The year 1933 must have been an *annus horribilis* for the Comintern. The Nazi takeover in Germany marked the abrupt end of all communist networks and the activities of international communist front organizations that were monitored via headquarters in Berlin or Hamburg. Some of these organizations tried to relocate their headquarters to neighbouring states and resume their activities, but much of their former intensity was lost. This was especially the case for organizations with an African network, the League Against Imperialism (LAI) and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW). Although the LAI, apart from its South African contacts, never played any crucial role in the African context, at times there had been plans to re-activate its anti-colonial propaganda and its links with sub-Saharan Africa. However, as has already been noted in Part 1, these plans were never realized by the Berlin Headquarters of the LAI. Instead, the task of anti-imperialist agitation was transferred to the British Section of the LAI which, as will be discussed below, was to emerge as a key supporter for West African radicals during the 1930s.

The transfer of anti-imperialist agitation in West Africa to the British Section of the LAI was already proposed in 1931. As a result of discussions in Berlin, probably after the visit by the West African delegation to the RILU Congress in Moscow, it was decided by the International Secretariat of the LAI that the British Section should be developed into a platform of the LAI for its propaganda against British firms, such as the United Africa Company, and their attempt to monopolize the cocoa market. Support was to be given to the cocoa hold-up in the Gold Coast and the West African ‘peasant movement’. Further, consumer boycotts were to be organized in Britain as they were regarded to be

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1 As late as June 1933, plans were made for the International Secretariat to once again focus on Africa. See RGASPI 542/1/60, fol 40-47, Material concerning the liquidation of the LAI secretariat in Berlin and its reorganization in Paris (June 1933).
an effective tool which the lesson of the agitation in Britain in support of the 1929 strike in the Gambia strike had demonstrated. Last, but not least, the struggle was to be a global one:

The British Anti-Imperialist League shall send an open letters [sic], protesting the activities of the United Africa Company, pledging full support to the struggle, at the same time bringing forward the revolutionary aims of the League, to all contacts, native press, national, peasant, and cooperative organizations in the four colonies.  

Reginald Bridgeman, the Secretary of the British Section of the LAI, emerged as the key contact for West Africa. In fact, not only did his network include key West African political activists at the time, such as E.F. Small from the Gambia and Kobina Sekyi from the Gold Coast (see further Part 2), but also African and other activists in England, such as Lapido Solanke and the West African Students’ Union (WASU) and Arnold Ward and the Negro Welfare Association (NWA). However, despite the grandiose plans in Berlin, actual work in the British Section had been much more modest and not much had been achieved, mainly because of lack of funding and personnel, as Bridgeman lamented in a letter to the International Secretariat:

[---] You seem to overlook the fact that we have no staff and very little money […]. We will do all we can, but as I have already said we have not got any staff or any resources, and can only therefore do one thing at a time[…]  

The Nazi crackdown on the LAI and other communist organizations in early 1933 led to the escape of Münzenberg, the chief architect of the LAI, and relocation of the International Secretariat of the LAI, first to Paris and in late autumn 1933 to London. Münzenberg further transferred all powers to Bridgeman, which was backed by the

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2 RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 79-80, Proposals Relative to Activities of Anti-Imperialist League in West Africa (1706/10. AS EP. Dic. 15.2.31) [copy with corrections, typewritten, no author, no date].
3 Hakim Adi, West Africans in Britain 1900-1960. Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism, London: Lawrence & Wishart 1998, 44, 62. The WASU had been founded in London in 1925, the NWA in 1931. Bridgeman was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the NWA.
Bridgeman, however, noted in his communication with Moscow that correspondence with the colonies had become extremely difficult as the League had been declared illegal by the authorities in many British colonies:

It has been noticeable that since the establishment of the International Secretariat of the League in London the censorship everywhere has been considerably strengthened. In many colonial countries the League itself has been declared illegal or unlawful, so that all its publications are liable to confiscation, and it must be plainly stated that the possibility of open correspondence and propaganda in reference to the anti-imperialist movement conducted through the postal channel is now out of the question. Methods employed for carrying on an anti-imperialist campaign have therefore to be different from what they were in the early days of the League.

On the other hand, the loyalty of Bridgeman and the ‘reorganized’ LAI was dubious from Moscow’s point of view. Bridgeman was not a member of the CPGB and neither had the party control over the British Section of the LAI. Bridgeman himself tried to present the British Section, if not the LAI itself, as a non-communist organization to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs Sir John Gilmour in May 1934. Interestingly, a copy of the letter was also sent to Moscow, perhaps indicating that Bridgeman tried to double-play?

On the other hand, at least in 1934 he still tried to upkeep the connections with Moscow. In a letter to the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern, he invited Moscow to send a written presentation on the topic of national liberation from “czarist imperialism” through the Bolshevik revolution which was to be read at the Annual Conference of the British Section of the LAI.

However, whereas Bridgeman and the LAI were drifting away from the orbit of the Comintern, the links between London and the West African activist were intensified. As Bridgeman or the LAI were not anymore directly connected to the Comintern, the

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5 RGASPI 542/1/61, fol 1-2, Report of the International Secretariat of the LAI for 1934, no date or author (presumably Bridgeman), Moscow received the report on 10.3.1935.
6 RGASPI 542/1/61, Report of the International Secretariat of the LAI for 1934, fol 1.(Underline in original text.)
7 RGASPI 543/1/61, fol. 3-4, letter from Bridgeman to Sir John Gilmour, Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 29.5.1934 (copy). The main issue of the letter was a complaint about the General Post Office inspecting the correspondence of the LAI.
8 RGASPI 543/1/61, fol. 48, letter from Bridgeman to the Eastern Secretariat, 12.10.1934 (original).
direct communist links more or less dissolved and the LAI was not anymore a communist front organization.

The effects of the Nazi takeover in 1933 had a much more negative effect on the ITUCNW and its network. For the next two years, the organization worked underground, first in Copenhagen and Brussels, then in Paris. Despite these constraints, the Committee was able to continue to publish *The Negro Worker*, albeit on an irregular basis. Padmore remained as editor-in-chief of the journal until August 1933, when he declared that the journal was bankrupt, blaming the Comintern for lack of support. Padmore’s resignation from all of his posts was in protest to the decision of the Comintern to suspend the journal and what was left of the ITUCNW in August 1933. Despite Padmore’s exit, the journal was revived by the Comintern and reappeared under different management in May 1934 and continued publication until October 1937. The underground nature of the journal was reflected by the continuous move of offices: from Copenhagen to Brussels, for a short time to Harlem and finally to Paris.\(^9\)

Although the exclusion of George Padmore from the ITUCNW and the CPUSA in 1934 meant that the organization lost its main link to West Africa, it was still able to hold on a crucial West African member: I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, alias Walter Daniels. However, the crux of the matter was that Wallace-Johnson established a network of his own, linking up with old ‘fellow travellers’ and ‘comrades’ such as Bankole Awoonor Renner in the Gold Coast, Reginald Bridgeman in London and George Padmore. Was Daniels/Wallace-Johnson also a double-player?

The biggest problem from Moscow’s point of view was that the former links of the Comintern and the RILU via the various front organizations had become extremely weak and distant by 1934. As long as Padmore was located in Hamburg, he was able to control a global net comprising the Americas, the West Indies, Africa and Europe. Since 1933 the only link to Africa was an indirect one through *The Negro Worker*. However, as will be indicated below, some direct connections seemed to have existed after that point.

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\(^9\) Otto Huiswood took over as editor-in-chief of *The Negro Worker* in 1934.

Sometimes in 1934 an attempt was made to revitalize the ITUCNW. At this stage, a confidential report declared, the organization comprised only of its executive head – Otto Huiswood – and an assistant, who had maintained an underground and semi-legal existence, at first in Belgium and, after its deportation, in Holland. The executive committee was non-functioning and activities had come to a standstill: it listed no affiliated organizations, groups or individuals. Ties with the political organs of the Comintern and the RILU were “seriously limited” and had restricted its activities. Relations between the colonies and the metropolitan countries were extremely loose and was mainly carried through irregular correspondence and through *The Negro Worker*. Still, the report claimed that there were contacts in several Africans colonies, including Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, the Gambia, Liberia, Kenya and South Africa. The impact of these connections was regarded to be a positive one:

The Committee has already a definite influence among its contacts and the Negro press of the colonies, for instance, the Gold Coast Spectator, the Provincial Pioneer, the British Guiana Tribune etc.

Despite the crisis of 1933, Huiswood had been able to re-establish some of the former links of the ITUCNW by early 1935. This is also evident from correspondence between him and A.Z. Zusmanovich [Zusmanowitch], who was at that time working as a leading functionary at the KUTV in Moscow. So far, four letters of their correspondence have

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11 Hooker (1967, 32-33) and Wilson (1974, 260) claim Charles Woodson was the first secretary of the revitalized ITUCNW, followed by Otto Huiswood. However, as Solomon notes, Charles Woodson was the alias of Huiswood. See Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36*, Jackson MS: University Press of Mississippi 1998, 179.
12 Otto Huiswood was a Suriname-born member of the CPUSA. He had been among the first Black Americans who made the eastward journey: in 1922 he was a delegate at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern.
13 RGASPI 495/155/101, fol 29-31, Confidential. Proposals on the Work of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (typewritten, no author, no date; marked: 10396/5/BT/29/10/35)
15 Alexander Z. Zusmanovich (1902-1965) was one of the leading Comintern specialists on Africa. Together with A.T. Nzula and I.I. Potekhin, he had published in 1933 a Marxist analysis of the effects on colonialism in Africa, *The Working Class Movement and Forced Labour in Negro Africa* (Moscow 1933). He was a member of the RILU Negro Bureau and, until 1935, also the head of the Special Sector (Sector ‘A’ or Sector 9) for African and African American students at the KUTV. During the early 1930s he had worked together with Padmore in the Hamburg office of the ITUCNW. It is likely that he was Padmore’s link to the RILU during this period (Italiaander 1962, 55, 61). See further by I. Filatova, “Indoctrination or
been located in Moscow, the first one being a letter sent to a certain Otto, the three others by one called Edward. The identity of Otto and Edward is of key importance: were they two different persons? As important is the question of the unknown sender of the first letter as well as the recipient of the two other letters. The identity of the persons is crucial as the content of these letters reveal much information both about the working conditions of the underground ITUCNW, the plans for the Negro Worker and, most importantly, the links to several West African activists.

At a first glance, the identity of the senders and recipients is puzzling: taken individually, there are few clues about who was involved. The content of the first letter, dated 21 February 1935, refers to certain contacts in West Africa: Robert, Daniels, Nelson. (The identity of the three agents will be discussed below.) The author of the letter seems to know them well or at least to have been in contact with them at some stage. Much space is devoted to the Negro Worker. Forthcoming issues are outlined (March: trade union movements in various colonies; April: West Africa; May: East Africa) as if the author was part of the editorial committee of the journal. However, this was not the case as is revealed in the following section:

[---] We await the South African issue with impatience. In the future will you please send us a larger number of copies of the magazine N.W. [Negro Worker, HW] because scores of Negro comrades come to us. [---]

Evidently, the author was someone part of the network but not actually engaged in the publication of the journal. Was it someone in the USA? Most probably not as the author ended the letter with a lengthy discussion about how to engage the British and French parties in enlisting students from African colonies. Although not stated, the only place where these students were to be sent to was Moscow. Thus, the sender was most probably someone in Moscow. But who? Further, who was Otto, the recipient of the letter?

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A clue to the identity of the two persons involved in the correspondence is given in the next letter, dated 11 April, 1935. Here the author, Edward, describes the difficulties in re-establishing the ITUCNW network:

Through a round-about-way, we have managed to communicate with some of our contacts in other parts and we are now awaiting replies to our letters. Through this same way, we have managed to send a few hundred copies of NW. to the places where it is prohibited. Thus we are gradually breaking down the barriers and extending the circulation of the journal.\(^\text{18}\)

Edward was definitively an alias – but whose? He definitively was not writing from the USA, as he lamented about the difficulties in getting in touch with the American comrades:

At the same time our contacts with the USA is very bad [...] I hope that from your end some steps can be taken to ensure better cooperation from our American friends.\(^\text{19}\)

The content of the letter indicates that the author was the key person in the ITUCNW. He had links with both the West Africans (Nelson, Daniels) as well as British and French organizations. He must have been at one stage in France as he critically reported about the activities of the Ligue de Defense de la Race Negre and its journal:

Regarding the situation in France. It must be said that while the paper [presumably La Cri de Negré, HW] has undoubtedly improved and is coming out more regularly, there is nothing at all to speak of in so far as concrete organizational activities is concerned. There is no mass work at all being carried out, and the existing organization is composed of a handful of people who do nothing actually to build up a movement [seems to refer to the LRDN]. I have discussed there with our friends certain concrete measures to be taken to liquidate the bad situation which has been existing for a number of years.\(^\text{20}\)

Finally, a clue to the identity of the author is given at the end of the letter:

\(^{18}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol. 4.
\(^{19}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol. 4.
\(^{20}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol. 5.
We want to call it to the attention of Zus that his last letter, especially, was not written discreetly enough. In future, bear in mind not to mention names, places, etc. so openly, and we think it also inadvisable to write directly to Nelson or others.

Zus was nobody else than Zusmanovich. In fact, Edward had started his letter by making a reference to a previous letter of Zusmanovich: “In response to letter from Zusmanovitch, January 22 […].” Was Zusmanowich the author of the first letter, although it was dated 22 February? In fact, Edward makes again reference in his next letter to Zusmanovich first letter, but this time he claimed that correspondence had started 22 February! Therefore, it is rather safe to argue that the author of the first letter was Alexander Zusmanovich.

But what about the identity of the person behind the two other names, Otto and Edward? Zusmanovich had addressed his letter to Otto, whereas Edward had sent two replies. Could it be possible that Otto and Edward were one and the same person? Edward had reminded Moscow that Zus[manovich] should not mention names and places in his correspondence, which was the case in Zusmanovich letter to Otto. First, Zusmanovich had indicated that Robert and Daniels were active in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Nelson had links to the Firestone plantation (in Liberia) and Otto was urged to contact Ward and Bridgeman. The critique by Edward was evident: any colonial intelligence service would soon have realized that the letter was dealing with highly important issues, especially as there was only one ‘Otto’ around in Europe with very suspicious links: Otto Huiswood. Thus, the conclusion follows that Edward was sending a critical reminder to Moscow that Zusmanowich was about to reveal his identity and network for an outsider. Instead, future correspondence from Moscow should be addressed to Edward, i.e., his alias!

Whereas Edward alias Otto Huiswood’s West African connections will be discussed further below, the next section will concentrate on problems dealing with the publication and dissemination of the Negro Worker. Although the journal had resumed

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21 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol. 5.
publication in 1934, with Huiswood as editor-in-chief, the content of it and its dissemination to Africa was to be a continuous problem for Huiswood. In a – so far – missing letter by Huiswood, he had criticized the articles in the journal for being too abstract and too long, and suggested to Zusmanovich that they were to be shorter and written in a simpler language. This was approved by Moscow. Another problem was the dissemination of *The Negro Worker* to Africa – by 1935 it had been banished by most of the British colonial authorities:

In so far as W.A. is concerned, sending by post, except to a few individuals is out of the question, because they are immediately confiscated. However, through another way, we are sending, regularly, every month, no less than 300. Undoubtedly this is a small number, but until we can develop further contacts with seamen which we are pursuing now, it is not possible to send much more.

The main weakness of the journal, however, was that only a few articles dealt with the actual conditions in Africa and that few articles were written by Africans:

We realize that one of the main weaknesses in the journal lies in the fact that most of the articles do not come direct from the spot and that we have not yet been able to build up real workers correspondence.

The lack of African involvement was, according to Huiswood, due to the state of affairs of the ITUCNW. Being forced to an underground existence, all links that did exist were indirect. The mailing address in the USA referred to on the cover of the journal was a bogus one:

And it is well to state just here that one of the greatest hindrances to this, and one of the major weaknesses in the work of the Committee itself, is the fact that up to now, we have been unable to establish an official address, despite all efforts to do so. This inability to work openly restricts the growth of the Committee and the journal to a considerable extent. This prevents direct contacts – practically all

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communication is being carried on indirectly. It is true that we have assumed an address in the US, but this is of no practical value. In this connection, we wish to state that we did not raise with you changing to P. [Paris] We only informed you that we had attempted to establish an open official address there.26

However, Huiswood continued by noting that his French contacts had advised him for not resettling to Paris at it was regarded impossible. Presumably it was feared that the French authorities would not give him or the ITUCNW any permission to establish themselves in Paris.

The other problem which Huiswood and Zusmanovich discussed about was the (old) plan to enlist African students. Moscow seems to have tried – in vain – to activate their British and French connections about the issue. As nothing had been forthcoming, Zusmanovich had ordered Huiswood to contact Arnold Ward and Regional Bridgeman concerning the plan:

From the Negro Welfare Associatrion we want to get five or six people from the African colonies. We also want to get from the French comrades five or six people from the French African colonies. From this point of view we are bombarding our friends all the time, but evidently without your interference nothing will come of it. By agreement with our chiefs, we have decided that you should go to Bridgeman and Ward, and select the necessary people on the spot. It is not absolutely essential that the latter be party members, but it is important for them to be anti-imperialist fighters and to have contacts with the colonies so that they can be sent back.27

Huiswood tried to persuade his British and French colleagues, but with little success. News from England was disappointing, as he had to admit:

But I have insisted that they go outside of London where there are greater possibilities to find the necessary people. I think it will be necessary to send a very strong message to HP [Harry Pollitt] about this matter otherwise nothing will be done.28

27 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN. to Otto, fol. 2-3.
28 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, fol. 4.
It turned out that the Negro Welfare Association, in Huiswood’s view, revealed almost complete lack of attention paid to colonial work on part of the highest circles. “Despite repeated efforts to aid in the form of concrete directives, the NWA merely flounders around,” Huiswood bitterly remarked in his June-letter.\textsuperscript{29} Interestingly, there exists one letter by Arnold Ward to an unidentified receiver (presumably Huiswood), dated 26 June 1935. Perhaps the letter was written as an ‘official’ explanation from Ward on why so little had been done. Conditions in England were problematic, Ward pointed out, and stated that he himself was not anymore certain about his position:

As I pointed out in my last letter to you that things here are very topsy for the moment. I personally don’t know where I stand, and I don’t think I can continue in the position I am in.\textsuperscript{30}

The problematic situation in Britain Ward referred to were most certainly the political activities in connection with the Italian aggression against Abyssinia and the various campaigns by the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist organizations. Ward put the main blame on the disinterest of the CPGB and the resumed activities of George Padmore:

\begin{quote}
G.P.’s [George Padmore’s] on Abyssinia in the Crisis is well read here among Negroes and you can well judge for yourself of has done us the N.W.A. a lot of harm. The inactivity of the A.W.M., the L.A.I. and the C.P. on the Abyssinian question brings G.P. and Marcus Garvey right in the limelight. Sak and I are bound to be pessimistic. At the last D.P. Congress a resolution on the Colonial question was brought forward at the last moment and was disposed of in two
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{29} RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, fol. 9.
\textsuperscript{30} RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 15, letter from W., dated 26/6/35. Based on internal evidence, it is almost certain that W. is the abbreviation for Arnold Ward. The content of the letter indicates that it was written in reply to someone who knew him well and with whom Ward earlier had been in correspondence, i.e., most probably Huiswood. In fact, Huiswood wrote in his July-letter that he had enclosed correspondence of Ward and Nelson:

The other letter, which is from Ward, is typical of those we get from Britain regarding the present situation there in the work. We have made repeated efforts to help in putting things on a concrete footing, but with very little results. The failure to accomplish anything up to now there is in our opinion due to a complete misconception of what to do and how to do it. The attached draft copy of the Aims and Objects of the NWA which they have just sent us shows quite clearly the confusion which exists. We propose to make corrections and suggestions regarding this document. (RGASPI 495/155/102, fol 12, letter of Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, 12.7.1935; the copy of the statutes of the NWA are files as fol. 14.)
minutes. The delegates walked out when it was discussed and came back and sung the International.\textsuperscript{31}

If little assistance was forthcoming from the NWA, not much more was to be expected by Bridgeman and the LAI. Huiswood noted that there had been a certain amount of cooperation between him and Bridgeman, but criticized the LAI for having a very passive approach to the ‘problems’ and had failed to develop any mass actions around burning issues:

Repeatedly, we have proposed certain definite action to them – the question of discrimination in England, the Protectorates, Abyssinia, the colonial seamen’s plight, etc., but they offer all sorts of reasons why mass action cannot be developed.\textsuperscript{32}

Last, but not least, regarding the question of sending Africans to Moscow Huiswood warned for randomly picking someone from the streets:

We might be clear on one point right now. We are not ready to pick up people from the streets and send. The tragic results of this method is still fresh in our memory.\textsuperscript{33}

Instead, as will be discussed in the next chapter, it was hoped that the African contacts – Nelson and Daniels – would fulfill their task and eventually send some handpicked Africans from the colonies. (As will be seen, this policy never realized either.)

Huiswood ended his June-letter by urging Moscow to take the Abyssinian-question into serious consideration. Further, Moscow was almost desperately asked to come forth with more concrete plans for how to organize future work:

We therefore raise the question AGAIN of being permitted to come to you. We have persistently raised this question for obvious reasons about the work, and secondly for an IMMEDIATE and IMPORTANT personal reason, which we have from time to time called to your attention. We hope this matter will be arranged immediately.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 15, letter from W., dated 26/6/35.
\textsuperscript{32} RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, fol. 9.
\textsuperscript{33} RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, fol. 9.
\textsuperscript{34} RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, fol. 9a.
It is likely that the “questions” Huiswood wanted to discuss with Moscow were the same as he had presented in his 1934-35 Report of Activity. As a solution to the pathetic conditions of the ITUCNW it was suggested that the Committee should be transferred to Paris. Here former activities were to be resumed, aiming at the affiliation of the various ‘Negro’ organizations with the ITUCNW listed in the report. Further, ties with the RILU were to be strengthened and, not surprisingly, “elements from the colonies” were to be secured as students to the schools in Moscow.\(^{35}\)

At first, the proposal was positively welcomed at the RILU headquarters in Moscow. In November 1935, the RILU had redrafted the ITUCNW proposal and outlined the new basis for affiliation:

a. active struggle for the defence of the independence of Abyssinia [this paragraph was crossed over, HW]
b. the struggle for full economic equality, equal rights and conditions on the job for the Negro toilers
c. the struggle against imperialist oppression.\(^{36}\)

Further, it was planned to invite delegates from the colonies, including South, West and East Africa, as well as Europe to attend a “General Conference” which was to be held in Paris. At the conference, the ITUNCW was to be reorganized and a new editor of *The Negro Worker* was to be elected.\(^{37}\)

However, Moscow’s plans were never materialized. Instead of revitalization, the liquidation of the ITUCNW was envisaged in another confidential report. A fresh start was proposed with a new organization, the International Negro Liberation Committee.\(^{38}\)

But this plan was neither put into action: at this point – in 1935-1936 – the RILU was

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37 RGASPI 495/155/101, fol 38-39, Proposal (handwritten add: Decision of the Sec of the R.I.L.U. re the future work of the N.C.), dated 10.11.1935. Interestingly, Huiswood’s proposal comes close to Garan Kouyaté’s and George Padmore’s proposal for a Congrès Mondial Nègre (Negro World Unity Congress) which they had outlined in 1933. According to their call, the congress was to be held in July 1935 in Paris, London, or Geneva. See further Edwards 2003, 276-281. Was Huiswood’s proposal an attempt to ‘plagiarize’ Kouyaté’s and Padmore’s attempt, or was it an attempt to organize a rival meeting?
38 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 24-32, Confidential report: The International Negro Liberation Committee.
itself more or less defunct and was dissolved in 1937.\(^{39}\) Erratic, as they seemed to have been, the Comintern and RILU officials in Moscow never really tried to launch a new approach towards sub-Saharan Black Africa. The lack of interest was perhaps mainly due to the internal developments in Moscow: it was the beginning of the Great Purges and the Russification of the Comintern apparatus.\(^{40}\)

II. A remaining ‘loyalist’?: Nelson in Liberia

Huiswood’s and Zusmanovich’s direct contacts in West Africa were limited to five persons, namely Nelson, Charlie, Smith, Robert and Daniels. The three first-mentioned were African contacts in Liberia, the two others were in the Gold Coast and will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Liberia had emerged as a key area of interest for the ITUCNW already during Padmore’s days. During the existence of the Hamburg secretariat, Padmore had established links with several Liberian journalists and had started to build up a rather extensive network.\(^{41}\) Padmore started to write articles about the conditions in Liberia in 1931, heavily criticising American imperialism in the country.\(^{42}\) In addition, he devoted an entire chapter in his pamphlet *The Lives and Struggles of the Negro Toiler* (1931) to the Liberian cause. After his expulsion, he criticized the Comintern and the CPUSA for not having done anything in connection with Liberia:

> Please tell us where and when the Communist International, in the fifteen years of its existence, has ever written one article on Liberia? As you [i.e., Earl Browder] know, Liberia is an economic colony of American imperialism, and as such it is the duty of American Communists to defend Liberia. Please tell us where and when you Party has ever organized a meeting or demonstration in defence of Liberia?\(^{43}\)

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\(^{39}\) On the liquidation of the RILU, see Tosstorf 2004.

\(^{40}\) On the turn of Soviet foreign policy during the 1930s and the disinterest of the Comintern in sub-Saharan Africa, see Wilson 1974.

\(^{41}\) RGASPI


\(^{43}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol 123-125, Open letter from George Padmore to Earl Browder (copy), this ref. to fol. 124.
Not only had Padmore written about the conditions in Liberia, he had also been able to establish small cells in the country. By 1932, however, political activities had become increasingly difficult in the country and Padmore had made an effort to get some of his local contacts out of the country. In September 1932, Padmore asked for assistance to get his contact to Moscow:

> The situation in the case of [Liberia] is very pressing as he has sent word that the authorities are trying to arrest him for his activities and especially for an article which he wrote and was printed in our journal ("Negro Worker"). I have communicated these facts to the LAI asking them to carry out the terms of the agreement and advance the fares for the comrades.\(^4\)

It is possible that the aforementioned Liberian contact was Holle Selle Tamba alias Nelson. Another Liberian comrade was Samuel Freeman alias Charles Lafayette or Charley. Both of them were to study in Moscow during 1932-1933, together with Nathan Varne Grey alias Smith;\(^5\) the three of them were sometimes in 1933 or 1934 sent back to Liberia.

Despite Padmore’s harsh critique of the lethargy of the Comintern with regards to Liberia, as presented in his ‘Open letter’ in 1935, Huiswood and Zusmanovich had in fact been able to re-establish contacts with the three Liberian comrades. The most important link was Nelson: he seems to have evolved as a kind of focal point in Liberia for Huiswood by 1935. This is at least a possible reading of Zusmanovich’ February 1935-letter to Huiswood:

> Send him greetings from the Russian comrades and tell him that they fully support him in his work. As for his report, we have translated it and in particular we are noting it in some publications, excepting the Negro Worker.\(^6\)

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\(^4\) RGASPI 542/1/54, Padmore to LAI Secretariat, Berlin 14.9.1932. Padmore asked for a meeting with ‘Magnus’ (unidentified WEB-contact) to discuss the matter and to cover the expenses of transport.

\(^5\) McClellan 1993, 380-381 fn 37; RGASPI 532/1/439, fol. 6, (Copy) List of students in group 9 section A (Negro section), 20.11.1932.

\(^6\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN to Otto, 21.2.1935, fol. 3. The ‘greetings from the Russian comrades’ to Nelson is not surprising: Nelson had during his sojourn in Moscow been active in the Negro Bureau of the RILU. Certainly in early 1933, perhaps even in late 1932, he together with Zusmanovich and other members of the Bureau were given the task to start preparations for a West African congress. However, these plans were never realized. See RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 181, Top Secret. Proposal for work in West Africa (no date).
It is not (yet) known when Charlie and Smith returned to Liberia. Nelson, at least, seemed to be based in Liberia from fall 1933 – he is listed to as one of the affiliated African editors of *The Negro Worker* in the August-September 1933 issue of the journal.\(^{47}\) Although the (existing) correspondence between the Liberians, Huiswood and Zusmanovich is patchy at best, some conclusions about activities and their eventual end can be drawn from it.

As suggested above, Nelson seems to have been nominated as a kind of leader of the ‘cell’ in Liberia. Zusmanovich had at this point grand ideas for the work in Liberia, not least in Nelson’s capability of securing prospective African students:

> He should send three or four people from his country to study. We should strike the iron while it is hot, but set him the condition that he must absolutely send industrial or agricultural workers from the Firestone plantations. It seems to me that there are possibilities there, so put pressure on and reply to this letter without fail.\(^{48}\)

Nelson’s central position in Liberia can also be detected from a letter from Smith:

> Just a few lines to inform you that upon my arrival here I made it my special duty to go up to the Rubber plantation here. After a four month stay up thee, I came down yesterday in order that I may submit Tamba [i.e., Nelson, HW] my report. I shall ask him to send you a copy.\(^{49}\)

Early in April 1935, Charlie had sent a letter to Zusmanovich, informing him about his local political engagement. It seems as if Charlie was planning to organize a kind of May Day demonstration or, as he called it, a “Grand World Proletarian Demonstration.” Calling on the moral support of Zusmanovich, he declared: “remember ‘Africa’ on the

\(^{47}\) Listed as M. Nelson (Liberia), although this reference also could be interpreted as Nelson ‘from Liberia’, not necessarily ‘in Liberia’.

\(^{48}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN to Otto, 21.2.1935, fol. 3.

\(^{49}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 20, (original) letter from Varney Gray Cullam (singed) [i.e., Smith], Monrovia, 8.1.1935. The recipient of the letter was either Huiswood or Zusmanovich.
Great May 1, when we together with you shall rejoice and continue to stretch forth our daring fists to decaying capitalism.\(^{50}\)

However, it is likely that there never was any demonstration. The news that Huiswood was to receive from Liberia was not promising at all with regards to the activity of the three comrades and the prospect for agitation in the plantations:

I have just received a communication from Nelson, who is apparently doing his best to gather up some forces to start some activities. While Charlie [Charlie Lafayette] is not cooperating in any way, Smith [Hilton Smith alias Nathan Varne Gray/Grey] on the other hand had been working for some time on the plantations and is now preparing, together with N. [Nelson] a report which I expect to receive very soon. Nelson reports that it is possible to get three persons – two of them from his home, and one from Sierra Leone. He is now working on this question and of course we have to make the necessary arrangements.\(^{51}\)

Whereas Huiswood tried to keep in touch with Nelson, contacts with the two others seemed to have been lost by 1935. Charlie’s disability to cooperate must not have come as a surprise to Moscow, his credentials had never been very high in the eyes of the KUTV. There exists a rather critical evaluation about his engagement during his stay at the Eastern University in his personal file:

Charley. A Negro from Liberia, born 1914. Came to Monrovia in 1929 where he went to school. Here he met Comrade Tamerin [unidentified or misspelled name?], who sent him to study in Moscow. Does not know anything about politics or the Soviet Union.\(^{52}\)

Instead of making any progress, Charlie was inclined to arrange “sabotage and scandals” in the dinging room. Depicted as an egoist and stubborn individual, devoting little interest in revolution, being interested in “phrases but contents”, and had been studying without any engagement. Consequently, the conclusion about him was a pessimistic one: “We should not expect from him much. Not sustainable. Will possible go away.” Interestingly, the assessment of the two other Liberians was not that positive either. The Liberians were

\(^{50}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 7, (copy) letter from 'Charlie' to COM-ZYC (Zusmanovitch), Monrovia, 20.4.1935.

\(^{51}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol. 5.

\(^{52}\) RGASPI 495/279/69, Charlie – personal file, fol 1.
criticized for disturbing education at the KUTV. A word of warning was issued: “Do not let the Liberians work together in the same country.” Especially Smith was claimed to be “unreliable.” Nelson, on the other hand, was the only promising student among them; it was hoped that he could do a lot of anti-imperialistic work provided that he was put under the surveillance of someone more experienced than him.

Despite the problems in Liberia, Huiswood still had hopes for Nelson’s success in his negotiations with the prospective students. However, in his June-letter to Moscow, Huiswood was already pessimistic about the Liberia-connection:

In so far as Liberia is concerned, we have not heard anything from our friend Nel., who used to write regularly, for the last 3 months. We nevertheless, sent another letter of inquiry. We fear that something amiss[?].

Finally, in July 1935 Huiswood received a new letter from Nelson. Much to Huiswood’s regret, Nelson had not been able to establish anything. Nelson told him that he had been six for some time and had experienced his second attack of malaria. He seemed to have mistrusted Charlie and told Huiswood that he had not wanted to engage the former in writing a letter to the latter “since I do not wish him to know the address for the reason I wrote you once.” The political situation had – once again – changed in Liberia. Nelson had backed the opposition in the presidential election, but they had lost:

Political campaign is now over with Barclay again in the mansion. I rendered assistance to the opposition particularly because I got them to put into their platform or “program” the repeal of the famous Sedition law. But due to actual force applied by the government, the opposition was defeated.

Interestingly, Nelson’s engagement in Liberian party politics could have been part of the assignment he had received in Moscow. Already in April 1933 he had outlined a letter to be sent to the National Party of Liberia, raising the call for mass agitation in Liberia

53 RGASPI 495/279/69, Charlie – personal file, fol. 4.
54 RGASPI 495/279/69, Charlie – personal file, fol. 5. The personal files of Nelson and Smith have not yet been located in the Comintern Archive.
55 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, fol. 9.
57 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 16, letter from Nelson to NN (Otto Huiswood), dated 10.6.1935.
against American imperialism and to work for the toilers in the country:

[---] The Party must be up and doing something for the cause of the subjected millions of the country. […] With the interest of the country at heart in relation to the freedom of the huge masses of aborigines, I have been thinking seriously as to how freedom can be secured. Consequently, I have discovered that if you the leaders of the toilers will abandon all superficial activity and exert yourself, the aborigined [sic] of Liberia will eventually conquer in their struggle for social-economic and political emancipation.59

This letter was drafted in Moscow. In fact, the letter gives a very interesting outline of Nelson’s political ambitions, bringing forward a political programme for the National Party in Liberia:

You should draw up a concrete program for the National Party of Liberia. In it the interest of the masses should be the central idea [Nelson’s underlining]. Declare in it the right of Liberia to unconditional self-determination, i.e. that Liberia ought to be an independent country, not only in theory but also in practice, without being a protectorate of any imperialistic state, e.g. as the United State.60

Not surprisingly, Nelson stressed the need to establish a link to the Comintern. Even more so, an affiliation with the Comintern and the Soviet Union would result in concrete political and economic backing:

Then I should emphatically suggest that the leaders of the Party despatch a memorandum to the Communist International […] expressing their desire to affiliate with it: Needless to say that this is a powerful institution with an international significance for all oppressed nationalities. […] If the aborigines would organise an anti-imperialist-national liberation [sic] movement with a view to liquidating the present exploiting system of government, and throwing off the present detestable yoke of American imperialism they may, if they so desire, find it possible to enter negotiations with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, with an eye single to obtaining material and moral support from the latter.61

60 RGASPI 534/6/23, letter to P.G. Wolo, 1.4.1933, fol. 83.
61 RGASPI 534/6/23, letter to P.G. Wolo, 1.4.1933, fol. 83.
In addition, the party should make preparations of sending young workers to get a free education in the Soviet Union, Nelson declared, “…for you will admit that it is quite impossible for you to send students to any American or British institution without paying heavy of money.” Cleverly, Nelson underlined that the party did not need to take a communist character for it to be affiliated with the Comintern: “This does not in any way presuppose that the movement must necessarily be of a communist character.”

However, it is not known whether or not the letter ever was sent to Liberia. Whatever the case, Nelson seemed to have tried to work for his goals in 1935, but had failed. In his June-letter to Huiswood, Nelson was rather pessimistic about future activities. Even worse, the situation of him and the other comrades was not a glorious one:

Smith is not here. He has gone to Sinoe, got a quasi job, and is being exploited, for there is no pay in it. At the present I am without job. My only salvation is the typewriter I brought. At times, I get typing jobs where whereby I earn few shillings to keep me from dying. Ch[arlie] is also unemployed, for there is no pay in it. If anything could be done for us, it would be appreciated. […] I am greatly in need of rain boots (rubber or water-proof leather boots); but there is as yet no way to get it; if you could assist in this direction I shall be very thankful.

Neither had there been any success in attracting African students. Due to his illness, he had not been able to give the two prospective students any further education in “T.U. work.” The biggest problem, however, was that he felt that he had little backing and no local support: “The lack of trained cadres is hindering execution of our plans; for as things are, I am practically ALONE.”

Thus ended the – so far – only letter by Nelson from Liberia that I have been able to locate in the Comintern Archives. However, both Huiswood and Suzmanovich made reference to several letters that they had received from Nelson in 1934 and 1935. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of their correspondence is – not yet – known. Neither is it

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62 RGASPI 534/6/23, letter to P.G. Wolo, 1.4.1933, fol. 84.
63 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 16, letter from Nelson to NN (Otto Huiswood), dated 10.6.1935.
64 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 16, letter from Nelson to NN (Otto Huiswood), dated 10.6.1935.
known if and when Huiswood and Nelson lost contact with each other: did it continue after June 1935?\(^{65}\)

III. Collaborating with Comrade Wallace-Johnson (1933-1936)

Not much of Padmore’s and the ITUCNW’s former links with British West Africa existed by the end of 1933. Contacts with E.F. Small and the Gambia had been lost at an early stage, if they ever had developed into something more than a short flirt. Contacts with Sierra Leone, too, were for different reasons aborted by 1932, most likely due to effective measures by the colonial government to curb Bolshevik agitation in the colony. The Nigerian-link, too, faced the same dilemma: with the expulsion of I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson Nigeria became a closed chapter for the rest of the decade. The only remaining region where the British colonial authorities so far had not clamped down on radical African intellectuals was the Gold Coast. Although Padmore’s and the ITUCNW’s contacts with the Gold Coast had resulted into the formation of radical political movements by 1933, the situation was to change over the next years.

The general picture of the emergence of radical political movements in the Gold Coast is already well-known. Partly as a consequence of local political agitation, partly due to the impact of Wallace-Johnson, a new, radical platform was formed in 1934: the West African Youth League. Wallace-Johnson held a key position among the radical intellectuals in the Gold Coast until he was forced by the colonial authorities to leave the colony in 1937. His links to various organizations were well-known already to the British intelligence: to the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society (ARPS) in the Gold Coast and to Reginald Bridgeman and the LAI as well as Arnold Ward and the NWA in London. So, too, were his personal contacts to local intellectuals and politicians, such as Bankole Awoonor Renner, Kojo Thompson and Kobina Sekyi, and other West Africans resident at that time in the Gold Coast, especially Nnamdi Azikiwe.\(^{66}\)

\(^{65}\) Interestingly, one K. Sallie Tamba is listed among the executive committee members of the International African Service Bureau (IASB). This organization had been founded by Padmore and others in London in 1937. Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 447 fn. 109. Was this Nelson? After all, he had kept some contact with Padmore, for which he had been criticized by Huiswood.

Wallace-Johnson had been one of George Padmore’s closest West African contacts, as outlined in Part 2. Therefore, it is not surprising that both of them were to join their efforts in international agitation against imperialism. He supported Padmore’s protest against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. In fact, as Wilson argues, contacts between Padmore and Wallace-Johnson resumed in 1934 when Padmore formed an ad-hoc committee in London to support the Gold Coast radicals in conjunction with their protest against the 1934 Sedition Bill (see below). Following the Italian invasion, this committee was reconstituted as the International African Friends of Abyssinia, which subsequently was integrated into the International African Service Bureau (IASB) in 1937, where Wallace-Johnson served as its Secretary-General.67

Wallace-Johnson is claimed to have retained his affiliation with the Comintern after 1934, although Wilson has not being able to demonstrate any direct link between him and the Comintern him during his Gold Coast period.68 The only well-established proof for such a contact was his affiliation to the editorial board of *The Negro Worker* – he even published in his own name a programmatic article about the WAYL as late as 1937.69 Interestingly, throughout the whole period he is still referred to – by his alias Walter Daniels – as an affiliated editor of *The Negro Worker*. But what was Wallace-Johnson’s alias Walter Daniels position in the Gold Coast during the mid-1930s? Was he a ‘renegade’, i.e., tied to Padmore and those who had broken with the Comintern in 1933/1934, or was he a ‘loyalist’? Or was he, as I previously hinted, a double-player? And what about the local Gold Coast radical intellectuals who all still were around and who were Wallace-Johnson’s closest allies in 1933, notably Awoonor Renner and Benjamin Wuta-Ofei?

Wallace-Johnson arrived in the Gold Coast in late 1933 at a moment when the colony was undergoing tremendous political turmoil. The colonial economy was still shaken by the effects of the World Depression70. The Colonial government was making plans to introduce propositions for two major reforms: the Criminal (Amendment) Code

67 Wilson 1974, 282-283. The IASB was founded by Padmore.
70 See Part 2.
Ordinance or Sedition Bill and the Waterworks Bill. Whereas the former bill was believed to introduce press control measures, the latter one was an attempt to raise revenue by introducing direct taxation of the municipalities of Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi. Both these bills sparked off intensive political agitation; the members of the elite were ever alert to any attempt by the government to limit their freedom of expression while the populace resisted any attempt by the colonial authorities to levy direct taxes. Key actors were members of the well-established opposition: Kobina Sekyi and his ARPS, but also younger radicals such as Awoonor Renner and his friends. Mass meetings were called, resolutions passed, and finally two delegations were dispatched to England. It seems to me that Awoonor Renner’s position was as crucial as that of Wallace-Johnson in the further development of events in the Gold Coast. Whenever there was some kind of political movement in the country, he had been part of it or at least been linked to it. Although I have not yet been able to fully establish his links to the ITUCNW and the Hamburg office, circumstantial evidence points towards him still being at least a potential Comintern contact in the Gold Coast at this time. However, it could also be argued that Awoonor Renner never was an ITUCNW contact in the Gold Coast: until 1933 there are no indications that he was involved in labour union activities which had been at the core of the ITUCNW and the RILU. Instead, his main emphasis had been the infiltration of the elite and the press.

Therefore, it was not surprising that neither Awoonor Renner nor his radical colleague Wuta-Ofei were to respond to the 1933 ‘Open Letter’ of the ITUCNW which, if it ever had been disseminated to the Gold Coast, had been addressed to labour union

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3. Silence!!/ Don’t you tell too much/ White folks fear you learn too quick,/ They can’t rob you as they wish.

4. You Coast of Gold –/ Silence!/ Nay, I’ll go on, and/ Fight and fight and fight.

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71 Rohdie 1965, 401; Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 428.
activists (see Part 2). However, it is possible that the manifesto had been circulated in the ITUCNW network and had reached West Africa. A central point was the call for a reactivation of trade union work in the Gold Coast, including a bitter critique about the inactivity of the two Gold Coast unions that had participated at the 1930 Hamburg conference. I suggested that Padmore was the author of the text, but who could have received it? There are reasons to believe that Wallace-Johnson did. Spitzer and Denzer noted that Wallace-Johnson’s first engagement in the Gold Coast was not with political organizations but with local labour unions, in particular the Gold Coast Drivers’ Union. This union was one of the two organizations which had been singled out in the 1933 call.

Wallace-Johnson’s union activity raises some intriguing questions. Did he act on Padmore’s orders or had he been commissioned by someone else? Unfortunately, there are no documents which would shed any further light on this question. A conspiratorial hypothesis could be that Awoonor Renner, provided that he still was a ‘fellow traveller’, was aware of the call and had suggested to Wallace-Johnson to focus on union activities when he arrived in the Gold Coast. The timing of the call fits the hypothesis: if it had been sent to West Africa sometimes in September 1933, it could have reached the Gold Coast say by October-November 1933 just at the time of Wallace-Johnson’s arrival in the country.

Whatever the case, Wallace-Johnson’s engagement with the Gold Coast Drivers’ Union does not seem to have lasted for a long period. Perhaps he came to realize that the union was not a suitable platform for labour union activities? Nevertheless, as Spitzer and Denzer outline, Wallace-Johnson continually made efforts to assist trade unions in their organizational policies and helped workers to make out their claims for compensation, increased pensions or petitions against wrongful dismissals. His interest in labour conditions was not limited to reactivating existing labour unions. Mining conditions, in particular, were to be closely watched by him. But this interest, too, can be linked to the 1933 ‘Open letter’: wasn’t there a call to build up a miners’ union in the Gold Coast?

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73 RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 135-140, "To the Workers of Acra [sic]! To the Toilers of the Gold Coast."
74 Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 424.
75 Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 424.
76 See Part 2.
Wallace-Johnson’s political moment came in June 1934 when a tunnel collapsed in the Prestea mines, killing forty-one men. This event spurred him to take action. He made by himself first-hand inquiries about the disaster and the hazardous conditions in the mining industry. He supplied his findings to the ARPS as well as sent his reports to the LAI and the NWA in London, urging Bridgeman and Ward to bring the issue to the knowledge of the Colonial Office as well as to launch appeals to both the CO as well as the Gold Coast Government to pass legislation which would impose compensation laws and improve working conditions.\(^77\)

At the same time as Wallace-Johnson was engaged in labour union issues and the conditions of the working class in the Gold Coast, opposition to the two Bills gained momentum. At this point Awoonor Renner, Wuta-Ofei and Wallace-Johnson joined forces and founded the first radical mass movement, the West African Youth League (WAYL)\(^78\). Awoonor Renner was elected as the first president of the WAYL, Wallace-Johnson became its secretary-general and Wuta-Ofei was an executive member. It is not known whose original initiative it was to form the WAYL. Clearly both Awoonor Renner and Wallace-Johnson had during previous years either tried to establish similar movements (Awoonor Renner: The African Academy) or been in charge of mass movements (Wallace-Johnson); both men could make use of the organizational training they had received in Moscow.

The cooperation between Wallace-Johnson and Awoonor Renner came as no surprise. British intelligence noted that the two of them had been continually in each others company during these years. It was further noted that these two men often held discussions together with Wuta-Ofei and J. Ocansey in the offices of the Gold Coast Spectator.\(^79\) Wuta-Ofei, at least, had by that time emerged as their close associate, if not almost a presumptive ‘fellow traveller’. Even the British were highly suspicious of him and regarded him to be a communist:

\(^{77}\) Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 429
\(^{78}\) Danquah 1943, 11; Rohdie 1965, 401; Wilson 1974, 247; Adu Boahen [1975] 2000, 144; Quarcoopome 1991, 16; Bush 1999, 118. However, a few scholars claim that the WAYL was founded in 1935 (Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 432; Adi and Sherwood 2003, 181), and Langely (1973, 332) even puts the establishment as late as 1936!
[Wuta-Ofei] had in peace time the following views – Communist, anti Government, anti European – i.e., Africa for the Africans, colour consciousness, and intensely bitter criticism of European minority […]\(^8\)

Awoonor Renner himself had earlier in 1934 established another political platform, the Friends of Ashanti Freedom Society.\(^8\) The society, of which he was President, had been founded to protest against plans to restore the Ashanti Confederacy and was the rival of the Asante Kotoko Society. Their argument was that the restoration, which was the aim of the Asante Kotoko Society\(^8\), would perpetuate the indirect rule system and prevent educated young men from Asante from having any voice in the decision making.\(^8\)

Making use of his international contacts, he even wrote (in 1934) to the LAI and the Secretary of State for the Colonies protesting against the reestablishment of the Ashanti Confederacy.\(^8\)

Such a move must have brought him into collision with J.B. Danquah, Nana Ofori Atta and other influential members of the Gold Coast elite. The formation of the WAYL further challenged their position as Awoonor Renner and Wallace-Johnson started to cooperate with Kobina Sekyi and his ARPS in opposing the Sedition Bill. The League was anxious to help the ARPS, especially in attacking the Provincial Councils and the Paramount Chiefs.\(^8\) Wallace-Johnson worked in conjunction with the ARPS and helped to organize protests, although in terms of political tactics Wallace-Johnson questioned the dispatch of a delegation to London which had been suggested by the ARPS.\(^8\) Two delegations were eventually sent to London in 1934, one by the Provincial Council of Chiefs,\(^8\) the other by the ARPS.\(^8\) Awoonor Renner wrote to James Maxton, British M.P.

\(^8\) TNA KV2/1847, 22.8.1943
\(^8\) Danquah 1943, 11.
\(^8\) The Asante Kotoko Society had been formed in 1919 and was the mouthpiece of the Asante traditional elite and their supporters.
\(^8\) Rohdie 1965, 401; Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 431.
\(^8\) TNA KV2/1840, Bankole Awoonor Renner, personal file I, Governor to Secretary of State, letter dated 2.11.1942.
\(^8\) Rohdie 1965, 401.
\(^8\) Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 428.
\(^8\) The delegation included Nana Ofori Atta as leader as well as Dr J.B. Danquah, Dr F.V. Nanka Bruce, Hon. K.A. Korsah, Akilagpa Sawyerr, James Mercer, Asafo Adjaye, I.K. Agyeman (President of the Asante Kotoko Society).
(ILP), in an attempt to enlist his aid, while Wallace-Johnson asked his friends at the LAI and the NWA to assist the ARPS delegation. In addition, either making use of his old contacts or via Wallace-Johnson’s direct links, Awoonor Renner also corresponded with George Padmore trying to enlist his assistance.

The events in the Gold Coast and the activities of the delegations in London were also noted in Moscow. In his 1934 Report of Activities of the LAI, Bridgeman informed the Comintern about his links with the Gold Coast:

The League received a request for assistance. The League has maintained contact and constant communication with the Gold Coast through different channels.

He further informed Moscow about his activities in conjunction with the agitation against the Sedition Bill:

The League against Imperialism was able to get this question raised in the British Parliament, and also to get letters published in the Press.

Interestingly, both delegations sought the assistance of the LAI:

Both these delegations sought the help of the League against Imperialism in bringing their grievances before the British people. The first delegation was called the “Gold Coast and Ashanti delegation”. It was appointed by the Provincial Council, and was representative of the Chiefs of the Gold Coast rather than of the mass of the people. The second delegation which is still in London was despatched by the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society. This delegation is more representative of the people of the Colony. It has worked in

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88 The ARPS delegation included two members, Tufohene George Moore and Samuel Wood. It arrived one month after their rivals. See further Rohdie 1965, 399-402; Shaloff 1972, 27-28.
91 RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 13, Report of Activities of the LAI, 1934 (Bridgeman), received in Moscow in 1935.
92 RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 13, Report of Activities of the LAI, 1934 (Bridgeman), received in Moscow in 1935.
close association with the League, which has been able to place it in touch with a certain number of persons, who are in the position to give it real assistance.\textsuperscript{93}

But Bridgeman and the LAI as well as Ward and the NWA were not the only (former) front organizations and radicals which still had links with the Gold Coast. British intelligence noted that Awoonor Renner communicated with the Afro-American communist William L. Patterson.\textsuperscript{94} Less known, if at all, was that Otto Huiswood and the ITUCNW had by 1935 been able to re-establish contacts with the Gold Coast.

Much of the correspondence between the Gold Coast and the ITUCNW or Huiswood is still missing, so far the existing letters are from 1935. One of the 1935-letters was (most likely) written by a certain Robert. The identification of the letter proved to be rather difficult: it had no sender and no receiver. There was only an address given: PO Box 214, Station Road, Gold Coast, Accva [sic], James Town. Was this the address of the author? The filed copy had been stamped in Moscow (date: 2. Jan. 1935) which meant that the letter had reached the Comintern sometimes in January 1935. Further, someone had in handwriting added: Zusmanovich – was he the original receiver of the letter? The letter was written in rather poor English, with a few phrases in French inserted. Thus, if it had been written by someone in the Gold Coast, it was none of the activists who all were fluent in English: Awoonor Renner, Wallace-Johnson or Wuta-Ofei. The content of the letter was a kind of report by someone who recently had arrived in the Gold Coast and had started to work among the unions according to a previously outlined plan:

I am gaining very much influence among our fellows here; nobody will dare to deny that. I [h]ave been already able to put on the sound basis all the trade unions and centralised them into a federated instead of scattered, by means of a small conference and unanimous vote of the delegates.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{93} RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 13, Report of Activities of the LAI, 1934 (Bridgeman), received in Moscow in 1935.
\textsuperscript{94} TNA KV2/1840, Bankole Awoonor Renner, personal file I, Extract from Gold Coast Police Report re the West African National Secretariat mentioning Renner, 13.2.1947.
\textsuperscript{95} RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 1, typewritten letter (perhaps a copy?) by NN to ‘Dear Friends’ (filed in Moscow: 2.1.1935).
It seems as if this person was on a mission from the RILU or the ITUNCW, his tasks could have been to follow up the 1933 manifesto? This could be one interpretation of the sentence: “I shall never fail in accomplishing my historical tasks due to me, neither capitulating to any other ideology besides the general line.” But who was he? A clue to the identity of the author is given in a letter by Zusmanovich to Huiswood. In a discussion about work in West Africa, Zusmanovich noted that one Robert had started to work in the trade unions:

You know the last letter of Robert where he writes that he began to work in the trade unions and recognises his mistakes which he made here.  

Robert, certainly an alias, informed Zusmanovich that he had started to organize labour union activities in the Gold Coast. However, the situation in the Gold Coast was more complicated than Robert, and presumably Moscow, had expected. Robert himself lacked both funding and contacts to strengthen his position. In fact, he soon found himself marginalized:

I have been studying the conditions, I am still going on, but due to difficulties in getting my daily bread and lodging is important and needs consideration in facts here is my home land but nobody to help me and parents are in the small village; if I go there it means isolat [sic] from the main bodies, but there is no hope of getting employed at all even as none skilled worker is anywhere.  

Even worse, he seems to have either quarrelled with Wallace-Johnson or did not trust him as he regarded him as a friend of Padmore. This was not surprising at all. Wallace-Johnson had never cut off his connections with Padmore, which perhaps also was known in Moscow. On the other hand, Wallace-Johnson was still the main organizer of the ITUCNW in the Gold Coast. Apart from assisting existing local trade unions, he had founded in December 1933 the Gold Coast Motor Car Union and the Gold Coast ...

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96 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 1, typewritten letter (perhaps a copy?) by NN to ‘Dear Friends’ (filed in Moscow: 2.1.1935).
97 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN to Otto, 21.2.1935, fol. 2. The sender has been identified as Zusmanovich.
98 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 1, typewritten letter (perhaps a copy?) by NN to ‘Dear Friends’ (filed in Moscow: 2.1.1935).
Workers’ Protection Association. According to Adu Boahen, the latter was a kind of an umbrella organization, aiming at achieving unity and cooperation among members of the working class and had branches in all parts of the Gold Coast.\(^99\) Despite Wallace-Johnson’s engagement, Robert was highly critical about his achievements:

My friend I came met here/is doing nothing, only on the paper that everything exists as for I have studied. Do not entrust him with anything, he is disorganising under the influence of the renegades (George) [i.e., George Padmore, HW], he was trying to get me too but he is small for me, I shall never stop in dealing with them at all as as on very of us that man here do not want send the (two) those ought fitting, but he is utilising the resources for himself concerning [h]is own news paper.\(^100\)

The second part of the quote – somewhat difficult to decode – raised the question of sending Africans to Europe. Robert informed Zusmanovich that he had been able to enlist two or three seamen which he had equipped with the necessary papers for “en haut”, promising that they would “become like myself best elements promise to come back and help us.”\(^101\) However, Zusmanovich himself was not convinced about the capability of Robert to succeed in the task and was not inclined at this point to cut the connections with Wallace-Johnson. Instead, although he warned Huiswood not to fully trust Robert, and concluded: “It should be better for you to maintain contact with each one separately.” Regarding Wallace-Johnson, Zusmanovich noted:

You know quite well what he is. In connection with the struggle between them you should as quickly as possible take advantage of every possibility to obtain live people from Gold Coast and Nigeria who are not yet contaminated by the struggle of these two “leaders” without armies.\(^102\)

Thus, Zusmanovich urged Huiswood to entrust Wallace-Johnson/Daniels the task of enlisting the prospective students:

\(^100\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 1, typewritten letter (perhaps a copy?) by NN to ‘Dear Friends’ (filed in Moscow: 2.1.1935).
\(^101\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 1, typewritten letter (perhaps a copy?) by NN to ‘Dear Friends’ (filed in Moscow: 2.1.1935).
\(^102\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN to Otto, 21.2.1935, fol. 2
On the question of obtaining people, you must not fail to orientate yourself on Daniels. If he could quickly send you three people from each of the colonies, i.e. Gold Coast and Nigeria, that would be a great achievement.103

In sum: Robert had been Moscow’s man who had been sent to the Gold Coast where he met Wallace-Johnson. But who was he? Among the Negro Students in the KUTV in late 1932, one Pierre Kalmek, alias Robert, is listed.104 McClellan claims that he was a sailor from one of the French African colonies who had been “every where”.105 However, according to the personal file of ‘Robert’, this was not the case. Born in the Gold Coast into a family of poor peasants in 1911,106 he had left the country when he was thirteen and thereafter worked as a seaman and steward. Before ending in France, he had called at ports in Nigeria, Ivory Coast (Grand Bassam), Sierra Leone (Freetown), Italy and Spain. In Marseille he had met Garan Kouyaté and Comrade Ferroni, seemingly while he visited the Club international du marin, and joined the French communist party in Algeria in 1929 and the Confederation general du Travail Unitaire, Secour Rouge. After that he was entrusted doing propaganda work in military camps in Senegal. Back in France, he was distributing leaflets in the streets of Marseilles. In September 1932 he was enlisted in the KUTV.107 Unfortunately, Robert did not reveal his name in his autobiography!

Huiswood agreed with Zusmanovich in keeping Robert at a distance and to side with Wallace-Johnson: “Regarding Roberts, I am not keeping any contact with him for I think he is quite unreliable and his actions are not trustworthy.”108 He was not the only one who was suspicious of Robert’s commitment. In an evaluation by someone at the KUTV, Robert was described as being a gifted and intelligent person but who had not made enough efforts to develop himself. He held ‘Pan-African’ ideas, claiming that Africa had to seen as one entity instead of consisting of many local nations. Even worse, he was rather stubborn and the evaluator suspected that Robert never really rejected his wrong ideas.109

103 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from NN to Otto, 21.2.1935, fol. 2
104 RGASPI 532/1/439, fol 6., List of students in group 9 section A (Negro Section), 20.11.1932.
105 McClellan 1993, 384.
106 According to his testimony, he had to support his mother and his eight younger sisters and brothers.
107 RGASPI 495/279/44, ’Robert’ – personal file, fol.3.
108 RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to ’Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, fol 4. Edward was the alias of Huiswood.
Nothing more, it seems, was ever heard from Robert. Communications with Wallace-Johnson, on the other hand, continued during 1935. In April 1935 Huiswood informed Moscow that he had been in contact with Daniels about the issue of enlisting African students, although not much had happened:

We have been negotiating for a long time with our friend Daniels, but I fear that there is little to be hoped from that section. While we have made all the necessary arrangements, he has, up to date, not secured any, and it seems to me that nothing much can be looked forward from him.\(^{10}\)

Huiswood, too, became nervous about Daniels other engagements – perhaps the organization of the activities of the WAYL, see below – and inability to proceed with the assigned tasks:

Besides this, he is so confused and apparently dabbling in all kinds of schemes which makes one question his future usefulness and reliability. Despite this, we are still trying to see what can be got out of him.\(^{11}\)

However, a few months later, Huiswood sent a disappointed letter to Moscow, implying the failure of getting any student from the Gold Coast. Until July 1935, Huiswood was let to believe that Wallace-Johnson in one way or the other was capable of sending some Africans to Moscow:

Subsequently, he informed us, after receiving all facilities and after a great deal of time lost on our part, that the arrangements could not get through. Because of our illness, we had to conduct further negotiations with him through the LAI, and from them we learned that he was making arrangements to replace those. Still later, we learned that one eventually would come. Then quite suddenly, the LAI people sent us a mysterious note about a month ago that it is likely that everything is off but no details. Although we have repeatedly asked for information on this question up to now, our inquiries have been completely ignored. We must tell you frankly that we put very little confidence in Daniels, not only because of this, but because of other things.\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to 'Dear Comrades', 11.4.1935, fol 4.

\(^{11}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, letter from Edward to 'Dear Comrades', 11.4.1935, fol 4.

In fact, Wallace-Johnson had informed Bridgeman already in March about the problems in selecting suitable candidates for Moscow:

We propose to send one along within two months from date. It would have been despatched right away but there are some preliminary arrangements necessary to be made which will take a little bit of time to accomplish, and this we are going about with caution. We would ask you to furnish us with information of a safe medium through which we can send the necessary particulars to get into the hands of the dealers in time so that they will be able to study the nature of the stuff before it gets into their hands.  

In May, Bridgeman had received news about the possible collapse of the plan:

Since we received this information, our friends have advised us that from his [?] correspondence it appears that WJ has become involved in some compromising situation which has up till now prevented him from sending the promised despatch. All efforts are still being made, however, to secure a good supply.  

But no ‘supplies’ were ever forthcoming. Whatever connections or contacts that had existed between Huiswood and Wallace-Johnson, by mid-1935 they seemed to have been cut off, although it is not known why and when – if at all? Research in the Comintern Archive about this question is still unfinished, although it seems as if the Gold Coast connection was a closed chapter for the ITUCNW and the Comintern by the end of 1935 – at least there are no further files or documents in ‘fond 495 opis 155 delo 102’, the last archival unit of the ‘Negro Section/Bureau’ of the Comintern and the RILU/Profintern. What is known about Comintern and ITUCNW activities is that some kinds of plans were outlined for future activities with regards to Africa, including the Gold Coast. A confidential report even painted a rather promising picture about the numerical strengths of trade unions in Gold Coast:

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113 RGASPI 495/155/102, fol 13, quotation of letter from W.J. (Daniels), dated 16.3.1935 in: letter (handwritten add on page: From England), 11th May 1935. The author of the letter is identified as Reginald Bridgeman, the recipient was almost certainly Otto Huiswood.


115 As proposed in a letter (in French) by André Marty to the secretariat of the Comintern, written in Moscow on the 17th of October 1935:

De charger la fraction du Profintern de diriger la fraction du Comité syndical nègre International – camarade Houhiswood – celui-ci se tenant en liaison avec les Secrétariats intéressés pour les questions qui les touchent. (RGASPI 495/155/102, fol 51.)
Union de la jeunesse travailleuse indigène, 150 Memb.; 7 syndicats indépendants en liaison avec le Comité international des ouvriers nègres, 12.000 Memb.; 3 membres du Parti sortis de l’UCTO.\(^{116}\)

But knowledge and interest in the Gold Coast was not enough if Moscow and Huiswood had none to cooperate with. Arguably, this was the case in the Gold Coast.

However, although Huiswood and Moscow had lost contact with the activists in the Gold Coast, this was not the case with the contacts between Wallace-Johnson and Bridgeman. In fact, in one of his dispatches to either Huiswood or to Moscow, Bridgeman – presumably – had enclosed two letters by Wallace-Johnson as well as the protocol of the general meeting of the WAYL, held on 4 July 1935.\(^{117}\) Unfortunately, so far I have not been able to find any comments on these documents by Huiswood or anyone in Moscow. However, one assumption is that Moscow was not really prepared to discuss the content of the documents. Perhaps the existence of the WAYL had perplexed Moscow as it had not been part of their plans or orders given to Wallace-Johnson? On the other hand: what is known about the founding of the WAYL: whose original idea was it – Awoonor-Renner’s or Wallace-Johnson’s?

Be as it may, by 1935 Awoonor Renner and Wallace-Johnson were in the centre of a network that comprised more or less all critical intellectuals in the Gold Coast and constituted an highly outspoken opposition to both the colonial government and the traditional and conservative elite. The focal point of the opposition was the WAYL.\(^{118}\) The supporters of the organization included, among others, Kobina Sekyi, Kojo Thompson and Nnamdi Azikiwe.\(^{119}\) Sekyi was already well-known to the colonial authorities. Kojo Thompson (1880-1944) was a lawyer and the leader of the Mambii Party of Accra, a mass party and bitter opponent of the elitist Rate Payer’s Association in

\(^{116}\) RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 75-77, Confidential Report (in French), filed as PK Copie 9689-2 exempl. 8/10/35, this ref. to p. 76.

\(^{117}\) RGASPI 495/155/101, fol 1-5, Minutes of a general meeting of the West African Youth League, held at the Palladium, Accra, Thursday 4 July 1935, signed K. Bankole-Awoonor Renner (President), Wallace Johnson (Secretary to the Executive); fol. 6, (copy) letter from Wallace-Johnson (Accra, 10.7.1935); fol. 7, letter from Wallace-Johnson to The Executive, Youth Front against War and Fascism, London (Accra, 11.7.1935).

\(^{118}\) The WAYL, its organization and the position of Wallace-Johnson is discussed in Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 433-440.

\(^{119}\) Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 433.
Accra. Nnamdi Azikiwe was a Nigerian intellectual and journalist who had studied in the USA and whom A.J. Ocansey had been able to attract to settle in the Gold Coast in 1934/1935. Azikiwe was the editor of one of Ocansey’s newspapers, the *African Morning Post*. However, as noted in Part 1, Azikiwe was also a friend of Padmore, and the latter had in his correspondence introduced him to Wallace-Johnson and Benjamin Wuta-Ofei already before his arrival in the Gold Coast. Azikiwe also knew Awoonor Renner: they had met in the USA during the mid-1920s while the latter was studying there! Not surprisingly, therefore, Azikiwe soon became a close associate of the Gold Coast ‘radicals’ and, consequently, his newspaper became the mouthpiece of the WAYL. In 1935 much energy was devoted by the group and the WAYL in their support to Kojo Thompson and his Mambii Party in the Accra Municipal Election – which were won by him. Legal objections by the Rate Payer’s Association resulted in fresh elections which were again won by Kojo Thompson.

By early 1936 the British authorities had become nervous about Wallace-Johnson’s and Awoonor Renner’s activities. Awoonor Renner made no attempt to disguise his Bolshevik inclinations, instead it was commonly known in the Gold Coast that he had studied in Moscow and regarded himself as a Communist. On top of it, he even sent on New Years Eve 1936 a telegram to Moscow, congratulating Stalin:


Wallace-Johnson, too, was a highly suspicious person in the eyes of the colonial authorities. Already in January 1936, Governor Hodson had come to the conclusion that Wallace-Johnson was a threat to the colonial system and complained about him to London. However, at this point the governor had no legal reason to charge Wallace-Johnson and to expel him from the colony:

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120 See further TNA KV2/1817.
123 TNA KV2/1840, Bankole Awoonor Renner, personal file.
I do wish you would suggest some plan whereby I could get rid of Wallace Johnson. He is in the employ of the Bolsheviks and is doing a certain amount of harm by getting hold of the young men for his ‘Youth League’. He just keeps within the law, but only just. At many of his meetings he says outrageous and criminal things but the law officers tell me it is almost impossible to get a conviction on the spoken word. There is something wrong in our Constitution which allows these sort of people to be at large. The French would not tolerate it for one second.\(^\text{124}\)

However, the governor’s moment came in May 1936. The *African Morning Post* had published on Friday, 15 May 1936, an article captioned: ‘Has the African a God?’, written, as it was duly proved, by Wallace-Johnson. The article was severely critical of European colonial rule and used some very strong language. The police raided Wallace-Johnson’s office, arrested him and Azikiwe and charged with a sedition libel by the colonial authorities. Wallace-Johnson was eventually convicted, but Azikiwe’s conviction was quashed on appeal in March 1937. Almost immediately after his appeal, Azikiwe left Accra and returned to Nigeria in July 1937 where he launched his own newspaper, the *West African Pilot*. His court case in March 1937 was regarded as a triumph by the Gold Coast intelligentsia\(^\text{125}\). Wallace-Johnson, again, decided to pursue an appeal to the Privy Council in London and left Accra in April 1937.\(^\text{126}\)

**IV. Postscript on Awoonor Renner and other ‘fellow travellers’**

The departure of Wallace-Johnson from the Gold Coast resulted into the disintegration of the WAYL. Although he tried to direct the affairs of the Youth League from London, he could accomplish little and by 1940, if not earlier, the WAYL had ceased to exist in the Gold Coast\(^\text{127}\). In London, Wallace-Johnson joined with George Padmore, T.R. Makonnen and C.L.R. James to found the International African Service Bureau (IASB) in 1937 and edited the IASB’s bulletins *African and the World* and the *African Sentinel*. At

\(^{124}\) TNA CO 96/731/1, letter from Sir A. Hodson to Sir Cecil Bottomley 14.1.1936.

\(^{125}\) Jones-Quartey 1965, 136.

\(^{126}\) Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 444-445.

\(^{127}\) Adu Boahen [1975] 2000, 145. On the disintegration of the WAYL, see Spitzer and Denzer 1973, 448-449. The collapse of the WAYL in 1937/1938 was to some extent also linked to the 1937 cocoa hold-up.
The same time, his appeal to the Privy Council engaged both Arnold Ward and Reginald Bridgeman. Wallace-Johnson thus remained linked with left-wing radical organizations, such as the LAI and the NWA, although by 1937 these contacts must have been on a personal basis: the LAI had more or less collapsed by 1937 and was subsequently disbanded by the CPGB. Instead, yet another organization saw its light: the Colonial Information Bureau, into with the LAI was merged. In 1938 Wallace-Johnson returned to Sierra Leone where he made a new attempt to establish a political mass movement, the Sierra Leone section of the WAYL.

The IASB was dominated by Padmore until its merger into the Pan-African Federation (PAF) in 1944, which one year later organized the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. About this time a new generation of radical West African intellectuals were about to take over, not least Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), who had been made the regional secretary of the PAF in 1944. However, some members of the ‘older’ generation of West African radicals still made the news, notably Bankole Awoonor Renner. Being an intellectual rather than a union activist, he was not able to halt the disintegration of the WAYL. For some years, it seems, he kept a low profile back home in the Gold Coast. It is much likely that he also supported the cocoa hold-up of 1937-1938, and devoted some interest in J.B. Danquah’s second Youth Conference in 1938. At this point, if not earlier, Awoonor-Renner’s started to articulate a kind of ‘radical’ Pan-Africanism which propagated the unity of West Africa instead of the separate interests of the British West African colonies:

130 J.B. Danquah was the key organizer of the ‘youth movement’ in the Gold Coast during the 1930s. Despite the name, the youth referred to the educated commoners who held no traditional office. Instead, they had started to establish a variety of associations and clubs. Danquah had organized the first Youth Conference in 1930. Like the 1930 conference, the 1938 conference was a gathering of already existing societies, clubs and unions, not of individuals. Awoonor-Renner’s links with the 1930 Gold Coast Youth Conference is discussed in Part 2.
Fundamentally, I still hold that the peoples of “French” West Africa and those of “British West Africa” have the same interest more or less. Our unification is not an impossibility.\textsuperscript{131}

Such a position brought him into opposition with Danquah’s political aspirations which were limited to the Gold Coast. Awoonor-Renner’s ‘radical Pan-Africanism’ echoes that of Padmore – with whom Danquah, arguably, never had any connections. However, in contrast to Padmore, Awoonor-Renner never distanced himself from the Bolsheviks. In September 1940, the colonial authorities learnt that he had written a letter to the Soviet ambassador in London congratulating ‘Mother Soviet’ on taking Bessarabia, Bukovina and the Baltic States ‘to her bosom’ and suggested that a Soviet Consulate should be established in Accra.\textsuperscript{132} At this point he made another move which much puzzled the British authorities: he converted to Islam and assumed the name Mustapha (Mustafa). Whereas the British official doubted his conversion, J.D. Danquah saw his conversion in line with his moral conviction:

\begin{quote}
But there he was – he had seen a vision, the downtrodden unrepresented and unrepresentable Hausas and others in our community who, mostly because of their Islamic faith, knew little English […] Bankole broke no idols, he just led the way where others had feared to tread, and the Moslems – to a man – followed him with a faith that is one of the wonders of our decade.\textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

Between 1942 and 1944 he was the representative of the Gold Coast Moslem [Muslim] Association in the Accra Town Council.\textsuperscript{134} Thereafter he left for London to study the ‘profession’, i.e., law. In 1945 he joined Padmore, Nkrumah, Wallace-Johnson and the others in the Manchester Conference, thereafter he was elected President for the West

\textsuperscript{132} TNA KV2/1840, Bankole Awoonor-Renner – personal file.
\textsuperscript{133} Danquah 1943, 9.
\textsuperscript{134} On Awoonor-Renner’s engagement with Muslim organizations, first the Gold Coast Moslem Association and later, during the 1950s, the Muslim Association Party (of which he was chairman), see Mishbahudeen Ahmed-Rufai, “The Muslim Association Party: A Test of Religious Politics in Ghana,” \textit{Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana}, New Series, 6, 2002, 83-98.
African National Secretariat (WANS), Nkrumah serving as secretary. As Hakim Adi has demonstrated, key members of the WANS, including Awoonor-Renner and Nkrumah, were at this time closely connected with the CPGB and regarded themselves as communists. WANS certainly echoed many of Awoonor-Renner’s ‘radical Pan-Africanist’ concept: the idea of a socialistic and unified West African ‘Soviet Union’ which stretched from the Atlantic to Kenya.

However, the developments after about 1940 had little to do with the Comintern anymore. By that time the organization was barely functioning and was dissolved by Stalin in 1943. In retrospect, the Comintern engagement with West African radicals was a dead end: no movement, association or party was ever high-jacked or taken-over by the Moscow-trained ‘fellow travellers’. The activities of the RILU (Profintern), especially its Negro Section or the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers was for a short period more successful: about 1930 it seemed as if radical trade or labour unions would mushroom in all British West African colonies. However, a few years later nothing was left either of this approach and around 1933, by the latest in 1935, direct links between the ITUCNW and British West Africa had been cut. Much of Moscow’s ‘failure’ to establish any lasting contacts with the Anglophone West African radicals were due to miscalculations of the Communists themselves. However, the final analysis has to be broadened and the West African perspective has to be integrated as well: apart from the aspirations and plans of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern/RILU apparatchiks, the West African intellectuals, with who the Comintern was either able to establish contacts or aspired to do so, had other preferences and plans. For most of them Moscow or other communist/radical front organizations were but one of many options in their endless attempts to enlist support for their various causes. Only a tiny minority of the West African intellectuals can be labelled as Communists or having been ‘fellow

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136 Adi 1998, 142. Also Sherwood 1994, 180. The position of Wallace-Johnson, however, is somewhat unclear. According to Adi (1998, 129), he had been elected first chairman of the WANS, but British archival sources refer to Awoonor-Renner as the President of WANS. Wallace-Johnson’s links with the CPGB are also unclear at this point.

travellers’; most of those intellectuals who at one point or another were connected with
the Comintern and its network had never the slightest intention of fully engaging
themselves in the Communist/Bolshevik cause. None of them ever articulated the need
for a radical, violent rupture: even Awoonor-Renner ever raised the call for a revolution.
Political, economic and social change, in the West African mind, was to come through
protest and lobbying, agitation and demonstration, but never through a mass uprising
against the colonial state.