



ARTICLE

# Pan-African Print in Interwar Britain: Ras T. Makonnen and *International African Opinion*

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## Abstract

This article presents a print history of the International African Service Bureau journal *International African Opinion* and its little-known editor Ras T. Makonnen. In doing so, it makes the case for a reassessment of how we think about anti-colonial movements in interwar Britain. It argues that Pan-Africanism can be viewed as a loose network of anti-colonial activists, where political ideas were fluid and often in competition with one another, yet still operated harmoniously under the wider banner of Pan-Africanism. By analysing the place of print in this competition it demonstrates the role of the history of print within wider histories of empire and anti-colonialism, as well as functions as an engagement with Black British history and histories of Black internationalism.

**Keywords:** anti-colonialism; book history; imperial history; interwar Britain; Pan-Africanism

In July 1938, Guyanese Pan-Africanist Ras T. Makonnen rose to ask those attending the Conference on Peace and Empire a pointed and rhetorical question: ‘how can you have peace with empire?’<sup>1</sup> The conference had brought together a makeshift coalition of Britain’s leftist groups and thinkers with anti-colonial organisations and included a keynote by Sir Stafford Cripps, a left-wing activist and the leader of the Socialist League, an offshoot of the Independent Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> This coming-together of various political factions and anti-colonial movements may suggest a consensus, but as

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<sup>1</sup>Theo Williams, *Making the Revolution Global: Black Radicalism and the British Socialist Movement before Decolonisation* (London, 2022), 177–8.

<sup>2</sup>The conference was organised by the India League and was chaired by future first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru. The 587 delegates included those from the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Independent Labour Party, the India League, the Negro Welfare Association and the Labour Party. Also present were four delegates from the International African Service Bureau.

Makonnen's intervention indicates, this actually proved elusive.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Cripps had posited that while swathes of the British empire should be decolonised, other imperial footholds were 'not fit for independence and ... should be put under international control'.<sup>4</sup> Anti-colonial activists bristled at the remark, and Makonnen's was one of several heated retorts.

Makonnen's response from the audience was, quite literally, belligerent: 'we want war not peace, because only war will settle the contradictions latent in this empire'.<sup>5</sup> The Guyanese businessman's position reflected that of the organisation he was representing, the International African Service Bureau (IASB), and it gets to the centre of how the project of Pan-Africanism in Britain was taking shape during the 1930s. His remarks represented a shift from what had begun as an arguably somewhat elitist and academic movement towards an increasingly radical working-class focused project. A few weeks after the Conference, Makonnen's call for war was echoed in what was only the third issue of the Pan-African journal *International African Opinion*.<sup>6</sup> This journal was the official mouthpiece of the IASB and sat at the heart of the changing network of Pan-Africanists in interwar Britain. This was a move towards a more working-class focused mode of anti-colonial organising, centred in African pride and unity, rather than a rigid set of political beliefs or actions. While ostensibly edited by leading Pan-Africanist and author George Padmore and C. L. R. James, the Trinidadian Trotskyist and famed author of *The Black Jacobins*, its principal manager was none other than Makonnen himself. All three had found different routes to England, both geographically and politically, uniting under the IASB.<sup>7</sup> *International African Opinion* came to embody the evolving Pan-African movement as it was propagated in Britain. Its content reflected this growing momentum. This article will reveal how Makonnen's personal politics suffused the journal's editorial position, which in turn increasingly came to define that of the wider British-based Pan-Africanism and operated at the centre of this emerging network. Under Makonnen's leadership the journal portrayed an expansive united Pan-African front, while managing internal disagreements and conflicts within the broader anti-colonial struggle. In the process, *International African Opinion* answered Makonnen's question: there was to be no peace with empire, and print was the vehicle by which, as he put it in July 1938, the 'contradictions latent in this empire' were to be settled.<sup>8</sup>

## A book history of Pan-Africanism

The central argument of this article is that anti-colonial print was a form of anti-colonial action. It presents a print history of the Pan-African journal *International African Opinion* and demonstrates the centrality and importance of this journal and its

<sup>3</sup>For more on the Conference see Theo Williams, 'Collective Security or Colonial Revolution? The 1938 Conference on Peace and Empire, Anticolonialism, and the Popular Front', *Twentieth Century British History*, 32 (2021), 325–49; Williams, *Making the Revolution*, 173–80.

<sup>4</sup>Anonymous, 'ILP or Communist Policy for Colonial Workers?', *New Leader*, 22 July 1938, 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ras T. Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism from Within, as recorded and edited by Kenneth King* (Nairobi, 1973), 157.

<sup>6</sup>IASB Committee, 'Sir Stafford Cripps and "Trusteeship"', *International African Opinion*, 3 (1938), 3.

<sup>7</sup>Although James and Padmore were actually friends from Trinidad and this connection helped frame their future work together.

<sup>8</sup>Williams, *Making the Revolution*, 178.

de facto editor, Ras T. Makonnen, in histories of Pan-Africanism and Black radicalism in Britain.<sup>9</sup> It shows that Pan-African activism was not only conducted in the colonies of the British empire, but direct criticism and anti-colonial action in the form of publishing took place within the imperial metropole. The exchanges, networks, cultures, and communities – sometimes tied together, at others times fragmented by, but always in discussion and dialogue with one another – created by anti-colonial activists were each a form of politics. This is what I call ‘print as politics in action’. Printing and publishing were explicit forms of anti-colonial action.

By taking a book history approach, this article challenges common assumptions about Pan-Africanism in Britain and contributes to a new interpretation of the history of anti-colonial activism. Its core aims and arguments are threefold and take aim at several preconceptions about Pan-Africanism as both a movement and an idea within 1930s Britain, as well as anti-colonial and anti-imperial organising in the twentieth-century more generally. This article argues, firstly, that Pan-Africanism between 1930 and 1950 was not a single project or entity, and did not operate within clear and distinct boundaries. It was an idea and a movement in rapid evolution, led by writers and activists who espoused widely varied political beliefs and creeds, from Marxism and Trotskyism to African nationalism and Black internationalism. Secondly, it demonstrates that analysis of the printed output is key to our understanding of this British Pan-African project. Engagement with Pan-African print allows us to explore the inner workings of the movement, as well as the explicit, and sometimes implicit, manifestations and expressions of political thought of key actors. Thirdly, close analysis of the printed output of the Pan-African movement will lay bare the broader history of anti-colonialism. Focusing on anti-colonial print allows us to approach these thinkers and activists on their own terms, highlighting how they operated within the core of the British imperial project, in which ways, and to what ends. Ultimately this is an article that places serious and continued scrutiny on print and the printed output of the Pan-African movement, and in doing so allows for a deeper engagement both with the movement itself, and with anti-colonial thought and projects more broadly.

The discussions in IASB offices and within the pages of *International African Opinion* were as far-reaching in their scope as they were in their reception. Although the journal only ran for around a year, its brief circulation belies its wider importance and enduring impact. It reflected a broader resurgence and prominence of Pan-Africanism that occurred in 1930s Britain, led by Africans and members of the African diaspora living in the imperial metropole from Kenya to Ghana, and from Trinidad to Guyana. This vibrant interwar ‘moment’ of Pan-Africanism had been spurred on by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have engaged with Pan-Africanism as

<sup>9</sup>The usage and employment of the term ‘Black’ is used in this article to denote those of African and/or African-Caribbean heritage, rather than the broader usage of the term. This is in line with the *Journal of Pan African Studies* guidelines, which seeks to use ‘affirmative African centred logic and language of liberation’ in reclaiming the languages of oppression.

<sup>10</sup>For more on the Ethiopian ‘crisis’ and its impact on British anti-colonialism see Christian Høgsbjerg, *C. L. R. James in Imperial Britain* (Durham, NC, 2014), 89–100; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London, 2019), 323–8; Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistance to Empire, 1930–1970* (London, 2018), 65–99.

an 'idea' and as a 'movement' in differing ways, with some viewing it as a singular and focused entity, a united front against imperial oppression defined by a shared defined vision. This reduces the interplay between peoples and ideas as well as their internal complexities – as if either ideas or movements were ever unchanging.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on Hakim Adi's working definition of Pan-Africanism as a 'variety of ideas, activities, organisations, and movements that, sometimes in concert, resisted the exploitation and oppression of all those of African heritage', I show that Pan-Africanism was varied in its scope, messy in its organisation, and nuanced in its application.<sup>12</sup> Theo Williams, Leslie James, Carol Polsgrove, and Christian Høgsbjerg have helped to reshape historical approaches to Pan-Africanism, all advocating in different ways for viewing it as a fluid and looser political structure, often linked to a wider anti-colonial network.<sup>13</sup> Building on this sizeable body of scholarship, I argue that print history can unpack this fluid network in more nuanced and engaging ways than has been previously done.

Key to any attempt at interpreting Pan-Africanism is acknowledging the 'overlaps', as Williams calls, between Black internationalism and Black radicalism.<sup>14</sup> Recent works are complicating how we write about Pan-Africanism, taking it out of its relative bubble and viewing it as a process of, and contributor to, other factors. Marc Matera's framing of 'Black London' highlights the ways in which writing about Black internationalism also means expanding how we write about Pan-Africanism, positing that 'metropolitan encounters at a historical conjecture defined by competing imperialisms and internationalisms encouraged people of African descent to think in terms of their shared circumstances' – that is, to think in Pan-African terms.<sup>15</sup> As Cedric Robinson has observed, 'in Britain, the most radical Black activists generally turned to Pan-Africanism as the form of their political work'.<sup>16</sup> I draw on these influences in building an understanding of Pan-Africanism as both a product of and contributor to a wider Black internationalist moment.

To untangle the web of activists, politics, movements and moments present within these histories, I posit that an analysis of print is key. Print allows us to think in terms of overlapping networks and loose frameworks of malleable politics that are able to operate as such precisely because of the printed output. As Brent Hayes Edwards argues, this anti-colonial web of activism and identity, consisting of the 'spindles and

<sup>11</sup>Anthony Bogue, *Caliban's Freedom: The Early Political Thought of C. L. R. James* (London, 1997); Grant Farred (ed.), *Rethinking C. L. R. James* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); George Delf, *Jomo Kenyatta: Towards Truth about 'The Light of Kenya'* (London, 1961).

<sup>12</sup>Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London, 2018), 3. For more of Adi's work, often written with Marika Sherwood see also Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London, 1998); Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood (eds.), *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London, 1995); Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London, 2003).

<sup>13</sup>Williams, *Making the Revolution*; Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke, 2015); Carol Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule in Africa: Writers in a Common Cause* (Manchester, 2009); Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*.

<sup>14</sup>See Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, 2015); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA, 2003); Williams, *Making the Revolution*.

<sup>15</sup>Matera, *Black London*, 99.

<sup>16</sup>Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 261.

joints of a print culture', is 'located above all at the stratum of periodical culture.'<sup>17</sup> Matera has similarly emphasised that 'the fugitive landscape of black London reveals the potentially transformative effects of the intimate spaces of sociality and of webs of friendships and the situated knowledge generated from them'.<sup>18</sup> These are the intimate spaces and webs of friendships, comradeship, shared oppressive experiences and political necessities with which I seek to engage. I also analyse the knowledge, activism and action generated from within these spaces. In doing so I focus on 'a sociality of print'.<sup>19</sup>

This article is thus also a contribution to the growing field of book history, which has expanded considerably chronologically and geographically from its early modern European origins.<sup>20</sup> Robert Darnton's famous suggestion in 1982, that historians should consider the lifespan of printed materials, still shapes my reading of *International African Opinion*. Yet, the widening geographical and chronological focus of the field has also prompted other important methodological insights that inform my approach.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, imperial histories are being approached from a book history angle; the seemingly still 'new' new imperial histories continue to branch out.<sup>22</sup> It is amongst these approaches that I situate my work, and I utilise book history to take close readings of specific texts and pan out to the broader picture. The print history I undertake is one that emphasises the physicality of the text as well as its content. When I approach a text I am looking at the author, the printer, the publisher and the reader, but I am also scanning the pages themselves to see which paper was used; if images were included and if so how they were crafted, utilised and printed; where the press was located, what else they had published, and how they priced copies. The material aspects of anti-colonial works can reveal as much as their textual contents, and I seek to link how the politics on the paper can be further drawn out in assessing the literal means of how they were put into print. I focus on the evolution of political ideas as they manifest themselves in various works over a given period, highlight the role of the author and those surrounding the author at time of writing, and assess how networks can link content to production. In doing so I build on past book history approaches and suggest 'zooming in' on specific projects, printed materials and political ideas, while also 'zooming out'

<sup>17</sup>Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 8.

<sup>18</sup>Matera, *Black London*, 413.

<sup>19</sup>This idea of the 'sociality' of print is not just an extension of Matera's argument but was suggested by Leslie James in a discussion of these ideas. The coining of this phrase comes directly from her comments and is just one example of the insightful and fruitful changes her reading brought to my work.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus*, 111 (1982), 65–83. Darnton proposed approaching printed materials through assessing their lifespan as a whole, utilising what he called a 'communications circuit'. For a precursor to this work see Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'Apparition du livre*, trans. David Gerard (London, 1976).

<sup>21</sup>See for example Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Alexander C. Cook (ed.), *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge, 2014); Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Library: A Dictator and his Books* (New Haven, 2022).

<sup>22</sup>See for example Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford, 2015); Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (eds.), *Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons* (Durham, NC, 2014); Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton, 2003); Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule*; Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham, NC, 2014); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002).

to broader trends in political evolution, Pan-Africanism and across the anti-colonial movement more widely.

### The origins of *International African Opinion*

Pan-African journals were political projects in both content and form. Publishing journals was, for Pan-Africanists, as much a political act in and of itself. Put simply the writing, editing, printing, and publishing of journals were explicit forms of Pan-African politics in action. Journals also played an important part in the development of Pan-Africanism in Britain, serving as a network for anti-colonial activism. The journals themselves became centres of Pan-African activity and debate while developing networks around key figures. Setting readership and financial success aside, the true value of journals to the Pan-African movement lay in their creation of connective tissue, a forging of a community of Black activists literally held together through the pages of a journal.<sup>23</sup>

Journals therefore played a significant role in the movement and were often seen as its official mouthpieces. Unlike books they could be produced quickly and cheaply, offering immediate reflections on current events or official statements on government policy. Such control enabled activists to bypass newspapers and sidestep whatever a white left-wing editor might require. Journals were also able to bridge the gap between commentary on current affairs and extended arguments and thought pieces that newspapers could not.<sup>24</sup> For Pan-African activists this meant being able to cover a wider span of topics, and in varying depths, as the occasion demanded. For example, a current controversy could be noted in one issue but then analysed in more detail in subsequent ones.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, as physical objects, the journals were also a powerful political statement in and of themselves. See [Figure 1](#) for an indication of how this operated on the actual page.

This political project was not just undertaken to communicate with outside audiences, crucially it also ironed out internal differences and debates. As we shall see, the pages of Pan-African journals, *International African Opinion* as well as several short-lived precursors, reveal the disputes and developments within the organisation, providing a platform for activists to discuss and share their points of view.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the physical printing and publishing demonstrated the movement's self-sufficiency, which some Pan-Africanists thought essential.<sup>27</sup> A Pan-African journal that featured articles by predominantly Black thinkers and activists and was funded by the profits from independent Black businesses was a powerful political vehicle of liberation. This also granted legitimacy to the movement to third-party observers; from a ragtag bunch

<sup>23</sup>Priyamvada Gopal has also argued that print-run and commercial 'success' should not detract from importance, see Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 333.

<sup>24</sup>Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule*, 34–6.

<sup>25</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 119–20.

<sup>26</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983). See also Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London, 2005), later printed as *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination* (London, 2013). Arthur Asseraf also makes similar points regarding the electric telegraph, see Arthur Asseraf, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* (Oxford, 2019).

<sup>27</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 144–5.



## REJOINDER TO A POPULAR RETORT

IN this issue *International African Opinion* prints a letter from one Mr. Jeremy Curtis. Mr. Curtis seemed to think that we would suppress his letter, and although he gave no address, the Executive Committee of the Bureau decided to waive the customary rule and has allowed the Editorial Committee to print it. We do this because the Bureau will strive to maintain freedom of discussion as one of the most vital principles of the struggle against reaction today, and its correspondence columns will always be open to any honest opinion. But the ideas Mr. Curtis expounds are so widespread that the Executive Committee deems it necessary to state its position on them. Mr. Curtis claims that but for the beneficent rule of the British Government, the members of the Bureau would not be able to read, far less write, the articles in *International African Opinion*. In other words, the comparatively few educated Negroes in Africa, America or the West Indies owe some debt of gratitude to those countries whose education and culture they make use of.

First of all, historically speaking, every great European nation, every modern culture, owes something to its predecessors and contemporaries. As far as we know, it is to the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Jews, and the Greeks that Europe owes the foundations of its culture. The Arabs contributed heavily during the Middle Ages. But we have not noticed any special feeling of gratitude among the modern Europeans to either Arab or Jew, for instance.

But Mr. Curtis means more than that. At the back of his mind and the minds of millions of his fellow-countrymen, is the firm belief that Africans in British territory, for instance, do owe something to the British people. The Bureau informs Mr. Curtis that a very elementary knowledge of history would teach him that far from blacks owing anything to British, Western civilisation owes a debt to blacks which can never be repaid. The wealth of Britain for two centuries was piled up on the bones of millions of Negro slaves, not only the millions who crossed the sea but the infinitely greater number who died in Africa during the murderous campaigns and raids of the slave-dealers. Some of the greatest families and business houses of England were built up on the slave-trade and the West Indian sugar plantations; the African Negro bore the brunt of the labour which laid the basis of American civilisation, while M. Gaston Martin, the French bourgeois historian, in his book *L'Ere*

*des Nègres* (The Era of the Slave-ships) states that French capitalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries drew its main source of strength from the slave-trade: all its other ramifications depended on it. Thus from Africans being grateful to Europe for teaching a few of them to read and write, many Europeans owe their standard of living and education, such as it is, to the labour of generations of Africans.

Mr. Curtis states that the Protectorates came willingly under British rule for protection. The rulers of the Protectorates listened to the lying promises of His Majesty's Government, who from its first entry into Africa, to the Ethiopian crisis, has equalled the fairness of its promises only by the grossness of its deceptions.

Finally, Mr. Curtis asks in what other country could we so vilify the Government? In many. But this we owe, not to the beneficence of the ruling class but to the devoted struggles of the British working-class movement through the centuries. It is our aim to convince the British workers and those classes, groups and individuals who are their natural allies, that in helping the blacks to attain freedom, the British build the surest bulwark of their own and create the possibility of a great and steady expansion in the standard of living and general culture of the masses both here and in Africa. They owe as little to our common masters as we do, and we shall fight in our own common interests but not in those of our exploiters.

The Executive Committee of the Bureau realises that balancing the debts of one civilisation to another and of one people to another is an abstract procedure which has little bearing on the realities and necessities of the present day. It exhorts the blacks in their struggle for their own freedom to be willing to form, on equal terms, alliances with all who struggle against imperialism: neither will we seek to bandy words with genuine British or French allies as to what their civilisations owe to black labour. But at the same time, the Bureau will be alert to set the example of vigorously repudiating and denouncing any suggestion that Africans owe anything whatever to British imperialism or to the British Government or any other European peoples. Such a claim is historically false and is no more than another carefully tended piece of propaganda by which imperialism seeks to dominate the minds as it enslaves the bodies of those whom it beads to its will. As such, it is not without importance, and we look, not only to Africans but to friends of Africa, to expose this dangerous lie wherever it raises its head. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, International African Service Bureau.

July 25th, 1938.

## CORRESPONDENCE

LONDON, July, 15th, 1938

To the Editor of INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN OPINION.

SIR—A copy of your paper having come into my hands, I feel that I should be doing you the greater disservice if I did not tell you a few honest truths about it.

In the first place, but for the beneficent rule of this country and its administrators (at whom you lose no occasion to sneer) you would not have such a paper. Far from being able to write such articles, you would be unable even to read them. In short, it is only from the rulers whom you so hate that you have received the education that has enabled you to bite the hand that feeds you.

Secondly, as one might expect (the Negro mind being sub-logically) you show a complete lack of coherence in the case put forward. One moment you vilify British Rule and the next moment you are whining because the British are a little tired of your utter ingratitude for years of selfless devotion and propose to shift some of the White Man's Burden from their own shoulders to those of the Union of South Africa. I notice that you even admit that the people of the South African Protectorates themselves, of their own free will, came under British Rule to save themselves from less kindly masters. So much for our "Facist" imperialism. Do you imagine that there are not still, in this present age, worse masters than ourselves, who, if we left you to your own devices, would soon step in and take our place? You might even find yourselves regretting the kind and sympathetic rule which you are now abusing.

This brings me to a third point. In what other country would you be permitted to attack and libel the Government as you have done in your paper? Do you think this would be possible in Germany, Italy or Japan? And if it altogether unreasonable that those who have preserved you from the rule of such countries, allowing you very considerable liberty (even when people like yourself misuse it) should demand something of you in return? Is it unreasonable that the French, who have built up their empire in the free liberal tradition, should ask you to take part in defending that empire against Facist aggression? Yet if the French in "Rhodesia" notes that he evidently resents this perfectly fair demand.

I do not suppose you will dare to publish this letter, but if you do, it possibly it may help to modify the views which you put before your readers.

I am, sir, yours,  
H. JEREMY CURTIS.

If you are interested in the Negro Question  
write to the  
International African Service Bureau  
12a Westbourne Grove, London, W.2

## GREETINGS TO INDIAN CONGRESS LEADER

THE INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN SERVICE BUREAU, speaking in the name of millions of black toilers in Africa, the West Indies, and other lands, extends heartiest fraternal greetings to Jawaharlal Nehru on his visit to London, and pledges its support to the Indian workers and peasants in their struggle for national freedom and social emancipation.

Africans and peoples of African descent will never forget the sympathy which the Indian people showed Abyssinia in her hour of crisis.

The Negro workers who form the vanguard of the toiling masses of the African peoples are at present struggling against capitalist exploitation in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana, side by side with their Indian brothers. Unity between the two races is being forged in the course of their common struggle.

The African peoples welcome the declaration of the Indian National Congress that "India can be no party to imperialist war and will not permit her man-power and resources to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism," and that India shall not "join any war without the express consent of her people." They also endorse the view expressed by the President of the Indian Congress Socialist Party that "every war in which the British Government is involved must be by the very nature of the case be an imperialist war."

We feel confident that if we loyally adhere to these principles our two movements will not only continue to march side by side, but that we shall achieve that final and irrevocable victory over Imperialism.

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BUREAU

Figure 1. Inside snapshot of the second edition of *International African Opinion*, Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (IISG), IISG ZDK 73.

of radicals with the occasional column in the *New Leader* (a socialist paper and the official organ of the ILP), they came to be seen as a cohesive and self-sufficient movement. From a historiographical perspective these journals are well suited to a book-historical analysis. As the materials themselves were produced not just for their content but as projects themselves, such an approach highlights these intentions and draws out the wider importance of this medium. Such a reassessment recasts the history of the Pan-African movement and reveals how these activists 'did' their politics.

*International African Opinion* was in many ways the first impactful journal of the British-based grouping of the Pan-African movement, that is to say an established organ that cemented the IASB's position as 'the' voice of Pan-African activism in Britain. This was part of a longer history, with roots going back to the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia, which as Neelam Srivastava has observed, had galvanised anti-colonialists across Europe.<sup>28</sup> The Second Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935 was an attempt by Italy to avenge its humiliating defeat at the Battle of Adwa (1896) and assert colonial control over Ethiopia. The 1896 war was the first instance of an African nation defeating a European power, a landmark moment for later Pan-African activists. Italy's 1935 invasion therefore outraged not just Pan-Africanists but the entire international anti-colonial community. The invasion thus galvanised Pan-African organisation, from the initial conflict in 1935 to the subsequent withdrawal of Italian troops and with it the establishment of a settler colony in 1937.<sup>29</sup> In Britain it spurred Pan-Africanists to set up new institutional structures, beginning with the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA).<sup>30</sup> Founded by C. L. R. James and Amy Ashwood Garvey, the IAFA became a formal association for anti-colonial Pan-African activism, created in direct response to the Ethiopian invasion. Makonnen swiftly became involved with this group; purportedly, he stumbled upon an IAFA soap-box speech in Hyde Park, while passing through London on his way to Denmark.<sup>31</sup> The IAFA, under James, Ashwood Garvey, Padmore, and others, broadened its focus away from Ethiopia and became the International African Service Bureau (IASB). It was in this new institutional structure that Pan-Africanism in Britain took root, with print playing a key part.

Makonnen's role in the publication in 1938 of *International African Opinion* has been mostly lost from view. When his role is acknowledged, it is principally that of a financial backer.<sup>32</sup> In reality, Makonnen played a crucial part in organising the IASB. He was not only heavily involved in its flagship journal but also in the planning of the monumental Manchester Congress of 1945, building a community of Pan-Africanism in Manchester, and uniting the various political factions within the movement.<sup>33</sup> His collaborator,

<sup>28</sup>Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism*, 9.

<sup>29</sup>Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 76, 107; Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 113–18.

<sup>30</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 112; Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*, 89–90.

<sup>31</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 113–14.

<sup>32</sup>To date the most nuanced history of Makonnen, aside from his own autobiography, is the entry in Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood's *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (2003), 117–23. In their introduction they note that Makonnen fits into their category of 'neglected figures who either are not as well known as perhaps they should be'.

<sup>33</sup>The Manchester Congress is perhaps the most written-about Pan-African event. Recent works on the historical geography of these events is shedding new light on the surrounding factors, such as location, delegates, and even the food and drink (something Makonnen led on for Manchester) – what Stephen Legg et al. refer to as a move from viewing Conferences from 'spaces to places'. For more on this see Stephen



George Padmore, remarked that 'it was largely through his [Makonnen's] exertions that the IASB and later the Pan-African Federation were able to establish themselves successfully and launch the *International African Opinion*'.<sup>34</sup> Makonnen's advocacy of complete Black self-sufficiency is reflected in his editorial work.<sup>35</sup> His business ventures proceeded along similar political lines and he used profits from Black-owned and run businesses to support Pan-African activism. Makonnen's entrepreneurship is evident from his growing business empire: from a single Manchester restaurant and nightclub, it gradually grew to encompass over ten eateries, clubs, a bookshop and a hotel.<sup>36</sup> He saw these business expansions as politically important too, particularly in the fact that he had based these ventures in Manchester, a historic hub of the British slave trade and cotton processing, but which had developed a strongly anti-slavery tradition. In this context, he likened himself and Padmore to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: 'I sometimes saw myself like Engels whose father had made a lot of money in Manchester and was able to support Marx in his great undertaking. I felt we were almost mimicking history.'<sup>37</sup>

For Makonnen, the medium of print was explicitly linked to notions of Black self-sufficiency. Makonnen saw the need for 'serious' Black writers whose publications would complement but also intellectually contrast with the other main vehicle for raising awareness of Black talent, entertainers.<sup>38</sup> He reflected that 'such few [Black] writers as there were had to enter a field that was predominantly white – white journals, white publishers, and nearly always white men writing about black'.<sup>39</sup> As we already saw at the beginning of this article, Makonnen possessed a healthy distrust of white supporters, and he also viewed the British Left as using figures such as Padmore and James. In many ways then, the political project of producing and publishing a journal was itself an expression of the politics Makonnen propagated, what he later called 'Pan-Africanism from Within'. It was perhaps no surprise that it was this fiery activist who found himself partly in charge of the Pan-African journals endorsed by heavyweights like Padmore, James, Jomo Kenyatta (future first president of Kenya) and later Kwame Nkrumah (future first president of Ghana), journals that were subsequently suffused with his own personal politics, contributing to guiding and dictating the official line of the movement.<sup>40</sup>

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Legg, Mike Heffernan, Jake Hodder, and Benjamin Thorpe (eds.), *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World* (London, 2022); Jake Hodder, 'The Elusive History of the Pan-African Congress, 1919–27', *History Workshop Journal*, 91 (2001), 113–31; Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle (eds.), *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational productions and practices, 1945–1970* (Manchester, 2016).

<sup>34</sup>George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London, 1956), 146.

<sup>35</sup>For more on Makonnen's political beliefs see Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 96–102, 116–17, 159, 179–80, 229–30, and 262–3.

<sup>36</sup>For more details on these enterprises see my online article for the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Education Trust, <https://www.racearchive.org.uk/mak-ras-t-makonnen-the-unrecognized-hero-of-the-pan-african-movement/> (accessed 25 Mar. 2025).

<sup>37</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 164.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 119–20.

**‘... we had begun the process of making ourselves independent ...’: printing and publishing *International African Opinion***

*International African Opinion* ran for just shy of a year, from July 1938 to June 1939, and seven issues were published, two of which were double issues. It built somewhat on the previous IASB bulletin-like journals *Africa and the World* (July to September 1937) and *African Sentinel* (October 1937 to April 1938). Also published before *International African Opinion* was the Bureau’s *Colonial Information Bulletin*, although this was less a journal and more a brief administrative monthly with none of the characteristics of a journal. *International African Opinion* proved to be more influential than either *Africa and the World* or the *African Sentinel*, both in terms of their reach externally and their greater importance internally.<sup>41</sup> Both predecessors were edited by Sierra-Leonean journalist I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, and largely reflected his own personal ideas and crusades.<sup>42</sup> While not dissimilar to Makonnen’s tenure in terms of having editorial authority, both of Wallace-Johnson’s journals were never seen as official IASB mouthpieces, nor were they situated within the wider Pan-African network as *International African Opinion* was under Makonnen. Rumours about Wallace-Johnson’s supposed lack of commitment were fuelled by his considerations of moving to America and were made worse by allegations that during a period of financial destitution he was sleeping at the Bureau’s offices and had taken Bureau funds to sustain himself.<sup>43</sup> Here the difference from the approach in editorship later adopted by Makonnen, who financially propped up the journal and worked with a web of collaborators to produce *International African Opinion*, is clear. Regardless of the truth of the rumours surrounding Wallace-Johnson’s use of funds, they demonstrate the importance and necessity of managing internal disagreement, largely by keeping it internal or working it out collaboratively within the pages of the journal. In April 1938 Wallace-Johnson left Britain for Sierra Leone, taking with him the final copies of the *African Sentinel* and leaving the space for a new IASB journal open.

*International African Opinion* can therefore be seen as the first ‘official’ journal of the IASB, and was established as a specific political project in and of itself, rather than the dry and administrative monthly bulletins of the Bureau’s *Colonial Information Bulletin*, and the slightly more structured *Africa and the World*. Like the *African Sentinel* it was to be produced to a higher standard, with images and several articles, although unlike the *African Sentinel* it was established to reflect the whole of the movement.<sup>44</sup> An editorial in the first edition laid out the journal’s approach: ‘International African Opinion will be, as far as in it lies, the mouthpiece of the black workers and peasants, and those intellectuals who see the necessity of making the cause of the masses their own.’<sup>45</sup> It promised that *International African Opinion* ‘will be no literary journal or giver of advice from the mountain-tops. It will be a journal of action.’<sup>46</sup> This was to be a project that sought to

<sup>41</sup>For more on these two preceding journals see Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*, 111–13.

<sup>42</sup>Hakim Adi, ‘I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson’, in *Pan-African History*, ed. Adi and Sherwood, 182.

<sup>43</sup>Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule*, 31–3.

<sup>44</sup>Polsgrove notes how Wallace-Johnson would write in *African Sentinel* as an anonymous author, ‘devoting considerable space to the story of Wallace-Johnson’s own troubles’ (*ibid.*, 32).

<sup>45</sup>C. L. R. James and George Padmore, ‘Editorial’, *International African Opinion*, 1 (1938), 2. For more on analysis of this editorial from a literary perspective see Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 300–1.

<sup>46</sup>James and Padmore, ‘Editorial’, 3.

raise Pan-African consciousness through more than coffee-table debates, apparently aware of past failings to engage with Black activists, anti-colonial thinkers and members of the diaspora. What actually constituted 'action' is vaguer. Action could range from town hall debates and public park speeches to helping organise and promote strikes across the African continent. For some, the emphasis was simply on expanding the journal's impact on the real world and daily lives. Whether or not these lofty aims were realised is questionable, but the clear aspirations are important in themselves.<sup>47</sup>

This editorial reads as strongly influenced by James and Padmore, and although the two partly co-edited the journal, Makonnen's role proved central.<sup>48</sup> As Christian Høgsbjerg has argued, the editing of the journal was as much of a collaborative IASB effort as its content was. James profited from his experience editing the Trotskyist *Fight*, and benefited from the support and contacts of Padmore and fellow-IASB member Chris Braithwaite (Braithwaite would write a regular column in *International African Opinion*).<sup>49</sup> This, combined with Makonnen's role, created as Høgsbjerg calls it a kind of 'editorial collective'.<sup>50</sup> While the first editorial appeared under James's name he was therefore not its sole author nor did he have editorial responsibility for what was written and published. This loose and shared editorial process speaks directly to the merging of ideas and activists under the umbrella of Pan-Africanism, and points to how this network was manifested in print. The editorial itself, however, does reflect more Padmore and James's politics, drawing from their commitment to Marxist, communist, and Trotskyist ideas. Padmore had recently been expelled from the Party and had returned from Russia still grappling with his own views. James was becoming a well-known figure within Trotskyist circles, as well as within the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Makonnen's politics, by contrast, eschewed broader ideological commitments and focused more on Black self-sufficiency.<sup>51</sup> His scepticism of white supporters would frequently prove to be well founded, most notoriously perhaps after Labour's post-war election win failed to deliver the promised changes in colonial policy and the hesitant decolonising initiatives on which the party had campaigned. Makonnen's position had been to question why white supporters or backers were needed at all: 'I don't know how this feeling of having to get a big white man to help you came about.'<sup>52</sup>

For *International African Opinion* Padmore and James were the eye-catching and better-known names upon the masthead, and indeed the only names to appear there, but in practice it was Makonnen who edited and ran the journal. Makonnen would receive letters from Padmore and James asking for suggested topics which they then set to develop under his direction.<sup>53</sup> The journal developed into a significant and important journal for the Pan-African movement with a strong focus on action that

<sup>47</sup>This was representative of the direction in which Padmore sought to take the movement: away from what Makonnen often referred to as W. E. B. Du Bois's (famed early Pan-Africanist and American intellectual and activist) ivory tower intellectualism, and towards a more widespread working-class movement.

<sup>48</sup>There are various claims as to who founded, ran and sustained the journal. See Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*, 120–1; Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 332, 354; Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 299.

<sup>49</sup>Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*, 120.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 97.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

centred African and diasporic voices and explicitly involved the working classes.<sup>54</sup> This can perhaps best be seen by the cover of each edition. It declared the journal to be 'neutral in nothing affecting the African people'. Equally direct was its motto 'educate – co-operate – emancipate'. The cover unmistakably signalled that this was a journal controlled by Pan-Africanists whose cause was solely Pan-African. This contrasts with other journals which sometimes featured Pan-African articles, almost 'part-time' activists hesitant to commit fully lest they damage their marketable impartiality.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, set against the backdrop of the rise of fascism in Europe, neutrality became increasingly seen as an untenable or toxic political choice. With the Second World War on the near horizon, the notion of apolitical neutrality was fast evaporating for all politicians and activists around the globe.

The motto's word order is important; its opening with education was no accident. The choice matched developments within Pan-African politics, which markedly moved away from the often heralded 'intellectualism' of Pan-African 'forefathers' W. E. B. Du Bois and Edward Blyden to the democratisation of education that Makonnen, Padmore and James propagated. Their firm belief that the education of, and pride in, a shared history was a crucial part of Pan-Africanism is clearly set out. The move towards creating a more legitimate-looking organisation is shown in the second word of the motto 'co-operate'. The IASB sought to engage with other Pan-African and left-wing groups as an organisation, building upon the tradition of Pan-African Congresses that had dwindled over the years. The final word is 'emancipate', perhaps the most highly charged word on the cover with strong connotations stemming back to slavery and the centuries of oppression that Black communities had endured. On the cover of the journal the word both builds upon this history but also suggests that colonialism was itself the latest and most dominant form of enslavement and bondage. This motto can thus be seen as the development of Pan-African politics towards a more working-class and widespread movement with a focus on education, but still in the same vein as historic struggles. It both harnessed and developed past Pan-African approaches and lay these out in black and white from the very beginning of *International African Opinion*.

Above this motto an illustration shows a slender Black woman holding a torch aloft set against a world map shaded to represent areas with largely Black populations (see Figure 2). As Polsgrove remarks, this was a sharp departure from the prevailing anti-colonial illustrations of the period.<sup>56</sup> The muscular Black male breaking chains with his bare hands was replaced by the IASB and Makonnen with a female figure. Previous imagery was built upon the notion of Black activists forcefully taking their liberation, an approach that Pan-Africanists felt antagonised observers and played up to the white man's view. The female figure suggested a softer approach in contrast to the muscular male, which with the torch expressed a different message.<sup>57</sup> The iconography

<sup>54</sup>For more on this see Høgsbjerg, *James in Imperial Britain*, 120–4; Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 329–46.

<sup>55</sup>Examples include editions of the *New Leader* and the *Manchester Guardian*, which featured occasional anti-colonial articles and writers but similarly gave space to opposite views.

<sup>56</sup>Polsgrove, *Ending British Rule*, 35.

<sup>57</sup>This image of the female slave had been used before, perhaps most notably by female abolitionists in similarly gendered discussions of race and emancipation. See for example Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, 1989); Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828–1860* (Knoxville, 1992).





Figure 2. Cover of the fourth edition of *International African Opinion*, IISG, IISG ZDK 73.

of the torch illuminating the globe links to the belief both in educating and in emancipating oppressed countries and peoples. The torch can be read as a Western symbol of knowledge and wisdom, in this case a literal enlightenment, utilised by a Pan-African figure. Similarly, her traditional dress and bare breast now played upon a sense of Pan-African pride rather than the previously ignorant view of 'backward' societies needing to be brought up to Western 'standards'. This image, then, operated on two levels – one for the white reader or otherwise sympathetic audience, and the other for Pan-Africanists across the globe and other Black activists. On the one hand, it was a move



towards a more measured and less 'frightening' view of colonised peoples, one that cast away the muscular liberator. It utilised Western tropes and images – with the torch invoking the Statue of Liberty for example – to make the concepts of Pan-Africanism more familiar, a strategy echoed in the motto. On the other hand, it also built upon the ideals of pride in a shared history and educating the masses as shown in the women's dress and proud stance; a literal manifestation of 'mother Africa'.

This combination of the motto and image that adorned the cover of each issue thus underlined the ultimate goal of the publication. Like the IASB itself *International African Opinion* was to be a go-between for Europeans and Africans, Black and the anti-colonial white, and intellectuals and workers. The front cover of each edition was crafted to be read as such, the dark swathes of the map behind the torch-bearing woman were to be illuminated not by breaking chains with brute force but by the light of a shared international African opinion. This similarly reflected the ideological move of Pan-Africanism away from being a semi-elite institution to one led by workers' movements. This change, although infused by the ideas of Padmore, freshly expelled from the Communists, and James notorious as a Trotskyite, were also driven by Makonnen's own anti-dogmatic scepticism. As the movement styled itself as both intellectual and working class so *International African Opinion* sought to engage with both groups. Makonnen himself had long propagated a similar approach, such as during his time in the USA working for the Beaumont YMCA.<sup>58</sup> While at one time interested in obtaining a university degree, he was also aware of not climbing the ivory tower as he argued figures such as Du Bois had. For Makonnen, learning was more about acquiring the tools needed to make an impact rather than education for education's sake.<sup>59</sup>

The articles within the journal were commissioned to support this approach and often had a global focus. For example, the first issue contained articles focusing on activities from Kenya to Jamaica, Scotland to America. The journal not only encompassed the colonies therefore but also the imperial homeland. The inclusion of Scotland demonstrated a working-class solidarity and also reflected imperial realities, linking struggles not just of metropole to periphery but also periphery to periphery and metropole to metropole. The articles stretched across the shaded map on the front cover, commenting on existing debates as well as current affairs. Aside from regular articles and contributions from James, Padmore, Braithwaite and Makonnen, *International African Opinion* also featured a range of other writers. The work of Jamaican poet and author Claude McKay, a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, was represented by the inclusion of his 1919 poem 'If We Must Die'.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps McKay's best-known work, the poem was originally published in Max Eastman's *The Liberator*,

<sup>58</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 47–50.

<sup>59</sup>Makonnen details how he and childhood friend and cousin David Talbot, himself a later Pan-African figure in Ethiopia from 1940 until his death, discussed education in America and Europe as a gateway to other forms of activism and ultimately a way 'back to' Africa. They later worked together in Harlem, protesting against rent increases and taking part in the rent strikes. See Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 8, 16, 92–3.

<sup>60</sup>It is unclear whether McKay directly contributed his work or whether it was clipped and reprinted by Makonnen. The latter is most likely as I was unable to find any correspondence from McKay detailing his intention that it be reprinted.

a future organ of the Communist Party of America, and was written by McKay in the wake of the America's 'Red Summer'. Originally a response to the white supremacist violence and terrorism of autumn 1919, the poem continued to resonate decades later. Its message was universal and applied beyond the appalling attacks in 1919, growing into a firm statement and reflection upon wider white racist violence. McKay writes how if 'they' are to die it should be a sacrifice to the wider movement, so that 'even the monsters we defy, Shall be constrained to honor us though dead! O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!'<sup>61</sup> This reads as a strong Pan-African statement, a call to McKay's 'kinsmen' across the world to unite in a single cause that they may remembered.<sup>62</sup> The choice of a Shakespearean sonnet is striking. By claiming a genre associated with a lauded white poet as a Black activist, McKay is speaking of Black rights in white language.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, the poem also resonates with the wider project of *International African Opinion* and with Makonnen's mission to carve out space in predominantly white spheres such as journalism and media for Black rights and voices.

Fellow poet Langston Hughes was also featured by *International African Opinion*. Hughes, an even more central figure of the Harlem Renaissance and often regarded as its quasi-leader, first found acclaim writing for Du Bois's *The Crisis* magazine, and continued to compose non-fiction alongside his other work, maintaining a strong political focus.<sup>64</sup> His 'Poem on Scottsboro', as it is advertised on the cover of the August edition of *International African Opinion*, was a reprint of his original 'Scottsboro'.<sup>65</sup> Centring on the 'Scottsboro Boys', nine Black teenagers wrongly accused of raping two white girls in 1931, the Scottsboro trial held in Alabama became a landmark moment in American judicial history. It sparked debates over the right to a fair trial and in particular the blatantly racist nature of the US justice system. An all-white jury, a rushed trial, and a lynch mob outside the courthouse were all indicators of the failed system that had legitimated the Scottsboro trial. Hughes's poem was just one of many literary works that highlighted the case and helped spark the lengthy appeals process that consumed the lives of the nine teenagers for years. Padmore himself had played a role in the campaign for justice as well, making it an issue even closer to home for the movement.<sup>66</sup> The poem's inclusion in *International African Opinion*'s second issue brings with it not just Hughes's influential name and reputation, but also the literary slant that the journal wanted to emphasise. The American focus was also intentional: this was the context most firmly established and understood in Europe amongst not just Pan-Africanists but the white public as well, and thus a good starting point for *International African Opinion*'s career. Both McKay's and Hughes's poems speak to Makonnen's own aims to make *International African Opinion* a journal both for the ending of the class divide in anti-colonial activism and for the emphasis of the importance

<sup>61</sup> Claude McKay, 'If We Must Die', *International African Opinion*, 6 (1939), 16.

<sup>62</sup> McKay was an intriguing figure and one who juggled his literary career with a political focus that covered Pan-Africanism, communism and wider focus on the African diaspora. See Tatiana Tagirova-Daley, "'A Vagabond with a Purpose": Claude McKay and His International Aspirations', *Forum for Inter-American Research*, 7 (2014), 55–71.

<sup>63</sup> For more on McKay's works see Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 187–240.

<sup>64</sup> For more on Langston Hughes see W. Jason Miller, *Langston Hughes* (London, 2020).

<sup>65</sup> Langston Hughes, 'Poem on Scottsboro', *International African Opinion*, 2 (1938), 4.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the Scottsboro campaigns see Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, 2009).

of Black voices in the arts. Makonnen was a firm believer in Black activism coming directly from Black people and this extended to novels, music, plays and other media. Just as Makonnen's restaurants and clubs in Manchester would later showcase Black talent, he sought to infuse these deeply held political beliefs into *International African Opinion*.

As the opening editorial testified, *International African Opinion* was not to be solely a literary journal. To this end it also featured articles from a range of other activists. Richard B. Moore, a Barbados-born socialist and writer, featured in the seventh issue of *International African Opinion*.<sup>67</sup> Moore's article upon Toussaint L'Ouverture is a brief and personal overview, and reflects Moore's own internal struggle to reconcile his West-Indian heritage with the wider Black diaspora. Moore, like Hughes, was deeply concerned with the Scottsboro case and ultimately contributed to the appeals process, both financially and through political organising, as part of the American Communist Party's joint effort with the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP).<sup>68</sup> He was also one of the first activists to question and challenge the term 'negro'. His book *The Name Negro, Its Origin and Evil Use* (1960) collected these thoughts in a difficult move away from a term infused with past racism and contemporary usage, as well as one seen by some as a positive Black affirmation, such as in its usage in the title of C. L. R. James's *A History of Negro Revolt*.<sup>69</sup> Makonnen's inclusive editorial approach is also evident in the other authors he featured and the wide geographical scope of the articles they wrote, ranging from Leila Seleau's on French colonial subjects, to J. Silva Herzog's focus upon Mexican oil and E. Maresse Donovan's upon Grenada.<sup>70</sup> While there were benefits from headline authors such as McKay and Hughes, Makonnen clearly felt the importance of profiling lesser-known writers.

*International African Opinion* also contained articles by other members of the IASB, often written in some part to promote the organisation's other journals or publications. For example, Kenyatta's 'Confiscation of Wakamba Land and Cattle' was both a current affairs argument and an outlet for his wider ideas as expressed in his seminal *Facing Mount Kenya*.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Dorothy Pizer's article 'How Blacks Fought for Freedom' argued for the importance of James's recent text to understand ongoing debates surrounding the legacies of slavery.<sup>72</sup> Pizer, who had been Padmore's long-time collaborator as well as romantic partner, had edited the manuscript for James's *The Black Jacobins* and her article in *International African Opinion* was heavily influenced by James's writings.<sup>73</sup> This is one of the very few projects Pizer put her name to, the

<sup>67</sup>Richard B. Moore, 'Toussaint - The Black Liberator', *International African Opinion*, 7 (1939), 4-5.

<sup>68</sup>For more on Moore see Linden Lewis, 'Richard B. Moore: The Making of a Caribbean Organic Intellectual', *Journal of Black Studies*, 25 (1995), 589-609.

<sup>69</sup>Richard B. Moore, *The Name Negro, Its Origin and Evil Use* (New York, 1960); C. L. R. James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (London, 1938).

<sup>70</sup>Leila Seleau, 'The French Colonies under the Popular Front', *International African Opinion*, 1 (1938), 5; Dr J. Silva Herzog, 'Oil Controversy in Mexico', *International African Opinion*, 6 (1939), 4-7; E. Maresse Donovan, 'Crown Colony Government in Grenada', *International African Opinion*, 4 (1938), 4.

<sup>71</sup>Jomo Kenyatta, 'Confiscation of Wakamba Land and Cattle', *International African Opinion*, 5 (1938), 6-8; Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London, 1938).

<sup>72</sup>Dorothy M. Pizer, 'How Blacks Fought for Freedom', *International African Opinion*, 4 (1938), 11-12.

<sup>73</sup>C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London, 1938).

most significant other one being *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire*, which she co-authored with Padmore.<sup>74</sup> The article itself reads almost as an extended advert for James's text as Pizer breaks down the main arguments succinctly and skilfully. Her own personal communist sympathies show through in her review, complementing aspects of James's political approach in the book.<sup>75</sup> Beneath the article is a quarter-page advert for James's most recent book, *A History of Negro Revolt*.

Indeed, *International African Opinion* also carried adverts for pamphlets published by the Bureau. The most common was entitled 'Hands off the Protectorates', which outlined German attempts to re-colonise Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (modern-day Lesotho, Botswana, and Eswatini), and was featured in numerous adverts in *International African Opinion*.<sup>76</sup> The bare and simple 'Buy "Hands off the Protectorates," 3d.' appeared at the bottom of many pages. Although this was a journal for fellow Pan-Africanists, it is clear that the intended readership went beyond those already well entrenched in the movement. The adverts and excerpts designed to push sales of other Pan-African materials point to the intended purpose of the journal, not just as a vehicle for opinion and debate but also in further spreading Pan-African ideals and materials. We must also not lose sight of the basic financial logic of advertising IASB materials as Makonnen sought to reclaim some of the cost of printing and publishing the journal.

Two further factors are essential for understanding the readership of *International African Opinion*: the methods of its distribution, and the ways in which it was perceived to have been distributed. *International African Opinion* itself painted a precise picture of its readership. The journal would often feature letters from across the globe, typically including Africa.<sup>77</sup> These letters underlined that the journal was reaching its desired wider audience. The link to Africa also strengthened the legitimacy of the editors and writers as truly representing the cause; this was a paper not just about Africa and the African diaspora but also approved of by those in the ancestral home. However, these letters were often forged, composed by Makonnen or others from England or sometimes sent in by associates in Africa already closely aligned with the movement and the journal. Makonnen himself confessed in his autobiography that 'we would sometimes concoct letters purporting to come from the Congo and many other places' hinting at the broad geographical scope of the hoax correspondence.<sup>78</sup> These letters inflated

<sup>74</sup>George Padmore, *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire: A Challenge to the Imperialist Powers*, in *Collaboration with Dorothy Pizer* (London, 1946).

<sup>75</sup>This is perhaps not surprising as Pizer had come from a home which often supported far-left politics, particularly through her brother, who was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It is speculated that it was through him that Padmore and Pizer originally became acquainted.

<sup>76</sup>George Padmore, *Hands off the Protectorates: Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland* (London, 1938). This pamphlet was in fact a slightly tweaked version of Padmore's article 'Hands off the Colonies!', which he had written for the *New Leader*. See George Padmore, 'Hands off the Colonies!', *New Leader*, 25 Feb. 1938, 4.

<sup>77</sup>The 'Correspondence' section on the back cover of the journal often included one letter from an English reader, usually a response to a previous month's article, and two or three from further afield. These were less focused on past editions and more on spelling out how *International African Opinion* had found them in some nook across America, or a village within a lesser-known portion of Africa. This structure, almost formulaic, perhaps also speaks to the often-fraudulent nature of these letters.

<sup>78</sup>Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 120.

perceptions of *International African Opinion*'s reach and readership. With each new issue, readers could increasingly see themselves as part of a Pan-African community which the journal was calling into being.

It could be argued that these tactics were used to demonstrate the suggested success of the new wave of Pan-African politics. In constructing a literal 'imagined community', other Pan-African observers were forced to admit that Padmore and others were building a truly grassroots working-class movement that covered the globe.<sup>79</sup> It suggested that their new approach to politics, and the move away from the so-called elitism of previous Pan-African iterations, was bearing fruit, as evidenced by the growing number of readers. It also supported the IASB's argument, and Makonnen's particularly, of Black self-sufficiency. Here were a group of activists writing, editing and publishing a journal entirely without the support, financial or otherwise, of flip-flopping white supporters, and not just getting by but excelling as writers and editors. As Makonnen puts it 'nobody could suggest it [*International African Opinion*] had been produced with Moscow gold or other white funds'.<sup>80</sup> This intended approach of the IASB is notable in itself, with a focus not just on garnering new support but suggesting this support for Pan-Africanism was growing across the empire. This was about winning fresh hearts and minds as well as showing progress to existing followers. In this context, it is worth remembering that the IASB was a new organisation at this time, and one that had only recently developed from the IAFA. With the Abyssinian crisis no longer the sole focus, reflected also in the Bureau's new name, there also came the need for these activists to truly grasp the mantle of the 'official' Pan-African movement.<sup>81</sup> *International African Opinion* can be seen as a tool for this purpose: in a period of uncertainty surrounding the Pan-African movement this journal was released as the official voice for all Pan-African activists across the world. The aforementioned details of its cover, motto and articles all speak to this approach, and the proposed readership further reflects this approach and vision.

A similar strategy was employed for letters purportedly from Bureau members themselves. A prime example here are those authored by Nancy Cunard.<sup>82</sup> Cunard, an upper-class white woman, heir to the sizeable Cunard Line fortune, was perhaps one of the few exceptions in the Bureau's well-founded distrust of white supporters.<sup>83</sup> She was a vocal activist and well-known socialite connected to many high-profile thinkers and artists, with rumours of romantic affairs ranging from Aldous Huxley and Ezra Pound to Ernest Hemingway and even Indian Independence activist V. K. Krishna Menon. She would later co-write *The White Man's Duty* with Padmore and was a supporter of a range of anti-colonial movements.<sup>84</sup> According to Makonnen's later autobiography, 'Nancy Cunard would write in to show there was a branch of the

<sup>79</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>80</sup> Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 145.

<sup>81</sup> Although the Bureau 'rebranded' itself with a name that moved away from solely Abyssinia it is worth noting that the conflict still held a place in the headlines. Sylvia Pankhurst's influential *New Times and Ethiopia News* for example, carried on explicitly campaigning for Ethiopian justice for many years. For more on this see Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism*, 147–83.

<sup>82</sup> Cunard wrote in at least three times, although possibly more as she often would sign them anonymously or under the guise of a 'supporter in Africa'.

<sup>83</sup> For more on Cunard see Anne Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard* (New York, 1979).

<sup>84</sup> George Padmore and Nancy Cunard, *The White Man's Duty* (London, 1942).



Bureau here and there in Africa.<sup>85</sup> If not quite forged, these letters were certainly staged to demonstrate the breadth of alleged members reading the journal, arriving with postmarks from across the continent. They suggested not just that *International African Opinion* was well distributed and consumed, but that the IASB itself was a large organisation with roots across Africa. This again further legitimated the IASB and strengthened its members' claims that theirs was the official movement of Pan-Africanism. *International African Opinion* not only promoted IASB activists and their work but also helped to raise the profile of the organisation as a whole. In doing so, the journal concretely demonstrated the strength and usefulness of print as a viable political tool. This again speaks to the loose network within which the journal operated, and to which it contributed. Pan-Africanism within the pages of *International African Opinion* constructed and sustained an increasingly varied milieu of activists and politics.

While imagined readers were useful, the journal did also rely on real readers and, more importantly, real sales. Although not published for financial gain, for Makonnen was well on his way to building up his businesses and finances, the journal did offer the opportunity for free advertisement and small sums of money to aid with day-to-day activities of the movement.<sup>86</sup> However, unlike many anti-colonial journals of this period, and indeed other subsequent Pan-African journals, *International African Opinion* actually managed initially to turn a strong profit.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the distribution of the journal demonstrates not just the financial reach of *International African Opinion* but also continues to highlight its readership.

Aside from being posted out to a small number of subscribed readers, the journal was never allowed to be sold in bookshops or newsagents in the colonies and was scarcely stocked in radical and left-wing bookshops in Britain either.<sup>88</sup> Instead the journal was distributed in specific ways, almost always by Padmore and Makonnen. Firstly, *International African Opinion* was sold outside what Makonnen called 'leftist meetings or peace meetings'.<sup>89</sup> This often involved him and Padmore looking up halls where meetings would be taking place and then selling the journal illegally at the door when people left. Both made an effort to look well-dressed, often in fine suits and shoes polished to perfection. As Makonnen puts it, Padmore was 'spic and span like a senator, and his shoes shone so you could see your face in them; his trouser creases could shave you'.<sup>90</sup> While the journal was bought by some attending these meetings, there was also money to be made in simply being moved on. Makonnen states how 'many an old English lady would give me sh.10 just to get rid of me'.<sup>91</sup> The sale of the journal can also

<sup>85</sup> Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 120.

<sup>86</sup> For a brief overview of Makonnen's growing business enterprises in Manchester see Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 133–41.

<sup>87</sup> Makonnen notes that after paying for production of *International African Opinion* 'there would be still large savings, and I gradually built up capital ... a number of Europeans even sent in money unsolicited after reading the *Opinion*', see Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 119.

<sup>88</sup> No clear figures for circulation numbers are available but we can deduce they were limited. The fact they are not recorded is perhaps an interesting indicator of how the journal was seen less as a business venture or interested in profit but rather as a political project.

<sup>89</sup> Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 119.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.



**Figure 3.** 'Monolulu Holds Forth'. Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images, editorial number 8196276. An indication of Monolulu's sway, taken as he held court at the Epsom Derby in the late 1920s. He would command a similar presence in his Hyde Park performances.

be seen as rough networking in the sense that leftist activists were directly confronted with the Pan-African cause.

The more profitable distribution came from Hyde Park and its soap-box speakers. Makonnen would use a man named Monolulu, an entrancing and overbearing race-course tipster and self-styled African king, with 'a kind of Rasputin tone'.<sup>92</sup> After Monolulu had drawn a crowd and given a long-winded and comedic speech, Makonnen would take to the stage attempting to distance himself from this figure. As he writes, 'as soon as he was thorough and this huge crowd was around, I would dissociate myself from this "buffoon", and try to present a different type of Negro [sic]' (Figure 3).<sup>93</sup>

Makonnen's sales tactics not only drew on the Pan-African approach of creating a legitimate movement taken seriously by white outsiders, but also evinced the shift from previous means of advocating for Black rights, just as the cover image of *International African Opinion* had moved away from earlier iconography. After an impassioned hour-long speech, apparently more a forte of Makonnen rather than Padmore, they would sell the journal. Up to £20 could be made in a single day, which after paying printers would still amount to a large profit. This, combined with a very few unnamed Europeans who sent in money unsolicited, meant *International African Opinion* soon had built up money enough to warrant an IASB bank account.<sup>94</sup> Naturally it was the

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 119–20.

business-savvy Makonnen who set this up and funnelled the profits into the Bureau account ready to be reinvested in the movement. Whether these profits speak to Makonnen's economic skills in keeping costs down, the journal's unusual distribution network, or the journal's commercial success compared to other journals of the time, is unclear. However, what it did demonstrate was the viability of utilising print within the Pan-African movement. *International African Opinion* was a project that achieved key political aims for the movement but also even managed to make financial sense for a time.

As noted, this could partly be due to the physical costs of printing the journal itself. Unlike the previous journal that the IASB put out, the short-lived *African Sentinel* that ran from October 1937 to April 1938, *International African Opinion* was printed on the commonly employed wood-pulp paper. This differed from the *African Sentinel*, which was printed using a form of laid paper utilising a fine mesh – as opposed to previously 'chain' laid paper – but still an outdated method that had begun to decline rapidly by the start of the twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> Printing on wood pulp was much more cost effective. Although likely to degrade quicker over time due to its high acid content this hardly mattered for a monthly journal. *International African Opinion* also differed from the *African Sentinel* in that it was simply stapled together rather than held with loose thread binding. This again was a cheaper method better suited to the short lifespan of a monthly journal. The *African Sentinel* even featured photographs, an extremely costly feature that *International African Opinion* never replicated. All these factors indicate that Makonnen's business background and acumen directly shaped production and design decisions. The *African Sentinel* was put out as a secondary undertaking by I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, with the aim of collating monthly bulletins and in direct response to the banning of *Africa and the World*, the previous IASB journal. *International African Opinion* however, was a project in itself. As such, every detail of it was thought out including how it was printed, proving the viability of printing journals as a successful political Pan-African tool.

Every copy of *International African Opinion* was printed by the National Labour Press Ltd. (NLP), of 35 St. Bride Street, London. This appears to have been a separate print shop from the NLP's main office on 30 Blackfriars Street, still funded by the NLP in the heyday of their successes. The press was founded in 1909 as a vessel for the ILP to put out their publications. These famously would include many writings by Keir Hardie, serialised editions of the *New Leader* (or the *Labour Leader* as it began and ended its life), and various other odd jobs for left-wing authors and groups. It is not clear how *International African Opinion* came to be printed by the NLP but it is reasonable to assume it was mainly out of convenience. After large-scale crackdowns on left-wing presses throughout the 1920s, as well as similar censorship of anti-colonial literature, the NLP was probably one of only a few options available.<sup>96</sup> Padmore's own

<sup>95</sup>For an overview of paper production and printing advances see Daven Christopher Chamberlain, 'Paper', in *The Book: A Global History*, ed. Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford, 2013), 116–29; James Mosley, 'The Technologies of Print', in *The Book*, ed. Suarez and Woudhuysen, 130–53. For more on the print techniques in Britain during this time see Sarah Bromage and Helen Williams, 'Materials, Technologies and the Printing Industry', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, VII: *The Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. Andrew Nash, Claire Squires and I. R. Willison (Cambridge, 2019), 41–60.

<sup>96</sup>David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 'Publishing', in *History of the Book*, ed. Nash, Squires and Willison, 151–63.

link to the *New Leader* and some of its writers and editors likely also underscored the decision to have *International African Opinion* printed there. This was a successful period for the NLP, suggesting how they were able to print *International African Opinion* quickly and easily at minimal cost. In contrast to other presses that had printed anti-colonial materials the NLP was not in financial difficulties. Often anti-colonial presses in Britain struggled with censorship and as such had economic issues, driving up the price of printing.<sup>97</sup> The NLP's presses were kept busy, especially as the Press was about to sign an exclusive deal with Nestlé to print Nescafé labels, further boosting its capital albeit in a rather pragmatic and perhaps hypocritical bit of business.<sup>98</sup> The NLP also bestowed a certain amount of legitimacy on *International African Opinion*. Although it was wary of white supporters the fact that the Bureau's name featured alongside the NLP on the back cover of each *International African Opinion* was an important and strong statement which explicitly linked the journal with the ILP's publishing apparatus.

These factors – the paper, binding, and choice of press – combined with the fact that many articles were written by Bureau members or sympathisers, always for no payment, meant *International African Opinion* could be sold for only 3 pence. This, too, set it apart from past IASB journals as well as other contemporary anti-colonial monthlies, making it cheaper by around 5 pence, or in some cases by up to 20 pence, per issue.<sup>99</sup> Clearly, then, this was a journal intended for quick and cheap consumption. As editor, Makonnen designed *International African Opinion* to fit in with the Bureau's aims of creating a working-class and non-elitist movement. Whether this meaningfully increased the number of readers is questionable, but it is significant nonetheless. What Makonnen had undoubtedly crafted was a framework that championed his own politics of Black self-sufficiency, all the while operating under the official Pan-African line. The intention speaks to the opening editorial's proclamation of *International African Opinion* as a 'journal of action'.<sup>100</sup>

The journal's evident commercial success raises the question why it ceased publishing after seven issues. A mix of factors is likely to blame, not least due to the time commitments and shifting focus of key IASB members like James (who departed for America at the end of 1938) and Padmore (who began writing and organising even more fervently across a wider variety of projects). Makonnen's expanding business ventures also played a role as these pulled him more frequently to Manchester, where he was building his empire. Despite its relatively short lifespan, *International African Opinion* would become a blueprint for Makonnen and the Pan-African movement for

<sup>97</sup>I can only draw on my own research here, for example while writing about Krishna Menon's publishing ventures in Britain in the 1930s it became clear that anti-colonial presses were sharply declining. Menon himself often used his white contacts and supporters, most of whom were part of the ILP too, printing odd-jobs here and there rather than being able to consistently use one press. See Jack Bowman, 'The Early Political Thought and Publishing Career of V. K. Krishna Menon, 1928–1938', *The Historical Journal*, 66 (2023), 641–65.

<sup>98</sup>It is said that this contract was secured after a serendipitous meeting between director W. M. Stafford and a member of the Nestlé family during a mountaineering vacation.

<sup>99</sup>In comparison to *International African Opinion*'s 3 pence price the IASB's previous journal *African Sentinel* was sold for 6 pence, whilst the short-lived *Colonial Parliamentary Bulletin* had a subscription rate of 11sh./6d. for six copies, rough 2sh. (or 24 pence) each.

<sup>100</sup>James and Padmore, 'Editorial', 2.

future publications such as *Pan-Africa*, which Makonnen would release in 1947, buoyed by the momentum from the Manchester Congress.

While it provided a template for the future, *International African Opinion* was also a project in and of itself, as an articulation of Pan-African political beliefs. *International African Opinion* thus also proved to be a strong political tool for the movement, publishing important articles, promoting Bureau publications, while most of the time managing to turn a profit. The journal demonstrated the viability of print as a political project and developed the existing foundations for the movement's continued growth over the following years. It created and sustained a loose group of Pan-African activists with varying politics, tying their words and actions together in both institutional and less explicit ways. Furthermore, it began to fulfil Makonnen's own yearnings for Black-run publications that he had highlighted before the inception of *International African Opinion*. No longer did Pan-African writings, as Makonnen put it, 'have to be read by a white man to see if it had any merit'; *International African Opinion* had begun the process of moving away from a reliance solely on white supporters, and showed that publications of merit could be produced by Black activists alone.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

While Pan-African activists shared broadly similar aims in terms of Black emancipation, the creation and development of Black political thought, and a desire to unite the African diaspora under one banner, the real glue that held the movement together was its network of activists. The connections Makonnen built in Manchester helped sustain a growth in Pan-African print and strengthen influence in the north of England. Padmore's personal friendship with James was built as much on their past as any shared political views. These interactions are what underlined the longevity and growth of Pan-Africanism, longevity that extends beyond a short-lived print-run of a journal but is reflected in the ideas behind its inception, production, and release. The utilisation of print both consolidated its position within anti-colonial debates and exchanges and drove further development of the movement. The emerging network of Pan-Africanists was literally holding the pages of each publication together. Journals can therefore be seen as one example of this printed approach, and the one spearheaded primarily by Makonnen and his drive for the politics of Black self-sufficiency. This article has assessed *International African Opinion* but the conclusions drawn cover more than this single journal. This article has shown how Makonnen's specific political and social relationships fuelled and drove the use of journals within the movement. The printed materials themselves thus became spaces for Pan-African thought, establishing in themselves a band of activists and thinkers.

The overlapping politics of Makonnen, Padmore, James, and others, were not only in constant dialogue within the pages of *International African Opinion*, they also led to the printing of these pages themselves. This means that although the format of this and other, later journals was specifically Makonnen's domain, the same inclusive approach also operated congenially within Pan-Africanism more widely. How, we might ask,

<sup>101</sup> Makonnen, *Pan-Africanism*, 144–5.



could the expression of diverse viewpoints appear so harmoniously? Crucially it was reliant upon the broad and ever-changing category of print. Print as an anti-colonial tool underwent significant changes in this period, reflecting growing needs and adapting to the wealth of different scenarios in which it was employed. Once we see the British-based Pan-African movement of the 1930s and 1940s primarily as a network rather than a unified and coherent ideology, it becomes clear how internal political arguments could be ironed out in public, in a printed form, allowing for wider debate, raising awareness and the emergence of common ground.

Analysis of *International African Opinion*, therefore, is also an analysis of a movement undergoing unprecedented growth in a similarly rapidly evolving external climate. It highlights how this political project developed, fought with itself at some points, but ultimately sustained a community. Study of *International African Opinion*, then, reveals how these Pan-African activists and thinkers ‘did’ their politics. *International African Opinion* offers a window on what their ideas looked like in practice. It means paying attention not only to a rich variety of political ideas – from Marxism and Trotskyism to African nationalism – but also to the genres of texts included – moving away from long-form intellectual essays to punchy editorials and accessible prose – and to the ‘politics’ of publication and distribution, embedded in the material form of the journal itself. Pan-Africanism, then, should not be approached as a coherent ideology but as a constellation of ideas grounded in a shared African history and pride, and as a collaborative project aimed at uniting Africans and members of the African diaspora in common political and anti-colonial action. *International African Opinion* shows how effective and flexible this political vision could be, and how ideally suited print was as a vehicle for its realisation. Makonnen had started a crusade to create a specifically Black domain in print. Gradually, and partly driven by Makonnen’s journals, it was no longer just ‘white men writing about black’, but Black men writing about Black politics, culture and society.<sup>102</sup> In this Makonnen, and Pan-Africanists more broadly, had begun to reclaim some ground. Print, often seen as black and white, could be viewed as *Black* and white.

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<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

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