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**‘The Natural Voice of Colonial Liberation
Movements Everywhere’: An Investigation
into the Significance of Anti-Colonialism
within the Labour Party from 1951 to 1960.**

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Abbreviations

CAF: Central African Federation

CLP: Constituency Labour Party

COPAI: Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism

CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain

FCB: Fabian Colonial Bureau

HC: House of Commons

LHASC: Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester

MCF: Movement for Colonial Freedom

MPs: Members of Parliament

NEC: National Executive Committee

PLP: Parliamentary Labour Party

PPP: Guyanese People's Progressive Party

WCML: Working Class Movement Library, Salford

Introduction

At its peak, the British Empire was ‘a global phenomenon of immense economic and cultural diversity’ spanning much of the planet.¹ Yet the Empire maintained a marginal position in British politics throughout the vast majority of its history.² Even by 1951, the year this investigation takes as its starting point, with cracks in the imperial project beginning to widen, colonialism was generally marked by parliamentary and public apathy.³ This generalisation does however obscure much of the work done by a number of committed activists who occupied a position on the fringes of British politics throughout the Empire’s lifespan. Most often situated within left-wing circles, though sometimes straying into the centre and the right, anti-colonialists consistently opposed the brutal exploitation of colonial peoples enacted under the banner of the British Empire.⁴ Anti-colonialists during the 1950s occupied a plethora of radical organisations from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), to the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism (COPAI), and the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF), all of which shared a ‘militant opposition to British colonialism’.⁵ This dissertation seeks to uncover how much influence this relatively fringe group of activists were thus able to wield in the mainstream political party commonly regarded as the most suitable or receptive to its demands.

Defining anti-colonialism is notoriously difficult.⁶ Anti-colonialism is a concept ‘subject to changing historical conditions’ and therefore often belies simple definition.⁷ As such, anti-colonialism has become an area of study notably ‘under-examined’.⁸ For the purposes of this

¹ P. J. Cain, ‘Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context’, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III, The Nineteenth Century*, (ed.) Andrew Porter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p31.

² Richard Whiting, ‘The Empire and British Politics’, in *Britain’s Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, (ed.) Andrew Thompson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p161.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p1.

⁵ Ibid., p309.

⁶ Christopher J. Lee, ‘Anti-Colonialism’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, ed(s). Martin Thomas & Andrew Thompson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198713197.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198713197-e-24>, accessed 11.12.2018.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

dissertation, anti-colonialism will be judged against the four criteria outlined by Howe in 1993's *Anticolonialism in British Politics*. Howe's anti-colonialism entails: 1) that national independence is a universal right alongside a rejection of notions of trusteeship; 2) that geographically disparate struggles for national independence are inherently connected; 3) that European and non-European peoples are equal; 4) that people in colony-owning nations have a duty to oppose the actions of their own nation's imperial project.⁹ Howe provides a useful starting point, supplying a definition of anti-colonialism suitable for any investigation into opposition to the British Empire in the mid-20th Century.

Within the Labour Party between 1951 and 1960, anti-colonial MPs such as Fenner Brockway and organisations such as the MCF persistently lobbied and campaigned at party conferences, within parliament, and across the wider country, inside a party whose position on empire has historically fluctuated between support and apathy. With the anti-colonial movement entering the 1950s in a position of general weakness, largely confined to fringe groups, and lacking a real organised presence in the Labour Party, this dissertation will seek to assess whether the movement experienced any change in status over the course of the decade. To do this, this dissertation will investigate how much influence the anti-colonial movement was able to wield both inside the Party and over the Conservative Government. This will involve looking at changes to party policy, analysing the language used by senior Labour politicians and present in official Labour documents, while also exploring changes to the nature and volume of pressure brought to bear by Labour MPs on the Conservative Government within parliament. However, wishing to avoid too greater focus on parliamentary politics alone, this dissertation will also aim to place particular importance on events outside parliament. The MCF, for instance, was an organisation affiliated to Labour, and which for the purposes of this dissertation will be considered as much a part of the Party as the Fabian Society - but, crucially, it was an organisation that placed great emphasis on organising outside of parliament. Judging

⁹ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p2-3.

levels of influence, therefore, will also involve investigating how receptive the general public appeared to be to the goals and aims of the anti-colonial movement.

Furthermore, if the anti-colonial movement did achieve some sort of growth between 1951 and 1960, then why did it? This dissertation begins its investigation in 1951, the final year of the last Attlee Government. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the Attlee Governments of 1945 to 1951 undertook the task of managing the British Empire with a relative enthusiasm.¹⁰ Is it overly ambitious to expect to find a burgeoning anti-colonial movement, fundamentally defined by its opposition to British imperialism, just a decade after that very same party had been a successful and often brutal manager of the very same system?¹¹ Lastly, if this conclusion is true, then should we also expect to see a lasting legacy for the anti-colonial movement post-1960 and into the Wilson Governments? If not, then why not?

In order to answer these research inquiries, this dissertation utilises a number of sources in a variety of forms. To analyse the attitudes of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the website of the British Online Archives provided PLP minutes from every session of parliament between 1951 and 1960. Meanwhile, House of Commons records issued by Hansard allowed observation of the attitudes of MPs in parliament. Together, these two sources gave a clear indicator as to how vocal the PLP was in its support or opposition to anti-colonialism, and to what degree the PLP opposed the actions of the Conservative Government. Outwith parliament, the Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC) at the People's History Museum in Manchester and the Working Class Movement Library (WCML) in neighbouring Salford provided materials associated with the MCF and internal Labour Party correspondence. Meanwhile, pamphlets published by the Fabian Society and the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB) were available free of use online. As discussed, MCF and FCB materials were extremely

¹⁰ D. George Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997*, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999), p211.

¹¹ John Saville, 'Labourism and the Labour Government', *The Socialist Register*, vol. 4 (1967), p59.

useful in that they allowed this dissertation to expand on simply looking at attitudes towards anti-colonialism within parliament. There is, after all, political activity across Britain which completely bypasses parliament for a whole plethora of reasons. Focusing solely on parliamentary sources would therefore have significantly limited this dissertation's scope and rendered any conclusions inadequate.

The sheer volume of primary source material available placed limits on this dissertation's scope. An investigation into the path of the anti-colonial movement within the Labour Party post-1945 would have presented a gargantuan task. 1951 to 1960, the nine years between the last Attlee Government in 1951 and Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in 1960, was a period in which the Labour Party and the leadership of the Conservative Party appeared to go from relative enthusiasm for empire to an acceptance of decolonization.¹² It was also a period when colonies such as Kenya, Malaya, and Cyprus witnessed extreme violence. This dissertation aims to look at how the Labour Party reacted to such events, and ask if Labour did undergo a transformation from the Empire's manager to its opponent, then how did it? Overall, 1951 to 1960 is a period subject to considerably less study than the periods before and after. However, with the beginnings of the violent disintegration of the British Empire and an acceleration of the decolonization process, fierce internal standoffs within Labour, and the Conservative Party's romantic attachment to the Anglo-Saxon diaspora increasingly on the wane, this period remains a fascinating area of study.

This dissertation focuses on a political movement that would grow significantly over this period, rising from the support of sole MPs and the odd radical Constituency Labour Party (CLP) to nationwide tours and general acclaim at the Labour Party conference. How much real influence the anti-colonial movement was actually able to wield however will be explored over the coming pages. In the next section, the literature review, this dissertation will survey the

¹² Dan Horowitz, 'Attitudes of British Conservatives Towards Decolonization', *African Affairs*, vol. 69 (1970), p25.

existing works on Labour's relationship with the Empire, looking at where this dissertation fits into the historiography, while positioning it in relation to Morgan's assessment that the Labour Party in 1960 had become the 'natural voice of colonial liberation movements everywhere'.¹³

¹³ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay: British Labour and Decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 27 (1999), p241.

Literature Review

Prior to the Second World War, the position of empire in Labour Party thinking was 'marginal'.¹⁴ Labour's early history was dominated by a focus on domestic issues.¹⁵ Indeed, one of the Party's forerunners in the late 1800s, the Social Democratic Federation, was founded by H. M. Hyndman - at one time, an avid imperialist.¹⁶ With Labour's foundation in 1900, the influence of the Fabian Society saw the majority of the new party's efforts devoted to the pursuit of incremental social reforms as a means of transforming the state.¹⁷ As a result, on those occasions when empire did enter into the forefront of Labour opinion it was generally seen through a prism of the domestic.¹⁸ A key driving force behind this was J. A. Hobson, a Liberal. Hobson argued that imperialism abroad reinforced capitalism at home - a state of affairs antithetical to Labour's natural interests and therefore warranting of opposition.¹⁹ Indeed, as Porter identifies, between 1900 and 1914, on issues of empire Labour did little more than 'repeat what Liberals had said before'.²⁰ The Party lacked a distinctive colonial policy.²¹ Seymour describes Labour's position on empire during this period as 'deferential',²² meanwhile Arendt derides Labour's 'complicity' in the imperial project.²³ Through analysing the work of Leonard Woolf, 'one of the chief architects of imperial and foreign policy for the Labour Party between 1914 and 1945',²⁴ Reader shows that Woolf's position, as somebody who was not necessarily pro-empire but nevertheless thought in imperial terms, was indicative of Labour pre-1945.²⁵ Woolf was against the Empire on economic grounds but saw for it a

¹⁴ Ibid., p234.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: The New Press, 1996), p15.

¹⁷ Ibid., p16.

¹⁸ Stuart Macintyre, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement in the 1920s: An Examination of Marxist Theory*, (London: Our History, 1975), p3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p4.

²⁰ Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914*, (London: Macmillan, 1968), p137.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Richard Seymour, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics*, (London: Verso, 2016), p95.

²³ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (London: Penguin, 2017), p197.

²⁴ Luke Reader, 'An Alternative to Imperialism: Leonard Woolf, The Labour Party, and Imperial Internationalism 1915-1922', *The International History Review*, (2017), p1.

²⁵ Ibid., p14.

lasting role as a 'moral authority' in the world.²⁶ For Macintyre, what to do about the colonies was consequently seen within Labour as a 'question of conscience'.²⁷ Similarly, Morgan argues that Labour's perception of empire lacked a coherent and consistent critique but 'was governed by a simple gut instinct that it was against it'.²⁸ There is clearly a common theme running throughout the historiography that pre-Second World War Labour's position on the Empire was vague and undistinctive. Empire was generally avoided, however when taking a stance proved unavoidable Labour's position often appeared remarkably similar to that adopted by the Liberals - a stance which tended to advocate moral opposition.²⁹

With ascent to government in 1945 however, Labour's position on colonial issues changed. As shown by Gupta, the colonial policy of the first Labour Government quickly came to grips with the travails of governance.³⁰ The Second World War had proven economically devastating, burdening Britain with huge debts, and wiping out much of its pre-war advantage *vis-a-vis* the rest of the industrialised world.³¹ Britain found itself transformed from creditor to debtor, playing a subordinate international role to the United States.³² Consequently, as Boyce demonstrates, what little desire to see an end to empire had existed pre-1945 quickly dissipated upon Labour taking office.³³ In this economic and political context, the Labour Government viewed the Empire as a means of 'salvation'.³⁴ Paul illustrates Labour's new attitude by showing how Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin, and Herbert Morrison's determination to preserve the Empire as a means of staving off economic disaster led to the establishment

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p2.

²⁷ Macintyre, *Examination of Marxist Theory*, p11.

²⁸ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p234.

²⁹ Porter, *Critics of Empire*, p96.

³⁰ Partha Sarathi Gupta, 'Imperialism and the Labour Government of 1945-51', in *The Working Class in Modern British History*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p100.

³¹ Sarah Elizabeth Stockwell, 'Britain', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, ed(s). Martin Thomas & Andrew Thompson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198713197.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198713197-e-4>, accessed 13.11.2018.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Boyce, *Decolonisation*, p211.

³⁴ Gupta, 'Imperialism and the Labour Government', p107.

of the Colonial Development Corporation in 1947.³⁵ Meanwhile, Deighton uses Bevin's desire to extend and maintain empire in Africa, in the form of a 'Third World Power', to display Labour's newfound eagerness for imperialism.³⁶ Saville emphasises how the Labour Government's determination to safeguard empire led to a 'pattern of colonial repression' indistinguishable to that carried out by the unmistakably pro-empire Conservative Governments prior to the Second World War.³⁷ Labour's attitudes towards empire in this period were heavily influenced by events in India. Unlike Morgan, who dubbed Attlee 'a liberator',³⁸ Owen argues that the declaration of Indian independence in 1947 actually represented a failure for Labour.³⁹ Labour's historical relationship with the Indian National Congress Party was marked by orientalist and paternalist attitudes.⁴⁰ By the 1940s, Labour's attempts to instil in the Congress a more modest version of Indian nationalism had unequivocally failed.⁴¹ However, policy constraints combined to force the Labour Government down a path which inevitably led to independence.⁴² Owen is therefore able to argue that for Labour, Indian independence represented a clear 'defeat'.⁴³ The damning experience of Indian independence consequently saw managerial tendencies and notions of responsible self-government reinforced.⁴⁴ Overall, there is a clear defined thread running throughout the historiography asserting that Labour displayed enthusiasm for the maintenance of empire between 1945 and 1951. Furthermore, this represents an evolution from the general apathy towards imperialism dominant pre-Second World War. Entering into 1951, Labour's early

³⁵ Kathleen Paul, "'British Subjects" and "British Stock": Labour's Postwar Imperialism', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 34 (1995), p235.

³⁶ Anne Deighton, 'Entente Neo-Coloniale?: Ernest Bevin and the Proposals for an Anglo-French Third World Power, 1945-1949', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 17 (2006), p836.

³⁷ Saville, 'Labourism and the Labour Government', p59.

³⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p142.

³⁹ Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p295.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p10-11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p295.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p273.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p295.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p298.

theoretical inconsistency on the British Empire had therefore been replaced by a genuine eagerness for management.

How does this idea of Labour displaying enthusiasm for the running of the Empire pre-1951 fit with Morgan's statement that by the early 1960s Labour represented the 'natural voice of colonial liberation movements everywhere'?⁴⁵ As Porter correctly recognises, these contrasting views of Labour's colonial role 'cannot both be correct'.⁴⁶ Morgan argues that it was during the 1950s, a time when the decolonization process started to appear unstoppable, that Labour first developed a serious critique of colonialism.⁴⁷ This critique, he argues, leaned emphatically in support of the nationalist movements seeking independence from British rule.⁴⁸ Keleman offers a similar conclusion, contending that by the end of the 1950s Labour's position had shifted to one of support for African nationalist movements.⁴⁹ Gupta, meanwhile, asserts that by the early 1960s Labour had shed any lingering 'social imperialist element' in its attitudes towards colonialism and the Empire.⁵⁰ Significantly, all three place special importance for this transformation on the emergence of the MCF. As will be discussed later, the rise of the MCF in terms of influence, organisational capacity, and radicalism, was undoubtedly an important factor in the growth of anti-colonialism between 1951 and 1960. However, where this essay differs to those referenced above is on the conclusions arrived at when analysing this growth. Unlike Morgan, Keleman, and Gupta, this essay will clearly demonstrate that though anti-colonialism did grow as a movement between 1951 and 1960, this did not result in Labour becoming anything close to the 'natural voice' for colonial liberation movements.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

⁴⁶ Porter, *Critics of Empire*, p95.

⁴⁷ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p237.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p241.

⁴⁹ Paul Keleman, 'The British Labour Party and the Economics of Decolonization: The Debate Over Kenya', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 8 (2007), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/230164>, accessed 13.11.2018.

⁵⁰ Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964*, (London: Macmillan, 1975), p393.

⁵¹ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

This essay shares a degree of common cause with a second group of historians who have argued that, by the end of the period, Labour's support for anti-colonial nationalist movements was still not wholly forthcoming and remained marked by suspicion. In his study on decolonisation in Guyana, Mawby shows how Labour remained mistrustful of and even hostile to the pro-independence People's Progressive Party (PPP).⁵² As Mawby argues, Labour's attitudes towards the PPP were shaped by overarching themes of anti-communism and Atlanticism reinforced by the Cold War.⁵³ Labour's support for anti-colonial movements was very clearly conditional. In her study of British rule in Kenya, Elkins draws a similar conclusion, illustrating how the leadership of the Labour Party held back on offering full support to the nationalist movement led by Jomo Kenyatta.⁵⁴ Though, as Elkins correctly identifies, this was derived from 'public apathy' as opposed to Cold War considerations, it once again demonstrates Labour's inconsistent support for colonial nationalist movements.⁵⁵ Compounding this critique, Joshi and Carter offer an even more damning evaluation. Labour, 'steeped in traditions of colonialism and its accompanying racism',⁵⁶ never fully committed itself to decolonisation at all.⁵⁷ There is evident continuity in the arguments, suggesting that Labour's support for colonial liberation movements was not as strong as those such as Morgan would believe. Joshi and Carter's denouncement of Labour's racist attitudes during the 1950s is a direct renunciation of Gupta's assertion that Labour had shed its 'social imperialist element'.⁵⁸ This essay attempts to show that this view of Labour as suspicious of, or hostile to, colonial liberation movements is somewhat accurate. The leadership of the Party certainly fits this critique. However, where this argument begins to falter is when analysing those

⁵² Spencer Mawby, 'The Limits of Anticolonialism: The British Labour Movement and the End of Empire in Guiana', *The Journal of the Historical Association*, vol. 101 (2016), p85.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Catherine Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, (London: Pimlico, 2005), p309.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Shirley Joshi, Bob Carter, 'The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain', *Race & Class*, vol. 25 (1984), p69.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p55.

⁵⁸ Gupta, *Imperialism*, p393.

affiliated bodies and activists situated on the Party's fringe. Consequently, this essay attempts to expand on works such as Howe's *Anticolonialism in British Politics* which provides extensive detail of the work of organisations such as the MCF. Howe usefully illustrates how the MCF grew in stature over the course of the 1950s and how this growth influenced changes in the Party's colonial thinking. This essay will aim to build upon Howe's conclusions while also investigating whether this growth was in any way related to the decline of the FCB. By viewing the Labour Party not as a homogenous body, but rather as a collection of (sometimes) competing interests, this essay will aim to shine greater focus on the views of affiliated party bodies and fringe MPs who were often relatively supportive of colonial movements. This allows for the analysis of a broader range of views and ultimately provides for a more accurate and holistic view of the Labour Party.

This dissertation is suitably placed within the historiography to justify its writing. Firstly, by charting the growth of anti-colonialism as a movement within Labour between 1951 and 1960 this dissertation will add to those works which focus on Labour's attitudes towards empire both pre-Second World War and during the Attlee Governments. Chapter One will show that 1951 to 1960 witnessed a growth of anti-colonialism to such an extent that there is a definite contrast to the periods immediately preceding it. Secondly, as will be shown in Chapters Two and Three, this essay rejects both of the contrasting views of Labour's relationship to anti-colonial movements outlined earlier. Between 1951 and 1960 Labour was neither a 'natural voice of colonial liberation movements' nor was it overtly hostile.⁵⁹ Instead, this essay will show that any analysis of Labour's relationship with colonial liberation movements requires greater nuance. This essay will attempt to provide this by building on pre-existing studies from historians like Howe as well as the contrasting works of both Elkins and Morgan. The idea that Labour's relationship to anti-colonial movements was either one of outright hostility or outright support will therefore be shown to be overly simplistic.

⁵⁹ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

Chapter 1: The Growth of Anti-Colonialism, 1951-1960

The experience of the anti-colonial movement within the Labour Party between 1951 and 1960 was qualitatively different to that experienced by the movement prior to the 1950s. Throughout this chapter, it will be demonstrated how over the course of the decade the anti-colonial movement experienced clear growth. This chapter will be split into three sections - the early 1950s, the mid-1950s, and the late 1950s - in an effort to most clearly chart this growth and allow for comparisons between the different periods, something which ultimately allows for greater analysis and greater accuracy.

1.1. 1951-1953

The anti-colonial movement within the Labour Party at the start of the 1950s faced an uphill struggle. At the start of the decade, the perception of the Empire within vast swathes of the Labour Party was largely indistinguishable to that which had characterised the Attlee Governments. In a House of Commons debate on Kenya in 1952, Sydney Silverman MP proclaimed that though he wished to see Kenya independent at some stage, the colony was not yet ready for 'full and complete responsible self-government'.⁶⁰ Silverman's contribution to the debate draws clear parallels with the paternalist arguments put forward by much of the Party pre-1951. Though the language is more flamboyant, there is relatively little difference between Silverman's proposal and that put forward by Labour's then-Secretary of State for the Colonies Arthur Creech Jones in 1950. Jones' description of Africa as a 'vast and dark continent' inhabited by a 'tribal and primitive people' shares a number of thematic similarities with the conclusion reached by Silverman.⁶¹ For instance, both perceive the African population in Kenya as inherently incapable of governance. This lies in stark contrast to the perception of the white settler population in Kenya which, though maybe not governing well, was still fit to perform the task of 'responsible' governance presumably by virtue of their race. As a result, going into 1950, the Secretary of Labour's Advisory Committee on International Relations

⁶⁰ HC Deb 25 November 1952, vol. 508, col. 359.

⁶¹ Arthur Creech Jones quoted in Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

Charles Greenidge went so far as to suggest that post-1943 the Party's colonial policy had actually regressed in terms of progressiveness.⁶² This sentiment was evoked further in a motion moved to the 1951 Labour Party Conference by Paddington North CLP. The motion attacked the Party for 'continuing the colonial business of the Commonwealth on the same old system that we inherited from the Tories' and suggested that Labour only took interest in the colonies when 'some sensational matter creeps up'.⁶³ At the 1952 Conference, a motion moved by Edinburgh West CLP echoed these sentiments calling on the Party to commit to anti-imperialism through the adoption of a policy which would grant 'immediate independence to all British colonies' and expose the imperialism of the Conservative Government.⁶⁴ The resolution, entitled 'Self Government for Colonial Peoples', failed to pass.⁶⁵ Indeed, much of the support for this more radical anti-colonial stance came from outside the PLP. Only a few MPs, mainly on the Party's left, chose to speak out against party colonial orthodoxy. Writing in 1953 for the COPAI, Fenner Brockway spoke of the need for urgent change in British colonial policy and demanded that target dates be set for the 'realisation of self-government' in Kenya.⁶⁶

Up to 1954, colonial attitudes within Labour remained largely unchanged from the 1940s. The paternalistic nature of the Attlee Governments and their eagerness for the management of empire left a clear legacy on Labour's colonial thinking between 1951 and 1953. However, during the early 1950s it is possible to identify the seeds of what was to become wider dissent later in the decade - especially from those on the left of the Party.⁶⁷ During the early 1950s though, aside from the support of a few fringe Labour MPs such as Brockway, this dissent was largely confined to CLPs and grassroots bodies where the left of the Party maintained greater

⁶² Charles Greenidge quoted in Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p219.

⁶³ The Labour Party, *The Labour Party Annual Report 1951*, (London, 1951), p95.

⁶⁴ The Labour Party, *The Labour Party Annual Report 1952*, (London, 1952), p137.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p142.

⁶⁶ LHASC. Fenner Brockway, *Why Mau Mau? An Analysis and a Remedy*, (London: COPAI, 1953), p15.

⁶⁷ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p219.

influence, and expressions of anti-colonialism were therefore mostly restricted to conference resolutions and motions.⁶⁸

1.2. The Impact of 1954

1954 marked a real watershed for the anti-colonial movement within Labour.⁶⁹ In comparison to previous party conferences, the 1954 Conference contained a veritable flood of resolutions on colonial affairs.⁷⁰ The resolution moved by Exeter CLP calling on Labour to fully recognise colonial peoples' 'unconditional right to self-determination and national independence' was matched by similar resolutions from across the country.⁷¹ Wolverhampton Borough Labour Party, for example, appealed for conference to reaffirm 'the principle of absolute self-determination for the peoples of the colonial territories'.⁷² The resolutions moved at the 1954 Conference were not only more radical in tone than much previous mainstream party thinking on colonial affairs, they were also greater in number. Out of the 22 resolutions moved on colonial affairs at the Conference, over 14 contained notions of radical anti-colonialism.⁷³ The resolution moved by Lewisham West CLP, for example, denounced the economic benefits that Britain had gained over the course of empire to the detriment of colonial peoples, calling for the postponement of extensions to the welfare state until native people had been reimbursed.⁷⁴ The changes witnessed at the 1954 Conference were partly influenced by the formation of the MCF in the same year. As will be discussed in greater depth later, the MCF inundated the 1954 Conference with literature, putting forward a comprehensive programme for British withdrawal, and offering a clear alternative programme on colonial affairs to the one espoused by a party hierarchy still overwhelmingly under the influence of the Fabians.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Ibid., p220.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p221.

⁷⁰ The Labour Party, *Agenda of the 53rd Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1954*.

⁷¹ Ibid., p47.

⁷² Ibid., p48.

⁷³ Labour Party, *Agenda of the 53rd Annual Conference*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p49.

⁷⁵ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p222.

An additional factor was the escalation of violence in Kenya. Resolutions moved by Chichester CLP, Harrow East CLP, and Birmingham Erdington CLP explicitly called for the withdrawal of troops from Kenya.⁷⁶ Leeds South East CLP meanwhile expressed 'grave concern' at the breakdown of race relations within the colony.⁷⁷ As Elkins illustrates, in 1955 Labour would 'explode' in outrage at events in Kenya.⁷⁸ These resolutions show however that the foundations of this explosion were already in place a year prior. For example, in 1956, Labour MP Aneurin Bevan recognised that the 'colonies are awakening ... towards, they hope, the realisation of self-government'.⁷⁹ This represented a much more radical tone than the one offered by Silverman in 1952, and is closer in attitudes to the line taken by Exeter CLP in 1954. As a result, the explosion that Elkins refers to was, in many ways, elements of the PLP simply recognising something which had already gained much support amongst CLPs and local parties in previous years. 1954 and 1955 saw notions of immediate independence for the colonies, influenced by the Mau Mau War in Kenya and the work of the MCF, gain increasing influence.

However, though the first elements of anti-colonialism were beginning to permeate from the grassroots into the PLP, much like at the start of the decade anti-colonial attitudes were still mostly confined to outside of parliament. At the same time CLPs were calling for immediate independence for the colonies, the 1954 Statement of Policy on Colonial Affairs and the 1956 Plural Society policy document reiterated well-worn ideas of 'responsible' government. The 1954 Statement accepted that the goal for the colonies was 'democratic self-government' but stressed this would only come about when 'the development of each territory makes it practicable'.⁸⁰ The Statement also, crucially, outlined the need for 'responsible leaders' amongst colonial peoples.⁸¹ Likewise, 'The Plural Society' asserted that, due to the presence

⁷⁶ Labour Party, *Agenda of the 53rd Annual Conference*, p47-48.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p48.

⁷⁸ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p275.

⁷⁹ HC Deb 06 June 1956, vol. 553, col 1195.

⁸⁰ The Labour Party, *Statement of Policy on Colonial Affairs to Labour Party Annual Conference 1954*.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

of large white settler communities, Britain should 'retain ultimate control ... until such conditions for the establishment of full democracy exist'.⁸² Ostensibly seen as a means of preventing domination by one racial group over another, 'The Plural Society' was 'bound to favour white minorities'.⁸³ Both documents highlight the limits of the anti-colonial movement's influence while shining a light on the clear split in attitudes on empire between the Party hierarchy and the grassroots. Increased radicalism on colonial issues found in the Party's grassroots bodies and amongst an ever-growing number of MPs was not mirrored in official party policy.

Despite this, the mid-1950s did see a clear growth in anti-colonialism within the Party. As Fenner Brockway remarked in 1957, 'during the period in Opposition, Labour's policy in this regard has advanced more than on any subject'.⁸⁴ Calls for immediate independence for the colonies spread like wildfire amongst local parties and CLPs. On occasion, these calls also found favour in the PLP. However, despite this clear growth, Labour policy on empire was still marked by much of the same features as it had been in the early 1950s. Notions of responsible self-government as a prerequisite for independence still held much sway - especially over the PLP.

1.3. 1958-1960

By the late 1950s, anti-colonialism's growth within the Labour Party began to accelerate. Traditional attitudes were eschewed by an increasingly larger section of the Party. Produced in 1958, the pamphlet 'Political Problems of the Colonies' called for the need to 'liquidate Colonialism' while asserting that 'it is far better to run the risk of going too fast rather than risk

⁸² The Labour Party, 'The Plural Society', *Talking Points*, No. 16 (1956), p128.

⁸³ Nicholas Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', in *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-1964*, ed(s). Harriet Jones & Michael Kandiah, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p170.

⁸⁴ Fenner Brockway quoted in Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p230.

going too slowly'.⁸⁵ By 1960, this sentiment was echoed at the Party's annual conference. However, unlike the early 1950s when the only displays of anti-colonialism came from lone CLP resolutions or motions, at the 1960 Conference it was MP James Callaghan's 'Emergency Resolution on Africa' that called upon Labour to 'continue this fight until the last vestiges of colonialism are removed'.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Callaghan was no fringe MP associated with the Labour left. Callaghan, who was of the Party's mainstream, would be narrowly defeated for the deputy leadership at the 1960 Conference, before becoming Shadow Chancellor in 1961, and then Prime Minister in 1976. The large divergence between the left and right on colonial issues, had, to a degree, narrowed. Where once Callaghan and MPs such as Barbara Castle had found themselves on opposite sides of internal party debate, by the late 1950s, they were united over colonial issues.⁸⁷ Anti-colonial thinking, though still perhaps less radical than that found at the grassroots level, had to a degree filtered up through the Party hierarchy. This represents a 'relatively cohesive' attitude on colonial matters found in Labour from the mid-1950s onwards.⁸⁸ For example, on the National Executive Committee's (NEC) Commonwealth Subcommittee chaired by Bevan, the left retained disproportionate power compared to its influence *vis-a-vis* the rest of the Party policy-making machine.⁸⁹ In comparison with the 1951 Manifesto which only went so far as to say that 'Britain must be strong: so must the Commonwealth', the tone of the language and the volume of content dedicated to colonial affairs in the 1959 Manifesto represents a great contrast.⁹⁰ In the 1959 Manifesto, the Labour Party offered a critique of the international system as one of 'two worlds, one white, well-fed and free, the other coloured, hungry, and struggling for equality' while recognising that colonial peoples have the right to be 'governed by consent' under 'one man, one vote'.⁹¹ In contrast to

⁸⁵ LHASC. The Labour Party, 'Political Problems of the Colonies', *Labour Political Education Series*, (London, 1958), p4, p9.

⁸⁶ The Labour Party, *The Labour Party Annual Report 1960*, (London, 1960), p107.

⁸⁷ Morgan, *Labour People*, p268.

⁸⁸ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p321.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p230.

⁹⁰ LHASC 73259E-11, The Labour Party, *Labour Party Election Manifesto*, (1951).

⁹¹ LHASC 73259G-02, The Labour Party, *1959 Labour Party Manifesto: Britain Belongs to You - The Labour Party's Policy for the Consideration of the Nation*, (1959).

eight years prior, official Labour policy recognised at once the damages inflicted by colonialism on colonial peoples and regions under British control, while suggesting that the remedy was self-government.

Crucially, however, notions of self-government had also evolved. Unlike the mid-1950s when the 'Plural Society' was a blueprint for African independence, 1960 saw this concept abandoned.⁹² Labour took the conscious decision not to republish the 1956 pamphlet because its ideas were now deemed outdated.⁹³ In its place, acceptance that the future of post-colonial Africa was likely to be defined by black majority rule gained increased traction. Callaghan's 'Emergency Resolution on Africa' called upon the Government to 'grant full democratic rights and self-determination to all peoples still under British rule, especially in East and Central Africa'.⁹⁴ Likewise, recognition of African desire for future self-government to be based on universal suffrage - something which would almost guarantee black majority rule - was expressed in parliament by Labour MP Dingle Foot.⁹⁵ Arguably, this acceptance of majoritarian democracy as the basis for future governance in ex-colonies was more to do with Labour reacting to events in the colonies themselves than any new intellectual formulations within the Party. In 1960, for example, Kenya saw an agreement reached for an eventual majority in the legislature for the black African population.⁹⁶ Though it is true that many in the radical anti-colonial fringe of the Party had been advancing ideas of black majority rule in African colonies for a number of years, the spread of these ideas throughout the rest of the Party was also a result of many in Labour reacting to events in the colonies. Labour was beginning to realise it was out of touch with events happening on the ground in areas of the world such as East Africa.

⁹² Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', p170.

⁹³ Talbot Imlay, 'International Socialism and Decolonization During the 1950s: Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 118 (2013), p1124.

⁹⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1960*, p41.

⁹⁵ HC Deb 26 March 1959, vol. 602, col. 1550

⁹⁶ Whiting, 'The Empire', p188.

This lack of contact with the colonial world was something that the anti-colonial movement started to address as the 1950s progressed. By end of the decade the anti-colonial movement within Labour had become better organised, establishing greater contact with nationalist activists in the colonies. The 1959 Annual Report outlines the Commonwealth Officer's plans for a tour of Africa to 'renew contacts',⁹⁷ meanwhile the Commonwealth Department itself received delegations from the Bahamas, Central Africa, and Kenya.⁹⁸ By 1960, the Department was being visited by Hastings Banda from Malawi, Tom Mboya from Kenya, and Julius Nyerere from Tanzania.⁹⁹ Extraordinarily, this influx of high-ranking nationalist leaders and officials from a variety of colonies and former colonies was described by the Department as 'the usual number of colonial delegations'.¹⁰⁰ MPs such as John Hatch also built up close personal relationships with nationalist figures like Kenyan trade unionist Tom Mboya. In a series of letters written between the two from 1958 to 1959, Hatch and Mboya exchanged proposals for constitutional change in Kenya. Declaring that his goal was 'undiluted democracy for Kenya', Mboya's letter contained five main demands, including 'universal franchise for Africans'.¹⁰¹ The primary material suggests that some in Labour did truly consider the Party to be the 'natural voice of colonial liberation movements everywhere'.¹⁰² In some respects, this opinion was shared by nationalists in the colonies. Nationalists in Africa increasingly regarded the Labour Party 'as being the quarter to which they would look for support'.¹⁰³ Enhanced communication between the metropole and the periphery, between the Labour Party in Britain and nationalist activists in Kenya, can therefore be used as an important barometer for judging the strength of anti-colonial feeling within the Party. At the start of the decade, contact between Labour and the colonies had been sparse. The 1951 Annual Report demonstrates that of the visitors received and international events attended by NEC representatives none were

⁹⁷ The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1959*, (London, 1959), p36.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p37.

⁹⁹ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1960*, p41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ LHASC, Labour Party International Department Box 126, Kenya Correspondence & Documents 1958-59. Letter from Tom Mboya to John Hatch, 28 June 1958.

¹⁰² Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

¹⁰³ David Stirling quoted in Boyce, *Decolonisation*, p212.

specifically African or Asian.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, as the 1952 Annual Report shows, the primary means of contact between Labour and colonial peoples in the early 1950s was through colonial students' unions in Britain.¹⁰⁵ By the end of the decade Labour had therefore revolutionized its access to contacts in the colonial world.

However, not all of these contacts viewed Labour in the same light. Correspondence between Labour Party General Secretary Morgan Phillips and J. D. Akumu from the Nairobi People's Convention Party demonstrates that Labour's favourable image in the colonies was not universal. In his letter to Phillips, Akumu takes aim at Labour officials 'trying to exert their influences on some Politicians and Organisations in the Colony', before reminding Phillips that Labour 'does not have a very clean record in Africa'.¹⁰⁶ Akumu argued that Labour was part of a coalition of 'anti-democratic forces' trying to stymie the nationalist movement in Kenya.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, when African members of the Kenya Legislative Council were placed on trial in 1958, internal party correspondence reveals the shallow extent of Labour's support. In a letter to Morgan Phillips, John Hatch recommended that the fund set up to provide legal representation for the seven accused men 'should not be supported'.¹⁰⁸ In a letter to Hatch, James Callaghan suggested that though personal contributions would be acceptable, a donation from the Party would not.¹⁰⁹ Labour did not wish to support any activities in the colonies which they feared would give the wrong impression at home.¹¹⁰ Labour's support for nationalist activists in the colonies was therefore very clearly conditional - a fact subsequently recognised by nationalists in the colonies.

¹⁰⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1951*, p23, p24.

¹⁰⁵ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1952*, p26.

¹⁰⁶ LHASC, Labour Party International Development Box 126, Kenya Correspondence and Documents 1952-1957. Letter from J.D. Akumu to Morgan Phillips, 12 December 1957.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ LHASC, Labour Party International Development Box 126, Kenya Correspondence and Documents 1958-1959. Letter from John Hatch to Morgan Phillips, 6 May 1958.

¹⁰⁹ LHASC, Labour Party International Development Box 126, Kenya Correspondence and Documents 1958-1959. Letter from James Callaghan to John Hatch, 14 May 1958.

¹¹⁰ Letter from John Hatch to Morgan Phillips, 6 May 1958.

From the late 1950s and into 1960, anti-colonialism continued the growth it had hinted at during the middle of the decade. The language used by Labour figures outside of anti-colonialism's traditional grassroots base became increasingly radical and, as documents from the late 1950s attest to, this did translate into changes to party policy. However, once again, Labour's anti-colonialism was not wholly forthcoming. Support for anti-colonial activists on the ground in East Africa was very clearly conditional on how it would impact Labour's domestic image. Likewise, though the late 1950s saw senior politicians inside parliament, such as Callaghan, more willing to take the lead for the anti-colonial movement than they had been in years previously, the vanguard of Labour anti-colonialism was still mostly composed of 'relative lightweights'.¹¹¹ As a result, by the late 1950s, anti-colonialism had grown significantly within the Party but this support remained limited.¹¹²

1.4. Assessment of Growth

The period from 1951 to 1960 saw the clear growth of anti-colonialism within the Labour Party. Traditional notions of Empire lost influence and became less widespread. Ideas of paternalism, fears of an African majority, and concepts of empire as mutually beneficial became discredited in Labour Party thinking. In their place, calls for immediate independence became more pervasive, the language used by senior Labour politicians became more radical, and there was greater contact between the Labour Party in Britain and nationalist activists in the colonies. This represented a clear contrast with the years prior to 1951. Ultimately, however, Labour's support for anti-colonialism was not total. Labour continued to view the movement with suspicion and the radical anti-colonialism associated with MPs like Fenner Brockway, organisations such as the MCF, and CLPs such as Lewisham West in 1954, never occupied a dominant position inside the Party. Changes in party policy were evident, however in many ways these changes were as much a reaction to events and attitudes on the ground in areas of the Empire such as East Africa than the influence of radical anti-colonialism. The vast

¹¹¹ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p309.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

majority of the Labour Party continued to view nationalist activists with paternalistic attitudes even if paternalism was starting to become less evident in official party policy. Furthermore, even when anti-colonial ideas did permeate into mainstream Labour thinking, they were of a markedly different vein to the radical thinking expressed by bodies such as the MCF. As a result, between 1951 and 1960, anti-colonialism did experience growth within the Labour Party, though it was growth of a clearly limited nature.

Chapter 2: Why Did Anti-Colonialism Grow?

Despite its clear limitations, the anti-colonial movement did however undergo significant growth between 1951 and 1960. This chapter will look at those factors which acted as catalysts for this growth, inspiring the ideological shifts and expansions in organisational capacities discussed previously. Specifically, this will involve looking at the decline of the Fabian Colonial Bureau and rise of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Labour's role as the official opposition, and the impact of the Cold War upon the Labour Party.

2.1. The Fabian Colonial Bureau and the Movement for Colonial Freedom

At the start of the 1950s, Labour Party colonial policy was heavily influenced by the Fabian Colonial Bureau.¹¹³ Founded in 1940, the FCB aimed to provide the Labour Party with a clear well-researched colonial policy, distinct from that of the Liberal Party.¹¹⁴ By the 1950s, supported by 12 Labour MPs, the FCB was articulating a view of empire rife with notions of paternalism and trusteeship.¹¹⁵ In 1951, Labour MP and Fabian Richard Crossman argued that 'national self-determination' for the remaining colonies was unviable.¹¹⁶ Crossman contended that, despite its best efforts, the Empire's attempted 'modernisation of a backward people' had failed.¹¹⁷ Africans still lacked the 'moral integrity' necessary to maintain political stability.¹¹⁸ Crossman's views were echoed in 1956 by historian and fellow Fabian Margery Perham. Perham regarded the African as 'quite unready'¹¹⁹ for governance due to the 'poverty, ignorance, and disunity' of native populations.¹²⁰ Perham argued that an ideal world would see 'negro Africa' experience 'another century at least of British rule, of order, education,

¹¹³ Charlotte Lydia Riley, "The Winds of Change Are Blowing Economically": The Labour Party and British Overseas Development, 1940s-1960s', in *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?*, ed(s)., Andrew W. Smith & Chris Jeppesen, (London: UCL Press, 2017), p50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p49.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p52.

¹¹⁶ R. H. Crossman, *Socialist Values in a Changing Civilization*, Fabian Tract 286, (London: Fabian Publications, 1951), p14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p15.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Margery Perham, 'Foreword', in *The Kenya Question: An African Answer*, Tom Mboya, (London: FCB, 1956), p7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p10.

unification, economic development'.¹²¹ To Perham, the British Empire was an empire of 'beneficent and expert trustees'.¹²² During the early-1950s, the FCB viewed the Empire in a benign manner. The Empire had performed an essential moral duty in 'civilizing' corners of the world they regarded as primitive.¹²³ As a result, there was no real pressing need for decolonization. Crossman and Perham's views on empire were entirely in-keeping with traditional Fabianism. George Bernard Shaw's 1900 *Fabianism and the Empire*, for instance, endorsed British imperial expansion on the grounds that a 'higher civilization' was incorporating 'lesser' peoples - and this, of course, represented progress.¹²⁴ Colonialism, which relied 'on notions of racial inferiority' and the perception of black people as inherently 'incapable of self-government', was therefore sustained into the early 1950s, in part, by the ideology espoused by the FCB and Fabian Society.¹²⁵ At the start of the decade, the FCB advocated the transformation of colonialism, not its dissolution.¹²⁶ In 1953, the FCB's Rita Hinden, as part of the *Socialist Commentary* editorial team, argued that although Europeans had 'introduced the trappings of white civilization' to previously 'backward' peoples, the escalation of violence in Kenya highlighted the need 'to change the conditions' of British rule.¹²⁷ Hinden's article clearly demonstrates the FCB's liberal view of the Empire's historical record and their unwillingness to accept calls for colonial independence. As a result, judged against Howe's criteria, the FCB cannot be considered in any way an anti-colonial organisation.

This holds certain significance due to the influence wielded by the FCB within the Party itself. At the 1951 Labour Party Conference, the FCB hosted a discussion under the title 'The Challenge to Labour in the Colonies', including speakers Reg Sorensen MP and Secretary of State for the Colonies James Griffiths.¹²⁸ Such close personal links between the FCB and the

¹²¹ Ibid., p4.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p312.

¹²⁴ Gupta, *Imperialism*, p11.

¹²⁵ Joshi, Carter, 'Racist Britain', p66.

¹²⁶ Riley, 'Winds of Change', p50.

¹²⁷ Editorial Team, 'Missing the Point in Kenya', *Socialist Commentary*, Vol. 17 (1953), p3.

¹²⁸ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1951*, p26.

Party's mainstream were reflected in similarities in policy. FCB paternalism was echoed in the House of Commons by James Griffiths in 1952, declaring of the African population in Kenya 'they are our wards and we are the trustees'.¹²⁹ For a long time the FCB was the only source of research and information on colonial policy available to Labour MPs.¹³⁰ As a result, the FCB's influence on Labour's colonial policy during the 1940s and 1950s was magnified because it was often conducting itself in a relative 'policy void'.¹³¹ This is especially significant because the FCB was not an anti-colonial organisation. It espoused a benign view of empire, wishing to see a transformation of the colonial system - not its dissolution. What's more, during the early 1950s, the FCB maintained close contact with senior Labour figures such as James Griffiths, subsequently reflected in similarities between FCB and Labour Party policy. The result was that during the early part of the decade Labour's colonial policy expressed much of the same features that it had pre-1951.

In 1954, the formation of the MCF presented a clear challenge to the FCB's dominance.¹³² The MCF's 1955 *A Policy for Colonial Freedom* called for the immediate fixing of target dates for independence for the remaining colonies, deriding the idea that it was up to Britain to decide when the constituent parts of the Empire should be allowed to declare independence.¹³³ What's more, the MCF explicitly rejected 'schemes of trusteeship',¹³⁴ demanding colonial independence based on 'freedom from military and economic domination'.¹³⁵ The MCF called for 'unconditional support' for nationalist leaders in the colonies,¹³⁶ and sent representatives to the Pan-African Peoples Conference and the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee.¹³⁷ Tactically, the MCF combined nationwide grassroots organising with extensive lobbying inside

¹²⁹ HC Deb 25 November 1952, vol. 508, col 326.

¹³⁰ Riley, 'Winds of Change', p50.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

¹³³ WCML. Movement for Colonial Freedom, *A Policy for Colonial Freedom: Policy Statement, Report of Activities, and Objects and Constitution*, (London: MCF, 1955), p3.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p5.

¹³⁵ LHASC. Fenner Brockway, 'What is the MCF', *Liberation*, (1960), p3.

¹³⁶ MCF, *Policy for Colonial Freedom*, p6.

¹³⁷ WCML AG/Liberation Box 1. Movement for Colonial Freedom, *Annual Report 1959/60*, p11.

parliament. Grassroots organising involved building upon the membership of existing Labour Party-affiliated bodies. In 1955, for example, the MCF claimed the support of 144 CLPs, 47 Co-Operative Parties, and 70 trade union branches.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, the founding conference was attended by 300 delegates from bodies across the country.¹³⁹ This allowed the MCF to conduct extensive campaigns highlighting issues surrounding the dissolution of the British Empire both inside *and* outside of the party. In the campaign to oppose the Monckton Commission on the Central African Federation (CAF), African leaders Joshua Nkomo, Mainza Chona, and A. Mkandawire, took part in an MCF-organised tour of British cities publicising the African cause.¹⁴⁰ Inside parliament, MPs Tony Benn, Leslie Plummer, and George Craddock sat on the MCF's Central Council, with Fenner Brockway elected as the organisation's first chair.¹⁴¹

The MCF combined 'left-wing activism in the Labour movement' with 'Third World nationalism'.¹⁴² The MCF was a radical anti-colonial organization, defiantly advocating Britain's withdrawal from the Empire, in regular contact with nationalist leaders in the colonies, and with significant support - both at grassroots level and inside parliament. As a result, the arrival of the MCF saw the invasion of the 'policy void' occupied by the FCB and the emergence of a direct challenge to the Bureau's 'liberal civilizing mission'.¹⁴³ In contrast to the FCB, which continued to place faith in an 'enlightened colonial bureaucracy',¹⁴⁴ the MCF vowed to 'fight against British colonialism'¹⁴⁵ through 'direct association with nationalist and anti-imperialist organisations in every country'.¹⁴⁶ The MCF offered a clear rejection of the liberal, paternalist, and often racist attitudes espoused by the FCB.

¹³⁸ MCF, *Policy for Colonial Freedom*, p20.

¹³⁹ LHASC CP/CENT/INT/64. *Movement for Colonial Freedom*, 1955 Conference Report, (1955), p1.

¹⁴⁰ WCML Liberation Box I/A. *Movement for Colonial Freedom*, *The Monckton Report*.

¹⁴¹ MCF, 1955 Conference Report, p2.

¹⁴² Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

¹⁴³ Stockwell, 'Britain', accessed 13.11.2018.

¹⁴⁴ Gupta, *Imperialism*, p351.

¹⁴⁵ MCF, *Policy for Colonial Freedom*, p16.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p18.

By the end of the decade, the MCF had replaced the FCB as the major influence on Labour colonial policy.¹⁴⁷ At the start of the 1950s, the FCB's paternalism and gradualism contributed significantly to the relatively conservative colonial attitudes held by the mainstream of the Labour Party. However, with the formation of the MCF in 1954, the FCB faced a challenge from an explicitly anti-colonial organisation, backed by a swell of grassroots and parliamentary support, and able to utilise extensive contacts throughout the Empire. With the escalation of violence in British colonies, greater support amongst nationalists for MCF tactics,¹⁴⁸ and a swell of parliamentary support for the MCF, the FCB found its 'liberal approach' increasingly challenged and its ideas gradually regarded as outdated.¹⁴⁹ Not willing to go down without a fight, the FCB journal *Venture* even took a swipe at the MCF in 1958, alleging that the MCF was operating under 'Communist influence' in a bid to discredit its new rival.¹⁵⁰ The FCB would in time come to adopt many of the less radical features of MCF policy - such as acceptance of majoritarian democracies in former colonies. The rise of the MCF undoubtedly contributed to the increasingly radical tone adopted by Labour towards the end of the 1950s. The late 1950s saw Labour progressively move away from traditional notions of empire - paternalism, gradualism - and towards acceptance of the need for immediate independence. The emergence of the MCF and decline of the FCB was undoubtedly a key factor in this shift, contributing to the development of a Party colonial policy 'increasingly ... defined by the Left'.¹⁵¹

2.2. Labour in Opposition

One reason why the MCF found fertile ground in Labour was the Party's repeated failure to win a general election. With the Party in opposition and no longer bound by the discipline

¹⁴⁷ Christabel Gurney, 'A Great Cause': The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959-March 1960', *Journal of South African Studies*, vol. 26 (2000), p129.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from J.D. Akumu to Morgan Phillips, 12 December 1957.

¹⁴⁹ Whiting, 'The Empire', p186.

¹⁵⁰ Fenner Brockway, 'Fabian Attack on the MCF', *PROD - Colonial Freedom News*, (August 1958), p2.

¹⁵¹ Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', p171.

required to maintain a functioning government, internal party debate on issues such as the Empire proliferated.¹⁵² The early 1950s saw the left of the Party develop a view of the leadership as 'self-satisfied and conservative', content with the achievements of the Attlee Governments.¹⁵³ In response, the left began to develop an increasingly popular critique of the Party's malaise dubbed 'Bevanism'.¹⁵⁴ One outlet for this was at party conferences. As demonstrated earlier, the 1954 Conference, 'the zenith of Bevanism',¹⁵⁵ saw a huge surge in resolutions dedicated to colonial affairs.¹⁵⁶ Displaying a greater radicalism than previously witnessed, resolutions from CLPs such as Salford West declared 'solidarity with those peoples aspiring to free themselves', and called for the granting of 'self-determination to all colonial peoples'.¹⁵⁷ The emergence of this alternative programme led to greater debate within the PLP. In 1953, party minutes show that there was such a 'divergence of opinion' on the issue of the CAF within the PLP that, during a meeting of the PLP in parliament, it was decided 'to have a free discussion ... without arriving at any conclusions'.¹⁵⁸ MPs such as Brockway and CLPs such as Salford West began to initiate debate on the nature of the Party's colonial policy - an area previously dominated by the FCB and the Party leadership. The early years of Labour in opposition therefore saw the left of the Party begin to use the fact that Labour was no longer in government to their advantage, using 'caucus tactics', and witnessing relative success compared to years prior.¹⁵⁹

Labour's period in opposition and consistent failure to win elections during the 1950s also resulted in a desire to break with the Conservative Government on colonial policy. Colonial policy could distinguish Labour from the Conservatives, potentially win elections, and improve the Party's image to the electorate. Up until 1960, the official colonial policy of the Conservative

¹⁵² Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p144.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p146.

¹⁵⁴ Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Labour Party, *Agenda of the 53rd Annual Conference*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p27.

¹⁵⁸ LHASC 73259E-12. PLP Papers 1952-1953, 'Meeting of the Party Tuesday 24th February 1953'.

¹⁵⁹ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p144.

Government was to delay independence movements in the remaining colonies.¹⁶⁰ Even in 1959, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was convinced that the Empire would continue to govern in East Africa until into the 1970s.¹⁶¹ In parliament, this attitude was illustrated by Conservative MP John Peel who contended that arguments advocating the universal right to self-determination were neither 'practical' nor 'sensible'.¹⁶² The hard right-wing of the Conservative Party held an even more radical position. In 1959, Conservative MP Christopher Chataway dubbed South African apartheid an 'excellent, admirable, and ethical solution' - albeit one which was 'unworkable'.¹⁶³ Not wishing to treat the Conservative Party as a single homogenous body however, the late 1950s did witness the beginnings of a shift within the Party. The Bow Group - a collection of more liberal-minded 'young Conservative intellectuals' - began to argue for more proactive Conservative policy on colonial affairs.¹⁶⁴ Though not a member of the Group, Conservative MP Enoch Powell also made a rather famous contribution to a debate on the Hola Camp Massacre in 1959. Powell dubbed the Massacre 'a great administrative disaster',¹⁶⁵ while commenting that Labour MP Barbara Castle's attacks on the Government were actually 'a little too kind' considering the circumstances.¹⁶⁶ Overall, however, the Conservative Party's continued commitment to empire and colonialism, even in its most overtly racist forms, gave the Labour opposition something to rally against to its potential advantage - a fact recognised by Fenner Brockway in 1959. Brockway argued that colonial issues in the late 1950s had roused the labour movement 'more deeply than ever before'.¹⁶⁷ Brockway acknowledged that this 'might be decisive in a General Election' and that consequently Labour should not let the Government take colonial affairs 'out of the arena of party controversy'.¹⁶⁸ Brockway urged Labour to capitalise on the Government's defence of

¹⁶⁰ Horowitz, 'British Conservatives', p9.

¹⁶¹ WM. Roger Louis, Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonisation', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 22 (1994), p488.

¹⁶² HC Deb 26 June 1958, vol. 590, col 635.

¹⁶³ HC Deb 07 December 1959, vol. 615, col 136.

¹⁶⁴ Horowitz, 'British Conservatives', p13.

¹⁶⁵ HC Deb 27 July 1959, vol. 610, col. 232.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 234.

¹⁶⁷ Fenner Brockway, 'We Will Not Be Silent', *Colonial Freedom News*, (1959), p1.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

empire through the adoption of an anti-colonial position. The late 1950s witnessed the 'generally bipartisan approach' between the Labour and Conservative parties on empire experienced prior to the mid-1950s 'break down'.¹⁶⁹ This was partly because, as the decade progressed and Labour's electoral fortunes continued to flounder, an increasing tendency within the Party viewed anti-colonialism as a useful tool to divide the Conservative Party and potentially win elections.¹⁷⁰

The fact that Labour was in opposition over the course of the 1950s worked to anti-colonialism's advantage. Labour's spell out of government allowed increased scope for internal party debate, providing fertile ground for the anti-colonial movement to articulate its alternative stance on colonial issues to the one provided by the Party's mainstream. In particular, this worked to aid the MCF to the detriment of the FCB. Meanwhile, Labour's continual failure to win elections and improve its standing *vis-a-vis* the Conservative Government saw anti-colonialism adopted as a tool to distinguish Labour from its opponents and potentially win elections. This was further enhanced by the belligerence of a Conservative Party mostly unwilling to move away from its historic ties to empire and the Anglo-Saxon diaspora. As a result, large swathes of the Labour Party, including moderates and those on the Party's right, saw clear material benefits to be gained from adopting anti-colonial positions. Ultimately, this worked to popularize anti-colonialism beyond its traditional leftist base, aiding the growth of the movement.

2.3. The Cold War

Anti-colonialism was also able to expand its influence beyond the left due to the all-encompassing influence of the Cold War. Within the Labour Party, the Cold War saw the solidifying of a revisionist school of thought on foreign policy marked by a keen Atlanticism

¹⁶⁹ Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

¹⁷⁰ Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', p171.

and ardent anti-Communism.¹⁷¹ Though predominantly based on the right-wing of the Party, Labour revisionism in the 1950s also found minor success within the 'pacifist left'.¹⁷² The result was the emergence of a particular brand of 'Atlanticist social democrats' such as Attlee's successor as Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell.¹⁷³ During the early 1950s, foreign policy revisionism within the Party expressed a distinct fear that the colonies might fall under communist influence. In 1951, writing for the Fabians, Labour MP John Strachey attempted to alert the Party to the possibility that, without a change in attitudes towards the Empire, the colonies would 'pass into the Russian orbit'.¹⁷⁴ This was echoed in 1954 by the Labour Party's *Challenge to Britain* publication which warned of the dangers posed by communism 'bidding for control of revolutionary movements' in the colonies.¹⁷⁵ Encouraged by the United States,¹⁷⁶ Labour Atlanticism viewed Soviet Communism as imperialistic in its own right, and therefore warranting of opposition. In 1951, Richard Crossman argued that this perception of communism as 'reactionary imperialism' was a key component in the development of a socialist foreign policy.¹⁷⁷ On the remaining colonies in South-East Asia, a 1954 statement produced by the NEC declared that the Party was 'as much opposed to Communist imperialism and domination as it is to colonial exploitation'.¹⁷⁸ As a result, some in Labour, such as committed anti-communist MP John Dugdale, found themselves advocating policies called for by the anti-colonial movement. In 1952, Dugdale argued that an end to restrictions on Africans owning land in Kenya's 'White Highlands' could be used to 'prevent Communism'.¹⁷⁹ By 1954, Labour MP Arthur Bottomley was asserting that the brutal repression enacted by the Kenyan colonial state in its war against the Mau Mau insurgency

¹⁷¹ Lawrence Black, 'The Bitterest Enemies of Communism': Labour Revisionists, Atlanticism, and the Cold War', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 15 (2001), p54.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p38.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p29.

¹⁷⁴ John Strachey, *Labour's Task*, (London: Fabian Publications, 1951), p18.

¹⁷⁵ LHASC 73259F-01. PLP Papers 1953-1954, Labour Party, *Challenge to Britain*, (1953).

¹⁷⁶ Peter Weiler, 'British Labour and the Cold War: The Foreign Policy of the Labour Governments, 1945-1951', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 26 (1987), p70.

¹⁷⁷ R. H. S. Crossman, Kenneth Younger, *Socialist Foreign Policy*, (London: Fabian Publications, 1951), p13.

¹⁷⁸ LHASC 73259F-01. PLP Papers 1953-1954, 'Meeting of the Party Thursday 29th April 1954'.

¹⁷⁹ HC Deb 17 July 1952, vol. 503, col. 2451.

had resulted in Britain 'providing a fertile soil for Communism'.¹⁸⁰ Atlanticist thinking within Labour and its inclination for anti-Communism saw sections outside the Party's left begin to realise that concessions to movements in the colonies could be used to prevent the spread of communism. These concessions often advocated the dismantling of 'white supremacy' in areas such as East Africa,¹⁸¹ and as such converged with the goals and aims of the anti-colonial movement which, in the early 1950s, was still predominantly confined to Labour's left-wing.

However, there were certain limitations to revisionism's Atlanticist tendencies. Although the United States was viewed as the preferential partner when it came to international politics, there was also an expressed fear that London would become overly dependent on Washington.¹⁸² Labour MP Emanuel Shinwell cited these concerns in 1957, warning that leaning too close to the US could see London transformed into Washington's 'economic satellite'.¹⁸³ Indeed, Shinwell was not the first to outline such anxieties. In 1951, T.E.M. McKitterick, while advising against the dangers of increasing communist influence in the Empire, also forewarned of growing 'dependence' on the US.¹⁸⁴ In many ways, these fears represented a tendency consistent throughout much of Labour's history. The US, even though it had been Britain's ally in the fight against fascism, was the world's principal capitalist power and as such was viewed with a natural suspicion by a significant proportion of the Party.¹⁸⁵

One solution to prevent both reliance on the US and the spread of communism was the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth, it was argued, could be used to forge a power base indirectly controlled by Britain, as a means of balancing against the two superpowers.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ HC Deb 22 July 1954, vol. 530, col. 1585.

¹⁸¹ Louis, Robinson, 'Imperialism', p494.

¹⁸² Black, 'Labour Revisionists', p36.

¹⁸³ HC Deb 03 May 1957, vol. 569, col. 522.

¹⁸⁴ T.E.M. McKitterick, *Conditions of British Foreign Policy*, (London: Fabian Publications, 1951), p14.

¹⁸⁵ Black, 'Labour Revisionists', p45.

¹⁸⁶ Deighton, 'Entente Neo-Coloniale', p836.

However, with militant opposition to the Empire increasing across the colonial world as the decade progressed, there was no guarantee that upon independence former colonies such as Kenya and Malaya would agree to cooperate with the ex-imperial power. Labour MP Stan Awbery recognised this in 1954. Awbery contended that, in talks with the 'genuine, nationalist movement arising in Malaya',¹⁸⁷ Britain must 'meet them now as equal partners'.¹⁸⁸ This was reiterated by Colin Jackson in 1957 who argued that if Britain continued to act as a 'reluctant' imperial power, she would 'lose all influence' in international politics.¹⁸⁹ There was a clear recognition within Labour of the need for greater contact with the nationalist movements. Enhanced cooperation could counter Britain's growing dependency on the US and limit the territorial gains made by communism in the Third World. However, as Younger noted in 1960, Britain now found itself in 'competition' with Washington and Moscow for the allegiance of the nationalist movements proliferating throughout the colonies.¹⁹⁰ As a result, interacting with nationalist movements on equal terms was crucial for the development of a post-imperial Commonwealth. This would allow Britain to maintain its international standing even after the Empire had fragmented.¹⁹¹

This desire to maintain Britain's global power status did however come under intense scrutiny from the left following the Suez Crisis in 1956. Obtaining domestic support from a 'residual imperial sentiment',¹⁹² Anglo-French military intervention in reaction to General Nasser's nationalization of the Canal ended in disaster.¹⁹³ The consensus across the Labour Party was that Suez highlighted Britain's waning global power.¹⁹⁴ The view of the Fabians in 1960 was that Suez proved that Britain, far from being the global power she envisaged, was a secondary

¹⁸⁷ HC Deb 30 July 1954, vol. 531, col. 926.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 928.

¹⁸⁹ Colin Jackson, *The New India*, (London: Fabian Society, 1957), p33.

¹⁹⁰ Kenneth Younger, *Britain's Role in a Changing World*, (London: Fabian Society, 1960), p8.

¹⁹¹ Stockwell, 'Britain', accessed 13.11.2018

¹⁹² Leon D. Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p5.

¹⁹³ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p148.

¹⁹⁴ Whiting, 'The Empire', p181.

force.¹⁹⁵ The MCF-aligned Labour MP William Warbey echoed this in 1956. Warbey castigated the 'imperialism' of the Conservative Government,¹⁹⁶ arguing that Britain had no right in 'over-riding the legitimate interests of the people of other countries'.¹⁹⁷ Warbey warned that the reverberations from Anglo-French military action over Suez could pose an even greater problem, helping transform 'the legitimate nationalism of the Middle East into a thwarted, twisted, and violent Chauvinism'.¹⁹⁸ On Suez, the Labour Party offered a united front.¹⁹⁹ The left took up a militant opposition to what it perceived as a revival of British imperialism's worst militaristic tendencies. This served to solidify and reinforce whatever lingering doubts the left had about the ongoing malevolence of British imperialism in the mid-1950s. What's more, on Suez, the party leadership also displayed a certain surprising militancy.²⁰⁰ Though Gaitskell denounced Nasser's nationalization of the Canal, he also consistently criticised the Government over what he considered had been 'a disastrous folly'.²⁰¹ The moderate leadership and the radical left of the Party formed a united front.

The Cold War saw the goals and aims of the anti-colonial movement converge, to a degree, with those of the Party's revisionist wing. Fear of both increased communist influence and over-dependence on the US saw sections of the Labour Party previously untroubled by anti-colonialism's appeals come round to the idea that colonial independence might be a preferential course for Britain's declining empire.²⁰² In part, this was inspired by the notion that a strong Commonwealth would allow Britain to retain her influence even after the Empire disintegrated. As a result, anti-colonialism faced less overt opposition in the late 1950s from the Party's right-wing and moderates than it had earlier in the decade - a factor which helped to disseminate anti-colonial ideas amongst a wider audience than previously possible.

¹⁹⁵ Younger, *Britain's Role*, p10.

¹⁹⁶ HC Deb 02 August 1956, vol. 557, col. 1649.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 1645.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 1646.

¹⁹⁹ Epstein, *Suez*, p62.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p128.

²⁰¹ HC Deb 31 October 1956, vol. 558, col. 1454.

²⁰² Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p239.

2.4. Summary

These factors worked to increase the stature of anti-colonialism within the Party, providing conditions ripe for the movement's growth both within traditional left-wing circles and the sceptical arenas occupied by those who identified as moderates or revisionists. Consistent failure to win a general election saw anti-colonialism increasingly regarded as an electoral tool. This largely explains why many senior Labour figures such as James Callaghan began to parrot the radical language of the anti-colonial movement by the late 1950s. The Cold War saw the desire to retain British global influence, prevent the spread of communism, and decrease dependence on the US trump any pre-existing fears that the more moderate elements of the Party may have maintained regarding colonial nationalist movements in the early 1950s. The failure of Labour to achieve electoral success and the looming spectre of the Cold War therefore prompted large swathes of the Party to support anti-colonial positions as a means of achieving other more important goals. Though colonial independence and an end to the Empire were seen as admirable causes, they were not pressing issues for much of the Labour Party. Despite this, they did help to provide fertile ground for the anti-colonial movement's growth. This opportunity was jumped upon by the MCF who, over the course of the decade, gradually replaced the paternalism of the FCB. The emergence of the MCF injected Labour's colonial thinking with a new radicalism, demanding immediate independence for colonies, and the treating of nationalist movements on equal terms. Anti-colonialism did however remain a predominantly left-wing phenomena. Though many of its positions were indirectly supported by other factions of the Party, the actual business of furthering the anti-colonial cause remained a left-wing occupation.²⁰³ As a result, though this chapter has shown that a number of factors helped popularize anti-colonialism throughout large swathes of the wider Party, as will be shown in the following chapter, support for radical anti-colonialism did remain somewhat limited.

²⁰³ Gurney, 'Anti-Apartheid', p130.

Chapter 3. Anti-Colonialism and its Limitations

This chapter will demonstrate why it remains that Morgan's conclusion that Labour had become 'the natural voice of colonial liberation movement everywhere' by 1960 remains patently false.²⁰⁴ This chapter will outline how, despite clear growth, much of Labour's support for anti-colonialism was based on a liberalism which co-opted the movement's more radical elements, how the causes espoused by the anti-colonial movement were preached to a largely indifferent public, and how the Cold War's positive impact on anti-colonialism was effectively outweighed by the limitations the conflict simultaneously placed upon the movement.

3.1. Liberal Anti-Colonialism

The emergence of anti-colonialism within the Labour Party saw the parallel development of a particular reading of the movement's goals and aims inspired by a 'liberal progressivism'.²⁰⁵ This tendency can be principally observed when analysing attitudes within the Party towards the settler communities and the extreme violence those communities enacted on native populations across the Empire. Though, as Lewis argues, sections of the Labour Party did naturally oppose the settler community in Kenya due to its perceived 'aristocratic reputation',²⁰⁶ the picture for a large element of the Party is undoubtedly more complex. In those sections of the Party less inclined to such overt class consciousness, such as the PLP and the Fabians, this default suspicion of the settler community does not appear to have been as widespread. As Rita Hinden explained, the white settlers were regarded as a 'permanently settled' community 'as much "natives" as the Africans'.²⁰⁷ Where Hinden found fault with the settlers was in their 'dream of domination'.²⁰⁸ Meanwhile, in 1954, Charles Hobson MP praised the 'liberal-minded white people in Kenya' and urged 'racial co-operation'.²⁰⁹ The problem in the

²⁰⁴ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

²⁰⁵ Whiting, 'The Empire', p171.

²⁰⁶ Joanna Lewis, "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau": The British Popular Press and the Demoralization of Empire', in *Mau Mau & Nationhood*, ed(s). E.S. Atieno Odhiambo & John Lonsdale (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p233.

²⁰⁷ Rita Hinden, 'Partnership in Africa', *Socialist Commentary*, vol. 16 (1952), p135.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p137.

²⁰⁹ HC Deb 22 July 1954, vol. 530, col 1623.

eyes of some in the PLP and the Fabians was not the settlers themselves, but the settlers' unwillingness to affect change. Settlers in Kenya who supported racial cooperation could expect to receive praise. It was only with the outbreak of extreme violence that such settler communities came under intense scrutiny. With the initiation of a state of emergency in 1952, the colonial state in Kenya declared war on the Mau Mau - a guerilla movement consisting predominantly of those Kikuyu dispossessed of land in the years prior.²¹⁰ What followed was one of the most 'traumatic' conflicts in British colonial history.²¹¹ Over 70,000 Kikuyu Kenyans were herded into detention camps, the majority guilty of nothing more than a shared ethnicity with members of the guerrilla movement.²¹² The British justice system increasingly resembled a 'blunt, brutal, and unsophisticated instrument of oppression'.²¹³ The sheer ferocity of the War reverberated throughout Labour. In the House of Commons, Creech Jones railed against 'cases of appalling cruelty' and the 'indiscriminate repression' of the colonial state.²¹⁴ For a significant proportion of the Labour Party, the settler communities embedded in British colonies only really therefore became a problem with the onset of the extreme violence of the 1950s.

Liberal anti-colonialism vocally opposed the Empire's worst excesses on moral grounds but lacked a structural critique as found in the radical anti-colonialism of the MCF. Even when the FCB and MCF's positions on independence for British colonies appeared to converge by the late 1950s, there remained stark differences. By 1960, there was a recognition within Britain that assertions of colonial power had become 'counter-productive' and attentions turned increasingly towards visions of a post-colonial world.²¹⁵ The MCF, however, continued in its critique of colonialism. The MCF maintained that 'political independence does not by itself

²¹⁰ David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, (London: Phoenix, 2005), p2.

²¹¹ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p201.

²¹² Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, p6.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p7.

²¹⁴ HC Deb 06 June 1956, vol. 553, cols 1089-1095.

²¹⁵ Louis, Robinson, 'Imperialism', p494.

mark the end of Imperialism',²¹⁶ warning against the dangers of continued imperial military presence in newly independent nations,²¹⁷ and asserting that economic independence was a crucial next step to true liberation.²¹⁸ This was reiterated by Fenner Brockway who argued that the prevailing thought amongst groups such as the FCB, that colonialism was something that had now gone, was a very dangerous tendency.²¹⁹ Brockway and the MCF explicitly warned against the dangers of an emerging system of neo-colonialism.²²⁰

Liberal anti-colonialism took a different view. The 1957 Fabian pamphlet *Commonwealth Future* reiterated the need for the abolition of colonialism,²²¹ while perpetuating notions of British exceptionalism.²²² In 1958, Rita Hinden declared that 'the old empires have been transformed into a crop of new independent poor sovereign states' and only 'remnants of the old imperialism remain'.²²³ The view expounded by Hinden and the Fabians by the late 1950s stressed that even though colonialism was rightfully coming to an end, the British Empire itself had essentially completed its civilizing mission. The Fabians combined an acceptance of independence for the remaining colonies with ideas of a 'liberal British exceptionalism' which 'amounted almost to a national self-conceit'.²²⁴ Furthermore, Hinden's reckoning that colonialism had virtually ceased to exist by 1958 displayed a degree of faith in the decolonization process which 'sanitizes struggle, eliminates contradictions and smuggles a plan'.²²⁵ This interpretation significantly influenced the direction that the anti-colonial movement in Labour took. The MCF, for instance, despite witnessing a clear rise in support and influence from 1954 onwards, was still able to lament a lack of support from 'decisive

²¹⁶ LHASC CP/CENT/INT/64. Movement for Colonial Freedom, *London and Home Counties Area Council, Secretary's Report, February 1960 to January 1961*, p1

²¹⁷ Ibid., p3.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p4.

²¹⁹ Brockway, 'What is the MCF', p3.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ MCF, *London and Home Counties Area Council*, p5.

²²² Ibid., p3.

²²³ Rita Hinden, 'Post-Imperialism', *Socialist Commentary*, (1958), p7.

²²⁴ Stockwell, 'Britain', accessed 13.11.2018.

²²⁵ E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, 'The Formative Years, 1945-1955', in *Decolonization & Independence in Kenya 1940-1993*, ed(s)., B.A. Ogot & W.R. Ochieng, (London: James Currey, 1995), p26.

sections of the Labour movement' by 1960.²²⁶ Primarily, this was because even as the Party increasingly supported the anti-colonial movement's demands for colonial independence, the movement's identification of the lasting nature of neo-colonialism largely fell on deaf ears. The position taken by the Fabians in the late 1950s is just one example of how, even when calls for colonial independence began to be adopted by an increasing number of groups, the anti-colonial movement could still find itself disadvantaged.

Just as the MCF continued the fight against colonialism and the increasingly apparent emergence of a system of neo-colonialism into the 1960s, the Fabians and much of the PLP saw decolonization as game over. This saw wholesale acceptance of the idea that the civilizing mission had been fulfilled and remained blind to 'British ambitions to an imperial role' which continued even as the Empire disintegrated.²²⁷ The spread of anti-colonialism had its obvious limits - of which opposition to, and identification of, a system of neo-colonialism was clearly outside the bounds of. This had its origins in a liberal-inspired view of the Empire, lacked the structural critique of colonialism as found in more radical interpretations, and was not fundamentally opposed to white British settler communities.

3.2. Public Apathy

Throughout the 1950s, the public's view of the Empire was one characterised primarily by 'long stretches of indifference',²²⁸ producing a party leadership keen not to 'rock the boat'.²²⁹ Despite extreme violence in the colonies and the slow fragmentation of the imperial system, attitudes towards the Empire were characterised by 'widespread ignorance'.²³⁰ In 1952, at the Second Reading of the Declaration of Human Rights Bill, a Bill that aimed to extend the freedoms outlined in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights Charter to

²²⁶ MCF, *London and Home Counties Area Council*, p4.

²²⁷ Stockwell, 'Britain', accessed 13.11.2018.

²²⁸ Erik Linstrum, 'Facts About Atrocity: Reporting Colonial Violence in Postwar Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 84 (2017), p2.

²²⁹ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p309.

²³⁰ Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', p175.

Britain's colonies, Fenner Brockway castigated the 'inadequate' number of MPs in the House of Commons who had bothered to attend.²³¹ Brockway's ire was not aimed solely at just the Conservative Party either, the PLP also displayed a certain reticence when it came to colonial affairs. In 1953, when the option of whether to discuss colonial affairs at a forthcoming meeting was raised to Labour MPs the majority 'decided by a show of hands that this was not required'.²³² Though empire did arise as an issue in British politics with almost 'episodic intensity', this general apathy or ignorance appears to have remained largely unchanged.²³³ Despite Kenya playing host to one of the most 'traumatic' conflicts in British colonial history,²³⁴ dubbed 'the great horror story of Britain's empire in the 1950s',²³⁵ 1959 saw the re-election of a Conservative Government with a 1.0% increase in its share of the vote.²³⁶ As correctly identified by the Fabians, the Conservative Party won the General Election 'despite Suez, Hola and Nyasaland'.²³⁷ The 1959 General Election was decided by the economy.²³⁸ Alongside short-term factors such as Hugh Gaitskell's image and immigration in the Midlands, the Conservative Party was seen as a more capable manager of the welfare capitalist system.²³⁹ As a result, Fenner Brockway's prediction in 1959 that 'colonialism is now becoming, at last, a dominant issue in British politics' was proven unequivocally false.²⁴⁰ Against the wishes of Brockway, who hoped that 'widespread anger' regarding British actions in the colonies 'might be decisive in a General Election',²⁴¹ the Conservative Government emerged from the disintegration of the British Empire during the 1950s relatively unscathed.²⁴²

²³¹ HC Deb 23 May 1952, vol. 501, col. 890.

²³² LHASC 73259F-01. PLP Papers 1953-1954, 'Meeting of the Party Thursday 10th December 1953'.

²³³ Whiting, 'The Empire', p184.

²³⁴ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p201.

²³⁵ Anderson, p1.

²³⁶ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p153.

²³⁷ Anthony Crosland, *Can Labour Win?*, (London: Fabian Society, 1960), p10.

²³⁸ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p153.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p154.

²⁴⁰ Brockway, 'We Will Not Be Silent', p1.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p353.

The Conservative Government was aided in this by the 'fragmented and ambiguous' nature of the public's knowledge of the violence that was actually taking place in the colonies.²⁴³ In Kenya, the conditions of the detention camps were deliberately hidden from Labour MPs by the colonial state.²⁴⁴ Recounting a fact-finding mission to Kenya in 1956, Barbara Castle recalled how 'the wool was pulled over my eyes'.²⁴⁵ In what she describes as a 'three weeks battle' to obtain accurate information, Castle resorted to 'cloak and dagger' methods.²⁴⁶ In parliament, Secretary of State for the Colonies Alan Lennox-Boyd, a man with full knowledge of the extent of the brutality occurring in British detention camps,²⁴⁷ intentionally 'obfuscated the facts, skirted the issues, and lied' when the issue was raised by Labour MPs.²⁴⁸ Decrying the official post-mortem of the ten African men murdered in the Hola Camp Massacre in 1959,²⁴⁹ Castle denounced what she regarded as a cover-up and demanded Boyd's resignation.²⁵⁰ Partly, therefore, the fact that colonialism was not an electoral issue was deliberate. The Conservative Government and colonial state in Kenya kept the worst excesses of empire from the public's attention - a fact which only contributed further to empire's insignificance in the 1959 General Election.²⁵¹

What was reported by the British press was often seen through a prism of racist imagery such as that of an Africa 'engulfed in savage barbarism'.²⁵² The Scotsman, for example, spent what little attention it did pay to East Africa during the early 1950s engaging wholeheartedly in the perpetuation of such stereotypes. Patrick O'Donovan, after having met members of the Ukamba people in Kenya, concluded that this tribe of approximately 500,000 had 'never done

²⁴³ Linstrum, 'Facts About Atrocity', p5.

²⁴⁴ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p283.

²⁴⁵ HC Deb 06 June 1956, vol. 553, col. 1165.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 1169.

²⁴⁷ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p304

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p332.

²⁴⁹ HC Deb 27 July 1959, vol. 610, col. 230.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 231.

²⁵¹ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p153.

²⁵² Lewis, 'British Popular Press', p230.

anything of importance or left so much as a notch on history'.²⁵³ O'Donovan argued that the Ukamba lived a 'wholly savage life', and their 'stupidity, idleness, and ignorance' were typical of attitudes found 'all over East Africa'.²⁵⁴ It is perhaps unsurprising that with the outbreak of violence in the colony, *The Scotsman* continued to display a considerable lack of nuance. When reporting on the Mau Mau 'secret society', *The Scotsman* informed its readers that the movement's aims consisted solely of bringing back to Kenya 'former ways of life before Western civilization came to Africa'.²⁵⁵ Typical reporting on colonial violence in the British press also saw the vast majority of attention focused on atrocities committed by the African population.²⁵⁶ On the 28th March 1953, the *Manchester Guardian* provided sensational detail of a massacre committed by the Mau Mau, describing a scene in which 'at least a hundred and fifty were murdered', comparing the aftermath to the 'gas chambers at Auschwitz'.²⁵⁷ Earlier in the year however, the paper's reporting on the actions of British personnel in the colony struck a very different tone. In an article entitled 'Police Fire on 300 Africans: Mau Mau Active', the paper solemnly informed its readers how six police officers had opened fire on 'three hundred Africans holding an illegal meeting', of these three hundred 'about a hundred ... were women'.²⁵⁸ The difference in language is striking. Linking what appears to be a peaceful political meeting to the Mau Mau movement, the *Manchester Guardian* finds the victims almost guilty by association. Throughout the 1950s, press coverage of the actions of British troops across the Empire was defined by 'a solidarity with British soldiers'.²⁵⁹ Although press coverage did experience a slight evolution towards the end of the decade, reporting on events such as the Mau Mau War in Kenya ultimately 'fed racial prejudice'.²⁶⁰

²⁵³ Patrick O'Donovan, 'Native Problem in Kenya: Famines Caused by Bad Farming', *The Scotsman*, 29th May 1950.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *The Scotsman*, 'Kenya Secret Society', 5th June 1950.

²⁵⁶ Lewis, 'British Popular Press', p233.

²⁵⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Massacre', 28th March 1953.

²⁵⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Police Fire on 300 Africans: Mau Mau Active', 23rd February 1953.

²⁵⁹ Linstrum, 'Facts About Atrocity', p15.

²⁶⁰ Lewis, 'British Popular Press', p231.

Outside the Labour Party, 'few Britons were interested in human rights abuses in the Empire'.²⁶¹ The specific nature of British press coverage combined with the Conservative Government's cover-up of British atrocities combined to produce a public whose knowledge of the true extent of British actions in the colonies was 'uneven, fragmented, and sporadic'.²⁶² The result was that colonialism and the Empire never became significant electoral topics and the Conservative Party was able to continue governing into the 1960s unscathed by events such as the Mau Mau War. Consequently, the anti-colonial movement found itself limited. As demonstrated by Miliband, the Labour Party has always been 'a party deeply imbued by parliamentarism'.²⁶³ The anti-colonial movement, therefore, with its clear lack of electoral expediency, was always going to find its scope for growth in the Party constrained. The result was that by 1960, a significant number of Labour MPs called for the Party to give greater attention to domestic issues.²⁶⁴ East and Central Africa, by now well on the road to independence after Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech, were no longer a subject of high importance - a fact that Labour MPs in parliament were quick to recognise.²⁶⁵

3.3. The Cold War

Though, as shown earlier, the Cold War did at times aid the anti-colonial movement, the conflict's impact was not wholly positive. The Cold War's boosting of traditional Labour anti-communism saw nationalist movements in the colonies come under intense scrutiny from the metropolitan labour movement.²⁶⁶ This was particularly evident in British Guiana. Following victory in 1953, the PPP Government's passing of the Labour Relations Bill led to the arrival of British troops in the colony.²⁶⁷ The newly elected Chief Minister Cheddi Jagan was deposed

²⁶¹ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p309.

²⁶² Linstrum, 'Facts About Atrocity', p2.

²⁶³ Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1961), p13.

²⁶⁴ LHASC 73259G-02. PLP Papers 1959-1960, 'Meeting of the Party 1960'.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Black, 'Labour Revisionists', p44.

²⁶⁷ Mawby, 'Empire in Guiana', p91.

and the colony's constitution suspended.²⁶⁸ Though, as James Griffiths elaborated upon in parliament, some in the Party disagreed with the Conservative Government's suspending of the Guianese Constitution,²⁶⁹ the consensus emanating from Labour benches in the House of Commons was that the PPP was communist and necessary steps must therefore be taken to remove them from power. According to Labour MP Thomas Reid, the 'PPP was Communist from the word 'go'' and inaction threatened the establishment of a 'totalitarian Communist state' in a British colony.²⁷⁰ This was reiterated by Attlee who summed up Labour's relentless anti-communism by backing the Conservative Government's decision to send in British troops,²⁷¹ declaring that the 'way to counter Communism is to prevent the Communists getting the lead'.²⁷² Outside of parliament, though it did also include opposition to suspension of the constitution, a statement released by the NEC declared 'support for the attitude adopted' by the PLP in combating the communism of the PPP.²⁷³ Attlee and the Labour leadership joined the Conservative Government in a 'reluctant bipartisanship'.²⁷⁴ The PPP and Jagan were made out to be communist bogeymen they were clearly not. When the furore surrounding the PPP's alleged communist infiltration had subsided, Jagan would resume contact with the Labour Party, even visiting as part of a delegation from British Guiana in 1960.²⁷⁵ The Cold War's solidifying of anti-communism within Labour therefore distorted the Party's image of nationalist movements in the colonies.

The Cold War also saw continued justification for British exploitation of the colonies based on security.²⁷⁶ Despite acknowledgment that the nature of Britain's economic relations with the colonies was clearly oppressive, the Fabians argued that if Britain 'should stop exploiting' the

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ HC Deb 22 October 1953, vol. 518, col. 2193.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., col. 2218.

²⁷¹ Ibid., col. 2262.

²⁷² Ibid., col. 2263.

²⁷³ The Labour Party, *Report of the National Executive Committee to the 53rd Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, (1954), p22.

²⁷⁴ Mawby, 'Empire in Guiana', p85.

²⁷⁵ Labour Party, *Annual Report 1960*, p41.

²⁷⁶ Mawby, 'Empire in Guiana', p87.

colonies then somebody else would start.²⁷⁷ This somebody else referred to a Soviet Union 'anxious to extend her influence in the world'.²⁷⁸ Labour MP Emanuel Shinwell voiced similar concerns in 1957, observing that Britain 'depends largely on raw material from overseas' and 'unless we can avail ourselves of the vast resources of the Commonwealth' the country would face relegation to the status of a 'third-class industrial Power'.²⁷⁹ The claims made by Shinwell and the Fabians harked back to a view prevalent throughout British politics during the 1940s – that the Empire's resources could save Britain from economic disaster.²⁸⁰ By the late 1950s, however, an alternative stance was also beginning to make itself known. In 1959, Britain joined the European Free Trade Association, and by 1960 the Conservative Government began to seriously discuss the possibility of entry into the European Economic Community.²⁸¹ By 1962, British exports to Western Europe had outstripped declining Commonwealth trade.²⁸² Europe increasingly presented itself as a more attractive proposition for the British economy. However, despite becoming less prevalent by end of the decade, the view that the Empire's resources could be used as a means of rescue from economic ruin still lingered even as Britain's focus increasingly concentrated on greater cooperation with Europe.²⁸³

Advocacy of economic exploitation of the colonies worked alongside a perception that the colonies were also necessary to maintain Britain's ability to transmit military power abroad. Sections of the Party were thus less than forthcoming about the prospect of independence for Cyprus. Describing the island as a 'strategic point in the whole of the free world's chain of defence', *Socialist Commentary* argued that as part of the 'West', Britain had 'a legitimate interest in maintaining its defensive strategy'.²⁸⁴ This belief was reiterated by Labour MP

²⁷⁷ McKitterick, *British Foreign Policy*, p14.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p18.

²⁷⁹ HC Deb 03 May 1957, vol. 569, col. 524.

²⁸⁰ Gupta, 'Imperialism and the Labour Government', p107.

²⁸¹ N. J. Crowson, *Britain and Europe: A Political History Since 1918*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), p77.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p79.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p74.

²⁸⁴ Editorial Committee, 'Twilight of Imperialism', *Socialist Commentary*, (July 1956), p2.

Desmond Donnelly in a parliamentary debate on Cyprus in 1958 when he surmised that, though ‘the ideal solution ... would have been self-government within the island’,²⁸⁵ it would be incorrect to ‘lightly cast aside its military significance’.²⁸⁶ Notions of self-determination as an inviolable right and recognition of certain colonies’ great strategic importance to British military aims often appear to have gone hand-in-hand. Sections of the Party appear to have subscribed to a concerted strategy to substitute ‘colonial control for informal empire’ as a means of securing ‘economic and strategic assets’.²⁸⁷ This represented ‘inclusion in a broadly bipartisan consensus’ as sections of the Party tacitly supported the strategy of the Conservative Government.²⁸⁸ The Cold War reinforced the belief in certain sections of the Party that colonial exploitation was a necessary evil in the fight against communism. The perceived necessity of such exploitation to the British national interest could even lead to support for independence. However, as demonstrated earlier, such exploitation even with independence simply represented neo-colonialism, with the ‘thralldom of international economy’ remaining constant throughout.²⁸⁹

As the Party leadership displayed ever more enthusiasm for Atlanticism and anti-communism the grassroots anti-colonial movement found itself increasingly constrained. The geopolitical Cold War was reflected in ‘something of a Cold War within Labour itself’.²⁹⁰ With a lack of strong leadership in the early 1950s,²⁹¹ debates about the best possible strategy for returning the Party to government were exacerbated by the Cold War’s dividing of the Party into those who agreed with Atlanticism and those who opposed it.²⁹² The Atlanticist wing of the Party placed a special emphasis on ‘responsible’ policies.²⁹³ This was demonstrated by Mary Saran,

²⁸⁵ HC Deb 26 June 1958, vol. 590, col. 665.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, col. 667.

²⁸⁷ Louis, Robinson, ‘Imperialism’, p485.

²⁸⁸ Black, ‘Labour Revisionists’, p35.

²⁸⁹ Louis, Robinson, ‘Imperialism’, p495.

²⁹⁰ Black, ‘Labour Revisionists’, p29.

²⁹¹ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p143.

²⁹² Black, ‘Labour Revisionists’, p32.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

contributor to *Socialist Commentary* and associated with the revisionist arm of the Party, in 1953.²⁹⁴ Reporting on a meeting of Asian socialists in the Burmese city of Rangoon, Saran happily informed the *Socialist Commentary* readership that ‘there were no irresponsible left wing slogans’ from the delegates.²⁹⁵ There was repeated reference throughout the decade over the dangers of communism’s links with anti-colonialism. Attlee warned that anti-colonialism could be used as a possible ‘rallying cry’ for communism.²⁹⁶ The constructing of a link between anti-colonialism and communism had a wholly negative impact on the anti-colonial movement. The MCF, for instance, recognised this and worked to negate any potential attempts to paint the group as communist-affiliated. Writing as MCF chair in 1960, Brockway re-asserted that the MCF was ‘largely associated with the Labour Party’ and that no ‘Communist-sponsored organisations’ were eligible for affiliation.²⁹⁷ The MCF were fearful that being seen to be ‘soft’ on communists would lead to ‘proscription’.²⁹⁸ The association of anti-colonialism with communism forced the MCF onto the back foot and compelled the organisation to place self-imposed limits on potential communist influence. The necessity of this was reinforced in 1958 when, as mentioned earlier, the FCB journal *Venture* suggested that the MCF’s policy on events in Malaysia was ‘the result of Communist influence’ - a claim denounced by the MCF as an example of Fabian ‘McCarthyism’.²⁹⁹ Cold War anti-communism thus allowed the revisionist and Atlanticist wings of the Party to undermine the anti-colonial movement by associating the movement’s aims and goals with that of communism.

The Cold War had a dual impact on the anti-colonial movement. On the one hand, the Cold War saw the revisionist and anti-colonial movement’s goals converge. Both began to recognise the benefits of colonial independence and this had a clearly positive role for the anti-

²⁹⁴ Ettore Costa, *The Labour Party, Denis Healey, and the International Socialist Movement*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p31.

²⁹⁵ Mary Saran, ‘Asian Socialists Unite’, *Socialist Commentary*, vol. 17 (1953), p29.

²⁹⁶ HC Deb 22 October 1953, vol. 518, col. 2264.

²⁹⁷ Brockway, ‘What is the MCF’, p3.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Brockway, ‘Fabian Attack on the MCF’, p2.

colonial movement in the Party. However, revisionist acceptance of colonial independence also tied into a belief that the colonies and former colonies' resources were crucial to British security in the Cold War. This represented neo-colonialism. Cold War reinforcement of traditional Labour anti-communism also saw the anti-colonial movement increasingly having to deny links, real or fictional, with the communist movement. This ultimately constrained the grassroots anti-colonial movement, forcing it onto the back foot, and leaving it open to potential attacks from anti-communist groups such as the FCB.

3.4. Summary

The three factors outlined above effectively extinguished much of the momentum accrued by the anti-colonial movement. Public apathy meant that the benefits gained by the movement from Labour being in opposition were largely ineffectual. Though anti-colonialism was increasingly viewed by some moderates within the Party as a tool to divide the Conservatives and win elections,³⁰⁰ a lack of public interest, inspired by racist and nationalistic press coverage alongside a Conservative Government keen to hide the worst excesses of colonial violence from the public, meant that empire never became a major electoral issue.³⁰¹ This, amongst other things, ensured that a Labour general election victory during the 1950s remained elusive. Likewise, anti-colonialism's gains from the Cold War were effectively extinguished as ardent anti-communists linked the movement with communism - something that led even moderate nationalist figures such as Jagan and Kenyatta to be viewed as potential revolutionaries.³⁰² The result was a fragmented and conditional support for nationalist leaders and movements often based on who could and could not be trusted in the fight against the communism.

³⁰⁰ Owen, 'Decolonisation and Postwar Consensus', p171.

³⁰¹ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p323.

³⁰² Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p358.

Even by the late 1950s, when calls for colonial independence were being adopted with increased intensity throughout the Party, the vast majority of Labour was oblivious to the need for continued opposition to colonialism, even post-independence, due to the persistence of a system of neo-colonialism resting on continued economic exploitation and the perseverance of military bases in ex-colonies. Unlike radical anti-colonialism, which continued to warn of the dangers posed by neo-colonialism into the 1960s, large swathes of the Labour Party such as the Fabians - heavily influenced by liberal-inspired anti-colonial thinking and Cold War justifications for continued economic and military exploitation of former colonies - saw political independence as the end of colonialism. With no system of colonialism to oppose, anti-colonialism increasingly lost influence.

Conclusion

Between 1951 and 1960, the anti-colonial movement within the Labour Party experienced clear growth, however this growth was from a position of virtual irrelevance and extreme marginalisation in 1951 to a position of greater relevance yet continued marginalisation by 1960. Far from becoming 'the natural voice of colonial liberation movements everywhere',³⁰³ the vast majority of the Labour Party never totally subscribed to the goals and aims of the anti-colonial movement. With the possible exception of James Callaghan, the vanguard of the anti-colonial movement continued to be occupied by 'relative lightweights'.³⁰⁴ When anti-colonialism appealed to Labour on moral grounds - as in the furore over detention camps in Kenya - it could expect ferocious backing. However, calls for unconditional support for nationalists in their campaigns for independence continually fell on deaf ears. Indeed, at times when anti-colonialism did appear to have gained wholesale backing inside the Party it was largely due to the necessity of other factors - the desire to win a general election, or to defeat communism in the midst of the Cold War, for example. This half-hearted backing of anti-colonialism was indicative of a Labour Party concerned 'not to rock the boat' too much on foreign policy issues, but still desperate to win votes and regain power.³⁰⁵

Despite this, the feeling within the Labour Party for anti-colonialism was still largely one of support - regardless of how very clearly conditional and limited this support was. By 1960, there was little overt opposition to the movement from inside the Party. Support for the MCF grew consistently between 1954 and 1960 and saw the radical anti-colonial organisation become the preeminent voice on colonial affairs. Even the once relatively hostile FCB began to accept the realities of a post-colonial Africa defined by black majoritarian democracies. MPs not connected to the MCF often saw themselves joining forces with those who were, such as in the protests at the moral abuses being enacted on native populations in the few remaining

³⁰³ Morgan, 'Imperialists at Bay', p241.

³⁰⁴ Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, p309.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

colonies. There were also changes to party policy - the decision not to republish 1956's 'The Plural Society' being indicative of this. As a result, though support for certain nationalist parties such as the PPP may have been off-limits due to their perceived communist affiliations, anti-colonial movements did overall tend to receive Labour's blessings.

However, this support was very much on Labour's terms. Though paternalist arguments regarding self-government may have been perceived as outdated by the late 1950s, Labour still tended to view itself as the 'big brother' to the movements in the colonies - just as it had done with the Indian National Congress during the 1940s.³⁰⁶ The Party's decision not to support the seven accused nationalists on trial in Kenya particularly attests to this. As does the desire of the Fabians that nationalist colonial movements would avoid 'irresponsible' left-wing politics. Consequently, Gupta's conclusion that Labour had shed its 'social imperialist element' by this point in history is not entirely accurate.³⁰⁷ Though this 'social imperialist element' had *mostly* disappeared, the findings of this dissertation reveal that certain hangovers remained - as seen in the persistence of the fear that black majority rule in former African colonies would result in chaos. This consequently serves to highlight the limitations of the MCF's influence inside the Party. The MCF, in contrast to the wider party, offered unconditional support to nationalists, organising tours for nationalist leaders to speak across the country, and generally elevated the voices of black African leaders above those of white British anti-colonialists or socialists – tactics which tended to remain absent from official Labour politics.

As well as rejecting Morgan's claim in the title of this work, the findings of this dissertation also entail a rejection of the opposite claim: that Labour was overtly hostile to the nationalist movements in the colonies. Sections of the Party, from CLPs to MPs to the MCF, did offer unconditional support to anti-colonial movements across the Empire. Consequently, this

³⁰⁶ Owen, *British Left and India*, p10-11.

³⁰⁷ Gupta, *Imperialism*, p393.

dissertation finds itself placed closer to Keleman's image of a Labour Party whose relationship with nationalist movements was largely one of 'support'.³⁰⁸ When taking the Party as a whole Labour did indeed offer 'support', however tepid, limited, and conditional it may have been. At the same time, this does not entirely rule out those conclusions reached by Elkins, Mawby, and Joshi and Carter. These works emphasise Labour's suspicion of colonial liberation movements - a conclusion shared by this dissertation. However, the findings of this dissertation have also shown that when delving into the myriad of organisations and bodies which constitute the Labour Party as a whole, the picture displays a greater complexity. The Labour Party is not a homogenous body. The leadership of the Labour Party displayed levels of support for the anti-colonial movement of much less intensity than affiliated organisations or grassroots party bodies - a fact that often caused conflict within the Party itself. Not all of the Labour Party attached the same kinds of conditionality to its support for anti-colonialism.

The implications of these findings can be seen most clearly in the lack of impact that anti-colonialism had on the Party in the period immediately after this essay explores. The foreign policymaking of the Harold Wilson governments post-1964 saw the left once again marginalised.³⁰⁹ Though committed to decolonization, the Wilson Government came under criticism from the left thanks to its handling of Rhodesia, the Nigerian Civil War, and its slashing of the overseas aid budget.³¹⁰ The story of the anti-colonial movement from the 1960s onwards was a story which increasingly found itself taking place outside of the Labour Party.³¹¹ Labour's involvement with the campaign against South African apartheid, for example, was once again marked by a nagging fear that black majority rule in South Africa would lead to chaos and that the movement itself was worryingly sympathetic to communism.³¹² When judged against the years both before and after, the influence of the anti-colonial movement within the Labour

³⁰⁸ Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

³⁰⁹ Thorpe, *History of the Labour Party*, p175.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p176.

³¹¹ Keleman, 'Economics of Decolonization', accessed 27.11.2018.

³¹² Gurney, 'Anti-Apartheid', p144.

Party therefore appears to have been at its greatest historical extent during the late 1950s - a fact that, in many ways, hands the period between 1951 and 1960 even greater significance and makes the movement's gains in these years even more impressive.

In some respects, however, this does pose a certain limitation to this dissertation. It is very hard to envisage what a Labour Party with radical anti-colonialism representing the mainstream, predominant mode of thinking would look like. Even in 2019, with the modern Labour Party arguably possessing its most radical leadership to date,³¹³ the Party's foreign policy still faces certain criticisms from the left over a perceived lack of radicalism.³¹⁴ As a result, it is relatively difficult to picture what success for the anti-colonial movement would have looked like simply because there is no benchmark. Likewise, this also means that it is entirely possible that the findings of this dissertation are perhaps too definite. When making judgements about the orientalism, paternalism, or racism found within Labour attitudes during the 1950s, for example, it is worth also acknowledging that other left-wing organisations such as the CPGB - an organisation which displayed a much greater commitment to radical anti-colonialism than Labour did - faced very similar charges.³¹⁵ This is not, however, to excuse the existence of such abhorrent attitudes. Instead, it is intended merely to place any judgements made regarding the Labour Party, and those in it during this period, within an accurate historical context.

The journey taken by the anti-colonial movement between 1951 and 1960 was, overall, a positive one. By 1960, the movement had undergone a relative revolution largely unthinkable to those such as Brockway who had experienced the movement at its most insignificant in the

³¹³ Seymour, *Corbyn*, p2.

³¹⁴ David Wearing, 'Corbyn's Emphasis on Diplomacy and Dialogue Puts Him on the Right Side of History', *The Independent*, 02.09.18, accessed 02.01.19, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/jeremy-corbyn-radical-lay-wreath-foreign-policy-labour-a8514491.html.

³¹⁵ Marika Sherwood, 'The Comintern, the CPGB, Colonies and Black Britons, 1920-1938', *Science and Society*, vol. 60 (1996), p160.

late 1940s and early 1950s. This revolution saw anti-colonialism elevated considerably in popularity within the Labour Party, both inside and outside of parliament, thanks to a combination of those factors investigated in Chapter Two. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, this positive journey was not all plain sailing. The movement started and ended the period in a position within the Labour Party of relative similarity in terms of actual influence. Though the movement's capacity to organise and campaign had undoubtedly expanded, its ability to affect real change on the Labour Party hierarchy and the Conservative Government remained limited. The extent of this limitedness was highlighted by the retreat of the movement's influence during the 1960s, illuminating a certain weakness to anti-colonialism in the Party that it never really managed to shed.

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