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Jake White  
S1951637

# [PAN-AFRICANISM & SEAFARERS BETWEEN FREETOWN, HAMBURG AND BRITAIN]

Within the centers of Black internationalism epitomized by the I.T.U.C.N.W in Hamburg, Black seafarers came into contact with Pan-Africanism and Communism. It looks at how and why Pan-Africanism was adopted by seafarers through the articulation and dissemination of literary production and the consequences that followed. These consequences are highlighted as a means to shed light upon the seafarer's unique role in the Black internationalist network due to their mobility and their specific role in forms of organized Marxism that emerged. This study looks at the intellectual phenomenon of Pan-Africanism in the 1930s and how this body of ideas was incorporated by Black seafarers as they travelled between Freetown, Hamburg and Britain, with the intention of recovering their historical agency in the process.

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## Introduction

*'the seamen have a glorious history of struggle, the battle ship 'Potemkin', the example of Mart of the French maritime workers, the glorious struggle of the Chinese seamen of Canton, and Shanghai, prove that the class-conscious seamen and harbour workers, since long have stood in the forefront of the revolutionary movement. This beautiful tradition, the ever-sharpening world economic crisis of capitalism, the growing discontent and the will of the masses to struggle against the offensive of the capitalists'*<sup>1</sup>

The role of maritime labourers has presented a wealth of opportunities for historical enquiry. The inter-war period was associated with the growing rise of interconnectedness spurred by capitalism's sprawling reach. Nowhere more prevalent was this found then within the global shipping industry. The growth of global capitalism was a result of the increasing flow of trade and capital throughout the world. Technological advances began to enable the support of global capital through the medium of maritime travel and this required maritime labour of a similar global ilk.

The maritime industry can be defined by its binary relationship between employers and employees, of restriction and coercion by the former and resistance by the latter. The accumulative flow of capital and goods led to an emphasis on the role of seafarers. This was an important factor which led to the heightened use of forcible strategies to ensure that they did not disrupt these channels. Once maritime employment became more entrenched and dominated by large corporations, the networks of labourers' responded by stimulated forms of resistance to mobilize against this trend. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker sketch these early forms of maritime resistance in *The Many-Headed Hydra*, a metaphor for the many practices of disorder and resistance encountered 'from below' when imposing order on an increasingly globalized form of labour.<sup>2</sup> This resistance, they argue, spread along the networks of maritime labour and the currents of human experience, coalescing in the environment of the ship, described as 'world turned upside down'<sup>3</sup>, due to its egalitarian, class-conscious and multi-ethnic pirate inhabitants. This resistance contributed to the genesis of maritime labour solidarity and the spaces where it originated.

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, CO323/1164/14, SZ/3368, "Letter Dated 4th July 1931 From The I.S.H To The S.M.M", 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).p.144.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p.144.

The connectivity and transitory nature of sea-based labour fostered interactions and exchanges along this network of resistance which brought about another layer of distinctiveness. Their consistent travelling while at work meant that seafarer's ideologies did not develop, nor were they imposed from the top down, but can be argued as being rooted in their own experience.<sup>4</sup> The consequences of this experience and the solidarity which it constructed meant that militancy and political radicalism became evidently anchored in the way in which they earned their livelihood. This argument is supported by David Featherstone, who argues that seafarer solidarity was produced in two ways; via politically constructed identities linking different spaces by organizing along networks and through the contestation of social and material relations present within their workplace and environment.<sup>5</sup> As an expression of their solidarity, seafarers formed Trade Unions in order to collectively mobilize and combat the rise of coercive employment practices in the inter-war years.

The construction of seafarer identity is intrinsically linked to the fact that their form of labour required constant movement. Their inherent mobility made them subversive in the minds of imperial authorities and employers. In addition to this, the growth of the internationalist movement subsequently led to an intensification of anti-colonialist movements. This interconnectedness stimulated the exchange and transmission of anti-colonialist ideas, literature and arms. The seafarers' unique ability to travel between spaces meant that their mobility was categorized as suspicious by the colonial authorities due to the fact they could be regarded as either a potential disruption to the flow of capital or a vessel for the transmission of ideas, literature or arms in support of these movements. It is the travel of ideas within the trajectories of maritime labour where this study derives its departure point.

The specific 'idea' which will be the focus of this study is Pan-Africanism. Due to the dispersed nature of those who championed its ideas, Pan-Africanism innately reflects the sort of processes which transcend nation-state borders and fosters contacts and interactions over large distances.<sup>6</sup> This resulted in opportunities for Pan-Africanism to potentially subvert the notion of empire within the confines of maritime labour. It is

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<sup>4</sup> Diane Kirby, "Connecting work identity and politics in the internationalism of 'seafarers who share the seas'", *International Journal of Maritime History*, 29.2 (2017). p.310.

<sup>5</sup> David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (New York: Zed Books, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Visions of world order Andreas Eckert, "Bringing the "Black Atlantic" into Global History: The Project of Pan-Africanism," in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements 1880s-1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). p.241.

therefore surprising how little scholarly attention has been given to the role which Black maritime labourers' played in the dissemination and circulation of Pan-Africanism in the wider context of the British maritime industry and growing anti-colonialist internationalism in the 1930s.

Pan-Africanism has undertaken various forms historically and it would be productive to start with a brief overview to provide context for this study. Pan-Africanism represents the complexities of Black political and cultural thought across the past two hundred years. As a movement, its goals often shifted or varied, including ambitions of a political, ideological, organizational or cultural nature. At a basic cultural level, it is a belief that African peoples, both on the African continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny. This commonality is linked to the notion of an African diaspora. This can be seen as a reference to the dispersal, diffusion and eventual syncretism of a civilization scattered due to the slave trade, indentured labour and migration.<sup>7</sup> The most notable of these diasporic thinkers whose actions demonstrate tangible examples of Pan-Africanism are individuals Marcus Garvey, W.E B Dubois and George Padmore. Garvey, through his Universal Negro Improvement Association, emphasized the historical linkages between Africans and its diaspora and sought reform through a spiritual journey back to Africa on his ship called Black Star Liner, which was ultimately unsuccessful.

W.E B Dubois is a prominent figure in the history of Pan-Africanism who was born in the United States. He often championed the study of African history whilst writing and theorizing vigorously on the 'Negro Problem' facing African-Americans throughout his life. Much of the evolution of Pan-Africanism as an ideology can be traced in the Pan-African Congresses which were held at various intervals during the twentieth century. The first being in 1919 in Paris, where Dubois played a significant role in organising the Congress in the shadows of the Versailles Conference, Brussels in 1921, and then Manchester in 1945. Prominent activist George Padmore, who had worked to aid Africans and the diaspora by developing racial solidarity within the structures of communism, played a key role in organising the 1945 Congress that instated Dubois as President. The political, organisational and ideological ambitions of these Congresses centred on the concept of solidarity between Africans and the diaspora. A history of enforced European hegemony constituted to the critical matrix that resulted in the production of Pan-Africanism. A key

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<sup>7</sup> Cedric Robinson, "The African Diaspora and the Italy-Ethiopian Crisis", *Race & Class*, 27.2 (1985).p.51.

element in this production was the experience of the diaspora and this was reflected in the attendees at these numerous gatherings.

Between 1921 and 1945 was a significant period for Pan-Africanism. Heightened connectivity meant the experiences of European imperialism stimulated growth in the spread of anti-western discourses, in particular in the colonized world. Pan-Africanism can be located within this global trend. Thus, Pan-Africanism found its opposition in the direction of imperialism, a process that had politically, culturally and economically devastated Africa and its history. Black people's position within the capitalist system was adhered to have been caused by European subjugation and subsequently rooted Pan-Africanism in a discourse of resistance and criticism of imperialism. This resulted in the creation of Pan-African solidarity across African peoples on the continent and the diaspora. Hence, it took up the aim to liberate Africa from imperial domination and unite African people in the continent with those in the diaspora against their capitalist suppression.

George Padmore was a key figure, as well as an example of this connectivity, treading the path of many Pan-African intellectuals who moved from the periphery to study in the metropole. In theorizing the discrepancies and correlations he saw, Padmore took a Marxist-orientated approach, attaching importance to the working class in the role of liberation from capitalist exploitation whilst simultaneously stressing the role of race. Subsequently, Pan-Africanism's reach expanded during this period, merging Marxist critiques of imperialism alongside racial solidarity to create a radicalised alternative.<sup>8</sup>

The necessary expansion of Pan-Africanism through its engagement with Marxism incorporated a wider range of individuals who could adopt the framework but from a working-class perspective. In its origins, Pan-Africanism as a form of cultural articulation has often been argued to be an intellectual framework that is of an elitist nature. This is seen most evidently in W.E Dubois contribution in one of his many essays, titled 'The Talented Tenth'. A prominent Black thinker, Dubois wrote the following in this essay;

*'Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work*

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<sup>8</sup> Ntongela Masiela, "Pan-Africanism or Classical African Marxism," in *Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, ed. Sidney Lemelle and Robin D.G Kelley (London: Verso Books, 1994). p.308

*and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men'*<sup>9</sup>

Here, Dubois advocates that one-tenth of the African-American populace had risen to prominence and positions of leadership due to their education, and that this portion of the Black population was considered of most importance to the 'Negro Problem'. Demonstrating its strands of elitism, it excluded those in the lower echelons of Black society who did not possess the same education or societal standing in contributing to both the cultural and therefore practical liberation aspects of Pan-Africanism. To say that those who were not educated to a certain degree could not contribute to the emancipation of Black people excluded the majority of the Black population at the time. Moreover, Dubois only took into account the perspective of Black people in the United States. Therefore, the intertwining of Marxism and Pan-Africanism theorized a role for the Black proletariat to play in their liberation from capitalist exploitation as well as fighting against racial discrimination, in both Africa and Europe.

This merging with Marxism not only made Pan-Africanism more dynamic as an intellectual thought but also brought to the fore more practical elements of Marxism concerned with working-class solidarity and mobilization commonly expressed in Trade Unionist circles. It is this brand of Pan-Africanism which features most prominently in this study due to its focus on Black maritime labourers' and will be subsequently labelled 'Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism'. This term was coined by Kent Worcester in his biographical study of prominent Pan-Africanist C.L.R James, also the author of *Black Jacobins*.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, it was used by Christian Hogsberg when describing the approach of the lesser known activist and maritime labourer Chris Braithwaite who straddled his activism in the workplace and Pan-Africanism in order to aid and better organise maritime labourers' whilst also writing for the *International African Opinion*.<sup>11</sup> The term points to the way in which elements of Pan-Africanism merged with aspects of Marxist theory, conjoining with collective bargaining upon lines of race as well as class, creating an intellectual framework with a wider appeal than what it possessed previously.

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<sup>9</sup> W. E. Burghardt DuBois, "The Talented Tenth", in *WEBDubois.org* <<http://www.webdubois.org/dbTalentedTenth.html>> [accessed 23 August 2018].

<sup>10</sup> Kent Worcester, *C.L.R James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). p.42.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Hogsbjerg, "Mariner, renegade and castaway: Chris Braithwaite, Seaman's organiser and Pan-Africanist", *Race & Class*, 53.2 (2011).p.48.



This subsequent extension and the wider appeal are one of the underpinnings that this study seeks to highlight. The appeal will be shown to have extended specifically to Black seafarers. In the case of Black seamen, their form of labour was significantly more marginal and exploitative due to the fact they faced pressures of racial exclusion from mainstream maritime. This enables us to look at the reception of Pan-Africanism and how its relevance to these maritime labourers shows how these actors' participated in Pan-Africanism 'from below', as opposed to the middle-class intellectuals or organisations who have been given prominence in the historiography. Furthermore, maritime labour during the interwar period played a notable role in the networks that also led to the conjoining of the currents of International Communism, Black Internationalism, Black maritime labour and Pan-Africanism. It is along these networks through which I will trace how and why Pan-Africanism garnered wider appeal amongst these seafarers' and establish the role which they played in its circulation.

Black maritime workers were a significant part of the mercantile marine labour force, a vital cog in a maritime industry that drew workers from all parts of the empire.<sup>12</sup> Their presence in British industry and within the metropole itself brought with it a unique experience which brought to the fore contestations on issues such as race, identity, societal standing and unequal capitalist labour relations. These were becoming exacerbated by sharpening industrial decline whilst particular racial attitudes became seemingly prevalent in society and politics as a result. These Black labourers' role in the industry acts as a lens that outlines the existing colour lines which were present. What became well-known were the parallels between the positions Black maritime labourers' occupied in the colonies, the metropole, and the ships they worked on. As they moved between these spaces, the imperial state and their employers attempted to constrict both their movements as well as their access to employment opportunities and adequate labour conditions of equal measure to their White counterparts. It is the divisive policies of the British Government and Elder Dempster, alongside the racialized approach by the N.U.S which caused the contestations mentioned above and created the environment through which Pan-Africanism was articulated and received by these maritime labourers.

Having touched upon the amalgamation of Pan-Africanism and radical Marxism above, the creation of organisations such as the Hamburg based International Trade Union

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<sup>12</sup> Laura Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). p.3.

of Negro Workers in 1930, and its neighbouring organisation, the International of Seaman and Harbour Workers, played a central role in the process of combining these strands whilst stressing the importance of Black seafarers'. Focus on these organisations will seek to highlight the autonomy of its own network by moving beyond the benevolent narrative of the Comintern. From Hamburg, the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H nurtured this network in Britain, where affiliated group the Seaman's Minority Movement also emphasized the importance of Black seafarers' in mobilizing against the conditions they faced, taking inspiration from the work of the I.T.U.C.N.W.

These organisations will be demonstrated to have aided in the construction of solidarity that attempted to refashion the spaces occupied by maritime labourers' in more equitable ways. One of those ways was the remedying of political exclusion from mainstream labour movements, providing Black maritime labourers' with the tools to mobilise against their difficult labour conditions. This narrative will historicize the direct role of the Black seafarers' in a bid to demonstrate their agency in this scenario. The dialectic of Pan-Africanism provided a further layer of solidarity along racial and cultural lines as it intertwined with the Trade Union activism present within these maritime circles which will be termed Black organisational autonomy. This will be demonstrated by the articulation and dissemination through Pan-Africanist literature and the circulating of these ideas within the networks of these organisations. These factors will allude to the latter; that the circulation of Pan-Africanism by these seafarers' brought to the fore a unique trajectory that linked Hamburg, British ports (such as London, Liverpool and Cardiff), with the colonial port of Freetown. It is along these channels that we can assess not only the mobility of these maritime labourers but also the mobility of Pan-Africanist ideas.

We see this in a 1931 intelligence report which was submitted by the British imperial authorities on an individual by the name of Ebenezer Foster Jones. Himself a Black maritime labourer from Sierra Leone, Foster Jones was reported to be acting as a carrier of information between the locations of Hamburg, Britain (Liverpool) and Freetown, with the aim of organizing his fellow Black seafarers' to mobilize against their labour conditions whilst corresponding with the I.T.U.C.N.W and the S.M.M along his journey. Although we lose trace of Foster-Jones beyond this point, this unique individual acts as a microcosm of the central themes and wide-ranging processes which this study intends to illuminate. Furthermore, there are archival traces of other specific individuals who also embody

tangible examples of the themes present in this study, those of which include a notable seafarer who was halted at a British colonial border in West Africa in possession of numerous copies of what was regarded as 'seditious' literature, demonstrating how these individuals may or may not have contributed to the circulation of Pan-Africanist ideas, Lastly, individuals like Chris Braithwaite, latterly known as Chris Jones, and Harry O'Connell, were Black seafarers' who receive notable but brief attention in secondary sources found in the historiography of Pan-Africanism. Herein, they will be used in a way to shed a more specific light upon the work of Black seafarers' who were also active in the articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism.

Now that two of the pillars of this study, Pan-Africanism and Black maritime labourers' have been charted, it is necessary to take a moment to expand upon this in order to sketch further the outlines of the study and its overall intention to be an Intellectual history of Pan-Africanism. This study does not seek to redefine or expand the definition of Pan-Africanism. There must be careful consideration as to not adhere to a manifestation of an already workable, fully formed notion of Pan Africanism as it is by definition a fluid grouping of ideas. To define its parameters completely does not take into account the nuances of an idea in circulation or the inconsistencies present emerging through its travel, neither does this allow for an accurate demonstration of how ideas can be reflective of its social condition.

Instead, it aims to historicize Pan-Africanism as a cerebral phenomenon amongst Black maritime labourers, with the intention of contributing to the Intellectual historiography of Pan-Africanism. The reason for using Black maritime labourers' as a means through which to study Pan-Africanism is that it provides the opportunity to attempt what can be termed a 'social history of ideas'. This departs from Robert Darnton's scholarship that attempted to grasp a wider, increasingly contextualised illustration of the impact the Enlightenment had on French society, looking beyond just the intellectual ideas themselves and focusing on their impact upon the different layers of society.<sup>13</sup> This brand of foci brings together intellectual and social history with the purpose of understanding this corpus of ideas in greater depth.

The way in which this study will do this is by straddling the concepts of internal and external histories of the seafarers'. External history will be defined as matters of politics,

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Darnton, "In search of the Enlightenment: Recent attempts to create a social history of ideas", *Journal of Modern History*, 43.1 (1971). p.113.

economics, the funding of institutions, the circulations of journals, and all the social circumstances that are external to knowledge itself. On the other hand, internal history is the history of individual items of knowledge, conjectures, experiments, refutations.<sup>14</sup> In order to balance both the internal and external dynamic of Pan Africanism, we will trace the reception of Pan-African ideas by these maritime labourers' through textual examples, whilst also attempting to grasp their role in the subsequent travel of Pan-Africanism.

By adhering to a social history, we have to contextualize efficiently and therefore it would be wise to confirm the main tenants of Pan-Africanism which will be shown to have garnered meaning amongst these seafarers. First, the emphasis placed upon inter-related experiences of Black seafarers and Black workers in the wider context of racial capitalism and imperialism. This built upon both race-based and labour-based solidarity to bring about an increased role of working-class mobilization. This utilization championed alternative forms of organisation which subsequently led to the creation of bodies that were aimed with addressing the shortcomings Black workers faced in society and the workplace. Recognising these aspects of Pan-Africanism and defining them is necessary if we are to show how Black maritime labourers received and interpreted Pan-Africanism in a distinctive way.

By outlining the way in which this study will incorporate these Black seafarers' into an intellectual history of Pan-Africanism by applying value socio-historical context of the actors, I would also like to elaborate exactly how I will achieve this. This study seeks to analyse the processes of articulation, dissemination and circulation so it would be wise to seek to define the parameters of these concepts before we proceed. Firstly, Stephanie Newell referred to articulation as a series of cultural connections that take place within particular socio-economic parameters and from there, feed into a clearly voiced argument.<sup>15</sup> Taking this as a departure point, articulation will be seen as the process through which an idea exemplary of Pan-African sentiment is formulated by or for Black seafarers' and then presented in a meaningful way to the recipients. Meanwhile, the journals, pamphlets and bulletins which will contain these examples of Pan-Africanism, can be seen to act as articulators of social relationships between Black maritime labourers' and maritime labourers more generally, often seen in the form of prose which encourages

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<sup>14</sup> Donald R. Kelley, "Intellectual History in a Global Age", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66.2 (2005). p.156.

<sup>15</sup> Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readerships in West Africa", *New Formations*, 73 (2011). p.27.

political mobilisation and promotes the brand of solidarity mentioned previously. This provides a secondary layer of articulation which stretches not only from the author to the reader but also between the Black seafarers' themselves. The stress regarding articulation will be on the contextual meaning of Pan-Africanism that was applied by the seafarers', as this implicitly links to the following processes of dissemination and circulation, enabling a social history of Pan-African ideas.

Dissemination will refer to the reception of Pan-Africanism and its subsequent circulation amongst these Black seafarers. The mobile context through which these maritime labourers encountered Pan-Africanism means that this approach allows for dissemination to maintain its fluidity. Ultimately, dissemination will be understood here as a process that can be perceived to be in constant flux, taking place across space and time. This is particularly important due to the fact that the dissemination of Pan-Africanism in this study will be shown to have taken place along the emerging network epitomised by the I.T.U.C.N.W.

Literary devices will provide tangible examples of Pan-Africanism to demonstrate both articulation and dissemination. The process of dissemination can be interpreted as a form of mutually reciprocal form of communication, exhibiting how literary devices provide instances where this communication is in 'action'.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, dissemination will mean the incorporation of Pan-Africanism to the point through which we can demonstrate consequential actions as a result of this diffusion. Essentially, by highlighting the process of dissemination of Pan-Africanism along this network, it will show why these Black seafarers' not only acknowledged this framework of ideas but decided to embark upon circulating Pan-Africanism along this very network and participate in forms of Black organisational autonomy.

The tracing and manifestation of Pan-Africanist knowledge in action takes the form of bulletins, newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets which expressed Pan-African sentiment locally and globally. These will act as a primary source of tracing Pan-Africanism intellectually. The most prominent example which appears in this study is the *Negro Worker*. The journal was produced by the I.T.U.C.N.W and its print run was the years 1931 to 1938. At first, it was edited by Ford and then undertaken by George Padmore. The journal acts as a reference point for the wide canon Padmore produced throughout his life. The journal's focus was upon two broad and inter-related themes; that black workers

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<sup>16</sup> James A Secord, "Knowledge in Transit", *Isis*, 95.4 (2004). p.661.

were the vanguard of the black liberation global struggle and that black liberation was linked to the global proletarian revolution. Its impact can be demonstrated through its prose as it assumed a role as a collective organiser, helping to foster a sense of unity of struggle throughout Africa and the diaspora and providing what Edwards referred to as 'one of the first channels for political communication and cross-pollination among Africans'.<sup>17</sup> Its banning throughout British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean validated its role in the dissemination and circulation of what was termed 'seditious' ideas. Its relevance to this study can be found within the prose of the *Negro Worker* as it explicitly expressed notions of Pan-Africanism, as well as conveyed to the Black seafarers at the time both their importance and role in achieving the aims of the I.T.U.C.N.W; to create deeper connections between Black workers in Europe, and those in the Africa and Caribbean via maritime networks.

Another form of tangible knowledge in this study takes the shape of bulletins and pamphlets issued by the I.S.H for circulation amongst maritime labourers in various ports in Hamburg and Britain. These expressed sentiments comparable to those of the *Negro Worker* where they articulated the importance of Black seafarers' in the global proletariat struggle, the circulation of information and the mobilization and organisation of their fellow Black labourers'. Together these periodicals, bulletins and pamphlets encouraged the creation of an arena of discussion that moved across space and incorporated its readers into a wider frame of the intellectual formulation at multiple sites of intellectual exchange in what can be considered a 'Black public sphere'.<sup>18</sup> By shaping public opinion, stimulating debate and questioning the legitimacy of colonial rule, this public sphere represented a phenomenon that existed outside, or in opposition to, an already established public sphere. These forms of intellectual production will be demonstrated to have helped to create an alternative narrative. This, I will argue, allows us to trace Pan-Africanism as it emanated from these literary devices. It created a form of shared knowledge which created an 'imagined community' of readership amongst Black workers, in particular, Black maritime labourers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009). p.259.

<sup>18</sup> Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of the Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). p.126.

<sup>19</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016).p.7.

Lastly, the process of circulation implies the travel of Pan-Africanism, as a consequence of its articulation and dissemination. This travel took place along an emergent network that allows us to adopt a spatial enquiry. Spaces 'derive their efficacy in social life only through the structure of social relations within which they come into play'.<sup>20</sup> Along with this network, Black seafarers inhabited spaces such as the ship, the port and other politicized areas provided by the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H which will be elaborated on. These spaces allow us to view how Black seafarers came into contact with Pan-Africanism, re-formulated the understanding of their environment. Ships will be shown to be a space of intellectual and organisational ferment where Black seafarers sought to reproduce by engaging in a brand of organized Marxist activism. Similarly, the Port was a location where the interlocking of race, unequal labour relations and imperial-colony inequalities surfaced. It was also the site where the mobility along this network surfaced, demonstrating both the wider inequalities and the acute similarities for Black maritime labourers. Circulation implies how Black seafarers channelled their own agency and contributed to the travel of Pan-Africanism by becoming vessels of its meaning.

Pan-Africanism is a transnational idea, drawing inspiration from multiple sites due to the dispersal of Black people and their different but inter-related experiences and therefore containing notions of fluidity. This fluid and transnational nature cannot allow for an analysis which is confined to one particular space but instead provides the opportunity to understand how and why Pan-Africanism travelled, specifically amongst Black seafarers along this network. This draws upon Paul Gilroy's conception of the 'Black Atlantic', where Black cultural and intellectual production was exchanged and transmitted across space, creating a unit of analysis that allows for the study of the transcendent processes to take place in transit.<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that these processes did not take place without significant overlap and many of the examples will be used to show how articulation, dissemination and circulation did not take place in isolation. Consequently, locating the processes of articulation and dissemination provides the opportunity to produce a transnational analysis of the circulation of Pan-Africanism and to achieve a social history of Pan-Africanism and Black seafarers.

The order of this thesis will be as follows; the first chapter will outline the network that was emerging from Hamburg at the beginning of the 1930s and what role this would

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<sup>20</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989). p.223.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).p.1.

come to play in the articulation, dissemination and circulation of Pan-Africanism amongst Black seafarers'. It will set the scene for the later chapters of this study when I analyse how specific individuals moved across this network and how they came to contribute to its extension. This chapter will also illuminate the role they played in articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism, specifically Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. The second chapter will sharpen our focus by looking at the environment of Britain, specifically the ports of Cardiff and Liverpool. It will highlight how from its hub in Hamburg, the I.T.U.C.N.W acted as a reference point for British organisations like the Seaman' Minority Movement to be more active within British ports. Furthermore, it will aim to show how this space of the Port provided certain conditions which were fertile for the articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism amongst Black maritime labourers'.

Additionally, it will explore the role of the S.M.M, an organisation that was a further extension of the network that was disseminating Pan-Africanism amongst these seafarers' whilst also combatting forces of political exclusion that these labourers faced. This exclusion was a result of a joint effort by Government, Employer and Union that intended to play race against a class with the aim of further exploiting maritime labourers. Finally, it will shed light upon previously neglected historical figures such as Chris Braithwaite and Harry O'Connell who will be shown to be prime examples of Pan-African seafarers. Lastly, the third chapter will use archival material to reconstruct the narrative of a Sierra Leonean seafarer by the name of Ebenezer Foster Jones. This chapter will show how Jones acted as a microcosm of the articulation, dissemination and circulation of Pan-Africanism. His presence in the three locales of Freetown, Hamburg and Britain highlight his interaction with the I.T.U.C.N.W, the I.S.H and the S.M.M whilst his movement points to the unique context of Black seafarers.

To summarise, the scope of this study seeks to highlight how Pan-Africanism was articulated and disseminated amongst these Black maritime labourers' to the extent in which it caused them to play a role in its subsequent circulation. The focus on the trajectory of Freetown, Hamburg and Britain will enable emphasis on how Pan-Africanism travelled along the network established by the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H whilst demonstrating how Black seafarers' contributed to the extension of this network. In the meantime, it will attempt to gain understanding as to how these Black seafarers' received Pan-Africanism as a result of its merging with Marxism. This reception will be shown



through expressions of Black organisational autonomy resulting from processes of articulation, dissemination and circulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

## Chapter 1: Hamburg as a Pan-African Centre

The emergence of an anti-colonial Black, internationalist network in the 1930s provides the immediate backdrop to locating these Black maritime labourers' within the ebbs and flows of Pan-Africanism. Black internationalism was a product of consciousness, that is, the conscious interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries - including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans and seas.<sup>22</sup> It was these principles that provided the backbone for the network itself. Approaching Black Internationalism within the scope of this study requires positioning it within the other networks and connections that existed, specifically those of international Communism and of labourers in the British imperial maritime trade. By doing so, we can understand how both Black Internationalist and maritime labour networks were an enabling factor in how Pan-Africanism travelled. By locating these Black internationalist networks within the wider milieu of the British Empire, we can also bring it into sharper focus and outline how and why it is important in its own right. Where most imperial historiography reduces the empire to a series of metropole-periphery binaries, moving beyond such a binary is present here through a focus on the development of a network based upon the interactions between British ports, Hamburg and Freetown.

At the centre of this network was the I.T.U.C.N.W. It was created by the Comintern as a radical Trade Union for Negro Workers in 1930 and led at first by James W. Ford and then later by influential Pan-African intellectual George Padmore. Its approach and politically ambitious activists were different to earlier Pan Africanist's gatherings of intellectuals. Hamburg opened up totally new perspectives for international class-conscious co-operation for the overthrow of imperialism. The focus here will be on the I.T.U.C.N.W's role as a collective organiser, fostering a sense of unity amongst Africans and its diaspora through its Trade Unionism and Pan-Africanist activism. The influence of the Comintern was prominent in the origins of the I.T.U.C.N.W and as the evidence demonstrates, the Comintern must be noted to have advanced the black struggle globally. Both directly and indirectly, The Comintern played a markedly important role in reinforcing the internationalist and revolutionary perspectives in the Black liberation struggle. This study, however, aims to move away from a Moscow-centered narrative, and focuses

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<sup>22</sup> Michael O. West and William G Martin, "Introduction: The contours of Black Internationalism," in *From Touissant to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution*, ed. Michael O. West, William G Martin and Fanon Che Wilkons (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).p.1

largely on the formulation of the I.T.U.C.N.W's own network, something Holger Weiss referred to as a 'radical African Atlantic network'.<sup>23</sup> This keeps in line with the theme of Black organisational autonomy and demonstrates the need for Black workers to mobilise outside of mainstream Trade Union circles.

A further extension of this network that is of importance was the I.S.H. The I.S.H was a representative body for Seamen and Harbour workers. The scope of the I.S.H's activities was threefold; First - the supervision and management of all Interclubs and their national sections. Secondly, the informing and educating of maritime labourers to create a class-conscious labour force and thirdly, to task these labourers with the transportation of seditious literature, letters, money and arms to fellow communist orientated movements across the world.<sup>24</sup> Forming a notable arm of the anti-colonial network in the discussion, the I.S.H also sought to attribute similar value to the role of colonial seamen, especially those of colour, due to their lack of adequate representation and their potential role in this network. The I.S.H operated as a further layer to the anti-colonial network emerging from Hamburg as well as acting as the circulatory network for the I.T.U.C.N.W.

The co-operation between the I.S.H and I.T.U.C.N.W is a notable factor in why Hamburg became an important political hub and why it is prominent in this analysis. It was not the only hub that existed for seafarers but due to their presence, it created an inter-connect which reflects how the frameworks of Pan-Africanism and Marxism conjoined. The inherent Pan-Africanist aims of the I.T.U.C.N.W merged with the Trade Unionist capacity of the I.S.H, creating an environment of increased importance for Black seafarers. As a result, we illustrate the role of these organisations in drawing these Black maritime labourers' into this network. However, their co-operation should not be overstated. Despite sharing the same headquarters and their obvious ideological commonalities, these are two separate organisations with a different genesis as well as dissimilar overall aims. It just so happens that their agenda converged in Hamburg and yet there is little correspondence to support this convergence. However, the I.T.U.C.N.W worked with the I.S.H circulatory network of anti-colonial literature, guns, money and support to enable the travel of the *Negro Worker* and other literature. It is along this circulation where the Black seafarers were regarded as indispensable by the I.S.H and I.T.U.C.N.W and their role is

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<sup>23</sup> Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic : African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).p.252

<sup>24</sup> Constance Margain, "The International Union of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) 1930-1937: Inter-clubs and transnational aspects", *Twentieth Century Communism*, 8.

important due to their dual relevance to Black seafarers. Together, the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H used their roles to transform Hamburg into a space responsible for the articulation, dissemination and circulation of Pan-Africanism. The seafarers who passed through and participated in these tactics provide ample evidence not only of the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism but also of how the unique context of these Black seafarers' resulted in the adoption of this framework of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

The aim of this chapter is as follows; as the literary mouthpiece of the I.T.U.C.N.W, The *Negro Worker* was the Pan-Africanist expression of the I.T.U.C.N.W's intentions. The organisation's overall aim was to connect Black workers throughout the world, with a particular focus on strengthening the connection between Black workers in Africa and Europe to support Black liberation. Their efforts to achieve this began in Hamburg and emanated outwards and this is where we outline the network that emerged from these attempts. I argue that they created a political hub in Hamburg that acted as a centre of a Pan-African network as well as also creating a fertile environment for the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to Black seafarers.

With this in mind, we will see how the *Negro Worker* made attempts to draw Black seafarers' in Sierra Leone and Britain into this network by drafting a role for them that involved becoming a conduit of Pan-Africanism between Hamburg, Freetown and British ports. By doing so, I will show how the prose of the *Negro Worker's* acted as important space for the articulation and expression of explicit notions of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that resonated with these Black seafarers. It highlights the inter-connectivity that existed between Africans and the African diaspora, specifically the experiences of Black seafarers'. Also, the pages of the *Negro Worker* encouraged forms of organized Marxism as the remedy to the ills suffered by Black workers. In the case of Black seafarers, it was encouraged that they act as the vital conduit, linking together different spaces of Black organisational autonomy in their struggle. Overall, I will show that the *Negro Worker* created a literary sphere important in the articulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that incorporated Black workers through a process of articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism and it will be used as evidence that reflect the goals of the I.T.U.C.N.W.

To start with, I will address the first aim of this chapter, that the *Negro Worker* reflected the aims of the I.T.U.C.N.W more widely and how it was used to articulate Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to Black seafarers. The journal played an important role in

creating a literary sphere emphasizing the capacity and capability of all Black workers to self-organize and lead the struggle for black liberation globally - this emphasis is evident throughout its run and the journal's aims are stated in its first publication, released in January of 1931;

"To help build strong contacts with the trade unions and work class organisations of Negro Workers, to strengthen these contacts and to support the establishment of revolutionary trade union organisations of industrial and agricultural workers.

To help stimulate the class consciousness of the Negro Worker by helping in international education on trade unions and labour questions. And to raise the international outlook of the Negro Workers"<sup>25</sup>

Shown above is how the journal expresses its aims from the very outset of its production. What is important to note here is that we can see the genesis of how Pan-Africanism began to merge with Marxist theory and praxis. The role of George Padmore as editor was crucial to this merging as his own attempts 'to reconcile his commitment to organized Marxism with his evolving conception of Pan-Africanism' reflects the literary emphasis of the journal at this time.<sup>26</sup> The I.T.U.C.N.W's position within the emerging anti-colonial Black internationalist network is seen through the circulation of the *Negro Worker*. The journal provides an insight into how Pan-Africanism was articulated and travelled throughout this network. Due to its content, it allows us to trace the development of Class Struggle Pan-Africanism as an intellectual idea whilst maintain a scope for its appropriation by Black maritime labourers'.

The *Negro Worker* also highlighted Black seafarers' as having the potential to play a key role in the mobilization of Black workers. In an article published in 1931, written by James W. Ford and titled 'Negro Seamen and the Revolutionary Movement in Africa (some lessons from Chinese Seamen), he says that 'Negro seamen can and must play a very important part in developing a revolutionary workers movement for the liberation of Africa'.<sup>27</sup> The article reflects both the intentions of the I.T.U.C.N.W and also how it appealed to Black seamen. Moreover, the article looks to draw upon the seamen's mobility through their livelihood as a means to aid this cause. By comparing the plight and rise of Chinese Seamen, it directly appeals to the solidarity and internationalism present amongst these labourers by highlighting the inter-related experiences of seafarers'.

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<sup>25</sup> "Our Aims", *The Negro Worker*, January 1931, p. 3-6.

<sup>26</sup> Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause for Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).p.192

<sup>27</sup> J.W Ford, "Negro Seamen and the Revolutionary Movement in Africa (Some Lessons from Chinese Seamen)", *The Negro Worker*, April-May 1931, p. 7-10.

Similarly, Ford also writes that 'The Negro Seamen in their travels and experience must establish contact and connection with the international worker's movement....and bring the principles of the international revolutionary worker's movement to their brothers in Africa'<sup>28</sup>. Arguably, the article's presence in the *Negro Worker* drew these Black seamen into its literary space and provided the necessary articulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that was framed in such a way that resonated with these actors.

In a later issue, an article written in September 1931, titled 'What the workers of Sierra Leone should do (an open letter)' is a prime example of how the *Negro Worker* appealed to the groupings of maritime labourers. We can draw the following conclusions from this letter. The first is that it is a clear attempt by the I.T.U.C.N.W to incorporate the Sierra Leonean maritime labourers' from Freetown into their literary sphere. Use of the journal in this manner was in support of their aims to achieve such connectivity between Black maritime labourers in Europe and Africa. Furthermore, we find in the letter articulations of the socio-economic conditions that were being experienced by Black seafarers at the expense of Elder Dempster, a British shipping company who employed Black British and Sierra Leonean seafarers;

'the dock and sea workers, such as the longshoremen in Freetown harbour, the seamen....must also begin to form a union....Every effort must be made to draw the Kroomen into the organisation for they are being robbed not only by the Elder Dempster and other shipping companies but also by their headmen. There must be unity between all sea and transport workers regardless of tribes. Because the shipowners play one tribe against one another, this work should be carried out with the participation of the working masses'<sup>29</sup>

I argue here that the article brings to the fore the aspects of these labourers experiences, articulating the fact that each Black seafarer was part of a fluid but common group. Their experiences were unique but also parallel. The similarities in their experiences were a result of the inter-related socio-economic conditions of Black maritime labourers which were a consequence of discriminatory employment practices on the basis of race. The *Negro Worker* highlighted the role of Elder Dempster in these practices as the shipping company was the culprit both in British ports and in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, due to the uniqueness of seafarer identity and the way in which their experiences were intertwined with the nature of their labour, the *Negro Worker* also articulated solidarity amongst seafarers. It states 'Every worker in Sierra Leone must come to realise that it is only

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.7-10.

<sup>29</sup> Ebenezer Foster Jones, "Situation of Native Workers in Sierra Leone", *The Negro Worker*, April-May 1931, p. 3-5.

through an organisation that those who are still employed will be able to improve their conditions and those who are unemployed obtain relief from the government'.<sup>30</sup> By emphasizing the need to ensure Sierra Leonean maritime labourers' join a Union and 'organize and struggle', it shows how the *Negro Worker* drew parallels in the experience of seafarers' whilst simultaneously articulating notions of organized Marxism, encouraging tactics for collective organising.

Together, these articles represent the conjoining of race and labour based solidarity based upon experience, reflecting how the *Negro Worker* conveyed Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to Black seafarers in Europe and Africa through the creation of a literary sphere. The conjoining of the two reflects how and why the components of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism resonated with these Black seafarers. The I.T.U.C.N.W's use of the *Negro Worker* acted as an expression of its aims, which were to link Black Workers in Europe and Africa together from their headquarters in Hamburg. Furthermore, it also articulated a role for Black seafarers, integrating them as the communicative bridge between Black workers in Europe and in Africa on the basis of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism found in the journal. This is how I argue the I.T.U.C.N.W contributed to the creation of a Pan-African network that emanated from Hamburg.

The secondary, but equally important aim of this chapter is to show how the I.S.H contributed to the creation of Hamburg as a Pan-African centre of this network. It adopted specific tactics that attempted to encourage Black seafarers' to adopt a role in this network and also remedy political underrepresentation. This ensured that Hamburg became a space through which this articulation and dissemination could take place when the seafarers' passed through it. The I.S.H recognised the potential role of Black seafarers' in acting as a vessel for the transmission of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Simultaneously, in what they regarded as their 'colonial' work, the I.S.H worked to combat the presence of 'White Labourism'. It understood how colonial workers (Black seafarers fall into this classification) were politically underrepresented within the Labour organisations on behalf of maritime and harbour workers because of their race. As a result, the I.S.H strove to remedy the exclusionary forces faced by Black maritime labourers'. The adoption of specific tactics to remedy these forces contain remnants of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism, notably Black organisational autonomy, which show how the I.S.H contributed to the importance of Hamburg in this network.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.3-5.

The first tactics are what was referred to as Interclubs. These clubs provided a space for Seamen and Harbour Workers to go to when they docked at the port. The Interclub established the means which the I.S.H could articulate and disseminate Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism beyond the confines of the Ship. The second tactic was encouraging the creation of Ship Committees. These committees represented a form of organised Marxism by encouraging collective organisation on ships in order to address particular grievances that arose. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the I.S.H encouraged attempts to mobilise outside of Trade Union circles on alternative lines. Both these Ship Committee's and the Interclubs shed light upon the role of the I.S.H. These tactics support the idea that I.S.H contributed to the creation of a Pan-African network with Hamburg at the centre. It will be argued that these Interclubs and the Ship committees contributed to the I.S.H aims and simultaneously enabled Black maritime labourers' to come into contact with the dissemination of Pan-Africanism whilst also partaking in methods of collective organising.

The I.S.H Interclubs were present throughout major port cities, with the largest two examples found in Petrograd and Hamburg. In a resolution issued in 1931 by the I.S.H, the Secretariat outlined the role that the Interclubs are intended to play like an organ of the organisation. It was to act to fill the void experienced by long stretches away from home by seamen and to fill this void with political activity. That the Interclubs must obtain work;

"that on his (seaman) visit to them he must find what is in fact of interest to him. At the same time, his presence must be exploited on the political side....successful revolts will only be obtained in organisational and political work of the clubs when the questions of interest to each national group of a foreign seaman are entered up. The interest of seamen will only be awakened when the concrete questions in which he is concerned are dealt with"<sup>31</sup>

This resolution implies two things; that the creation of these Interclubs by the I.S.H was an attempt to fashion an 'intermediate space'<sup>32</sup> for the political agitation and education of working maritime labourers' that existed between work and home. Also, the Inter-clubs operated as a platform for the mobilisation of maritime labourers and provided the opportunity for Black maritime labourers' to come into contact with their fellow seafarers.

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<sup>31</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/129/3, "Instructions Issued On 4th April By The I.S.H To All Inter-Clubs And Associated Organisations", 1931.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Zachariah, "Introduction: The Internationalism of the Moment: South Asia and the Contours of the Interwar World," in *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and Worldview 1917-1939*, ed. Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah (New Delhi: SAGE, 2014). p.xxxi.



Secondly, the clubs were points in the multi-layered communication network that the I.S.H belonged to, with maritime labourers seen as the medium, or the carriers between different points. The Hamburg Interclub offered the opportunity for these Black maritime labourers' to organise within and across this network of clubs, enabling them to mobilise beyond their local scale. Their inherent mobility and their interaction within these intermediate spaces, allowed them to 'jump scales'.<sup>33</sup> That is, to extend their reach beyond their immediate locality and organise simultaneously at the local, national and international level. The club served as relay stations of the network as these maritime labourers' travelled between ports, creating what Weiss called a 'Clandestine web'.<sup>34</sup>

In an I.S.H resolution stating the aims and methods for its colonial work, it can be read that "Special efforts must be made by the Inter-clubs to draw in the colonial seamen, and to carry on an educational campaign to enlighten" with further instructions stating;

" 1. Selection of colonial workers of the corresponding nationality to visit all vessels manned by colonial seamen, to arrange meetings on board and to distribute cartoons, leaflets etc...and by adapting the interclub environment to attract the colonial and coloured seamen.

2. To concentrate upon enrolling colonial seamen into various class unions and organisations"<sup>35</sup>

What we see here is the clear instructions sent out to I.S.H branches to attempt to bring colonial workers into the Interclubs. A part of the tactic known as the 'Hamburg method', after these labourers were approached by representatives of the I.S.H on board their ships. Importantly, here they explicitly mention that Black maritime labourers were also targets of this method. Although we have little evidence of what was discussed or how many Black maritime labourers attended the Interclub at any one time<sup>36</sup>, we can theorize that discussions about conditions and grievances in Africa emanating from their own personal experience took place. This shows how seafarer solidarity and internationalisation of seafarer identity and experience was constructed through encounters with these intermediate spaces and other seafarers.

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<sup>33</sup> Josephine Fowler, "From East to West and West to East: Ties of Solidarity in the Pan Pacific Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, 1923-1934", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 66 (2004). p.101.

<sup>34</sup> Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic : African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). p.340.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, "Resolution On The Colonial Work Of The Sections Of The I.S.H In The Imperialist Countries", *International of Negro Seamen and Harbour Workers*, 1931.

<sup>36</sup> The number of Black maritime labourers' who subsequently attended the Interclub in Hamburg is difficult to gauge due to their constant coming and going, according to Weiss, by 1930 the number of Black seamen visiting the Interclub was increasing, especially those from Africa.

Therefore, through their presence at the Interclubs, Black seafarers demonstrate the contribution made by the I.S.H in creating a Pan-African centre in Hamburg by enacting such a space. It is through their colonial work that I argue that these Interclubs offered Black maritime labourers' an important space for political representation and for the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. The presence of the Hamburg Interclub alongside the I.T.U.C.N.W would have intertwined the club with Pan-Africanism, providing a fruitful space for the merging of Pan-Africanist discourse with Marxist activism that would have disseminated amongst Black seafarers' when they attended.<sup>37</sup> This Interclub can be seen to have acted as an important enabler for the creation of a network emanating from Hamburg due to the already established branches operated by the I.S.H as well as a circulatory network of literature between these clubs.

Another tactic which the I.S.H used to incorporate colonial workers and encourage them to adopt tactics of organising was what the I.S.H regarded as Ship Groups and Ship Committees. The ship has long been a site of resistance for maritime labour, it was an integral part of the experience for these Black seafarers' and can be viewed as a 'micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion'.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the ship represents another 'intermediate space' that these seafarers inhabited, allowing them to use their marginal position in relation to and between flows and trade networks, to bring diverse relations of power into contestation.<sup>39</sup> This tactic represents a brand of organized Marxism that I argue, formed a brand of Black organisational autonomy amongst these seafarers, demonstrating the dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism through their participation in this Committee.

In the first information bulletin of the I.S.H in June 1931, the organisation outlined what the purpose of the Ship Groups was to be;

"the Ships group to organise the Ships committee – the representation of the whole crew regardless of whether organized or not, independent of nationality, race, and age of the members of the crew. This Ships committee is the constant documentation of the fighting unity of all seamen on board must be utilised by our comrades for the education of the whole crew in the class struggle and as the recruiting field for our revolutionary trade union organisations"<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid p.345.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).p.4.

<sup>39</sup> David Featherstone, "Maritime Labour and Subaltern Geographies of Internationalism: Black internationalist seafarers' organising in the interwar period", *Political Geography*, 49 (2015).p.9.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, CO323/1164/14, "Resolution On The Colonial Work Of The Sections Of The I.S.H In The Imperialist Countries", International of Negro Seamen and Harbour Workers. 1931.

The Ship Committees were another characteristic of what was regarded as the ‘Hamburg method’. I.S.H representatives would embark on docked ships and distribute pamphlets and leaflets amongst the crew. Their intention was to rile up discontent among the seafarers and wherever this was received positively, they would then set up a Ship Committee in order to prepare for future strikes, address grievances and enlist individuals for the circulation of literature.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, there was a purpose for these Committees in reference to the I.S.H’s colonial work. In the same resolution of 1931, it explicitly states;

“Organizing ship committees which represent every department of the crew, the colonial seamen to be elected to these committees”<sup>42</sup>

This shows the intention of the I.S.H to encourage colonial seamen to become part of these Committees. Their emphasis here is that when there is a crew which is made up of mostly colonial seamen, there should be added emphasis to ensuring that a fellow colonial seaman was elected to the Committee to guarantee adequate representation. In the case of Black seafarers, who made up a sizeable proportion of colonial seamen, this points to the efforts of the I.S.H to remedy their lack of political representation by encouraging Black seafarers to take up positions within these Committees. Taking up a role in these Committees signifies that the Black seafarers needed to assume a role in these Committees to ensure better. Furthermore, it shows the role of the I.S.H in encouraging and enabling forms of Black organisational autonomy that embody the dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism amongst these seafarers.

As members of these Ship Groups and Ship Committees’, this enabled Black seafarers to form a brand of resistance by adopting tactics of Black organisational autonomy. It is here where we can see how their presence on these ships and within these committees represents the construction of resistance ‘from below’. What is of most importance here is that it shows how the ship can act as a microcosm, displaying how the transmission of resistance in forms of political organisation or more fluid forms of cultural or intellectual resistance can travel.<sup>43</sup> The construction of resistance based upon racial and labour based solidarity amongst these Black seafarers took place within the intermediate space of the ship, embodying Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism and as a result, rewarding the

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<sup>41</sup> Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic : African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).p.350.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, CO323/1164/14, "Resolution On The Colonial Work Of The Sections Of The I.S.H In The Imperialist Countries", International of Negro Seamen and Harbour Workers. 1931.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

efforts of the I.S.H by strengthening the Pan-African network which was emerging from Hamburg.

Black seafarers appropriation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism within the ship involved constructing solidarity across different scales and potentially reproducing the space of the ship that they inhabited. Subsequently, through their attempts to disseminate information amongst these actors, the I.S.H and I.T.U.C.N.W provided the opportunities for Black organisational autonomy. Essentially, this autonomy highlights how Pan-Africanism and Marxism intermeshed as a result of the articulation and dissemination resulting from the I.S.H and the I.T.U.C.N.W. Furthermore, we see how conjunction between Pan-Africanism and Marxism brought about an extension of the former to incorporate these Black maritime labourers and bring them to adopt this framework of ideas.

To conclude, we have seen the way in which the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H adopted an approach which intended to articulate and disseminate information amongst colonial, in particularly Black, seafarers. They achieved this by creating a network containing currents of Pan-Africanism and Marxist praxis, transforming Hamburg into a Pan-African centre. Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism was found in the pages of the *Negro Worker* as it continually stressed the role of Black seafarers' in achieving the aims of the network; bringing Black workers in Europe and Africa into coalition and stressing racial solidarity based upon the inter-related experiences of Black seafarers in Britain and Sierra Leone at the expense of Elder Dempster.

The I.S.H also attached importance to the role of Black seafarers and was shown to have adopted two notable tactics which contributed to the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism amongst these seafarers'. They formed an Interclub in Hamburg which was an important point of dissemination, bringing Black seafarers in this already established network of worldwide clubs. The Hamburg club's proximity to the I.T.U.C.N.W meant that Black seafarers' from Europe and Africa would attend, coming into contact with the combination of both Marxism and Pan-Africanism. Furthermore, the I.S.H also encouraged forms of organised Marxism known as Ship Committees. These were shown to be an important method which allowed the Black seafarers' to reproduce the ship in more equitable ways by enacting Black organisational autonomy. It is this Black organisational autonomy which embodies the consequences of articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism amongst these seafarers.

Lastly, both the Interclubs and Ship Committees represent examples of 'intermediate spaces' that enabled further construction of solidarity and resistance amongst these Black seafarers. These 'intermediate spaces' provided further sustenance to the Pan-African network emerging from Hamburg, demonstrating the I.S.H's contribution in making Hamburg the centre of this network. What we see next is how the efforts by the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H in establishing this network, provided encouragement, inspiration and structure to organisations and individual seafarers in Britain. In British ports, the racial stratifications that existed brought about a specific environment that will be argued to have shaped the reception of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to Black seafarers.

## Chapter 2: Race, Class and Pan-African seafarers' in British ports

The aim of this chapter is to sharpen the focus of the analytical scope by looking at how the processes of articulation and dissemination associated with Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism materialised in the British ports of London, Liverpool and Cardiff. The overarching theme of this chapter is that there was a relationship between the formation of one's ideology and the specific environment that such an individual resides in. Ideology here is to mean a grouping of 'ideas' that derives from a formulated worldview or perspective, a 'representation of the imaginary relationship between individuals and their conditions of existence'.<sup>44</sup> This relationship is brought about by an agent, or, in this case, a mediator(s).<sup>45</sup> To be more specific, the ideas in the minds of Black maritime labourers' were a reflection of their material environment, their class position, and the ideas they inherited historically which too were traceable to their material condition. Their own experiences, their relationship with the British port, their employers, their fellow seafarers and the organisations that sought to represent Black seafarers and Black workers contributed to form these individuals ideology. This process of mediation is the main crux of this chapter because it was an important facet in the process of articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism amongst Black seafarers in Britain.

I will build further on the role of the I.T.U.C.N.W and the *Negro Worker*, the I.S.H, including the British based organisation, The Seaman's Minority Movement. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, a network containing currents of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism was emanating from Hamburg. The main cause of this was the presence of both the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H. Therefore, the intention is to demonstrate how those in Hamburg provided inspiration and structure to the organisations and Black seafarers in Britain. Henceforth, this chapter will proceed to analyse the extent of correspondence between the I.T.U.C.N.W, the I.S.H and the S.M.M. The latter were also attempting to remedy the political exclusion and underrepresentation that Black seafarers faced in Britain and the role of the network in Hamburg and the correspondence with the S.M.M, contributed to the circulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Consequently, these efforts resulted in the enlargement of this network. This allowed for the spread of the specific currents of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to reach Black maritime labourers in

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<sup>44</sup> Kanishka Goonewardena, "The Urban Sensorium, Ideology and the Aestheticization of Politics", *Antipode*, 37.1 (2005). p.49.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p.49.

Britain. It also aligned with the overall goals of the I.T.U.C.N.W to facilitate better linkages between Black workers in Europe and Africa.

The articulation and dissemination will be found through further examples of Black organisational autonomy adopted by Black seafarers as well as in the pages of the *Negro Worker*. The *Negro Worker* supplanted the literary space of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to Britain, articulating notions of such nature to Black seafarers, signifying its contribution to the creation and travel of the Black public sphere. This will then be shown to have played a significant mediating role in the process of disseminating Pan-Africanism in British ports. The reason for this is that the *Negro Worker's* prose counteracted the mainstream narrative espoused by the National Union of Seaman's official organ *The Seaman*. This narrative contained overt notions of racial discrimination towards foreign seafarers and demonstrated its inability as a Union when it came to representing Black seafarers. In addition to this, bulletins and pamphlets from the I.S.H will also be mentioned to have added to this alternative narrative. By acting as an alternative to the mainstream public sphere, it countered the exclusionary reality faced by Black maritime labourers and acted as an important form of articulation.

Pan-Africanist inspired mobilisation and organising known as Black organisational autonomy played a crucial role in remedying political exclusion within the maritime labour movement. As mentioned above, there was a significant gap in representation not only for Black but all colonial maritime workers and this extended beyond the public sphere. Subsequently, it became a point of importance for these Black maritime labourers' to mobilize and represent themselves in the face of the socio-economic and racist Union pressures they faced. The involvement in alternative forms of Black organisational autonomy within organisations such as the I.T.U.C.N.W, the I.S.H and the S.M.M brought Black maritime labourers' to a better understanding of their role and simultaneously acted as an expression of their own Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Put more simply, the involvement in these forms of Black organisational autonomy in Britain represents a consequence (or mediator) for the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism as an intellectual framework amongst these seafarers'. Together, these two combined to remedy the forms exclusion faced by the seafarers in Britain.

It makes sense to elaborate briefly on the nature of British Ports at this time and the Black seafarers that were present in Britain. It begins with the fact that Sierra Leone and the main port in its capital of Freetown was a colony of the British Empire. This

created the existence of a historic colonial shipping route since the nineteenth century that brought many Sierra Leonean seafarers, most from the tribal group known as the Kru, to Britain under the employment of shipping company Elder Dempster. Therefore, the seafarers' here represent two specific groupings; Black seafarers' who resided in Britain and had a claim to being both Black and British, and those who were present in Britain that were of Sierra Leonean origin and who worked along the shipping route between Liverpool and Freetown.

To differentiate between Black maritime labourers' who had settled in Britain, and those who had arrived on ships from the colonies, in particular, those from Sierra Leone will be useful because it offers the opportunity to shed light on the difference in experience, but also to stress the strands of seafarer solidarity that are relevant to this study. On the other hand, because of the nature of Pan-Africanism and the fact it contrived its intellectual framework from the way it stressed the inter-related experiences of Africans and its diaspora, the similarities between the two groups of seafarers are just as important because they point to aspects of racial solidarity. Both these groups came into contact with the mediators of experience which I will argue, produced the conditions for the articulation, dissemination and circulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

The conditions for Black seafarers in British ports were a result of the unequal labour relations that were being exacerbated by the increasing rate of decline experienced by the British shipping industry. Maritime labour, its conduct and regulations were shaped by its relations with particular shipping corporations, the imperial state and the contested practices of labour organising.<sup>46</sup> The protagonists here are the Board of Trade, Elder Dempster, and the National Union of Seamen, the British Trade Union for seafarers' and harbour workers. This decline brought about collusive efforts by these three institutions to bring issues of race and class to the fore amongst British seafarers. To a certain extent, they played race and class against each other to sow divisions between the workforce, most evidently seen in the prose of *The Seaman*. It is within this context that we see how Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism was endorsed by Black seafarers as a means to seek adequate political representation and battle against precarious socio-economic conditions caused by these racial stratifications.

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<sup>46</sup> David Featherstone, "Harry O'Connell: Maritime labour and the racialized politics of place", *Race & Class*, 57.3 (2016). p.72.



The unequal labour relations experienced by Black seafarers stem from the profit-seeking principles of the British shipping company Elder Dempster. Dempster had come to acquire something short of a monopoly of British colonial shipping routes between British ports and Sierra Leone and as a result, it held large sway within the British industry. The policies adopted by the Board of Trade that will be discussed in the following paragraphs can be referred to as the 'Elder Dempster Agreements' due to the influence the company wielded in policy-making concerning maritime trade. These policies had a trickle-down impact upon Black maritime labourers' due to the fact they attempted to maintain the over-arching inequality of colonial economic relationships, exposing both the contradictions in metropole-colony subtleties as well as the inter-related position of Black workers under this plexus. These impacted the position of seafarers and enabled Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to be articulated, disseminated and circulated amongst Black seafarers in Britain.

It is easier to demonstrate the characteristics and consequences of the 'Elder Dempster Agreements' chronologically so we can contextualise adequately. Firstly, the 1925 Coloured Alien Seaman Order required colonial maritime workers, specifically Kru Seaman from Sierra Leone, were to register as an 'Alien' if they did not have the required documents. As a result, they were restricted to a stay no longer than sixty days when looking for work. This was a new system of registering seamen and this gave the Union great power over the employment of Black seamen. They were required to register with the Police under this Act and this increased the likelihood of being deported. This also affected those Black seamen who were claiming British subject status but did not have the required documents to do so. This was also exacerbated by the lack of bureaucracy that would provide them with relevant documents in Sierra Leone and the fact Elder Dempster and other shipping companies often confiscated these documents from their employees as a further measure to coerce their labour.

Essentially, this was the first instance of overt racial subordination issued in the legislature by the British government.<sup>47</sup> It was also an attempt from Elder Dempster to control the population of its labourers' to ensure their own access to a cheaper workforce. Another example of the controlling efforts of Elder Dempster was through the way the company confined its Black employees to poor and racially segregated board in

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<sup>47</sup> Christian Hogsbjerg, "Mariner, renegade and castaway: Chris Braithwaite, Seaman's organiser and Pan-Africanist", *Race & Class*, 53.2 (2011). p.40.

Liverpool.<sup>48</sup> As a registered 'Alien' it was harder to find housing as much as it was to find work and this was essentially a tactic by Elder Dempster to restrict their chances of finding alternative employment on another ship. These methods were designed to hamper and exploit these workers to ensure they returned to work, especially when they were made to make ends meet until work on an outgoing or incoming ship became available. The Coloured Alien Seamen Order was the first attempt to maintain Elder Dempster's ability to hire labour within 'colonial parameters'.<sup>49</sup> We see the attempts to maintain colonial level wages in the metropole, whilst we also see the racial undertones of Act's its additional layer of importance concerning the articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism.

The second policy that is significant is the 1935 British Shipping Assistance Act. This Act was passed with the intention of safeguarding British seaman's jobs in the face of worsening economic conditions caused by the industry's decline. The Board of Trade offered subsidies to British Shipping companies to suffice for the higher wages when employing White British seafarers'. The response to the Act by shipping companies such as Elder Dempster was to sack the majority of their non-White crew, causing mass unemployment amongst Black, Lascar and Arab seamen. It was the combination of these two acts across this period of the 1930s that impacted upon the Black maritime labourers' experience of British ports. What we see here is how Black seafarers were relegated to a position of uncertainty as a result of racist employment practices. As we will see, this position required forms of Black organisational autonomy to remedy the conditions they faced.

These two policies highlight the role of the Government and the Board of Trade in exacerbating the difficult conditions of Black seafarers by adopting protective policies that attempted to secure Elder Dempster's profits at their expense. The National Union of Seamen also collaborated with the Board of Trade and Elder Dempster to ensure that these policies were legitimised amongst sections of the White labour force. This was achieved through the discourse of their literary organ, *The Seaman*. This represented their contribution to the collusive attempts to ensure White maritime labourers' interests were protected before those of colour. I argue that *The Seaman* espoused racist discourse to sow division between the labour force and hinder solidarity along purely class lines. This

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<sup>48</sup> Laura Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).p.68.

<sup>49</sup> Marika Sherwood, "Strikes! African Seamen, Elder Dempster and the Government 1940-42", *Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 13:2-3 (1994). p.136.

shows the existence of what the Communist International had termed 'White Chauvinism' within the Trade Union movement. In an article published in the *Negro Worker* in 1931 by the secretary of the R.I.L.U, he defines White Chauvinism and the potential difficulties it poses towards sections of Black workers by stating

"The question of the organisation of Negro workers is closely connected with the struggle against White Chauvinism, against racial isolation and against the whole of that ideological corruption which has been introduced in the labour movement by capitalism and reformism"<sup>50</sup>

He adds;

"this may be explained in the first place by the fact that for long years the reactionary Trade Unions have placed obstacles in the way of Black workers. They prefer to exploit Black workers hand in hand with the bourgeoisie than to be fighting against capitalist exploitation hand in hand with the Black workers".<sup>51</sup>

The articulation of White Chauvinism by *The Seaman* demonstrates the existence of what Hyslop also referred to as 'White Labourism'. An ideology that possessed a critique of capitalist exploitation of the white working class, intertwined with the belief that their employers were attempting to undermine White workers by allowing competition from non-White workers.<sup>52</sup>

*The Seaman's* White Chauvinistic narrative manifested itself in various forms throughout the 1930s, focusing mainly on the supposed economic threat posed by the Black seafarers to their White counterparts livelihood. Firstly their views that 'alien' seamen, in this case, Black seamen, were a threat to the livelihood of White British seamen were to be found in an article titled "A Warning to White British Seamen". The organ wrote;

"the shipping industry in common with all other industries is suffering from the severest depression on record, and seamen are out of employment by the thousands, and there does not seem to be any remedy in sight. The Union in these difficult circumstances has endeavoured to give preference to its white members, and has worked hard to stem the tide of preference which has been flowing toward the employment of Arabs, alien and otherwise...but we think that they should not have preference over White Britishers".<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, in 1933, *The Seaman* reported on the Annual General Meeting, stating that there is a;

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<sup>50</sup> A. Losovsky, "ABC of Trade Unionism for Negro Workers", *Negro Worker*, July 1931, p.11-13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, "The Imperial Working Class makes itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia and South Africa Before the First World War", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12.4 (1999). p.399.

<sup>53</sup> "A Warning to British Seamen", *The Seaman*, September 1931.

"tragic state of affairs for British seamen! Steadily, during the last three years, the percentage of Chinese and Africans serving on British ships has increased. Thousands of British seamen have grown desperate owing to their enforced idleness, some having been ashore for over two years".<sup>54</sup>

Also, in an article published on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1933, titled 'How Foreign Owners Dodge British Wage Agreements' , *The Seaman* points to an extract of the Alien Restriction Order stating "no alien shall be employed in any capacity on board a British ship registered in the United Kingdom at a rate of pay less than the standard rate of pay for the time"<sup>55</sup> and then claims that as a result of alien maritime labour, "British ship owners and ourselves are growling because the foreigners are cutting the ground beneath our feet".<sup>56</sup> These claims are somewhat contradictory when one looks at the way in which Elder Dempster was potentially benefitting from the reduced wages at a time where the British shipping industry was undergoing acute economic difficulties. In conjunction with this, in May 1935, *The Seaman* can be quoted in reference to the British Shipping Subsidy Act of 1935, "because of the present deplorable economic conditions, it is necessary to restrict the employment other than native British seamen, so as to provide employment for the genuine bonafide British-born seamen"<sup>57</sup> and that;

"therefore, although about 1500 British white and coloured seamen are to be re-employed as a result of the dismissals taking place under the subsidy conditions, the main problem of unemployment cannot be properly dealt with until the hordes of underpaid lascars, Kroo boys and Chinese are reduced."<sup>58</sup>

What this evidence shows is that the National Union of Seamen used their literary organ *The Seaman*, to vocally support the policies enacted by the British Government, Board of Trade and Elder Dempster, demonstrating their collusive role in fostering division amongst the workforce in British ports. We can see how fostering this kind of racial divisiveness was an approach that stemmed from the top-down. The construction of this narrative served a purpose in protecting Elder Dempster's taxable profits by making a distinction between their ability to hire colonial (Black) seafarers at a lower wage or receiving subsidies for hiring White British seafarers at the expense of Black seafarers, from the presence of colonial seafarers in British ports. Black seafarers were portrayed as an economic threat to their White counterparts despite the fact that it was the pursuit for a wider profit margin by Elder Dempster against a declining industry that was causing

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<sup>54</sup> "Industry Going Down Hill", *The Seaman*, May 1933.

<sup>55</sup> "How Foreign Owners Dodge British Wage Agreements", *The Seaman*, March 1933.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> "Alien Seamen: The Attitude of the Union", *The Seaman*, May 1935.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

economic hardship. This exposes the contradictory underpinnings of *The Seaman's* claims as these policies did not address the growing unemployment of White seafarers but yet garnered support for policies which discriminated against colonial (black) seafarers and excluded them from mainstream trade union circles.

What is important here is to recognise how the N.U.S claimed to represent *all* seamen who resided in Britain but their collusive role alongside the Government and Elder Dempster meant that this was an inherent contradiction. For those of colour who were part of the Union, they could claim that the Union paid little attention to the needs of the Black maritime labourer. Even those Black seafarers' who sought Trade Union representation in Britain at the time were left politically excluded due to the chauvinistic tone of *The Seaman* and the role of the N.U.S. We will now look at how the *Negro Worker* espoused an alternative narrative to the *Seaman* and how forms of Black organisational autonomy arose in response to the inadequacy of the N.U.S to provide political representation to these Black seafarers. It is important to mention that in its attempts to draft an alternative narrative, the *Negro Worker* also simultaneously encouraged forms of Black organisational autonomy.

The role of the *Negro Worker* here demonstrates the processes of articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism amongst these Black seafarers. Its importance lies in its role in providing an alternative commentary on the state of not only British shipping, but the wider role of Black maritime labourers' across the world. Below we see an article from April 1932 which introduced the I.S.H's aims and objectives. It also highlighted the contradictions evident in the shipping industry, terming it a 'Divide and Rule' policy. The article states;

"in order to carry out this policy of worsening the conditions of the life of the sailors and Dockers, the employers and their agents, the reactionary Trade Union leaders of America, England and France, are fostering race hatred among white sailors and Dockers against their coloured class brothers. In this way the Negro workers become the victims of the worst forms of discrimination; the bosses give them the heaviest and the dirtiest work, and pay them lower wages than to the white workers"<sup>59</sup>.

Above, we see how the journal was attempting to shed light upon the way in which the N.U.S and Elder Dempster were playing race against class. In the same article, it also articulates the similarities between those in the imperialist countries and how this extends to the colonies by saying;

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<sup>59</sup> "Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers", *Negro Worker*, April 1932, p.20-24.

'the conditions imposed upon the Negro seamen and Dockers in Africa and the West Indies are yet worse than in America. They are being robbed and exploited by the shipping companies and the European imperialist exploiters in the most brutal fashion. For instance, the companies of Elder Dempster...are not only paying to the actives sailors and Dockers in Dakar, Bathurst, Freetown, Monrovia....the miserable pay of 9d to 1+/- shillings per day, but the officers and headmen are forcing them to work like slaves'<sup>60</sup>.

This explicitly mentions the way in which Black maritime labourers' were being exploited by Elder Dempster both in Britain and Freetown. This shows the correlations between in the inter-related experiences of Black seafarers in these different locales, highlighting the similarities in how Black labourers were treated. Meanwhile, they were also being paid significantly less than their white counterparts.

In essence, I argue above that the *Negro Worker* articulated notions of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism by espousing this alternative narrative. It responded by articulating to Black maritime labourers' that they were facing destitute and difficult economic conditions because of the government policies that allowed for racialised discriminatory employment practices that were subsequently legitimised by the production of 'White Labourism' emanating from the N.U.S via *The Seamen*. The *Negro Worker* internationalised the struggles of seamen and drew correlations between the inter-related experiences of Black seafarers' in British Ports and Freetown. Not only did the *Negro Worker* refute mainstream accounts of Black maritime labour in British ports, but it circulated articles which contained tones of Pan-Africanism that encouraged Black organisational autonomy in the face of the racist collusion that existed.

To conclude this point, the articulation provided by the *Negro Worker* raised the level of consciousness amongst Black seafarers that brought them a greater understanding of their material environment. By being both Black and being a seafarer, it articulated how both their race and their class influenced their position in the labour force and the Port, causing their role in these spaces to be unfairly defined by the racialized approach of the British Government, Elder Dempster and the N.U.S. In addition to this, whilst articulating the unique Black seafarer experience, it simultaneously rallied for organization and mobilization. The necessity to organise and resist these forms of discrimination brought into conjunction Pan-Africanist seafarer solidarity and Marxist methods of organisation to formulate the brand of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that articulated and disseminated amongst these Black maritime labourers, leading us to our next point.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.20-24.

The collusion between the Board of Trade, Elder Dempster and the N.U.S meant that Black seafarers were encouraged by the prose of the *Negro Worker* to organise amongst themselves as a way to combat the political exclusion and mobilise against the grievances they faced. The journal encouraged activism but the main protagonists in transferring the seafarers' socio-economic concerns into viable political concerns were the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H, and the S.M.M. Furthermore, focus on the agency of Black seafarers', brings me to argue that by locating specific individuals like Chris Braithwaite (also known as Chris Jones) and Harry O'Connell within the aegis of these organisations, I can show how they worked to combat these forms of political exclusion and in the process, brought Black maritime labourers' into further contact with forms of labour organising and Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Also, their prominent position in these examples highlights the agency of these seafarers.

Firstly, there were political consequences for Black seafarers concerning the Coloured Alien Seamen Order in 1925. Essentially, the forms of registration had empowered the National Union of Seamen, enabling them to control the movements and job-seeking patterns of Black seamen.<sup>61</sup> They created barriers to Union membership for Black seamen from West Africa. They required them to become Union members for future work on British (Elder Dempster) ships but would not accept workers who were on the 'African run'.<sup>62</sup> This was mainly because of the inability to keep tabs on such seafarers once they arrived in Freetown, reflecting the notion that mobility amongst seafarers was regarded with suspicion and as a result they were refused representation gifted to members of the N.U.S.

In response to the 1935 Shipping Act and mass unemployment it caused, there emerged a Colonial Seaman Association in London. This association was to specifically address the grievances of the Colonial seamen affected and simultaneously addressed the lack of Trade Union representation. It was led by Chris Braithwaite, later, named Chris Jones, a Barbadian born seafarer who moved to London after his career as a seafarer. Braithwaite, as leader of the Colonial Seamen's Association (C.S.A) and an important 'Class Struggle Pan-Africanist', was perhaps the critical lynchpin of an anti-colonial maritime

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<sup>61</sup> Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).p.130.

<sup>62</sup> Marika Sherwood, "Strikes! African Seamen, Elder Dempster and the Government 1940-42", *Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 13:2-3 (1994). p.134.

subaltern network in the imperial metropolis of inter-war London.<sup>63</sup> It was a testament to his commitment to multiracial class unity and his tenacity and indefatigability as an organiser that in 1935 he would now achieve his greatest victory in the founding of the C.S.A and the Colonial Seaman's Conference in 1936.

The C.S.A was a clear demonstration of Black organisational autonomy and this coalesced with the Colonial Seaman's Conference in London, November 1936, which was;

'attended by 51 delegates including representatives of the Negro Welfare Association, the Indian Swaraj League, the League Against Imperialism, the Cypriot Club, and the League of Coloured Peoples, the conference denounced the colour bar and the British Shipping Assistance Act, invoking Black seamen's and subjects' service in the Great War'<sup>64</sup>

The conference aims were declared as;

"therefore demands that the disability thus imposed on colonial seamen in this country be immediately removed and that seamen in the British Empire be given full democratic rights, especially do we demand the right of trade union organizations, freedom of speech and assembly"<sup>65</sup>

Regarding, the Colonial Seaman's Conference; Chris Braithwaite represents an example of a Black seafarer who organised separately in order to combat the presence of 'White Labourism' that rendered the N.U.S unable to redress the specific grievances of Black maritime labourers. He drew upon the network emanating from Hamburg and the dissemination of the C.S.A's efforts in the *Negro Worker* pointing to the role of the I.T.U.C.N.W and its literary sphere. Furthermore, Braithwaite can be interpreted as an illustration of how Black seafarers' intellectually reckoned with Pan-Africanism and Marxism, leading them to pursue forms of Black organisational autonomy as proof of their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

Similarly to Braithwaite, there existed another prominent Black maritime labourer activist by the name of Harry O'Connell who was primarily based in the Port of Cardiff. He was increasingly critical of the shortcomings he saw in the I.S.H and S.M.M's response to the 1925 and 1935 Acts and the lack of adequate political representation of colonial seafarers in Cardiff as well in other British ports. A fervent speaker and organiser, Harry O'Connell channelled his frustration to create the Coloured Cardiff Seaman's Committee, details of which were published in the *Negro Worker*;

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<sup>63</sup> Christian Hogsbjerg, "Mariner, renegade and castaway: Chris Braithwaite, Seaman's organiser and Pan-Africanist", *Race & Class*, 53.2 (2011). p.37.

<sup>64</sup> "Colonial Seaman's Conference", *Negro Worker*, February 1937, p.4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.



'As soon as the "proving of nationality clause" began to be worked, a committee of a coloured seaman was formed in Cardiff to fight against it. On the committee sat spokesmen of Malayan, Arab, Somali, West Indian and African workers. From the first meeting of the committee, a delegate was elected to put the grievances before the various organisations in London that claimed to be sympathetic to the coloured workers....in particular, the NUS'<sup>66</sup>

Here, one can see how the Committee was an expression of Black organisational autonomy which stemmed from both the local struggles faced by the Cardiff colonial seaman – and the apparent limitations of the I.S.H and S.M.M which prompted O'Connell to form the Committee.

In the spite of O'Connell's opinion, the fact that information about the Committee and its work was published in the *Negro Worker* shows the role of the I.T.U.C.N.W's literary sphere and how it articulated and disseminated Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. It is a further example of how the *Negro Worker* articulated the inter-related experiences of Black seafarers, demonstrating how those in Cardiff were another microcosm of the socio-economic problems and White Labourism faced by Black seafarers in Britain and Sierra Leone.

Together, Braithwaite and O'Connell and their contribution to the formation of the C.S.A and Cardiff Committee represent examples of Black organisational autonomy and how Black seafarers' were required to organise outside of mainstream Trade Union circles to counter the political exclusion they faced in British Port. However, Braithwaite and O'Connell go one step further by demonstrating the limitations of the organisations in question, organising on the premise that the I.S.H, S.M.M work was inadequate to the unique contexts of their specific locations.

Additionally, the analysis above represents the agency of individual seafarers and the role they played. Braithwaite and O'Connell efforts incorporated London and Cardiff into the wider network emerging in Hamburg, linking these cities by organising on the specific grievances that existed in these contexts. Consequently, it is this linking of these cities as intermediate spaces that we can see how Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism travelled along this network and both seafarers demonstrate their role in this travel.

In conclusion, the focus of this chapter was to demonstrate how an individual's relationship with their environment can determine certain aspects of their ideology. We have shown how the collusion between the British Government, Elder Dempster and the

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<sup>66</sup> Cardiff Coloured Seaman's Committee, "Coloured Seamen Struggle Against De-Nationalisation Memorandum", *Negro Worker*, July-Aug 1935, p. 10-11, 18.

N.U.S amounted to difficult socioeconomic conditions and forms of political exclusion and inadequate representation for Black seafarers who were located in British Ports. It was the Black seafarers' relationship with these mediators that provided the necessary opportunity for the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism in response to the dynamics of their relationship with the Port, their employers and their supposed representatives.

Firstly, the network that stemmed from Hamburg incorporated the British ports of Cardiff, Liverpool and London. The correspondence between the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H and S.M.M drew these seafarers into this network and continued the processes of articulation, dissemination and circulation of Pan-Africanism. As both an inspiration as well as a reference point for organisations such as the S.M.M in Britain, the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H integrated organisations and individuals in Britain in their attempts to better organise Black workers. This integration allowed for the continuation of the currents of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism to reach Britain and represent how individuals and cities were linked through the geography of Pan-Africanism.

The *Negro Worker* was influential in numerous ways. This is shown particularly through the way the *Negro Worker* was so vocal in its prose about the conditions of Black seafarers. The *Negro Worker* was influential in countering this process. It provided a framework by drawing correlations and parallels that demonstrated the inter-related experiences of Black maritime labourers' in Britain, Europe and Africa. The racialized, discriminatory labour practices and the presence of White Chauvinism in the National Union of Seamen, alongside the precarious socio-economic conditions all Black seafarers' suffered in British ports acted as a mediator for the *Negro Worker* to articulate and disseminate an alternative narrative. The I.S.H, S.M.M, C.S.A and the I.T.U.C.N.W also produced forms of literary production in the shape of pamphlets and circulars which stressed for Black organisational autonomy and collective organising within. These contributed to the Black public space and brought to the fore democratic methods of Black organisational autonomy.

Black organisational autonomy benefitted by the awareness created by the alternative Black public sphere led by the *Negro Worker*. The journal published examples of the work being done by organisations like the C.S.A, the Cardiff Coloured Seaman's Association who were mobilising against the 'Elder Dempster Agreements' whilst combating White Chauvinism found in the N.U.S. Essentially, they offered the means for

Black seafarers' to express their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism by encouraging mobilization outside of the mainstream Trade Union circles. This expression, most notably seen through Harry O'Connell and Chris Braithwaite, represents the process of dissemination as it infers that there were consequences as a result of the articulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism in the first place. Furthermore, the role of these seafarers highlighted the limitations of organisations like the S.M.M and I.S.H whilst simultaneously emphasizing the agency of Black seafarers.

Lastly, what this chapter demonstrates, and what *Negro Worker* disseminated - was that Black seafarers' role can be seen as one not of subordination, but of circumventing British power. The Port was a space which represented the limits of British imperial power, rather than its benevolent governmentality. By embodying forms of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism and Black organisational autonomy, Black maritime labourers' are an accentuation of this fact. Whilst their precarious socio-economic position and mobility suited the needs of British shipping, the contradiction was that their insecure conditions provided maritime labourers' with a unique notion of mobility that was key to emphasizing their agency to mobilise against and resist British power. Subsequently, it was the combination of their labour and this contact and transfer with Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that amounted to circulation. As we will see in the final chapter, these processes resulted in a few of these actors becoming 'carriers' of Pan-Africanism.

### Chapter 3: Locating Pan-African seafarers: The Case of Ebenezer Foster Jones

The following chapter demonstrates the role specific Black seafarers played, channelling their agency by undertaking a role which linked together the three locales of Freetown, Hamburg and Britain. They engaged with the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H and S.M.M as they sailed, interacting with the various forms of Black organisational autonomy outlined previously. The main point is to show how the articulation and dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism and its relevance resulted in these seafarers becoming conscious vessels for the travel of these ideas. I argue that their role consolidated the Pan-African network emerging in Hamburg, as they adopted the opportune role of agitators between different spaces that their seafarer mobility granted them. At a time of increased inter-imperial surveillance, greater forms of employee control, co-operation between domestic and colonial police forces and the establishment of border restrictions, this role of mobile agitator meant that these seafarers subverted these institutions, conveying their own brand of resistance in the process. This subversive activity acts as a further expression of the seafarers' agency, whilst also providing insight into the restraints of colonial surveillance, showing how the British Empire was by no means a benevolent entity. By focusing on their agency, it shows 'from below', how they embodied Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism because of how its intellectual framework was relevant to their condition. Therefore, it adds the final piece to the construction of a social history of ideas.

The two individuals that acted as carriers of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism and embodying the process outlined above are a West African seafarer by the name of Charlie Solomon, and a Sierra Leonean seafarer by the name of Ebenezer Foster Jones. The former encapsulated the role of a vessel for the spread of ideas by smuggling literature into Freetown. Evidence of this was found in an intelligence report commissioned in 1931, detailing the seizure of seditious literature from Solomon. He was travelling on the S.S William Wilberforce that belonged to Elder Dempster, from Hamburg to Freetown, where he was searched by colonial authorities on arrival. In total, they seized 150 copies of the *Negro Worker*, 100 copies of the proceedings of the First International which was a publication outlining the Hamburg Conference of Negro Workers, alongside 5 copies of the *International Sea Transport Worker*, as well as various papers addressed to individuals of importance in neighbouring countries.

The fact that Solomon had arrived from Hamburg with 150 copies of the *Negro Worker* can be interpreted as evidence that he had interacted with the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H during his presence, where the mantra of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism resonated with him, resulting in his attempts at smuggling the literature. In support of this, further evidence is found in an intercepted letter sent by J.W Ford to Hardy of the S.M.M. On the topic of colonial work amongst Negro Seamen, Ford wrote;

‘With regards to my work, it is going ahead. We are however beginning to meet some obstacles in W.Africa, already two ships have been searched at Freetown for literature and the Negro Seamen arrested’<sup>67</sup>

This implies that there were correspondence and awareness of the difficulties Solomon faced regarding his arrest, suggesting that the I.T.U.C.N.W had enlisted Solomon for the excursion to Freetown after he had spent time in Hamburg. It also shows the extent of the co-operation between the I.S.H and I.T.U.C.N.W to achieve the goal of expanding their network, linking Black workers in Europe and Africa. It provides a tangible example of how the agency of Solomon furthered the plans of the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H by bringing the plans to disseminate ideas and circulate literature into fruition. Solomon undertook large risk in transporting this literature with the intention of circulating it in West Africa. Ford can be quoted in the same letter saying that ‘the comrades have been fined 10 shillings for each piece of material they have, even for their own for reading’<sup>68</sup>, a significant fee given the context of the earnings of Black seafarers. Overall, we can see how Solomon’s interaction with the I.T.U.C.N.W and the articulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism led to him becoming a carrier of these ideas, channelling his agency and undertaking great risk in solidarity with his fellow Black seafarers.

Ebenezer Foster Jones provides a much more pertinent example than Solomon, appearing numerous times in the Colonial Office Surveillance files as well as in the *Negro Worker*. To begin with, in 1931, Jones wrote an article in the *Negro Worker* titled ‘Situation of Native Workers in Sierra Leone’, outlining the general situation regarding workers in Sierra Leone. Combining his Sierra Leonean cultural heritage and his socio-economic experience as a seafarer in his argumentation, Jones writes with class consciousness and racial awareness, expressing a similar line of analysis found in the *Negro Worker*.

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<sup>67</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/6322, "International Trade Union Committee Of Negro Workers", 1931.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

In this article, he describes the context of maritime labour in Sierra Leone, providing examples of how Black seafarers experienced conditions that were inter-related. He states that Elder Dempster was fostering tribal division between the labourers' to hinder full mobilization of the seafarers against their poor working conditions. This is inherently similar to the fostering of White Chauvinism in Britain to divide the multi-racial workforce. This was alongside his claim for the maritime labourers' of Freetown to seek to become affiliated with a Trade Union and encouraging the aims of the I.T.U.C.N.W.<sup>69</sup> These expressions support the fact that Jones was a Class-Struggle Pan-Africanist whose ideological sentiments contributed to his own political activism. This activism led him to journey along the trajectory from Freetown to Hamburg and on to Britain, engaging with the processes we have outlined beforehand, acting as a carrier of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

In one document, it was reported that there was a presence of a coloured seaman on board a ship in Freetown who may be of interest to the authorities. The report states that Foster Jones was;

“acting as a courier, and conveying propaganda material, messages etc. between Nigeria and Freetown as well as a diversity of centres in French West Africa...and the International Committee at 8, Roothesoodstrasse, Hamburg.”<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the report also contains information about the trajectory of Jones, stating that;

“The S.S Holmelea is due in Hamburg about the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, and should from there go to London when it is indicated that JONES may bring parcels for FRED THOMPSON and the S.M.M”<sup>71</sup>

His apparent mobility within neighbouring West African colonies reflects the suspicion in which he was regarded by the Colonial Office despite there being little to no proof that E.F.J was acting as a courier or spreading tangible propaganda. What is more important in this document is the fact that it claims E.F.J intended to contact the I.T.U.C.N.W, as well as delivering ‘parcels’ he was supposedly couriating to Thompson at the S.M.M. Similar to Solomon, Jones intended to act as a carrier of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism by couriating literature. In this process, he would be furthering the networking aims of the I.T.U.C.N.W by linking Black workers in Africa. By undertaking this role in the

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<sup>69</sup> Ebenezer Foster Jones, "Situation of Native Workers in Sierra Leone", *The Negro Worker*, April-May 1931, p. 3-5.

<sup>70</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/129/3/MI5S9, 1931.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

network, it can be interpreted as an expression of their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism, a role which would be increasingly significant as he arrived in Hamburg.

It was reported that he had arrived in Hamburg from Freetown carrying the same suspicious label of the courier. The correspondence stated the following;

“regarding Ebenezer Foster Jones, who is acting as courier...and conveying material particularly hitherto on the route West Africa - Hamburg, Hamburg - London, we now learn that this individual has been in communication with the International Committee of Negro Worker in Hamburg. It appears he left Hamburg for London about the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> November”<sup>72</sup>

Further documentary evidence cites the Master of the Ship informing that “Jones was in close touch with Communist agents at Hamburg and was in the habit of going ashore at the port whenever the ship called there”<sup>73</sup>. The dates mentioned in both this correspondence and the report describing E.F.J.’s activities in West Africa coincide, enabling us to estimate his presence in Hamburg for around four to five days. We can conclude from this that it is likely Jones made contact with both the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H in his time at Hamburg, possibly interacting with fellow seafarers’ at the Interclubs during his stay.

Additionally, further evidence suggests that when Ebenezer Foster Jones arrived in Britain, first in London and then to Liverpool, he embarked upon a similar course of disembarking from his ship to interact with his fellow Black seafarers’. A side note on one of the previously cited correspondence stated;

“It has been ascertained that JONES was in Liverpool round about the 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November....At Liverpool he had been boarding ships, and found that the attitude of the coloured seamen towards the proposed extension of the movement in Africa, was in his view, excellent”<sup>74</sup>

This demonstrates that Jones was active in boarding ships in Liverpool, speaking to his fellow seafarers’ in Liverpool. Moreover, Jones was also reported as having formed a Ship Committee with his fellow Negro Seamen on board the S.S Thomas Holt.<sup>75</sup> The formation of the Ship Committee highlights his role in the forms of Black organisational autonomy that I have associated with Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. The S.S Thomas Holt was scheduled to stop at various ports in along the coast of West Africa after leaving

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<sup>72</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/16322/MI5S9, 1931.

<sup>73</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, 1931.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/16322/MI5S9, 1931.

<sup>75</sup> TNA, CO 323/1164/14, SZ/129/3, 1931.

Liverpool. From his time in Hamburg, London and Liverpool, we can conclude that on his *return* to West Africa, his intention was to fulfil the role theorized by the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H for Black seafarers', acting as a vessel for Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism, disseminating and circulating these ideas amongst his fellow Black workers.

As the main aim of this chapter was to highlight Jones and Solomon as agents of the processes I have alluded to, we can identify their agency in two ways; Jones trajectory arguably fulfilled the role that the I.T.U.C.N.W drafted for Black seafarers' by acting as the link between Africa and Europe. His involvement in spreading literature throughout neighbouring West African colonies may have been overstated, but, Solomon undertook a similar, more tangible role in his couriating of the *Negro Worker* in West Africa, demonstrating intent to spread the ideas of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism and link Black workers.

On Jones' arrival from Freetown, he visited the I.T.U.C.N.W, we can also conclude that Jones attended the I.S.H Hamburg Interclub, showing how these intermediate spaces acted as a place for Black seafarers to encounter the currents of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism as well as an opportunity to enlist willing seafarers to carry out the aim linking Black workers in Europe and Africa. Also, it demonstrates how their office in Hamburg acted as the centre of a Pan-African network of articulation and dissemination, culminating in Jones then moving to the British port of Liverpool. Here, Jones involvement in creating a Ship Committee in Liverpool with his other fellow Black seafarers, resulting in the manifestation of Black organisational autonomy, drawing upon their unique notion of solidarity and their own agency to organise within the intermediate space of the Ship. Lastly, it is reasonable to conclude that upon his return to Freetown from Liverpool, Jones would continue his work, using his experiences to consolidate the processes that took place.

In becoming conduits of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism, these seafarers' channelled their agency in thought and action, providing tangible examples of the role of Black seafarers. We see how Foster Jones and Solomon used their mobility to consolidate the network between Hamburg, Britain and Freetown, undertaking the role of a connector between Black workers in Europe and Africa. Furthermore, their participation in the Interclubs and Ship Committees demonstrate how they became vessels of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. In addition, their ability to circumvent the colonial state was an expression



of their own brand of resistance 'from below'. Therefore, the recovery of their agency through such resistance is an expression of their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. They act as a microcosm for us to view the processes of articulation and dissemination, conveying their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism in their role as carriers.

It is important to note due to the context of these seafarers', the expression of their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism does not fit within the explicit confines of intellectual Pan-Africanism, but of the actions taken that were characteristic of seafarers which can then be interpreted to convey a reception of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. This is also applicable to the role of Harry O'Connell and Chris Braithwaite, who engaged in examples of Black organisational autonomy because they were frustrated with the shortcomings of organisations like the I.S.H and S.M.M in Britain. Their expressions reflect not a coherent ideological standing, but an evolvment of relatable lived experience, as well as the movement of Pan-African ideas, the process of formulating them and of translating them, and acknowledging the complexity and intermingling of motives of these seafarers' with, and alongside, Pan-Africanism.<sup>76</sup> By examining Foster Jones and Solomon and their involvement in the processes highlighted in the previous chapter, we can come to see the relationship between Black seafarers' and Pan-Africanism and allude to a social history of ideas.

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<sup>76</sup> Raza Ali and Zachariah Benhamin, "To Take Arms Across a Sea of Trouble: The 'Lascar' System", *Politics and Agency in the 1920's*, *Itinerario*, 36 (2012). p.33.

## Conclusion

This study began with the intention of writing a social history of ideas concerning Black seafarers and Pan-Africanism. This goal was inextricably tied to the role Black seafarers played in the articulation, dissemination and circulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism once these actors had encountered its intellectual framework. By understanding the context in which these seafarers' received Pan-Africanism, and how and why it was understood by these actors, the aim was to demonstrate how Pan-Africanism garnered a widening appeal and meaning amongst these seafarers, which led to their role in its subsequent travel.

The merging of Pan-Africanism and Marxism demonstrated how the nuances of this intellectual framework began to be endorsed by these seafarers. This endorsement was argued to have taken up a specific manifestation, termed as 'Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism'. The expansion of Pan-Africanism's appeal and meaning spoke to Black seafarers' cultural heritage, stressing racial solidarity based upon a shared African past. It held the opinion that Black workers' experiences were inter-related and only separated by location. The experience of Black labourers negatively determined by the racism that was an intrinsic part of the capitalist-imperialist system they existed under. Alongside this, it also emphasised the importance of their labour-based experiences.

The unique characteristics of maritime labour also played a significant part in the relationship between these seafarers and Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. The nature of the workplace, whether on the ship or in the port and the constant travel that was an intrinsic part of this labour, contributed to the creation of distinctive ideologies that became rooted in these seafarers experience. This resulted in the manifestation of idiosyncratic solidarity among fellow labourers due to this common experience, regardless of ethnic, cultural or national differences. The difference here is that with Black seafarers, solidarity was shown to have been constructed upon the basis of race as well as class.

The consequence of this solidarity was that it led to the organising of seafarers to mobilize against the specific challenges Black maritime labourers' were facing. The intellectual framework and the solidarity can be seen in the manifestation of organized Marxism, termed as Black organisational autonomy. Larger notions of Organized Marxism in this study played a prominent role in articulating and disseminating Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Fostering a network between Hamburg and Britain, their activism in spaces

that Black seafarers inhabited allowed for the opportunity to raise the consciousness of these actors.

The most prevalent in this case was the I.T.U.C.N.W. It created a Pan-African hub for all Black workers in Hamburg, where I argue that it articulated remnants of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism through the *Negro Worker*. The circulation of this journal along the network created a literary sphere that incorporated its readers into a wider narrative, a space of increased consciousness where readership which resembled somewhat of a community, accentuated experience and stressed the solidarity necessary to tackle the difficulties that came with seafarer life. This literary space subsequently reinforced the network it was intent on creating. The *Negro Worker* contributed to the nascent Black public sphere that was a culmination of the international circulation of Black published print, integrating discussions at multiple sites, subsequently articulating a space of independent thinking that was applicable to Black seafarers and Black workers more generally, raising consciousness in the process.<sup>77</sup>

As shown in chapter 1 and 2, the *Negro Worker* contained textual examples of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. Firstly, it highlighted the inter-related experiences of Black seafarers and Black workers more generally. Black seafarers were being exploited by Elder Dempster, paid less than their White counterparts and were in less secure employment. The *Negro Worker* highlighted the correlation between British ports and Freetown, most notably seen through the article written by Ebenezer Foster Jones in chapter 3. The journal showed not only the exploitative nature of the capitalist-imperialist system but also its inherent racism. Secondly, and most importantly, the *Negro Worker* constructed a role for Black seafarers that involved channelling their mobility and acting as the link in conjoining the different spaces in the network.

Thirdly, the journal exposed the collusion between the British Government, Elder Dempster, and the National Union of Seamen. It showed that the 1925 Coloured Alien Seaman Order and the 1935 Shipping Assistance Act were attempts by the Government to protect the profits of Elder Dempster at the expense of the seafarers. Furthermore, it articulated how sentiments of White Labourism or White Chauvinism in the N.U.S publication *The Seaman*, were fostering racial divisions amongst the workforce. Essentially, the publication attached the blame for White seafarer's precarious socio-economic

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<sup>77</sup> Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of the Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). p.126.

position to the presence of colonial (Black) seafarers in British ports and how they were a threat to their livelihood. Importantly, this highlights how the attempts to play race against class amongst British seafarers was intended to protect Elder Dempster and the Government from a unified mass mobilization of seafarers against these policies which only served to exacerbate seafarers position.

In addition to this, the *Negro Worker* created an alternative narrative, exposing this collusion and bringing to the forefront the presence of White Chauvinism. In the process, it showed how along with racial discrimination and unemployment, Black seafarers were politically excluded and lacked representation because organisations like the N.U.S were ill-equipped to represent Black seafarers. It then championed forms of Black organisational autonomy as the means to battle against the challenges Black seafarers faced, stressing the facets of race and class present in Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. One of the main reasons why Black seafarers received Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism was the necessity for these seafarers to organise outside of white-dominated Trade Unions and representative bodies.

The organisations such as the I.S.H and S.M.M were prominent in this study because of their role in fostering Black organisational autonomy. This was characterised by the creation of Inter-Clubs. These Clubs provided a space for the articulation and dissemination of Pan-Africanism when the seafarers attended. Furthermore, the I.S.H encouraged tactics called Ship Committees. The Committee's and Inter-clubs reflect the role of the I.S.H in the dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism in various ways; The Interclubs was an example of what I referred to as an 'intermediate space'. This space acted as an opportunity for the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H to articulate and disseminate Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism, preaching solidarity between Black seafarers as well as encouraging forms of Black organisational autonomy. Furthermore, as seen in Chapter 3, it was an opportunity to enlist receptive seaman present in these clubs for the role of 'carrier', a role undertaken by Charlie Solomon. Similarly, The Ship Committees were a means for Black seafarers to channel their solidarity and mobilize against employer grievances whilst present in another 'intermediate space', the ship.

What is of importance here is these organisations and their tactics culminated in the integration of Black seafarers into a network as they travelled. This network was shown to be a cause of the I.T.U.C.N.W and the I.S.H who were both based in Hamburg. Their presence created a political hub in Hamburg that acted as a centre of a Pan-African

network. This network was shown to have extended to Britain and Africa, where the work of these organisations acted as both an inspiration and a reference point, highlighted through the correspondence between Hamburg and British based organisations such as the S.M.M. The *Negro Worker* facilitated further correspondence between these points and shows how this network was contrived on a discourse of racial unity and labour-based organisation. Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism provided the intellectual framework for these seafarers to connect these different parts of the network together. The articulation and dissemination that took place along this network, and amongst these seafarers, facilitated the travel of this discourse as the seafarers took up the role of 'carriers'. What is important about this plexus and the spaces within it is how Black seafarers became vessels of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism after they had participated in these spaces, adopting the intellectual framework which then generated its travel.

Focusing upon the efforts of Black seafarers' like Harry O'Connell and Chris Braithwaite, we saw how they endeavoured in adopting forms of autonomous organizing to counteract the various obstacles placed in front of Black maritime labourers'. As we saw, Braithwaite played a significant role in the creation of the Colonial Seaman Association which aimed to redress the grievances of unemployment and discrimination Black seafarers were facing as a result of the 1935 Shipping Assistance Act. This culminated in the hosting of a Colonial Seamen's Conference in London that hosted 51 delegates, denouncing the aims of the Shipping Act and organising to achieve full democratic rights and freedom of assembly. Furthermore, Harry O'Connell's activism in Cardiff demonstrated a similar form of organisational autonomy, creating the Coloured Cardiff Seaman's Committee in order to better represent Black maritime labourers' in this locale.

The agency and activism of seafarers was the central component in demonstrating the role of seafarers in chapter 3. Ebenezer Foster Jones and Charlie Solomon interacted and participated along the trajectory of this network. It is here where we see that it was a two-way process in how the network was created by the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H and S.M.M with the aim of articulation, disseminating and circulating Pan-Africanism whilst these individuals were drawn into this network, reinforcing these processes. I argue that consequences of this caused very recovery of these individuals agency. Ebenezer Foster Jones wrote articles for the *Negro Worker*, engaged and exchange with his fellow Black maritime labourers and participated in Ship Committee's in Liverpool and also visited the I.T.U.C.N.W and I.S.H in Hamburg whilst Solomon engaged in the attempt to circulate of

Pan-Africanism through the smuggling of literature. The point here is that these contributions by individual Black seafarers are explicit expressions of their Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism as a result of the very processes initiated by the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H and S.M.M.

Each individual mentioned in this paper shows how they were crucial in linking different sites of Black organisational autonomy together within this network. Their efforts demonstrate their role in these linkages and how Pan-Africanism's transnational nature was an enabling factor in creating a dynamic worthy of manifesting these connections. What has been shown is that the mobility of individual seafarers contributed to connecting the different spaces in the trajectory together through the discourse of resistance and organisation, extending attempts by the I.T.U.C.N.W, I.S.H and the S.M.M. Their presence in the Ports as well as on the Ships meant that they adopted an important role in this network-based exchange. The ability to organise and resist between these spaces is an expression of their agency which I argue was a result of the articulation, dissemination of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism.

Ultimately, by combining the context of with the way in which they received Pan-Africanism with the meaning that it held for Black seafarers, there has been sufficient contribution to shedding light on the social history of Pan-Africanism as an idea. The context that these Black seafarers received Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism was within a network that first emanated from Hamburg, spreading to Britain and later to Freetown. This network allowed for the travel of these seafarers and the Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism across four different spaces; the Port, the Ship, the Trade Union and the nascent Black literary sphere. The latter, in the form of the *Negro Worker*, was particularly important in articulating and disseminating prose that conjoined racial solidarity and labour solidarity to produce a discourse of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism that appealed to these seafarers. In addition, organisations like the I.T.U.C.N.W, the I.S.H and the S.M.M, politicized Black seafarers as they inhabited the spaces along this network, demonstrating the racism and lack of representation they faced. We saw in chapter 2 how the characteristics of the British port were mediators for the formation and reception of particular ideologies. The political activism by these organisations in British ports made the articulation of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism increasingly more prevalent.

Upon reception, the role of solidarity was crucial in the contours of meaning it held for these seafarers. Without the solidarity first drawn from Pan-Africanism, and then

merged with the historic solidarity inherent amongst seafarers, I do not think that Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism would have garnered the appeal and meaning it did amongst Black seafarers. I also believe that the network would not have had as much success in achieving its goals or enlisting these seafarers had this foundation of solidarity not existed before it was added to. The *Negro Worker* built upon these existing notions of solidarity, conjoining the aspects of Pan-Africanism and seafarer solidarity, articulating a discourse that spoke to *Black seafarers*. This solidarity was inherent in connecting the four spaces of the network; the Port, the Ship, the Trade Union and the literary, together in sight of a common goal, the adoption of forms of Black organisational autonomy to better the conditions of Black seafarers. It was this solidarity that encouraged seafarers like O'Connell and Braithwaite, to organise with their fellow Black seafarers autonomously, revealing how they saw solidarity with their fellow seafarers as more important than aligning with organisations like the S.M.M. Furthermore, Foster Jones and Solomon channelled their agency with the idea of solidarity at the forefront of their decision to become 'carriers' of Class Struggle Pan-Africanism, circulating its mantra, expanding the network and linking Britain and Hamburg with Freetown.

Thus, it is these seafarers presence in an emerging Pan-African plexus that brought them in contact with the mantra of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism conjoined Pan-Africanism and Marxism, and further linked and built upon two forms of racial and labour based solidarity. This resulted in specific Black seafarers adopting Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism. This adoption led to forms of expression that were inherently characteristic of a Black seafarer. As they moved across space due to their labour, Black seafarers became vessels of Class-Struggle Pan-Africanism because of its applicableness to their situation. It is this conclusion that demonstrates the contribution this study makes to a social history of ideas concerning Black seafarers and Pan-Africanism.

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