

## 19

# George Padmore: Black Marxist Revolutionary — A Memoir

---

*[James has frequently said: "George Padmore in my view is one of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century. He earned for himself the title of 'Father of African emancipation'. I knew him from the time I can remember myself and through all our lives when we were together we had similar attitudes to the emancipation of Africa and the need for black people to establish themselves as ordinary people." This is the edited text of a talk given in North London in 1976.]*

I want to talk about George Padmore and I am going to begin by talking about our early life in the Caribbean; that is the first part of what I am going to say because it is not an accident that certain people in the Caribbean have taken such a prominent role in international politics and literature. The second thing I am going to move to is George's life abroad — in the United States and then his political life in Europe afterwards — unfortunately in Africa he didn't last very long. And then finally I will try to give you some picture of George Padmore as a human being. So I am going to begin with the material circumstances in which he grew up and the social relations which shaped him: the longer I live the more I see that people are shaped to a degree that they do not yet understand by the social relations and family and other groups in which they grew up. I believe — and I may be wrong here and I am treading in dangerous waters — that the new science of genetics is beginning to find a lot more in the physical structure of people and the way they behave than we believed even twenty years ago, but that I will leave for the time being.

Well, I grew up in Trinidad and so did George. Now Trinidad is 50 miles long by 35 miles broad, a scrap of an island — it is not as scrappy as Barbados which is nothing at all. Now in those islands you could see politics and society in a way that you could not and did not see it in Britain.

When I was a small boy and George was a small boy, there was the governor, George F. Huggins, the most important persons, the heads of departments, the Attorney-General and the rest of them, the officials, the white people, who had all the money and property. Then there was the brown-skin middle class and near to them some of the blacks who had some education, and below them the peasants and the plebeians, the ordinary people. So that you could see the social structure and understand what was taking place in a way that it was difficult to when you were living in London N4 or Lancashire or... It is easier now with television but before TV it was not easy to know what was happening — you had to get up in the morning and read a good paper. And that is a lot of trouble. But in those days, it was like TV, you could see and know everything. And George and I were very close — in one respect. My father was a teacher and notable teacher, Robert James.

People who knew Trinidad in their younger days remember him up to now. But George's father, James Hubert Alfonso Nurse, was also a teacher and a very remarkable man. Some time in the 1890s the government said that the elementary school children should be taught agriculture because that was what they would do when they grew up. So they appointed someone to go around and teach agriculture and Mr Nurse learnt so quickly that they took him away from teaching and made him an instructor in agriculture to the school teachers around. Some dispute started in the newspapers and Mr Nurse wrote letters in the papers, signing himself Agricultural Director to the Board of Education, or something like that. There was a man in Trinidad, a white man who used to call himself Professor Carmolidy. Why they called him professor I don't know, but he was in touch with the Board of Education and he violently objected to James Hubert Alfonso Nurse writing to the papers as a scientific member of the Education Department. A dispute started and finally James Hubert Alfonso Nurse told them to go to the devil and he resigned.

Well, he was quite a figure, everybody knew him — had a fine voice and spoke well. He and his wife were not together and he lived in a small room at Belmont Circular Road and it is one of the few rooms I have seen in the Caribbean which was covered all round with books. He had built shelves and they were completely covered with books from the floor right to the ceiling. So James Hubert Alfonso Nurse was a man who had some education, because the teachers then and middle-class whites had some education. He was a man who had defied the government, he lived in an atmosphere of books and he declared himself a Moslem. He said he had left the Christian church — he would have nothing to do with Christianity, he was a Mohammaden — I did not understand what that meant — nobody knew anything about Black Moslems then. I believe he had been reading a book by a famous Barbadian (what was the name? Blyden), *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, and that book was talked about a great deal. So he left the church. He was defiant. And Malcolm Nurse, his son, was our good friend. He and my father were good friends. Everybody respected Mr Nurse for what he was, and he used to talk to me — say a few words, something insignificant. I was a little boy nothing more than about eight or ten years old. I knew his wife; I knew Malcolm's sister and the two families used to meet and talk and he and my father would go to the Savannah to watch the cricket and go to the races and they used to take me along and Mr Nurse would be there holding forth. He would talk about his books and so forth and he was quite a distinguished figure in those days.

Now my father went to teach in Arima and I lived in Arima for some years and that is only 15 miles from Port of Spain. But Arima in Trinidad — in the old language, the Carib language — meant rain, and Naparima meant no rain. So around Arima the cocoa industry flourished and the black men were in charge of it and whites bothered little with Arima then. They were more interested in sugar, but some Frenchmen came and developed the cocoa industry and a lot of black

men developed the cocoa industry around Arima. These became very wealthy and in 1897, when they came to Queen Victoria's Jubilee or something, they asked her if they could make Arima into a municipality. And Queen Victoria, knowing as much about Arima as she knew about Canada's Alberta, said, "Certainly," and Arima became a municipality. With these black men owning all this cocoa around Arima, the result was that there was a black mayor, Mr Beekles. There was another black mayor, Mr Symister, and all these black men in Arima ran the races, Santa Arima races, etc. etc. . . .

Now you may wonder what this has to do with Malcolm Nurse. Mrs Symister, whose husband had been mayor and one of the councillors of this new municipality, was related to the Nurses and every summer during his vacation, Malcolm used to come from Port of Spain to Arima to spend time with Mrs Symister. And as he and I were boys together and his father and my father were good friends and my father knew the Symisters, every summer George used to come and he and I — the chief thing I remember — used to go and bathe in the river.

The Arima river is at the bottom of the Ice Factory and every day either I went to the Symisters or George came to pick me up and we would go and bathe in the pool at the bottom of the river, and then go right up and go further into the deep part of the river and so on and talk about all sorts of things. I hadn't and he hadn't got the faintest idea that one day our names would be linked in the study of the emancipation of Africa and European politics.

Now there was a school where some of the middle class would go and you could win a scholarship and get there free — they gave you four scholarships a year. I won one. George didn't win one; his father paid for him at St Mary's College and when the time came for me to leave school, I began to teach and do journalism and George got a job on the *Mirror* as a reporter with the result that we both became familiar with a whole lot of things. I was reading European literature and history, and George reading chiefly — I remember those days well — Du Bois, Garvey and the others. I also read Du Bois and Garvey but my chief concern was European literature, because that was what I was educated on chiefly — I had done well at school on that and I was teaching that when George was working as a reporter on the *Trinidad Guardian*, which meant that he had to go through all the material that came in, which enabled him to begin the tremendous amount of information which he had later — that was about 1921-2. . . .

Well, in about 1923 George went away to the United States. We were members of the Black middle class. Below us were the workers, the plebeians, the peasants. Above us was the white officialdom and the bankers and the rest of them. And George was very sensitive to all this. He was more sensitive than I was. I remember, before he went away he told me: "Look here, I am supposed to be an assistant reporter at that paper and Mr Jones (a dignified old gentleman) is the assistant editor. But you should see the way Mr Parker, the editor, treats him. He calls him Jones, come and do this, Jones, see about that. He treats him like a reporter. So Jones has the name of assistant editor but it

means nothing. I could never be an assistant editor and be pushed around like that." Anyway, he went away to the United States. So you get the first glimpse of George. At question time I will give you some more details.

We were bright and we had the opportunity of gathering a lot of information. I want you to understand that George's father was a revolutionary and a man who had this body of books. That is number one. Number two — he was a man who declared he had nothing to do with Christianity; he was a Mohammedan. And George went to St Mary's College where he studied a kind of middle-class education that you got in public schools in England. I got it at the Queen's Royal College and then I continued to teach and George was a reporter at the *Trinidad Guardian* where all this world information used to come to be sorted — then to be put in the paper. We had telegrams coming in every day. So that was Malcolm Nurse and he went away to the United States about 1923.

In 1932 I came to England. I didn't see or hear much about George. But when I was in England, one day I heard that the great George Padmore, the great Communist, was coming to speak in Gray's Inn Road. I had heard a lot about George Padmore, the great man from Moscow who was organising black people all over the world, so I said I would go, because in those days I was going to see and hear all that I could. I went to the meeting and there were about fifty or sixty people, half of them white, and suddenly, after five minutes, there walked in the great George Padmore. Who was he but my friend Malcolm Nurse? He had changed his name (that was for the police) and everybody knew him as George Padmore. So we said, "How are you?" and so on. By that time he was tied up with Moscow, I was headed away from Moscow; I was a Trotskyist, but that didn't trouble us. That night we went home. I went either to his room or he came to mine, I don't remember, but we stayed talking till about 4 o'clock in the morning and that is a conversation I must remember.

He said: "You came here in 1932?" I said, "Yes, March 1932. I was here and I stayed about here in London for about three months." He said: "My God, man, I was here in 1932 looking for people to carry to Moscow to help to train them to organise blacks. If I had seen you I would have asked you." I told him: "Well, boy, if you had seen me and asked me to go to Moscow the day after I had landed in London I would have gone." That was how we just missed one another. What would have happened to me I don't know, because by 1935 Padmore broke with them, and I remember that day very well.

Padmore, as I shall tell you later, was a very big man. He was a West Indian of the old school. Always everything in order. But this afternoon someone knocks at the door and I went and saw George and he looked not only dishevelled but his eyes were not what they ought to be. So I said, "Hello, George, sit down." Whenever he came to London he would always come to see me and we would talk. I was a Trotskyite and he was a Stalinist but that didn't bother us. We were both concerned with the emancipation of Africa. I said, "Hello, George,

what's up?" And then he used a phrase which took me a long time to understand. He said, "I have left those people, you know."

It was only after some months that I began to get the significance of "those people". Padmore had been a Communist. He had been a great leader of the Communist movement. When on May Day the Communist armies used to march about Moscow, George would be on the platform with Stalin, Molotov and the rest of them. He lived in the Kremlin. But nevertheless he called them "those people" and it became clear to me afterwards — and I have been told even that much — that he had never been completely swept away by the Stalinist conception of Marxism. He said: "I lived there; I saw what was going on." He gave me some examples which I have no time to tell you now. But he said: "I stayed there because there was a means of doing work for the black emancipation and there was no other place that I could think of. But I had come to Moscow from the United States. They had been looking for a bright man to take charge of this. They had seen me in the United States when I had worked there and I had got a good education in Trinidad." So they brought him to Moscow and Hamburg was the centre. And he moved about Europe organising the black people into the Black International Trade-union Movement. So that day I asked him: "George, what has happened, why have you left them?" And he told me something of which only now, in later years, I understand the full significance.

George had a great deal of money at his disposal; he had a newspaper that he used to edit; he was a member of all sorts of committees. Whatever was going on anywhere, he, as a member of the Communist Party and as an official of the Communist International, was able to go. But they came and told him one day in 1934: "George, you know, we have to change the line. We must say that the United States, Britain and France, they are imperialists it is true, but they are democratic imperialists; but Germany, Italy and Japan are the fascist imperialists. So as you write, George, in your paper and your propaganda, make it clear the distinction between the democratic imperialists and the fascist imperialist." George told them: "How can I do that?" He says, "That makes nonsense of all I have been writing and preaching before." He said: "Germany has no colonies in Africa, Japan has no colonies in Africa, what is this? The most racially-minded country in the world is the United States. Britain and France are the ones with the colonies in Africa. Italy just has Ethiopia, that's all. And they are not safe there." They said: "George, you know that's the line, you have to take the question internationally," but George says, "I can't do that — I can't write that."

In the old days, it isn't as now: when you were in the Communist Party and they gave you a line, you followed that line; you followed that line or you went out on your ears. So George packed his stuff and went away and came to London and settled down to work. And it is very strange. There were not many of them who so definitely and clearly said no to the Communist Party. "No, I am not going to follow this new line and despite all the new opportunities that you offer to me,

I am going away and I am going my own way and try to work at it in the best way I can." This was quite something to do. When I think of the enormous number of people who followed the line and as the Communists twisted, managed somehow to twist with them, because they thought here was something going on; here they had money; they did not have money in the sense that they had money to spend, but they had money to carry out activities and they usually had political enemies and the Communists represented, in theory at least, their supporters, and when the Communists changed the line and said, "We are still going at those people but we are going this way instead of that way," many of them, nearly 90 per cent of them, capitulated or gave up altogether and drifted away. But George said, "No, I'm not going to be in that, I'm not going," and he came to London and immediately started to organise again. Where these tough men came from I don't know. George was not shaken at all by them, but he was just a little disturbed that day.

The next thing is that I had started an organisation in Britain called the International African Friends of Ethiopia. You will see a lot about it in a book called *Pan-Africanism* by a German writer. Have you heard of that book? Read that book, get it and read it; it is worthwhile reading. It has all the material there. He makes one or two mistakes but they are insignificant. He understands politics and he understood what we were trying to do. We had the international African Friends of Ethiopia. I was the chairman. There was a Mrs Amy Garvey, who was Marcus Garvey's previous wife; and there was a marvellous man who called himself, ultimately, Makonnen. There was a man who died in prison in Ghana, he wrote a book called *African People and God*, Dr Danquah. We formed this society and we were doing reasonably well and George came just then at that time and he joined the society. Soon the Italian armies swept over Ethiopia and the society faded away. George formed a new society, the International African Service Bureau.

Now some of the things I say, you won't be able to appreciate. It was the only organisation in the world at that time that was talking about and writing about the emancipation of Africa. There wasn't another one. There were isolated people here and there, like De Graft Johnson and others, who were writing books. But an organisation that in time to come published a journal — George asked me to be the editor and I was the editor for a while — there wasn't one anywhere. Most of the politicians in Britain looked upon us as reasonably intelligent West Indians but they said: "What is this emancipation of Africa? What is that? That has to be a lot of nonsense..." Now at that time there were not many black people in England. There were a few, and we would go periodically to Liverpool or Manchester but the chief thing that we did, and George organised it and kept it going, was to keep in touch with the left wing of the Labour movement. We got into close touch with the Independent Labour Party which had split away from the Labour Party. We were in close touch with the left-wing members of the Labour Party and left-wing organisations. And whenever the Communists held a meeting or some kind of conference, we were there,

presenting resolutions, making speeches. What was our function in those days? Periodically we held a meeting but chiefly we aimed at the left wing of the Labour movement such as it was. That was all we could aim at. And, God have mercy, now I look back at what happened. We rented the upstairs of a big building in Westbourne Grove. I pass by Westbourne Grove and I look at it and I say: "But, James, you all used to rent some big buildings." We rented the building and Makonnen saw after everything. I was a Trotskyist and, in those days, I used to edit the Trotskyist paper. Nobody made any quarrel. George was concerned with the revolution, chiefly in regard to Africa; we were concerned with the world revolution but I took special interest in the revolution for Africa. So it did not matter. They used to come to our meetings. We used to go to theirs. And nobody held as many meetings as George. George took it as a principle and he used every event. He said: "Don't let anything happen and not hold a meeting. When three or four incidents take place, the press is full of it and when you do nothing about it and then after a while there are further incidents and people will say that these people take no interest, they are backward people etc." So George, as soon as something happens, he will hold a meeting, then we'll have twenty, sometimes twenty-five, fifty and even a hundred people, and will pass a resolution. Next morning George will go down or we will go down or we would send a letter to the Colonial Office saying that last night such an organisation as the African International Service Bureau held a meeting and we passed this resolution and we would like you to have a copy. The Englishmen in the office said, "Thank you very much," and wished us goodbye. We kept on going at them, we had to keep in touch with the left wing of the Labour Party, they would help us somewhat. We used to ask maybe five questions, we would repeat this to the Labour minister but he would answer only once. We would say, "Is it true that the Colonial Secretary said so and so . . .?" We filled him in with information all the time. One thing I must say for Kenyatta. His brains he kept to himself, that is the best way I can put it. But he was in constant touch with people from Kenya.

George earned his living by writing articles and sending them out to various newspapers. They didn't send him any money, at least they sent him very little. But they used to send him back copies of the paper, so George always had a lot of information and there was always certain information George got. There were Africans who came from Africa to attack the Colonial Office and to ask for help, there were Africans who came to England to get in touch with the Labour Party but whoever they were and wherever they came from, they found themselves in George's house. George was not a brilliant speaker but he always spoke well. He was not a dashing writer. But he had control, conviction and determination to carry on his organisation because we had about ten people — about eight West Indians — I don't want to go into names now.

George kept that organisation going, never missing an opportunity. And then I met Nkrumah in the United States and we used to see a lot

of him and we used to go down to Pennsylvania or to the university where he used to teach or he would come up to New York to our trotskyist group, though he was never a trotskyist but nevertheless very friendly. He used to talk to us about Africa and we used to talk to him about marxism etc. Well, I wrote a letter and gave it to George about Nkrumah and that letter is a very important thing because in it I said something that could easily be misunderstood by you but would not be misunderstood by George.

I said: "This young man is coming to England; I know him very well, he is not very bright." Now an ordinary person wouldn't understand as Nkrumah was a very sophisticated and fluent man — I don't mean he was a fool. He was my good friend and I knew he was politically sound. He was determined to throw the Europeans out of Africa and I asked George to do what he could for him. George understood at once: The man is a born revolutionary, devoted completely, but doesn't know much. George went to meet him at Waterloo Station, took him home and he educated him. What Nkrumah did in Ghana afterwards was due to the political education that Padmore gave him....

Well, Padmore covered the waterfront, everywhere and everybody periodically would go to France and it was very curious, he sent me to see a man called Kouyaté and also to meet the Trotskyists. And George kept up that acquaintance with Kouyaté although Kouyaté remained in the CP and George had left and would have nothing to do with them.

Then the news came that in Ghana, in the Gold Coast, the black lawyers, businessmen and the rest of them who were in charge of a party called the Convention Party wanted someone to run it because at weekends they were not concerned with that; they would rather go to the races or play cricket or play cards or run after girlfriends or something. They wanted someone to run the party. They heard that Nkrumah was active and energetic in politics and creating a reputation in London and they sent for him to come and — here, I go by rumours — Nkrumah wanted to form another organisation called the Circle Movement. You can see a reference to it in the appendix to the first volume of his reminiscences. Nkrumah thought he would be better off if he stayed here. I am told, I don't know how true this is, that George and Dorothy Padmore told him, "Go right back and work there, they have sent for you." And as a rule you listened to Padmore, you didn't doubt him. But when he said something you knew at once what he was talking about. And Nkrumah went back and it is impossible to understand the development of the revolution in the Gold Coast that brought Ghana, unless you realised that, from the very start, the man behind was Padmore.

When I was in Ghana in 1957, they told me a story about the independence celebration concerning Nkrumah, Ghana and the government. They said one day, the Governor came back from Britain and the papers said the Governor had returned but nobody came. Then a day or two afterwards, it was said that George Padmore was coming and the people all turned up to meet him and the papers printed long interviews, etc., and that was what Padmore was like before the

revolution took place. Nkrumah got power after being in gaol — he was a quite remarkable man.

In 1957, I remember three episodes which I will tell you about, I believe, my friends can take it or leave it. Nkrumah wanted me to stay there and work with him but he never approached me directly about it and I wasn't going to ask him about it. But while I was there, we spent quite a lot of time together and I stayed with him at State House while the others stayed at the Hamburg Hotel or other hotels. One night I said to him that he hadn't made a speech on foreign office affairs. He said, "Come with me tonight," and he and I went in the official car to the meeting where there was the Governor-General and the rest of them. Nkrumah made a tremendous speech about the foreign policy of the new free Ghana. When he had finished, he said, "Look, I am going on to our platform. You take the car and go home." So I got into the car. To the sharp-eyed African I was a West Indian and I am in Nkrumah's car going home, so the people seeing me assumed I was Padmore and said, "Goodnight, Mr Padmore." I replied suitably.

The second thing was that there was a serious disagreement between Padmore, his wife Dorothy and Nkrumah. Nkrumah got power in 1951 and the transfer was not made till 1957. He kept on manoeuvring with the British government, the British government trying to get the Ashantis to split away from him. And George and Dorothy kept on telling him to go ahead and take power, but he said, "No, let me wait," and so on. So in 1957 I got there and told him: "George and Dorothy are very angry and, up to this day, are certain that you should have gone on and taken power." And I said to him, "What do you think about it?" He gave me an answer which showed me that he was a very advanced politician. He said: "I really don't know." He said, "I could have taken it but what I was afraid of was that the heads of provinces, the magistrates and everybody else would leave." That is exactly what they did to Sekou Touré. Not only did they leave in person, they pulled out the telephones, they took all the documents, burnt them and carried what they could and left him stranded. He did not know that in advance. Nkrumah said: "I was scared that they would all go suddenly and leave me with the country. That is why I waited until 1957."

George was there at that time. He had one African weakness, only one, he liked to dress in African clothes. (I also have a weakness there, but I like the Ghanaian garments, they remind me of the Roman toga; the ones I don't like — no offence is meant — are the Nigerian pyjamas.... I have since been to Nigeria and have felt more at home there than in any part of Africa. I met a man there the living image of my father and saw various women who looked exactly like my aunts. I feel my ancestors originally came from Nigeria. I would like to talk to you about that another time.)

George never passed any remarks about the African character — never once did I hear him speak of the African personality or the difference between Africans and West Indians or the difference between Africans and Europeans. George kept his eyes on the political issues all the time.

I remember the night of the independence dinner celebration, George was there dressed up in his African clothes — he came and talked to me and he was a very serious man. He pointed out all the people there; there was Nkrumah dancing with Princess Marina (Duchess of Kent, whose husband died in a plane crash), there were the police, the head of the department of education, the magistrates and a lot of white people, and George said to me: “When Nkrumah was fighting for independence, they were putting all the black people into gaols, now with independence the black people are outside and the white people inside dancing.”

Nkrumah made George head of the Department of African Affairs, to organise revolutionaries and organise the African states. For the first time in history, the African states were organised and George did that. Makonnen was in charge of housing and feeding and I can't talk about George and his politics without speaking about his wife Dorothy. She was English and Makonnen was from the Caribbean. Dorothy was an educated woman. She did George's French and German translations, she also understood Marxism and had been a member of the CP.

Makonnen was the magician. We would meet and decide to have meetings, this meant renting a hall, printing our leaflets, etc. When it was finished, we only had just enough money to pay for the building in Westbourne Grove. Makonnen somehow always managed to find the cash (I don't want to inquire too closely where he got it from).

Dorothy assisted George in his writing, the books he read, the literature he should get. She did the entertaining of all George's Caribbean and African friends — knew all their national dishes. Makonnen arranged the finances and the meetings, both in public places and Hyde Park. That was the organisation.

About Padmore I have written that he was one of the finest political organisers of the twentieth century. I not only wrote this. It was asked of Mr Macmillan: “What was the thing in your ministry that you remember and are most proud of?” and he had the nerve to say: “The granting of freedom to African territories.” I remember the difficulties Padmore had in mobilising the freedom movements. Unfortunately, Padmore lived only one year after, then he took ill and died. I think it was the *New York Times* with which Padmore kept up an unceasing conflict and it was the broadcasters in the United States that gave him the title “Father of African Emancipation”.

There are two things I have to tell you; the 1946 Conference.... Padmore started his International African Service Bureau in 1935 and for ten years it was a small insignificant organisation, but all the people who were politically alive knew what was going on and we used to go and write books, publish pamphlets, speak everywhere so people knew something about us. In 1945 the communists and the imperialists together held a big conference in Paris, the first trade-union conference. It was an international conference and they paid for the Africans, the African journalists, the politicians — the first conference after the War.

Then the British government, which was in trouble with the British people, asked what they meant by “immediate independence” and they

said: "Immediate means at once, but you have to wait a bit."

The British government invited them from Paris to a special conference in Oxford to explain the word "immediate" as it applied to Africa. Then it was that Padmore's insignificant organisation hit hard. We said they had come to Paris to hear about the International Movement and they had then to call a special conference in Oxford to explain what "immediate" means for Britain and what it means for African colonies.

What I want to say is that if we had not been working in what looked like an insignificant and small organisation, there would never have been independence for African states — after 1957, about forty African colonies got their independence.

It started in 1945 with the Pan-African Conference. A year or two afterwards, Nkrumah went back and gained independence for the Gold Coast, and after Gold Coast got its independence, within ten years, nobody here can guess how many African states followed him. I give you a chance. Guess. Within ten years after Nkrumah had done it in Gold Coast, within ten years, how many African states were there? ... *Forty*. I know forty. Forty African states. Now people don't know what that means. I have never heard in history at any time of forty new African states coming at the same time. Never! It means that they were only waiting for somebody to give them the start and the 1945 conference which Padmore organised and where he brought the boys gave them the start and Nkrumah gave them the start in the Gold Coast, and forty African states followed in ten years.

That is the work that Padmore did. So in my autobiography I'm going to make it clear: the old world and the world I knew very well is gone. It no longer exists. The new one has not come but we are in a state of uncertainty, and four people's names will always be remembered as the people who did it, who led the movement. Number one is Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. Number two is Mahatma Gandhi in India. Number three is Mao Tse-tung in China. Number four is Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, because it's not only the five million people in Ghana who gained their independence and raised the flag, but forty African states followed within ten years and what they started seemed to have gone down. But it hasn't gone down really, as Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Angola tell you that it hasn't gone down. And the originator above all is George Padmore....

To study the work of Padmore is easy enough, the books are not difficult to get. The books are being reprinted in the United States and I want to recommend two to you. Nancy Cunard published a book on Africa which Padmore helped her to produce and that book has been reprinted in the United States. It was published in about 1936 and it is a book to read.... You will see Padmore's articles in there. You will see some other people. You will see in there articles by Ezra Pound, one of the great writers of modern language, poet of the United States. There is another man who has about ten articles that he translated. He is an Irishman, I wonder if you know his name? The finest writer in English today. He is still alive. He writes in English and French just as

Joyce used to do. He wrote *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett of course. In that book by Nancy Cunard, which she wrote with the assistance of George Padmore, there are ten articles translated by Samuel Beckett. You know, I am going to remind him of those in my autobiography. Maybe he will remember it with satisfaction or not, but he is there. Ezra Pound is there, all sorts of people there because Nancy Cunard was a very rich woman ... and George helped her to write that book. The book is called *The Negro*, that is all, and I read that book today and really she did wonderful work. It is a wonderful thing to remember because in those days it looked as if, well, you were doing some work and the whole world was against you, and who would have believed that in America today, two or three years ago, there would be a firm to reprint Nancy Cunard's book. They have reprinted also *Pan-Africanism or Communism* and it is that I'm going to end with.

*Pan-Africanism or Communism* was the last book that George wrote. He said, "Look, the Africa that I knew can *never* remain colonial." That he was *absolutely* certain of. He says, "The revolution is going to take place there." That he knew. That was fundamental. But he says: "It will have some leadership and those Communists, I know them, and unless the Africans themselves produce their own leaders, the Communists are going to take over and then God help them." That is the meaning of the phrase, "Pan-Africanism or Communism". By Communists he meant those people in Moscow whom he knew very well. So he said, telling the Africans, "The revolution is on its way; organise yourselves and take it over, otherwise the Communists are going to take it over." But the European imperialists, he knew their days were done. And by and large, although much that is said does not immediately apply today, I don't know *anybody* else, except perhaps Dr Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, who is worth more careful consideration.... Anyone who wants to know where the movement came from, what was its foundation, the people you have to look at are Marcus Garvey who made it a mass movement, Du Bois who gave it the historical and social background that it needed, and George Padmore who organised it.... Marcus Garvey was the great agitator who made Black people and Black politics something in the world. Before Garvey there was none. After Garvey ... the great theorist and historian was Dr Du Bois, but the organiser, the man who took Du Bois's theory and linked it in such a way to political movement, to the mass movement that Garvey had created — that man was George Padmore. And while it is good to know something about Oliver Cromwell and Robespierre and so on, I believe you couldn't do badly by studying closely the works of Padmore. That is one of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century, and I have written that if Macmillan says that the freedom of Africa, of the African colonies of Great Britain, was the thing he remembered most, then he should put a statue of Padmore in his living-room; because Padmore was a very handsome man.

*Question: Did Padmore concern himself at all with West Indian politics?*

Ah! That was a battle that took place in London, because the West Indians who were in London — I don't wish to be rude ... there were many very able men, but they used to be called by the Africans "Black Englishmen", because we had no past, you know. Those of us who were educated were educated in the British schools, and there was nothing much nationalist going ahead in those days. So the Africans were not as bright as we were in the things that were going on in Britain and France, but they found that we were very efficient and a great battle took place over a building that the British imperialists wanted to build in London for the black people. And we said no, and Padmore and I and WASU, the West African Students' Union here, said no. "What are you going to build for black people for? Why not give the money to them to build and work on their own and so forth?" ... I bear my share of concentrating on Africa, although during the last fifteen years I have made it clear on fifteen occasions, both there and in Britain and in my writing, that if they call me back to do something in Trinidad tomorrow, I will go....

*Question: It's true that Padmore was involved with politics in Ghana and might not have been able to go back, but he must obviously have been interested in Trinidad politics?*

He was interested in Trinidad politics. I was interested in Trinidad politics, but my real concern up to 1938 was Africa, and we joined up with the Africans.... When the Africans had a celebration, when WASU and company held a meeting or had a dinner to celebrate things, I would come there and speak. They would put me or Padmore down as the main speaker, because we made it clear that the future of black people lay with the emancipation of the African people and not with the Caribbean. We were very short-sighted, I agree entirely.... We undoubtedly did not do what we should have done in regard to the developments in the Caribbean. I did one thing. I wrote *The Black Jacobins*. You know why I made up my mind to do that? I said, "I am sick to death that whenever they talk about the West Indian they say he is suffering; he's intelligent but he's looked upon as backward because he came from slavery.... I am going to write a book in which I will show that the West Indian had more in him than that." And I decided that and I began to study, to write *The Black Jacobins*. That is how I came to do it, and although I took the West Indian as an example, all that book is permeated with the idea that what I'm talking about is what the Africans should do.