wake of this action, with Saklatvala keeping his seat.\(^{86}\) However, local party members became increasingly vocal in supporting the national party and renouncing the Communist MP, with one even writing an open letter in the *South West Star*, denouncing him as a “foreign revolutionary” and calling upon him to drop his red flag and “pick up the Union Jack” instead.\(^{87}\)

It was perhaps this experience of local Labour enmity, as well as the refusal to allow him to take the Labour whip, which helped spur him on to a more confrontational approach towards the national party. By 1925 he had effectively prefigured the politics

\(^{84}\) Saklatvala, *Fifth Commandment*, pp.482-5
\(^{85}\) *The Times*, 15\(^{th}\) September, 1925. For links between the two organisations see Thomas Lineham, *British Fascism, 1918-39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester, 2000), pp.45-46
\(^{86}\) *The Times*, October 1\(^{st}\), 1925
\(^{87}\) Quoted in *Workers Weekly*, October 3\(^{rd}\), 1924.
of the Third Period by calling on the CPGB Political Bureau to “adopt merciless measures to fight the Labour Party.” It is also significant that while the CPGB in the main comprised of male workers engaged in particular industries such as mining and transport, Saklatvala’s economic background had been one of relative privilege. Worley makes the argument that the bulk of the CPGB had been prepared to accept the direction of the Third Period due to their experiences of disappointment in and marginalisation from the Trade Union movement, particularly after the General Strike and the 1925 decision to exclude to Communists from the Labour Party. It is perhaps unsurprising that Saklatvala’s earlier hostility towards Labour related to the experiences of political marginalisation rooted in his racial background. He witnessed the First MacDonald Ministry make little progress towards Indian independence, and even prosecute a number of Indian Communists in Kanpur. If Saklatvala had stood with one foot in both the Communist Party and the Labour Party previously, by 1925 his loyalties had been firmly decided.

From the records of the British Commission and the Anglo-American Secretariat, it appears that until 1924-5 the ECCI’s attempts to direct the CPGB to increase their anti-colonial work were limited to the occasional missive. At meetings of the British Commission, an occasional body called to examine the CPGB’s activities, the issue of anti-colonial work was repeatedly overlooked until 1924. At a meeting of the commission in 1923, the issue of colonialism was pushed off the agenda at the suggestion of Radek, head of the Eastern Secretariat, and Zinoviev, president of the Comintern, with both of them stating that the issue was “remote” and not “an immediate priority”. This was not a period where the parochialism and national focus of the British party came under extensive critique from Comintern authorities. Neither the CPGB’S collective leadership, nor the Commissions appointed to oversee the organisation, treated anti-colonialism as an integral part of routine party activities, leaving Saklatvala a free hand to determine his own activism with regards to the subcontinent.

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88 Squires, Saklatvala, p.53
89 Worley, Class Against Class, pp.54-9
90 DCA, 495/38/5, 53a-d, ‘British Commission- Report on Organisation’, December 10th, 1924. Although the document calls for the CPGB to engage in anti-colonial activism “more energetically”, little specific advice is offered.
91 DCA, 495/38/1, 1-22, ‘English Conference’, June 19th, 1923
This non-interventionist approach is not wholly unsurprising. In the aftermath of the October Revolution and the Comintern’s formation, a spirit of revolutionary optimism imbued many of its adherents, both those affiliated to those parties within its orbit, and those outside of the international structures. Within the fledgling Soviet state, Bonnett identifies a strong strain of ethno-politics which saw notions of progress, civilisation, and modernity linked not only to political structures and ideology, but also to ethnically-rooted predilections for particular groups to embody the ideal Communist proletarian.92 While not an elevation of ‘white’ ethnic identity, there was a conscious identification with Westernising ‘enlightenment’ against Asiatic ‘backwardness’, and a belief that European workers (even situated in non-European geographic contexts) had a greater predilection for socialist revolution. Indeed, Lenin’s initial model for the Bolsheviks had been an attempted re-creation of SPD models within the context of Russian society.93 As the prospects for revolutionary advance across Europe grew dimmer throughout the 1920s, increasingly the West was discarded as both a developmental partial-model or as a potential site for immediate revolutionary breakthrough. Instead, ‘the East’, a vague and fluid category which could stand as a geographic embodiment of the dichotomy Lenin identified between oppressor and oppressed nations within the imperialist epoch, began to draw greater attention from both the Soviet state and the Comintern, with the latter focusing its efforts through the Eastern Secretariat.94

This spatial re-focusing occurred alongside the period of Bolshevisation, from approximately 1924 to 1928. This period was marked by a concentration of power within the structures of the Comintern based around the Russian delegation within the ECCI. Under the leadership of Zinoviev, the ECCI increasingly sought to centralise the movement at a transnational level, and ultimately dampen the pluralism which had marked the first five years of the Comintern’s existence. However, it would be wrong

92 Alastair Bonnett, The idea of the West: Culture, Politics, and History (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.40-56
93 Lars T. Lih, Lenin Reloaded: What is to be Done? in Context (Leiden, 2005), pp.111-158
94 For example, see Masha Kirasirova, ‘The “East” as a Category of Bolshevik and Comintern Ideology: The Arab Section of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East’, Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, 18:1 (Winter, 2017), pp.7-34
to assert this as a purely top-down phenomenon, or to over-represent its unifying impact on the various national parties of the Comintern.\textsuperscript{95}

1924 marked a significant shift in the approach of the Comintern to the CPGB, with colonial issues becoming more prominent in instructions and pronouncements from the leadership in the wake of the Comintern’s Fifth Congress.\textsuperscript{96} The year also saw the establishment of an organisation designed to oversee anti-imperial campaigning amongst Western European parties, the International Colonial Bureau based in Paris under the direction of MN Roy. Roy would attempt to take charge of the CPGB’s relationships with Indian Communists and marginalise Saklatvala through two separate means in the course of the year, both through the ICB, and his proposal for an Indian Defence Committee.

Roy and Saklatvala had a fractious relationship, owing both to political and personal differences. Whilst Saklatvala had advocated a policy of a building united fronts between the Indian labour and nationalist movements and cohering a broad left within which Communists could operate, Roy’s approach relied on a narrower orientation towards a purely working-class audience and prioritised the immediate building of an Indian Communist Party. The tensions appeared early in their relationship. In 1920 Roy wrote to Saklatvala, proposing that the two of them work together to establish a revolutionary party in India. This letter had been seized during a search of Saklatvala’s house, causing him concern, and prompted him to write to the police distancing himself from Roy.\textsuperscript{97} The Secret Service delighted in Saklatvala’s obvious nervousness on this issue, and it is possible that this fear of being connected to Roy is what kept Saklatvala from cooperating with him, effectively compounding the ideological disconnect between the two.\textsuperscript{98} In 1923, Evelyn Roy née Trent visited Saklatvala at his office in an incident he would complain about to Comintern authorities. He claimed that she had no letter of introduction, had asked numerous questions about

\textsuperscript{95} Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, \textit{The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin} (Basingstoke, 1996), pp.42-67
\textsuperscript{96} Weiss, \textit{Framing}, pp.56-64
\textsuperscript{97} NA, KV2/612, ‘Letter from MN Roy to Saklatvala’, August 20\textsuperscript{th} 1920
\textsuperscript{98} NA, KV2/612, ‘Letter from Saklatvala FAO Basil Thomson’, October 26\textsuperscript{th} 1920. These fears were not unfounded, Roy had been a revolutionary nationalist prior to 1917, and the nature of the tactics he and his comrades had employed had ultimately led to many of them being executed and imprisoned. See Suchetana Chattopadhyay, ‘Being ‘Naren Bhattacharji’’, in Vijay Prashad (ed), \textit{Communist Histories, Volume 1} (New Delhi, 2016), pp.29-71
potentially illegal connections with Persian groups, and left a letter openly declaring her revolutionary affiliations in the hands of a server. 99 This tactlessness, he impugned, was potentially a sign of her work as an undercover police officer, echoing allegations made by the Berlin-based group of Indian revolutionaries two years prior. 100

By 1924, Roy was ready to use his reputation as a prominent anti-imperialist strategist within the Comintern to take greater control of the CPGB’s work. At a meeting of the Indo-Irish Commission, a body set up to examine potential coordination between the two nationalist movements through activists in Britain, MN Roy and Bob Stewart were mandated to develop a series of recommendations on CPGB colonial policy in light of the formation of the First MacDonald Ministry. While calling for a more vocal public campaign in support of Indian independence, and a proper compilation of the facts on Indian labour conditions and political rights to support this advocacy, a number of the proposals related directly to Roy’s relationship with the party. Complaining that Saklatvala had not been “the right man for the job” of pro-Indian advocacy, Roy and Stewart suggested that the CPGB should agitate for Roy to be allowed a visa to enter Britain and, if successful, that he should be co-opted onto the party’s Central Committee, take charge of anti-colonial work, and become one of the CPGB’s future parliamentary candidates. Were his entry to be barred, it was suggested that a public campaign be launched for his right to enter the country. 101

This plan was disrupted in April 1924 when four leading figures of Indian Communism were put on trial in Kanpur, accused of a conspiracy to foment violent revolution and deprive the crown of its Indian holdings. MN Roy was to be tried as part of the conspiracy in absentia. The CPGB made efforts to publicise the case, forming an Indian Defence Committee and publishing a leaflet by Roy on the case which was circulated amongst other labour organisations. 102 The CPGB’s Political Bureau initially hoped that coordination between Clemens Dutt, MN Roy, and the Eastern Secretariat would successfully organise support and publicity for the accused. However, it was ultimately Saklatvala who was to prove crucial in providing links with the activists in India. He arranged a meeting between members of the Central Committee and Joseph Baptista,

99 DCA, 495/27/5, 6-8, ‘Letter from Saklatvala to the Comintern presidium’, March 1923
100 Samaren Roy, MN Roy: A Political Biography (Hyderabad, 1997), p.60
101 DCA, 495/42/1a, 1-13, ‘Indo-Irish Commission Minutes’, March 20th, 1924
102 LHA, CP/CENT/PC/01/02, ‘CPGB Political Bureau Minutes’, July 3rd, 1924
one of the founders of AITUC, to coordinate defence activities. During this meeting, Baptista recommended focussing defence efforts on the appeal rather than the initial trial, whilst Saklatvala informed his comrades that he had arranged legal representation for the defendants’ appeal to the High Court.\textsuperscript{103} While Saklatvala focussed his attentions on those who had been detained, the Indian Defence Committee was instructed to focus on the case of Roy, who had been found guilty in absentia, effectively barring any entry to Britain.\textsuperscript{104} Ultimately they were not granted the appeal, and in the wake of the trial Roy was highly critical both of the calibre of the Communists who had been arrested, and the legal counsel Saklatvala had arranged.\textsuperscript{105} Roy used the failed defence in an attempt to position himself as a crucial point of contact for the coordination between CPGB and his preferred activists within the subcontinent.

Later in the year Roy advocated reviving the Indian Defence Committee. However this time he suggested it should function as an agitational body comprised of Communists and prominent figures from the labour movement to advocate for political rights for Indian workers.\textsuperscript{106} Had this occurred, the WWLI would have been effectively undermined by the new committee, which would have the same political remit and character, but with greater opportunities for funding and resources from the International. However the British party did not take up the offer and the idea went no further than Roy’s initial proposal. While figures within the British party had attempted to conduct work through the Comintern’s channels, Saklatvala’s personal connections with influential figures within the Indian labour and nationalist movements proved to be more efficient and effective than working through either the ICB or the Eastern Secretariat.

However, soon Roy would establish a healthier working relationship with the British party, largely through Clemens Dutt.\textsuperscript{107} As mentioned earlier, Rajani Palme Dutt was no fan of Saklatvala, and neither was his brother Clemens.\textsuperscript{108} In the wake of the Fifth

\textsuperscript{103} LHA, CP/CENT/PC/01/01- ‘CPGB Political Bureau Minutes’, May 28\textsuperscript{th}, June 6\textsuperscript{th}, June 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1924
\textsuperscript{104} LHA, CP/CENT/PC/01/02- ‘CPGB Political Bureau Minutes’, August 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1924
\textsuperscript{105} Marshall Windmiller and Gene Overstreet, \textit{Communism in India} (Berkeley, 1959), pp.67-8
\textsuperscript{106} DCA, 495/18/325a, 8-11, ‘International Colonial Bureau Minutes’, October 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1924
\textsuperscript{107} Windmiller and Overstreet, \textit{Communism}, pp.76-77
\textsuperscript{108} Phillip Spratt, \textit{Blowing up India: Reminiscences and reflections of a former Comintern emissary} (Calcutta, 1955), p.36
Congress, held from June to July 1924, Roy was mandated to establish the ICB, and set about reworking the earlier plans he had drawn up with Stewart to effectively direct the CPGB’s work. The CPGB was instructed to establish a Colonial Commission which would work under the direction of the ICB. In October Scottish Communist leader Willie Gallacher set up this body, with Saklatvala, Clemens Dutt, and Evelyn Roy, amongst others, as members. For the next several months its meetings were poorly-attended, much to Gallacher’s frustration, and Roy and the CPGB’s Politbureau would send angry missives about one another back and forth.\(^\text{109}\) This was not purely the result of rivalry between CPGB members and Roy. Clemens Dutt, attending his first meeting of the ICB in 1924, complained of the disinterest in the colonial question amongst CPGB members, and that members of the party’s own Colonial Committee were frequently asked to engage in other areas of work, leaving few cadres free to take up the organising tasks.\(^\text{110}\) Whilst the CPGB eventually got the body running, there was a breakdown in communication and trust with the ICB. Although they followed some of the recommendations of Roy’s group, such as establishing an Egyptian, Indian, and Irish bureau and sending CPGB members to those countries, it functioned without direct oversight, although Clemens Dutt would provide reports of the party’s work, particularly amongst Indian sailors and students. While Roy was unable to direct the group, his proposals had fed into the work of the party, and articles of his appeared with greater frequency in the CPGB press than in previous years.

In 1925, both Saklatvala and Roy’s prestige would be knocked. Percy Glading had travelled to India to work within the Indian labour movement on behalf of the CPGB, and met with figures from Saklatvala’s network such as Joshi and Chaman Lal. He reported to the Colonial Conference in Amsterdam that these men were completely unsuitable for the task of leading the Communist movement in India.\(^\text{111}\) While Glading was critical of Saklatvala’s contacts, his report was not supportive of Roy’s rival networks, emphasising that he had found little in the way of organised Communism in India. To Roy’s displeasure, the CPGB was given authority over the work in India.

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\(^\text{110}\) DCA, 495/18/325a, 21-3, ‘Letter from Roy to Voitinsky’, October 29\(^\text{th}\), 1924

through the Indian Bureau established by Clemens Dutt, and the role of his ICB reduced. This was compounded by Roy’s arrest and expulsion from Paris later in the year, effectively ending the ICB’s work.

If the efficacy of Saklatvala’s network came under doubt in 1925, over the next three years it would lose all credibility. Since 1921, WWLI members, affiliates, and supporters had taken motions to the annual TUC conference calling on the body to send a delegation to India. In 1927 their supporters, including AJ Cook of the Miners Federation and PJ Johnson of the Furnishing Trades’ Association, successfully lobbied the Edinburgh TUC Conference to send an official delegation, against the protests of the TUC General Council. This came after two years of increasingly close links between the British and Indian official labour movements. In 1926 the Indian Trade Union Act had been passed, which legalised trade unions in the country, provided that they were registered with the central government. The leaders of the AITUC were growing further anxious about their connections with Communists and the impact that this would have on their legal status, while the British labour movement saw an opportunity to forge international connections. Graham Pole had attended the 1926 AITUC conference as a representative the Labour Party, and had warned against working with Saklatvala and Communist-dominated organisations. The Edinburgh motion of 1927 was therefore something of a pyrrhic victory for the WWLI, as Albert Arthur Purcell and Joseph Hallsworth toured the country and established direct contact with Saklatvala’s associates, precipitating a formal agreement for mutual cooperation between the British TUC and AITUC.

With this direct connection fostered the WWLI, which had previously been the AITUC representative in Britain, became less relevant and at the 1928 AITUC conference in Jharia, the WWLI–AITUC relationship was formally severed. Devastatingly for Saklatvala, both Joshi and Chaman Lal backed this move. This nullification of relations was grim

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113 DCA, 495/42/1, 1-16, ‘Minutes of the Indian Commission’, February 27th, 1926

114 AA Purcell and J Hallsworth, Report on Labour Conditions in India (London, 1928). The authors of the report recommended the development of international connections between British and Indian trade union bodies with the aim of coordinated action to prevent the disparity of wages between workers in both countries.
news for his organisation, but in an attempt to maintain cordial relations the WWLI positively spun the TUC-AITUC relationship. They publicly welcomed the TUC’s decision to act as a direct fundraising body for Indian labour disputes, taking over the role the WWLI had formerly played.¹¹⁵

This cordiality stood in stark contrast to other responses within the Communist movement; in December 1927 at the AITUC conference in Kanpur, Lal and Joshi had voted against affiliation with both the Communist-backed Pan-Pacific Conference and the LAI, earning them the ire of the CPGB in the *Sunday Worker*.¹¹⁶ Lal’s vote had been seen as particularly treacherous by the Comintern’s Indian Commission, as he had previously promised to back these motions.¹¹⁷

As both Saklatvala and Roy’s control over the work was slipping, activism on the subcontinent was being increasingly directed by an ad-hoc coalition of the Dutts alongside elements of both the Comintern and the Profintern, its sister trade-union organisation. The ICB had proposed sending further activists from Britain to India following Glading’s visit, but had stopped functioning before this plan could be followed through. However, over the course of the next three years, George Allison, Phillip Spratt, and Ben Bradley would all be directed to travel to the country to assist AITUC, the Communist Party of India, and its legal cover organisation, the Workers and Peasants Party.¹¹⁸ Saklatvala would also tour the country in 1927, delivering speeches, meeting high-ranking Indian nationalists to encourage greater collaboration with labour organisations, and encouraging the formation of a revolutionary movement on a similar basis to that which had developed in China.

Roy had assumed that these members were receiving instructions directly from the CPGB leadership in the wake of the Amsterdam Conference. During a meeting of the Anglo-American Secretariat, called to discuss the arrest of Spratt in October 1927, Roy criticised Spratt’s refusal to publicly declare his Communist affiliation after arrest. He claimed that he had backtracked on the aims of his overseas mission and committed a “social-democratic deviation” which was reflective of the politics of the CPGB. He went on to denounce the other British members who had gone to India, stating that they

¹¹⁵ LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/12, 15-18, ‘WWLI Annual Bulletin for 1927’, April 1st, 1928
¹¹⁶ *Sunday Worker*, December 30th, 1927
¹¹⁷ DCA, 495/42/3, 6-26, ‘Indian Commission Minutes’, 14th September, 1928
¹¹⁸ DCA, 495/18/325a, 8-11, ‘Letter from International Colonial Bureau to CPGB’, October 22nd, 1924
confined themselves to purely legalistic work under CPGB instructions. He also
condemned Saklatvala’s visit, claiming that he had publicly denounced the
Communists’ allies in the WPP. Petrovsky, the former Comintern representative to
Britain, defended Spratt, stating that his mission had been overseen through a
coordination between himself as the Comintern representative, Clemens Dutt, and
Robin Page Arnot of the Labour Research Department. Glading’s visit, he stated, had
been directed by Profintern, with the CPGB Central Committee not having even been
made aware of the purpose of the trip. Its only involvement had been to obtain a false
passport. In an ironic twist, Roy’s attempt to discredit the British party’s
international activism revealed the extent to which the activities of CPGB members in
the colonial world were directed by other sections of the international Communist
movement, rather than by the British party itself. It also made clear that Saklatvala was
no longer directing policy, increasingly following orders, when in previous years he had
operated relatively autonomously.

This was compounded by the shifting of power which took place between 1927 and
1928 in the Comintern, predicated on two significant events. The first of these was the
establishment of the LAI in 1927, and the second was the fallout from the Comintern’s
Sixth World Congress in 1928.

The LAI was formally inaugurated in February 1927 at a conference in Brussels. The
brainchild of German Communist Willi Münzenberg, this transnational organisation
drew together the Communist movement with a wide array of colonial nationalists,
reformers, and anti-racist organisations. Saklatvala initially remained aloof from the
process, though he would come to be prominent within the LAI. He was on its
Executive Committee throughout its existence, helped to establish the British branch
of the organisation, and was a prominent speaker on its behalf. However, he appears
to have had little input into the network-building which was key to the LAI’s initial
prominence. In Britain, both he and the ILP member Reginald Bridgeman had been
authorised to establish a committee in the prelude to the Brussels Congress, its remit
being to create a list of invitees, both individuals and representatives of British-based
organisations. However, as Saklatvala would be out of the country in early 1927 due to

119 DCA, 495/72/27, 82-96, ‘Anglo-American Secretariat Minutes’, October 18th, 1927
his India tour, this responsibility largely fell to Bridgeman. It was also Bridgeman who ultimately maintained the connection between the British national leadership and the International Secretariat in Berlin.

Connections with Indian activists did not come through Saklatvala’s networks in the subcontinent, but were instead primarily organised by and through Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. ‘Chatto’, through the previously-mentioned Berlin group of Indian Revolutionaries, had connections with Jawaharlal Nehru, the prominent leader of the left faction of the INC. His involvement in the Brussels Congress and ability to secure the INC’s affiliation to the LAI would help win legitimacy for the organisation which many saw as a Communist front (as indeed, it would become over the next two years). New individual contacts and Communist-sympathising groups in India were put in touch with Chatto and Münzenberg at the Berlin centre, rather than dealing with Saklatvala, and soon it was the German-Indian connection rather than the British-Indian connection which was shaping Comintern approaches to the subcontinent.

Petersson’s thorough study of the organisation finds little evidence of Saklatvala determining policy or shaping proceedings, and he ultimately comes across a somewhat peripheral figure on the leadership.

This shift in control over the Indian party would be confirmed by the Comintern’s Sixth World Congress, held in July 1928, and ultimately had a marked impact on Saklatvala’s ability to continue his relatively-autonomous campaigning. This was due to two significant pronouncements on theory and strategy. The first of these was the ushering in of the ‘New Line’ which stated that post-war capitalism was in its ‘Third Period’. This analysis called for an end to Communist Parties seeking alliances with Social-Democratic organisations, which were characterised as ‘social fascists’. Although more amenable to flexible application than the pronouncements may seem to indicate, this led to a narrower set of choices in terms of potential allies and necessitated a particularly harsh invective when describing other forces in labour and nationalist movements. The

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121 Petersson, *Willi Münzenberg*, p.234
123 He did, however, play a role in the black trade unionist work which eventually launched the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. See, Weiss, *Framing*, pp.168-170
second of these pronouncements came in the debate over the so-called ‘decolonisation thesis’.

In January 1928, Ghulam Ambia Khan Luhani delivered his report on India to the Anglo-American Secretariat, the stenogram of which was sent on to the ECCI presidium. He strongly criticised the CPGB, and Saklatvala in particular, for sending congratulatory messages to the INC on their boycott of the Simon Commission. Luhani accused the CPGB of “not acting as a Communist party” and “giving support to the Indian bourgeoisie” for this broad approach to united work.124

In the run-up to the Sixth Congress, this debate was to spill out into the public domain, and nominally took place over the ‘decolonisation thesis’ which was associated with the Dutts, Roy and Saklatvala. Despite their differing strategic orientations, they all shared a perspective centred on a growing industrial sector in India. The thesis maintained that the British policy of industrialising India had led to the development of an indigenous bourgeoisie. This class, although leaning towards counter-revolutionary politics and cooperation with Imperial state structures, ultimately was attempting to push away from British economic domination in their own attempts to expand their industrial base. It was alleged by the Russian faction that the natural outcome of such a perspective was a belief in the possibility of a capitalist-led peaceful decolonisation of India.

The Russian viewpoint was articulated by Eugene Varga, a Hungarian economist with close ties to Stalin’s ascendant faction, in the pages of the Comintern newspaper Inprecorr. Varga argued that Roy, Dutt, and others had overstated the industrialisation which had occurred within India, and that the Indian bourgeois class merely sought a better position within the Imperial framework rather than a break from it.125 The crux of the debate was over the tactics that Indian Communists should employ with regards to the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party, and the INC. The ECCI produced a document in the wake of a special Indian Commission which confirmed its adherence to the Russian position. The task of Indian Communists, Varga claimed, was to follow the line that would be rolled out globally, building an independent Communist Party and red unions, rather than engaging with alliances with reformists or trying to influence the

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bourgeois-led Congress from within. As Callaghan has noted, the irony in this was that
the new approach was predicated on an economic perspective which disavowed the
emergence of a large Indian proletariat, but the tactics themselves presupposed the
existence of such a class.  

Saklatvala was present at the Sixth Congress in 1928, but his role appears to have been
remarkably muted given both the centrality of the Indian question to the debate
between the British and Russian parties, and his own role in developing a model of
transnational activism which helped inform the perspectives of the CPGB. He gave a
speech agreeing with the Russian chiding of Communist Parties in the imperialist
countries, but ultimately would not vote against a model of activism he had developed,
or an economic perspective his position within the Tata firm had shown him to be
untrue. All but one member of the British delegation voted the same way as him,
against the Russian and ECCI-endorsed proposals to narrow the basis of activism in
India, end the work in the WPP, and become more antagonistic to the left-wing of the
INC.  

This put the CPGB at odds with the Comintern, and ensured that control over
Indian affairs would no longer remain solely in the hands of their party. Saklatvala
would no longer be free to play his own hand.

**Saklatvala the Loyalist**

These shifts in the international movement presented a proscription and an
opportunity for Saklatvala. On the one hand, his existing transnational networks had
been rendered ineffective through a widening political gulf with his contacts, greater
collaboration between the labour movements of the British Empire, and the
disapproval of the Comintern. On the other hand, a growing emphasis on the
significance of anti-imperialism was discernible, and the LAI presented new
opportunities to engage the CPGB in consistent work in this field.

However, this did not mean that LAI activism immediately flourished in Britain, and the
organisation effectively only existed as a committee until 1928. In the meanwhile it

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126 Callaghan, *Dutt*, pp.121-5
127 Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, pp.102-121
128 Jones, *The League*, pp.18-20
still functioned at the international level, meaning instructions from the executive had to be negotiated and interpreted in the context of no significant activist basis within Britain. In August 1927, the LAI executive decided that a mission of prominent adherents should be sent to visit the Dutch East Indies and British India, with the aim of publicising their first-hand experiences upon returning to Europe. One of these figures was the MP for Pontypridd Thomas Mardy Jones, a key figure within the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain. Whilst the rest of the delegation never made the journey, owing to both a Comintern unwillingness to fund the voyage and the difficulties involved with arranging visas for Communist participants, Mardy Jones set off in October 1927, his trip unendorsed by the LAI executive. They had attempted to message him with news that the delegation had been cancelled, but he never received the communication.\(^{129}\) Saklatvala was obliged to fund the trip, taking out a loan through a broker on behalf of a deposed Indian prince, making an assurance to repay his debt once the LAI had reimbursed him. However the funds were not forthcoming, despite repeated requests to both the LAI and Comintern executives. It is not known whether he was ever paid back, but as late as May 1934, just a year and a half before his death, he was still chasing this debt with the Comintern, imploring that he was in dire straits.\(^{130}\)

Having funded the trip himself, and with no LAI as such to promote, Saklatvala utilised the propaganda value of Jones’ trip for the WWLI, organising a speaking tour for him upon his return to Britain and ensuring the miners’ leader addressed their 1928 conference.\(^{131}\) Both his and Saklatvala’s visits to India in 1927 were even described in a League bulletin as having been on behalf of the WWLI, in spite of their initiation by the LAI and the Comintern respectively.\(^{132}\) This pattern of coordination between the WWLI and LAI would continue, with Bridgeman, secretary of the British LAI section, encouraged to ensure collaboration between the two by the international executive.\(^{133}\) However, it would also present a political challenge in the context of the Third Period, given that the WWLI had always been premised on a broad labour united front.

\(^{129}\) Petersson, \textit{Willi Münzenberg}, pp.353-363
\(^{130}\) DCA, 495/4/292, 10-13, ‘Letter from Saklatvala to the ECCI Political Commission’, May 10\(^{th}\), 1934
\(^{131}\) LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/12, ‘WWLI 10\(^{th}\) Annual Report’, April 1\(^{st}\), 1928
\(^{132}\) LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/10, ‘WWLI Circular’, June 18\(^{th}\), 1928
\(^{133}\) Petersson, \textit{Willi Münzenberg}, p.434
The shift of power away from Saklatvala and the CPGB towards the Comintern’s Indian Commission, Dutt’s Indian Bureau, and the LAI leadership did not initially spell the end of the WWLI, in fact 1928 proved to be one of the organisation’s most active years. However, records from the Indian Commission indicate that increasingly WWLI activities were pre-approved and pre-arranged through the Comintern.

Throughout 1928, the WWLI was asked to take on an ever-greater series of challenges with increasingly diminished financial and organisational resources. Collaboration with Joshi and Chaman Lal was discouraged as potentially confusing to the Indian workers whom the Comintern was trying to inculcate against reformist leadership.134 As the leadership of AITUC started distancing themselves from their Communist allies through 1927 and 1928, concurrently Indian Communists attempted to reassert themselves in the organisation, both through capturing AITUC leadership and fomenting labour disputes through those unions they already controlled. This culminated in the Bombay textile mills strikes, which had begun in the summer of 1927 as a response to efficiency measures being introduced in Sassoon’s mills, and would explode in April 1928 after a police shooting of picketers at the Swan Mill. This dispute lasted over 18 months, involved nearly 200,000 workers, shut down 80 mills, and even saw sympathy strikes in other industries.135

The Indian Commission determined that WWLI should launch a publicity and fundraising campaign, and warned against the reduction of their instructions to a mere paper appeal in the Sunday Worker. They further exhorted Spratt and Bradley, both in India at the time, against collaboration with union leaders who were “sham leftwingers like Chaman Lal” or “lawyers and intellectuals who come from the outside to ‘save the poor workers’”, instead encouraging them to support grassroots strike committees. Simultaneously they poured scorn on Saklatvala for writing an article in Calcutta Forward which had called on the entire nationalist movement to support the strike wave and engage in labour organising to advance the cause of independence. They argued this was a “poisonous” policy which would hinder the development of “class-conscious independent activities” and ensure the continued tethering of Indian

134 DCA, 495/42/3 116-127, ‘Report of Spencer for the Indian Commission’, April 23rd, 1928; Spratt, Blowing Up, pp.43-51
workers to “old-fashioned religious and social organisation”. The message was clear; Saklatvala’s involvement with the strikes would be determined by how well he could apply the Commission’s perspectives.

The recommendations were taken up by the CPGB and the WWLI. From April, an appeal for funds on behalf of the WWLI would appear on the front page of *Workers’ Life* nearly every week in a level of publicity the organisation had not received from the Communist press at any prior point. Articles vividly described police repression of the demonstrations and pickets, and painted a portrait of heroic resistance by grassroots union members in the face of an indifferent Indian trade union leadership, and a barely-interested British leadership. It was emphasised that “real trade union solidarity” to support the Indian strikes against the “Baby Starvers” should be expressed through sending funds and support through the WWLI. In contrast with the reserved treatments of the AITUC leadership in WWLI publications that year, Saklatvala condemned his former allies in harsh terms, both for breaking relations with the WWLI, and for not calling a general strike, in the June 15th edition of *Workers’ Life*. By the end of the year, the WWLI had raised some £440. The organisation was also able to win support throughout the dispute, increasing individual membership by 30 members to 124, and raising its number of British trade union branch affiliations by 10, bringing the total to 90.

However this boost would not last long. 1929 would see the arrest and imprisonment of 33 leading trade unionists, communists, and left-nationalists in India, including three CPGB members. The Meerut Conspiracy Case would become an international cause célèbre, and potentially provided an opportunity for the WWLI to raise its public profile through an even larger fundraising campaign than that of the strike wave. A defence campaign was quickly launched and a support fund for those imprisoned and their dependents was established, with the appeal bringing in over £100 within a few months. A large number of the donations came from local branches of the CPGB and meetings organised through the LAI, although several large individual donations from

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136 DCA, 495/42/3, 163-5, ‘Letter to Albert’, April 20th, 1928
137 See *Workers Life*, April 20th, April 27th, May 11th, May 18th, May 25th, June 1st, June 15th, June 22nd, June 29th, July 6th, July 13th, July 27th, August 24th, 1928
138 LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/10, ‘WWLI Annual Bulletin for 1928’, February 16th, 1929
139 LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/12, ‘Balance sheet March-July 1929’
trade union leaders such as Alex Gossip and prominent anti-imperialists such as Despard suggest an appeal that went beyond the Communist periphery. Building a broad public-facing campaign would not be a straightforward task; a Daily Herald article in April that year warned its readership against the WWLI and Saklatvala, prompting a stinging rebuke from the WWLI. They alleged that this condemnation undermined support for the imprisoned, and represented an attempt by the TUC to monopolise communications with the Indian labour movement and undermine Saklatvala’s electoral chances.\textsuperscript{140}

By 1930, having raised over £600, the responsibility for the campaign was passed on to the LAI.\textsuperscript{141} In spite of the growing enmity between Saklatvala and the Labour Party, his connections with members of the ILP provided the basis to extend the campaign further into the labour movement than previously possible. He co-authored a pamphlet on the trial with Fenner Brockway of the ILP, and sought prominent ILP members to speak at campaign rallies.\textsuperscript{142} Attempts were made through the LAI to gain support from Labour’s membership at the 1931 annual conference, with motions proposed condemning the MacDonald government for not granting amnesty to the prisoners, who were not sentenced until January 1933. Leaflets were distributed to conference delegates on the details of the case, alongside general information about Indian poverty, featuring quotes from Ghandi calling for British solidarity.\textsuperscript{143}

Between 1930 and 1932 the WWLI kept campaigning over the cause of Meerut and in support of Indian labour disputes. The moderates of the AITUC had split off to form their own rival union federation, and the Meerut Trial itself had actually increased support for Communism within India, creating the opportunity for the WWLI to re-establish itself as AITUC’s representative in Britain.\textsuperscript{144} The WWLI even gained more organisational affiliations from the growing number of Indian trade unions being established within the AITUC’s orbit. However, the divergence between the Labour and Communist movements had reduced the ability of the group to operate. In their

\textsuperscript{140} LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/O6/10, ‘WWLI Circular’, April 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 1929
\textsuperscript{141} League Against Imperialism, Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism, British Section, February 1931 (London, 1931), pp.14-15
\textsuperscript{142} Pennybacker, Scottsboro, pp.173-5
\textsuperscript{143} HHC, UDBN 19/1 ‘The Meerut Conspiracy Case: Open Letter to the delegates to the 31\textsuperscript{st} Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Scarborough October 5\textsuperscript{th} to 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1931’, Sept 29\textsuperscript{th} 1931
\textsuperscript{144} Ali Raza, ‘Separating the Wheat from the Chaff: Meerut and the Creation of “Official” Communism in India’, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 33:3 (2013), p.316
1930 annual report, laced heavily with the invectives of the Third Period, most of their recorded activities had been oriented towards organisations already within the Communist periphery. There were no interventions at the TUC conference or articles in the labour press, instead appearances at the Minority Movement congress, speakers sent to LAI meetings, and positive write-ups in the *Daily Worker* were proudly reported.\(^{145}\)

Its organisational effectiveness within Britain was increasingly curtailed. Unable to retain the broad coalition which had been its basis and increasingly subservient to favoured front organisations such as the LAI, its activist base and members’ enthusiasm were severely drained. By 1932, the organisation was down to only 68 dues-paying members.\(^ {146}\) Its increasing subsumption within the Communist movement would ultimately wrench apart the network that had been at its core. Arthur Field, having left the CPGB in 1927, had become increasingly wary of their influence within the organisation that he had co-founded. It is possible that he also feared the potential proscription of the WWLI within the official labour movement in the same manner that had befallen both the LAI and the Minority Movement, threatening the organisation’s ability to seek trade union branch affiliations.\(^ {147}\)

Field called a meeting of the British Section of the WWLI, which passed a resolution condemning a decision of the Indian Section to send representatives to the LAI’S conference, claiming that they had no right to unilaterally send representatives on the organisation’s behalf. Such an action, he argued, negated the principles of the WWLI as a non-political organisation and threatened to undermine the organisation’s ability to operate within the TUC, and a circular was forwarded to the membership stating as such. In response, Saklatvala called a meeting of the Indian Section which passed a motion condemning Field’s actions, reaffirming the WWLI’s commitment to the LAI, and further alleging that Field’s attempts to overturn the decisions of the Indian Section was part of a ploy to undermine the group’s support for Indian independence. In keeping with the rhetoric of the Third Period, Saklatvala denounced Field’s

\(^{145}\) LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/10, ‘Draft annual report’

\(^{146}\) LHA, CP/ORG/MISC/06/09, ‘Inventory’, March 16\(^{th}\), 1932

\(^{147}\) It was in the wake of the 1926 General Strike that the TUC banned individual branches from affiliating to the Minority Movement, and CPGB membership had been considered incompatible with Labour Party member since 1925, a policy which seen nearly 30 local Labour Party branches being disaffiliated between 1928 and 1929.
document as an “anti-worker and anti-Indian manifesto.” Field attempted to counter this view at the next monthly meeting, claiming that the Indian Section had no right to take action on behalf of the group without the approval of the British Section, and further that the WWLI had drifted from its original purposes. Saklatvala moved a motion censuring Field and striking his comments and the resolutions of the previous British Section meetings from the record, winning by a narrow majority. Field resigned both as treasurer and from the organisation in the wake of the meeting. He alleged that the WWLI had become undemocratic, that its meetings were erratic and stuffed with Saklatvala’s sympathisers to produce artificial majorities, that it was overspending without paying its debts, and that its analysis of Indian affairs had become conspiratorial and divorced from reality. Saklatvala had effectively ousted one of his oldest allies from the group he had helped establish to save the reputation of the LAI in front of a dwindling audience. He had come far from the ecumenism of his earlier years.

**Conclusion**

For a number of years, Saklatvala had been an ill-disciplined member of the CPGB. Prone to ecumenism and reluctant to engage with the international structures of the movement, he had effectively carved out a space for his own transnational model of organising. He drew on his personal contacts with leading figures of the Indian labour and nationalist movements, and utilised the transnational agency of Indian students, professionals, and sailors to forge links between colony and metropole. Motivated by his own experiences of exclusion, he would not wait for the Eurocentric internationalism of the CPGB to focus on the non-white world, and stood against the racialised differentiations of colonial populations of both his comrades and Imperial ideologues. Whilst never ignoring the divergent relationships of colonised subjects and metropolitan workers with imperial political structures, his model of advocacy emphasised the intersections of their interests and articulated the international connections of localised political struggles. His strategy demonstrates the centrality he

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afforded to the agency of colonised populations, prioritising supporting their political and labour organisations, even those elements with which he disagreed, and using every opportunity to advocate policies which afforded them greater political space and resources.

While his ability to run the WWLI in this manner narrowed due to changing relationships between the British and Indian labour movements, the growing gulf between the CPGB with the Labour Party, and the increased centralisation and shift in control over Indian affairs within the Comintern, this did not stop his engagement with anti-colonial labour activism. Instead he took advantage of the emphasis on anti-imperialism in the Third Period, utilising both his own organisation and the LAI to continuously try to influence the perspective of the British labour movement in favour of Indian independence. Whether he was utilising his parliamentary position, or the WWLI, or the LAI, however, he consistently demonstrated a commitment to actively supporting the struggles of all colonised populations in a manner which marked him apart from many of his comrades.
Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the differences and similarities in the approaches of SDF/BSP and CPGB members towards anti-racist and anti-imperialist causes in the early twentieth century. It focussed on the extent to which transnational intellectual influences and political actors shaped both ideological and organisational developments within the groups studied. It further set out to determine the extent to which this was a process driven by racialised outsiders, and how their discursive and analytical focus differed from white British activists. It also queried the extent to which internationalism, both as an immediate organisational logic as well as an ideological drive or projected vision of the future, fed into these fluctuating patterns of opposition to empire and racial hierarchies. Further to this, it examined why these projects to centre anti-racism and anti-imperialism within the left faced opposition, and the factors which contributed to this resistance.

Through drawing on unstudied personal correspondence, newly-available records of the Communist movement, and a close reading of more-familiar published documents to examine the relationship between different racialised populations and the organisations studied, I have suggested some answers to these questions. The nature of anti-racist argumentation and the basis of anti-imperialism were certainly transformed in the period studied, however this was not an immediate result of the foundation of the CPGB. The pre-war SDF often relied on positive racialisations to advocate for independence and criticised imperialism as a cosmopolitan denigration of different racially-delineated national communities. By the end of the period studied, imperialism and racist ideology were presented as forces which segmented an international and universal working-class. Members of the CPGB were more proactive in anti-colonial causes than many of their pre-war colleagues. They raised funds for labour disputes and legal defences of colonial activists, attempted to influence policy both through direct lobbying and gaining labour support for independence movements, and even supported diplomatic efforts of newly-independent states for recognition. However this was by no means universal, and patterns of aversion towards proactive anti-colonial agitation on behalf of, and amongst, African populations remained.
Transnational exchanges were key to the anti-imperialism of both organisations. Within the SDF, the influence of nationalists who moved between metropolitan and colonial settings such as Statham, Singh, and Naoroji clearly influenced analyses of imperialism and representations of colonial populations. Émigré Jewish socialists were able to draw on their knowledge of Jewish involvement in labour causes and working conditions across Europe to argue for their identification as a largely proletarian people. Arthur Field was heavily influenced by the ideas of Dusé Mohamed Ali and the worldview of the CUP through his connections to the WMM. Saklatvala’s personal contacts with Indian students, lawyers and sailors formed the basis for the coordination he developed between British and Indian labour movements.

Racialised outsiders were central to the change in approaches witnessed within this time period. Jewish socialists took the lead in arguing against anti-Semitism, even if they publicly downplayed their connections to the Jewish community, and it was Jewish-dominated London branches of the SDF which would consistently oppose the Hyndmanites’ Anglo-exceptionalism. Field’s connections to the Irish community in Battersea and own sense of marginalisation would lead not only to his proactive approach towards Muslim communities but his ability to draw Irish activists into other anti-colonial causes. Saklatvala was one of the few activists who made attempts to connect with labour and nationalist bodies amongst African populations. He would reflect disparagingly on their treatment by the British left towards the end of his life, when the era of popular front politics saw anti-colonialism deprioritised in favour of forging European anti-fascist alliances.¹

Both structural and ideological internationalisms played a formative role in this development of ideas and praxis. Despite the weakness of the Second International in cohering and coordinating its constituent national parties, the centrality of internationalist identification with a universal working-class was a significant component of the arguments of those who opposed anti-Semitism, and its re-emphasis and re-elaboration in the wake of the BSP split drew many of its adherents towards the Comintern. Similarly the Comintern’s expansion of internationalist practice beyond the boundaries of Europe and its centring of anti-imperialism as a core tenet of this new internationalist spirit would attract into the CPGB a number of the

¹ LHA, CP/IND/MISC/22/03, Shapurji Saklatvala, ‘A Few Thoughts on Party Work’, June 22nd, 1934
racialised outsiders who were central to the transformation of its praxis. The initiatives that these individuals developed would gain promotion and resources in line with tendencies within International Communism. The East-West Circle acquired some party support due to both its potential to deflect the 1924 criticisms of the CPGB’s anti-colonial work, and to act as a domestic corollary of Roy’s International Colonial Bureau. Saklatvala’s WWLI gained party publicity and promotion due to the Indian Commission’s identification of the body as an appropriate vehicle through which to organise solidarity work for the 1928 strike wave in India. However, the international prioritisation of the LAI would also reduce its space to operate and create insurmountable divides within its leadership.

The barriers to the centring of a consistent anti-colonial politics within the organisations studied were theoretical, social, and personal. At the theoretical level, a unilineal model of historical progress which emphasised fixed stages of social development could be drawn upon to justify prioritising or ignoring advocacy on behalf of different populations and redirecting organisational resources towards domestic causes. The identities which actors within the colonial world mobilised around could provoke consternation amongst their metropolitan counterparts as neither explicitly racial nor religious identifications had the legitimising theoretical basis to justify Marxist engagement. The sources of information which metropolitan activists were privy to could inform their conceptions of the political and social characteristics of colonised populations, meaning that without access to a network of socialist correspondents, they had to rely on characterisations often produced by individuals who were part of colonial projects. The personal characteristics of activists and their rivalries could also help and hinder the development of these organisations. Field’s past political associations as well as his self-aggrandising verbosity certainly kept him from being able to win the confidence of his comrades. Saklatvala’s conflicts with Pollitt and Dutt, as well as his rivalry with MN Roy, kept him from gaining traction within the Comintern. However his personal ability to cohere and maintain relationships with individuals from varying political backgrounds as well as the oratory ability which had seen him rise to prominence ensured that he could continue to play an important role within international projects.
This thesis has complicated existing understandings of the relationship between race and anti-imperialism in British Social-Democracy. Racist attitudes and support for imperial governance were not inextricably intertwined. Hyndman and Quelch were able to draw on the essentialising characterisations of racial discourse to agitate against imperial control in India and South Africa, an imperialism they rooted firmly in Jewish international conspiracy. Bax’s anti-imperialism was partially based upon a desire for racial segregation. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that anti-Semitism within the SDF/BSP was not a direct legacy of Marx’s writings on the Jewish Question, but instead was drawn from the tropes of the anti-Disraelian milieu. Hyndman’s uses of explicit racial discourses were often deployed to justify his own position and strategic predilections as critiques of him became more vigorous or popular within the party. Following this idea, I have suggested that the behaviour of the pro-war membership preceding the 1916 split should be understood as an anti-Semitic campaign which specifically targeted Jewish members of the organisation who challenged the leadership’s authority. Similarly, I have demonstrated that struggles against anti-Semitic manifestations within the Marxist left did not necessarily entail an anti-genealogical critique of racial ideology. Likewise, I have shown that socialist-nationalists were by no means the only group who could draw on racially-exclusionary ideas. Although identification with the nation-state saw many socialists looking to racial discourses to ground their politics, the ideological centring of internationalism was no guarantee against exclusionary tendencies or reliance on racial characterisations.

I have further queried whether the difference between the SDF/BSP and the young CPGB’s attitudes towards empire are as distinct as have been portrayed. Certainly the symbolic significance of the Comintern’s anti-imperialist stance and the attraction this held for racialised outsiders who joined the party cannot be ignored. However, for several years anti-colonial campaigning largely took place outside of party structures, through individuals such as Saklatvala and Field drawing on their connections to different anti-colonial networks and developing their own initiatives. I have demonstrated that Arthur Field played an important role in cohering together individuals from different anti-colonial networks, even if he was to eventually become marginalised from them. Furthermore, I have shown that these connections
underpinned Saklatvala’s strength within the party and their value potentially prevented his opponents from either eclipsing or expelling him. Overall this paints a picture of the CPGB as gradually brought around to a more-consistent opposition to empire, influenced by transnational populations of racialised outsiders engaging with the party and partnering with the international institutions of the Comintern. Parallels between the successful campaign of Jewish socialists against anti-Semitism amongst the SDF/BSP ranks and Saklatvala’s attempts to draw more resources into anti-colonial activism demonstrate that a discursive framing of racial exclusion as a means of attacking a section of the international working-class was an effective technique in winning support from the Marxist left in Britain.

The results of this thesis are valuable for historians working in a number of fields. For historians of BME populations and migration within the UK, it has demonstrated a number of instances whereby migrant communities have shaped the political culture of the Marxist left and the broader labour movement. It also highlights the tensions and difficulties involved in re-elaborating and re-presenting lived identities to popularise particular political concerns in a context of racial marginalisation. For those studying the development of anti-colonial politics in the British context, it highlights the ways in which these ideas were shaped by the transnational flow of ideas and enabled through international collaboration. It further provides evidence of the intermingling of different anti-colonial networks and the cooperation between different racialised communities based in Britain. For historians of the Communist movement, it furnishes valuable details on important anti-colonial activists working within the CPGB and the international movement, demonstrating in greater detail their connections, rivalries, and tensions and providing avenues for further research based on the networks that they helped to develop.

Originally this thesis was going to contain a chapter focussing on the Communist-founded Negro Welfare Association. I wanted to determine whether its fortunes were interlinked with a growing anti-colonial focus on African societies, and the extent to which networks and bodies which had developed around opposition to colonialism in India were involved in this turn to the African diaspora. Other studies have focussed on the linkages between Indian and Irish activists in the British context, and the collaboration between Asian and African activists in promulgating a broader anti-
colonial culture within the Comintern. A study of the intermingling of these groups in the British context could prove valuable in determining the extent to which the “transcolonial recognition” referred to by Manjapra in his work on German Communism also manifested in the British context.

Further research could be focussed on the figures involved in the Battersea network and the WWLI. Little is known of KS Bhat, who became the WWLI president after 1928, represented the organisation at LAI conferences, and who wrote about the organisation for Labour Monthly. His connections to both Saklatvala’s networks and those backed by the Dutts may indicate that he helped to keep this rivalry contained or even bring a rapprochement between them in the wake of the Comintern’s Sixth Congress. Such a study could also go into greater detail on the activities of the Profintern-directed Indian Seamen’s Union which could allow for a comparative study of Communist attitudes towards metropolitan BME communities. This could enrich studies of Communist anti-racism which have often had to rely on case studies of anti-imperialism and anti-fascism. This organisation has received little scholarly attention, but it is clear that MN Roy sought to cooperate with Saklatvala on the project, and that it had Profintern resources available to it.

Furthermore, there is room to expand the research on Jewish BSP members and examine the approaches they took towards anti-colonialism and anti-racism within Communist Parties of the Anglosphere. Several of these activists for whom the struggle against the anti-Semitism of the SDF/BSP leadership would be a definitional political event found work within the institutions of the Comintern in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Both Rothstein and Fineberg spent periods on the Anglo-American Secretariat and took part in debates on the Communist Party of Australia’s sympathy for anti-migration policies, as well as the ramifications of the ‘Native Republic’ thesis for the Communist Party of South Africa. The campaign against anti-Semitism did not translate into a broader opposition to the racialised anti-migration narratives or racist tropes about colonial soldiers deployed by anti-war activists. Therefore such a study

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2 Kate O’Malley, Ireland, India; Makalani, Cause of Freedom, pp.71-102
3 Manjapra, ‘Communist Internationalism’
4 Sherwood, ‘Lascar Struggles’, p.439
5 This thesis emphasised that the struggle for socialism in South Africa would entail an anti-colonial struggle against the white bourgeoisie and British imperialism, effectively presenting black South Africans as an oppressed national grouping, rather than a section of a multiracial proletariat.
could illuminate whether these activists deliberately limited their arguments to mobilise support around this particular cause, or whether this was reflective of a delineation they made between anti-Semitism and racism towards other populations. There is a growing body of literature on the anti-racist and anti-colonial activism of the CPGB in the wake of the Second World War. This thesis and the potential avenues for further research signposted here could prove useful in providing a series of networks whose influence could be traced to this period. Furthermore the model put forward, that anti-colonialism and anti-racism were not universally applied but instead developed in line with popular perceptions of racial groups and the relative strength of racialised outsiders within party structures, furnishes a methodological approach that could inform such studies, by connecting intellectual and political histories of the post-war CPGB.

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