After he died, people began to think that I had brought Marxism to the African movement. It wasn't so.

Did he ever speak to you about his past experiences with the Communist International?

Padmore said when he was in Germany, he had been seen by the Nazis. They wanted a black man in the Communist International in Moscow and as he was the only Negro so they sent him. He went to Moscow, he had nobody, but they made him into a wreck. He became a socialist. He married a Moscowa girl and on Mayday when Stalin, Molotov and the others would be on the platform reviewing the revolutionaries they would invite him, and he would be up there with them representing the Caribbean, where they had nobody.

When the Communist Party began to change their line they said that they could not be real revolutionaries, completely for the revolution in the Caribbean. In your country and not America that makes democracy, so we are not going to attack them. There are some domestic capitalists, he said. "I come from those countries, and they know me for years as the man who had denounced the domestic capitalists. Why do you expect me to go there and write and say that this is domestic capitalism?" They said to him, "Well George, sometimes you have to change the line," His answer was, "Well boys, this is one line I can't change". He broke with them and went to England and we join that other group and formed the Pan-African Movement.

Marcus Garvey's first wife and I. I edited the journal International African Opinion. I am being cautious here, because I haven't got documents. As I remember it, there was no one concerned about the colonial movements in Western Africa. Nevertheless something was happening. Mussolini had attacked Ethiopia and Mrs. Garvey and I said that we were openly to oppose that.

We tried all ways to get our journal into the colonial world. We couldn't get it in normally, because many of those colonial governments, and those that came in afterwards, were quite hostile to us. Others if not hostile were sympathetic that James was writing books that brought in the colonial people, but were nevertheless unfriendly because the books were by Marcus. Trotsky. We had one or two people who worked on the waterfront. They gave the pamphlets to seamen and people in boats. In that way it went around.

I am very conscious that most of the African leaders of the independence movement, who were in Europe, orientated naturally towards the Marxist movement which said we are for freedom to the colonies. I was often invited to come and speak on the Marxist movement in Africa.

It was very small, was influenced by the Stalinists, normally they would have dominated it. Those leaders who had worked in London hadn't become Trotsky - but we had so educated them that Stalinism didn't do much to them.

Did you attempt to have conferences with them and try to get them to discuss together the idea of a United Africa, or anything like that?

I must say the idea of a United Africa was nonsense. That was quite obvious. It was not a practical proposition. East Africa was one way, West Africa another, and Central a third way. On the coast we had people of different tongues, and away from the coast you had entirely different African villages and styles. So whilst in every revolution or at the end, you spoke of Africa united at every important part, you knew it wasn't going to be. It was a general vision, and one that would become an ideal.

I only say it was very effective, and said that the unity of Africa was closer, theoretically speaking, than the unity of Europe. For that reason, the African states were not as - and if they would have jointed up, they would have had the barriers between them that the Europeans had. Of course the policy shouldn't be put forward when people objected. But that was all. There were one or two fanatics who talked about it...

Is there any truth in the statement that Trotsky and James supported a black state in America?

NO! NO! NO! We discussed in some detail plans to help create and build an independent black organisation in the United States. That was our thinking of a political grouping that would advocate the cause of the black people. We believed it was the people to mean we wanted to build a little black section of the United States - a black Mississippi.

There were people in the United States doing that who were claiming that a part of Mississippi should be a black state, but the Marxist movement had nothing to do with that - absolutely nothing! But our enemies, or one or two of them, took it up. They tried to make this as a political organisation fighting for the position of rights in general and the black people's rights. That was misinterpreted to mean something else, but nobody took it up. I think it was a little bit difficult for us to do much with it.

CLR James was interviewed by Al Richard- sant as part of the 'The Movement' series on 18 November 1996 at South London. Also present were Claire Grant and Mary Anne Graham. The full text of this interview is to be published separately by Socialist Platform.