

George Padmore, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Metropolitan Perceptions of
Nazism/Fascism and Colonialism/Imperialism in the 1930s-40s.

by

Matthew Max Anthony Huijsmans
BA University of Victoria, 2017

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

The degree to which Nazi Germany and the other Axis powers can be understood within the framework of the European nineteenth century colonial/imperial projects has, in recent years, been a controversial topic in historiography. In this thesis, I coin the term “connections literature” to describe this emergent body of academic work. While scholars such as Jurgen Zimmerer have argued for a direct causal link, others, such as Roberta Pergher and Mark Roseman, have focused on a broader conceptualization of the Nazis as Empire builders. Although this thesis agrees more with the latter than the former, it takes a rather different approach to this question of “connections.” In this thesis I trace the writings of two colonized intellectuals who addressed this question during the 1930s: Jawaharlal Nehru and George Padmore. For them, it was not that Nazism/fascism and Western colonialism/imperialism were exactly the same; rather, what they felt needed to be highlighted was the fact that the general Western public did not perceive the *general* similarities between the two. That is, Western pundits condemned Nazi/fascist attacks on civil liberties and democracy while ignoring similar activities within their own empires. For Padmore and Nehru, the main reason for the inability of the British public to perceive the general similarities between the two was their “ignorance of the realities of empire.” In this thesis, I trace the origins of the “connections” debate. I reveal the fact that this debate had its origins in a discourse focused on demonstrating the fact that very basic *moral* similarities between Nazism/colonialism were/are not recognized amongst the general British/Western public because of a lack of knowledge of the “realities of empire.” Modern historiographical debates on this topic are heirs to this earlier discourse and should be aware of its origins.

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Dedication:

Andre Gunder Frank,

February 24, 1929, Berlin, Germany

April 25, 2005, Luxembourg

Giovanni Arrighi,

July 7, 1937, Milan, Italy

June 18, 2009, Baltimore, Maryland, United States

Samir Amin,

September 3, 1931, Cairo, Egypt

August 12, 2018, Paris, France

Immanuel Wallerstein.

September 28, 1930, New York, New York, United States

August 31, 2019, Branford, Connecticut, United States

Thank You

Chapter 1: Introduction

Historiographical Context

Since the late 1990s, scholarly works have emerged investigating specific connections between Nazism and colonialism. There is now (2020) a rapidly developing body of academic literature on this topic. This literature is particularly focused with good reason on the Nazi conquest and administration of eastern Europe. Themes explored include the ways in which Nazi expansion can be framed as an imperial project,¹ as a project consciously following the “American model” of western expansion,² as a continuation of Germany’s long tradition of “internal colonization” (particularly in the ethnic boundary areas between Germany and Poland),³ and as a project possibly influenced by Italian fascist colonization in Africa.⁴ There is also an extensive literature examining the coloniality of the Holocaust. That is, examining whether or not and to what extent the Holocaust can be conceptualized as a “colonial

¹ In each of the following groups citations, I have arranged the debate by date of publication (rather than by last name alphabetically) to provide easier tracing of the development of each debate: Wendy Lower, "A New Ordering of Space and Race: Nazi Colonial Dreams in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, 1941-1944" *German Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (2002): 227-254; Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Carolina: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2005); Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (Penguin, 2009); Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

² Carroll P. III Kakel, *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776-1945*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Carroll Kakel, *The Holocaust as Colonial Genocide: Hitler's 'Indian Wars' in the 'Wild East'* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Jens-Uwe Guettel, "The US Frontier as Rationale for the Nazi East? Settler Colonialism and Genocide in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe and the American West." *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 4 (2013): 401-419.

³ Elissa Mailänder Koslov, "'Going east': colonial experiences and practices of violence among female and male Majdanek camp guards (1941-44)" *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 4 (2008): 563-582; Robert L. Ed. Nelson, *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Kristin Leigh Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (University of Michigan Press, 2012).

⁴ Alfredo González-Ruibal, "Fascist Colonialism: The Archaeology of Italian Outposts in Western Ethiopia (1936-41)" *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14, no. 4 (2010): 547-574; Patrick Bernhard, "Borrowing from Mussolini: Nazi Germany's Colonial Aspirations in the Shadow of Italian Expansionism" *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 4 (2013): 617-643; Patrick Bernhard, "Hitler's Africa in the east: Italian colonialism as a model for German planning in eastern Europe" *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (2016): 61-90; Patrick Bernhard, "Colonial Crossovers: Nazi Germany and its Entanglements with other Empires" *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 2 (2017): 206-227; Patrick Bernhard, "Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany" *Fascism* 6, no. 2 (2017): 127-162.

genocide,”⁵ and the related question of to what extent the Holocaust can be conceptualized as “unique.”⁶

In this thesis, I will refer to this body of work in its totality as the “connection” literature or the “connection” thesis because of its focus on debating various “connections” drawn in recent years between Nazism/fascism and Western colonialism/imperialism. This “connections” literature almost invariably references a particular set of mid-century texts as the first articulations of the “connections” thesis. These include texts written by two Jewish Europeans, (Raphael Lemkin (1944) and Hannah Arendt (1951)), one African American (W.E.B. DuBois (1947)), and one Black Martinican French colonial subject (Aimé Césaire (1951)). While Césaire and DuBois have received little analysis beyond quotation of specific excerpts, Arendt and Lemkin have received significant attention. Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* has been deeply analyzed, is ubiquitously referenced as a foundational text of the “connections” thesis, and is often referred to as the *earliest* articulation of this thesis. I will demonstrate in this thesis that this is not the case. Long before Arendt’s publication of *Origins* in 1951, the Trinidadian descendent of slaves, George Padmore, made such connections in countless pamphlets and newspaper articles published in Britain in the early 1930s. He also made these connections in his book

⁵ A. Dirk Moses, "Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the 'racial century': genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust" *Patterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 4 (2002): 7-36; Dan Stone, ed. *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); A. Dirk Moses, "The Holocaust and Genocide" In Dan Stone, ed. *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 533-555; Dan Stone, "The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond 'Uniqueness' and ethnic Competition" *Rethinking History* 8, no. 1 (2004): 127-142; A. Dirk Moses, ed. *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism, and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Roberta Pergher, Mark Roseman, Jürgen Zimmerer, Shelley Baranowski, Doris L. Bergen, and Zygmunt Bauman. "The Holocaust: a colonial genocide? A scholars' forum" *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 27, no. 1 (2013): 40-73; Tom Lawson, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Reading and Writing Colonial Genocide in the Shadow of the Holocaust" *Holocaust Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (2014): 129-156; Michelle Gordon, "Colonial violence and Holocaust studies" *Holocaust Studies* 21, no. 4 (2015): 272-291.

⁶ Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13, no. 1 (1999): 28-61; A. Dirk Moses, "Moving the genocide debate beyond the history wars." *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 54, no. 2 (2008): 248-270; A. Dirk Moses, "The Canadian Museum for Human Rights: the 'uniqueness of the Holocaust' and the question of genocide" *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 2 (2012): 215-238; Dan Michman, "'The Holocaust'—Do We Agree What We Are Talking About?" *Holocaust Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (2014): 117-128.

How Britain Rules Africa (1936) and most extensively in *Africa and World Peace* (1937). Jawaharlal Nehru, who would later become the first Prime Minister of independent India, also made such connections in a myriad of speeches and articles delivered and published in Britain from 1936-1938. The fact that it is the works of the white Europeans that are remembered in the modern “connections” literature while those of the colonized are not will be placed in the context of a long history of such non-recognitions. The intermediate place of W.E.B. DuBois and Aimé Césaire will be subsequently explored.

The Quotations

The earliest text commonly referenced in the modern “connections” literature is that of the Jewish-Polish Lawyer Raphael Lemkin, his *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). Lemkin is the man who developed the concept and created the term for “genocide,” and he did so in this work through reference to the German occupation of Poland in particular. In his own definition of the concept, Lemkin directly connected genocide with colonization:

Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the *colonization* of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals.⁷

The next text, *The World and Africa*, was written by the African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois and published in 1947. In this text, DuBois was more direct in his moral comparison between Nazism and western colonialism. For DuBois,

There was no Nazi atrocity—concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of childhood—which Christian civilization or Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world.⁸

⁷ Raphael Lemkin. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79 (my italics).

⁸ W. E. B. DuBois *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has Played in World History* (New York: International Publishers, 2015), 23*.

*Originally published in 1946.

Published in 1950, *Discourse on Colonialism* was written by the Martinican Black Aimé Césaire. This work was published originally in 1950⁹ as “Discours sur le colonialisme” but is nearly always referenced in its 1955¹⁰ edition. In a line of argument similar to that of DuBois, Césaire claims in this work that what the white European

...cannot forgive Hitler for is not the *crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa.¹¹

Finally, Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, argued that Nazism was the bringing home to Europe of its own colonial violence. In the words of Césaire, and later Jean-Paul Sartre, she described European colonial violence returning to the sub-continent as a “boomerang” in the form of fascism.¹²

As previously noted, significant academic attention has been paid to the connections drawn by Arendt¹³ and Lemkin¹⁴ (with Arendt receiving particular attention). Those of W.E.B. Dubois and Aimé Césaire, however, have been almost entirely limited to simple quotation of the above excerpts without analysis.¹⁵ As a result, Thomas Kühne for example, considers Arendt to be “the ‘godmother’ of the

⁹ Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Editions Réclame, 1950)

¹⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse sur le colonialisme* (Dakar, Paris: Présence africaine, 1955)

¹¹ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 36.

¹² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951). Originally Published in Britain as, *The Burden of Our Time* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951).

¹³ Pascal Grosse, "From Colonialism to National Socialism to Postcolonialism: Hannah Arendt's Origins of Totalitarianism," *Postcolonial Studies* 9, no. 1 (2006): 35-52; Richard H. King, and Dan Stone, eds. *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide*. Berghahn Books, 2007; Stone, Dan. "Defending the plural: Hannah Arendt and genocide studies." *New Formations* 71, no. 71 (2011): 46-57; Patricia Owens, "Racism in the Theory Canon: Hannah Arendt and 'the One Great Crime in Which America Was Never Involved'," *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (2017): 403-424.

¹⁴ Michael A McDonnell, and A. Dirk Moses. "Raphael Lemkin as historian of genocide in the Americas," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 501-529; Dan Stone, "Raphael Lemkin on the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 539-550; A. Dirk Moses, "Raphael Lemkin, culture, and the concept of genocide," In *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*. 2010; Dominik J. Schaller, and Jürgen Zimmerer, eds. *The Origins of Genocide: Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence* (Routledge, 2013).

¹⁵ The only significant exception I am aware of is Rothberg’s *Multidirectional Memory*.

colonial paradigm in Holocaust and genocide studies,”¹⁶ while Dan Stone has noted that it is now “customary” at academic conferences on this and related topics to “refer to her [Arendt’s] linkage of imperialism...and the Holocaust”.¹⁷ For Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, Arendt provides the “most intellectually influential interpretation of imperialism and National Socialism...”¹⁸ while for Pascal Grosse, *Origins* is “one of the constitutive books of postcolonial studies.”¹⁹ Already given pride of place as the ubiquitous reference point for discussion of Holocaust/colonialism “connections,” Arendt is often also given further status through claims that she was the “first” to make such “connections.”²⁰ However, as noted above, colonized intellectuals were making such “connections” long before Arendt’s postwar formulation of *Origins* (never mind the connections drawn by Lemkin, DuBois, and Césaire).

In this thesis, I will lay out the “connections” drawn by two colonized intellectuals from this period: George Padmore (1902/3-1959) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964). Both men repeatedly made such connections in public beginning in the early 1930s. Both Padmore and Nehru explicitly made comparisons between Nazism/fascism and colonialism/imperialism from their international perspective.

¹⁶ Thomas Kühne “Colonialism and the Holocaust: Continuities, Causations, and Complexities,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 3 (2013): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2013.821229>

¹⁷ A.D. Moses, “Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the 'racial century': genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 36 no. 4: (2002), 32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132202128811538>

¹⁸ Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, “Hannah Arendt’s Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz” *Central European History* 42, no. 2 (June 2009): 281, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40600596>

¹⁹ Pascal Grosse, “From Colonialism to National Socialism to Postcolonialism: Hannah Arendt’s Origins of Totalitarianism,” *Postcolonial Studies* 9, no. 1 (2006): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668250500488819>

²⁰ Roberta Pergher, Mark Roseman, Jürgen Zimmerer, Shelley Baranowski, Doris L. Bergen & Zygmunt Bauman, “The Holocaust: a colonial genocide? A scholars’ forum,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 27, no. 1 (2013): 40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23256249.2013.812823>;* A.D. Moses, “Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the 'racial century': genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 36 no. 4: (2002), 32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132202128811538>**

*The editors, after citing Césaire’s above-quoted statement, claim that Arendt (in *Origins*) had “already taken note of this link and written extensively on it”. However, Arendt first published *Origins* in 1951, while Césaire originally published *Discourse...* in 1950. The editor’s mistake is perhaps explained by the fact that they reference the 1955 edition of Césaire’s work. This nicely illustrates the surface knowledge of these texts by knowledgeable persons in the field such as the editors of this prestigious journal.

** Stone describes *Origins* as the “earliest attempt to conceptualize [Nazi and colonial genocide] as a totality.” In other words, as parts of the same process.

For example, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote that, with the rise of fascism and Nazism in the early 1930s, he and the Indian National Congress (the largest political organization in India at that time) “immediately” declared opposition to them. Their reasoning for doing so was that “Hitler and his creed seemed the *very embodiment and intensification* of the imperialism and racialism against which the Congress was struggling...” in India.²¹ By 1939, Nehru, then President of the Indian National Congress, had become even more explicit. He stated,

Fascism is only employing in Europe the methods employed by imperialism in other continents. Fascism is a mirror to the past, and to a certain extent the present, of imperialism.²²

...Fascism in Europe is nothing but the application to home countries of the principles which imperialism has already tried in Asia.²³

In 1941, George Padmore, an anti-colonial activist from the British Crown Colony of Trinidad, penned a London article entitled “British Imperialists Treat the Negro Masses Like Nazis Treat the Jews.” For him,

...[it] is no exaggeration to say that Hitler and his Gestapo sadists are merely applying, with the usual Germanic efficiency, in Poland and other conquered countries, colonial practices borrowed lock, stock and barrel from the British in southern Africa. The only difference is: Hitler’s victims are white, Smuts’ and Huggins’²⁴ are black. Perhaps that accounts for the reasons why the British press denounces the Nazis – *and rightly so* – but remains silent (with few exceptions) about the sufferings of the blacks in southern Africa.²⁵

Hannah Arendt’s “most intellectually influential” “masterpiece,”²⁶ her ubiquitously referenced *Origins of Totalitarianism*, was therefore far from the earliest articulation of the “connections” thesis. In fact, it is likely that much of her intellectual work in *Origins* was at least partly inspired by the declarations made

²¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946), 350 (italics added).

²² Jawaharlal Nehru, “Speech at Allahabad University Student’s Meeting’ *National Herald*, 10 January 1939” in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 9*, ed. S. Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), 226.

²³ Ibid. Nehru does note, however, that “...the democratic tradition of the British people does place them in a slightly different position in regard to the home policy, which has nevertheless an imperialist background.”

²⁴ Jan Christian Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (1939-48); Godfrey Martin Huggins, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia (1933-53).

²⁵ George Padmore, “British Imperialists Treat the Negro Masses Like Nazis Treat the Jews,” *Labor Action**, October 20, 1941, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/laboraction-ny/1941/v05n42-oct-20-1941-la.pdf> (italics added).

*Organ of the Workers Party of the United States

²⁶ Gerwarth and Malinowski, “Hannah Arendt’s Ghost”, 281.

in the 1930s and early 1940s by men such as Padmore and Nehru. *Origins*, therefore, can be viewed as rather derivative.²⁷

Argument

I will argue in this thesis that Padmore and Nehru had a specific *purpose* in making the “connections” as described above. In the 1930s, both men observed that many Britons, particularly those on the left, condemned fascism/Nazism in Italy and Germany for their racism, expansionism, and authoritarianism (including their attacks on civil liberties such as freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom from arbitrary arrest, etc.).²⁸ They also observed that many of these same Britons did not condemn similar actions when they occurred in British colonies. For Padmore and Nehru, it was not that the British people understood what was occurring in the colonies and were happily in full support. Rather, both Padmore and Nehru perceived the British public to be “ignorant of the realities of empire.” In this thesis, I will demonstrate that Padmore and Nehru sought to reveal the “double standard” of those in Britain who condemned Nazism but not colonialism. They did this by demonstrating that the realities of Nazism/fascism that sections of the British public condemned were also the “realities of empire”. They did so through speeches, letters, newspaper articles, and books published in Britain, mostly in the context of Hitler’s consolidation of power and Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

²⁷ Although Arendt was not in Britain during the period I cover here, she spent the majority of the war in the US, where other intellectuals such as C.L.R. James who were actively publishing similar materials in the US at that time. An archive of James’ work from that period is available on the Marxist Internet Archive. See, “C.L.R. James Archive,” Marxist Internet Archive, updated July 23, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/index.htm>.

²⁸ For a fairly recent more detailed look at British perceptions of Fascism in the 1930s see Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939: Before War and Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003). For similar responses to Nazism in Egypt see Israel Gershoni, and James Jankowski *Confronting fascism in Egypt: dictatorship versus democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

As Dan Stone has recently shown, for the British popular book market “the number of studies dedicated to fascism in general and Germany in particular is remarkable...one cannot open an issue of a ‘quality’ journal from the 1930s without coming across an article on Nazism.” The “general tendency” of these works was to be “unmistakably critical” of Nazism/fascism. For Stone,

...one might find a more convincing explanation for the failure of fascism in Britain: not the brilliance of the National Government...not even the relative lightness of the recession, but the fact that millions of ordinary Britons and Americans had, thanks to the invention of the cheap paperback edition, received an education in what fascism meant, and it scared them enough to know that they did not want it.²⁹

It was to such audiences that Padmore and Nehru addressed themselves.

As will be elaborated on in chapters III and V, Padmore and Nehru did not perceive the population of the British Isles to be homogeneously accountable for empire. For Padmore and Nehru, there was a group of Britons, centered in but by no means limited to working class and left-wing groups, who only went along with empire because of their ignorance of its realities. Although most of their invitations to speak and article publications came from left-wing sources and publishers, they were really aiming at a larger audience. Therefore, in this thesis I will signify those to whom Padmore and Nehru addressed themselves with terms such as the “British public,” “the British populace,” the “British population,” and “the British people”. For Padmore and Nehru, the British elite *did* generally have access to information regarding the “realities of empire.” The “self-interest” of these elites, however, blocked their ability to sympathize with the colonized. This elite, therefore, purposely deceived the rest of the population through their control of media and public discourse – mostly through omission of the more “negative” side of empire – and bore the brunt of moral culpability for said empire.

Chapter II of this work provides the contexts in which Jawaharlal Nehru and George Padmore grew up and the influences that shaped their lives – particularly in the interwar years. In Chapter III, I outline how Padmore and Nehru understood metropolitan “ignorance of the realities of empire.” That

²⁹ Stone, *Responses...*, 5-6.

chapter will also examine the psychological barriers Padmore and Nehru perceived as blocking popular recognition of the “realities of empire.” These include the popular metropolitan belief in the British Empire as a benevolent force of enlightened progress as promoted by their elites. This chapter also includes a discussion of the “global” perspective that informed both men’s “anti-imperialist internationalism” (as Michele Louro would have it).³⁰ Chapter IV outlines how Padmore and Nehru sought to address such liberal misconceptions of empire in the context of their responses to the various crises of the 1930s. In drawing out the similarities between the British Empire and Nazism, Padmore and Nehru needed to reveal to the British public that their elites were not the benevolent and liberal administrators that they perceived them to be. In Chapter V, I delve deeper into the analysis of Padmore and Nehru regarding the reasons behind this metropolitan “ignorance” and the ramifications for understanding the modern literature discussing the “connections” thesis.

The “meat” of my argument is contained in Chapter IV. As Nazism gained momentum in Germany in the 1930s, Britain’s elites continued to proclaim their belief in the inherent goodness of the British Empire while at least some of them increasingly criticized the authoritarianism, repression of civil liberties, and expansionism present in Nazi Germany. The way in which such men could claim to be standing for freedom against tyranny, without any sense of contradiction, while strongly opposing freedom for India and Britain’s various other colonies, brings to mind similar occurrences in Western political thought. For example, they seem to hold similarities with the way in which some leaders of the French Revolution could declare all “Men” to be born “free and equal in rights” while continuing the institution of slavery and that of the female sex.³¹ Another similarity could be drawn with the way some

³⁰ Michele Louro, “India and the League Against Imperialism: A Special “Blend” of Nationalism and Internationalism” in *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917–39*, ed. Ali Raza, Franziska Roy & Benjamin Zachariah (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015), 22-25.

³¹ Some revolutionary leaders opposed slavery and favoured civil and political rights for women, and both positions were temporarily put into law, but were later reversed. The Revolution also emancipated the Jews of conquered territories and then of France itself, but that was overturned after Napoleon’s defeat. The Nazis strongly blamed

of the “founding fathers” of the American Revolution could declare that they found it “self-evident” that “all men are created equal” while themselves owning slaves. Such similarities are not that surprising considering the cross-fertilization between the two. For example, one of the drafters of the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, the man who owned hundreds of slaves throughout his life,³² also helped in the drafting of the French “Rights of Man.”³³ For the British elite, like these French and American Revolutionaries, it was “self-evident” that, in the words of Césaire, Fanon, and Sartre, certain “things”³⁴ did not qualify as “men” – i.e., moral and political actors. That is, like these revolutionaries, the British elites held no qualms in their positions and were in no way hypocritical in their pronouncements (an accusation often leveled against them). For, they *did not mean* when uttering such statements about “democracy,” “freedom,” and the “Rights of Man” to include the colonized. In Chapter IV, Padmore and Nehru demonstrate this to their British audiences by revealing the racialized logic of the British elite’s passive (and sometimes not so passive) support for fascism, their project of “appeasement,” their responses to criticism of the empire, their interpretation of the Atlantic Charter, and their plans to fight the Second World War (once it broke out) as an imperial war for the maintenance of the British Empire.

In Chapter V, I will demonstrate how Nehru particularly sought to understand the mechanisms that produced metropolitan ignorance. He understood from very early on the power of self-interest and the media to block metropolitan popular recognition of similarities between Nazism/fascism and the British imperial project. He argued that the British elites were the only section of British society with the

the French Revolution for the emancipation. See e.g. “The French Revolution,” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/french-revolution>

³² William Cohen, “Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Slavery,” *Journal of American History* 56, no. 3 (1969): 510.

³³ George Athan Billias, ed. *American Constitutionalism Heard Round the World, 1776-1989: A Global Perspective* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 92.

³⁴ I.e., they experienced, in the words of Césaire and Fanon “thingification” at the hands of and in the epistemology of, the colonizer: See Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2; Aimé Césaire, *Discourse...*, 42.

necessary access to information to understand the real “goings-on” of empire. The elites were also the people who had the most stake in the empire. They, therefore, were the people most likely to excuse those aspects of the empire that they may otherwise have found disturbing and reacted to. At the same time, because they were the people with control over the societal organs of information, they could perpetuate the ignorance of those groups and classes who were not so invested in the empire and thus were less mentally resistant to information which might change their perspective on empire.

In this chapter (Ch. V), I will also demonstrate how Nehru recognized the more passive role of informational/experiential distance in the production of this “metropolitan ignorance.” For example, the conditions in rural areas were often so geographically and societally isolated that even local indigenous urban populations in India might not know what was occurring in adjacent rural areas and therefore not perceive the exploitation existent there. Nehru himself, who lived the majority of his life in urban India, admits to only learning of the real brutality of the British Raj – in the form of its oppression and exploitation of the Indian peasantry – in his mid-30s. He recognized, therefore, the problem of blaming the British people (who lived nearly on the other side of the world) for not knowing what he (living geographically adjacent) had only recently discovered. Nehru discovered the power of “distance” (geographical, structural, moral etc.) in the shaping of our perceptions and therefore our conceptual worlds. Padmore and Nehru both sought to demonstrate to the British public, the way in which their elites were able to shape public discourse regarding freedom, democracy, and empire.

Padmore and particularly Nehru perceived the inability of the British population to recognize the similarities between Nazism and colonialism to have multiple causes. They did not blame the British public but sought to demonstrate to them their misunderstanding of the morals and intentions of their own elites. From the perspective of Padmore and Nehru it was the British public’s misunderstanding of their own elites which, more than anything, lay at the foundation of the British public’s inability to recognize the similarities between Nazism and colonialism. This misunderstanding enabled the British

public to condemn one and not the other in good conscience. The continued non-recognition of the similarities between Nazism and colonialism in the west today, then, is likely traceable back to the false understandings of the intentions of the British elites and the realities of their empire by the British public in the interwar period.

Implications

The introduction of the Holocaust into the broad western consciousness from the 1960s onward³⁵ has further complicated the issue of colonial memory.³⁶ By the 1990s, certain anti-racist activists blamed Holocaust memory for the inability of the west to recognize the crimes of their colonial past. Two exemplars of such opinions can be found in Khalid Abdul Muhammad and Diedonné M'bala. The former is an early example of this phenomenon. His life's work seems to have been guided by the objective of creating recognition in the west of the sufferings of the world's Black population. However, in doing so, he lambastes western Holocaust memory as blocking this recognition. For example, Muhammad has consistently argued that the "Black Holocaust" was "100 times worse" than the Jewish Holocaust. He has marginalized the Jewish Holocaust to a point of near denial of its occurrence: "Reports on the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis were bloated, exaggerated, probably fabricated...we'd be hard-pressed to get 1 ½ million."³⁷ The latter, M'bala, a man who also has

³⁵ For an interesting discussion of the rise of Holocaust Memory in the United States see Jeffrey C. Alexander, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: the Holocaust from War Crime to Trauma Drama," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 5-85. Jews, of course, were acutely aware of the mounting atrocities, the massacres in the east, and the final solution as they happened. The general western public, however, as Jeffrey C. Alexander shows, was not.

³⁶ For the rise of Leftist Anti-Semitism beginning in the late 1960s see Dave Rich, *Zionists and Anti-Zionists: Political Protest and Student Activism in Britain 1968-1986* (PHD, University of London, 2015). For discussion of Holocaust memory in the post-colonial context see Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory...*, 1-29.

³⁷ "Khalid Abdul Muhammad: In His Own Words," Anti-Defamation League, Updated November 18, 2014, <https://www.adl.org/.../khalid-muhammad-in-his-own-words-2014-11-18.pdf>;

committed his life to bringing awareness to colonialism and slavery, has publicly presented an award to France's best-known Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson.³⁸

This thesis demonstrates that such a perception of Holocaust memory, as blocking recognition of colonial crimes, is ahistorical. In this thesis, I have very purposely traced a discourse of comparison that took place *before* the death camps and the massacres carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* on the eastern front, as a means of demonstrating this.³⁹ The fact that both Padmore and Nehru perceived the British public as unable to recognize the brutality of colonialism *before* the Holocaust undermines the logic of Holocaust memory as the key factor creating this non-recognition. If the metropolitan population had little perception of colonial atrocities/genocides before the Holocaust, then memory of the Holocaust can scarcely be blamed for non-recognition of those atrocities/genocides. If the British were already "ignorant" of the atrocities of empire before the Holocaust, causal mechanisms for this ignorance other than the Holocaust need be investigated.

Approach

In laying out my argument, I make no pretense of presenting the "whole subject"; that is, capturing the entire reality of who Nehru and Padmore really were.⁴⁰ This is not because of a lack of sources, but the nature of the argument. My approach is not that of a traditional biography. It is selectively and thematically biographical. I have integrated one theme present in their life and writings into a broader argument. This approach is similar to that of Adom Getachew in her use of themed

³⁸ Dave Rich, "Is it Good for the Jews? Anti-Semitism and the New Europe" *World Affairs* 178, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 18.

³⁹ The few references I make to comments made in the later years of the war occurred at a time before the events of the Holocaust became common knowledge amongst the allied populace.

⁴⁰ Pamela Scully, "Peripheral Visions: Heterography and Writing the Transnational Life of Sara Baartman" in *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-Present*, ed. Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 32.

snapshots of specific post-colonial leaders in her book *Worldmaking after Empire*, or of Priyamvada Gopal's examination of the writings of anti-colonial activists in her *Insurgent Empire*.⁴¹

Although Padmore and Nehru led “transnational lives” in the sense examined in the 2010 edited volume with that title,⁴² at the time of their writing, the geographic globe on which they lived was not populated by a plethora of independent sovereign nation-states in the ideal of the “Westphalian” model. In other words, “transnational” may not be the most descriptive term for such a space.⁴³ It was a geographic globe almost entirely covered by empires – particularly the Eurasian and African continents. Recent discussions of how to categorize the differing types of history which do not take the nation-state as their locus and boundary of investigation have examined the differing implications of terms such as “transnational”, “international”, “global”, and “world” history.⁴⁴ Samuel Moyn has argued that the term “world” can be differentiated from that of the “global” by defining the former as “not purely geographical space but a constituted political and cultural space.”⁴⁵ In this sense, Padmore and Nehru lived their formative years within the “world” of the British Empire. Although they were shaped by this “world”, both men sought to understand the much larger “world” of the international political-economic system.

Both men were also shaped by the period of internationalism within the anti-colonial movement of the early twentieth century before decolonization. This thesis follows in the footsteps of the likes of

⁴¹ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁴² Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott Ed., *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁴³ This is only so if we deem “national” in “transnational” to be referring to the nation-state rather than just the nation. That is, referring to the ways in which nation-state borders are traversed and bypassed and not to movement between groups of people without a state bearing their name who nevertheless consider themselves to be “nations”.

⁴⁴ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁴⁵ Samuel Moyn, “On the Non-globalization of Ideas”, in *Global Intellectual History* ed. Samuel Moyn & Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 196; Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, “Approaches to Global Intellectual History” in *Global Intellectual History* ed. Samuel Moyn & Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

Michele Louro and Benjamin Zachariah who have recently sought to re-situate Nehru's politics and thought in the context of his international/global contacts and vision.⁴⁶ As they have reminded us, the interwar period saw a great flowering of international and world-making thought and interchange. Louro has argued specifically that Nehru's anti-imperialism was a special "blend" of anti-imperial nationalism and the building of an international anti-imperial "imagined community" in the sense first put forward by Benedict Anderson for the imagining of the nation state.⁴⁷ Nehru was an "international anti-imperialists" in that he perceived India's anti-imperial nationalist movement to be fundamentally "tied up" in a global system of capitalism and imperialism.⁴⁸ For Both Padmore and Nehru, the forces of "progress" (Socialism and anti-imperialism) struggled on a global stage against the forces of "reaction" (capitalism and imperialism). When Fascism/Nazism eventually emerged, they perceived it to be simply a radical manifestation of capitalist imperialism.

In the post-war period, Nehru and Padmore became inevitably more focused upon the politics of the new state in which they chose to invest their energies (Padmore in Nkrumah's Ghana starting in 1957 and Nehru as first Prime Minister of India starting in 1947). Although as Adom Getachew has recently shown, such figures never truly abandoned their internationalist worldview after decolonization,⁴⁹ they were able to focus *more* on the international before decolonization. They led "global" lives in that they frequently traveled throughout the "world" of the British Empire and beyond its boundaries, into the overlapping "worlds" of various European nation states, their empires, the USSR, and China. In their travels they sought to understand how these worlds interacted and the differing

⁴⁶ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London: Routledge, 2004); Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Michele Louro, *The League against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020).

⁴⁷ Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism...*, 12.

⁴⁸ Michele Louro, "India and the League Against Imperialism: A Special "Blend" of Nationalism and Internationalism" in *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917–39*, ed. Ali Raza, Franziska Roy & Benjamin Zachariah (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015), 22-25.

⁴⁹ Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire...*

experiential “worlds” of metropole and colony. Their perspectives were “global” in that they were seeking to synthesize all major events from Eurasia, Africa, and even the Americas into an understandable whole. It was this “global” perspective that gave Padmore and Nehru such clarity on the parallels between Nazism/fascism and colonialism/imperialism.

In this thesis, my purpose in examining Padmore and Nehru is not to argue that their views represent those of all or even most anticolonial activists or socialists of the 1930s. Rather, I have chosen to discuss the intellectual output of these men because of their perspective on the world as a global system in the sense of being intrinsically and deeply connected through an international/global system of capitalism/imperialism.

Reiteration/Elaboration

It is important to un-earth the perspectives of such men for, in viewing Nazism/fascism from the perspective of global European empire, they perceived these phenomena to be far less unique than the European populace. The writings of Padmore and Nehru, therefore, demonstrate the way in which perspective influences what we decide are a historical event/occurrence’s most important aspects. By searching the European continent for explanations of Nazism, post-war scholars unavoidably found Europe-bound answers to their questions. If we examine Nazism from the referential frame of the European continent, then the Nazi conquest and occupation of Europe was indeed unique in that such an invasion and occupation had not occurred within Europe on that scale since Napoleon. Except for the population of Belgium and the regions of France occupied during the Great War, relatively few people in the living memory of western Europe in the late 1930s had any experience of prolonged occupation by a foreign power. From a global perspective, however, such as that of Padmore and Nehru, the Nazi invasion and occupation of Europe was not unique in its violation of sovereignty, conquest of peoples, military occupation, and extraction of resources. Reto Hofmann, among others, has responded to the

long-standing overly national/sub-continental framing of Nazism/fascism in a 2017 issue of the *Journal of Global History*. Hofmann, points out:

If we cast Axis empires – a blend of fascism and imperialism – in the larger framework...it becomes clear that they were not so much the result of the peculiar national histories of Japan, Italy, and Germany, but products of larger, global forces.⁵⁰

In other words, the writings of Padmore and Nehru reveal the way in which Western historiographical perspectives on Nazism which are often overly focused upon the nation-state have contributed to the maintenance of the framing of Nazism as fundamentally unique.

From the perspective of Padmore and Nehru, it was the failure of the British public to accurately perceive the actions and intentions of their ruling elite throughout the 1930s and 40s, their “overly national perspective”, and their physical and therefore perceptual distance from “the realities of empire” which laid the ground work for the modern mis-understanding of the relationships both between Britain and her colonies, but also between Britain and Germany in the 1930s-40s. Padmore and Nehru sought to demonstrate to the British public that the British elite did not lead their country into war against Germany in order to fight for liberty and democracy for all, but rather, to defend their own position of power.

Padmore and Nehru would no doubt agree with Max Hastings who, in this, could well be considered their intellectual heir. In his 2011 popular history of WWII, Hastings felt it necessary to point out to his general western audience that:

So widespread is a modern Western perception that the war was fought about Jews, that it should be emphasised this was not the case. Though Hitler and his followers chose to blame the Jews for the troubles of Europe and the grievances of the Third Reich, Germany’s struggle with the Allies was about power and hemispheric dominance... it is important to recognise that between 1939 and 1945 the Allied nations saw the struggle overwhelmingly in terms of the threat posed by the Axis to their own interests, though Churchill defined these in generous and noble terms.

⁵⁰ Reto Hofmann, “The fascist new-old order” *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 2. (July 2017): 166.

It is these “generous and noble terms” which Padmore and Nehru so assiduously piece apart for the British public. Their intellectual work demonstrates the way in which the bi-partisan narrative of the British Empire as a benevolent force bringing progress, civilization, and general well-being to the peoples of its colonies influenced British public perceptions of the international context in the 1930s and 40s, and therefore, the post-war world. They recognized what Hastings, as a journalist, recognizes so innately: that,

One of the most important truths about the war, as indeed about all human affairs, is that people can interpret what happens to them only in the context of their own circumstances.⁵¹

The British people were not to be blamed for their “ignorance”. Rather, they were to be educated. Although Nehru particularly perceived the power of the British elites in controlling public discourse, none-the-less both Padmore and Nehru felt compelled to try and reach said public. They sought to share their own perspective on the international situation of the 1930s and 40s with their British audience, hoping to provide them with the tools to interpret what was happening in a larger, more global, context.

⁵¹ Max Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World At War 1939-1945* (London: HarperPress, 2012), Xvi-Xvii. First Published in 2011.

Chapter 2: Historical Contexts.

Childhood, and Education

To properly understand the writings discussed in this thesis, it is necessary to grasp the broader historical milieus from which Padmore and Nehru emerged. Specifically, the intellectual world of colonial critique in the age of high imperialism and the differing colonial and personal contexts in which they lived their formative years. As Cemil Aydin has notably demonstrated, as late as the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, many critiques of the west by colonized intellectuals were not yet “anti-western”.⁵² These intellectuals criticized the failures of the west to live up to its promises rather than rejecting “the West” as such. For, the “development” narrative of such liberals as John Stuart Mill had posited that, although government “in a considerable degree despotic” was necessary for “backward” societies, this was in no way a permanent condition. If the “ruled” were able to “develop” the necessary “civilization” to be “capable” of “self-rule,” then, according to his strictures it should be granted. For Mill, it was the purpose of the colonial regime to bring about this “level” of “civilization” amongst the colonized through the “development” of their societies. A version of this model, Aydin argues, was generally accepted amongst many of the educated colonized of the late nineteenth century who – ignoring more racist and fixed ascriptions of inferiority – essentially accepted the idea that their own country should (and would) be granted “self-rule” as soon as it had reached the requisite level of “civilization.” That is, they accepted a Millian conception of “the west” as the harbinger of a “radical universalism” – a “universal” civilization which required only the attainment of the requisite “level” of civilization for equality of status to be recognized and some form of political independence granted.⁵³

It was in this epistemological milieu that Nehru’s father (Motilal Nehru) was born on May 6, 1861 – coincidentally the same day and year as the Nobel Prize-winning Rabindranath Tagore – into the

⁵² Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

⁵³ Michael Adas, “Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology” *Journal of World History* 15, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 38.

community of highly educated but relatively land/wealth-poor, Kashmiri-Brahmins. These educationally elite figures traditionally found employment amongst the bureaucratic retinue of the ruling imperial dynasty, or local ruling princes. As a result of this service to local or regional power, they had, long before British rule, absorbed much of the culture of their Muslim Moghul rulers. With the emergence of British control, they continued their historical tendency of imperial adaptability, adopting and adapting western culture into their existent culture.⁵⁴

As has been discussed by Ann Laura Stoler, as the second half of the nineteenth century progressed, “scientific racism” increasingly influenced European colonialism. What was deemed “European” was increasingly guarded and kept “pure.” Concerns of “Europeanness” and European superiority were of increasing concern for the colonizer.⁵⁵ For example, throughout the nineteenth century, European women were increasingly brought to the colonies to ensure the purity of the race by replacing “indigenous” women in relationships with (white male) imperial functionaries. Indigenous women were then increasingly excluded from all but the most “illegitimate” forms of relations with the white-male colonizer.⁵⁶

It was into this milieu of increasingly rigid “othering” of the colonized that Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) and, over a decade later, Malcolm Nurse, i.e., George Padmore (1903-1959)⁵⁷ emerged.

⁵⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1936), 1-2.

⁵⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 63-107.

⁵⁶ Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*, 63-107; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge...*

Indian women who had sexual relations with white Europeans were consigned to prostitute status. Prostitution was seen by officialdom as a social necessity, including for the white rank-&-file of the army & civil service who weren't allowed to marry. Things were more relaxed in Southeast Asia, where white male / native women relationships were commonplace. However, officialdom, particularly that of the home country, were considerably “anxious” about the effect of these inter-racial relationships on Dutch control. See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, “Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* Ed. Ann Laura Stoler (London: University of California Press, 1998), 198-238.

⁵⁷ It is unclear if Padmore was born in 1903 or 1904.

Born in the Allahabad of the British Raj, Jawaharlal Nehru had familial experience of the increasing paranoia for the “protection” of the “honor” of white women that ran parallel to the rise of Scientific Racism at the end of the nineteenth century. On one occasion, his uncle was nearly killed by British soldiers when they mistook his wife (who had relatively light skin) for a kidnapped Englishwoman. It was only the intervention of a second uncle, whose knowledge of English enabled him to explain the situation to the soldiers, that prevented his first uncle from being shot.⁵⁸ On a more daily level throughout his formative years, Nehru regularly overheard his adult relatives discussing the “overbearing character and insulting manner” of the British imperialists towards Indians:

In railway train compartments were reserved for Europeans and however crowded the train might be – and they used to be terribly crowded – no Indian was allowed to travel in them, even though they were empty. Even an unreserved compartment would be taken possession of by an Englishman and he would not allow any Indian to enter it. Benches and chairs were also reserved for Europeans in public parks and other places. I was filled with resentment against the alien rulers of my country who misbehaved in this manner...⁵⁹

As far as his adult cousins were concerned, “it was the duty of every Indian to stand up to this and not to tolerate it.”⁶⁰ Therefore, “instances of conflict between rulers and ruled” were “common” in his family. And, upon returning home, such confrontations were “fully discussed.”⁶¹ His family also frequently discussed the “notorious fact” that, “whenever an English man killed an Indian, he was acquitted by a jury of his own countrymen.”⁶² Nehru and his family did not resist British rule because of European ideas, but rather, because of the “poor” behavior of the British occupiers: e.g., their implementation of a segregationist-system of rule.⁶³

⁵⁸ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, “Not infrequently one of my cousins or one of their friends became personally involved in these individual encounters and then of course we all got very excited over it.”

⁶² Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Raised within the hybridity of his father's household, Nehru learned both the traditional knowledge of his Kashmiri Brahmin heritage as well as western culture and science. Landing in Britain at fifteen to continue his studies at Harrow (where Churchill had been educated only a few decades earlier),⁶⁴ Nehru was "electrified" by the news of the Japanese victory over Russia at the battle of Tsushima. Not only did such an event demonstrate that a "colored" power could "advance" as rapidly as the Europeans and militarily defeat a "white" power in a battle of machines, but it also undermined the justification of European colonialism as a developmental project. For Japan, "opened" by Commodore Perry in 1853-54 had been revealed to the world in a state of development determined by western observers as positively "medieval." Fifty years later, with men living who had been trained as samurai in a "medieval" Shogunate society still alive, Japan defeated in succession both the eastern and Baltic fleets of one of the white European Great Powers – that of Tsarist Russia. Japan had succeeded in "developing" herself from a society that was amongst the most "backward" to one of the most "advanced" societies in the world in less than a single lifetime. It is difficult to overstate the impact of such an occurrence on the psyche of an increasingly restless colonized world.

The justifying narrative of colonialism had long been that the colonizer was "developing"/"civilizing" the colonized. Even if the intentions of the British were sincere, and they were earnestly attempting to "develop" India, their lack of success must have appeared rather astonishing. For example, after 150 years of British rule, not only had India *not* begun to industrialize, but the opposite had occurred: India had been systematically *de*-industrialized. Meanwhile, Japan, one of the only states in the world to never be colonized by the west, industrialized faster than any European power had done before. Romesh Chundra Dutt, an Indian civil servant, clearly recognized this and lambasted the British regime for "draining" the wealth of India for the benefit of British imperial power publishing an *Economic History of India* from the battle of Plassey to the accession of Queen Victoria

⁶⁴ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 21.

(1837) in 1902, and a second volume two years later on the *Economic History of India in the Victorian Age* (1837-1900) in 1904.⁶⁵ While Nehru lived through this enormous shift in geopolitical perceptions, Padmore was born into what could be described as a post-Tsushima period.

About a decade and a half younger than Nehru, Malcolm Nurse (George Padmore) was born sometime between 1903 and 1904 on the island of Trinidad in the British Crown Colony of Trinidad and Tobago. He was the grandchild of a slave “freed” and “apprenticed” by the British through their policy of “transition” after the British abolition of slavery in 1833, and the son of an island school-master. As Malcom’s childhood friend C.L.R. James⁶⁶ (also the son of an island school master) reported, Malcom Nurse’s father (Hubert Nurse) had “a great political mind.” Hubert, living in “a room filled with books,” “talked often of George Washington, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois.” Purportedly, Hubert even converted to Islam at the end of his life to symbolize his rejection of European influence.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Romesh Chundra Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age. From the Accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 to the Commencement of the Twentieth Century, Vol. II*. London, Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner (1904); Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty of India: Papers and Statistics* (London: Winckworth Foulger & Co., 1888).

For the more modern literature on this subject, see: Michael Barratt Brown, *The Economics of Imperialism* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974), 133-6; B.R. Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire, 1880-1935," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 12, 4 (1975); Marcello de Cecco, *The International Gold Standard: Money and Empire*, 2nd ed. (New York: St Marrin's Press, 1984), 62-3; David Washbrook, "South Asia, the World System, and World Capitalism," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49 no. 3 (1990): 481; Amiya K. Bagchi, *Perilous Passage: Mankind and the Global Ascendancy of Capital* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 145-7, 239-43; Utsa Patnaik. 2006. "The Diffusion of Development." *Economic and Political Weekly* 41 no. 18 (May 6): 1766-72. Amiya Kumar Bagchi, "De-industrialization in India in the nineteenth century: Some theoretical implications." *The Journal of Development Studies* 12, no. 2 (1976): 135-164.

⁶⁶ C.L.R. James, "Reflections on Pan-Africanism" November 20, 1973 Available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1973/panafricanism.htm> and, Columbia University Online at <http://www.docdatabase.net/more-reflections-on-pan-africanism-columbia--1341491.html> and, <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/edwards/Reflections%20of%20Pan-Africanism.pdf>

⁶⁷ C.L.R. James, "Reflections on Pan-Africanism." James wrote: "George Padmore and I were very friendly. I knew him and I knew his father, his mother. I knew his sisters. His father was a teacher. My father was a teacher...We were boys together...He went to St. Mary's College, I went to Queen's Royal. We would spend vacations together."

Lessons in Perspective

According to C.L.R. James, Malcolm Nurse (George Padmore) “continued the tradition [of] his father” and “used to do a lot of reading of American writings about Blacks.”⁶⁸ Like C.L.R. James, DuBois, Césaire, Nehru, and many others, Nurse received a “western” education graduating from high-school with the “usual Cambridge Certificate subjects” – Geometry, Latin, Greek, French, History, Algebra, and English Literature.⁶⁹ As an adolescent he talked of West Indian politics with C.L.R. James⁷⁰ and, as James noted of their childhood,

...we read Garvey...and we read Dr. DuBois. That educated us. As far as I know that was the only way we got some education on the affairs of black people in the Caribbean. Otherwise we learned what they taught us in the schools. They were very good schools, secondary schools. All they taught us about Africa was how backward they were and how beneficial the British invasion of Africa was[,] and the slave trade was not so bad because it brought backward people in touch with civilization and taught them Christianity. It may not have taught them very much Christianity but at least it got them on the road. And that is what we learned. So[,] it was Garvey in his paper and DuBois in his books and a [news]paper that he published later that changed our whole attitude.⁷¹

Nehru, on the other hand, was sent to the British Isles by his father (as previously noted) to get “the best education England can give”⁷² at Harrow (1905-1907), at Trinity College Cambridge (1907-1910), and as a student of law at the “Inner Temple” (1910-1912). Nehru’s experiences of European education were similar to those of Padmore – particularly in the discipline of history. As Nehru wrote in a letter to his daughter later published in *Glimpses of World History* (1934): “[t]he history we learn in school or college is usually not up to much.” Although they did learn “a little” English history, they were given only the “vague knowledge” of the rest of the world, and, with regards to the history of India, this was but “a little – a very little.” Even this little, having been written by those who “looked down” on

⁶⁸ Ibid. Interestingly, James notes in his speech that the people in Trinidad knew of Gandhi and his movement and were supportive as early as 1927.

⁶⁹ James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore’s Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 3; He also studied “Tropical entomology and Agricultural Science”

⁷⁰ C.L.R. James, “Reflections on Pan-Africanism”.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² John B. Alphonso-Karkala, *Jawaharlal Nehru* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 6.

India, was “largely wrong or distorted.” It was not until he graduated from college and began to read on his own that he discovered “real history.”⁷³

Padmore’s perceptions were reinforced through his own experiences working in journalism after primary school in his first job at an island newspaper, the *Weekly Guardian*, in 1917.⁷⁴ Padmore “detested” the editor (his boss) for the man’s racial arrogance and, importantly for our purposes, for how he used the framing of information in his paper to support the colonial regime. It was during this time that Padmore came to dream of revealing such informational forms of “oppression”: “I hoped to use my pen in exposing his role before the colonial workers and peasants whom he oppressed through his dirty sheet the *Guardian*.”⁷⁵

While at school in England, Nehru observed from afar the increasing unrest in India – including the 1905 near open-revolt of Bengal in opposition to the attempted partition of that province – for reference to which, Nehru eagerly searched but was only able to find “meager ...accounts from the English papers.”⁷⁶ His schooling and various travels to England and Europe gave him the opportunity to repetitively perceive first-hand this lack of information in British newspapers on (what Nehru would consider to be) the negative aspects of British rule in India, noting that, “the people of the West ...pay little attention to India.”⁷⁷ Both Padmore and Nehru, then, had an early experience of narrative and knowledge and how they can and are manipulated in the interests of those who hold power over their distribution. They both had personal experience with the erasures of the colonized within imperial

⁷³ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History: Being Further Letters to His Daughter, Written in Prison, and Containing a Rambling Account of History for Young People; with 50 Maps by J.F. Horrabin* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1934; New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964) 9. Citation refers to Asia Pub. Edition.

⁷⁴ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁶ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 19.

⁷⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World: Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), 200-209.

epistemology from an early age as awareness of what was taught, how it was taught, and what was not, became increasingly evident.

The Post-War Period

By the early 1920s, disillusionment with the West was increasing amongst the colonized for many reasons.⁷⁸ These included the loss of (particularly moral) prestige produced by the enormous slaughter of inter-European war (the Great War), the experiences of colonial soldiers on said European battlegrounds (killing white men – Germans, Austrians, etc. – and experiencing the racism of their own “side”)⁷⁹ and the post-war betrayal of the implicit and sometimes explicit promises of increased self-rule and rights as “reward” for their loyalty. Disillusionment with the West was also increased by the generalized post-war crackdown on colonial descent, the attempts at increased colonial extraction in order to deal with the financial consequences of the war,⁸⁰ and the climactic height of belligerently projected racial arrogance on the part of European colonizers (for example, as demonstrated by the League of Nations’ rejection of Japan’s proposed “Racial Equality” clause at Versailles (1919)).⁸¹

India, for example, was “rewarded” for her loyalty in that war by the passing of the harsh 1919 Rowlatt Act. During the War, many of India’s elites had given wholehearted support to the British war effort and, essentially, Indian forces defeated the Ottoman Empire for the British, providing new regions of control in “Iraq” and “Palestine” for the Empire. The Rowlatt Act extended into peacetime

⁷⁸ For India generally see Sugata Bose, and Ayesha Jalal. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2017). For French African colonies see, Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France...*

⁷⁹ Michael Adas, “Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 1 (March 2004): 31-63; Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁸⁰ Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* Revised Ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 350; Utsa Patnaik, “India in the World Economy 1900 to 1935: The Inter-War Depression and Britain’s Demise as World Capitalist Leader” *Social Scientist* 42, no. 1/2 (2014): 13-35;

⁸¹ Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality* (New York, Routledge, 1998), 112-115; Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia...*

*The rejection of the “racial equality” clause is almost universally mentioned by the anti-colonial writers of this period. For example, see George Padmore, *Africa and World Peace* (London: Frank Cass, 1937), 184 *fn*; W.E.B. DuBois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945), 6.

“emergency wartime ordinance and legislation” which restricted civil liberties. It was followed by the massacre of civilians by General Dye at Jallianwala Bagh for inadvertently violating its prescriptions. Under the guise of this act, Dyer, without engagement or warning, ordered his men to open fire on the crowd of civilians. Nehru, having returned to India as a trained lawyer in 1912, was appointed to the Congress Committee of Inquiry to investigate the massacre and organize relief for the victims.⁸² He visited Jallianwala Bagh and observed the concentration of bullet holes in those areas where those attempting to escape over the walls of the massacre site had been purposely targeted.⁸³ Shortly after, during an overnight train journey, Nehru overheard Dyer himself, who, far from concerned over his behavior, was “holding forth in an aggressive and triumphant tone.” Dyer described his “Amritsar experiences”; he was “the hero of Jallianwala Bagh.”⁸⁴

As a result of such experiences, Nehru dropped his pursuit of a legal career, became a full-time Congress Worker,⁸⁵ and participated in Gandhi’s Non-Cooperation campaign. Along with at least 300,000 peaceful protestors, he was arrested and imprisoned in December 1920 – the first of nine periods of imprisonment.⁸⁶ Elected Mayor of Allahabad in 1923, Nehru found himself powerless to bring change or reform within the system of the Raj, further radicalizing his notions of how to answer the question of “what is to be done?”⁸⁷ Likewise, Padmore was radicalized by his experiences of the rolling strikes that paralyzed the island of Trinidad in 1919, and the oppressive response of the British government. Rabindranath Tagore, recipient of the Nobel Prize (and one of those leading Indian intellectuals whom Aydin identified as earlier accepting European civilization according to its universal strictures) effectively imparts this moment. A moment in which the belief amongst the colonized of

⁸² Alphonso-Karkala, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 6,8; Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 42-3.

⁸³ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 40.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁵ Alphonso-Karkala, *Jawaharlal...*, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

British goodwill and sincerity of concern for the welfare of their colonized subjects truly began to crumble.⁸⁸ For Tagore, writing in 1921,

[Europeans]...have now got to recognize that Europe has completely lost her former moral prestige in Asia, She is no longer regarded as the champion throughout the world of fair dealing and the exponent of high principle, but rather as an upholder of Western race supremacy, and the exploiter of those outside of her own borders.”⁸⁹

Marxism, Communism, and Anti-Colonial Activism

It was into this moment of intense disillusionment that the Soviet Union emerged from the 1917-21 Russian Revolution, and although mired in civil and regional wars, *explicitly* declared itself in favor of self-determination for *all colonized peoples*.⁹⁰ This was *not* done vaguely, in a way that could be repudiated through subsequent “clarification,” as was done for Wilson’s Fourteen Points (or, for that matter, Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s 1941 Atlantic Charter),⁹¹ but in terms that left little room for misinterpretation. By 1923, having consolidated its power through the defeat of both the internal “White” and external Polish threats both sponsored by “the West”, the declarations of this revolutionary state took up Lenin’s initial anti-imperialist line with renewed vigor. For example, in 1923, the Profintern (Red International of Labour Unions – RILU), declared that Task No. 7 of the organization was to “struggle against exploitation and enslavement of the working masses in the colonies without

⁸⁸ Gajendra Singh, “India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*: Vol. 14, No. 2, (2014); Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, 1919” Encyclopedia Britannica Online: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Jallianwala-Bagh-Massacre> (Accessed May 4, 2019). “...the House of Lords praised Dyer and gave him a sword inscribed with the motto ‘Saviour of the Punjab.’ In addition, a large fund was raised by Dyer’s sympathizers and presented to him.”

⁸⁹ Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire*, 186. Quoting Rabindranath Tagore, 1921; for the changes wrought by the Great War see also Michael Adas, “Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault...”

⁹⁰ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 11.

⁹¹ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of a Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983; North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 224; also, see Nancy Cunard and George Padmore, *The White Man’s Duty: An Analysis of the Colonial Question in Light of the Atlantic Charter* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1943).

distinction of race.”⁹² Similar views were presented in 1926 by Moscow’s principle organization appealing to American Blacks, the American Negro Labour Congress (ANLC),

...Millions of Negroes in Africa, Central America and the West Indies suffer under imperialist aggression and domination...Robbed of their lands, their village communes deliberately destroyed, the once independent and happy peasantry of Africa and Asia is being forced into the mines and privately-owned plantations of white imperialists.⁹³

Needless to say, in making such assertions, the USSR succeeded in winning for itself varying degrees of loyalty and ideological alliance from many anti-colonial nationalists.

Like many anti-colonial nationalists of the period, Padmore was drawn to the Soviet Union precisely because of such credentials, and he viewed the Soviet Union as an ally in the struggle both against the political domination of one people by another (colonialism) and the ravages of capitalism deeply intertwined with such. By 1924, having always “dreamed of higher education,” Nurse set sail for the United States and, having been designated by immigration services as an “African Black,” enrolled at Fisk University in the fall of 1925. There he joined the *Fisk Herald* and was noted as “an exceptionally able speaker, much in demand when colonial issues were aired.”⁹⁴ He was first introduced to Marxism and Soviet communism through the Communist Party of the United States, which was deeply involved in support of the black anti-racial struggle in the US and had adopted an anti-imperialist stance abroad. By 1927, Padmore had “come under party discipline.”⁹⁵

In that year, Moscow was helping to organize and support the formation of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence. Nehru attended as a delegate for the Indian National Congress at its first meeting in Brussels and was very active in organizing the League. (Padmore would

⁹² Red International of Labour Unions (Second Congress), *Resolutions and Decisions* (London: 1923). As cited in *Black Revolutionary...*, 10.

⁹³ As cited in Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 10. No source is provided for this quotation.

⁹⁴ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 4,5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

attend the League's second meeting in Frankfurt Germany in 1929).⁹⁶ Subsequently invited to Moscow to attend the tenth anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, Nehru spent four days with his father, mother, and sisters, observing the Soviet system with great interest.⁹⁷ Even though Nehru was greatly influenced by Marxism and his experiences in the Soviet Union – producing a short collection of his impressions the following year⁹⁸ – he was never a “doctrinal” Marxist, Leninist, or Stalinist. Perhaps, he could best be described as an anti-capitalist and a socialist rather than a follower of any specific set of ideological “rules.” Although he did “think that the basic ideology of communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound,” at the same time, communism had to be adapted “to changing conditions and may vary in different countries.”⁹⁹ Padmore, on the other hand, taking up the Soviet line of the late 1920s and early 1930s with vigor, would become a committed overseas agent for (what he understood to be) Soviet Communism. I think it can be said that, during this period, Padmore was less concerned with nuance and detail than Nehru. This can partly be seen in his more consistent use of a more rigid use of Marxist discourse in his analysis of contemporary events. It can also perhaps be explained by the amount of time Nehru was given to read and reflect during his many lengthy prison sentences. Padmore was not “given” these lengthy periods of solitary reading, study, and reflection which gave Nehru the cognitive space and time to develop more nuanced perspectives.

By 1928, Padmore was traveling “extensively” for the CPUSA and, having shot through the communist ranks, was beginning to appear in the pages of the New York *Daily Worker* under the alias of “George Padmore.”¹⁰⁰ In 1929, just after the economic crash which signaled for many “the possible end

⁹⁶ Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 65-102. For greater detail/context see, Michele Louro, *The League against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020).

⁹⁷ Alphonso-Karkala, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 16.

⁹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Soviet Russia: Some Random Sketches and Impressions* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1928).

⁹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Recent Essays and Writings, on the Future of India, Communalism and other Subjects* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1934), 129-30.

¹⁰⁰ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 6-8.

of capitalism”¹⁰¹ and the same year in which Nehru was first elected President of the Indian National Congress, Padmore left New York for Moscow. Perhaps precisely because these were years in which he had “great personal power” delegated to him by the party, they are shaded in secrecy. We do know that he attended (as previously mentioned) in the second Congress of the LAI in Frankfurt in 1929. Padmore’s greater willingness to follow the Soviet line can be seen in this participation because, at this time, it was being brought into strict alignment with Soviet policy in contradistinction with the loser alliance of anti-imperialist movements organized and envisioned by Nehru during the early years of the LAI and its first Congress. Nehru formally left the organization (and/or was expelled) for not being sufficiently orthodox as were many other leading anti-colonial activists.¹⁰²

Between 1930 to January 1934 Padmore spent at least some time in Moscow and functioned as a covert functionary/agitator for Moscow in the colonies and Europe.¹⁰³ It appears that Padmore received considerable Soviet patronage during this period as he was elected to the Moscow Soviet along with Kagonovitch and Stalin.¹⁰⁴ He occupied a place beside the regime’s top apparatchiks one May Day on the reviewing stand of the parade on Red Square. He was placed on the Soviet committee to investigate accusations against Li Lisan for “ultra-left” deviationism.¹⁰⁵ And, he briefly lectured on colonialism at the University of the Toilers of the East, which trained persons from Asia (apart from China) in the late 1920s.) During his travels, he introduced a young Johnstone Kamau (i.e., Jomo Kenyatta) to Marxism and brought him to Moscow. Alongside the American communist James Ford of

¹⁰¹ Carol Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule in Africa: Writers in a Common Cause* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁰² Michele Louro, “India and the League Against Imperialism: A Special “Blend”, 22-55. For more detail see, Michele Louro, *The League against Imperialism: Lives and Afterlives* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020); Michele Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁰³ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

the CPUSA,¹⁰⁶ Padmore was tasked by the Profintern with organizing the First International Conference of Negro Workers held in Hamburg in July 1930,¹⁰⁷ which established the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW).¹⁰⁸ Placed at the “head” of this organization and as editor of its main publication, the *Negro Worker*, Padmore quickly became, in the words of Carol Polsgrove, “the Communist International’s leading propagandist on Black affairs.”¹⁰⁹

However, Padmore’s days as a Soviet functionary were numbered. The rise of fascism in Germany undermined the very reason for his alliance with the USSR, its anti-imperialism. Fearing the threat of fascism in the mid-1930s, Stalin attempted to secure alliances with the “capitalist-imperialists” through a policy of “collective security” and abandoned the USSR’s previously strident anti-colonial/anti-imperial stance. The rise of fascism in Germany, therefore, had a dual impact on Padmore. Firstly, his persistent pro-communist/anti-fascist agitation within Germany landed him in a Gestapo interrogation cell in 1933, followed by deportation to England on the strength of his British passport.¹¹⁰ Secondly, his recalcitrant continuance of Moscow’s previously abandoned Leninist anti-imperialist line caused friction with the Kremlin and, ultimately, his expulsion from the ITUCNW and the loss of his editorial position with the *Negro Worker*. In January 1934, he was expelled from the French, American, and British Communist Parties and a smear campaign was launched against him by Moscow, seeking to delegitimize any criticisms he would lodge against its abandonment of those colonized by the West.¹¹¹ As one

¹⁰⁶ The Labour Union wing of the Communist International (Comintern).

¹⁰⁷ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 33

¹⁰⁸ Fredrik Petersson, “Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement” *Interventions*, (2014) Vol.16 No. 1: 59-60.

¹⁰⁹ Petersson, “Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement”, 59-60; Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 2; Although Padmore was feasibly the Comintern’s “leading propogandist” for the European colonies in the Caribbean and West Africa, there were other major figures in the Comintern’s support of anti-racial initiatives such as Harry Haywood in the US and others in South Africa.

¹¹⁰ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 3.

¹¹¹ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 17.

biographer described it: “George Padmore’s career as a communist was over.”¹¹² That is, as a functionary of the Communist International and the Stalinist Soviet regime.

Padmore, then, having been drawn to Marxism by the USSR’s anti-colonial stance and alienated by what he saw as Stalin’s 1934 “lurch” to the “West,” existed in a fertile space for the production of independent anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist thought. He benefited from Marxist theory but without being bound any longer by its Soviet interpretation, Communist Party discipline, or the inevitable influence of Marx’s Eurocentric location in the production of his text. That is, he was “freed” from the self-imposed ideological homogeneity (and I would argue intellectual sterilization) required by the ever-increasingly dogmatic and self-serving Stalinist-Soviet line. The conceptual “tool-box” of Marx’s writings was available, but he was not limited to it. Therefore, he was able to draw from various other traditions in his analysis. This was the intellectually “fertile ground” from which Cedric Robinson argued a flowering of the “black radical tradition” emerged.¹¹³

This, I would argue, is also representative of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had been influenced by the many intellectual, philosophical, spiritual, and theological traditions of his native land. Educated in the “western canon” and influenced by Marx, Nehru produced a personal synthesis of his knowledge/experiences by the 1930s and rejected dogmatism in all its forms. For Nehru, socialism did not mean “just a duplication of what has taken place in Soviet Russia.”¹¹⁴ For him, “on the basis of that very [Marxist] theory it [would be] absurd to copy blindly what had taken place in Russia...”¹¹⁵ Nor did he

¹¹² Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 4; Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, 33. Hooker dates Padmore’s expulsion by the International Control Commission as February 23, 1934 (not January).

¹¹³ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of a Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) Chap. 9 and 10 respectively.

(Robinson makes this argument through textual case studies of the works of W.E.B. DuBois’s *Black Reconstruction* (1935), C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins* (1938), and the political fiction of Richard Wright).

¹¹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Letter to the Editor of *The Pioneer*, November 23, 1933” in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 6*, Ed. S. Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), 31-32.

¹¹⁵ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 362.

“agree with everything that the orthodox communists had done.”¹¹⁶ His view is particularly clearly demonstrated in a letter he wrote to Lord Lothian in January of 1936 in which he argued that,

It may be that Marx overstates the case for the materialist or economic interpretation of history. Perhaps he did so for the simple reason that it had been largely ignored, or at any rate very much understated till then. But Marx never denied the influence of other factors on the shaping of events. He laid the greatest stress on one – the economic factor. Whether that stress was a little overdone does not make much difference. The fact remains, I think, that his interpretation of history is the only one which does explain history to some extent and give it meaning. It helps us to understand the present and it is quite remarkable how many of his predictions have come true.¹¹⁷

For, although “there was plenty of dogma in official communism in Russia and elsewhere, and frequently heresy hunts were organized,” this was “deplorable” and stood in opposition to all that Nehru understood Marxism to stand for. What “appealed” to Nehru about Marxism was its “essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook.”¹¹⁸

In Britain – the Primary Texts

Although Padmore, more than Nehru, would continue in the Soviet tradition during the ensuing years addressed in this thesis, Padmore did move away from the official Stalinist line as enunciated from 1934. After his arrival in Britain, Padmore quickly began gathering fellow anti-colonial activists alienated from the Comintern line and began building an anti-imperialist movement within Britain. Although many of these (mostly Black) activists were influenced by Marx, they were by no means united in their relationship to the texts and movements bearing the label of that man nor were they to a man devoted Marxists. For example, C.L.R. James pursued a highly intellectual form of Trotskyism while Jomo Kenyatta (despite having been educated in Moscow) had, according to Polsgrove, “...after the Comintern’s recent betrayal of the anti-imperial cause” become “hostile towards Marxism

¹¹⁶ Nehru, *Recent Essays and Writings...*129-3).

¹¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World: Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), 177-199.

¹¹⁸ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 362.

altogether.”¹¹⁹ In fact, unlike Padmore and James whose vision for Africa’s future had a decidedly western form (in the Marxist modernist tradition), Kenyatta “did not want to see Africa detribalized” and even “defended the custom of female circumcision.”¹²⁰ At the same time, Padmore, despite having been ejected from Moscow’s orbit and attacked by the Stalinist press, “refused to defend himself, except on rare occasions” throughout the period here examined (1930s-1940s), and he refused to attack the Soviet Union for years to come. Nehru would never fully repudiate the Soviet regime either. In the 1930s, he “romanticized” the Stalinist regime and tended to explain away or refuse to recognize the extent of Soviet brutality.¹²¹ Even in 1955, the year before Khrushchev’s “secret speech” denouncing Stalin’s “excesses,” Nehru renounced any conception of the USSR as a neo-imperial power in eastern Europe.¹²²

This was, according to one biographer, because “he did not wish to provide ammunition for professional anti-communists, and because he continued to believe that only the Russians under communism had succeeded in decolonizing and eliminating manifestations of racial prejudice.”¹²³ C.L.R. James, on the other hand, as a devoted Trotskyist, had no such compunction. He attacked Moscow, arguably, as thoroughly and viciously as colonialism.¹²⁴ Padmore, on the other hand, continued to cite the literature of staunch Stalinists such as Rajani Palme Dutt as authoritative, factual, and theoretical sources throughout the 1930s and early 1940s.¹²⁵

During his time in London, Padmore worked with many prominent anti-colonial activists, including many activists from colonized regions who would take an active role in the administration of newly decolonized regions in the 1950s and 60s. These included three men who would become the first

¹¹⁹ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 41.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Michele Louro, “India and the League Against Imperialism...” in *The Internationalist Moment...*, 34.

¹²² Louro, “India and the League...” 35.

¹²³ Hooker, 33, 35.

¹²⁴ See, for example, his articles on the Stalinist line available at the Marxist Internet Archive

¹²⁵ See Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 45 fn 1, 48 fn 1, 53 fn 1, 69 fn 1.

leaders of the newly independent states of Ghana, Kenya, and Trinidad and Tobago (Padmore's birthplace). These were Kwame Nkrumah (influential advocate of Pan-Africanism, of the Organization for African Unity,¹²⁶ and future first Prime Minister of independent Ghana),¹²⁷ the previously mentioned Jomo Kenyatta (future first Prime Minister of independent Kenya),¹²⁸ and Henry Sylvester Williams (better known as Eric Williams, future first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, a driving force behind the West Indies Federation of Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica et. al., and author of the 1944 *Capitalism and Slavery*). Padmore also worked with Nnamdi Azikiwe (future first indigenous Governor General and then President of independent Nigeria)¹²⁹

Padmore worked with many other influential activists of the time and of the following period of decolonization including George Thomas N. Griffith who took the name of T. Ras Makonnen (after the Ethiopian emperor)¹³⁰ and would later, in the post-war period, work with Padmore and Nkrumah in the first independent administration of Guyana. (He was saved from prison after the fall of Nkrumah's administration in 1966 through the intervention of Kenyatta who found him a place in the Kenyan administration).¹³¹ In London, Padmore associated with Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté (an anti-colonial nationalist from present-day Mali executed by the Nazis after the fall of France)¹³² who met him at his flat shortly after his arrival in Britain. He moved in the circles of Amy Ashwood Garvey (estranged wife of Marcus Garvey), her partner the musician Sam Manning,¹³³ and Dr. Harold Moody (the philanthropic

¹²⁶ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

¹²⁷ Leslie James, *George Padmore...*, 193. "two of Padmore's closest African allies from the 1940s...[were] Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah"; Bill Schwartz "George Padmore" in Bill Schwartz Ed., *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 124-125.

¹²⁸ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, 16.

¹²⁹ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 1.

¹³⁰ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 2.

¹³¹ "Ras Makonnen: True Pan-Africanist. An Appreciation" *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), Jan 6, 1984 in K.K. Prah Ed., *Beyond the Color Line: Pan-Africanist Disputations: Selected Sketches, Letters, Papers, and Reviews*. (New York: African World Press, 1998).

¹³² Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, 37.

¹³³ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 25.

“reformist” Black London doctor). Padmore worked with I.T.A. Wallace Johnson (the Sierra Leone nationalist and journalist who brought with him a long list of international connections),¹³⁴ Rajani Palme Dutt (one of the leading journalists and theoreticians of the Communist Party of Great Britain),¹³⁵ and of course, Padmore’s childhood friend C.L.R. James. Padmore communicated with and was supported by figures such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Nancy Cunard,¹³⁶ and Sir Stafford Cripps,¹³⁷ and he corresponded with the American novelist Richard Wright.¹³⁸ It is likely he knew Virginia and Leonard Woolf.¹³⁹

Now based in London, he regularly gave speeches in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square¹⁴⁰ as well as at leftist meetings.¹⁴¹ He joined C.L.R. James’s International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFE),¹⁴² founded in expectation of an Italian invasion of that country, and together they co-founded the *International African Service Bureau* (IASB). The IASB’s main publication, *International African Opinion*, initiated by Ras Makonnen, would carry a continuous stream of Padmore’s writings.¹⁴³ Padmore used his contacts accumulated during his days as an overseas Soviet functionary to develop, according to one biographer, a “massive” network:

From his base in London, he had political contacts not only in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States but also in poles as far apart as Denmark, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Singapore. These were fostered through an unending stream of protest rallies, public lectures, and meetings with colonial peoples who traveled to London.”¹⁴⁴

Utilizing this transnational, trans-imperial network, Padmore “...cultivated journalism as a mass medium that could serve his political ends, covering all the major topics in international politics for audiences in

¹³⁴ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 30.

¹³⁵ James, *George Padmore...*, 75. Dutt also founded and edited *Labour Monthly* to which Padmore contributed.

¹³⁶ Schwartz, “George Padmore” in Schwartz, *West Indian...*, 141.

¹³⁷ Cripps wrote the “forward” to Padmore’s *Africa and World Peace*.

¹³⁸ James, *George Padmore...*, 10.

¹³⁹ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 11; The Woolfs published *The Case for West-Indian Self-Government...* a booklet authored by Padmore’s close friend C.L.R. James.

¹⁴⁰ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 23.

¹⁴¹ James, for example, recognized Padmore when he attended one such event.

¹⁴² Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 25.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ James, *George Padmore...*, 3.

the United States, Britain, and the colonies.”¹⁴⁵ Before being expelled from the Stalinist camp in 1934, he wrote for the Communist Party of Great Britain’s *Labour Monthly* and the Communist Party of the USA’s *Daily Worker*.¹⁴⁶ By 1935, however, the *Daily Worker* attacked rather than published Padmore and he was forced to respond in the NAACP’s magazine *The Crisis*.¹⁴⁷ He would subsequently “settle in as a long term contributor” for *The Crisis*.¹⁴⁸ In Britain, Padmore also published in the Independent Labour Party’s main newspaper the *New Leader*, and in their monthly journal *Controversy* (renamed *Left* around 1939) for which Padmore became editor in June of 1942.¹⁴⁹ He wrote for American publications such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* (George Schuyler’s newspaper),¹⁵⁰ and the *Chicago Defender*, which published his writings “almost weekly” from 1938 onwards.¹⁵¹ Padmore was published in a very wide variety of newspapers in Africa, such as *Ashanti Pioneer*,¹⁵² *African Morning Post*,¹⁵³ *Gold Coast Spectator*,¹⁵⁴ and Azikiwe’s Nigerian newspaper *West African Pilot*.¹⁵⁵ In terms of numbers, the Jamaican newspaper *Public Opinion*, for example, published 73 articles by Padmore from 1943-1952, while three of Trinidad’s major labor newspapers *The Vanguard*, *The People*, and *The Clarion* published over 207 of his articles between 1936 and 1954.¹⁵⁶

Scans and transcriptions of the originals of some of these publications are available online through the Marxist Internet Archive¹⁵⁷ including those of *Labour Action*.¹⁵⁸ Scans used in this thesis

¹⁴⁵ James, *George Padmore...*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, 8,12,14,36,42; Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 54-55.

¹⁴⁷ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 36.

¹⁴⁸ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 54.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 34, 85.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵² James, *George Padmore*, 93.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 56; James, *George Padmore...*, 13-16.

¹⁵⁶ James, *George Padmore...*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ “George Padmore”, Marxist Internet Archive, updated February 1, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/index.htm>

¹⁵⁸ “Labour Action”, Marxist Internet Archive, updated December 16, 2015 <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/laboraction-ny/>

from the Archive were almost entirely transcribed for the website by Professor Christian Høgsbjerg,¹⁵⁹ a respected scholar of Caribbean intellectuals of this period.¹⁶⁰ Because I do not have access to the original texts, I have limited myself to only interspersed reference of these online sources.

In this work, I draw most heavily upon *Africa and World Peace* as I was able to find a hard copy in the University of Victoria library. When read beside the articles available online, it is clear that many of these articles drew heavily from the materials produced for *Africa and World Peace*. It is likely that *Africa* itself drew from earlier articles and pamphlets, but I do not have access to enough of these to confirm this hunch. *Africa and World Peace*, however, seems to be the most reliable source available to me for Padmore's early comparisons between Nazism and colonialism. In any case, it is also his most sustained comparison between fascism/Nazism and imperialism/colonialism that I could find. *Africa and World Peace*, however, was not Padmore's first book length publication in Britain. This honor belongs to his 1936 work *How Britain Rules Africa*.

Writing in Paris in June of 1934 after his expulsion from the Stalinist camp in February of that year, (and before he moved to London)¹⁶¹ Padmore himself explained the inspiration for *How Britain Rules Africa* came in response to the British Labour Party's promises of colonial reforms. His purpose in writing was "...to rouse public opinion in Britain on behalf of the African peoples..." He continued "... my countrymen asked me to undertake the publication of a book giving the presentation of the situation from the point of view of the blacks, we think that the time has come for Africans to speak out for themselves."¹⁶² In a detailed step by step exposé of British mechanisms of rule – forced labor, taxation, various forms of expropriation, corporal punishment, and the destruction of traditional social and political structures – Padmore sought to present to the British people the reality of their empire "from

¹⁵⁹ "Christian Høgsbjerg" University of Brighton, <https://research.brighton.ac.uk/en/persons/christian-hogsbjerg>

¹⁶⁰ Christian Høgsbjerg, *C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014). His 2014 work on Padmore's childhood friend C.L.R. James analyses James's life in London during the period examined here.

¹⁶¹ Hooker, *Black Revolutionary...*, 34.

¹⁶² Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 5.

the point of view of the Blacks.”¹⁶³ After its publication in 1936, he began work on *Africa and World Peace* (published in 1937) in which he sought to demonstrate the centrality of Africa in the political rivalries of the European powers. He would also work on a pamphlet entitled *The White Man’s Duty*, co-authored with Nancy Cunard, and published in 1943, in which, together, they piece apart the “hypocrisy” of the *Atlantic Charter* issued by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941.¹⁶⁴

These works, written and published in the years following his expulsion from the communist ranks, meant that he had lost the support of hardline communist publications and leaders and needed to find another sympathetic audience, say, that of the British Labour Party.¹⁶⁵ Padmore’s criticisms of the USSR, however veiled, and his general non-adherence to the Soviet party line, meant that he would not be able to rely on the communist left in Britain to promote his publications through positive reviews and ads.¹⁶⁶ Needless to say, the publication process for *How Britain Rules Africa* and his subsequent (1937) *Africa and World Peace* were fraught with difficulty. The communist press refused to publish him, liberal British reviewers balked at his accusations against their empire, and reviewers from the non-communist Left took it in turns to be mildly supportive and strongly critical.¹⁶⁷ Although both were eventually published, neither produced sales numbers of any significance. In fact, during the first six months after publication of *How Britain Rules Africa* in 1936, only 165 copies were sold, and by the first half of 1938, sales had reduced to just eighteen copies.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, in the words of the publisher of *Africa and World Peace*, that publication was also a “flop.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Cunard, Nancy, and George Padmore. *The White Man’s Duty: An Analysis of the Colonial Question in Light of the Atlantic Charter*. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1943.

¹⁶⁵ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 9.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-14.

¹⁶⁸ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 18.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

Although *How Britain Rules Africa* became a source of “cognitive liberation” for many African anti-colonial activists who saw in this work the voice of an African speaking directly to their oppressors,¹⁷⁰ *Africa and World Peace* was truly left to be the inheritance solely of future academics. *The White Man’s Duty*, on the other hand, although written in 1941 and only published in 1943, once published, did far better than either of his previous books and sold close to twenty thousand copies.¹⁷¹ Although *Africa and World Peace* was a “flop”, echoes and near direct re-iterations of much of its content can readily be recognized in the myriad of newspaper articles and pamphlets he wrote during the period 1938-1942.¹⁷² Much of the book’s content, therefore, reached a far larger audience than that of the few hundred purchasers of the actual book. This is also the work which focusses most explicitly on comparisons between Nazism and colonialism in the 1930s *before* the outbreak of war, which is the explicit focus of this thesis. It is therefore the source by far most heavily drawn upon here. For Nehru, I draw upon a greater number of publications, as many of his letters and articles were collected and published in this period as collected works.”

The majority of Nehru’s texts drawn upon in this research were produced during two visits to Europe. Specifically, the six months between September 1935 and February 1936 (during which time he stayed in Germany and Switzerland and visited both Britain and France) and another six months from June 1938 to November 1938 (during which he visited Egypt, Spain, Czechoslovakia, France, and Britain). During his visit to England in 1938, Nehru had “long talks” with “almost everybody who counts or might count in regard to India” except Churchill and Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister 1937-1940).¹⁷³ These included “Linlithgow” (Governor-General and Viceroy of India from 1936-1943), “Atlee” (Clement Atlee – head of the British Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition from 1935-1940, and Post-War

¹⁷⁰ Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 19.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁷² Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*; “George Padmore” Marxist Internet Archive (accessed September 14, 2020) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/index.htm>. See the articles written between 1938-1942.

¹⁷³ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, 95.

implementer of the British welfare state as Prime Minister from 1945-1950), and “Cripps” (Sir Stafford Cripps). He was also in touch with Professor Harold Laski (controversial and influential political scientist, an economist at the London School of Economics, one-time chair of the British Labour Party, and significant influencer of Nehru), Leonard Barnes (anti-colonialist writer and journalist),¹⁷⁴ and Leonard Woolf (author, publisher, and husband of Virginia Woolf).¹⁷⁵

The texts in question include various sorts of letters, numerous magazine and newspaper publications, transcripts of speeches to various organizations, and transcripts of press interviews, including live radio interviews. He gave Press Interviews and Statements to the Press in London, Paris, Prague, Budapest, and Spain. He addressed “numerous public and semi-public gatherings” in London, particularly during his visit in 1938.¹⁷⁶ These included speeches addressing the House of Commons,¹⁷⁷ and given at Labour Party meetings, the Congress of the British Communist Party, a gathering of the *Left Book Club*,¹⁷⁸ a conference on “Peace and Empire”,¹⁷⁹ the National Council of Civil Liberties,¹⁸⁰ the International Peace Conference held in Paris in July 1938¹⁸¹ as well as various other speeches at Kingsway Hall, Caxton Hall, and Trafalgar Square. *Time and Tide Magazine*, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Labour Monthly*,¹⁸² the *Daily Worker*,¹⁸³ and, of course, his own publication the *National Herald* (with his contribution to its inaugural issue submitted from Budapest, Hungary in August of 1938) all published his letters, interviews, and articles.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁴ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, 95.

¹⁷⁵ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p.121.

¹⁷⁶ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p.95.

¹⁷⁷ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p.112.

¹⁷⁸ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p.34.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 61

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁸¹ Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p.85.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

These various texts were regularly gathered and re-published as “collected works” volumes during this period – including *Soviet Russia* (1928), *Statements, Speeches, and Writings* (1929); *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* (1930); *Whither India* (1933); *Glimpses of World History* (1934); *India and the World* (1936); *Eighteen Months in India* (1938); *China, Spain, and the War* (1940); and *The Unity of India* (1941). These texts – subsequently organized by date along with other supplementary data and published in thirteen volumes¹⁸⁵ – along with *An Autobiography* (1936) (written between June 1934 and February 1935 in prison) and *The Discovery of India* (1946)¹⁸⁶ (written in prison between 1942 and 1945) – are the primary sources of Nehru’s intellectual work for the period drawn upon in this work.

For Padmore, as Fanon would later famously argue (like W.E.B. DuBois before him), the *global* capitalist system was *also* a global *racial* system. What was particularly unique in the thought of the intellectuals of this moment was the fact that neither race nor class held a clear and consistent causal position for the other. Racism and economic exploitation were inextricably intertwined with capitalism itself. If they leaned on either side of the scale, Padmore, Nehru, and DuBois (and arguably even Fanon), to varying degrees, emphasized capitalism as the *agent* behind racism, which *shaped* its function and gave it its power. For them, racism was not explicitly *created* by capitalism, but racism as it existed within the global capitalist system was, in a way of speaking, a product of capitalism.

This conceptualization of racism was both fundamentally informative of their perception of fascism and Nazism as it emerged in the 1930s and constitutive of their understanding of those

¹⁸⁵ Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol. 1-13*, ed. S. Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974).

¹⁸⁶ In *The Discovery of India*, written while in prison between August 9, 1942 and May 28, 1945, Nehru discusses his own perceptions, those of the All India Congress (of which he had been president), and his prison companions (representing a wide spectrum of Indian languages, religions, histories, forms of scholarship, and political backgrounds) of Indian and global events. They were but a few of the hundreds of thousands imprisoned for participation in Gandhi’s “Quit India” movement – representing opposition to British rule generally, but specifically that of the British Viceroy’s unilateral declaration of war on behalf of India without any consultation with her elected representatives, his seizure of executive authority, and his imposition of draconian wartime authoritarian measures of censorship, physical repression, and control. Having written this work amidst “innumerable talks and discussions” with these men while imprisoned together in the Ahmednagar Fort) Nehru asks in his “preface” that the work not be considered “wholly mine.” It represents therefore, more than just his own ideas and perspectives.

movements' treatment of Jews. That is, although Nazi anti-Semitism seemingly challenged their understanding of what DuBois had coined as the global "color line"¹⁸⁷, at the same time, it was this very *global* and conceptually open approach to such problems which enabled its incorporation into the lexicon of Padmore and Nehru. They sought to understand world events as a "system." They sought to incorporate a constant stream of new global events into their analysis and strove to understand the underlying structures, tendencies, and logics of global history in the present. As a result, Nehru, like Padmore, as argued by Leslie James in his recent biography, increasingly understood "empire, racism, and economic degradation as part of a *system* [of global western capitalist domination] which fundamentally required the application of *strategy* to its destruction."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ See Rothberg's fulsome discussion of this in *Multidirectional Memory...*, 111-135.

¹⁸⁸ James, *George Padmore...*, 2.

Chapter 3: Perceptions of British Public Apathy

Nehru: British Apathy

As he recorded in an 18 July, 1938 article in *The Tribune* (London),¹⁸⁹ Nehru found both in his previous visit to England, two and a half years earlier, as well as during his present visit, a certain “indifference and apathy” amongst the British people “generally” with regards to India. This was even amongst those persons “whose business it is to consider such problems.” Although such persons showed “courteous interest” in what he had to convey – almost entirely concerning India – and some even “expressed sympathy” for the Indian cause, there was, underlying these outer pleasantries, “a general desire not to think about India, to shirk the issue.” For such persons, these issues were “complicated” and the recent 1935 Government of India Act gave an “excuse” for the continuance of their non-consideration of the issue. Nehru was “not disappointed” for he “had not expected much more” but reminded his readers that “[o]ur problem did not vanish [simply] because people in England were not thinking about it” – “it grew and we grew with it.”¹⁹⁰ Nehru could understand why the British population was so apathetic with regards to India, for:

Faced by repeated crises and engrossed in their domestic troubles it is not surprising that the people of the West should pay little attention to India. A few may feel drawn to the rich past of India and admire her ancient culture, some may feel an instinctive sympathy with a people struggling for freedom, others may have the humanitarian urge to condemn the exploitation and brutal suppression of a great people by an imperialist power. *But the great majority are supremely ignorant of the conditions in India.* They have troubles of their own; why add to them?¹⁹¹

In the summer of 1938, this “apathy and considerable ignorance” was alive and well. The “attention” of the British public was increasingly “absorbed” with the “urgent problems” emergent in Spain, China, Central Europe, and elsewhere which provided a new “excuse” for non-consideration of the “Indian

¹⁸⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, “India and the British Labour Party,” *The Tribune*, (London) October 28, 1938, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume Nine* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 78.*

*Originally Re-published in Jawaharlal Nehru, *China, Spain and the War* (Allahabad & London: Kitabistan, 1940), 119-125.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Question.”¹⁹² In other words, with the consolidation of fascist power and the rise of its militant expansionism into Ethiopia, Spain, Austria, and China, the apathy of the British public with regards to empire continued.

Reprimanding his fellow socialists for “wobbling dangerously on imperial issues and more particularly on India,” he argues that if Labour is anti-fascist, it cannot justify not being equally anti-imperialist. This “wobbling”, he argues, has produced strange inconsistencies in the judgment of many in the British public who vehemently condemn fascism – that which is taking up much of their attention – but do not equally condemn imperialism. Such persons tend to perceive imperialism as something with which Britain can “carry on” with for some time, while they “cannot possibly” “tolerate” the continuance of fascism, even in the near future. Such persons, therefore, “seek to distinguish between the two.” That is, between fascism and imperialism. Such distinctions were reflexive and rarely considered in any depth. For many, he thought, they were not part of any particularly “worked out” system of thought. Nehru required that such persons reflect upon such distinctions and consider whether they can “logically” be sustained.¹⁹³

From the perspective of a colonized subject, he informs them, “you cannot distinguish between the two” (between “fascism and empire”); indeed, fascism is but an “intensified form” of the “system” that is imperialism.¹⁹⁴ The two are so much a part of the same continuum that, in fact, “if you seek to combat fascism, you inevitably combat imperialism.” Therefore, if they, his audience, are “convinced” that “imperialism is akin to fascism” and that “both are enemies of peace,” then it is necessary to recognize that they must “seek to remove both, and not try to distinguish between the two.”¹⁹⁵ In a July 6, 1938 speech to the Left Book Club in London, he further elaborated upon this point:

¹⁹² Jawaharlal Nehru, “India and the British Labour Party,” in *Selected Works... Vol. 9. p.78.*

¹⁹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Presidential Address at the Conference on Peace and Empire,” *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 22, 1938” in Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9, p62; Nehru, An Autobiography...*, 341.

¹⁹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Presidential Address...” in *Selected Works... Vol. 9, p.62.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 63-4.

...a very large number of people in England today do not like fascism. They attack it and condemn it. And yet many of them who do so get very irritated if you talk about the British Empire functioning in India or other colonial parts of the empire. They try to separate these two things. *Of course[,] one can find the points of distinction. But because they seek to preserve it [the moral acceptability of British imperial rule] in a way while attacking fascism, their attack loses all real effectiveness.* There is no logic behind it. You know how in the past the fascist leaders of Italy have repeatedly taunted the British people and said, "We are only doing what you have done in the past." And it is a common taunt in Europe, when the question of bombing comes up in connection with China or Spain, that the British people are continuously doing it on the north west frontier of India So in considering these questions you have to be logical in order to understand the roots of them and not try to preserve your interests and to condemn somebody else's, although yours may be the same[,] of the same kind.¹⁹⁶

It is perhaps, he concedes, because of his own subjectivity as a "subject" of British imperialism, that makes the empire's continuance such an intolerable prospect compared with what it is for his British listeners.¹⁹⁷ In referencing his subjectivity as an imperial subject as the basis upon which his urgency for the dissolution of empire is grounded, Nehru points to those subjective aspects of our perceptual positioning that inform the ways in which we categorize phenomena. This is particularly the case regarding how we decide which facets of phenomena are its constitutive (i.e., most important) aspects. For Nehru, fascism was "bad" because it was racist, violent, expansionist, and authoritarian. These were also the characteristics that led him to oppose imperialism: "it is our anti-imperialism that makes us anti-fascist." As he had noted in an earlier London speech, on June 23, 1938:

Fascism is a near kin to imperialism; unless by your words and actions you also condemn imperialism, it is no use condemning fascism. You have been surprised in the past few years at the extent of the excesses to which human beings can go, but the atmosphere in which such excesses take place is fairly familiar to us. Go down to the roots of fascism and imperialism and you will find they lead to the same place. There have been similar excesses in India when these took place in other areas you were shocked, and rightly so, but you ought to have been shocked earlier when they were taking place in India.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'India and Britain'* (London) *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 13, 1938" in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.36.

*Speech at a Left Book Club Rally at Queens Hall, London.

¹⁹⁷ Nehru, "Presidential Address..." in Nehru, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.62.

¹⁹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'The Need for Understanding India'* *The Hindu*, July 3, 1938" in Nehru, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.27.

*Speech given at Caxton Hall, London, "in response to a welcome address."

On the 16th of July, 1938, he continued this line of thought, urging his British listeners to seek the “root” of the problems they are facing. For, if “your conception of freedom is a limited freedom” i.e., a freedom that excludes India and/or the colonized world, then “there is something very radically wrong with that conception [of freedom].”¹⁹⁹ It has “pained” him to observe throughout decades of travel in Europe and England that it is just such an approach to these issues that the populations of these regions have adopted by a sort of default; “the whole method and mode of approach to the problem [of freedom] was wrong.” That is, their perspective was distorted by their metropolitan location – the epistemological location of their lives.

Nehru: Global Perspective

Nehru emphasized the need for a global perspective 1930s and 1940s. he emphasized this perspective with particular clarity in the mid-1930s, particularly in 1935-36. Although international political maneuvering may have impacted his positions to some extent (such as the Soviet Union’s switch from an anti-imperialist front to an anti-fascist “Popular Front” foreign policy), Nehru global perspective is continually present.

From Nehru’s perspective, as he wrote in a letter to Lord Lothian in Dec. 1935, the “average person’s mental beat” is but a “tiny corner of the world.”²⁰⁰ To counteract this tendency in himself, he assiduously studied world events. As he wrote in his autobiography (originally written in prison between June 1934 and February 1935) to understand this tangled W.E.B. of “current affairs”, he “carefully” studied current events in Russia, Germany, England, America, Japan, China, France, Spain, Italy, and Central Europe.²⁰¹ In a speech to Indian students in Calcutta on Nov. 9, 1936,²⁰² Nehru urged his

¹⁹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘Speech at Kingsway Hall’ (London) *The Bombay Chronicle*, July 16, 1938” in Nehru, *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, p.72.

²⁰⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Letter to Lord Lothian’ December 9, 1935” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p.50.

²⁰¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Towards Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 231.

²⁰² Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘The Need for a Larger Perspective’ (Calcutta) *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, November 10, 1936” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p.548-553.

countrymen to understand nationalism as having a very detrimental blinding-effect on their ability to understand the workings of what today could be called a “World System.”²⁰³ They needed to recognize that the globe had become united more than ever before by capitalism and that events in one part of the system reverberated through the whole. For,

Every incident that happens in one or other corner of the world has its effects on every other part. If one wants to understand a certain portion of the picture, it will be better understood if he sees and studies the whole picture...it is essential that one should know the international situation.²⁰⁴

In the previously mentioned address to Indian students in Calcutta (printed November 10, 1936 in Calcutta) Nehru further considers this problem, asking his fellow nationals, who consider Indian “freedom” to be “the whole” of their politics and “half” their religion, to consider the larger perspective:

Whenever I address students, I draw their attention usually to certain wider aspects and wider problems to enable them to think...in larger perspective...I want you to consider and think of these problems of Indian freedom...in terms of the world...Otherwise when freedom comes to India, we shall remain narrow and limited and we shall not take part in the great freedom moment of the world...View the world forces that are at work today. India today is not and never can be a separate unit of the world.²⁰⁵

He urges his listeners to go “a little outside” their “narrow orbit of nationalism and think of the world.”

For

Nationalism is not wholly good enough. It is a restricted creed, a narrow creed...[it] has dangerous aspects in it.²⁰⁶ In a country like India, it is an uplifting creed today because we work for a freedom of India... But this nationalism in Germany is a crushing thing, not an ennobling thing, it is a narrow thing, it is an aggressive thing which threatens the freedom of others.²⁰⁷ I want you to think more in terms of something wider than nationalism. That is not freedom, but some anti-British feeling, anti-foreign feeling, and that is not good.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ For World Systems literature see Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004). I am not arguing that Nehru was proto-Wallersteinian in the strict sense. Rather, Nehru tried to understand the world from a global perspective long before such an approach became fashionable in the academia of today.

²⁰⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘Appeal for an Anti-imperialist United Front’ *Bombay Chronicle*, May 15, 1936” in *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p.219-220.

²⁰⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, “The Need for a Larger Perspective”* in Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p.550.

*Published November 10, 1936 in Calcutta.

²⁰⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, “The Need for a Larger Perspective” in Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p.550.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 552.

It is “very strange” for him (as he observed in a speech several weeks earlier), that “even intelligent people” cannot seem to see things in their larger context; they are blinded by their local perspectives, seeing their local problems as “separate” from the global whole. He “begs” them to consider European events from a global perspective, as part of the world and not to acquiesce to the relegation of the latter within their consciousness to a space of inherent difference simply because of the former’s continental location. In other words,

...every intelligent dabbler in public affairs knows that the problems of the modern world cannot be kept in watertight compartments; they cannot be dealt with successfully separately and without regard to the others; they run into each other and, in the final analysis, form one single world problem with many different facets. Events in the desert and waste lands of East Africa echo in distant chancelleries and cast their heavy shadow over Europe; a shot fired in eastern Siberia may set the world on fire. Many difficult problems trouble Europe today, and yet it may well be that the future historian, with a truer perspective, will consider China and India as the most significant problems of today, and as having a greater influence on the future shaping of world events. For, essentially, India and China are world problems, and to ignore them, to try to minimize their significance, is to betray a woeful ignorance of the trend of world affairs and to fail to understand completely the basic disease which all of us suffer.²⁰⁹

For Nehru, the British – including the trade unionists and members of the Labour Party – were blind to the wrongs of British rule in India in part due to their overly national perspective.²¹⁰ This “ignorance” was the product of a truncated perspective on the world. In a speech on “India and Britain” at a Left Book Club rally at Queen’s Hall in London, on 6 July 1938, Nehru discussed in depth how he understood context and perspective, and how he desired his listeners to consider the two. For Nehru,

It is surprising how people sometimes discuss things and do things as if they were not related in any way to a larger whole and come to strange conclusions. The world is a very strange place to live in, *but stranger still is the fact that even intelligent people can take these little problems separately and discuss them without relation to the larger whole.*²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, “India and the World” * *Vendredi* (Paris) January 6, 1936” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 52.

*Reprinted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World: Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936) 200-209.

²¹⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, “India and the World” * *Vendredi* (Paris) January 6, 1936” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 52.

²¹¹ Nehru, “India and Britain” in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.35.

He urges his listeners not to accept a truncated national perspective that enables the relegation of colonized peoples to a state of exception from the ideals of “civilized” Europe. For Nehru,

...India is obviously a problem in itself, but the way...I would like to consider it, is more in relation to the other problems of the world, to the international situation. Personally, I have always tried to look upon it in that way, and *I think that it is not really possible to understand any one of these problems that face us, unless we have before us that larger picture of the world as it is today.* Of course, if I function in India, as I must...I have to face the various difficulties peculiar to India...But even those difficulties I can better appreciate and thus function more effectively in India if I keep the larger picture of the world before me and try to fit India into it somewhere. Therefore, it is desirable that we should look upon these problems in that way.²¹²

Padmore: British Public Apathy and the Global Perspective

As Leslie James has noted, from Padmore’s perspective what was of the utmost importance was the influence of imperialism on the lives of the average Briton. As Leslie James has pointed out, it is precisely this influence which imperial historians such as Ronald Hyam have sidelined as unimportant.²¹³ That meant the very visible and physical (if nonetheless unconscious and unrecognized) forms in which empire manifested itself in their *material* lives. In other words, the economic structures within which the British population was imbedded, and from which any limited physical comforts that trickled down, were often not just tied financially to colonial relations of power but were often also direct products of the labor of exploited colonial peoples. In the words of Padmore, written in July of 1935 “[t]he British public especially the workers and middle classes, know as much about Africa and its problems as the man in the moon.”²¹⁴

In England, this was related to the fact that many supposed anti-capitalists, thinking only of their immediate surroundings, considered British capitalism to be “something hermetically sealed up in what

²¹² Jawaharlal Nehru, “India and Britain” in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.36.

²¹³ James, *George Padmore and Decolonization...*, 3; Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonization, 1918–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the classic literature debating the influence of empire on British society and culture, see, Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

²¹⁴ As quoted in Polsgrove, *Ending British rule...*, 12

is known as the British Isles.” This was, for Padmore, “fundamentally incorrect” for “*British imperialism is world-wide in scope...* [and the] English capitalists have their tentacles in every nook and corner of the world.”²¹⁵ In the years of Depression-era economic hardship, he reminds his readers, the British capitalists are drawing “more and more of their strength from their colonies, especially India and Africa.” Moreover, although British imperialism is aging and is not as strong as it once was, access to these colonies ensures that it remains strong enough to continue to face down the rising, younger imperialisms of America and Japan. Because of the strength it can draw from its colonies, Padmore contends, the British State “will be able to corrupt and if need be, to beat down with open violence any attempt on the part of the British workers to free themselves [from capitalist oppression].”²¹⁶

For Padmore, the British population’s “ignorance” was also the result of the fact that, as he wrote in *How Britain Rules Africa* (1936), “...Blacks have no powerful press, control no broadcasting stations, sit in no parliaments of the world and therefore have no means of voicing their grievances...”²¹⁷ Therefore, Blacks in Africa and the Caribbean were dependent upon American and European publishers and other Western forms of communicational infrastructure. This did not mean, however, that Africans did not consider/evaluate the world around them. For, “they are nevertheless thinking seriously about the vital economic, political and social problems which confront them.”²¹⁸ The time had come for “Africans to speak out for themselves.” It was time to publish “the point of view of the blacks” in order to “rouse public opinion in Britain on behalf of the African peoples.”²¹⁹ As Carol Polsgrove points out, publications on Europe’s African empires had, up to this point, been “largely controlled” by European and American authors. The publication of *How Britain Rules Africa*, therefore, was in-itself a “political act.” Few Africans had published such scholarly works, and fewer still had done so on Africa itself –

²¹⁵ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 4-5. Emphasis. Added.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 390-1.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ As quoted in Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule...*, 5.

Padmore hoped that “Europeans would take seriously” a book with “weight and heft” (both literally and in its wealth of primary materials and citations) such as this.²²⁰

Padmore, therefore, sought to “shed light in dark places” to reveal the “present economic, political and social conditions of the Native populations...” Particularly the African “Native” populations. He sought to educate the British public, “especially... the working and middle classes” of that which was being perpetrated in their name.²²¹ In the words of Leslie James,

...the purpose of Padmore's life work [was] to illuminate to the British public exactly what was being executed in their name and for their supposed benefit. He understood that Empire functioned precisely upon what Hyam rejects as irrelevant: popular ignorance and complacency.²²²

In Padmore’s own words, he sought to

arouse the conscience of the British people, especially *the common folks, who are being exploited at ‘home’ by the same classes that oppress the Indians, the Africans, the Chinese and other colonial peoples* and become a weapon in the struggle for the new social order.²²³

In short, Padmore increasingly analyzed the world as a *system*: a capitalist World System which functioned through the perpetuation of widespread metropolitan ignorance.²²⁴

For Padmore, as he wrote to Theis, his publishing agent,²²⁵ in July of 1935, “it seems that there is a conspiracy among publishers to keep the public as dumb as possible. I hope I am wrong but it seems so.”²²⁶ This differentiation of metropolitan guilt, that is, such a non-monolithic conceptualization of the metropolitan population as containing separate “groups” – the “guilty” (the “conspirators”) and those who were, in a way, the “victims” of the “conspiracy” – was likely informed by the experiences of his boyhood friend, C.L.R. James. The two reconnected while in Britain and collaborated in the founding of

²²⁰ Polsgrove, *Ending British rule...*, 6.

²²¹ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 2.

²²² James, *George Padmore and Decolonization...*, 3.

²²³ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 395.

²²⁴ For the most recent contribution to the Global Capitalism literature see, Dilip M. Menon and Kaveh Yazdani, eds., *Capitalisms: Towards a Global History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²²⁵ Cited in Polsgrove, *Ending British rule...*, 8.

²²⁶ As quoted in Polsgrove, *Ending British rule...*, 12.

an organization intended to support Abyssinia in its defensive war against Italian invasion. C.L.R. James had experienced the day to day life of British factory workers in “Red Nelson”.²²⁷ It is likely that James conveyed such information to Padmore during their numerous discussions and collaborations.²²⁸ Christian Høgsbjerg has compiled evidence of the rapt attention the British workers gave to the lectures of C.L.R. James on the conditions of the colonized.²²⁹ This would seem to suggest that, at least amongst the more militant British factory workers, it was not for a lack of interest, which enabled their “ignorance” of colonial conditions, but rather, that there were larger, more structural factors of voidance at play. That is, a lack of information, of real communication, which negated their ability to find solidarity with their fellow oppressed in the colonial location.

A question which is returned to again and again by the authors of these texts is that of how the occupants of the metropole can be accepting of the injustices of the imperial system, while condemning the same injustices when perpetrated by fascism and Nazism closer to home. Again, and again, they call for solidarity between western labor and colonial peoples. For Padmore, like Nehru, this obliviousness with regards to the empire on the part of metropolitan labour is momentarily broken “when there is some riot in Jamaica, or shooting in Palestine, or unrest on the North-West Frontier.” For, in these moments, “the average Briton” becomes “remotely conscious” of his relationship with the empire and its imperial rule over hundreds of millions of coloured “subjects.” However, in their eyes these moments of consciousness are “momentary” and therefore do not produce any structural change.²³⁰ For Padmore, the British masses are structurally ignorant of the violence being perpetrated in the empire propagated in their name.²³¹ Padmore’s writings during this period, then, sought to make “knowable” the evils of

²²⁷ A nick name for the town of Nelson, Lancashire, referencing the labour militancy of its population.

²²⁸ The prefaces to both *Ending British Rule...* and *Africa and World Peace* cite James as a friend whose conversation and suggestions were instrumental.

²²⁹ Christian Høgsbjerg, *C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain* (New York: Duke University Press, 2014), 51-52.

²³⁰ George Padmore, “The British Empire Is Worst Racket Yet Invented By Man”

²³¹ *Ibid.*

colonialism through comparison with existent significations of evil, i.e, those of fascism.²³²

Padmore did not condemn the entire British public as morally reprehensible. He recognized that some Britains had “good intentions” towards Africans. There were “certain...large sections of Whites in Britain” who, driven by “religious sentiments humanitarian reasons or political convictions”, had “tremendous sympathy” for the “hopes and aspirations” of Africans.²³³ Referencing the anti-slavery moment of the early nineteenth century, he notes that there are “Whites” in Britain who carry on the British “Tradition” of “Abolitionism.”²³⁴ Not so much in the sense of “abolishing” empire, but in the sense of being open to sympathy for the sufferings of others, entertaining the possibility that those sufferings could be caused by one’s own “side”, and being willing to investigate and act to end that suffering. Padmore sought to forge common cause with such persons against both empire and fascism.

Nehru and Padmore, then, when they sought to draw connections between Nazism and colonialism, were doing so in a context in which the populations of the metropole, for various structural and systemic reasons, were “ignorant” of the conditions of the colonized and therefore did not have empathy for them. Their recognition of this “ignorance” was shared by several of those persons mentioned in the introduction of this thesis: W.E.B. DuBois, Aimé Césaire, and to a lesser extent Hannah Arendt. Let us consider the way in which Arendt’s epistemological location influenced her conception of a “connection” between Nazism and colonialism, and the way in which the “erasure” in this location was understood by W.E.B. DuBois and Aimé Césaire alongside their own discussion of such “connections.”

Hannah Arendt: “good”, “bad”, “heritage” and “oblivion”

When Arendt states in the conclusion of her original preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that, “[w]e can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage,

²³² Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 4-5.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 395.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion," she seems to be referencing the metropolitan "silence" Nehru discussed above. In other words, those societal acts and subconscious biases by which certain narratives are privileged and others are not. That means the ways in which the "bad" – those actions which, on some level, we ourselves recognize as wrong – are "buried in oblivion" through their eradication from reference in the larger societal discourse; while, at the same time, those that are "good" – those actions, the recollection of which induce a sense of 'healthy pride' in our collective – are consistently highlighted.

Although Arendt probably would not have put it in so many words, she is, at least to some extent, referencing what Franz Fanon noted as the fact that "[t]he colonist makes history and he knows it."²³⁵ Including, in the sense of quite literally physically writing the texts of "history." And this is, perhaps, the crux of the issue here pertained. For, Arendt continues,

The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain.²³⁶

'Subterranean' is used here in the sense that, as the West increasingly discussed the dignity of "man" – a much remembered and lauded aspect of European history for European society – there was a contemporaneous degradation of real men and women; a "history" of violence and exploitation in non-European regions.

What is particularly poignant about this statement is the fact that Arendt is herself participating in a seemingly unconscious relegation of "the subterranean stream of Western history" to a location which prevents it from "usurp[ing] the dignity of our [Western] tradition" within *Origins* itself. For, as Robert Bernasconi has shown, Arendt obfuscated the role of race in *Origins*, sidelining its importance

²³⁵ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 15.

²³⁶ Hannah Arendt, "Preface to the First Edition"* in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (UK: Penguin Random House, 2017), ix-xii.

*Written in the summer of 1950.

since Kant through her constellation of “Imperialism” in order to differentiate what she called “race thinking” from its Totalitarian variant “Racism”.²³⁷ For, in her introduction, Arendt argued that Europeans were, in her present moment (1951) yearning for a return to that time (the nineteenth century) in which “even horrors...were marked by a certain *moderation* and controlled by *respectability*, and therefore could be related to the general appearance of *sanity*.”²³⁸ She then relegates to a footnote the information that, between 1890 and 1911, perhaps 20-40,000,000 Congolese were reduced to 8,500,000 (according to her sources) through Belgian rule. This begs the question, in Bernasconi’s words, of “how many more Africans Leopold II needed to kill to break her impression that these years were marked by moderation”?²³⁹ That is, Arendt demonstrates the power of the erasure by reproducing it even as she identifies and seeks to address it. W.E.B. DuBois, and the Black French-Caribbean intellectual Aimé Césaire – both persons whose assertions regarding the coloniality of Nazism are almost invariably quoted in the modern of the thesis (when discussing “connections” between colonialism and Nazism) – were also well-aware of and discussed such “erasure.” They discussed it, however, without replicating its logic as had Arendt. In fact, they discussed this erasure *in the very text in which they assert connections between Nazism and colonialism*.

W.E.B. DuBois: History, “Erasure,” and “Connections.”

DuBois, like Nehru and Padmore, had similar experiences with education, racism, and exposure to the power of narrative. As Cedric Robinson has pointed out in his study of “Black Radicalism,” DuBois was uniquely situated to recognize and interrogate both the interstices of racial “othering” (particularly

²³⁷ Robert Bernasconi, “When the Real Crime Began: Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and the Dignity of the Western Philosophical Tradition,” 55-68 in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 58-9.

²³⁸ Arendt, *The Origins...*, 123.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

in the United States), and its relation to the production of history, both in popular memory and the scholarly realm. In Robinson's words, DuBois,

...as a Black scholar, had had an immediate and profound experience with the false histories produced in [European/American] culture. Both his training at Harvard with its history department largely influenced by German historiography, and his studies in Berlin had left him with an acute sensitivity for myth and propaganda in history.²⁴⁰

Like Padmore and Nehru, DuBois was not bound by the Soviet interpretation of Marxism. In Robinson's words, as a "critic of Marx, DuBois had possessed no obligations to Marxist or Leninist dogma, nor to the vagaries of historical analysis and interpretation that characterized American Communist thought."²⁴¹

In his seven hundred plus pages of *Black Reconstruction* (1935), DuBois put his understanding of propaganda and false history to work and systematically reveals the mythical status of both Northern and Southern memory of the Reconstruction period. He demonstrates that, contrary to the myth of the uncivilized "Negro" as the instigator of chaos and tyranny in the south during that period, "Negros" had been, on the whole, effective legislators, and hard-working, law-abiding, education-seeking, eager citizens who significantly contributed to the post-war civil and economic recovery of each post-confederate state. DuBois bolsters his claims through detailed reference to and analysis of archival material gleaned from each of the eleven ex-confederate states (including newspapers, letters, state documents, transcripts of legislative debates, etc.) from the Reconstruction period.²⁴² Having dedicating at least one entire chapter to Reconstruction in each post-confederate state, covering literally hundreds of pages with careful analysis of archival sources, DuBois concludes this tome by comparing the picture he has just revealed with a survey of recent American academic, curricular, and popular presentations of

²⁴⁰ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of a Radical Tradition* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 228.

²⁴¹ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism...*, 228.

²⁴² E.g., DuBois reveals the falsity of Southern claims regarding the exceptional corruption of black Reconstruction legislators. He points out that corruption was endemic to the American political system at the time (both North and South) and that many of the most corrupt Southern officials were not Black or Northern "carpet baggers" but, in fact, members of the existent Southern White aristocracy.

that era. Commenting on the contrast between the two, DuBois concludes of past (and present)

portrayals of Reconstruction:

In order to paint the South as a martyr to inescapable fate, to make the North the magnanimous emancipator, and to ridicule the Negro as the impossible joke in the whole development, we have in fifty years, by libel, innuendo and silence, so completely misstated and obliterated the history of the Negro in America and his relation to its work and government that today it is almost unknown²⁴³... by long study of the facts, I stand at the end of this writing, literally aghast at what American historians have done to this field.²⁴⁴

In short, with regards to those persons of African descent in America generally, and their part in American Reconstruction more specifically, there had been, on the part of American historians and educators, a “deliberate attempt...to change the facts of history” to make that history “pleasant reading for [white] Americans.”²⁴⁵ This, he argues, is a reflection of the larger tendency in the writing of national histories in which “[o]ne is astonished...at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over.”²⁴⁶ For example,

We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk but only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slave owner, or that Thomas Jefferson had mulatto children, or that Alexander Hamilton had Negro blood, and simply remember the things we regard as creditable and inspiring.²⁴⁷

For DuBois, such history “paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth.”²⁴⁸ The inordinate success of this enterprise – the resultant deliberately falsified “histories” – is demonstrative of the larger socio-political reality within which the writing of history takes place. His point is that, “...with sufficient general agreement and determination among the dominant classes, the truth of history may be utterly distorted and contradicted and changed to any convenient fairy tale that the

²⁴³ DuBois, *Black Reconstruction...*, 725-6.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 726.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 713.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 722.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

masters of men wish."²⁴⁹ With such a realization, DuBois reflects that, although he is "...not familiar enough with the vast field of human history to pronounce on the relative guilt of...historians of other times and fields,...if the history of the past has been written in the same fashion, it is useless as science and misleading as ethics."²⁵⁰

It was with such understandings of the ways in which popular consciousness is manipulated that DuBois wrote his now famous declaration regarding the "connection" between Nazism and colonialism that has previously been discussed (that there was "no Nazi atrocity...which Christian civilization...had not long been practicing against colored folks...")²⁵¹ In his 1947 *The World and Africa*, DuBois imbedded the above statement within a string of arguments regarding the ways in which Western society produces a culture of Bowdlerization to protect itself from its own conscience, in treating both its histories and its present. In the paragraphs immediately preceding this utterance, DuBois argues that, from the nineteenth century rise of the industrial system until the present moment, "[w]idespread insensibility to cruelty and suffering" developed amongst the powerful in Europe (i.e., the white male bourgeoisie and aristocracy). At the same time, "every effort" was made on their part to ensure that the rest of this "white world" (i.e., its women, children, and "more sensitive" men) were "deceived" to "guard against too much emotional sympathy with the distressed."²⁵² They were deceived "not only" about "distress" in the colonies, but also that in the "slums" of the newly arisen industrial factory system.

This was done, he argues, through the presentation of information on the colonies (and the urban slums) to the metropolitan population in the form of "[e]laborate writing, disguised as interpretation" and through the "testimony of so called 'experts'" who "made it impossible for charming

²⁴⁹ DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, 726.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 725-6.

²⁵¹ W. E. B. DuBois *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has Played in World History* (New York: International Publishers, 2015*), 23

*Originally published in 1946

²⁵² Dubois, *The World...*, 23.

people in Europe to realize what their comforts and luxuries cost in sweat, blood, death, and despair.” This was “not only in the remoter parts of the world, but even on their own doorsteps.”²⁵³ That is, he insisted that the European elites spent considerable energy keeping the truth about conditions not only in the colonies but also at home a secret from the more “sensitive” of their class. The “weightier” questions of “law, mercy, justice, and truth” were “omitted” from general consideration and in their place a “Gracious culture was built up; delicately poised literature treated the little intellectual problems of the rich and well-born [and] discussed small matters of manners and convention...”²⁵⁴

At a certain point, DuBois indicates, after enough “reiteration” of racial messaging, the metropolitan population learned to deny “even the evidence of their own eyes and sense” when it came to questions of race and color. As evidence he points to the fact that, according to the metropolitan racial logic, the “ugly features of Darwin and Winston Churchill” are considered to be “beautiful” by Western standards while, those of “Toussaint” and “Menelik” have been deemed “ugly”.²⁵⁵ For DuBois, it was *out of this logic* that the racialized conception of the world was born which enabled the brutality against “colored” folk so essential for what Cedric Robinson called “racial capitalism.” With the development of industrial capitalism there developed a culture, “Victorian” culture, which included not only obfuscation of those less savory aspects of itself, but also the construction of a a conceptual “state of exception” with which to justify those ‘less savory’ “aspects.” Note, in reading the following, the way in which DuBois seamlessly transitions from his discussion of erasure to that connecting Nazism with colonialism. For, DuBois, in the Victorian period,

The concept of the European “gentlemen” was evolved: a man well-bred and of meticulous grooming...who did not hesitate...to cheat “niggers”; an ideal of sportsmanship which reflected the Golden Rule and yet contradicted it – not only in business and in industry within white countries, but all over Asia and Africa – by indulging in lying, murder, theft, rape, deception, and degradation, of the same sort and kind which has left the world aghast at the accounts of what the Nazis did in Poland and Russia...

²⁵³ Dubois, *The World...*, 22.

²⁵⁴ In other words, a “culture” like that which Edward Said discussed in his *Culture and Empire*.

²⁵⁵ Dubois, *The World...*, 22-23.

And it is only immediately *after* all these articulations of the erasure of Western colonial atrocities that DuBois makes his (now oft-quoted) statement, that,

...There was no Nazi atrocity – concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women, or ghastly blasphemy of children – which the Christian civilization of Europe had not long been practicing against colored folks in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world.”²⁵⁶

In other words, for DuBois, this “connection” was something that was made difficult for the metropolitan audiences to recognize because of culture of erasure and bowdlerization that existed around them.

Aimé Césaire: Discourses, Perspective, and Non-Recognition.

The key text of Aimé Césaire, originally published in 1950, and so often quoted thereafter in the context of the Nazism/colonialism connection, is also reflective of such erasure. In Césaire’s writing, this erasure is achieved through silencing, ignoring, and justifying. Césaire argues it would be “worthwhile,” therefore, for the colonized intellectual to “reveal” that the twentieth century’s “very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeoisie” has, in a sort-of metaphysical sense and “*without his being aware of it...a Hitler inside of him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon*”. For, this “very Christian bourgeoisie” exists as the rulers of an empire which, as a matter of course, performs many of those actions for which, in Europe, Hitler and his ilk are deemed morally reprehensible: military conquest (Europe conquered nearly one-third of the world’s land and population in the late nineteenth century), violent day-to-day authoritarian administration of said territories, and economic exploitation for the benefit of the “home” economy – all justified through a racial or civilizational hierarchal discourse.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Dubois, *The World...*, 23.

²⁵⁷ Césaire, *Discourse...*, 36. By the early twentieth century, the “civilizational” discourse often functioned in the here-and-now essentially as that of “race”.

For Césaire, Europeans are “surprise[d]” when the “barbarism” of Nazism manifests itself in Europe because Europeans “hide the truth from themselves”;²⁵⁸ they are shocked that many of those aspects of Nazism which they condemn are concomitantly being perpetrated by their own imperial governments on colonial peoples. They “hide the truth from themselves” that they have “tolerated” Nazism, that they “absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it...” as long as it was not perpetrated against themselves or other Europeans.²⁵⁹

When a society as such, rather than just individuals in it, shields itself from its own actions, there are those in that society who simply do not know about that from which the society as a whole shields them. Such persons then, could condemn the “barbarism” of Nazism in Europe without any conscious rationalization for why such actions would be justified – if they were aware of them – in the colonies. Popular European condemnations of Nazi “barbarism,” therefore, created a space whereby Europeans, if they were presented with the similar “barbarism” of colonialism, must choose between several mental “options” in order to be “consistent”. That is, such Europeans must either: 1; equally condemn the “barbarism” occurring in the colonies, 2; *continue* to “hide the truth from themselves” or, 3; rationalize the continued application of “barbarisms” in the colonies – the most obvious “rationalization” being the application of a racial discourse of difference (i.e., the same “rationalization” as that mobilized by the Nazi’s themselves).²⁶⁰ This is the context within which Césaire made his famous declaration (quoted in the introduction) that, if said bourgeois “rails against” Hitler, “he is being inconsistent” and,

...at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India and the “niggers” of Africa.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 36.

²⁵⁹ Césaire, *Discourse...*, 36.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Conclusion: “Non-Recognition” in Nehru, Padmore, DuBois, Césaire, and Arendt

The “connections” literature which has repetitively cited DuBois, Césaire, and Arendt for their declarations of “connections” between Nazism and colonialism, has not noted the textual context in which these statements were written – contexts which explicitly dealt with metropolitan non-recognition of colonial atrocity and the mechanisms which bring this about. Their purpose was not to argue that colonial violence was *necessarily* more-brutal or extensive or morally reprehensible than, say, that of nationalistic violence – so far as the two can and/or are chosen to be the focus of differentiation. Rather, they made such connections in the context of asserting that colonial violence is not *remembered* in the *national narratives* of the modern (post?)-colonial metropolises; and, therefore, Europeans do not recognize the similarities between the two.

Discussion of the “erasure” of colonialism from western memory may well ring familiar to the reader familiar with post-colonial memory scholarship.²⁶² However, this literature is focused upon modern post-colonial *memory* of a *past* colonialism. Nehru, Padmore, and to a lesser extent Césaire and DuBois were writing of *perception* of colonialism in the *present*. George Padmore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Aimé Césaire, and W.E.B. DuBois, when they noted “connections” between Nazism and colonialism, did so in the context of discussing metropolitan non-recognition by the colonial metropole of the atrocities being committed in their own empires. George Padmore and Jawaharlal Nehru particularly, argue that this non-recognition was the result of the “truncated” national perspective of said metropolitan populations, and argue that if said populations were to take a more global approach, the “connections” would become obvious. The following chapter delves into their attempts to reach the British public with

²⁶² Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial aphasia: Race and disabled histories in France" *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 121-156; Ann Laura Stoler, and Karen Strassler. "Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in 'New Order' Java" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (2000): 4-48; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999); Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015); Paul Bijl, "Colonial memory and forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia" *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 3-4 (2012): 441-461.

this message in the 1930s. I will show how Padmore and Nehru used existing British condemnation of specific geo-political events such as the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, the fascist bombing of Spanish cities, and Nazi expansion in Europe, to demonstrate to their British listeners that their perceptions of their own elites are false; and, therefore, to demonstrate that their perceptions of a benevolent empire are also false. These events were used as intellectual stepping-stones to guide their European listeners to the recognition of the moral reprehensibility of colonialism.

Chapter 4: Revealing British Elite Intentions and Meanings to the British Public (1935-1940)

Chapter Introduction

As fascist aggression increased throughout the 1930s, Nehru and Padmore reflected on its meaning and consequence for themselves and the colonized world, as well as the European reaction to it. Observing a discrepancy between the two, they sought to demonstrate to the British public their differing perceptions of those events. They argue that the “proper” perspective from which to understand these events is a broader (i.e., less nationally “truncated”) perspective. From this perspective, opposition to both fascism and British imperialism was a straightforward and non-contradictory stance. They demonstrate that this was the perspective for many colonized persons from the rise of fascism till Britain was truly threatened by Nazism in the late 1930s. For, although there was tension between hegemonic British imperialism and German “revisionist” imperialism, in the larger picture of world affairs – particularly that of the threat of the USSR and communist revolution in Europe – many British elites (they argued) did not perceive (German) Nazism and (Italian) fascism as the real threat to “British interests.” From the perspective of their ruling elites the “interests” of the “revisionist” imperialisms of Germany, Italy, and Japan were acceptable as long as they could be directed in ways unthreatening to British hegemony.

Nehru and Padmore therefore, sought to reveal to the British metropolitan public the real meaning behind their leaders’ declarations regarding “Freedom, Democracy, and Self-Determination.” They recognized that said public did not necessarily understand said terms as representing that which was intended when uttered by their leaders. That is, Padmore and Nehru sought to reveal to their English readers/listeners, the realities of what their leaders *intended* rather than what said public *understood* as the meaning conveyed by such words and actions. In particular, they did this by bringing to light the seeming contradictions between the utterances and actions of Britain’s ruling elite and demonstrating that they were, in fact, not so. For, “universal” language had no “universal” meaning so

often ascribed to it in the present.²⁶³ Drawing on the work of Adom Getachew in this regard, signifiers such as “freedom,” “democracy,” and “self-determination” do and do not contain within themselves “stable unequivocal meanings that need only be applied and realized in practice.”²⁶⁴ Nehru demonstrated the way in which such terms are weighted and applied in reality through examples of British reporting on the geo-politics of Europe.

Austria

In February 1934 Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss suspended the Austrian Parliament and, after the unrest of the short “Austrian Civil War” instituted an authoritarian-type state – ending democracy in Austria until its post-war restoration in the guise of the Second Republic.²⁶⁵ Nehru, in prison from June 1934 to February 1935, was writing his *Autobiography* and was allowed to “have” the *Manchester Guardian* during the period of his prison sentence that coincided with the Austrian upheaval. In his *Autobiography*, he critiqued the *Guardian’s* editorials on the British government’s response, or lack thereof, to the fall of Austrian democracy. The *Guardian* (as recorded by Nehru) demanded to know why the British government, had nothing to say regarding the destruction of democracy in Austria. The *Guardian* asked,

...why, if England stands for liberty, has its Prime Minister so little to say [on the end of democracy in Austria]? We have heard his praises of dictatorships...But a Prime Minister of England should have something to say of tyrannies, in whatever country, which kill often the body, but more often, and with a worse death, the soul.’²⁶⁶

Nehru points to the inconsistency of the *Guardian’s* concern for democracy by following the above quote of that paper with the question, “why, if the *Manchester Guardian* stands for liberty, has it so

²⁶³ As demonstrated by their use with regards to the “freedom” of owning slaves. See, Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture, 1991).

²⁶⁴ Getachew, 39-40.

²⁶⁵ The complete takeover of Austria by Germany (the *Anschluss*) would not occur until March 12, 1938. Chancellor Dollfuss, however, would be assassinated the following year, 1934, during a failed Nazi coup attempt.

²⁶⁶ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 500.

little to say when liberty is crushed in India?" From his perspective, Indians "...also have known not only bodily suffering, but that far worse ordeal of the soul" to which the *Guardian* refers. That is, the "bodily suffering" and "ordeal of the soul" perpetrated upon a people by an authoritarian government. The *Guardian* waxed poetic as it described the encroachment of authoritarianism in Europe. For the *Guardian*, those areas of Europe that had descended into authoritarianism had "ceased to breath" freely, they were suffering "gradual suffocation," and were approaching a "mental coma." In fact, "Europe from the Rhine to the Urals is one great prison". Nehru reflects upon the question of how such a newspaper, amongst the many other "lovers of Freedom" in England, could be so horrified at the destruction of democracy in Europe but do not have a similar level of outrage at the existent authoritarianism within the British Empire. How could they be "so oblivious" to the fate of India, and "...miss seeing here [in India] what they condemn with such fervor elsewhere [in Europe]?"²⁶⁷ Such misalignment of understanding when it came to world events and institutions was far from the private domain of the *Guardian*, but was a structural feature of British public consciousness. Let us look, for example, at Padmore and Nehru's perception of the League of Nations.

The League of Nations

There is an assumption in the west, Nehru observed, whereby the League is understood to be an organization, the chartered purpose of which was to rid the world of "the anarchy of sovereign states."²⁶⁸ However, because the League is based upon a charter which guarantees the boundaries of the existent political entities – i.e., the sovereignty of the British, French, Dutch, Belgian, Portuguese, and Spanish Empires – this meant that the League, inherently, was an entity based upon the defense of an imperial *status quo*. Its purpose was to ensure the continuance of European empire in its post-Great War form. For Nehru, Padmore, the Indian National Congress, and others, the League was an instrument

²⁶⁷ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 500.

²⁶⁸ Nehru, "Letter to Lord Lothian" in *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p. 65.

of British and French capitalist imperialism, the “chief function” of which was to “preserve” the global political “status quo”: the imperialist hegemony of Britain and France.²⁶⁹ The contradiction between its public perception as an institution intended to protect the world from inter-national war and its actual function as a protector of the imperial status quo, ensured the League was “frequently involved in hopeless contradictions.”²⁷⁰ Padmore agreed. From its very founding, the League was “used by the ruling classes of the victorious Powers as a means...of defending the *status quo* against the Revisionist Powers...” – Germany, Italy, and Japan.²⁷¹ Nehru argued similarly in a letter to Lord Lothian that

Britain certainly does not want fresh wars. She is a satisfied and surfeited power. Why should she risk what she has got? She wants to maintain the *status quo* which is eminently to her advantage.²⁷²

Nehru notes that the affinity between fascism and that which the British elites described as “democracy” is revealed by the reactions of said elites to the various international crises of the 1930s. As early as 1927, the Indian National Congress published a foreign policy document, declaring “‘India could be no party to an imperialist war.’”²⁷³ This was maintained as “one of the foundations” of Congress policy and “[n]o individual organization in India opposed it.”²⁷⁴ In fact, until the time of Churchill’s assumption to power in 1940, Nehru and Congress considered British policy to be “continuously pro-fascist and pro-Nazi.”²⁷⁵ This was because of the previous acquiescence and even approval by Britain of Japanese aggression in China and Italian conquest of Abyssinia, financial support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War, and allowing/enabling Nazi expansionism, particularly the “annexation” of the Sudetenland. All these “betrayals” of the supposed ideals of the “West” were, in

²⁶⁹ Nehru, “Letter to Lord Lothian” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 65.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 256-7; Ibid., 47: “...the Allied Powers, led by England and France, combined themselves into a so-called League of Nations to guarantee the spoils of the World War...”

²⁷² Nehru, “Letter to Lord Lothian” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 66.

²⁷³ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 350.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 350-351.

fact, not so. They were, in the context of Britain's 200-year track-record in India, the *continuance* of British imperial policy; and, for the British Empire to have acted differently, it would have *diverged* from its previous precedents. For Nehru, it was "difficult to believe" that British foreign policy would "suddenly change overnight and champion freedom and democracy... [For, i]ts dominant imperialist outlook and desire to hold on to its empire would continue despite other developments."²⁷⁶

Spain

Reflecting upon the "frightful and terrible" events of the Spanish Civil War, Nehru argues that these had "enormous consequences to the future of Europe and the world." In his perception, India's "fate" is more "bound up" with the results of this conflict than the majority of the people in India "realize." This struggle is essentially one between the forces of "progress" and those of "reaction", between the rule of "democracy" and "cruel military-fascism."²⁷⁷ For Franco and his revolutionaries sought to overthrow a popularly elected democratic government. Spain was the testing ground for fascistic expansion: if fascism is triumphant in Spain, then European fascism (in "cooperation" with that of Japan in the east), he argues, would proceed to attempt "world domination."²⁷⁸

The reactions of the various European states to the Spanish crisis were "noteworthy" for revealing the true interests and perspectives of these states. For, although the "constituted government" of Spain was that of a "moderate liberal regime" and its opponents were therefore in "rebellion against law and order" – "words so dear to the British Government" – it was that same British Government that not only did nothing to aid the Spanish government. At the same time, "it is

²⁷⁶ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 351.

²⁷⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" * *The Leader*, September 28, 1936" in *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p. 583. **
*Speech on Palestine Day in Allahabad.

**Reprinted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Eighteen Months in India 1936-1937: Being Further Essays and Writings by Jawaharlal Nehru* (Allahabad & London: Kitabistan, 1938), 132-142.

²⁷⁸ Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" in *Selected Works... Vol. 7*, p. 583; Nehru, "India and the World" *Selected Works...*, *Vol. 7*, p. 52-58

“interesting to note,” that the British Government allowed “financial aid from the big financiers of London” to reach Franco’s fascist forces.²⁷⁹ For, as Nehru explained,

In this vital issue we find the ruling classes and government of Britain definitely favouring fascism. We find imperialist Britain with her much vaunted democracy sympathizing with those who are trying to crush democracy in Spain.²⁸⁰

For Nehru, this was “not really surprising, for essentially imperialism and fascism are of one family”; opposing the forces of progress – of “social progress” in Europe and “even” “political progress” amongst “subject” peoples.²⁸¹

Spanish Colonial Morocco and the Civil War

Both Nehru and Padmore note that the first major military force of the Spanish fascist rebellion were, in fact, colonial troops from Morocco brought to Spain by their fascist officers²⁸² – describing this use of colonial soldiers to crush democracy as, essentially, a boomerang effect, whereby the “fascism” of colonialism is quite literally brought back to Europe in the form of colonial officers and their “colored” troops. Both note that the Left had criticized these soldiers for their part in crushing socialism and democracy in Spain. They argue that leftists should not be blaming these colonial soldiers who had no choice in the matter. These soldiers would not have been available for use by Franco, they argue, if the Spanish Republican government had, in the words of Padmore, “immediately it assumed office, issued decrees granting colonial peoples economic and political reforms as a gesture towards self-

²⁷⁹ Nehru, “Spain and Palestine” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 583.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² The rebellion was first successful in Spanish Morocco (which implies that perhaps, a high percentage of Spanish colonists sympathized with the rebels rather than the Republic – i.e., they were pro-fascist), and the Spanish colonial army made up of Moroccan soldiers and Spanish officers were airlifted to Spain by German Junkers since the Spanish navy had remained loyal to the republic.

government..." If they had done this, the support of the colonized Moroccan people for the Republican Government "would have been assured."²⁸³

Nehru asks how and why it was "allowed to happen" that Franco was able to "take advantage of Moroccan people to suppress the republic of Spain."²⁸⁴ From his perspective, it was because the republic had taken no substantial steps to support the freedom of the Moroccan people from the social and economic impacts of colonial oppression. If the Republican government had "functioned properly," it would have made significant real demonstrations of its commitment to the improvement of the lot of the average Moroccan person. However, it did not. Because they did not, Franco, who "nobody can believe" stands for "freedom" was able to make just such promises and thereby win the support of Moroccan troops against Spanish continental democracy. Padmore makes essentially the same argument in a *New Leader* article published in May 1938 entitled "Why Moors help Franco." For Padmore, the "Moors" would not have fought for the fascist had the "Popular Front Government, immediately it assumed office, issued decrees granting the colonial peoples economic and political reforms as a gesture towards self-government..."²⁸⁵

For Nehru it was "tragic" that Moroccan colonial soldiers, who "ought to have been behind the republican government" were instead "made to attack it." However, it was "no good blaming them" for "[t]hey were misled, and probably all manner of promises were made to them. This was perhaps done because they were poverty-stricken."²⁸⁶ Padmore essentially agreed:

²⁸³ George Padmore, "Why Moors help Franco" *New Leader*, 20 May, 1938. Transcribed: by Christian Høgsbjerg* for the Marxists Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1938/moors-franco.htm> (accessed 3 June 2019). Padmore also makes this argument in *Africa and World Peace*, 236-237.

*Christian Høgsbjerg is lecturer in Critical History and Politics at the University of Brighton and author of many books on the experience of black colonized intellectuals in Britain during this period. Høgsbjerg's research is particularly focused on Padmore's childhood friend C.L.R. James, and his publications on this topic include, Christian Høgsbjerg, *C. L. R. James in Imperial Britain* (London: Duke University Press, 2014). See also discussion of Høgsbjerg in the Introduction of this Thesis.

²⁸⁴ Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 583

²⁸⁵ George Padmore, "Why Moors help Franco"

²⁸⁶ Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 582-586; Nehru, "India and Britain" in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 44.

It is not the politically backward Moors who should be blamed for being used by the forces of reaction against the Spanish workers and peasants, but the leaders of the Popular Front, who, in attempting to continue the policy of Spanish Imperialism, made it possible for Franco to exploit the natives in the service of Fascism...²⁸⁷*Economic misery and starvation...made it possible for the Fascists to recruit natives.*²⁸⁸

If it had not been for such social and economic circumstances, there was no reason for the Moors to fight on the side of fascism. As Padmore put it,

*...the Moors have no particular ideological interest in Fascism. They, like most colonial peoples, are not concerned with the conflicting political conflicts going on in Europe. To them all whites are alike...".*²⁸⁹

For Padmore, “[n]o people have had to pay such a price for Empire as the Spanish workers. It should be a warning to the French and British workers whose ruling classes control the largest Empires...”²⁹⁰ It is for this reason, Nehru informs his listeners, that:

...it is well for the British, and for those people who are interested in the British Empire, and more especially those who talk in terms of democracy and in terms of opposition to fascism, to remember that they cannot ultimately be anti-fascist or go far in their fight against fascism, unless they are also anti-imperialist.”²⁹¹

Bombing Barcelona and the North-West Frontier

In the summer of 1938, Nehru traveled to Barcelona where, for five days, he observed the bombing of that city by Franco’s fascist supported forces. Afterward, he proceeded to London, where, during a month-long visit, he made various observations to the British people regarding their understandings of these bombings. For, bombing civilians had been consistently employed throughout the British Empire since 1921²⁹² as a means through which to maintain the empire on a “shoestring” in the context of heightened anti-colonial resistance and British financial difficulties due to heavy wartime

²⁸⁷ Padmore, “Why Moors help Franco” *New Leader*, 20 May, 1938; Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 236-237.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Nehru, “Spain and Palestine” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 582-586; Nehru, “India and Britain” in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 44.

²⁹² In fact, since 1919 in Afghanistan, then a British protectorate fighting for sovereignty. It became official colonial policy in 1921.

debts and an increasingly competitive global industrial and financial environment.²⁹³ In the bureaucratic discourse of British policy makers, such “police bombings” created an atmosphere of “healthy terror” amongst the occupants of “recalcitrant villages.”²⁹⁴

He pointed to the contradictions he perceived as underlying the denunciations of the German and Italian bombing of civilians during the Spanish Civil War by illustrious British figures such as the archbishop of Chichester. At one conference, he asked his listeners to consider the consistency of such condemnations:

The Bishop of Chichester demanded yesterday at this conference that no treaty should be made with countries that were carrying on aerial bombing, a sentiment that was rightly applauded. What of England then, which is still responsible for bombing on the frontier of India?²⁹⁵

He had made similar arguments the previous month. In a July 16, 1938 London speech he declared that what “pained” him most “here in England” was that “...the whole method and mode of approach to this problem was wrong.” He continued:

I give you an analogy which is very much to the fore now. There is great indignation at the bombing of Barcelona and Canton²⁹⁶ and very rightly. It is inhuman and horrible and only a very few days ago I was myself a witness, not once but at least seven or eight times, to the bombing of Barcelona. A horrible thing and it is an experience I am not likely to forget as long as I live. I want you to appreciate that this bombing of Barcelona and Canton are of the same type, maybe not in the same degree, but there is no difference in principle between the bombing of Barcelona and the bombing of the Northwest frontier.²⁹⁷

²⁹³ Priya Satia, "Drones: a history from the British Middle East" *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* Vol. 5, no. 1 (2014), 2. It is also likely that growing nationalism in India and its vehement opposition to the use of Indian troops in the suppression of anti-colonial movements was another factor which drove British decision makers – I.E. Churchill – to promote aerial “policing” in India.

²⁹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘Britain, Spain and India’...”, 25-26.

²⁹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘The Bombing of Open Towns’* *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1938” in *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p.85. **

*Speech at the International Peace Conference, Paris, July 24, 1938.

**Reprinted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1941), 278-283.

²⁹⁶ Canton: modern day Guangzhou city, Guangdong province. The Japanese purposely bombed civilian targets in Canton in the spring of 1938.

²⁹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘The Spirit of Indian Nationalism’* *The Bombay Chronicle*, July 16, 1938” in Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p. 74.

*Speech at Kingsway Hall, London.

Nehru points out how the average Englishman cannot seem to recognize without it being spelled out for him that it is inconsistent to condemn the fascist bombing of civilians in Madrid while (at least implicitly) condoning the British Empire's policy of "strategic bombing." That is, the bombing of whole villages, i.e., "civilians" as a means of "control" on the North West frontier of India. He had dealt with this issue many times before. For example, in a June 23, 1938 press interview, he argued that, although the "scope" of the bombings he experienced in Barcelona "cannot fairly compare" with that of the "police" bombings on India's Northwestern frontier, "in principle", these bombings were the "same thing". Both bombing campaigns "have the same effect": their "only victims are women and children," and they "arouse" only "rage and a desire for revenge."²⁹⁸

For Nehru, Britain was responsible not only for their own "police bombings." Britain also bore "heavy responsibility" for the existence of civilian bombing in the world at all – including the bombing of Spanish women and children they now decry (as well as the bombing of their own ships off the coast of Spain²⁹⁹). This was because Britain had undermined the unanimous decision at the World Disarmament Conference in 1932 to completely ban all aerial bombardment of civilian targets.³⁰⁰ The British delegation to the Conference insisted that "a proviso" be added permitting bombing "for police purposes in outlying areas."³⁰¹ Because Britain had insisted that certain forms of bombing civilians be globally sanctioned, she had left the door open to the acceptance/tolerance by the global community of the bombing of civilians in the Spanish Civil War and beyond.

²⁹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'Britain, Spain and India' * *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, June 24, 1938" in Nehru, *Selected Works... Vol. 9*, p. 25-26.

*Interview with the British Press, London, June 23, 1938.

²⁹⁹ In the late 1930s, German and Italian planes sometimes bombed British merchant vessels in Spanish waters.

³⁰⁰ N.C. Fleming, "Cabinet Government, British Imperial Security, and the World Disarmament Conference, 1932-1934" *War in History* 18 no. 1 (2011): 62-84. At the World Disarmament Conference in 1932, there was unanimous agreement for the complete abolition of aerial bombing except for Britain's objection. Britain insisted that a provision be added which permitted bombing for "police" purposes in outlying areas.

³⁰¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'Britain, Spain and India' ...", 26, fn 4.

For Nehru, the result of Britain's selective condemnation of other powers (e.g. of the bombing of Spanish civilians but not their own bombing of "colonials") had placed Britain in a bind. Her continued domination of more people and more land than any other European power meant that she could find "no valid answer" to Mussolini's "taunt" that his conquest of Ethiopia was no different from what British imperialists "have done before, and are doing now".³⁰² In the previously quoted London speech on 16 July, 1938, Nehru continued,

I want you to appreciate that if England or the British Government is responsible for the bombing of the [North-West] frontier [of India]...it is quite impossible for it to condemn the bombing of any other place. You know well that all over the rest of the world this attitude of the British Government in sometimes condemning other powers when they bomb, and not themselves stopping their own bombing is a matter of ribald jests, and rightly so, because they have landed themselves in an extraordinary state where everything they say is pure quibbling. They cannot justify any protest which they might make because of the actions they are taking.³⁰³

The moral condemnation by Britain's elites of the rising "revisionist imperialisms" therefore, needed to be recognized for what they were: attempts on the part of the British ruling elite to use moral language as a weapon in the "game" of imperial chess.

Abyssinia

In his 1937 book *Africa and World Peace*, Padmore made similar arguments regarding European discourse for events in Africa. Padmore argues that the British public have a false perception of British benevolence towards Abyssinia in the context of Italian aggression. In this work, he sought to provide a "a kaleidoscopic survey of European diplomacy" showing how the "the scramble for colonies in Africa as markets, sources of raw materials and outlets for monopoly-capital, etc., influenced alliances and alignments among the great European Powers" from the nineteenth century into his present (1936).³⁰⁴ In this work, he painstakingly chronicles the various agreements made by Britain and other European

³⁰² Nehru, "Letter to Lord Lothian" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 65.

³⁰³ Nehru, "'The Spirit of Indian Nationalism' in *Selected Works...Vol.*, p74.

³⁰⁴ Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 2.

powers regarding their “interests” in Abyssinia for over the previous half a century. Such treatment of Ethiopia, he points out, changed little after Ethiopia became a member of the League of Nations. Therefore, he argued, the supposed high ideals of the League of Nations had little (or no) effect on European relations with Ethiopia.³⁰⁵

As far back as 1896, after Ethiopia thwarted Italy’s attempted invasion, Italy turned to the Great Powers to get what they wanted from Ethiopia.³⁰⁶ The Great Powers (including Britain and France) “agreed to divide Abyssinia” between the three of them as they –and other western powers – had divided the rest of the continent without any recourse or thought to the considerations of the territorial occupants.³⁰⁷ Adding “insult to injury”, they had the “audacity” to show their agreement to (Menelik), the Ethiopian Emperor, who Padmore recorded that he “informed them that no treaty which they signed could alter his sovereign rights.”³⁰⁸ Nevertheless the western powers “gave” Ethiopia to Italy more exclusively in 1915 as part of the “London Agreement” by which Italy agreed to join the Allied Powers in the Great War. The agreement stated,

’[We]...agree in principle that Italy may claim some equitable compensation, particularly as regards the settlement in her favour of the questions relating to the frontiers of the Italian colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya, and the neighboring colonies belonging to France and Great Britain.’³⁰⁹

Italy was in no condition to take control of Abyssinia in the aftermath of the Great War however, and the leaders of Abyssinia, seeking to protect themselves against further European encroachment, ensured that Abyssinia became a founding member of the League of Nations. By the charter of the League, this meant that if Abyssinia was invaded by any foreign power, all members of the League were obliged to come to her aid. However, instead of ensuring her independence, Britain and Italy continued

³⁰⁵ Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 113.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

to treat Ethiopia as a region open for colonization. For example, in the 1925 Anglo-Italian Agreement sought to divide control of Ethiopia between those two powers. Padmore reports on an interview given by Mussolini to a French Journalist³¹⁰ in which Mussolini, referencing this agreement, accuses Britain, in Padmore's words, of "hypocrisy...[for] posing as a friend of Ethiopia and a defender of the rights of weak coloured nations." Mussolini perceived Britain's "friendship" with Ethiopia to be hypocritical because, in the words of Mussolini as quoted by Padmore, "in 1925, with the British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Ronald Graham, I signed an Act which divided [and] virtually cut up Abyssinia between Italy and Britain."³¹¹ When Mussolini invaded Abyssinia in 1935, there was little or no difference in the treatment of Ethiopia by her League partners. In response to the invasion Britain and France agreed in the Hoare-Laval Pact of that year (1935) to a collective colonization of Ethiopia whereby all three powers would share in the control of that territory. As Britain's representative, Sir Samuel Hoare objected not to the colonization of Ethiopia, but rather, its colonization and exploitation exclusively for the benefit of Italy. In short, he represented the standard interest of British imperialism – that is, *always contest new colonial potentialities*. Unfortunately for these men, the plan was leaked and popular outrage at its stipulations forced its abandonment.

The idea that British politicians were kept from intervening in the various forms of foreign aggression during the 1930s because of powerful anti-war sentiments amongst the British people which, if they had been violated, would have resulted in the electoral defeat of those who brought war upon the state, was obviously not adhered to by Padmore and Nehru. Their sentiment is supported by the results of the "Peace Ballot" survey. This survey of the British population undertaken in the midst of the Abyssinian crisis produced numbers of fourteen-to-one in favor of collective use of economic measures to stop a foreign power if it "insists on attacking another." More importantly for our purposes here, it

³¹⁰ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 394. Padmore is quoting an interview of Mussolini conducted by the "French journalist" M. Alfred Mallet of the *Petit Journal*.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* 392-4.

resulted in a ratio of three-to-one in favor of the statement that “...the other nations should combine to compel it to stop...[using] military measures.”³¹² Such surveys demonstrate, firstly, that the British public was *not* against war in all circumstances, even after the trauma of the Great War. Secondly, they demonstrate that the British public *did perceive* foreign aggression as something morally reprehensible and worthy of going to war to resist. This was also demonstrated by the “outrage” of the British and French publics at the Hoare Laval agreement. The survey also revealed the profound desire on the part of said population that the League do that which it was supposedly created to do. To end the “anarchy of sovereign states” that supposedly resulted in the Great War.

Some members of Britain’s ruling elite did not agree with the Hoare-Laval approach to preserving the empire and believed that Italy, as an aspiring “Great Power”, needed to be given its “place in the sun.” This faction included Lloyd George (the Prime Minister of Britain during the Great War who called for a “War to make the World Safe for Democracy”) and Lord Lothian (private secretary to Lloyd George while he was PM). Padmore and Nehru discussed in letters, speeches, and publications how Lloyd George and Lord Lothian were both fundamental architects of the Versailles peace settlement.³¹³ At Versailles, they had promoted and agreed to the stripping of German wealth, continental territories and overseas colonies (the largest share of which ending up in British hands) at said negotiations.³¹⁴ Now, in the 1930s, Lloyd George and Lord Lothian recognized their “error” and believed that in order to ensure “World Peace”, the “have” powers (Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Holland) needed to consider “giving” colonies to the “have not” powers (Germany and Italy) for

³¹² Figures are taken from Harold Nicolson, 'British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy', *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 1, no. 1. (January 1937): 57-8. There was also a thirty-to-one ratio of support for Britain remaining within the League, and roughly ten-to-one support for international agreements on: the reduction of armaments, the abolition of the aircraft for national military use, and the “prohibition” of the production of armaments for private profit.

³¹³ Nehru, “Letter to Lord Lothian” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 65; Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 179. Padmore had similar views. See: Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 237-9.

³¹⁴ Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 49-53, 181. Padmore points out that Lloyd George on Jan 23, 1919 was the first to insist upon the dividing the “spoils” at Versailles (on page 181).

their exclusive use. As Padmore wrote in 1937, Lord Lothian opposed the Hoare-Laval agreement, because, like Lloyd George, he believed that, in the long run allowing Italy *exclusive* control over Ethiopia was a better strategy for ensuring the continuance of British imperial hegemony:³¹⁵ “This distinguished publicist [Lord Lothian] advocates returning to Germany her colonies and distributing others among dissatisfied Powers in order to appease them.”³¹⁶ Lothian argued *against* the Hoare-Laval approach (which would have seen a joint “colonization” of Ethiopia by all three powers, Britain, France, and Italy)³¹⁷ because he supported Italian *monopolistic* control of Ethiopia as a colony. Responding to Lloyd George’s support of the “giving” of colonies to the “have not” powers in a House of Commons speech, Nehru argued in a February 22, 1936 London newspaper article, that,

As I listened to Mr. Lloyd George, it struck me as very odd that he should feel so keenly for the unhappy state of the “have-not” powers and yet ignore completely the colonial countries and their peoples. Have they no rights in the matter or no say in it?...it seems a mockery to call powerful nations “have-nots” and ignore the real “have-not” countries and classes which are being dominated over and exploited. If Mr. Lloyd George’s argument is to be carried to its logical conclusion, *the first thing to be done is to equalize from below upwards, put an end to the exploitation of one country or people or class by another, and thus remove the causes of conflict. But that of course would mean an ending of capitalist imperialism.*³¹⁸

Neither the opinion therefore, represented by Lord Lothian and Lloyd George or that represented by Sir Samuel Hoare, took issue with the colonization of Abyssinia as such. Men like Lloyd George, Lord Lothian, Sir Samuel Hoare, etc. were very willing to “appease” Germany by “giving” that “dissatisfied” power parts of its empire – or that of other weaker states or empires³¹⁹ – in exchange for the continued ability to run their global empire in “peace.”³²⁰ It was for this reason, that Nehru and Padmore understood the British and French, when they finally did begin to oppose Hitler, as doing so

³¹⁵ Padmore, *Africa and World Peace*, 237

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Joseph E. Harris, *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia 1936-1941* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 35.

³¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘The Way to Peace’ *Time and Tide*, 1936” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 122-123.

³¹⁹ EG., those of Portugal.

³²⁰ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 351; see also, Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism*, 80.

not out of any moral scruples for “freedom” or “self-determination”, but because Hitler was beginning to threaten their own interests.

Czechoslovakia

From London, Nehru traveled to Czechoslovakia in 1938 where he observed the beginnings of the Sudetenland crisis. He then traveled between London, Paris and Geneva observing local reactions to the latest developments of that crisis.³²¹ In London, he was able to hold meetings with many elite members of the British government, including members of cabinet, to whom he expressed his strong anti-fascist and anti-Nazi “views.” He records in the *Discovery of India*, however, that these “leaders of the free world” made it inordinately clear to him that such “views” were “not welcomed.” From their perspective, “there were many other considerations to be borne in mind.”³²²

Throughout the ensuing Czech crisis, Nehru persistently records through various mediums that he was “amazed and disgusted” at the actions of British and French statesmen, considering their “appeasement” of Hitler to be a “feeble word” for their “betrayal” of Czechoslovakia.³²³ For it was “not merely” that Chamberlain abandoned the Czechs in their time of need. He also brought “all the strength of his government” against the Czechs and threatened them with “all manner of penalties if they did not submit.”³²⁴ Chamberlain “acted throughout as the faithful friend and ally of Herr Hitler.”³²⁵ For Nehru, this was, essentially, “...the rape of Czechoslovakia by Germany with England and France holding her forcibly down!”³²⁶ As he wrote from Paris on September 22, 1938 (the Sudetenland would be annexed on the 1 October):

³²¹ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 605.

³²² Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 4.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “The World Crises” * *The Hindu*, October 12, 1938” in Nehru, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.189.

*Speech at a Friend’s House, London, October 4, 1938.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, “On the Brink” *National Herald*, September 22, 1938” in Nehru, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 157.

Mr. Chamberlain held the important cards in his hands and could have imposed an honorable peace, or, at any rate, a much better agreement. No one can doubt that this was certain a few weeks earlier.

This was not just his own opinion as he would later note, for, “Mr. Churchill” agreed that “but for Britain’s intervention, the Czechs could have got, at any time previously, much better terms...”³²⁷

However, as Nehru saw it, any peaceful solution to the situation without capitulation to Hitler

“...involved a measure of cooperation with Russia and a certain opposition to Hitler. Mr. Chamberlain’s fundamental policy has been opposed to both these developments.”³²⁸

British Ruling Class Fear the USSR

From Nehru’s perspective, if Britain and France formed a “peace front” with the Soviet Union to guarantee the independence of Czechoslovakia, such a coalition would effectively check German aggression and ensure the continuation of peace. For, it would be “madness” for the Nazis to simultaneously initiate war with what he considered to be the most-powerful Great Powers (Britain, France, and the USSR) and all the smaller local states that would inevitably be drawn into such an alliance. However, although alliance with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany was a “straight and obvious policy, inevitably leading to peace”, it was

...not to the liking of the British Government, for it meant cooperation with the Soviet Union. It meant the strengthening of the Soviet Union and releasing the popular forces all over the world. Class sympathies of the British Government made them view the Soviet Union with horror and inclined them towards Nazism and fascism. And so[,] although they talked of democracy and peace, they pursued a policy of appeasement of fascism and thus directly led directly to war.^{329*}

In other words, the British policy of “appeasement” was driven by a refusal to join in an alliance with the Soviet Union.

³²⁷ Nehru, “‘The World Crises’ in, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.189.

³²⁸ Nehru, “On the Brink” in, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 157.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 156. Note how confident Nehru is that this *will* lead to war as demonstrated by the fact that he speaks in the *past* tense long before Britain declares war (Britain would not be at war for another year). That is, for Nehru, the British elites have already “led” the world to war.

With the rise of Nazism in Germany in the early 1930s, the USSR had pivoted, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis, away from its previous foreign policy of aiding anti-imperialism in the colonies, to one of “collective security.” This policy sought an alliance with the colonial/imperial powers it had so recently been attempting to undermine against the rising Nazi/fascist threat. However, although Stalin had reversed the anti-imperial propaganda of the USSR in 1934 as part of this strategy to form an alliance with the West, Britain’s ruling classes perceived the USSR to be their *class* enemy, while continental fascism was only a potential geo-strategic rival. For Chamberlain and his government, as representatives of the British ruling classes, the Soviet Union was a harbinger of an existential threat to their power: successful socialist revolution in metropole and colony since the USSR had engaged in agitation for and support of both before its turn to “collective security”.

From the perspective of the British ruling classes, as long as continental fascism maintained its hostility to the Soviet Union and suppressed Germany’s radical left – ensuring that Europe’s most advanced industrial economy, the birthplace of Marxist theory and location of the near-successful 1919 Spartacist Uprising was denied to “the Communists” – it was the lesser of two evils. For them, the very fact that the USSR had dropped its anti-imperialist line in response to the rise of Hitler demonstrated to the rulers of those Isles the counterweight which fascism could provide to that greatest of all threats. German expansion could be, at the very least, “tolerated” by Britain’s elites³³⁰ as long as Nazi Germany did not threaten their interests. Even if Nazi Germany did “threaten their interests,” as long as these threats were balanced out by the threat that the Nazi’s posed to that power which the British elite considered to be the *most significant global* threat to their power (global communist revolution), the British elite could countenance an authoritarian Nazi state in place of the unstable Weimar Republic. It

³³⁰ Nehru, “On the Brink” in, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 157.

was this counterweight to the Left that Fascism could provide that, from Nehru's perspective, led many of Britain's elites to "not only a fear of Hitler but a sneaking admiration for him."³³¹

Although in India, there were "no illusions" regarding the intentions and purpose of British foreign policy, the fact that Chamberlain's foreign policy had been, from the very beginning, "one of encouraging the growth of the Nazi power and of functioning almost as an ally of Hitler"³³² came as a shock for some in India. This included, to some extent, Nehru himself – despite the fact that the Indian National Congress, and Nehru himself, had "repeatedly described" Britain's foreign policy as "pro-fascist". As Nehru wrote of that time,

...few among us could imagine the lengths to which these governments have gone in their support of Nazism and fascism. Why has this been so? We must understand this, realise³³³ what it is in store for us, and shape our policy accordingly...the importance of this to...our struggle for freedom is obvious...essentially, all forces and movements in favour of freedom and democracy have to face similar problems in the world. They have not only to resist open fascist aggression but also the more insidious and therefore the more dangerous, policies of the present British and French Governments, which in the name of democracy are helping to crush democracy....³³⁴

In other words, despite his attempts at recognizing the true policies of Britain, Nehru was nevertheless influenced, at least on some level, by a belief in the goodness of the British people. This is particularly seen in his reactions to Britain's "failures" to resist fascist aggression. These are recorded in a letter to the Congress Working-Committee from that period,

I distrust the British Government entirely, and its policy towards Spain and Czechoslovakia makes me sick with disgust. This is a good measure of its policy towards us and therefore we cannot ignore it in considering our own position in India.³³⁵

Nehru could only be "disgusted" with British policy if, at the very least, he, hoped on some level that British foreign policy would truly stand for freedom and democracy.

³³¹ Nehru, *The Discovery*, 4.

³³² Nehru, "On the Brink" in, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 157.

³³³ Sic.

³³⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'The Crises in Europe' *National Herald*, (London) September 18, 1938" in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p.148-9.

³³⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'Note for the Working Committee' (London) September 6, 1938" in Nehru, *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, 137.

Britain's foreign policy, therefore, brought clarity to Nehru's analysis and drove him to the conclusion that both imperialism and fascism are antagonistic to both socialism and democracy. As such, they will "stand together" where these interests align.³³⁶ For as Nehru had himself read³³⁷ Hitler clearly stated in *Mein Kampf*³³⁸ that he "...wish[ed] to see India under English domination rather than under any other."³³⁹ For, although there is an "inherent conflict" between European fascism and British imperialism in so far as the fascist states were themselves imperialist powers (constantly expanding and seeking "a greater share in the spoils of exploitation" and therefore, inevitably coming into conflict with the established imperialisms), at the same time, these two forms of imperialism, precisely because they are variations on a theme, "sympathise [sic] with and aid each other against the social urge to freedom and the nationalist struggle for political freedom" amongst those people they have subjugated through conquest and colonization.³⁴⁰ Therefore, it is for this reason that the "Indian struggle for independence" is "part of this world struggle against imperialism and fascism."³⁴¹

The Meaning of "Democracy" for Britain's Elites

As Nehru declared in an article written in London for the *National Herald* on the 18th of September and published on the 26th, 1938, there are "two great forces" striving for mastery of the world: "those who labour for democratic and social freedom and those who wish to crush this freedom under imperialism and fascism."³⁴² In this global struggle, "Britain" (here representing not the collectivity of the people living on those Isles, but the region as a state, controlled by its elites, and therefore,

³³⁶ Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 583.

³³⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Letter to O. Urchs" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 154.

³³⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 139.

³³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 408.

³⁴⁰ Nehru, "'India and the World' in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 54.

³⁴¹ Nehru, "Spain and Palestine" in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 583.

³⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru, "'Presidential Address to the National Congress', Faizpur December 1936" in *Eighteen Months in India 1936-1937: Being Further Essays and Writings by Jawaharlal Nehru* (Allahabad & London: Kitabistan, 1938), 77-78.

representative of those elite's interests) "inevitably joins the ranks of reaction."³⁴³ This is because, Britain's elites, as "top dogs" have "no use for freedom and democracy" (in the sense of these terms as understood by Nehru) and they "fear both". Because they are "afraid of the forces of democracy" and therefore "encourage" the growth of fascism, "hoping that these will *make the world safe for their ruling classes*."³⁴⁴ For, although the political and economic elites of the west have consistently declared themselves to be "fighting to make the world safe for democracy", this "democracy", obviously, did not mean that which Nehru intended when he used it as an ideal for which to strive. For the British and French ruling classes, "democracy...means their own domination and the protection of their special interests"³⁴⁵, and if said "democratic process" fails to produce such an outcome, these elites "have no further use for it."³⁴⁶ Therefore, when the system of candidates and voting which is widely understood as that which is signified by the signifier "democracy", in the course of its function, "...threatens to affect the great vested interests and privileged classes" of the British metropole, then these classes will "refuse to accept the democratic process and rebel against it."³⁴⁷ For them, Hitler is a "champion of reaction" and however "difficult" he may be to "tolerate", from their perspective, he is "infinitely better than real democracy."³⁴⁸ Britain's elite, therefore, desire "to build up a fascist-imperialist alliance to resist democracy all over the world." Not just in the colonial regions but also in the British metropole itself³⁴⁹ -

³⁴³ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'Presidential Address to the National Congress', Faizpur December 1936" in *Eighteen Months in India 1936-1937: Being Further Essays and Writings by Jawaharlal Nehru* (Allahabad & London: Kitabistan, 1938), 77-78.

³⁴⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'The Crises in Europe,' *National Herald* (London) September 26, 1938" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, 149.

³⁴⁵ Nehru, "Presidential Address..." in *Eighteen Months...*, 77-78.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Nehru, "'On the Brink,' *National Herald*, 22 September 1938"* in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, p. 156.

*Written while in Paris.

³⁴⁹ Nehru "'The Hoax' *National Herald*, 25 October 1938" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, p. 189.

to “restrict” democracy in the metropole to that which serves their own interests and, at the same time, to “hold down” the peoples of their empire with a “firmer grip.”³⁵⁰

As Nehru noted, Mr. John Morley (a “great *Liberal* statesmen”)³⁵¹ asserted that democracy in India, as is a “Canadian fur coat” is not “suitable” for its people. India was a space “other” than Britain and for which democracy did not apply.³⁵² And, although another “great English Liberal leader” Mr. Asquith, on the eve of the Great war, declared that he would see Britain “blotted out of the pages of history” rather than stand “witness to the tragic triumph of force over law” – the international “law” that protected one state from the invasion of another³⁵³ – he had no such considerations when it came to that empire over which he himself held sway.³⁵⁴ In short, living at an immense psycho-social distance, far above the colonized – and for that matter the British “great unwashed” – in their racial eyries, such men only use these signifiers of “democracy” and “liberty” with regards to those individuals they consider to qualify for their application. For, as Nehru explained, – “*democracy and Liberty*” – “*these words were not coined for our use.*”³⁵⁵ Therefore, when those of “lower” race “talk of democracy and Liberty”, they “irritate” the sensibilities of these elites.³⁵⁶

The British Raj “functions increasingly in a fascist way”

Nehru noted in the 1930s that British colonial administrations were increasingly acting in a fascist way. He wrote, British imperialism – the “finance imperialism of the present day” – “functions increasingly in a fascist way in its colonial dependencies” and, “proudly laying stress on its democratic

³⁵⁰ Nehru “The Hoax’ *National Herald*, 25 October 1938” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, p. 189.

³⁵¹ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 307-8. Emphasis Added.

³⁵² Nehru, *Towards Freedom*...*, 307-8; Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 500.

* Written while in prison between June 1934 – Feb. 1935.

³⁵³ There was of course no “international law” which generally protected one state from invasion by another. There was only that law which rhetorically protecting “civilized” states from invading one another. Even that “law” was seemingly broken with impunity.

³⁵⁴ Nehru, *Towards Freedom...*, 307-8

³⁵⁵ Emphasis Added; Nehru, *Towards Freedom...*, 307-8; Nehru, “Presidential Address...” in *Eighteen Months...*, 77-78.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

constitution” in England, “acts after the fascist fashion in India.”³⁵⁷ As Nehru noted in his *Autobiography*, (written while in jail for resisting Raj autocracy), even the declarations of the Raj’s own functionaries reflected this turn in their method of governance:³⁵⁸

I have had ample leisure in jail to read the speeches of high officials, their answers to questions in the Assembly and councils, and Government statements. I noticed, during the years 1932 to 1935, a marked change coming over them, and this change became progressively more and more obvious. They became more threatening and minatory,³⁵⁹ developing more and more the style of a sergeant-major addressing his men...*Vae victis*³⁶⁰* seems to run like a threat through these utterances. Nonofficial Europeans, in Bengal especially, go even further than the official variety, and both in their speeches and actions have shown a very decided fascist tendency... [T]here was an amazing growth of the spirit of violence in official circles.³⁶¹

Although the authoritarian tendency in British rule “was an old one” and India had been governed by the British from the very first “mainly as a police state”, the “serious challenge to the existing order” produced by Indian demands for freedom resulted in an increasingly authoritarian outlook on the part of British administrators.³⁶² This was not restricted to a fascist mentality alone, British rule was itself becoming more authoritarian and controlling:

[In p]arts of Bengal...[the] Government treated the whole populations (or, to be exact, the Hindu population) as hostile, and everyone – man, women, boy or girl between 12 and 25 – had to carry identity cards. There were internments and internments in the mass, dress was regulated, schools were regulated or closed, bicycles were not allowed, movements had to be reported to the police, curfew, sunset law, military marches, punitive police, collective fines, and a host of other rules and regulations. Large areas seemed to be in a continuous state of siege, and the inhabitants were little better than ticket-of-leave men and women under the strictest surveillance. Whether, from the point of view of the British Government, all these amazing provisions and regulations were necessary or not, it is not for me to judge. If they were not necessary, then that Government must be held guilty of a grave offence in oppressing and

³⁵⁷ Nehru, “‘India and the World’ in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 54.

³⁵⁸ Nehru, *Towards Freedom*, 254; *Ibid.*, xi: “This book was written entirely in prison, except for the postscript and certain minor changes, from June 1934, to February 1935.”

³⁵⁹ Minatory – expressing or conveying a threat.

³⁶⁰ “Woe to the Vanquished”.

* Latin: from Plutarch’s chronicles of early Rome. These words were supposedly uttered by Brennus the leader of a Gaulic tribe while exacting an agreed quantity of gold as tribute from the defeated Romans. When some Romans complained that the scales were doctored, Brennus threw his sword on the scales and declared “Vae Victus” (“Woe to the Vanquished”).

³⁶¹ Nehru, *Towards Freedom*, 254.

³⁶² Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 342.

humiliating and causing great loss to the population of whole areas. If they were necessary than surely that is the final verdict in British rule in India.”³⁶³

Responding to Impending Conflict

For Nehru, Padmore, and the Indian National Congress, British foreign policy was for much of the 1930s, unmistakably “pro-fascist.”³⁶⁴ Throughout the majority of the 1930s, therefore, opposition to both imperialism and fascism were considered by Padmore, Nehru, the Indian National Congress, and others to hold no contradiction. In Nehru’s words, although imperialism and fascism “sometimes come into conflict”³⁶⁵ they are none-the-less, essentially “birds of the same feather.”³⁶⁶ Therefore “if fascism goes up in the world, imperialism, including British imperialism, goes up and *vice versa*.”³⁶⁷ It was only when Hitler’s Germany began to emerge as the “dominating power in Europe, entirely upsetting the old balance [of power] and menacing the vital interests of the British Empire” that “War between England and Germany became probable.”³⁶⁸ Once this occurred, the declared hostility of the Congress to both fascism and British imperialism was placed in a seeming paradoxical position: in order to fulfill their declared opposition to the “evils” of fascism, they could support British imperialism, their daily oppressors (in a supposed fight for a “freedom” which they did not have, nor for whom the moniker was intended to apply) ; or, they could oppose British imperialism and thereby weaken the fight against the fascism they perceived as abhorrent. Nehru summarized the bind they found themselves in to a newspaper reporter during his visit to Prague on the August 31, 1938 in the lead up to the Munich

Crises:

The struggle in India is essentially and fundamentally an anti-imperialist one. As such, it is also opposed to fascism which vigorously supports the imperialist philosophy. While India is keen on getting out of the imperialist hold and with this aim carries on her struggle, she has no desire to

³⁶³ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 343.

³⁶⁴ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 351; Janam Mukherjee, *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine, and the End of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)

³⁶⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Two Messages’, *The Hindu*, October 7, 1936” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 493.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 351.)

support the expansionist drives of the fascist powers merely on account of the manifestations of the clashes within the imperialist camp...How [can] we [then] reconcile the two dominating trends of our policy: Opposition to British imperialism and opposition to fascism and Nazism?³⁶⁹

Resolving the Contradiction

Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the left wing of the Indian National Congress and briefly elected president of that body, had a very similar vision in this regard.

Great Britain and her apologists are now talking of self-determination of the Poles and if she goes to war, she will do so with the words 'Self-determination' on her lips. Is not this the time to remind our British rulers that east of the Suez Canal there is a land inhabited by an ancient and cultured people who have been deprived of their birth right of liberty and have been groaning under the British yoke? And is not this the time to tell the British people and their government that those who are slaves at home cannot fight for the freedom of others?³⁷⁰

Likewise, Nehru repeatedly argues that the people of India cannot be forced into this conflict by the British. In the case of a "crisis" in which Britain becomes involved in a war, "it should be clearly understood that the people of India, and they alone, can and will determine what part India shall take in the crisis."³⁷¹ For "World peace" can only be established "on a basis of freedom of all peoples and nations."³⁷² At the same time, and in the same breath, with obvious purpose of association, Nehru strongly emphasizes the "sympathy" of the people of India for victims of fascist expansion and oppression. Usually, also in the same breath, he argues that fascist aggression must be resisted. In doing so, he is providing the British Government with a choice – either the British Government gives India the freedom to choose in the matter of fighting fascism (in the event of British entanglement with fascism),

³⁶⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, "'The Tensions of Europe' *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 31, 1938" in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p 120.*

*This interview took place in Prague.

³⁷⁰ Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose Ed., *The Alternative Leadership: Subhas Chandra Bose. Speeches, Articles, Statements, and Letters, June 1939-1941*. Netaji: Collected Works, Volume 10. (Delhi: Oxford university Press, 1998), 14. Although it is not dealt with in this thesis, Subhas Chandra Bose and other anti-colonial activists in India in the 1940s, accepted the concept of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" and worked alongside the Axis powers against Britain. Gandhi's reasoning for forcing Bose out of the presidentship of the Indian National Congress after his democratic election to that position in 1939 included the above.

³⁷¹ Nehru, "Note for the Working Committee" in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 131.

³⁷² Ibid.

in which case he *de facto* promises that Congress would “freely” “choose” to fight fascism alongside the British Government. On the other hand, if the British Government tries to force India to take-part in hostilities with the fascist powers without consulting her, then Britain would have to face Indian resistance.

Congress Policy

Following Nehru’s lead as President, the Congress resolved the contradiction in their opposition to both fascism and British imperialism in a period in which the two were likely to come into conflict through the policy that, if Britain was truly fighting for “democracy” and “freedom,” then she should prove her commitment to these principles by granting India her freedom. In such a case, Congress argued, the people of India would rise up in collective support of Britain as that country which was demonstrably on the side of “freedom” and in opposition to the fascism that was perceived as an “intensified form” of the racialized imperialism against which they had struggled for so long. That is,

...only a free India could take proper part in such a war [against fascism]; only through freedom could we overcome the bitter heritage of our past relations with Britain and arouse enthusiasm and mobilize our great resources. Without that freedom the war would be like any old war, a contest between rival imperialisms, and an attempt to defend and perpetuate the British Empire as such.³⁷³

The Indian National Congress Executive of which Nehru was a member declared its official position to this effect in early August of 1939:

³⁷³ Nehru. *Discovery*, 354. “The Congress laid down and frequently repeated a dual policy in regard to war. There was, on the one hand, opposition to fascism, Nazism and Japanese militarism, both because of their internal policies and their aggression on other countries; there was intense sympathy with the victims of that aggression; and there was a willingness to join up in any war or other attempt to stop this aggression. On the other hand, there was an emphasis on the freedom of India, not only because that was our fundamental objective for which we had continuously labored, but also especially in relation to a possible war. For, we reiterated that only a free India could take proper part in such a war; only through freedom could we overcome the bitter heritage of our past relations with Britain and arouse enthusiasm and mobilize our great resources. Without that freedom the war would be like any old war, a contest between rival imperialisms, and an attempt to defend and perpetuate the British Empire as such. It seemed absurd and impossible for us to line up in defense of that very imperialism against which we had been struggling for so long. And even if a few of us, in view of larger considerations, considered that a lesser evil, it was utterly beyond our capacity to carry our people. Only freedom could release mass energy and convert bitterness into enthusiasm for a cause. There was no other way.”

in this world crisis the sympathies of the Working Committee are entirely with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom and the Congress has repeatedly condemned Fascist aggression in Europe, Africa and the Far East of Asia, as well as the betrayal of democracy by British Imperialism in Czechoslovakia and Spain...The past policy of the British Government does not stand for freedom and democracy and may at any time betray these ideals. [Therefore,] India cannot associate herself with such a Government or be asked to give her resources for democratic freedom which is denied to her and which is likely to be betrayed.³⁷⁴

Padmore makes similar arguments regarding colonized peoples in Africa. In an article published in the *New Leader*. He warns the British and French governments that, if they expected help from their colonial peoples, they would need first to grant them “full democratic rights and self-government – Now!”. That is, they would need to demonstrate their actual existing commitment to those principles which they had so long linguistically espoused.³⁷⁵ In *How Britain Rules Africa* he notes that Africans “welcome” the gestures for support from certain of the more “far-sighted sections of the ruling classes of Europe.” At the same time, he very directly states that,

Let those who preach co-operation demonstrate their sympathy with Africa in *deeds*, not words; for Africans have had too many empty promises made them in the past, and the present is far from reassuring.³⁷⁶

Gandhi echoed such sentiments, arguing that the full independence on offer for India *after* the war was useless. Gandhi wanted a free India that could aid China against Japanese aggression “now.”³⁷⁷

However, the man to “take charge” in 1940 to fight “The Battle of Britain” against the fascist menace was by no means sympathetic with such considerations.

Churchill’s Record

Winston Churchill – one of the only members of the British ruling elite who strongly opposed Nazism almost from its conception and hence the man chosen to lead Britain in its struggle against

³⁷⁴ Quoted by Nehru in *The Discovery of India*, 356.

³⁷⁵ Padmore, “What Can the Blacks Know of Democracy” *New Leader*, 24 November 1939, 3; Carol Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule in Africa: Writers in a Common Cause* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 46.

³⁷⁶ Padmore, *How Britain Rules...*, 392.

³⁷⁷ Louis Fischer, *A Week with Gandhi* (New York: Duell Sloan, & Pearce, 1942), 329.

Nazism – was a deeply committed proponent of empire. In his work *The Discovery of India* (published in 1946 and written in the Ahmednagar Fort prison between August 9, 1942 and March 28, 1945) Nehru argued that Churchill had no intention of giving India her independence. To support this claim, he references several of Churchill's statements from 1930 and 1931 as evidence of his historical position. Subsequent to these statements by Churchill, India had, of course, been granted some self-government through the 1935 Government of India Act regardless of Churchill's opinions (he was, as is well known, in the political wilderness for much of the 1930s).³⁷⁸ Although, at the time of his writing, such statements were over a decade in the past, Nehru seems to have taken such statements as indicative of Churchill's present thinking on the subject. For Nehru, Churchill cannot and "could not conceive of England except as the head and possessor of a vast empire, and so he could not conceive of India being free."³⁷⁹ At the same time, "dominion status [for India], which had so long been held out to us as something within our grasp, was explained [by Churchill] to be a mere matter of words and ceremony, very far removed from freedom and power."³⁸⁰ In other words, he seems to have strongly believed that Churchill had not substantially changed for many years and that his opinions from a decade previous were indicative of his present positions on empire.

³⁷⁸ Nehru, *The Discovery*, 439. According to Nehru:

...the new Prime Minister. Mr. Churchill's views on Indian freedom were clear and definite and had been frequently repeated. He stood out as an uncompromising opponent of that freedom. In January 1930, he had said: 'Sooner or later you will have to crush Gandhi and the Indian Congress and all they stand for.' In December of that year he said: 'The British nation has no intention whatever of relinquishing control of Indian life and progress.... We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel in the crown of the King, which, more than all our dominions and dependencies, constitutes the glory and strength of the British empire.'

Later he explained what those magic words 'Dominion status,' so frequently thrown at us, really meant in relation to India. In January 1931, he said: 'We have always contemplated it (dominion status) as the ultimate goal, but no one has supposed, except in a purely ceremonious sense in the way in which representatives of India attend conferences during the war, that the principle and policy for India would be carried into effect in any time which it is reasonable or useful for us to foresee.' And, again, in December, 1931: 'Most of the leading public men—of whom I was one in those days—made speeches—I certainly did—about dominion status, but I did not contemplate India having the same constitutional rights and system as Canada in any period which we can foresee...England, apart from her empire in India, ceases for ever to exist as a great power.'

³⁷⁹ Nehru, *The Discovery*, 439.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Although Churchill's government, under pressure from Indian unrest and US pressure, did make public offers of increased "self-government" for India and even "dominion status" immediately after the war, it seems that from Nehru's perspective, Churchill was fundamentally opposed to any concessions to Indian freedom and therefore, any moves that his government made in this direction were the result of intense external pressure on the Prime Minister and his own beliefs. For Nehru, such offers were highly suspect and should be treated with great caution.

Nehru was at least partially proven right in the fact that Churchill generally resisted offers of freedom to India (in various forms) and would famously tell the *Guardian* in 1942 that he did "...not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."^{381*} Nehru also notes in *The Discovery* that he and his fellow prison mates were made aware of Churchill's signing of the Atlantic Charter in 1941 which committed Churchill to support "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live;"³⁸² and, of Churchill's "qualifications" September 1942 restricting its application to those areas of Europe occupied by the Nazis'.³⁸³ Padmore chronicled these events in detail, including Churchill's exact statement, in his booklet *The White Man's Duty*.³⁸⁴ Such sentiments were echoed by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Amery, who argued that

³⁸¹ Nehru, *The Discovery*, 415 (Quoting Churchill)*.

*Winston Churchill "On Our One Aim," *The Guardian*, November 11, 1942 from the Guardian Archive.

<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2009/nov/11/churchill-blood-sweat-tears>

"We have not entered this war for profit or expansion. Let me, however, make this clear: we mean to hold our own. (Cheers) I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

³⁸² Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt, "Declaration of Principles Issued by Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt, August 14." *Bulletin of International News* 18, no. 17 (1941): 1081-083. Accessed February 27, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/25643089.

³⁸³ Nehru, *The Discovery*, 442.

³⁸⁴ Nancy Cunard and George Padmore, *The White Man's Duty: An Analysis of the Colonial Question in the Light of the Atlantic Charter* (London: W.H. Allen & CO., Ltd., 1942), 9, 13. Padmore and Cunard demonstrate Churchill's position by quoting his declarations on the subject: "almost immediately after his return from the Atlantic meeting Churchill pointedly declared in the House of Commons on Sep. 9, 1942, that,

'At the Atlantic meeting we had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the state and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke...so that it is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-government institutions in the regions and among the peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown.'"

it was the Indian habit for “loose thinking” that made them perceive the Atlantic Charter as applicable to them.³⁸⁵ In Nehru’s words, for Mr. Winston Churchill and his ilk, the coming war with Germany, would be “a war of restoration and nothing more, a continuation with minor changes, of both the social structure of England and the imperial structure of her empire.”³⁸⁶

Such sentiments were not restricted to Churchill’s (Conservative) party. Nehru records that even the British Labour Party – historically the party in which the most anti-imperial MPs could be found – made public statements whereby they “stress[ed] the resolve of the British people to keep the empire together after the war.”³⁸⁷ This belief, that the British Empire should continue unchanged after the war, from Nehru’s perspective (while in prison, 1943-44) “undoubtedly represented the view-point of the vast majority of this [(British)] people, and even of the many who had previously criticized the theory and practice of imperialism.”³⁸⁸ That is, even if they criticized imperialism, they did not reject the imperial project *as such*, but rather the present form of its application – that is, they were imperial reformers, not anti-imperialists. For Churchill and his ilk, those geographic regions in which empire was readily understood to belong, were also those regions in which “freedom” and “self-determination”, self-evidently, did not. Therefore, those of this “ilk” who espoused views of “anti-fascism” did not do so because they opposed the authoritarianism, expansionism, and racism embodied by modern imperialism.

A seeming “profound irony”

When war actually broke-out, and Britain began mobilizing its resources for war, there developed what appeared to be a “profound irony” whereby those who had been the strongest advocates of democracy in India were immediately thrown in jail to facilitate Britain’s war “to defend

³⁸⁵ L.S. Amery, *India and Freedom...*, 40-41.

³⁸⁶ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 405-407.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 415. Nehru quoting the British Labour Party in 1942.

³⁸⁸ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 415.

democracy.” In *Discovery of India*, written while in prison during the war, Nehru wrote that it was a “curious turn of fate’s wheel” that, while he and many persons who had long and loudly declared themselves to be ardent anti-fascists now languished in prison for insisting upon democratic process, those metropolitan personages who had gone out of their way throughout the 1930s to “bow to Hitler and Mussolini and approve of Japanese aggression in China” now “hold aloft the banner of freedom and democracy and anti-fascism.”³⁸⁹ This change was also seen amongst those Indian sycophants who, seeking to gain favour with the colonial administration, were full of “praise for Hitler and Mussolini” throughout the 1930s, holding them up as “models” while “cursing” the Soviet Union. Such persons quickly had to change their line once the “weather” shifted in the fall of 1939: these pro-fascist sycophants, having, according to Nehru, achieved high positions in the colonial administration – and Nehru highly implies that their promotion was directly related to their pro-fascist views – now “loudly proclaim their anti-fascism and anti-Nazism.”³⁹⁰ The All India National Congress, which had “consistently for all these years...been anti-fascist and anti-Nazi” and had loudly declared its opposition to fascist aggression in Spain, in Czechoslovakia, and China was declared “illegal” by the British administration upon the outbreak of war. For insisting upon democratic process, its “elected members of the provincial parliaments, its speakers of these parliaments, its ex-ministers, its mayors and presidents of municipal corporations” were all thrown in prison³⁹¹ while “the war goes on for democracy and the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms.”³⁹²

³⁸⁹ Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 4.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 5, 368; Cunard and Padmore, *The White Man’s...* 13; Louis Fischer, *A Week With Gandhi* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1942), 59.

Chapter IV Conclusion

For Nehru and Padmore then, in the immediate lead up to the Second World War, opposition to fascism was easily subsumed into their existent opposition to imperialism. For them, the restriction of civil liberties, the racism, the expansionist tendencies and the “unmasked brutality” of fascism and Nazism were very much reflections of what they experienced in Europe’s colonial projects – although perhaps not in quite such an “intensified form.” At the same time, they perceived a contradiction emerging within the metropolitan discourse regarding international morality. For, there were, increasingly in the 1930s, many Britons who condemned the expansionism, racism and internal authoritarianism of Nazi Germany but did not do so when it came to the context of the British Empire, although some persons did recognize the similarities.³⁹³ Nehru particularly sought to use such statements to demonstrate to his audiences the realities of the meanings intended by their elite regarding freedom, democracy, empire, and fascism.

With regards to the threat to German democracy posed by Hitler, it was the understanding of Nehru and Padmore that, even if fascism destroyed in Germany (or elsewhere) that “democracy” for which the British ruling classes had for so long seemingly declared themselves to be the world’s principle champions, this was of little concern for Britain’s elites; for, the “democracy” these men espoused was not necessarily that understood by or of “the masses”, but was that which enabled the continuation of their power.³⁹⁴ Not for nothing did Hitler praise the British Empire and explicitly state that “they” (Germany’s rulers during the Second Reich) should have left *overseas* colonialism to Britain and instead rule Europe.^{395*} For, many British statesmen felt – to varying degrees of course – rather similar. That is, Hitler could rule Europe if she let Britain rule the seas. For fascism was not, for these men, the threat

³⁹³ For example, Sir Stafford Cripps and George Orwell.

³⁹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, “‘Presidential Address’, Dec. 27, 1936” in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), 69-94.

³⁹⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 139.

*Nehru was aware of Hitler’s beliefs. Stating in a 1938 speech, “Her Hitler’s reference to British rule in India as something necessary is not unknown in India”; see, Nehru, “Speech to Indian students, Munich, 8 August 1938” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, 107.

that perhaps it was perceived to be in the more “popular” British opinion: as long as fascism did not threaten the British Empire as such (and therefore their placement at the top of an enormous system of power), and as long as fascism was vehemently opposed to socialism, rooting it out and destroying it at “home” and abroad, a fascist government could find great sympathy in the hearts of the British elite. As Lloyd George wrote after visiting Hitler in Germany, Hitler was “the George Washington of Germany.”³⁹⁶

Clearly then, there were those “ruling elites” in Britain during the 1930s and 40s for whom there was absolutely no contradiction between their own visions of the perpetuation of British imperialism and their concomitant condemnation of Nazism (examples of such perspectives include those of men like Sir Samuel Hoare, Lloyd George, Lord Lothian, Winston Churchill, and Lord Amery). Such men had “all the facts” as it were, of Nazism and British colonialism, and, with all said “facts”, had no problems whatsoever in condemning the former while praising the latter. This was clearly demonstrated by Nehru and Padmore through exposition of the racialized logic of such men’s participation in the project of appeasement, their interpretation of the Atlantic Charter, their responses to criticism of the empire, and their understanding of and plans for a post-war imperial state.

³⁹⁶ David Lloyd George, "I talked to Hitler" *Daily Express*, Sep. 17, 1936, 12, 17. (This article was written upon Lloyd George’s return from visiting Germany during which he was personally entertained by Hitler).

Chapter 5: Theorizing “Erasure”

Limited Data: “Difficult to Judge”

Nehru particularly reflected in his writings on *why* the British public did not do more in support of colonized peoples and against their governments. Writing while in prison between June 1934 and February 1935 during the period of Hitler’s consolidation of power in Germany, Nehru recorded that British officials and press in India, used reports of Nazi “excess” in Germany to frame British rule in India as comparatively benign. In his words:

Reports of Nazi excess in Germany had a curious effect on British officials and their press in India. [Such reports] gave them a justification for all they had done in India, and it was pointed out to us, with a glow of conscious virtue, how much worse our lot would have been if the Nazis had had anything to do with us. New standards and records had been set up by the Nazis, and it was certainly not an easy matter to rival them.³⁹⁷

Nehru reflects upon such assertions of (relative) imperial benevolence with the thought that it was essentially impossible to prove such assertions wrong. For Nehru, it was “perhaps” possible that conditions in India “would have been worse” if it were ruled by a Nazi rather than a British “Raj” simply because of the fact that conditions in the existent (British) Raj were, essentially, unknown. That is, for various structural reasons, he did not have the information on the happenings in all the vast reaches of India that would be required for the making of an informed comparison – he did not have “all the facts of the occurrences that have taken place in various parts of India during the past five years.”³⁹⁸ Nazism of November 1935,³⁹⁹ however, could not be determined to be to be “worse” than British rule in India, without the information necessary to make such an evaluation.

Nehru’s assertion that Nazism cannot be effectively demonstrated as worse than British rule in India because of a lack of information regarding the actions of colonialism likely stems from his experience in 1921 of “discovering” an India of which he had been completely ignorant up to that point. This India was literally right in front of his nose. That is, the rural India that surrounded him like an ocean

³⁹⁷ Nehru *Towards Freedom...*, 254.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Written between June 1934 and February 1935, these interchanges were occurring before the Nuremberg Laws which were passed the following September (1935).

and in which hundreds of millions of peasants lived – the India that was *really* “India” in the sense of being its *real* representation in the sense of representing *the vast majority of its human beings*. For, the India that Nehru had known up to that point had been the India of a tiny urban-dwelling and educated minority.

He recalls in his autobiography how this “discovery” occurred while visiting Allahabad. He was “entangled in the *Kisan* (peasant) movement” when a group of peasants begged him to come and investigate their conditions as a representative of the Congress. The subsequent experiences “influenced my mental outlook greatly.”⁴⁰⁰ In visiting the peasants in their villages he was made aware of the fact that, literally right beside him and all the other urban “natives” like him, there existed conditions of life disquieting to behold: “A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked starving, crushed and utterly miserable.”⁴⁰¹ Such conditions, in a turn of phrase he would use in another context “would have shocked” him much earlier if they had been “closer to home” in the sense of made knowable by observation in his daily life.⁴⁰² The fact that Nehru was able to live childhood, young adulthood, and his first few years in India after his return from England, so close to the peasantry and yet so unaware of their realities, gave him a unique insight into the complex realities of “knowing” and “knowability.”

As he recalls, upon leaving the urban environment in order to travel to the *Kisan*’s villages, he became aware that the “whole countryside” was “afire” and that “enormous gatherings” of peasants were spontaneously occurring without the slightest knowledge of the urban dwellers such as himself:

⁴⁰⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 52; Michael Edwards, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 59; John B. Alphonso-Karkala, *Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 9.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 52. “I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India...And their faith in us, casual visitors from a distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me.”

What was surprising... was *our total ignorance* in the cities of this great agrarian movement. *No [Indian or British] newspaper had contained a line* about it...I realized more than ever how cut off we were from our people and how we lived and worked and agitated in a little world apart from them.⁴⁰³

During one such excursion, he records his experience of having “thousands” of peasants gathering around him as British soldiers descended upon the area to “put down” the (peaceful) protest of the *Kisans*. The peasants believed (rightly) that the soldiers would not shoot them while in Nehru’s presence. However, he could hear, just behind a nearby thicket of trees, the sound of British soldiers shooting at villagers just out of his vision. Even when he visited the countryside, therefore, Nehru’s very presence changed the occurrences in that area and therefore functioned to “hide” from him the realities of imperial governance over the subaltern.

In short, Nehru was given a lesson in the realities of how, both in the sense of the mechanics of transfer and in the sense of the descriptors which make up inscription, certain “things” are “known.” That is, the fact that we can be told that someone is suffering in a certain way, but unless we can somehow *experience* it in a way that naturally produces empathy – that is, in a way in which our own experiences naturally provide an empathetic understanding of said experience – then the production of empathy on our part requires an imaginative leap. The further away from us the “thing” to be “known” is – geographically, culturally, linguistically, etc. – the more difficult such an “imaginative leap” becomes. As he told the Bengali middle classes, they, like the populations of metropolitan Britain, exist within a particular experiential bubble which negates their ability to recognize the realities which structure the lives of the vast majority of Indians; i.e., the peasantry. He urges them therefore,

...if you want to do work, go to the working people’s quarters outside Calcutta and some villages and just do a useful job. Sweep the road if possible. Know how they live, what is their standard of living. And then you will get a greater insight into the economics of India. If you do that, it will give you insight into the masses of India, it will make you effective workers...⁴⁰⁴ Try to

⁴⁰³ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 51-55.

⁴⁰⁴ Nehru “‘The Need for a Larger Perspective’* *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, November 10, 1936” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 552.

*An Address to Indian Students in Calcutta.

understand them, try to understand what they do and how they work. When you go to the villages, you also do a lot of good to yourselves. It makes a great deal of difference to the person who goes there. It gives you the knowledge of things...⁴⁰⁵

That is, Nehru believes *experience* as fundamental to an *understanding* of India's "problems", and he understands the need to break the experiential and therefore conceptual barriers that develop between economically – and therefore socially – connected groups due to their disparate geographic location and experiential knowledge. If Nehru, a "native" of India could live his life without experiencing rural Indian village life with his five senses and thereby experience and therefore understand and therefore experience *empathy for* (that is, *involuntarily understand*) the suffering of said peasantry, how much more so did the British public generally lack the *experience* (and the potential to experience) that which was productive of said empathy. For Nehru then, throughout the British Empire, the majority of persons lived in regions so geographically, culturally, and linguistically, distanced from the British metropole, that the populations of that metropole had extraordinarily little opportunity for the development of empathy for the suffering of the peoples of the empire.

Nehru contended that the British people would condemn what was occurring in India if only they were made aware of it. As he stated while visiting England in 1938,

I think the average Englishman or Englishwomen does not require much detailed knowledge of Indian problems to understand the problem of civil liberty; the average English person *does* feel that civil liberty is a desirable thing, and, when the facts of the situation in India are put before him, he is somewhat shocked; he dislikes the utter denial of civil liberty in India. I think a great deal can be done by keeping all these facts before the people of this country...⁴⁰⁶

He "felt drawn towards" the "psychological and humanitarian" approach which was espoused by many "sensitive" men he met during his 1938 visit to England. As non-partisan non-ideologically bound individuals, such men were greatly concerned at the "world's disorder" and were greatly taken

⁴⁰⁵ Nehru "'The Need for a Larger Perspective' *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, November 10, 1936" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 552.

⁴⁰⁶ Nehru "'On The Indian Problem' *The Bombay Chronicle* May 16, 21,26, 27 and June 1, 1936" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p.102.

up with the attempt “to avert it.” Their “psychological approach” sought to “convince” their intellectual adversary “that it is to their interests to have the change.” This strategy was essentially a sort of theoretical-consensus democracy requiring “a sufficient number of people” be “converted” to one’s perspective and agree to one’s solution for success to be achieved. As he would later note, however, there were *structural* hindrances to the successful functioning of this approach with regards to India. The vast majority of the (above mentioned) “sensitive men” who pursued this as their strategy for changing the world, did so, he argues, “without much reference to hard and cruel reality”.⁴⁰⁷ Their optimism came from their inability to grapple with the realities of power structures and human psychology. Specifically, the fact that it is “...very, very difficult to consider [the world’s problems] apart from our own prejudices and sectional interests.”⁴⁰⁸

For Nehru, this was because “vested interests” within the British Empire tend to “move in their own rigid ideologies and refuse to open their minds to anything which injures their group interests.”⁴⁰⁹ This meant that, although it is “possible” for *individual* members of a larger interest group to “put up with the loss and suffering” such a change would entail, willing acceptance of loss “is not known to take place in groups and classes *as a whole*.” Because the changes Nehru called for would strip aspects of the “privileged position” from certain “groups and classes which dominate today”, they “will not be convinced of the beauty of the new order or willing to accept the change.”⁴¹⁰ The Psychological approach to peaceful transformation away from the existent *status quo* would require changes in “habits and beliefs and instincts” of those persons whose interests are strongly rooted in the existent

⁴⁰⁷ Nehru, “‘The Way to Peace’ *Time and Tide*”, 1936” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, 123; *India and the World...*, 218-225.

*A weekly British Magazine whose contributors included Virginia Woolf, G.K. Chesterton, and George Orwell.

⁴⁰⁸ Nehru, “‘Letter to Lord Lothian’ *Badenweiler*, December 9, 1936.” In *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p.50.

⁴⁰⁹ Nehru, “‘The Way to Peace’ *Time and Tide*, 1936” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p.122-126.

⁴¹⁰ Nehru “‘A Visit to England’ *The Socialist*”, February 22, 1936” in *Selected Works...*, Vol 7, p120.

*Published in London and Subsequently republished in London the same year in the collected work *India and the World*.

system.⁴¹¹ Therefore, belief that such a strategy had the capability of changing the majority opinion among Britain's elites was "vague and idealistic...and it did not promise any definite results."⁴¹²

This is demonstrated, he argues, in the historical examples of the movements Gandhi led against British rule. Gandhi's movement mobilized a "psychological approach" characterized by "the refusal to subordinate means to an end, the constant endeavor to lessen ill will and fear, the continuous willingness to make friends with his opponents". If ever there was a "psychological" attempt to reach the British people that was likely to succeed, this was it. However, the "psychological approach" foundered on the rocks of interest. The British "higher ups" – those persons in Britain most likely to have a "fair notion of what was happening" in India – were "prevented" by their own "real or imaginary interests" from recognizing the plight of India. As Gandhi's movement progressed and gained momentum (and, therefore, as the threat to "British interests" – those of its elites – increased),

...informed and intelligent people [in Britain], generous and liberal in their ideas, freedom-loving when remote people [outside the British Empire] and other [non-British] interests were concerned, became more and more hostile to India and her people and tolerated conditions there, of their own government's making, which shocked them nearer home. It was a very striking example of one's own interests perverting one's sense of values and suppressing the moral sense...

Nehru reflects that these contradictions are likely to be, at least in part, the result of understandable basic psychology, and the placement of individuals within structures of power:

National psychology is a complicated affair. *Most of us imagine how fair and impartial we are; it is always the other fellow, the other country that is wrong. Somewhere in the back of our mind we are convinced that we are not as others are: there is a difference which good breeding usually prevents us from emphasizing. And if we are fortunate enough to be an imperial race controlling the destinies of other countries, it is difficult not to believe that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds, and those who agitate for change are self-seekers or deluded fools, ungrateful for the benefits they have received from us.*^{413*}

⁴¹¹ Nehru, "'The Way to Peace' *Time and Tide*, 1936" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p123.

⁴¹² Nehru "'A Visit to England'" in *Selected Works...*, Vol 7, p120.

⁴¹³ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 500; Nehru "'A Visit to England'" in *Selected Works...*, Vol 7, p. 120. The Conservative "reaction" embodied this response most purely:

The Conservative reaction was simple enough, and its very simplicity gave it an air of romance. They had few doubts or difficulties, no complexes over India. For an Indian it was a little difficult to discuss this question with them, in spite of their amiability, for we started from entirely different premises and looked

This natural tendency, he argues, has crystalized in Britain's elites in the form of a racial self-perception. For Nehru, they had become an "insular race" who, because of their "long success" in the imperial arena now "look down on almost all others." The racial hierarchies entrenched in the psyche of the English elite could be represented in the following manner: from highest to lowest,

(1) Britain – a long gap, and then (2) the British Dominions (white populations only) and America (Anglo Saxons only, and not dagoes, wops, etc.), (3) Western Europe, (4) Rest of Europe, (5) South America (Latin races), a long gap, and then (6) the brown, yellow, and black races of Asia and Africa.⁴¹⁴

In other words, as Nehru observed, obviously quoting an overheard statement, it is "*à Calais les nègres commencement*" – "it is at Calais that the Negroes (or "Niggers") begin."⁴¹⁵ It was through these categories, these conceptions of racial hierarchy, that Britain's elites perceived and ruled the world.

Elites Control Information

For Nehru, the British elites – those persons actually "in the seats of power" whose self-interest negated the influence of the "psychological approach" – sought to influence the perceptions of those in Britain who, because they were not tied so closely with those interests, were not so shielded from the influence of the "psychological approach". Britain's elite sought to mobilize their "advantageous position" in their society to "influence mass opinion in their own favour." This was done in "a variety of ways."⁴¹⁶ For example, to ensure loyalty to the British Empire in the face of accusations of wrongdoing,

different ways. We could find no common ground to stand on, no agreement to form the basis of argument. The British Empire was good, very good and beneficial to all concerned, and bound to endure. Unhappily it was surrounded by evil elements, full of spite and jealousy, who created difficulties in the smooth working of this ideal institution. If these objectionable elements could be made to see straight or be suppressed, all would be well. Some of the left-wing Conservatives were a little troubled at the close association of their party with the reactionary and feudal elements in India; they even thought that some economic changes were necessary. But, on the whole, these ideas did not affect the essential serenity of their outlook.

⁴¹⁴ Nehru, *An Autobiography...*, 500.

⁴¹⁵ Calais is a French Port City – Nehru has obviously heard such a comment and is reproducing it here. It means that the "niggers" start once one leaves the "English" Isle.

⁴¹⁶ Nehru, "'A Letter to Agatha Harris', Badenweiler, September 25, 1935" in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 25-27.

“glorification” of empire was “imposed on the prevailing system of education” throughout said empire.⁴¹⁷ There was “suppression and distortion of Indian news in England” and, as the Gandhian movement gained momentum, Indian newspapers (some of which published in Britain as well as India) “dare[d] not [give] expression to the real feeling of India” for fear of retaliation from those “seats of power.”⁴¹⁸ In England, during the Gandhian movement,

Fleet Street⁴¹⁹ declared a ban on India, except when the antics of a maharaja were prominently figured. While millions in India were living through a nightmare of horror, *most people in England no doubt imagined that all was well in this bright jewel of the British crown.*⁴²⁰

At the same time, the cornerstone of British imperial governance was the unspoken rule that the “right hand” of the British Government in India “should not know what its left hand does...”⁴²¹ It is for this reason that said Raj has “turned down every suggestion of an impartial inquiry” into conditions of the peasantry during the past five years since 1929^{422*} – despite the fact that such “impartial” enquiries were, in fact, not so – they were “always weighted on the official side.”⁴²³ In other words, on the side which desired not to see any issues with British rule, and, as Nehru pointed out elsewhere, the “side” allied with the Indian landed elite. The British ruling elite, therefore, did not want to recognize and therefore have to engage with any negative reports on peasant conditions. For, in recognizing the

⁴¹⁷ Nehru, “Speech to Indian Students” * *The Hindustan Times*, 22 August 1939 in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 9, p. 107.

*Delivered in Munich on August 8, 1939.

⁴¹⁸ Nehru, “A Letter to Agatha Harris” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 28.

⁴¹⁹ “Fleet Street” meaning British Newspaper and Magazine publishers.

⁴²⁰ Nehru, “A Letter to Agatha Harris” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 28.

⁴²¹ Nehru, *Towards Freedom...*, 254.

⁴²² Janam Mukherjee, *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine and the End of Empire*.

*Interestingly, since “the last five years” was literally the five years since the 1929 crash, this was the period in which the Bengal Famine, as argued by Janam Mukherjee in his most recent study of the famine, was beginning to develop. As such, an investigation could have put “on paper” the fact that the soon-to-be widespread appropriations of grain from the Bengali coastal regions would produce the mass death that was to subsequently occur. See Mukherjee, *Hungry Bengal*. For the horrors of British rule for the Indian Peasantry from Plassey to independence, see Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso Books, 2002).

⁴²³ Nehru, *Towards Freedom...*, 254.

realities of peasant conditions and moving to ameliorate them, the British elite would cause political tensions with this “native” elite upon whom the Raj relied for its function.⁴²⁴ Thus,

...the psychological approach did not have a very marked effect.... *It was smothered by those in power and places of authority and not allowed to reach wider groups,* and even when it did so reach, the real or imaginary interests of the group prevented it from producing its expected result.⁴²⁵

For Nehru, the result of all of this was that the British metropolitan population had “no realization” of “the quite extraordinary amount of repression and denial of civil liberties that is going on in India.”⁴²⁶ Even MPs of the ruling Conservative Party had been surprised in the House of Commons that year (1936) when it was revealed that there were “still...political prisoners in India...”⁴²⁷ That is, the erasure of Indian conditions was such that even some of those whose self-interest would encourage them to not recognize colonial suffering if confronted with such, were spared even that experience of developing non-recognition or denial.

In other words, those persons who were most likely to have access to real information on the conditions in the colonies because of their location as members of its “ruling class” were also those persons whose “self-interest” made them most resistant to persuasion by the “psychological approach” because of their vested interest in the existent system. At the same time, these elites held disproportionate (if not *de facto* monopolistic) control over the production of information in Britain and therefore were able to ensure that the British “masses” – those groups who had the least *conscious* stake in empire and were therefore most susceptible to the “psychological approach” – did not become so “knowledgeable of Indian realities” that the “psychological approach” could take effect. Therefore, the “psychological approach” was largely “thwarted” and “often neutralized” and resulted only in a

⁴²⁴ Nehru, *Towards Freedom...*, 254.

⁴²⁵ Nehru, “‘The Way to Peace’ *Time and Tide*, 1936” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 122-126.

⁴²⁶ Nehru, “‘On The Indian Problem...’” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 102.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

“vague pricking of conscience” amongst the populace. Real interest in the “Indian problem” was “largely confined to special groups and individuals.”⁴²⁸

For Nehru, if the “psychological approach” was to be attempted, it had to be kept in mind that first the self-interest of the British elite would ensure that the British elite would not be swayed *en masse* by such an approach. Second, said elites controlled much of the means of communication (printing, radio, etc.) in Britain and her empire and had thus (mostly through omission) left the British public ignorant of the real conditions in the colonies. Although Nehru believed there were “many Britishers who feel kindly towards India and her people and would like to see India free”, such persons, he understood, “count for little in the shaping of policy”. Besides which, “even they, most of them, think in terms of Indian freedom fitting in with British desires and interests.”⁴²⁹

In other words, the British government would officially block any news of events in India or criticism of colonial rule there that would be detrimental to its image amongst the British public, as well as in the burgeoning public opinion on a global level.⁴³⁰ The British elite, whose “self-interest” negated feelings of empathy for the colonized, utilized their social power to ensure that the rest of society was not exposed to information that would create feelings of empathy. At the same time, information from the colonies was also sequestered by geographic, cultural, and linguistic barriers.

⁴²⁸ Nehru, ““On The Indian Problem...”” in *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p. 101-102.

⁴²⁹ Nehru, ““Letter to Lord Lothian’ Badenweiler, December 9, 1936” in, *Selected Works...*, Vol. 7, p.66-67.

⁴³⁰ For an interesting investigation of Britain’s propaganda towards its American ally with regards to India, see Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt and India: Propaganda During World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has argued contrary to the received wisdom in the modern academic “connections” literature, that long before Hannah Arendt began drawing connections between Nazism/fascism and colonialism/imperialism in the late 1940s, colonized intellectuals such as Jawaharlal Nehru and George Padmore were making just such connections at least a decade earlier. These “connections” were often drawn in explicit discussions of the lack of western recognition of these very “connections.” In making these assertions, Padmore and Nehru were shaped by similar but differing contexts. Yes, they were both highly educated while not significantly wealthy racialized subjects of the British Empire; however, there were also significant differences. In India, empire was no new phenomenon, and imperial critique, reform, revolt, and overthrow had, for centuries, been part of the socio-political fabric. In India, the British took control of a society which had thousands of years of history of non-European empires with all the associated educational systems and socio-institutional knowledge of governance. Put simply, in India, the British inherited an existing society with an existing ruling elite, educational systems, and religious hierarchies which, in many cases, they co-opted rather than destroyed and re-created from whole cloth. On the other hand, in the Caribbean, after the virtual annihilation of the Indigenous populations, the importation of African slaves, and the institutionalization of mono-cropping plantations with a white ruling class, there was created, in effect, a sort of new society without the imbedded histories of Indigenous empires so apparent in India.

While Nehru held high political positions in India during this period, Padmore participated in the politics of Trinidad only through those of his political writings that happened to be published there. Even in Africa, which was the main focus of his attention throughout the 1930s and 40s, he held no elected political positions. He was an activist for a society he had been divorced from through slavery and had few remaining direct connections with. Nehru on the other hand, was deeply imbedded in the society he sought to liberate from colonial rule. I think it is also safe to say that Nehru more than Padmore,

considered and weighed how to transform the Raj into a new better society rather than just overthrowing British rule.

Nehru also, during his education in Britain's elite institutions, and later as elected President of the Indian National Congress, came into direct contact with British ruling elites in ways that Padmore did not. He therefore had more nuanced and developed understandings of the worldviews of such men and how they functioned. Although Padmore criticized Black elites, he tended to do so in a far more general sense than did Nehru, who having real-world political post-colonial political ramifications to consider, was more careful and nuanced in his critique. This does not mean however, that Nehru was always necessarily less harsh or direct in his critique. These differing contexts and perspectives none the less provided both men with an extremely similar understanding of the British public's misperceptions of the British Empire and its relation to fascism and Nazism.

Nehru and Padmore sought to intervene in the metropolitan understanding of the events of the 1930s by demonstrating that the triumphalist narrative by which Britain acted as the benevolent hegemon was nothing but a myth. This myth was not only that of the Conservatives, nor even of the British Liberals. For, as Padmore and Nehru sought to make their metropolitan Labour Party and other Leftist allies recognize, they – metropolitan labour – were fundamentally part of the *system* of imperial rule which was so devastating for the colonized. That is, members of the left could also fall into this "myth" of imperial benevolence. For those members of the left who "fell" for this "myth", the past crimes of colonialism were "crimes" precisely because they were *not* the norm. Rather, they were anomalies that required imperial redress. For Nehru and Padmore, because imperialism/colonialism was fundamentally exploitative, there was no such thing as a "good" imperialism, and any attempt to "reform" the system served only to perpetuate the evils of said system. In short, Padmore and Nehru sought to undermine and problematize the metropole's narratives of benevolence through stringent investigation and analysis of current events.

They argued that the actions of Britain and France in the 1930s that were perceived by their populace as “betrayals” of China, Spain, Abyssinia, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, should not have been so surprising. This was because such actions were fundamentally in accordance with the interests of the governing classes of both states to maintain the power of the British and French Empires in the international arena, regardless of the moral consequences. Padmore and Nehru argue that the League of Nations was not an instrument intended to end the “anarchy of sovereign states” but rather to protect the status quo of British and French imperialism against “revisionist” powers, that the British elites had no problem with fascism/Nazism – which was demonstrated by the passive, and sometimes not so passive, support they offered to Franco against Spanish democracy, to Mussolini against Abyssinia, and to Hitler in the form of colonies, as well as in Austria and Czechoslovakia. For Padmore and Nehru, it was not until fascism began to threaten the interests of the British elite that said elite began to oppose fascism. For Winston Churchill, this war was fundamentally a war of imperial interest – a war to protect the British Empire. The strategic choices of Britain’s elites in the 1930s, that is, the supposed “betrayal” of various victims of aggression and the failure of “appeasement”, were not so. The British people should have expected their state to act in such ways, for these actions were entirely consistent with the interests of their elites and the historical record of said elites on the international stage. Only a belief in the influence of the British public’s commitment to democracy led some observers to expect a different course of action.

The use of comparison for both men was not intended to demonstrate German uniqueness, but rather, through comparison between the specifics of Nazism and colonial rule, to demonstrate the similarities between Nazism and British imperial governance *generally*. Nehru specifically, however, did not by any means perceive, or intend for his audiences to perceive, Nazism/fascism and British colonialism/imperialism to be exactly the same thing. For, although as early as 1936, Nehru personally

considered Nazism to be simply an “intensified form” of imperialism,⁴³¹ he had no problem with allocating “some” difference between the actions and function of British and by implication the other West European imperialisms with those of Germany, Italy, and Japan. He repetitively noted that, say, the bombings in Spain by Italy and Germany were, in their degree of singular intensity, different from those of Britain on the northwestern frontier of the Raj; that the “satisfied” imperial powers were, in the present, less violent than the “dissatisfied” powers;⁴³² and that there were “of course” differences between British imperialism and that of German fascism.⁴³³ However, for Nehru, it was the British *moral* understanding of these events that is distorted. The British were not being *morally* consistent in their analysis. The *purpose* of these utterances was to demonstrate to the British public that certain aspects of Nazism which many of them condemned as evil were also “aspects” of their own empire and were being perpetrated in their colonies in their national name. Specifically, authoritarian rule and restriction of civil liberties, military and political expansionism, bombing of civilians, all were infused with an aura of racial justification.

The western public had great difficulty in recognizing such crimes long before the Holocaust came to hold its present place in western consciousness. Contrary to what Khalid Abdul Muhammad and Diedonné M’bala have argued, in other words, Western non-recognition of colonial crimes, therefore, was by no means created or maintained by Holocaust memory. It is therefore false, unproductive, and reproductive of an anti-Semitic canard to blame “the Jews” for modern western non-recognition of the negative aspects of its colonial past. Rather, the western inability to grapple with the crimes of its colonial past is, if we follow the assessment of Padmore and Nehru, a result of layered causes. These included an inheritance of colonial-era propaganda, elite control of information, psycho-social distance

⁴³¹ Nehru, “Letter to Lord Lothian” in *Selected Works...Vol. 7*, p. 65. Nehru calls Italian “New Imperialism” “particularly blatant.”

⁴³² Nehru, *The Discovery...*, 355. For Nehru, the “difference” between fascism and British Imperialism “was one of degree and of time, not of kind.”

⁴³³ Nehru, “Presidential Address...” in *Selected Works...Vol. 9*, p. 60-64.

from colonial (and post-colonial) conditions in the form of real geographic distance from these “conditions”, and an on-going psychological block to perceiving oneself, as it were, on the “wrong side” of history. It is the very narrative of imperial benevolence – which has it that men such as Padmore and Nehru were able to criticize the British Empire because of the morals the British had taught them – that is the same narrative which “blocked” the British public of WWII in their time and continues to block many the contemporary members of the western public of today from wholly recognizing the negative aspects of the British and other European empires. It also, therefore, is likely related to the general tendency of the public in post-war allied states to not perceive the areas of overlap between Nazism/fascism and British colonialism/imperialism discussed in this thesis.

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