A Global Radical Waterfront

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A Global Radical Waterfront

The International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, 1921–1937

By

Holger Weiss

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Acknowledgements

This book completes several journeys. One commenced in 2015 when I started my five-years term as guest professor at Dalarna University and was heading the research seminar in global history. My journey to Falun enabled me to engage with the radical maritime transport workers during the interwar period, resulting in a book in Swedish on the northern dimension of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. However, the foundation for this book were laid during my previous engagement with the radical African Atlantic, a journey that had started in 2004. This journey took me to a specific place in Hamburg, namely 8, Rothesoodstrasse. Here, the secretariat of the International Trade Union Committee of Nero Workers was located in a four-storey building until February 1933. Sometimes in 2011, I realised that I was about to open a door that would take me to another room in the same building, the office of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. The same building hosted the International Seamen's Club and, during the 1920s, the International Port Bureau.

While writing my book on the radical African Atlantic, I became aware of the intertwined relationship between the two organisations, both of them having been established by the Red International of Labour Unions in 1930. However, it took me two books and several trips to Moscow to grasp the contours of the complexities of the interaction between the organisations. Most importantly, it was during my last trip in November 2019 when I realised that both organisations were an outcome of a process that took off in 1928. In fact, it started in 1921 with the establishment of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the radicalisation of the global waterfront.

My final journey started on 15 January 2020 when arrived at the Munich Centre for Global History. I had been invited by professor Roland Wenzlhuemer as Guest of Director. My two-month stay at the Centre was extremely productive as I was able to finish the first draft version of the new book manuscript. I am immensely grateful for professor Wenzlhuemer and his team for their hospitality and assistance. Returning to Finland on 15 March, I used the lockdown imposed by Sars-Cov-2 to rewrite and expand my manuscript.

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Holger Weiss

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Abbreviations

ACLF	All China Labour Federation, also All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ADGB	Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Confederation of German Trade Unions)
CGT	Confédération générale du travail (General Confederation of Labour, France)
CGTU	Confédération générale du travail unitaire (United General Confederation of Labour, France)
CMPLA	Comite Maritimo y Portuario Latino Americana Comintern Third (Communist) International
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPJ	Communist Party of Japan
CPUSA	Communist Party of the USA
CSLA	Confederación Sindical Latino Americana
DKP	Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti (Communist Party of Denmark)
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
FAUD	Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (Free Workers' Union of Germany)
FEB	Far Eastern Bureau
FILM	Federazione Italiana dei Lavoratori del Mare
FOM	Federación Obrera Marítima (Uruguay)
FORA	Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (Argentine Regional Workers' Federation)
FORU	Federación Obrera Regional Uruguaya
FUMP	Federation Unitaire des Marines et Pécheurs
ISF	International Seafarers' Federation
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions, also known as Amsterdam International
Interclub	International Seamen's Club
IPAC-TW	International Propaganda and Action Committee for Transport Workers
IPC-TW	International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers
ISH	International of Seamen and Harbour Workers
ISU	International Seamen's Union
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
ITUC	International Trade Union Council, forerunner of the RILU
ITUCNW	International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers

ITUCNW-RILU	International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U.
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
JSU	Japan Seamen's Union
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party)
LAI	League Against Imperialism
LDRN	Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre
LSI	Labour and Socialist International, also known as Second International
MM	(National) Minority Movement
MTWIU	Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union
MWIU	Marine Workers' Industrial Union
MWPL	Marine Workers Progressive League
NKP	Norges Kommunistiske Parti (Communist Party of Norway)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
NSFU	National Sailors' and Firemen's Union
NUS	National Union of Seamen
OMS	Department for International Communication of the Comintern
PCF	Parti Communiste Française
PCU	Partido de Comunista Uruguay
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party
PolCom	Political Commission of the ECCI
PPTUS	Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat
RFO	Röd facklig opposition (Red Trade Union Opposition; Sweden: Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO; Denmark: Søfolkenens og havnearbejdernes RFO; Norway: Sjøfolkens RFO)
RGO	Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition, Germany)
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions, also known as Profintern
RTUO	Red Trade Union Opposition
SA	Sturmabteilung
Serilagu	Serikat Laut dan Gudang (Union of Seamen and Dockers, Indonesia)
SKP	Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti, Sektion av Komintern (Communist Party of Sweden)
SMM	Seamen's Minority Movement
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
SPLI	Sarekat Pegawai Laoet Indonesia (Union of Indonesian Seamen)
SPPL	Serikat Pegawai Pelabuhan dan Lautan (Indonesian Seamen's and Dockers' Union)

STF	Scandinavian Transport Workers' Federation
SUA	Seamen's Union of Australia
TOST	Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TUEL	Trade Union Educational League
TUUL	Trade Union Unity League
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Independent Social Democratic Party)
USU	Unión Sindical Uruguaya
VAO	Vallankumouksellinen ammattillinen opposition (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition, Finland)
VSTP	Union of Train and Tramway Personnel (Indonesia)
WUL	Workers' Unity League

Introduction

This book outlines and analyses the ambitions and plans to radicalise and organise the militant maritime transport workers during the interwar period. The focus is to trace the operations and structural setup of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers during the 1920s as well as those of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers during the 1930s. Both organisations operated on various scales, ranging from local actors and groups, national sections and unions to transregional bureaus and secretariats as well as international headquarters. Both organisations were at the same time part of the hierarchical organisational setup of the Red International of Labour Unions or RILU and the Third (Communist) International or Comintern. Some local actors were party members, the regional bureaus cooperated with other RILU regional bureaus, the headquarters of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers operated in tandem with the RILU headquarters in Moscow. Local actors and groups as well as national sections, especially the revolutionary trade union oppositions, were usually part of the national trade unions and tried to influence politics and tactics of the unions, (most of) the national maritime transport workers' unions, in turn, were affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation or ITF. Operationally, the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers tried to link up with local and national units all over the world and sought to embrace radical mariners who sailed on the Seven Seas disregarding colour or nationality.

The vision of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers or ISH was global: "The ISH must become the militant organisation of seamen and dockers of all countries, races, and continents."[1] Its ambition was to create a radical global space or globality parallel to and in contrast/confrontation to those of the ITF, the bourgeois or labour/social democratic governments in power, and the capitalist/colonial world-order. The declaration was not a novel one but rather a continuation of earlier attempts by the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the RILU to engage with and radicalise non-white organised and unorganised so-called semi-colonial, colonial and 'coloured' maritime transport workers – Arab, black, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Japanese. Referred as "work among colonial seamen"

1 RILU, Resolution on the ISH, February 1931, 534/5/220, 75, RGASPI.

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in contemporary documents, this "work" started in the early 1920s in Indonesia and China and opened towards black seamen in 1928. Applying a 'forward-reading' of the history of the 1920s and 1930s, this book traces the vicissitudes as well as connections and disconnections of the 'framing, making and – eventually – unmaking' of the global radical waterfront. Its contours were almost visible already by the mid-1920s but the onslaught on the communists in Indonesia and China in 1926 and 1927 shattered its first outline. Its next manifestation was the World Congress of the ISH in 1932. One year later, the course of events in Germany started a process that resulted in the paralysation of the ISH and its final liquidation in 1937.

A collage on the cover of the April 1932-issue of the journal *The Negro Worker* visualises the call for radical global action by maritime transport workers.[2] Three persons, one Asian, one black and one Caucasian, point towards the catchword "Strike!" and a red flag carrying a logo containing the globe and an anchor and the letters 'I – S – H' written in them. On the background is a photograph of the Hamburg waterfront, identified by the silhouette of the tower of St. Michael's church. A series of slogans catch the eye below the collage: "NOT A GUN FOR THE IMPERIALIST WAR MONGERS! HANDS OFF CHINA! DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION!"[3] The message was directed to seamen and harbour workers throughout the world; its sender was the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, calling the maritime transport workers to fight for better working conditions and against the lowering of tariffs and salaries ("strike") and for unified actions against Japanese imperialism in China ("Hands off China"). International proletarian solidarity portrayed as global and 'colour-blind': white and non-white workers were to join hands and form a unified front against capitalist, colonial and imperial exploitation.

The establishment of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers in October 1930 was the fulfilment of a process that started in the early 1920s. It started initially as syndicalist project to launch a global organisation for militant and radical seamen but the Bolsheviks in Moscow torpedoed the plan in 1921. Instead, the outcome of the initial project was the section for agitation

2 *The Negro Worker* was the mouthpiece of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers or ITUCNW. Similar to the ISH, the ITUCNW had been established by and was linked to the RILU. The two organisations cooperated closely, their headquarters being located at 8, Rothesoodstrasse in Hamburg. The April 1932-issue of *The Negro Worker* included an appeal to black seamen and harbour workers to join the national sections of the ISH (see further Chapter 7.2.1), it is not farfetched to assume that someone in Hamburg or Berlin had produced the cover collage.

3 Cover of *The Negro Worker* 4, no. 2 (April 1932).

and propaganda among maritime transport workers of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers. Renamed in 1928 as the International Propaganda and Action Committee of Transport Workers, the unit was rather a propaganda tool than an outright organisation with national sections and affiliated radical trade union opposition groups, see Appendix 1. Nevertheless, the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers consisted of an organisational apparatus, including its headquarters in Moscow, several offices usually linked to a bureau of the RILU outside Soviet Russia as well as a network of so-called Port Bureaus and International Seamen's Clubs or Interclubs. The latter ones served as legal and visible agitation and propaganda centres of which the majority were located in Soviet ports and a few outside Soviet Russia.

The main difference between the International Propaganda and Action Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers was their target group. While the former addressed both land and maritime transport workers, opposition groups and unions, the latter one concentrated on revolutionary trade union opposition groups within maritime transport workers unions, including those of the seamen or crew members above deck, those of the stokers or crew members below deck, and those of the dockers or harbour workers. In line with the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine adopted by the Comintern and RILU in 1928, the International Propaganda and Action Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers propagated for the establishment of 'red' seamen's unions although this was realised in only a few cases. Also, in line with the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine, both organisations applied the so-called 'confrontation'-tactics, meaning launching vigorous attacks on the ITF and the socialist/social democratic leaders and functionaries of national maritime trade unions. By 1934, it was evident that the 'confrontation'-tactics had ended in a cul-de-sac; in retrospect, it widened the gap between the ultra-left minority and the left/politically non-aligned majority within the trade unions and presented the communists as those who split rather than unified the interwar working class and trade union movement.

The International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers were international, global and world organisations. The Interclubs were projected to co-operate internationally, to represent different national maritime unions (this was mainly the case during the 1920s, rather seldom during the 1930s), and to disseminate bulletins and journals of the various opposition groups (at least in Chinese, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Japanese, Latvian, Spanish, and Scandinavian languages). Boycotts in support of national strikes were

organised internationally especially during the 1930s by the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (although usually without achieving their intended effect). In principle, both organisations aspired a worldwide outreach and both presented themselves as global players. The objective of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers was to form and strengthen the militant and revolutionary opposition within the national trade unions anywhere on the globe; the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers' ambition was to gather all maritime revolutionary trade union oppositions and red unions under its umbrella. Both organisations articulated a message of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-segregation and anti-discrimination, and presented the communist alternative as being strictly against the white chauvinism of the day that dominated and permeated the existing national unions in Europe, North America and Australia. However, both organisations were part of and bound to the ideological and rhetoric space of the Comintern and its worldview (and ultimately, Soviet foreign policy). Consequently, the internationalism and globalism of both organisations rested on an uncompromising and one-sided interpretation of class struggle as the driving force in world history; class rather than race being interpreted as the unifying factor of the working class on a global scale.

Research on the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers is very rudimentary. The former unit and its ambition to radicalise the global waterfront has not been studied in any greater detail apart from Josephine Fowler's seminal work on the push of the RILU into the East Asia and the Pacific ocean during the 1920s.[4] In contrast, there exists a few studies outlining the national, regional and even meta/trans-regional aspects of the International of Harbour and Seamen. Ludwig Eiber's, Constance Margain's and Dieter Nelles' works address the activities of the ISH in Germany and the activities of the German exile sections after 1933. J. Manley and Kevin Morgan provide a critical assessment of George Hardy, the leader of the Seamen Minority Movement in the United Kingdom, and his futile attempt to establish a red seafarer's union in the United Kingdom.[5] The Seamen's Minority Movement's engagement with and

4 Josephine Fowler, *Japanese & Chinese Immigrant Activists. Organizing in American & International Communist Movements, 1919–1933* (New Brunswick, NJ & London: Rutgers University Press 2007).

5 J. Manley, "Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain, Canada and the United States, 1928–1935," *Labour/Le Travail* 56 (2005): 4–49; Kevin Morgan, "The Trouble with Revisionism: or Communist History with the History Left In," *Labour/Le Travail* 63 (2009): 131–155.

organisation of black seamen in Britain is critically discussed by Hakim Adi, David Featherstone, Christian Høgsbjerg as well as Marika Sherwood.[6] Vernon L. Pedersen has focussed on George Mink's activities as organiser of the radical waterfront in the USA and head of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU), the ISH Section in the USA.[7] In addition, there is Bruce Nelson's 'history from below' of the red waterfront in the USA and of the 1934 harbour workers' strike in San Francisco and the role of the MWIU.[8] At least two studies focus on the operations of the ISH or L'Internationale des marins et des dockers, as the ISH was known in French, in France. Marie-Paule Dhaille-Hervieu's monograph provides a general overview of communist activities, including those of the ISH, in Le Havre from a local, national and international perspective as well as a sub-chapter providing local comments on Jan Valtins' a.k.a. Richard Krebs' critical remarks concerning the French communist (and ISH Instructor) Pierre Villon.[9] The other available study is Constance Margain's PhD thesis on the ISH and its national sections. Her tour de force is the first empirical analysis of the organisation's objectives and activities and includes a biography of some 500 activists.[10] The focus of her thesis is on the German section, the Einheitsverband, its organisation as well as its anti-fascist engagement after 1933.[11] Josephine Fowler's detailed assessment of the trans-Pacific activities

6 For example, Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919–1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013); David Featherstone, "Maritime Labour and Subaltern Geographies of Internationalism: Black Internationalist Seafarers' Organising in the Interwar Period," *Political Geography* 49 (2015): 7–16; David Featherstone, "Harry O'Connell, maritime labour and the racialised politics of place," *Race & Class* 57, no. 3 (2016): 71–87, Christian Høgsbjerg, *Chris Braithwaite: Mariner, Renegade & Castaway. Seamen's Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist* (London: Socialist History Society/Redwoods, 2014); Marika Sherwood, "The Comintern, the CPGB, Colonies and Black Britons," *Science & Society* 60, no. 2 (1996): 137–163.

7 Vernon L. Pedersen, "George Mink, the Marine Workers' Industrial Union, and the Comintern in America," *Labor History* 41, (2000): 307–320; Vernon L. Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront: Revolution, Reform, and the Quest for Power* (Lanham: Lexington Boos, 2020).

8 Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

9 Marie-Paule Dhaille-Hervieu, *Communists au Havre: Histoire sociale, culturelle et politique (1930–1983)* (Rouen : Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2009).

10 Constance Micalef Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer (1930–1937). Activités, parcours militants et résistance au nazisme d'un syndicat communisme de marins et dockers, PhD thesis, University of Le Havre, 2015, pdf available at https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01676981/document.

11 See also Constance Margain, "The International Union of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) 1930–1937: Interclubs and transnational aspects," *Twentieth Century Communism* 8 (February 2015): 133–144; Constance Margain, "The German section of the International

of both the ISH and its forerunner is singular in its transnational and global approach;[12] Niels Erik Rosenfelt critically discusses the activities of the ISH in Copenhagen and its links to the Comintern's Foreign Liaison Department.[13]

My own research has, among others, focussed on the northern outreach of the ISH. The structure and actions of the national sections in Northern Europe (the Scandinavian countries, Finland, Estonia and Latvia) have been relatively unknown except for their involvement in various maritime strikes. Tracing the activities of the ISH and its national sections is challenging as neither of them have an existing archive, either being destroyed during the 1930s or, as in the case of the illegal Finnish and Estonian sections, never existing. To some extent, I have been able to reconstruct the missing archives by making use of material filed in the Comintern archives in Moscow. The archives of the British, Finnish, German, and Swedish security authorities also contain copies of letter correspondence to and from the ISH Secretariat. In addition, the national sections produced journals and magazines that reprinted calls and resolutions of the ISH and its national sections. Occasionally, the national communist press even published resolutions and calls of the ISH and its national sections. The existing source material therefore provided the source material in my previous reconstruction of the networks, operations and outreach of the ISH and its national sections in northern Europe.[14] The present investigation on the global outreach of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and its successor, the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, contains additional archival material from the Comintern Archives.

A 'total' presentation and analysis of the global history the two organisations would require mastering of multiple languages and tracing empirical sources in local, regional and national archives on five continents. As the capacities of the author were limited, I decided to unearth the superstructure well knowing that the result can only be rudimentary. Empirical data has been analysed for the intermediate scale of operations, namely that of the

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of Sailors and Harbour Workers," in *Weimar Communism as Mass Movement 1918–1933*, eds. Ralf Hoffrogge and Norman LaPorte (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2017), 170–186.

12 Fowler, *Japanese & Chinese Immigrant Activists*.

13 Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *Verdensrevolutionens generalstad. Komintern og det hemmelige apparat* (Copenhagen: Gads forlag, 2011); Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, "Komintern og det hemmelige apparat", in Jesper Jørgensen, Alexander Chubaryan, Andrei Sorokin & Thomas Wegener Friis (eds), *Komintern og de dansk-sovjetiske relationer* (Copenhagen: Arbejdermuseet og ABA, 2012), 81–128.

14 Holger Weiss, *För kampen internationellt! Transportarbetarnas globala kampinternational och dess verksamhet i Nordeuropa under 1930-talet* (Helsinki: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2019).

International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers', the International Seamen's Clubs' and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers' work among maritime transport workers. I have tried to address some actions and activities of local groups and national sections by making use of existing investigations but in many cases, a close analysis of their operations has to wait for forthcoming studies. This is especially the case of the attempt to radicalise the waterfront in Southern and Central America that requires a critical assessment of the source material both in Moscow and in various national archives.

The main challenge to outline and analyse the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers and its forerunner concerns the availability of documentary sources. Although the files of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers can be consulted in the Comintern Archives in Moscow, the latter ones do not constitute the archive of the ISH Secretariat but rather its unit in Moscow, the ISH Sovbureau. The documentary material available in Moscow consists of reports and letters authored by members of the ISH Secretariat and either sent to the RILU bureau in Berlin (before February 1933) which in turn forwarded the documents to the RILU headquarters in Moscow or were sent directly or via Paris (since March 1933) to Moscow. The correspondence of the ISH Secretariat with the national sections is mostly missing; some of it is filed in original or as copies in the archives of national intelligence and security authorities, others in the archives of national communist parties. On the other hand, dispatches from headquarters in Moscow as well as instructions and policy papers (usually as draft versions, often in several languages) are filed in the Comintern Archives.

The archives of the national sections of the ISH, the Interclubs and the revolutionary trade union opposition are in most cases missing or have been destroyed. This is at least the case with the British, German, Scandinavian and US American sections, although some material is localised in the party archives and in the archives of the national security authorities, which enables further investigations.

Most of the filed material in Moscow can be defined as "invisible" documents as they were not to be disseminated in public. However, as outlined in Appendix II, a critical evaluation of the material, especially the letters and reports, opens up for the identification of actors and networks. Such "invisible" documents are the reports and correspondence produced by the various units of the RILU, especially those of its bureau in Berlin. Other key documents are those produced by the central units of the Comintern, the Executive Committee (ECCI) and its Political Commission (PolCom), as these units made the final decisions concerning work among maritime transport workers.

Similarly "invisible" is the material of the various national security organisations of which those in Britain and Sweden contain much interesting material. British intelligence kept personal files and dossiers on several of the key activists of the ISH. The Swedish material, in turn, contains confiscated original and copied documents and correspondence. Police reports on the 1932 ISH World Congress, including draft versions of all resolutions passed at the congress, are filed in the archives of the Prussian state police of Schleswig-Holstein in Schleswig.

Important sources are also the "visible" material, namely the various flyers, leaflets, bulletins, magazines, journals, pamphlets and booklets published (sometimes cyclostyled and mimeographed) by local trade union opposition groups, Interclubs, and national sections. Consulting and evaluating the "visible" material is important as it enables a discussion about local, national and international activities and campaigns. However, none of the printed material has been systematically collected and archived. Some national archives and libraries carry copies of the publications of the national sections of the ISH but this usually an exception. For example, the Danish Labour Movement Archives has a collection of leaflets and documents on the Swedish seamen's strike of 1933, while the Finnish National Library, the archives of the Finnish state police and the People's Archives each holds copies of a different issue of *Majakka*, the magazine of the Finnish ISH section.

The source material on International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers provides a clue to their structural outline and operational frameworks. The RILU envisioned both organisations to operate on a global, national and local level, the difference being that the former organisation focussed on the dissemination of propaganda while the RILU projected the latter organisation as a 'mass-organisation' with affiliated national sections. The national sections constituted the branches of the global network of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers in the same way that the various national communist parties were 'satellites' in the Comintern's 'solar system'. In tandem with the hierarchical structure of the Comintern and the RILU, the core unit of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers was its Secretariat (ISH Secretariat) and its parallel, secret or illegal secretariat (ISH Illegal Secretariat), see Appendix I. A key issue was the extent to which the ISH Secretariat sought to influence, govern and control individual national sections. Contemporary security reports from the 1930s as well as investigations from the 1950s constructed the image of a hierarchical and top-down organisation. Recent critical studies on the Comintern, the RILU and various communist international mass and sympathising organisations have re-evaluated this image and instead

emphasised the national actors' capacity and opportunity for (limited) independent action.[15] How should one assess the ISH and its operations? To what extent did local and national conditions dictate strategic considerations, most importantly the organisation of the maritime transport workers and their fight for wage settlements? To what extent did the ISH Secretariat interfere at the national and local level? What room for manoeuvre did the activists have in the national sections and at a local level? What kind of interaction, asymmetrical and rudimentary perhaps, existed at different levels within the organisations? Should the International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers be analysed within a framework of connections or rather disconnections?

1 Identifying Individuals and the Use of Aliases and Pseudonyms

Working with material of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers (IPC-TW/IPAC-TW) and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) filed in the Comintern Archives is connected with several challenges. One is the fact that the files of the Red International of Labour

15 See, among others, Bernhard H. Bayerlein, "Das neue Babylon. Strukturen und Netzwerke der Kommunistischen Internationale und ihre Klassifizierung," *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (2004): 181–270; Morgan, "The Trouble with Revisionism"; Geoff Andrews, Nina Fisherman and Kevin Morgan (eds.), *Opening the Books: Essays on the social and cultural history of British communism* (London: Pluto Press, 1995); Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew (eds.), *The Comintern: A history of international communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1996); Tauno Saarela & Kimmo Rentola (eds.), *Communism: National & international* (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1998); Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe (eds.), *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919–43* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998); Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the wars* (London: Tauris, 2002); Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley (eds.), *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, "Revising Revisionism: A New Look at American Communism," *Academic Questions* 22, no. 4 (2009): 457–461; Jacob Zumoff, *Communist International and US Communism, 1919–1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (Basinstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Norman LaPorte and Ralf Hoffrogge (eds.), *Weimar Communism as Mass Movement, 1918–1933* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2017); Bernhard H. Bayerlein, "The 'Cultural International' as the Comintern's Intermediate Empire: International Mass and Sympathizing Organisations beyond Parties," in *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements and Global Politics, 1919–1939*, ed. Holger Weiss (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 28–88.

Unions (RILU) of opis 534 are only available on microfilm. Or, to be correct, this was the case until I conducted my last research in Moscow in November 2019 as I then, for the first time, received files with the original documents of opis 534. Thus, while I was able to make an examination of the external qualities of the documents (paper, ink, etc.), this was not possible during my earlier visits to Moscow. Another challenge is the – sometimes – poor quality of the rolls of microfilm. In addition, it is unclear whether a roll contains all documents physically contained in a folder. Finally, yet importantly, individual documents can have multiple page numbers, which means that they have been integrated and ordered at different times and may have been attached to other documents or files.

However, the biggest challenge is that several documents lack senders and receivers, usually even dating. In some cases, these are typed reports or letters containing the author's or authors' signatures or initials – usually an alias or a pseudonym – and which have been addressed to "Werter Genosse" (Best comrade) or "Liebe Freunde" (Dear friends). Some of the letters also contain an (sometimes handwritten) add "Für Alexander" (to Alexander), most likely to be identified as RILU General Secretary Solomon Abramovich Lozovsky (1878–1952) as he used the pseudonym Alexander. However, a critical analysis of such documents points to the fact that the document itself was not usually addressed directly to Lozovsky but that the receiving unit of the document, either the RILU Berlin Bureau or the RILU Secretariat in Moscow, made the add and passed the document to the notice of Lozovsky.

The identification of aliases and pseudonyms is crucial if an investigation focuses on the activities and perspectives of a particular actor. If, on the other hand, a study concentrates solely on reconstructing the structures and forms of the operations of an organisation, emphasis is on the collective actions and the ideological goals that the organisation *in corpore* says it stands for or wants to achieve. In this case, the ISH and its national sections would constitute the object of study and the individual persons remain in the background. Mariners go on strike, establish strike committees, the revolutionary opposition and/or the national sections plan activities, the ISH Secretariat issues orders and publishes guidelines and pamphlets. However, the source material for this study provides an opportunity to penetrate the facade of the collective and trace the actions of key actors. The ISH Secretariat counted a limited number of individuals who received instructions from liaison officers in Berlin or directly from the RILU Secretariat in Moscow. The ISH Secretariat decides to send an instructor to a country to intervene in the activities of a national section or to organise the management during a strike. Actors write letters and reports, and if one can identify the sender and the recipient, one can start the

reconstruction of an actor's network. Identifying the location of an actor is important if the person is a member of inner circle of an organisation: Was the report or letter written in Hamburg, Paris or Moscow? Who did the person meet, when and where? Finally, the identification of the individual behind a pseudonym allows, at best, localising and positioning the person in a historical context.

The use of aliases and pseudonyms was a precaution taken by the Comintern to hinder the identification of a person by the authorities, especially if the person was involved in illegal activities or travelled with a forged passport. If a person was enrolled in Moscow at one of the Comintern's higher education institutions, such as Lenin School, he or she was given a pseudonym. Others used the names of persons whose passport they were using. For example, the Surinamese communist Otto Huiswoud used the cover name Charles Woodson when he was secretary of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers or ITUCNW. At the same time, he carried a passport issued to Edward Mason. In his correspondence with the RILU Secretariat, he used the pseudonym Edward. The Dutch former ISH activist Joseph Schaap used the pseudonyms Fritz and Friman when he was engaged with the Wollweber League during the latter half of the 1930s. Ernst Wollweber used the aliases Schmidt while working at ISH Secretary in Copenhagen in 1934, and Ernst Behrend when stationed at the Interclub in Leningrad in 1934/35. Government security authorities, in turn, were well aware of the use of aliases and pseudonyms by the communists. The German security authorities, for example, circulated lists of known and suspected aliases and pseudonyms that they had managed to identify during the 1930s.

A systematic review of the ISH material archived in Moscow shows that it contains a limited group of senders. Some of them are easy to identify. Albert Walter used the initials Y and AW when signing his reports, while Adolf Shelley signed his letters and reports with either Adolf or the initial Ad. Max Ziese at the Berlin RILU Bureau used the alias *Paul*; the alias *George/Georges* was used by Adolf Shelley after the ISH Illegal Secretariat had moved to Paris, see further Appendix II.

A major challenge is the identification of the pseudonyms Henri/Henry, Leo, and André. According to Constance Margain, *Henry* or *Maurice Henry* was the pseudonym used by French communist Octave Rabaté (1899–1964) who Margain claims to have belonged to ISH leadership. Rabaté was a mechanic in his profession and was active in the metalworkers' union in France. From 1928 to 1932, he worked at the RILU headquarters, was its instructor in Spain (1928) and South America (1932) and was responsible, using the aliases *Augustine* and *Centurion*, for contacts to the Spanish-speaking world. The fact that a person

used many aliases and pseudonyms was typical for someone working in the Comintern or RILU apparatus.[16] Margain's interpretation is possible but a close analysis of the documents in Moscow reveal that *Henry/Henry Maurice* was the pseudonym of the Italian communist and ISH functionary Luigi Polano, see further Appendix II.

The problem with identifying the pseudonym *Henri/Henry* is that it is unclear whether it is one or two person(s) although I consider the pseudonym to refer to the same person as demonstrated in Appendix II. According to a report written in 1934, ISH leaders Adolf Shelley and Adolf Deter (*André*) noted that Comrade *Henry Maurice* had been elected to the secretariat "of our company" (i.e., the ISH) at the 1932 World Congress and the same Henry Maurice was then a member of the ISH Executive Committee.[17] According to British contemporary intelligence reports, the pseudonym *Henry* was used by Italian communist Luigi Polano.[18] According to Polano's personal file in Moscow, he had been an instructor for the Interclubs in Odessa, Novorossiysk and Batumi in the 1920s before moving to the RILU headquarters in Moscow. From 1932 he began to work for ISH as instructor under the pseudonym *Henri Maurice* in various European countries, including Spain and Portugal in the spring of 1932,[19] and from 1933 at the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow.[20] In Margain's dissertation, however, Polano plays a minor role and is not associated with the activities of the ISH in Southern Europe.

Nevertheless, the difficulty in the identification the pseudonym of *Henri* and *Henry* as Luigi Polano is that the contemporary sources give a contradictory picture. Most of the letters or reports are signed by *Henri*,[21] i.e., probably by Luigi Polano. Some specific documents refer to the pseudonym *Henry*, in

16 Constance Micalef Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer (1930–1937). Activités, parcours militants et résistance au nazisme d'un syndicat communisme de marins et dockers. Thèse pour obtenir le grade de docteur de l' université du Havre, discipline: Histoire, 2015 (HAL id: tel-01676981; submitted 7.1.2018), 56, 79, 194, 313.

17 Adolf and André to "Komfrakton des Vollzugsbüro der RGI," 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 253–266, RGASPI.

18 Schedule of the Principal Revolutionary Organisations Controlled by Moscow (end 1935), 20.4.1936, International Organisations of Communist Parties, KV 3/128, TNA.

19 Information in [Garan] Kouyaté's report to the politbureau of the PCF, Paris 18.5.1932, 517/1/1306, 56, RGASPI.

20 Biographica Luigi Polano, 26.7.1939, Luigi Polano personal file, 495/221/425, RGASPI. See further the entry on Luigi Polano ("H. Maurice") in Michael Buckmiller and Klaus Meschkat (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007).

21 Report from Albert Walter, 16.6.1931, 534/5/220, 176–190, RGASPI.

some cases even to both *Henri* and *Henry*.[22] In the former case, it may be that the writer meant Polano but used an English/German spelling of the pseudonym;[23] inter alia, both Shelley and Deter did this in their letters.[24] In one letters, however, reference is made to two separate persons who used the pseudonym *Henry*.[25] Unfortunately, I have not been able to establish the identity of the "second" or "other" Henry, although I assume that the author of the letter refers to one and the same person.

I my opinion, it is doubtful if Octave Rabaté really can be identified as the "other" *Henry*. One possible candidate could be Etkar André who used the pseudonym when working as a functionary at the Hamburg Interclub. According to information provided by André when the police interrogated him, he was responsible for the Interclub's international work from 1929 until he was arrested on March 5, 1933. In this capacity, he frequently travelled to Belgium and France; in the latter country, he claimed to have been responsible for organising the seamen in Le Havre and Marseille. His last assignment in France, however, came to an abrupt end when he was expelled by the French authorities in December 1932.[26] Whether and what pseudonym André used was not disclosed in the interrogation report. On the other hand, his stays in Belgium and France correlate with the assignments that *Henry*, according to Walter and Shelley, performed (or was blamed for not performing).[27] If André was *Henry*, it could also explain why *Henry*, i.e., Etkar André, commented on the Interclub's activities at the second plenum of the ISH Executive Committee in September 1931. Besides, Octave Rabaté had never worked for the Hamburg Interclub. On the other hand, *Henri* – and not *Henry* – was arrested by the French authorities in September 1932 and expelled a few months later,[28] charged with possession of a forged passport. Moreover, *Henry* figures in Hamburg in December 1932. However, it is quite possible that both Polano and André were arrested and expelled by the French authorities. Nevertheless, as noted above, the problem

22 Report on the second plenum of the ISH Executive Committee, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI; Henri to George Padmore, 3.8.1932, 534/5/231, 4, RGASPI.

23 Letter from Adolf [Shelley] to Alexander [Lozovsky], 5.10.1935, 534/5/243, 115, RGASPI. Shelley report in the letter that *Henry* arrived in Paris. This must have been Polano as subsequent letters were signed by both Adolf [Shelley] and Henri [Polano], see Appendix II.

24 See André [Deter] to Henri [Polano], 24.5.1937, and André to "Bruder Henry," 21.6.1937, both in 534/5/247, RGASPI.

25 Report from Adolf Shelley, 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 84–98, RGASPI.

26 Anklageschrift gegen Etkar André wegen Vorbereitung zum Hochverrat (9.2.1936–11.2.1936), 621-1/90_7, Staatsarchiv Hamburg.

27 Report by Albert Walter, 16.6.1931, 534/5/220, 176–190, RGASPI.

28 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," 5.9.1932, 534/4/405, 44–45, RGASPI.

with the hypothesis that *Henry* was Etkar André's alias is that the pseudonym *Henry* is also used after André was arrested in 1933.

Margain, who only uses Russian and German source material and relies on Krebs' statements, identifies *Leo* with certain a Léon Purman, who died in 1933.[29] However, this seems unlikely since the alias *Leo* signs letters and reports as late as 1934. *Leo* was a leading player in the RILU Berlin Bureau until 1933, and was Albert Walter's contact person and the person responsible for monitoring the operations of the IPAC-TW and the ISH. After moving to Copenhagen in 1933, he became a member of the ISH's (illegal) secretariat. In 1934, *Leo* was a member of the RILU Paris Bureau though still linked to the ISH. Contemporary British and German intelligence reports claim that *Leo* was the alias of Leo Smolianski alias *Leo Pechmann*.[30] Also, "Purmann" and "Smoljanski", i.e., Purman and Smolianski, were both members of the RILU Berlin Bureau, the latter one being nominated to the bureau by the ECCI in September 1930.[31] Margain, for her part, thinks that *Pechmann* was the pseudonym of a certain Hermann Schubert (1886–1938).[32] I think this is unlikely, as I have not found any such person in documents relating to the RILU Berlin Bureau.

I am equally critical of Margain's conclusion that the German communist Etkar André (1894–1936) used the alias *André*.[33] As noted above, Etkar André had worked for the ISH before the German police arrested him in March 1933. He the spent two years in concentration camp before and was executed after a show trial in 1936. What speaks against her identification is that the personal files of the Comintern demonstrate that the German communist Gustav Adolf Deter used the pseudonym *André* when he worked within ISH from 1933 to 1937.[34] Margain, on the other hand, rightly claims that Deter used the alias

29 Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 101.

30 Minutes 20.6.1934, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA; Schedule of the Principal Revolutionary Organisations Controlled by Moscow (end 1935), 20.4.1936, International Organisations of Communist Parties, KV 3/128, TNA. See also the notes on persons working for the RILU Berlin Bureau: Leow Smolianski, alias Pechmann, using the pseudonym 'Leow', [Handling IVA.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, odaterad rapport [filed 20.12.1941], 12, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2 – IV A 4, volym 169, SNA. It is likely that this is a translation of a German document.

31 Protokoll Nr 82 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des EKKI vom 20.9.1930, 495/5/52, § 3, RGASPI.

32 Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 79, 266.

33 Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 79.

34 See the personal files of Adolf Deter, 495/205/188 and 495/205/5434, RGASPI, as well as the note on Adolf Deter alias André in [Handling IVA.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, odaterad rapport [filed 20.12.1941], 12, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2 – IV A 4, volym 169, SNA. Also the entry on Gustav Adolf

Rudolf. In fact, Deter had been elected to the ISH Executive Committee in 1933 under the pseudonym *André Rudolf*![35] It is also likely that Deter used different cover names depending on his position when writing a report. As a member of the ISH secretariat, he figured under the alias *André*, among other things when he visited Sweden in 1935. On the other hand, he signed letters and reports as member of the RILU bureau in in Copenhagen with the alias *Rudolf/Rudolph*.[36]

2 The Negative Image: A Subversive Organisation for the World Revolution

At least the Finnish and Swedish security authorities received in September 1937 a report on the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. Compiled by the German security authorities, the report presented the organisation as an international sabotage organisation based in Copenhagen, which engaged in subversive agitation and spread communist propaganda among seafarers and harbour workers. According to the report, the organisation had about 300,000 members in the Soviet Union and about 100,000 in the rest of the world in 1934, "the numbers today are expected to be higher." In sixteen countries, ISH had affiliated red or communist-controlled maritime unions. In another twelve countries, its sections were said to be so-called Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition (RTUO) units within the maritime unions.[37]

The German security police defined the ISH to be an international communist sabotage organisation and accused it for being the mastermind behind series of terrorist acts against German, Italian and Japanese vessels. Its members placed dynamite charges with clock-set triggers on board a ship. The

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Deter in Buckmiller and Meschkat (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale*.

35 Adolf and André to "Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro der RGI," 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 253–266, RGASPI.

36 Leo and Rudolf to "Liebe Freunde," 6.12.1933, 534/4/460, 237–241, RGASPI.

37 Die Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter. ISH, überreicht im September 1937, EK-Valpo AMP I L 1 (2404), FNA. The German compilation of the organisation was also received by the Swedish security authorities, which shows that the German security authorities were keen to warn their Nordic counterparts of the communists' agitation among the seafarers and to call for coordinated activities against the alleged terrorist network, see Die Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter. ISH, überreicht im September 1937, and the translated version of the report, Översättning från tyska. Sjömännens och hamnarbetarnas international. ISH. Överlämnat i september 1937, svensk översättning 1947, Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 4, 476–500, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3, SNA.

intention was that the blast occurred after the vessel had left the port, creating maximum damage but not jeopardising the lives of its crew or passengers. A series of startling explosions on the high seas followed: the Italian freighter *Felice* sank in the Gulf of Taranto while the Japanese ship *Tajima Maru* sank on its way to Germany shortly after leaving Rotterdam. In addition, explosions damaged the German vessel *Claus Böge*, the Dutch *Westplein*, the Japanese *Kazi Maru* and the Romanian *Bessarabia*. The Germans took the incidents very seriously and suspected that the organisation included underground cells operating in Amsterdam, Bremen, Copenhagen, Danzig, Hamburg, Oslo, Riga, Rotterdam and Tallinn. In addition, they claimed that cells in Sweden had provided the dynamite for the sabotage actions.[38]

The German security authorities called on the Belgian, Dutch and Nordic police authorities to work together to trace the alleged communist terror network. However, the German security authorities' report on the ISH overlooked that the organisation no longer existed in September 1937. Instead, it turned out that the attacks had been carried out by a regular sabotage organisation set up in 1935 and headed by the German Ernst Wollweber. Nevertheless, the connection between the so-called Wollweber League or Wollweber Group, officially called the 'Organisation against Fascism and in Support of the USSR' but usually referred to as the Organisation Bernhard, and the ISH was not far-fetched. Wollweber held a leading position within the ISH until 1934 and all members of his organisation had previously been members of a national section of the ISH and a national communist party.[39] According to him, the objective of his

38 Rajmund Szubanski, *Sabotage Operations of the Prewar Anti-fascist League*, translation of the article "Ships are Sinking" in the Polish periodical *Morze* No. 3, March 1960, Warsaw, page 7, U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, New York, no date.

39 The first critical analysis on the operations of the Wollweber-organisation in Scandinavia as well as its non-linkage to the ISH is established in Lars Borgersrud, Wollweber-organisasjonen i Norge, PhD thesis, Oslo University, 1994. Originally, the Norwegian state police classified part of the original thesis. Twenty years later, Borgersrud received permission to publish the whole thesis, now available at http://www.larsborgersrud.no/boker/wollweber_komplett_b5.pdf (checked 1.8.2018). See also Lars Borgersrud, *Die Wollweber-Organisation und Norwegen* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2001). On its operations in Belgium and the Netherlands, see H. Dankaart and R. van Doorslaar, "De activiteiten van een communistische sabotagegroep in Antwerpen en Rotterdam: De organisatie Wollweber (1933–1939)," *Opstellen over de belgische arbeiderbeweging* 1 (1979): 129–160; Etienne Verhoeyen, " 'De zaak Block en Celis'. De moeizame relatie van de Antwerpse gerechtelijke politie met de Gestapo (1938 – 1941). Deel 1," in *Cahiers Inlichtingenstudies/ Cahiers d'études du renseignement* 2, eds. Marc Cools, E. Debruyne en F. Franceus (Antwerpen, Apeldoorn: Maklu, 2012), 15–72, and Alexander Lindemans, 'Terreur' in Antwerpen. De Wollwebergroep Revisited. MA thesis, Ghent University, 2014. On the Wollweber-organisation in Denmark and Sweden, see Erik Nørgaard, *Krigen før krigen.*

organisation was to implement militant anti-fascism in contrast to the earlier 'civil' anti-fascism of demonstrations and boycotts. Whether his superior and instigator in Moscow interpreted it in the same way is another matter as Soviet foreign policy and realpolitik seldom backed anti-fascist and anti-imperialist campaigns by the Comintern and RILU.

The German security authorities regarded the ISH to be a subversive organisation and a threat to the prevailing political and societal order. The negative image gained momentum after the Nazis seized power and the ban on the communists in Germany in 1933. An internal memorandum of the Geheime Staatspolizei (Gestapo) in 1936 labelled the organisation as particularly dangerous as it tried to convert mariners and port workers to communism and to organise them according to communist, meaning subversive, principles. The memorandum claimed that the organisation maintained a network of secret trustees aboard ships for the global dissemination of illegal literature. Furthermore, the memorandum outlined the organisation as hierarchically structured with an international central and a number of regional bureaus. Before 1933, the memorandum noted, the centre had been in Hamburg, then in Copenhagen from where it moved to Antwerp, and finally to Paris; its regional bureaus were located in Copenhagen, Odessa, Rotterdam, San Francisco and Vladivostok. Below the regional bureaus, there was a dense network of local nodes of operation, the International Seamen's Clubs or Interclubs, claimed to exist in all major ports around the globe, see Figure 1.[40]

The German security police based its analysis on data compiled from published material of the ISH and its national sections. The police would not have had access to internal documents as raids conducted in 1931 and 1932 on the ISH headquarters in Hamburg rarely resulted in the confiscation of classified material. When the German police authorities closed the operations in Hamburg in early March 1933, the ISH Secretariat had already moved its documents to a safe place and the police was never able to get hold on them. Consequently, the German security authorities were keen to update and clarify their information on the operations of the ISH. For this purpose, they used finks and informants, which the security authorities tried – and sometimes succeeded – to infiltrate into the organisation whose leadership was in exile in Copenhagen.

Wollweber-organisationen og skibssabotagerne (Lynge: Bogan, 1986), and Wilhelm Agrell, *Stora sabotageligan. Komintern och Sovjetunionens underjordiska nätverk i Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2016).

40 Behrends, Betrifft Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, Berlin 20.8.1936, 458/9/135, 56–57, RGASPI.

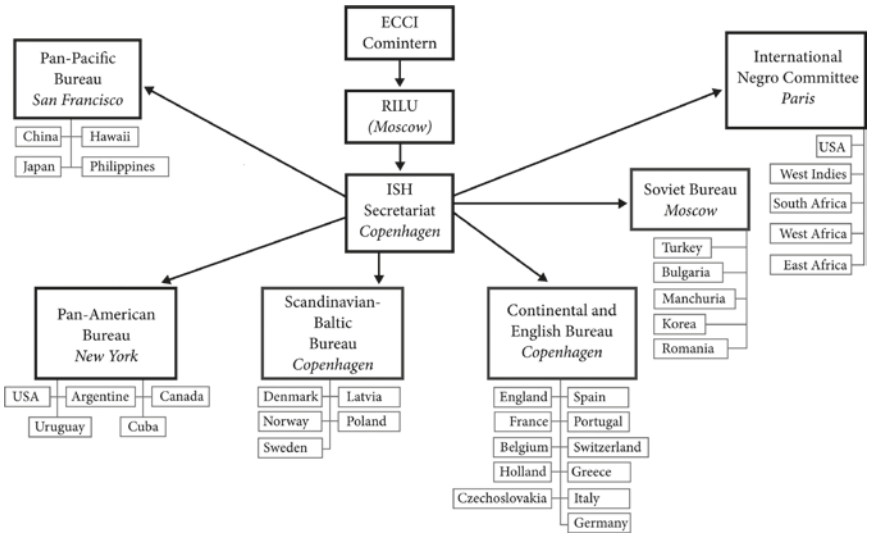

FIGURE 1 The organisation of the ISH according to the Gestapo in 1937. The figure is a modified version of a chart attached to the Gestapo report on the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH), *Die Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter – ISH*, sent to the Nordic police authorities in September 1937. A copy of the report is filed in the archives of the Swedish state police, SÄPO VIII 3 Interklub och Röd Marin Pärm 5, SNA; another copy of the chart is filed in the German confiscated archival material, 458/9/130, 9, RGASPI. The German outline of the global outreach of the ISH in 1937 is pure fiction and at best resembles the situation in ca 1933/34 when the ISH Secretariat was located in Copenhagen, the ISH Secretariat was moved to Antwerp during spring 1934. Apart from its bureau in Moscow, the ISH Sovbureau, the other regional bureaus and units listed in the chart never existed as units attached to the ISH. The 'International Negro Committee' was a separate unit attached to the Red International of Labour Unions or RILU, known as the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW); its headquarters was moved from Hamburg to Paris in 1933 and relocated to Antwerp in 1934, to Amsterdam in 1935, and back to Paris in 1936. The 'Pan-Pacific Bureau' is identical with the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of the RILU, a 'Pan-American Bureau' and 'Continental and English Bureau' never existed.

The Gestapo's most important informant was the German Richard Krebs. He had worked for ISH before the Nazi takeover and had a good insight on the activities of the Interclubs; he had been in charge of the Interclubs in Bremen and Hamburg and had worked as an ISH instructor in England and Scandinavia.[41] However, he did not belong to the inner circle of the ISH. In

41 "Valtin, Jan (Krebs, Richard)," in *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, eds. Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 2008), 963.

addition, his information reflected the state of affairs in late 1933. Krebs could not have had any information on the subsequent operational changes of the ISH as the Hamburg police arrested him in November 1933 and he then spent a couple of years in a concentration camp. After his release, he started to cooperate with the Gestapo and provided them information on the ISH. However, rather than providing up to date information of an existing organisation, the Gestapo created a phantom image about a global propaganda and sabotage organisation in 1936/37 that no longer existed when the German security police called for international countermeasures. Chased by both the Nazis and communists, Krebs managed to flee to the United States where he published his autobiography under the pseudonym Jan Valtin.[42]

Krebs continued to paint the phantom image of ISH as a subversive organisation in his autobiography and in later interrogations with the US Army security service, the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps. The autobiography *Out of the Night* was published in 1941 and immediately became a bestseller, and was judged by historians during the Cold War to give an authentic picture of the organisation.[43] Thus, in the Cold War standard work on the Comintern, Günther Nollau relied entirely on Krebs'/Valtin's descriptions of the ISH as did Michael Rohrwasser in his standard work on the revelations of the renegades on the inner essence of the Comintern and Stalinism.[44] The tenor in *Out of the Night* was negative, highlighting the poisoned atmosphere in and illegality of the organisation. Most notably, Krebs/Valtin portrayed Ernst Wollweber as an unscrupulous tactician who protected no means and sacrificed human life to achieve his goals.

One of the early attempts to correct the phantom image of Krebs/Valtin was the Danish communist Richard Jensen. He was one of the leaders of the Danish Stokers' Union and belonged to inner circle of the ISH during the 1930s. In his publication *Frem i lyset*, Jensen claimed that Krebs had been a Gestapo agent and that his revelations about ISH were pure fiction. Yet few historians have made use of Jensen's pamphlet as well as his own autobiography, *En omtumlet tilværelse*, in their assessment of communist engagement with the radical waterfront during the interwar period.[45] One of the few who did so

42 Dieter Nelles, "Die Rehabilitation eines Gestapo-Agenten: Richard Krebs/Jan Valtin," *Sozial.Geschichte* 18, no. 3 (2003): 148–158.

43 Jan Valtin, *Out of the Night* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1941).

44 Günther Nollau, *International Communism and World Revolution: History & Methods* (New York: Praeger, 1961); Michael Rohrwasser, *Der Stalinismus und die Renegaten. Die Literatur der Exkommunisten* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991). See further John V. Fleming, *The Anti-Communist Manifestos. Four books that shaped the Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

45 Richard Jensen, *Frem i lyset. Jan Valtin Gestapo Agent Nr. 51* (Copenhagen: Prior, 1946); Richard Jensen, *En omtumlet tilværelse* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1957), 107. Similar claims

was the Danish journalist Erik Nørgaard who, in his four-part work on the ISH and the activities of the Wollweber League in Denmark, sought to combine the testimonies of Krebs/Valtin and Jensen, added with Danish archival material and interviews with Richard Jensen.[46] So did Per Madsen in his essay on the activities of the Wollweber League in Norway.[47]

A critical re-evaluation of Krebs' autobiography only started after the end of the Cold War. Based on German archival material, Dieter Nelles provided a critical assessment of Krebs' activities after 1933, especially his relationship with the Gestapo, and argued that Krebs had been a Gestapo agent in 1937 and 1938. In addition, he questioned the reliability and validity of Kreb's autobiography in toto and dismissed it as fiction.[48] Nelles' negative account was subsequently challenged by Ernst von Waldenfels who was the first to use German, Russian, British and American archival material in his discussion of Kreb's engagement with the ISH and his activities after 1933.[49] Waldenfels' attempt to neutralise Krebs' activities after he was jailed by the Gestapo in 1933 has been criticised by Dieter Nelles as being an uncritical interpretation of the German and Russian sources.[50] Nelles' critical contention is supported by Lars Borgersrud and Guillaume Bourgeois, who claim that Krebs' autobiography is heavily biased, subjective and unreliable, if not sometimes even fictitious.[51] Interestingly, however, Vernon L. Pedersen claims the opposite: "it has proven accurate where it can be compared with Party records."[52] Constance Margain,

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were also presented in Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *The Great Conspiracy Against Russia* (New York: Boni and Gaer, 1946), 126–127.

46 Erik Nørgaard, *Revolutionen der udeblev. Kominterns virksomhed med Ernst Wollweber og Richard Jensen i forgrunden* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1975); Erik Nørgaard, *Drømmen om verdensrevolutionen: Komintern og de revolutionære søfolk* (Lynge: Bogan, 1985); Erik Nørgaard, *Truslen om krig. Komintern, Folkefront og 5. Kolonne* (Lynge: Bogan, 1985); Erik Nørgaard, *Krigen før krigen. Wollweber-organisationen og skibssabotagerne* (Lynge: Bogan, 1986); and Erik Nørgaard, *Krig og slutspil. Gestapo og dansk politi mod Kominterns »bombefolk«* (Lynge: Bogan, 1986).

47 Per Madsen, "Nøytralitet og ettergivenhet," *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie* 2 (1982): 121–136.

48 Dieter Nelles, "Jan Valtins >>Tagebuch der Hölle<< – Legende und Wirklichkeit eines Schlüsselromans der Totalitarismustheorie," *1999 Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 9, no. 1 (1994): 11–45.

49 Ernst von Waldenfels, *Der Spion der aus Deutschland kam. Das geheime Leben des Seemanns Richard Krebs* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2002).

50 Nelles, "Die Rehabilitation eines Gestapo-Agenten."

51 Borgersrud, Wollweber-organisasjonen; Guillaume Bourgeois, 'Sans patrie ni frontières de Jan Valtin: l'affaire de presse et le secret bien gardé des services spéciaux', *Le temps des médias* 16, no. 1 (2011): 19–51.

52 Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, xiii.

too, makes use of Krebs' autobiography ("autobiographie romancée") in her reconstruction of the ISH.[53]

The main problem with Krebs' account is that his autobiography is fictitious. Already in his reply when interrogated by the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps in 1950, Krebs stressed that his book had been written as an adventure story and contained several deliberate distortions and inaccuracies,[54] especially about the role of the key ISH leaders Albert Walter, Adolf Shelley and Ernst Wollweber. I therefore decided not to make use the autobiography as some of his claims, such as his account of James W. Ford's and George Padmore's interaction with the ISH and the Hamburg Interclub are distorted and extremely unreliable. Instead, the evaluation of existing documentary sources and published contemporary texts gives enough empirical data to address the complex history of the ISH and its forerunner, the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers.

The insights of Nørgaard and above all those of Nelles and Borgersrud open for a re-evaluation of ISH. All three authors stress the difference between ISH and the Wollweber League. While the former was a radical organisation for revolutionary trade union opposition groups within maritime transport workers' unions as well as red unions, the latter was explicitly and solely a militant anti-fascist sabotage organisation. The former organisation originated from the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Worker and the Comintern leadership liquidated it in 1937. The latter was set up in the autumn of 1935 as a secret organisation officially detached from the Comintern and the Communist parties and remained active until 1939/1940 when the German, Danish and Swedish police authorities managed to arrest most of its activists including Ernst Wollweber. What connected the two organisations were individual actors – all leading members of Wollweber League were mariners and had a background in the national sections of the ISH.

The legacy of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers was not its claimed subversive outreach but its role in the radicalisation of the global waterfront and militant engagement during the Spanish Civil War. The constant calls for international proletarian solidarity during the 1920s and 1930s had radicalised a generation of mariners and resulted in them enlisting as volunteers in the International Brigades. Most of them either were communists or had been (non-communist) members of the revolutionary trade union opposition; most of them had been radicalised during the 1930s as an outcome of the agitation

53 Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer.

54 CIC (Army Counter Intelligence Corps) FO 10501 Report R-G44-50, 2, RG 319 IRR, Personal File; Box 124 BB, National Archive (USA).

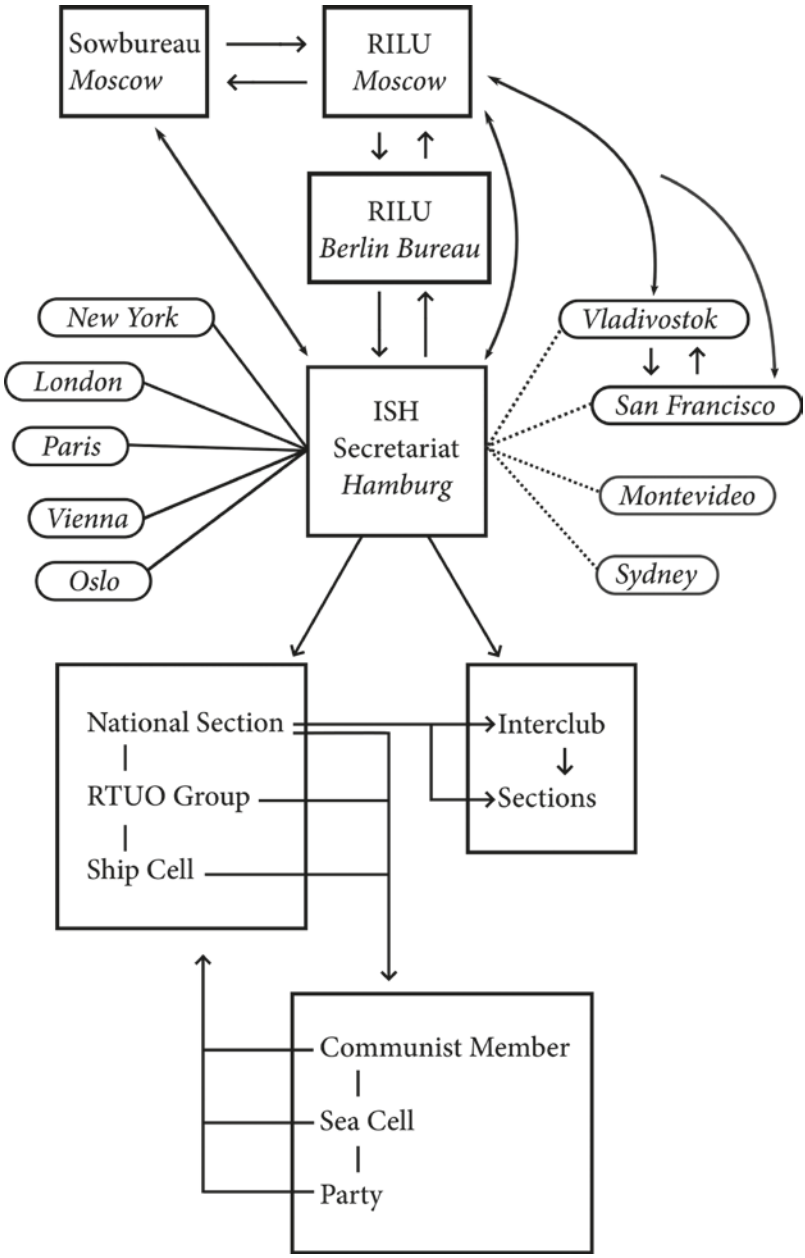

FIGURE 2 Organisational chart of the ISH, ca 1932. The diagram shows the position of the ISH Secretariat within the hierarchy of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), the RILU Berlin Bureau and the ISH Sovbureau. The ISH Secretariat in Hamburg had direct contacts, marked [———], with its major sub-divisions, initially referred to as regional secretariats, in London (headquarters of the SMM), New York (headquarters of the MWIU), Paris (headquarters of the ISH Latin Secretariat), Oslo (headquarters of the ISH Scandinavian Secretariat until

and propaganda efforts of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, its national sections and the Interclubs. This book, therefore, seeks to present an alternative history of organising and radicalising the maritime transport workers during the interwar period. Focus is on the macro and intermediate level, the international headquarters (secretariat) of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers and its forerunner. Both units constituted the central node within their own circuit (macro level) but were at the same time intermediate units within the hierarchical structures of the RILU (and ultimately, the Comintern and the Kremlin). The circuit of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers and its forerunner consisted of its regional bureaus, national sections and local groups and activists. The local Port Bureaus and Interclubs, whose main task was to agitate among foreign crew members while visiting a port, were an exception as they in theory but seldom in practice were not subordinate to the regional bureaus and national sections but constituted extraterritorial units monitored by the International Secretariat. On the other hand, the local opposition group of the maritime transport workers' unions consisted of members of the communist party, non-party members and (seldom) members of other parties; seamen and stokers, who were members of the communist party, were part of the party's sea cell or unit for the mariners. The communist party, in turn, was a section of the Comintern, which centre was located in Moscow and with operated regional bureaus at various locations outside Soviet Russia, including Berlin, Buenos Aires, London, New York, Paris and Shanghai to oversee the activities of the national parties, see further Figure 2.

April 1930, and headquarters of the revolutionary trade union opposition of the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union), and Vienna (headquarters of the ISH Danube Committee). Connections to other regional hubs were indirect, marked [···], and the ISH Secretariat had few means of intervening or monitoring activities there, including Montevideo (headquarters of the CMPLA as well as site of an Interclub), San Francisco (headquarters of the American Bureau of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat as well as site of an Interclub), Sydney (site of an Interclub), and Vladivostok (headquarters of the TOST as well as site of an Interclub). The ISH Secretariat instructed the national sections and, ideally, also the International Seamen's Clubs or Interclubs. A national section incorporated the revolutionary trade union opposition (RTUO) as well as the ship cells, i.e., a RTUO unit on board a vessel. The waterfront units of a national communist party, in turn, comprised the communist members of the RTUO and the sea cell, i.e., party members who were also members in a union. The Interclubs, in turn, consisted of sections for different language or national groups, such as a Baltic, colonial, English, French, German, Italian or Scandinavian one. Ideally, an Interclub was controlled by the ISH Secretariat but operated by a local group of a national section.

The history of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers and its forerunner is the sum of the actions of their headquarters, their national sections, and actors engaged at various levels of the organisations. The units established and operated a complex and multi-layered network in which various actors tried to control, direct, implement and monitor activities and campaigns, mediate directives, and author guidelines and pamphlets. Only a few of them acted under their own name, instructions and resolutions were usually signed by the "Secretariat" or a "national" section. Some of them were visible spokespersons for the organisation in places and countries where they could operate legally, others were invisible and left only traces in internal reports or the archives of the security authorities, in general by using an alias or pseudonym, sometimes even signing a document in their own name. However, the sum of the preserved and available documentation for this book makes it possible to grasp the actors behind the organisations, to identify and reconstruct their networks and actions, and to define the space they both created and worked in and which limitations they sought to challenge and overcome.

3 The Limitations of the Sources – The Absence of Women and Individual Voices

The history of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers and its forerunner consists of multiple flows and networks, actors and spaces. Members at headquarters and the regional bureaus drafted directives and guidelines, discussed them behind closed doors in smaller circles and disseminated them to the national sections and local groups, who in turn reported to the regional bureau and headquarters about successful and failed actions and campaigns. Local liaison officers received instructions from headquarters to carry out, but in practice perhaps never did. Some actors are visible; many remain invisible in the written sources.

The documents and texts on which this study is based were written by men and concerned men. Yet it is not a conscious choice or a determined attempt to neglect gender or the perspective of women – women worked aboard ships, they resided in the ports, many of the mariners and harbour workers were married, women frequented, visited and occasionally operated the Interclubs. Nevertheless, they do not appear in the documentary sources albeit sometimes on photos and in texts published in contemporary journals and magazines.
International as well as national maritime transport workers' organisations, communist as well as non-communist ones, were predominantly male domains during the interwar period. Most, if not all published material of the ISH and its sections is gendered – written by men, addressed to men, always

concerning class struggle and the confrontation with the (male) union leaders. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there was a woman next to (almost) all the male actors who figure in this book. Sometimes they pop up, for example, when Luigi Polano travelled to France together with his wife and children or when Albert Walter refused to go into political exile in 1934 because he did not want to leave his mother alone in Hamburg. However, there are few traces of women in the source material of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers or the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. It is likely that the technical staff of both the ISH Secretariat as well as in the secretariats of the national sections listed women, such as stenographers and technical assistants, but they are seldom if ever mentioned. On the other hand, the government security authorities collected information about women who were functionaries in communist organisations. One of them was Gertrud Gläser, who was employed by the editorial board of the *Norddeutsches Echo* in Hamburg and worked for the ISH Secretariat during the evenings. After the ISH had moved its (illegal) secretariat to Copenhagen in March/April 1933, she and her husband Richard Rast worked full-time in the ISH office.[55] Other women participated in the design of print articles – Hermine Krebs, wife of Richard Krebs, drew caricatures for German (and Danish?) pamphlets and magazines published by the Hamburg Interclub and the ISH (illegal) Secretariat in Copenhagen. It is difficult to identify her drawings as she did not sign them.

The voices of rank-and-file maritime transport workers is as difficult to detect in the documentary sources. Maritime transport workers worked on board ships and in the ports. A range of associations and trade unions safeguarded the interests of these two separate occupational groups. This poses a challenge for a study of the politicisation of maritime transport workers during the interwar period. Mariners and harbour workers may briefly meet one another when a the vessel calls at a port. Nevertheless, their situation differs markedly when they reside in the same place as mariners then disembark the ship and are not working while harbour workers are at work. The reverse situation applies when the ship leaves the port. The meetings of mariners and harbour workers on land are therefore asymmetrical. A foreign mariner, i.e., one who is not a resident of the locality, is staying ashore either because he is spending his leisure time and then returns to the same vessel or because he has disembarked and is waiting to board a new ship. If the disembarked mariner is lucky, the waiting time on land is a short one; if he has bad luck, it will be a long one

55 [Handling IVA.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, odaterad rapport [registrerad 20.12.1941], 16, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2 – IV A 4, volym 169, SNA.

and he is unemployed. A mariner who lives in the port may choose to visit his family and stay for a period at home, but this choice may also be an enforced one if there are no jobs on board the ships. Thus, for mariner, time spent ashore is an intermediate one or a period of waiting. The harbour worker, on the other hand works in the port and his intermediate time is the period when there is no demand for his work in the harbour.

4 Radicalising Maritime Transport Workers during the Age of Steamships

The 'transport revolution' that steam power made possible during the 19th century meant a significant increase in high sea shipping. World tonnage increased exponentially, the frequency of travel also, the transportation times shrunk and the connections became regular and followed schedules. The maritime transport system was undergoing a major change following the introduction of steamers, adding a completely new category of occupations below deck. Among others, as trimmers who shovelled coal to the stokers who, in turn, shovelled the coal into the boiler, as well as machine personnel such as oilers, donkey men and engineers. The crews above and below deck on the vessels of the major interwar merchant fleets, including the British, French, German, Norwegian and US American, were multinational and at the same time strictly hierarchical and segregated. At the top where the white seamen followed by the white stokers who were members of a national union. At the bottom was the non-white unorganised and low-paid auxiliary staff who worked below deck. The recruitment of mariners re-enforced the hierarchical segregation on board the vessels, as is reflected in the social composition on board Scandinavian steamers. Seamen and sailors were recruited mainly from the coastal population while the crew below deck was recruited from the lower strata of cities and industrial communities. Maritime law regulated life on board the merchant fleet. In practice, the captain ruled his ship and the crew were his subordinates. The captain was responsible to the shipowners; his task was to ensure that the ship and its cargo were transported from point A to point B. A member of the crew could easily be replaced, he was not allowed to leave the ship without the permission of the captain and refusal to obey was interpreted and punished as mutiny.[56]

56 See further, among others, Diane Frost (ed.), *Ethnic Labour and British Imperial Trade: A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the UK* (London: Routledge, 1995); Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalising Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, 1870–1945* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

The steam and transport revolution propelled the collective organisation of (white) mariners and the establishment of trade unions for the various occupational groups on board steamers, in general one for the seamen and another for the stokers. Later, trade unions were also set up for other staff groups who worked aboard a ship, such as the deck and kitchen staff. Their objective was to improve and/or defend the working conditions and salaries of their own members; the idea of "proletarian solidarity" or cooperation across national borders and between different unions was seldom articulated before 1914. Also, the collaboration between the seamen's and stokers' unions was initially hardly existing as a consequence of the strict hierarchy on board the steamers.[57]

The steam and transport revolution also affected the waterfront of the port cities. The harbour areas diversified due to the expansion of freight and passenger traffic across the seas, resulting in separate areas for free trade, passengers, general cargo, mass cargo, coal, oil, industrial products and warehousing. In addition, there were private loading places. The diversification in the various ports was equalled by the emergence of various stowage, freight and handling companies that employed stevedores that loaded and unloaded the vessels. Other parts of the port areas were occupied by the shipyards and the docks with their various occupational groups; some of the shipyards built new vessels, others repaired or broke up old ones. The stevedores and others who were engaged in the loading and unloading of the ships were picked from the ever-expanding reserve made up of unskilled labourers who had arrived in the port city in the hope of a better life. They were hired on chords, gathered in the morning at the exclamation offices and competed among themselves to get a job. There were no common interests that would have unified the waterfront; the dock, harbour and yard workers each formed unions to defend their own interests.[58]

The history of trade unionism among mariners or harbour workers during the first half of the twentieth century is usually framed in a local and national context. Local struggles resulted in the emergence of the various national unions, the struggles of the national unions resulted in improved working

57 See further the general observations in Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Abingdon, Oxon & New York: Ashgate, 2003); Jan van Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labour History: A State of the Art* (Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2006); Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Andreas Bieler and Ingemar Lindberg (eds.), *Global Restructuring, Labour and the Challenges for Transnational Solidarity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

58 See further Alice Mah, *Port Cities and Global Legacies: Urban Identity, Waterfront Work, and Radicalism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

conditions and wages, the introduction of an 8-hour working day and paid vacation, sick pay and retirement pension. The history of trade unions is intimately linked to the growth of the welfare state in its various frames and shapes in the Global North as well as the Global South. The fight for better living and working conditions took place on two arenas, namely the local and the national. Strikes are local or national, their outcome and effects are local or national. Individual shipping companies are boycotted, negotiations are held with shipowners and the representatives of the shipping industry. The juridical and legislative framework is national; maritime laws were discussed at and enacted by national parliaments.[59]

The national framework was challenged by the emergence of international trade unions such as the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres (founded 1901) and its successors, the International Federation of Trade Unions or the Amsterdam International (IFTU; founded 1919). Equally important were the various supra-national industrial organisations or International Trade Secretariats, among others the International Transport Workers' Federation or ITF, founded in 1896 as an association for trade unions in the transport industry. However, the hallmark of engagements of ITF during the interwar period was that it did not seek to confront the national framework for trade union activities; instead, the ITF acted primarily as a trans- and international forum for national trade union leaders.[60]

The capacities of the ITF to intervene in local and national conflicts were limited during the interwar period. This was a consequence of the scope of action of its affiliated member associations and unions as they were bound to national territory and legislation. Attempts by the ITF to coordinate trans- and international boycotts and support campaigns were often blocked due conflicting interests of the various national unions. Most notable, however, was the attitude of the ITF to whether the struggle for better living and wage conditions on board and ashore was merely a union issue or whether it was also a political one. This question had already divided national unions. At one end were the syndicalists who claimed that the union was the only means of

59 See further Sam Davies, Colin J. Davies, David de Vries, Lex Heerma van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.), *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790 – 1970, 2 vols.* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2000). Also Heather Goodall, "Port Politics: Indian Seamen, Australian Unions and Indonesian Independence, 1945–47," *Labour History* 94 (2008): 43–68; Lynn Schler, "Transnationalism and nationalism in the Nigerian Seamen's Union," *African Identities* 7, no. 3 (2009): 387–398.

60 For a general outline, see Marcel van der Linden, "Trade Unions," in *Handbook Global History of Work*, eds. Karin Hofmeester and Marcel van der Linden (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 551–570.

waging the class struggle to abolish the capitalist state. At the other end were the socialists (later: social democrats) who decided to distinguish between trade union and political party work: the trade union would focus on the interests of its members while the party was to spearhead the change towards a socialist society in parliament. The communists took an intermediate position: all union struggle was also political and the party would strive for the abolition of the capitalist order and the bourgeois state through political and extra-parliamentary action.

Trade union work among and union organisation of mariners, especially, was a challenge. The mariner's profession was (and is) by definition transboundary; they were and are translocal and transnational globetrotters with multiple identities. They spend a large part of the year away from their place of residence. The ship constituted, on the one hand, a closed 'national' territory: National maritime law was applied according to the flag of the vessel. On the other hand, the crew on merchant vessels was a multinational group of individuals, some with rights and being members of unions, others defined as foreigners who were excluded from membership in the national unions of the vessel's flag. Mariners encountered new cultures, ideas, people and practices during their travels: On board the ship and ashore in foreign ports. Union functionaries and officials, on the other hand, operated in specific locations and national contexts. This posed structural barriers for union work among mariners. They seldom resided for longer periods at home or were unemployed and could not pay the membership fee to the union. Trade union work, on the other hand, was more or less impossible on board; instead, it would take place on land. The crux of the matter was how to politicise mariners and get them to join the local section of a national union if they were home for only a short period. The politicisation and radicalisation among maritime transport workers started during the age of the steamship. In the wake of the division of the working class during the First World War, some of them came to uphold the communist credo of an uncompromising class struggle to liberate the proletariat from the exploitation of capitalists and capitalism.[61]

61 David Featherstone, "The spatial politics of the past unbound: transnational networks and the making of political identities," *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 7, no. 4 (2007): 430–452; Jonathan Hyslop, "The Politics of Disembarkation: Empire, Shipping and Labor in the Port of Durban, 1897–1947," I*nternational Labor and Working-Class History* 93 (2018): 176–200.

PART 1

The International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers

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Introduction to Part 1

The principal aim of the Bolsheviks and the Third (Communist) International or Comintern in the early years after the Great War was to ignite and promote World Revolution by supporting uncompromising class struggle on a global scale. Although revolutions had failed in Finland, Germany, Estonia and Hungary in 1918/1919, the Bolsheviks and their comrades in Moscow clung to the idea of spreading the Revolution to Europe until it faded away with the failed attempts in Germany and Bulgaria in 1923. Although it seemed unlikely that the revolutionary, i.e., communist, working-class movement would take power in the West, a new promising territory for igniting the revolutionary spark was sighted among the 'semi-colonial' and 'colonial' exploited workers of the East – in Central Asia, China, Korea, Indochina, India and Indonesia. The vision of World Revolution turned global in the aftermath of the Second World Congress of the Comintern when the delegates rushed to Baku in Azerbaijan and attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920. While the founding of the Comintern in 1919 marked the beginning of the Western or European and North American dimension of interwar radical international proletarian solidarity, the Baku Congress in 1920 paved the way for its global dimension. Consequently, World Revolution and the freedom of the toiling masses from capitalist exploitation was to remain on top of the agenda of the communists during the coming decade(s).[1]

Nevertheless, it was not the idea of World Revolution that constituted the framework for the communist agenda outside Russia after 1917. A deep gorge had divided the labour movement into two camps due to the fateful nationalistic turn of the European labour parties in 1914. Denouncing the leaders of the labour parties as betrayers of the workers and for being the lackeys of the bourgeoisie, capitalists and warmongers, the ultra-left minority defined itself as the true and only champion of class struggle and propagators of proletarian solidarity. Although the ultra-left minority – soon to be known as the communists – established national political parties, contested parliamentary elections and engaged in political activities all over the world wherever it was

1 Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism. An historical introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). On the Baku Congress and its aftermath, see Mario Kessler, Für unsere und eure Freiheit. Der Kongress der Ostvölker in Baku nach 100 Jahren, in: Internationales Willi Münzenberg Forum, 14.8.2020, https://www.muenzenbergforum.de/exponat/fuer-unsere-und-eure-freiheit/ (checked 18.12.2020).

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legally possible, its guiding line was the doctrine of revolutionary socialism. By this, they declared that revolutionary upheaval – World Revolution – was a necessary precondition for the structural changes to transform a capitalist system into a socialist and eventually a communist one. Mainstream labour – socialist or social democratic – parties would in their party programmes have paragraphs mentioning class struggle and upheaval but had already before 1914 moved towards what their ultra-left critics defined as reformism, namely working within the parliamentary system and through existing political institutions to achieve political, economic and social changes in society.[2]

The rift of the working-class affected not only the socialist parties but also the labour and trade unions. These two were not necessary intertwined before 1914. While the dominant political organisation of the working class, the labour party, split into (at least) two rivalling blocs of mainstream and majority socialist and minority ultra-left ones, the labour union movement comprised of rivalling anarchist, Christian, craft, socialist and syndicalist directions. Anarchist and syndicalist groups and associations rejected political work through parties and parliamentary politics in contrast to the Christian and socialist ones; syndicalists regarded the general strike to be the supreme revolutionary weapon. Globally, it was syndicalism rather than socialism, which was the leitmotiv of revolutionary industrial unionism before 1914. Strong syndicalist organisations had emerged in Europe, North and South America, most notably the Confédération générale du travail or CGT in France and the Industrial Workers of the World or IWW in North America. In other countries, socialist labour unions dominated and socialists controlled the national trade union organisations such as the Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (ADGB) in Germany and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the United Kingdom. This was also the case with the umbrella organisations of national and industrial labour unions, the International Federation of Trade Unions or IFTU. Established in 1903, the IFTU had its headquarters in Amsterdam.[3]

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2 Werner Schmidt, *Kommunismens rötter i första världskrigets historiska rum. En studie kring arbetarrörelsens historiska misslyckande* (Stockholm: B. Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 1996); Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The history of the left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism, and Two World Wars* (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006); Neil Redfern, "The Comintern and Imperialism: A Balance Sheet," *Journal of Labor and Society* 20 (2017): 43–60.

3 See further Dimitris Stevis, "Global Union Organisations, 1889–2019: The Weight of History and the Challenges of the Present," in *The Internationalization of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers' Movements and the ILO since 1919*, eds. Stefano Bellucci and Holger Weiss (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 25–28.

The IFTU had strong links with the Second International, renamed Labour and Socialist International (LSI) in 1923, although the IFTU comprised of socialist as well as non-political organisations. However, the IFTU congress in Amsterdam in July 1919 cemented the socialist orientation of the organisation. This congress also paved the way for defining the ITFU and its member organisations as bulwarks against the confrontations of the ultra-left minority, syndicalist or non-political members within the unions.[4] The minority groups constituted the opposition within the unions and they became the main target for Bolshevik and communist agitation and propaganda. If the establishment of the Comintern in 1919 propelled the political split of the working-class movement, the Comintern further deepened the rift through the establishment of the International Trade Union Council or ITUC in 1920. In part, this was an effort of the communists to pave the way for a compromise between their concept of the revolutionary party and the syndicalist demand for union autonomy. The main objective of the Bolsheviks and communists was to impel individual unions and federations of unions to break with the IFTU and to join an envisioned 'red' international of labour unions. This process culminated in July 1921 with the founding of the Red International of Labour Unions or RILU in Moscow. While syndicalist delegates fiercely opposed the connections between the RILU and the Comintern, the Congress approved a resolution with manifested the intimate links between the two organisations as well as the unity between revolutionary unions and communist parties on the national level.[5]

The International Trade Secretariats were a main target in the tug of war between the RILU and the IFTU. Existing since the 1890s, the International Trade Secretariats were confederations of autonomous, national trade unions of certain branches, craft, and industry or employee groups. Peter Rüttgers distinguishes between two early types of trade secretariats, namely those representing status-oriented professions and those representing branches or industries. Soon, however, the branch principle dominated and became an important prerequisite for the trade secretariats. In 1913, the IFTU registered 32 trade secretariats, most of them comprising only European trade unions although some also listed trade unions in the USA as member associations.[6]

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4 See further Geert Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International. The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913–1943* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

5 See further Ralph Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism. An International Comparative Analysis* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Reiner Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) 1920–1937* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 2016).

6 Peter Rütters, "International Trade Secretariats – Origins, Development, Activities," in *International Trade Union Organisations. Inventory of the Archive of Social Democracy and the Library of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, eds. Peter Rütters, Michael Schneider, Erwin

One of the largest and most influential International Trade Secretariat was the International Transport Workers' Federation or ITF.[7] With the exception of the ITF, national labour unions and their international organisations had limited, if any, global aspirations and appeared in the early 1920s as exclusively white and mostly male dominated.[8] Socialists controlled most of the International Trade Secretariats and as an attempt to counteract the influence of the ultra-left minority, the ITFU stipulated in 1922 that only an IFTU-affiliated union could join an International Trade Secretariat.[9]

The establishment of the RILU, the communist agenda of exporting the World Revolution to the colonial and semi-colonial countries, combined with their anti-racialist and anti-discriminatory demands of opening the unions for non-white members, was a challenge the international trade union movement. The RILU developed a double strategy for its global outreach. The core objective was not the establishment of independent, rivalling units outside a trade union; rather, the aim was to unify the opposition within a union under the leadership of the communist fraction[10]. The first part of the grand strategy focused on internal mobilisation within the unions. The RILU ordered the communist fractions within a union to establish cells at the workplaces. The cells would form the core unit of the revolutionary trade union opposition, and the communist members were to be in control of the cell but at the same time be subordinated to the national communist party apparatus. The revolutionary trade union opposition was to apply the 'United front from below'-tactic which basically meant attacking and challenging the (socialist) leadership of the unions while at the same time cooperating with socialist, syndicalist or even Christian and non-partisan rank-and-file members.[11]

Schweißhelm, Rüdiger Zimmermann (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, no date), 9–27, available at http://library.fes.de/library/netzquelle/intgw/geschichte/pdf/ruetters_e.pdf (assessed 24.4.2020).

7 On the ITF, see further *The International Transport Workers Federation 1914–1945: The Edo Fimmen Era*, ed. Bob Reinalda (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1997); Sigrid Koch-Baumgartner, *Gewerkschaftsinternationalismus und die Herausforderung der Globalisierung. Das Beispiel der Internationalen Transportarbeiterföderation* (*ITF*) (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999).

8 Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2003).

9 Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International*.

10 The term 'fraction' was used in communist vocabulary to define a group of communist militants within a union, see Charles Gagnon, "The work of communist fractions in unions," *Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line*, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ca.secondwave/is-communist-fractions.htm.

11 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 310, 370.

Seen from Moscow's perspective, external agitation and propaganda was crucial for the formation and control of a revolutionary opposition within the unions. This formed the second part of the grand strategy. The key vehicle for the RILU to supervise the infiltration of trade unions as well as the organisation of the opposition within the unions were the so-called International Propaganda Committees of which fifteen of them had been established by 1922. Almost all of them had its headquarters in Moscow and had a Russian as its secretary. As Reiner Tosstorff notes, the objective of the International Propaganda Committees was to do revolutionary work both inside the International Trade Secretariats as well as inside the national trade unions. Their job would be to join revolutionary minorities within the unions and co-ordinate their national and international activities, to propagate the class struggle within the International Trade Secretariats and, ultimately, to take control of the latter.[12]

Most of the International Propaganda Committees had by a short but hectic existence. Most of them fell short in achieving any lasting results as the IFTU and the corresponding International Trade Secretariats mainly blocked their ambitions during the early 1920s. However, there was one exception, namely the International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers or IPC-TW. Capitalists as well as political and labour leaders from the extreme Left to the extreme Right realised that the transport workers were of utmost importance for industry and commerce, nationally as well as internationally. They controlled the railways and seaways that connected factories with consumers as well as the transportation of armaments and war equipment. The waterfront evolved as a battleground during the 1920s and early 1930s where shipowners and national governments tried to reduce wages and cut expenses as well as to block the radicalisation of the maritime workers and the spread of revolutionary ideas among them. On the other hand, a fundamental guideline amongst the Bolsheviks in Moscow was to inhibit an attack against the Soviet Union by the so-called 'imperialists and their lackeys'. From Moscow's perspective, therefore, the maritime transport workers were crucial allies, not only for adverting an attack on the Soviet Union but also as potential couriers for secret dispatches and transfers as they criss-crossed the Seven Seas and called at ports that were outside the reach of the Soviet Russian merchant fleet.

12 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 415.

CHAPTER 1

Organising the Radical Maritime Transport Workers

Maritime workers constituted a multi-faceted group, e.g. the seamen and stokers of many nationalities hired on the various national merchant fleets as well as the dockers and stevedores working in the harbours. Working conditions both on board and on land were tough and worsened due to the economic depression from the late 1920s onwards. The organisation of seamen in trade unions, especially, was a challenge as union activity was mainly land-based while seamen worked on ships that seldom called at their homeports. In addition, seamen were for long regarded as an unruly, individualistic and internationalist group who had few interests in organised union activities. Socialist party and labour leaders regarded the waterfront as a secondary field of work – in sheer numbers, the maritime workers constituted but a small portion of the work force.[1] Also, as Peter Cole and David Featherstone have underlined, apart from the 1913-established Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, the official maritime labour unions in the USA, Britain and elsewhere where preominantly exclusionary and segregationist.[2] It comes therefore as no surprise that many of the leading figures in the radical waterfront both in Europe and the Americas had a background in the 'revolutionary industrial unionism' and the radical international syndicalism of the 'Wobblies', the Industrial Workers of the World, before and during the Great War.[3] A further challenge were the unemployed seamen living ashore. Especially during the 1920s and 1930s, they constituted a problematic group for the existing socialist-led maritime labour unions: receptive for radical, i.e., communist, agitation and propaganda, they could turn into a 'fifth column' at union meetings and push for a politicisation of trade union activities.

1 See further Ludwig Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Hansestadt Hamburg in den Jahren 1929 bis 1939. Werftarbeiter, Hafenarbeiter und Seeleute: Konformität, Opposition, Widerstand* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000); Dieter Nelles, *Widerstand und internationale Solidarität. Die Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation* (*ITF*) *im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 2001).

2 Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); David Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

3 See further Peter Cole, David Struthers and Kenyon Zimmer (eds.), *Wobblies of the World. A Global History of the IWW* (London: Pluto Books, 2017).

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1 A Communist Answer to a Syndicalist Initiative

The initial idea of establishing a radical umbrella organisation or a red Seamen's International was raised by syndicalist activists in Latin America in the aftermath of the Great War. According to Rainer Tosstorff, its main protagonist was Tom Barker, the representative of the Argentinian anachist labour association Federación Obrera Regional Argentina or FORA-V Congress at the founding congress of the RILU in Moscow in July 1921. Barker, born in 1887 in England, had emigrated to New Zealand in 1911 where he joined the Industrial Workers of the World or IWW in 1913, and had made headlines as a colourful union and anti-war activist in Australia until 1918 when the authorities expelled him. He ended up in Latin America and became an organiser of maritime workers in Chile and Argentina. On his way to Soviet Russia, he attended a conference in Berlin in December 1920.[4] This conference had been summoned by syndicalist organisations to discuss the call by the International Trade Union Council (ITUC) for an international trade-union congress to meet in Moscow in 1921.[5]

The 1920 Berlin Conference generated a rupture within the syndicalist movement. While most of the syndicalist organisations, including the IWW and the British Shop Stewards' Movement, decided to send delegations to Moscow, the German syndicalist trade union Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (Free Workers' Union of Germany, FAUD) declined to do so as it opposed the communists idea of subordinating the unions to party control. However, some member organisations of the FAUD contested the decision, among others the syndicalist Deutscher Schiffahrtsbund or German Maritime Union which decided to send a delegation to Moscow. The Schiffahrtsbund had been set up during the turmoils at the end of the war. It soon emerged as an organisation for radical seamen and constituted a serious competitor to the ADGB-afiliated and socialist-controlled Transport Workers' Union.[6]

It is tempting to assume that Barker might have raised idea for a red Seamen's International in informal discussions at the Berlin Conference, perhaps with George Hardy who was the representative of the IWW at the conference. Interestingly, Barker, Hardy and Jack Tanner, the representative of the British Shop Steward's Movement, stood out at the conference as supporters of centralism and were in favour of co-operation with Moscow. According to Tosstorff, Barker claimed at his arrival in Moscow that the initiative to call

4 "Tom Barker," in Lazar Jeiferts, *Amèrica Latina en la International Communista 1919–1943*, online available at https://books.openedition.org/ariadnaediciones/955 (checked 28.1.2020).

5 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 345.

6 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 242–248.

for an international seamen's congress had been initiated among maritime transport workers in Argentina and Uruguay and had met with agreement from syndicalist organisations in Europe. This was at least the case with the Schiffahrtsbund who discussed its international orientation at a conference held in Stettin in January 1921. It is likely that Barker participated at the Stettin Conference as he moved from Germany to Soviet Russia in February 1921.[7]

On top of the agenda of the 1921 Stettin Conference was the relationship between the Schiffahrtsbund and the International Seafarers' Federation (ISF). The latter organisation had been established in 1918 in opposition to the (then defunct) ITF and was dominated by J. Havelock Wilson, the notorious leader of the British National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU) and member of the extreme right wing of the British Trades Unions Congress TUC. As an outcome of the conference, the Schiffahrtsbund declined to join the ISF. Instead, the conference backed the idea of establishing a revolutionary Seamen's International as a radical opposition to the ISF. At this point, the doors were still left open towards the ITF as the organisation was in a process of re-organisation after it had been re-established in 1919; the Schiffahrtsbund was not a member of the ITF.[8]

Shortly after his arrival in Moscow in February 1921, Barker raised the idea of a red International for seamen with ITUC General Secretary Mikhail Pavlovich Tomsky. The latter initially supported it and Baker organised a wider meeting in late April where it was decided to summon an international congress of maritime workers in Petrograd in August 1921.[9] On top of the agenda of the projected seamen's congress was the establishment of a red Seamen's International. The envisioned red Seamen's International was to have a dual role. Apart from its legal activities to counteract the influence of the ISF, the red Seamen's International was to set up a secret organisation for the transportation of people, literature and information to all parts of the world.[10]

Barker left Moscow after the meeting and moved to Britian where he made propaganda for the forthcoming seamen's congress. He therefore was absent from the scene in Moscow in May and June when the International Trade Union Council reconsidered its earlier positive stance towards the seamen's congress and turned against the idea of launching a red Seamen's International. Instead,

7 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 345.

8 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 261–262.

9 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 345.

10 Report of the meeting of the Provisional Council concerned with the organisation of a Red International of Water Transport Workers' Unions, held in Moscow, Hotel Lux, 28.4.1921, 534/5/149, 11, RGASPI.

the International Trade Union Council decided to establish a new body, the International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers or IPC-TW, and to relocate the seamen's congress to Moscow. In addition, the seamen's congress was downgraded to the level of a mere conference and the projected seamen's organisation was to be amalgamated with the IPC-TW. Not surprisingly, the proposition of the International Trade Union Council was fiercly criticised by it syndicalist members.[11]

All in vain. The final chapter in the syndicalist initiative to establish a red Seamen's International opened with the joint conference of the seamen and the representatives of the IPC-TW and RILU in mid-August 1921. Alexander Lozovsky, Secretary General of the newly founded Red International of Labour Unions or RILU, declared that he was not in favour of challening the International Trade Secretariats by creating red internationals. The representatives of the Schiffahrtsbund and the communist-dominated German General Workers' Union (Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union), in turn, presented a modified plan and suggested the establishment of a red seamen's union as part of the IPC-TW with operational units, or so-called Port Bureaus, in the biggest ports of the world. The RILU representatives contested by proposing to broaden the leadership and scope of IPC-TW. Not surprisingly, the RILU poposition was accepted with 10 votes against 5 of the syndicalist delegates, including Barker. On 15 August, the RILU Executive Board proceeded to put these decisions into effect. A bureau for communications and information was to be set up within the IPC-TW in order to prepare the establishment of Port Bureaus. Three representatives for the seamen were added to the leadership of the IPC-TW: Tom Barker, the Australian William Casey and the Russian Grigorii (Gregory) Palvovich Achkanov.[12]

The newly founded International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers had two main objectives for its work on the waterfront. The first aim was to create cells among ship crews and among harbour workers. These units were to constitute themselves as the revolutionary vanguard within the local sections of the national unions for seamen and harbour workers, and were to constitute themselves as the so-called revolutionary opposition within the national unions. The cells were to serve as core action units in case of a strike or other legal activity while the revolutionary opposition was to maintain regular communications with the representative of the IPC-TW in the country. The IPC-TW, in turn, was to produce and publish the material for propaganda

11 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 346, 416.

12 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 417–418.

and agitation among maritime transport workers, such as manifestos and pamphlets.[13]

The second task of the IPC-TW was the establishment of so-called Port Bureaus in chief ports in the world. The key task of the Port Bureaus was to serve as liaison centre for communication and information between the headquarters of the IPC-TW and the national sections of the revolutionary opposition. Paralell to its legal activities, a Port Bureau was expected to engage in illegal work and clandestine operations.[14]

Initially, Port Bureaus were envisioned in locations where legal communist activites was possible, namely New York, San Francisco, Sydney, Liverpool, Hamburg, Buenos Aires and Marseille. Material produced by the International Propaganda Committee or the individual Port Bureaus was to be distributed to the other units in the network. For example, the projected Port Bureaus in Hamburg and Liverpool were given the task to publish material in Norwegian in order to reach out to Norwegian seamen. This comes at no surprise as the Nowegian merchant fleet ranked among the largest in the world. However, agitation and propaganda work among Norwegian seamen was hardly effective in Norway as the ships rarely called at their home ports but spent long periods abroad. Consequently, the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union (Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøter-Union) had established sections in Liverpool and Hamburg and the IPC-TW aspired to infiltrate them and use them for its propaganda work.[15]

The establishment of Port Bureaus in Petrograd and Odessa during autumn 1921 set the stage for focussed communist agitation and propaganda among seamen. Attached to Port Bureaus were so-called International Seamen's Clubs or Interclubs for foreign seamen. Aiming for a global outreach, the IPC-TW also sent emissaries to Constantinople, London and Liverpool to investigate the possibility of starting work in these port cities.[16] In addition, the IPC-TW sent Jim Quinton to Hamburg to supervise the activities of the Schiffahrtsbund. Quinton's work was challenging as the syndicalist members of the Schiffahrtsbund were unfavourably disposed towards decisions made in Moscow and contested the affiliation of the Schiffahrtsbund with the ITF,

13 The Most Urgent Tasks of the International Committee of Propaganda of the Transport Workers (no date [ca. 1921], 534/5/149, 61–63, RGASPI.

14 The Most Urgent Tasks of the International Committee of Propaganda of the Transport Workers (no date [ca. 1921], 534/5/149, 61–63, RGASPI.

15 Tom Barker, Proposition for Marine TransPort Bureaus (no date [ca. 1921]), 534/5/149, 96–97, RGASPI.

16 To the bureau members of the ITC-TW, no date [ca. 1921], 534/5/150, 9–10, RGASPI.

a demand enacted by the RILU. However, Quinton found an ally in Albert Walter, a former syndicalist mariner who had joined the German Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in 1919. In contrast to the other leaders of the Schiffahrtsbund, Walter backed the RILU demand. Most importantly, Walter supported the idea of establishing a ships and harbour committee, i.e., the forerunner of a Port Bureau, in Hamburg that would include representatives of all nationalities calling at the port.[17]

Albert Walter's co-operation was crucial for gaining a successful start in Hamburg. Quinton informed the IPC-TW headquarters in Moscow that Walter was "the Communist within the Schiffahrtsbund" with a large amount of knowledge about the organisation of British maritime transport workers as he had previously served for nine months as representative of the British NSFU and had gained practival experience on working with national and foreign ship crews.[18] However, this was of little help as the Schiffahrtbund protracted the establishment of a Port Bureau in Hamburg and by the end of the year, the representative of the RILU Bureau in Berlin instructed Quinton to speed up activities in Hamburg.[19] Neither had there been much progress in other countries. Consequently, the IPC-TW headquarters issued a circular to its representatives in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the USA reminding them about the decision to establish Port Bureaus in their respective countries.[20]

2 A Push towards the West

The grandiose plan of the International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers for opening operative units in all major ports across the world was slow to materialise. While the Bolsheviks established Port Bureaus in Vladivostok and Archangelsk in 1922, activities outside Soviet Russia had come to a deadlock. Apart from the Schiffahrtsbund and the British Shop Stewards' Movement, renamed in 1921 as the National Workers' Committee Movement, relations with syndicalist unions turned sour.[21] In December 1921, the IWW

17 Jim Quinton to Deutscher Schiffahrtsbund Hamburg, letter dated 14.11.1921, 534/5/150, 11–13, RGASPI.

18 [Jim Quinton] to 'Dear Comrade Hyen', Hamburg [?].11.1921, 534/5/150, 24–25, RGASPI.

19 Letter to 'Genosse Farwig', Berlin 26.12.1921, 534/5/150, 30–31, RGASPI. Farwig was the representative of the IPC-TW in Berlin and it is likely that the author of the letter was someone at the RILU Bureau in Berlin. The RILU had established an office in Berlin, the Middle or Central European Bureau (MEB), in 1920.

20 Circular letter in English, French and German by the IPC-TW, 534/5/150, 35–37, RGASPI.

21 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 249–252.

officially cut its ties with Moscow and the RILU.[22] In March 1922, the IWW expelled George Hardy; the latter went to Europe in early May and started to work for the RILU. In June 1922, the British Bureau of the ITUC/RILU (existing since December 1920) and the National Workers' Committee Movement were merged and were since then known as the (National) Minority Movement or MM.[23] In late October 1922, Mussolini and the fascists took control over Italy and unleashed a terror campaign against the Italian labour movement. Among the affected ones was the Italian maritime workers' union or Federazione Italiana dei Lavoratori del Mare (FILM). Organisational matters where therefore high on the agenda when the RILU summoned for its Second World Congress in Moscow in November 1922. In conjunction with the RILU Congress, the IPC-TW organised a conference to boost its activities. The outcome was a new push into Western Europe.

2.1 *The Hamburg Connection*

The Hamburg Port Bureau in Hamburg was the first maritime unit of the IPC-TW set up outside Soviet Russia. Projected to start operations in late 1921, its opening was delayed for a year. Although the bureau was officially set up on 29 December 1922,[24] effective operative work started two months later.[25] The position of bureau within the RILU-apparatus became a model for the other Port Bureaus established during the 1920s. Headed by Albert Walter, the Hamburg Port Bureau was institutionally and organisationally separated from the Schiffahrtsbund although both organisations had their offices at 8, Rothesoodstrasse in a building acquired by Walter to serve for this purpose. Instead of using the logotype and symbols of the Schiffahrtsbund, the Central European Bureau of the RILU in Berlin (RILU Berlin Bureau) instructed Walter to create separate ones for the Port Bureau and to establish contacts with RILU-affiliated units as well as with minority and opposition groups within the maritime unions. Further, the RILU Berlin Bureau instructed Walter to send them monthly activity reports as well as copies of all correspondence.[26] In spring 1923, some Dutch activists started another Port Bureau in Rotterdam

22 See further Peter Cole, "Strange Bedfellows but Not for Long: The Industrial Workers of the World and the Communist International," in *The Internationalization of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers' Movements and the ILO since 1919*, eds. Stefano Bellucci and Holger Weiss (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 259–278.

23 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 276–277, 463.

24 Hamburg Hafenbüro to MEB, 7.4.1923, 534/5/157, 3–4, RGASPI.

25 Report re Bürositzung vom 22. Mai 1923, 534/5/157, 19–20, RGASPI.

26 Reinhardt/MEB RGI to Internat. Hafenbüro Hamburg, Berlin 13.3.1923, 534/4/52, 73–78bp, RGASPI.

and the RILU Berlin Bureau ordered the new unit to establish contacts with the Hamburg Port Bureau.[27]

The Hamburg Port Bureau was at the lower end within the internal hierarchy of the RILU apparatus. The Port Bureau was subordinate to the RILU Berlin Bureau, which, in turn, ranked below the IPC-TW and RILU secretariats in Moscow. Consequently, Berlin rather than Hamburg was the operational node of the IPC-TW in Western and Northern Europe.[28] This hierarchical structure was evident already in March 1923. At this point, Reinhardt at the RILU Berlin Bureau informed Walter that he had forwarded a letter from the Finnish Seamen's Union originally received by the Hamburg Bureau to the headquarters in Moscow; the letter was about a planned seamen's strike and the Berlin Bureau together with the comrades in Moscow were to decide about appropriate actions.[29] On the other hand, when the RILU Berlin Bureau received letters from foreign seamen's organisations, it would send copies to the Port Bureaus and order them to establish contacts with the sender. For example, this was the case when Reinhardt informed the IPC-TW secretariat in Moscow that he had forwarded a letter from the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union in New York to the Port Bureaus in Hamburg and Rotterdam in March 1923.[30]

Initially, Walter and the Swede A. J. Smålan[31] were running the daily operations of the Hamburg Port Bureau. Their main task, it seems, was to establish the Port Bureau as the global relay station for the IPC-TW's outreach to maritime unions. To achieve this goal, Walter and Smålan immediately sent letters to the maritime unions in Australia, China, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, as well as to contact persons in Britain, France, and the United States.[32] Also, they furnished a reading room at the premises of the Port Bureau and were soon to able to attract 50 visitors daily, mostly crew members from US American, British, Finnish and German vessels.[33] Still, two major hurdles restricted the operational capacities of the Port Bureau. One concerned logistics: The Port Bureau did not have a motorboat at its disposal and its functionaries could only cover a small part of the extensive harbour area. The second

27 MEG to Rotterdamer Hafenbüro, no date [ca April 1923], 534/4/52, 95, RGASPI.

28 Reinhardt to IPC-TW Moscow, Berlin 13.3.1923, 534/4/52, 79, RGASPI.

29 Reinhardt/MEB RGI to Internat. Hafenbüro Hamburg, Berlin 12.3.1923, 534/4/52, 73–74, RGASPI.

30 Reinhardt to IPC-TW Moscow, Berlin 14.3.1929, 534/4/52, 80, RGASPI.

31 Smålan was the pseudonym of Swedish journalist Nils Albert Johansson (1888–1965). See https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.J._Sm%C3%A5lan. His name is spelled Smolan in contemporary documents.

32 Hamburg Hafenbüro to MEB, 7.4.1923, 534/5/157, 3–4, RGASPI.

33 Report re Bürositzung vom 22. Mai 1923, 534/5/157, 19–20, RGASPI.

concerned languages: The Port Bureau lacked a member fluent in English. Consequently, agitation on board US American and British vessels was limited.[34] At least the second hurdle was soon overcome and in early July, Smålan informed about the formation of a "Union for Oriental Seamen" in Hamburg. However, he himself was ambiguous if the association was a success or not; in fact, it seems as if Smålan had not much information about it.[35]

Nevertheless, the members of the Port Bureau made a virtue out of the constraints and directed their main energy on agitating among Scandinavian seamen. At this point, there were high hopes in Moscow for at least the Swedish Seamen's Union to affiliate with the RILU, and Walter received order to participate at the federation meeting of the Swedish union in April 1923.[36] It is doubtful if Walter's visit in Sweden made any impact as the Swedish union never affiliated to the RILU. Back in Hamburg, Walter received orders from RILU General Secretary Lozovsky to concentrate on the Schiffahrtsbund whereas Smålan was nominated as interim secretary of the Port Bureau.[37]

2.2 *Preparing the Ground in Britain and the USA*

The United Kingdom was another key area for communist agitation and propaganda among maritime workers. The British merchant fleet was the largest in the world. Its crew constituted of white and non-white mariners, the latter ones being mainly of Indian, Chinese, Arab and African origin. The dominant union was National Sailors' and Firemen's Union or NSFU, and the ambition of the IPC-TW was to unify the radical elements within the union. The key instigator for this policy was George Hardy who arrived in London in late December 1922. Hardy, who at this point used the pseudonym Geo Hall, had been mandated by the IPC-TW to establish its operational basis in Britain and aspired to set up committees in the various ports and, ultimately, to establish Port Bureaus. The RILU British Bureau instructed him to co-operate with Fred Thompson, party member and important official of the Transport and General Workers Union, to accomplish his mission. Hardy set off for a tour in the United Kingdom and constituted committees in Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Southampton. In London, he organised meetings in Poplar Town Hall during mid- and late January 1923; one thousand seamen, Hardy claimed in his report to the ITC-TW headquarters, attended the latter. Fred Thompson was elected as chair and

34 Hamburg Hafenbüro to MEB, 7.4.1923, 534/5/157, 3–4, RGASPI.

35 Secretary/Int. Seamen's Bureau in Hamburg to MEB, Hamburg 7.7.1923, 534/5/157, 33–34, RGASPI.

36 Reinhardt to Hamburg, 26.3., 5.4., 13.4., 16.4.1923, 534/4/52, 85–87, 89–94, RGASPI.

37 Report re Bürositzung vom 22. Mai 1923, 534/5/157, 19–20, RGASPI.

Fred Potter nominated secretary at a subsequent meeting of the committees. Hardy instructed the committees to be in touch with the Hamburg Port Bureau and urged Potter to send monthly reports to the RILU Bureau in Berlin. Having thus laid the operational basis for work among maritime workers in the United Kingdom, Hardy rushed to the United States.[38]

Hardy had a rather realistic perspective on the possibilities of successful work in Britain. "Port Bureaus cannot be set up yet, but London will be the place for such an opening when conditions warrant," he informed headquarters in Moscow, and noted that "objective" conditions for institutionalised work were challenging.[39] Similar constraints prevailed in the USA where the communist minority within the IWW was marginalised. Still, he notified the Russian Bolshevik Mikhail Kalinin about his plans to organise a Port Bureau or at least a committee in New York whereupon he would to comply with RILU instructions and relocate to Hamburg.[40]

3 The 1923 Berlin Conference and Its Aftermath

Socialist-controlled labour unions as well as the ITFU were highly suspicious about communist agitation throughout 1922. A critical point was the positions of those unions who had joined the RILU, including all Russian ones: Could they also be members of an International Trade Secretariat? In April 1922, the IFTU Congress in Rome decided against double-membership: Only IFTU member unions could join the International Trade Secretariats. This decision nullified the achievements of most International Propaganda Committees. However, the International Transport Workers' Federation seemed at first to be an exception. Influential members among its leadership, including ITF Secretary Edo Fimmen, were left-leaning and open to negotiations with representatives of the Russian trade unions. These positive conditions culminated in spring 1923 when Fimmen agreed on behalf of the ITF – but without permission of the IFTU – to a conference with the Russian transport workers on the danger of war and fascism in May in Berlin.[41] As an outcome, the Berlin

38 Geo Hall [George Hardy] to Secretariat IPC-TW of the RILU, Liverpool, no date [ca February/1922], 534/5/155, 84–90, RGASPI.

39 Geo Hall [George Hardy] to Secretariat IPC-TW of the RILU, Liverpool, no date [ca February/1922], 534/5/155, 84–90, RGASPI.

40 G.H. [Georg Hardy] to Comrade Kalinin, Chicago 8.4.1923, 534/5/155, 79–80, RGASPI.

41 See further Kasper Braskén, "Making Anti-Fascism Transnational: The Origins of Communist and Socialist Articulations of Resistance in Europe, 1923–1924," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (2016), 584.

Conference decided to establish a joint action committee to direct a campaign against war and fascism. Most importantly from Moscow's perspective was the plan to organise a unity congress of the IFTU and RILU in autumn 1923.[42] From Moscow's perspective, the call for a unity congress framed the communist trade union doctrine of the United Front for reconciling the organised labour movement.[43] However, negotiations halted when Fimmen informed the IFTU's bureau in Amsterdam and after vehement opposition from the ADGB, among others, the IFTU terminated its engagement.[44]

3.1 *Framing the Activities of the Port Bureaus*

A resolution adopted by the Third Session of the General Council of the RILU, held in Moscow 25 June – 2 July 1923, framed the work among maritime transport workers. The resolution outlined the strategic and tactical objectives for communist agitation and propaganda among seamen. Firstly, the resolution inculcated the revolutionary transport workers' unions, the revolutionary minorities as well as the Port Bureaus to execute the decisions of the 1923 Berlin Conference regarding the United Front as well as the struggle against fascism. Secondly, the key units for the dissemination of revolutionary propaganda among the seamen were the Port Bureaus in and outside Soviet Russia. The resolution instructed the Executive Bureau of the RILU to accelerate its publication of class-conscious seamen's literature in all European and Eastern languages. In addition, the RILU ordered the IPC-TW to furnish the Port Bureaus with publications for the popularisation of the communist perspective on the United Front.[45]

Most importantly, the resolution requested the IPC-TW to draft a program of action to address the specific conditions of the seamen's life, afloat and ashore, to attract unorganised maritime workers into the revolutionary opposition as well as to intervene in and utilise conflicts arising on foreign ships in the ports. The rationale was to issue instructions to the revolutionary opposition groups and to the Port Bureaus for the intervention to protect the interests of seamen and to settle conflicts between the seamen. The RILU also instructed

42 "Report by Comrade Lozovsky on the Trade Union Question," *Inprecor* 3: no. 49 (12 July 1923): 495–496.

43 For a detailed description and analysis, see further Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*.

44 Braskén, "Making Anti-Fascism Transnational," 584.

45 Port Bureaus and the Activities among Seamen, no date [ca. 1923], 534/2/11, 100, RGASPI. Fort he published version of the text, see "The Harbour Bureaus and Work among Seamen," *Inprecor* 3: no. 65 (6 October 1923): 726.

the IPC-TW Secretariat to collect quantitative data on wages and working conditions of seamen, formulate tactics and methods of the struggle for better working conditions, and issue corresponding instructions to the revolutionary opposition groups as well as to the Port Bureaus.[46]

In conformity to the decisions of the 1923 Berlin Conference, the RILU charged the revolutionary opposition groups and Port Bureaus to establish control committees to monitor the transportation of war materials. Apart from this, the RILU instructed them to adapt the struggle against fascism to local conditions and closely co-operate with all other local and national revolutionary labour organisations in this fight.[47]

Apart from United Front and anti-war/anti-fascism activities, the RILU impelled the IPC-TW and the Port Bureaus to highlight the condition of the unemployed seamen. Here, the key idea was the formation of so-called unemployed committees in every port; "these Committees shall have the task of conferring with ships' crews, and to see to it that the hiring of seamen is done only thru the Employment Bureaus," the resolution declared. Besides, concerning strike tactics, the revolutionary unions and the Port Bureaus received instructions to combat strikebreaking and disorganisation as well as to create an international seamen's fund for mutual aid as to assist unemployed seamen in every port. Last, but not least, the Port Bureaus received instructions to extend their activities to the railroad workers and the local transport workers, "wherever there exists no local transport or railroad workers' bodies carrying on revolutionary activities along the lines of the Transport Workers' IPC or of the revolutionary unions."[48]

3.2 *The Interlude of Geo Hall*

The IPC-TW headquarters decided sometimes in early spring 1923 to transfer George Hardy as secretary of the Hamburg Port Bureau. Probably residing at this point in the United States, he received a confirmation of the plan, moved across the Atlantic and settled in Hamburg using his nom de guerre Geo Hall on 12 July 1923.[49] He found working conditions at Rothesoodstrasse to be

46 Port Bureaus and the Activities among Seamen, no date [ca. 1923], 534/2/11, 100, RGASPI.
47 Port Bureaus and the Activities among Seamen, no date [ca. 1923], 534/2/11, 100, RGASPI.
48 Port Bureaus and the Activities among Seamen, no date [ca. 1923], 534/2/11, 101, RGASPI.
49 Hardy's use of his pseudonym varied and depended on the context of his appearance. He used his own name when commenting British affairs but his pseudonym when making official statements as secretary of the Hamburg Port Bureau. See, for example, Geo Hardy, "The Strike of the British Dock Workers," *Inprecor* 3, no. 55 (9 August 1923): 591–592, and George Hall, "Seamen and United Front," *Inprecor* 3, no. 55 (9 August 1923): 590–591.

pathetic if not chaotic as Smålan had left the bureau about one month earlier "without completing all arrangements." Therefore, Hardy's priority was to (re-)establish the international network and connections of the Hamburg Port Bureau and to design an international action program for seamen.[50] Already within the next month, he received letters and notifications from the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, a non-white union in South Africa, the Hong Kong and Shanghai sections of Chinese Seamen's Union, and the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union in the USA.[51] He appealed (in vain) to the latter for affiliating with the "Revolutionary Transport Workers of the RILU."[52] By the end of September, his international network had expanded further and he had established connections with the British Colombia Seafarer's Federation in Canada, the Danish Stokers' Union (Søfyrbødernes forbund), the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union of Great Britain and the Irish Transport Workers' Union.[53]

Hardy was no doubt a visible agitator in Hamburg. At the end of July, he boasted of having organised the "first international mass meeting for seamen" at Wulff's Gesellschaftshaus in Altona adjacent to Hamburg, with more than 800 seamen attending.[54] Two months later, he organised a protest meeting against the Italian occupation of Corfu ("700–800 attending") as well as a second mass meeting at Wulff's Gesellschaftshaus to propagate for the formation of "Committees of Action."[55]

Hardy's main objective was to push for the amalgamation of the Schiffahrtsbund with the German Transport Workers' Federation (Deutscher Transportarbeiter-Verband, from 1923 Deutscher Verkehrsbund) as part of the United Front-tactics. Hardy's main ally was Albert Walter who backed the idea

50 Geo Hall to IPC-TW, Hamburg 24.8.1923, 534/5/157, 48–49, RGASPI. Smålan had moved to Berlin where he worked for the *Internationale Gewerkschaft-Pressekorrespondenz*.

51 Report of Comrade Hardy for July the 12th to August 31st, Hamburg 31.8.1923, 534/5/157, 53–58, RGASPI.

52 Hall to General Convention of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union, Hamburg 13.9.1923, 534/5/157, 68–71, RGASPI. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace his correspondence with the other organisations but I assume that it contained a similar message.

53 Geo Hall, Report for September 1923, 534/5/157, 99–102, RGASPI.

54 Geo Hall to RILU Executive Council, Hamburg 27.7.1923, 534/5/157, 37, RGASPI. Echoing the decisions of the Berlin Conference, the meeting supported the vision of an international united front of all transport workers and urged the ITF and RILU to summon a joint conference "as soon as possible." See George Hall, "Seamen and United Front," *Inprecor* 3, no. 55 (9 August 1923): 590–591.

55 Geo Hall, Report for September 1923, 534/5/157, 99–102, RGASPI. The call for the creation of Action Committees of the maritime workers was published as "International Seamen against War," *Inprecor* 3, no. 61 (20 September 1923): 681.

as the Schiffahrtsbund had lost most of its influence – the organisation counted some 21,000 members during its heydays but only 4,000 in 1923. Tactically and strategically, the fusion of the two unions was top priority; not least, as the merger of a lesser communist-controlled organisation with a bigger socialist/social democratic-controlled organisation would enable communist agitation and propaganda within the union and, by extension, the ITF.[56]

Hardy's activities in Hamburg were paying off. The relations with the RILU Bureau in Berlin were smooth and Moscow funded the Hamburg Port Bureau through monthly instalments via Berlin.[57] By the end of September, he had published a pamphlet, *An Appeal to the Toilers of the Marine Industry*,[58] an anti-war leaflet with 7,000 copies in English and 5,000 copies in German, and was just about to publish the first issue of the *International Seamen's Bulletin*.[59]

3.3 *Setback? The German October and Its Consequences*

George Hardy's reports to the comrades in Berlin gives the impression that the Hamburg Port Bureau was completely unaffected by the societal turmoil in Germany during 1923. One looks in vain for any hits about the deteriorating economic and political conditions that marked the year – the economic crisis as well as the occupation of the Ruhr area by French and Belgian troops in January 1923, followed by the general strike of the workers in the Ruhr area. Neither are there any comments on the violent clashes between left- and right-wing elements and paramilitary units, culminating in the nationwide strikes against the government. On the other hand, this does not imply that the Hamburg Port Bureau did not respond to the situation in Germany. When German seamen demanded for international wages to be paid in gold and went on strike in June, the Hamburg Port Bureau published at least one appeal for international solidarity actions in support of 1,200 striking German seamen in Britain.[60] In addition, it sent instructions for legal and illegal activities among transport workers to counteract an international intervention in Germany in the aftermath of the Ruhr occupation.[61]

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56 Geo Hall to MEB, Hamburg 10.9.1923, 534/5/157, 65–66, RGASPI.

57 Geo Hall to Max Ziese/MEB, Hamburg 20.9.1923, 534/5/157, 78–79, RGASPI.

58 George Hall, An Appeal to the Toilers of the Marine Industry, no date [ca. 1923], 534/5/157, 83, RGASPI.

59 Geo Hall, Report for September 1923, 534/5/157, 99–102, RGASPI.

60 Apell: An die Seeleute aller Länder. Internationale Unterstützungsaktion zu Gunsten der streikenden deutschen Seeleuten, 534/5/155, 72–75, RGASPI. It is likely that the original text was written in Hamburg and transferred to Berlin where it was translated and published as A.J. Smolan, "The German Seamen's Strike," *Inprecor* 3, no. 50 (12 July 1923): 517.

61 Copy of memorandum, no date [ca. 1923], 534/5/155, 91–92, RGASPI.

The situation remained tense in Germany throughout the year. At the end of September, the government declared a state of emergency. On 1 October, right-wing paramilitary troops in Küstrin attempted a putsch. Two weeks later, the German parliament adopted an enabling act that was to facilitate a de jure dictatorship by Chancellor Gustav Stresemann. Large-scale demonstrations followed in Berlin. In Saxony and Thuringia, coalition governments were formed which included the German Communist Party (KPD). The communists held divergent interpretations of the 'signs of the hour'. Leading members of the Soviet Politbureau as well as the Comintern and its emissaries in Germany advanced the idea of an armed rebellion; others, including KPD leader Heinrich Brandler, were against it as they felt that conditions for a revolution in Germany did not yet exist. An intensive debate followed behind the curtains about what actions to be taken. Eventually, the party leadership called the uprisings off. For reasons still unclear, all other party sections apart from the KPD Wasserkante in the Hamburg region followed orders. Here, the local military leader of the party received orders of the regional party leadership to start the rebellion on 22 October 1923. The attempt proved futile and police forces crushed the uprising within the next day. For the social democrats, the uprising confirmed the rumours of a hidden agenda of the communists: Officially working through parliamentary politics but de facto aiming for a Bolshevik Revolution. If the relationship between the Left and the ultra-Left had been sour before the German October, the failed uprising split the German Left into two fighting blocks. Poisoned as it was already before October 1923, the rift of the German labour movement was to affect the relationship between the socialist and communist blocks on a global level.[62]

The turmoil in Hamburg cut Hardy's links to the RILU Berlin Bureau. Although the Hamburg Port Bureau was not directly involved in the uprising, it is likely that its operations came to a standstill. Hardy and Walter appear not to have been engaged in the planning of the uprising as they had visited Rotterdam and Amsterdam on 18 and 22 October; perhaps they were not even present in Hamburg on 23 October. Working conditions deteriorated after the failed uprising. The authorities in Hamburg declared martial law, and the police raided the premises of the Port Bureau on 24 October and 24 November. The Hamburg authorities outlawed all organised activities of the communists, including those of the Port Bureau. The illegality of the bureau effectively curtailed its activities in the harbour area. Consequently, the functionaries of the

62 Bernhard H. Bayerlein et al. (eds.), *Deutscher Oktober 1923. Ein Revolutionsplan und sein Scheitern* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2003).

Port Bureau turned to clandestine methods and started to approach foreign mariners at cafés and bars. Nevertheless, Hardy and his team managed to edit and send the second issue of the Port Bureau's journal, *The International Seafarer*, to the RILU Berlin Bureau for printing.[63] On 24 November 1923, German authorities banned the KPD and suppressed all Communist organisations and units, including the Berlin Bureau of the RILU. The existence of the Hamburg Port Bureau was doomed. Hardy returned to England at the end of 1923.[64]

Summarising his experiences of illegal and "semi-illegal" work in Hamburg, Hardy pushed for moving the international centre for agitation and propaganda among seamen to London. Communist activity had been banned throughout Germany. Moving the IPC-TW seamen's section to another country would be preferable, he argued, instead of facing the constant harassment by police and port authorities. Printing costs were high due to inflation and the uprising had cut contacts with the party. Most importantly, Hamburg was not an ideal place to work among foreign mariners as the bulk of them called at British ports. Besides, it was absolute necessary to conduct work in the English language. "Unless we can get the support of the British seafarers we cannot have a truly seamen's organisation," Hardy stressed. Therefore, moving the headquarters to London would ignite the British comrades to speed up their activities that so far had slumbered.[65]

However, Hardy's proposal of shifting the centre of gravity from Hamburg to London did not materialise. Instead, the RILU Berlin Bureau instructed the Rotterdam Port Bureau to start agitation and propaganda work among British seamen.[66] In March 1924, the German authorities lifted the ban on communist activities and work could resume in the port of Hamburg. About one month later, a certain comrade Alex send a handwritten message to Berlin: The Hamburg Port Bureau had resumed its operations.[67] Alex, whom I have not been able to identify, must have been an instructor of the IPC-TW who had been sent to Hamburg to re-establish the Port Bureau. Work in the Hamburg harbour recommenced and by early May Alex' team was again visiting US

63 Geo Hall, Report October + November 1923, 534/5/157, 111–116, RGASPI.

64 Home Office Warrant, 1.3.1924, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 17A, TNA; J. Bell to Sir Vernon Kell, Record re George Hardy, 12.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 66b, TNA; George Hardy, *Those Stormy Years: Memoirs of the Fight for Freedom on Five Continents* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1956), 168, 170–171, 177.

65 Geo Hall, Report October + November 1923, 534/5/157, 111–116, RGASPI.

66 MEB to Port Bureau Rotterdam, Berlin 4.1.1924, 534/4/89, 1, RGASPI.

67 Handwritten message from 'Alex' to 'Genosse Paul', no date [ca. April 1924], 534/5/164, 14, RGASPI. Paul was the pseudonym of Max Ziese who was head of the RILU Berlin Bureau.

American and British ships. Most importantly, the bureau office had moved back into its old location at Rothesoodstrasse.[68] At this point, the IPC-TW had two nodes for legally disseminating literature in English, including its mouthpiece *The International Seafarer*: Hamburg and Rotterdam.[69]

3.4 *A Missed Opportunity in Sydney*

Left-wing syndicalism was salient among the maritime transport workers in early twentieth-century Australia. The seamen and their union, the Seamen's Union of Australia (SUA), established in 1906, stood at the frontline of activities.[70] Before and during the war, IWW-adherents or Wobblies, such as Tom Barker and William (Bill) Casey, and their supporters dominated among the radical members of the SUA in Sydney. Both were actively engaged in the anti-conscription campaign during the war, and Casey had made a name of himself as a master of satire and political propaganda, not least by his IWW song 'Bump Me Into Parliament'. While the Australian authorities had expelled Barker in 1918, Casey became involved in the 1919 seamen's strike.[71]

The 1919 Australian seamen's strike was a watershed for the infusion of communism among the members of the seamen's union. In 1918, Tom Walsh (1871–1943), socialist and key propagator of revolutionary left, was elected as secretary of the SUA. One year later, he led a three-month strike that brought most shipping to a halt, resulting in a closure of many factories in Australia. Key demands were increased rates of pay, reduced working-hours, better accommodations on ships and insurance against death. Starting in Queensland in May, the strike soon spread to Victoria and New South Wales and eventually to all states of Australia. Pickets were being maintained at docks, which effectively hindered the use of scab labour. Soon the strike was felt outside the harbours – thousands of workers of manufacturing industries had to be stood down, coal supplies were held up and power restrictions had to be implemented. Walsh was jailed when he rejected to attend arbitration but this had little effect on the

68 Alex to Paul, Hamburg 4.5.1924, 534/5/164, 24, RGASPI.

69 MEB to Port Bureau Hamburg, Berlin 17.4.1924, 534/4/89, 3, RGASPI.

70 Organised union activity had started in Australia in 1874 with the establishment of the Sydney Seamen's Union and the Melbourne Seamen's Union. In 1890, the two organisations formed a loose federation known as the Federated Seamen's Union of Australasia, renamed in 1906 as the Seamen's Union of Australia. See further Brian Fitzpatrick and Rowan J. Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872–1972* (Sydney: Seamen's Union of Australia, 1981), and Diane Fitzpatrick, *Voices from the Ships: Australia's Seafarer's and their Union* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008).

71 Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66.

strikers. Eventually, after three months, the Australian government was forced to negotiate with the union outside the arbitration system. The government had to give in: The workers received an increase of 35 shillings per month, the 8-hour working day was recognised and the seamen received better accommodation and sick pay. Walsh was released from jail in September.[72]

The communist fraction within the SUA gained prominence as an outcome of the victorious strike. Casey joined in and was sent, together with another ex-Wobbly Barney Kelley, to Moscow in 1921 as delegates of the Seamen's Union at the International Trade Union Congress and the subsequent conference of transport workers.[73]

Back at home, left-wing radicals dominated the SUA. At the time of the formation of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Seamen's Union, and especially its leader Tom Walsh, played an important role in organising the party. Soon, however, both the Seamen's Union and the CPA entered muddy terrain when they tried to apply the United Front-tactics at home. The radical elements within the union, among others Casey, discharged the communist invitations towards the Australian Labour Party as a deviation from outright revolutionary politics and tactics. The effects were disastrous for the communists and many seamen left the CPA.[74]

The ideological clashes within the party and the union culminated during the maritime transport workers strike in North Queensland in 1923. Tom Walsh and others were attacked on the management of the strike. The confrontations shattered the foundations of the party; most unionists left the party while the Seamen's Union was split into factionalism. The crisis culminated in 1924 when the leading members of the Seamen's Union, including Casey, formed the Socialist Party of Australia.[75]

The complex situation on the Australian waterfront proved a challenge for the RILU and the IPC-TW. Hopes were raised for the establishment of a Port Bureau in Sydney in 1921 but nothing came out of it. Direct communication with the comrades in Australia proved difficult, not to speak about directing

72 "History: The 1919 seamen's strike," *The Socialist. Magazine of Socialist Action in Australia*, 20.5.2019, http://socialiststandardmyspace.blogspot.com/2013/12/obituary-bill-casey-socialist-pioneer.html (checked 27.1.2020).

73 "Orbituary: Bill Casey – Socialist Pioneer," *The Western Socialist*, November-December 1949, republished 12.12.2013 at http://socialiststandardmyspace.blogspot.com/2013/12/obituary-bill-casey-socialist-pioneer.html (checked 27.1.2020).

74 Frank Farrell, International Socialism and the Australian Labour. A Study of the impact of left-wing and internationalist doctrines and influences on the organised labour movement, 1918–32, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1975, 92–93.

75 Farrell, International Socialism and the Australian Labour, 93.

and monitoring affairs in the Seamen's Union. A new attempt to bring order within the union, to pave the way for a Port Bureau and the opening of an Interclub in Sydney, was made in 1924 when George Hardy was sent to Australia as an emissary of the RILU. Hardy's mission was unsuccessful. The Seamen's Union proved incapable of organising a Port Bureau. Four years later the RILU sent another emissary to Australia. One result of his visit was the establishment of the Sydney Port Bureau and Interclub.[76]

76 Farrell, International Socialism and the Australian Labour, 158 fn 123. Farrell states that "Hardy or some other prominent British RILU emissary" was sent to Australia. Although Hardy's visit to Australia is not confirmed, he could have made the trip after he returned to Britain in late 1923/early 1924. However, there is no information on such a visit in his Special Branch/MI5 dossier, KV 2/1027, TNA.

CHAPTER 2

Establishing a Global Network

In mid-August 1924, the revolutionary transport workers summoned for their fourth conference in Hamburg. A few months earlier in Moscow, the Comintern had held its Fifth World Congress followed by the Third World Congress of the RILU in June/July 1924. Trade union tactics ranged high on the agenda of both congresses. The split of the labour union movement was evident for all, and voices were raised that communists should either join or form revolutionary unions. Still, the leaders of the Comintern and RILU stood firm behind their calls for trade union unity and issued a resolution denouncing the social democrats and socialists (i.e., "reformists") as splitters. The Comintern Congress branded the leaders of the unions and the Amsterdam International, i.e., the IFTU, as supporters of conservative, backward, national narrow-minded and bourgeois-imperialist sentiments. The communists, in turn, were to remain within the existing unions, and the Comintern ordered them to endorse the 'United front from below'-tactics. Their core task was the extension of communist influence within the unions and, ultimately, to assume control of the union leadership.[1] Communist trade union strategies and tactics dominated discussions at the RILU Congress. The Congress urged its members to stick to the RILU programme and tactics. Echoing the Comintern theses on tactics in the trade unions, communist ideas were to be promoted among the rank and file of the unions and to push for a 'united front'. The communist vision of a unified trade union movement was to be achieved at a projected World Unity Congress of the RILU and the IFTU.[2]

The Comintern and RILU declarations on the 'United front from below' were made in the aftermath of the failed hopes for a 'Unity Congress' of transport workers in autumn 1923. The ITF General Council rejected the idea, and the ITF cemented its negative stance towards admitting communist-controlled unions within its ranks at its congress, summoned in Hamburg 7 to 12 August

1 Fifth Congress of the Communist International, Theses on tactics in the trade unions (1924), first published in *Inprecor* 4, no. 119 (16 September 1924): 1577; also available at https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/5th-congress/trade-unions.htm.

2 A. Lozovsky, "The Results of the III. Congress of the R.I.L.U," *Inprecor* 4, no. 56 (7 August 1924): 506–507; "For the Unity of the Trade Union Movement," *Inprecor* 4, no. 66 (18 September 1924): 718–719.

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1924.[3] RILU General Secretary Lozovsky condemned the ITF decision, and announced that the RILU had revoked its decision to dissolve the International Propaganda Committees.[4] The IPC-TW, in turn, denounced the ITF Hamburg Congress for sabotaging the international unity of the transport workers' movement as the representatives of the revolutionary opposition had been silenced at the congress and the Russian Railway and Transport Union had not even been invited to attend the congress.[5]

The revolutionary transport workers organised their own conference from 12 to 15 August 1924 just after the closure of the ITF Congress.[6] Some of delegates (most likely) had participated at the ITF Congress, others not, as the delegates represented opposition groups within legal and illegal trade unions of land and maritime transport workers in Britain, China, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Java, the Netherlands and Spain.[7] Interestingly, there was no representative or delegation from the Russian transport workers' union. On the other hand, this comes as no surprise as the IPC-TW was neither obliged nor ordered to conduct agitation and propaganda in Soviet Russia.

The composition of the delegations attending the 1924 Hamburg Conference gives a hint about the expansion and areas of activity of the IPC-TW. In contrast to the predominantly European extension of the ITF, which included member unions in Austria, Argentina, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA,[8] the IPC-TW had only connections to minorities and revolutionary groups within the European transport workers' unions. Soviet Russian trade unions as well as revolutionary or red trade unions in Europe, including the Schiffahrtsbund,

3 See further *Report on the International Congress held from 7 to 12 August 1924 in the Large Hall of the Gewerkschaftshaus Besenbinderhof Hamburg* (Amsterdam: International Transport Workers' Federation, 1924).

4 A. Lozovsky, "The Struggle for the Unity of the International Trade Union Movement," *Inprecor* 4, no. 60 (21 August 1924): 634.

5 P.B., "The Hamburg Conference of the Transport Workers' Federation," *Inprecor* 4, no. 63 (4 September 1924): 62–63.

6 Similar to its earlier meetings, the IPC-TW published a report and resolutions of the conference in the *Internationales Transportarbeiter-Bulletin*. Unfortunately, I was not able to consult the publication.

7 [Achkanov,] "Vorwort," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter Abgehalten in Moskau im April 1928* (Moskau: Internationales Propaganda- und Aktionskommittee der revolutionären Transportarbeiter, 1928), 5. [Hereafter: *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter.*].

8 See list of ITF member unions in *Report on the International Congress held from 7 to 12 August 1924*.

were members of the RILU, not the ITF. Nevertheless, the main difference to the ITF were the connections to Asian transport workers' unions and associations, among others in China and in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). Most notably, the IPC-TW rather than the ITF had the ambition to reach out to non-European/non-Western/non-white unions and aspired to evolve as a global player.[9]

Four years later, the global outreach of the IPC-TW was manifested at its fifth conference that convened in Moscow in early April 1928. IPC-TW Secretary Grigorii (Gregory) Pavlovich Achkanov (1887–1937) boasted that the IPC-TW was active in 43 countries all over the world and that the revolutionary minorities within the unions counted about two million members. Achkanov himself had started as IPC-TW Secretary in 1926. He was a high-profiled Russian Bolshevik and had already participated in the Revolution of 1905, being then a mariner and one of the instigators of the uprising in Odessa. From 1921 to 1923, he was, among others, a member of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat of Transportation of the USSR, vice-chair of the Central Committee of the United Transportation and Water Transport Workers' Union (Tsektran), and a member of the Presidium of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS).[10]

The geographical spread of the delegations attending the 1928 Moscow Conference was impressive and included participants from the Antilles, Argentina, Australia, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, Turkey, Uruguay, the USA and Yugoslavia.[11] Besides oral propaganda, conducted at meetings of revolutionary unions and in the Interclubs, the IPC-TW made extensively use of written propaganda by publishing 17 periodicals in 13 languages, including Arabian, Chinese, Danish, English, Flemish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish,

9 Spearheaded by its secretary general Edo Fimmen, the ITF evolved as a global player during the 1930s. See Willi Buschak, *Edo Fimmen: Der schöne Traum von Europa und die Globalisierung* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2002).

10 See further "Achkanov Brothers," *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 3rd edition (1970–1979), Achkanov Brothers | Article about Achkanov Brothers by The Free Dictionary. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia claims that Achkanov died in 1939. This information is corrected in the 'Open list of victims of political repression in the USSR', which states that Achkanov was executed on 3 December 1937, see https://ru.openlist.wiki/Ачканов_Григорий_Павлович_(1887).

11 "Vorwort," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 5–6.

and Swedish as well as planned to commence publication in Bulgarian and 'Yugoslavian'.[12]

The 1928 Moscow Conference lasted for three days and had mustered 71 delegates representing 37 countries.[13] At his speech at the opening event, Achkanov hailed the global expansion of activities. He claimed that more workers than ever were supporting the RILU call for a 'united front from below' and the onslaught against the trade union leaders was greater than ever. Local activists had established new Port Bureaus in Copenhagen, Marseille and New York, and together with the existing ones in the Soviet Russian ports, Hamburg, Rotterdam and Bordeaux, had been able to radicalise maritime transport workers. On the other hand, there had been setbacks, he admitted. Fascism was making headway and in some countries, such as Bulgaria and Greece, the authorities had crushed the communist-dominated railway and seamen unions and put them under the control of the 'fascists'. The situation was similar outside Europe: A mixture of progress and defeats. A promising start had been curtailed in China, repressive anti-communist politics prevailed in Japan and Korea, a communist uprising had been crushed in Dutch East India and news from South and North America was disappointing.[14]

1 Opening a Window towards the Global South

The global turn of the Comintern had been initiated at the 1920 Baku Conference and generated during the following years a heated debate about strategies and tactics as well as on focus and outreach.[15] At first, the 'global' was equivalent to 'the East' in communist vocabulary and publications as well as in the organisational framework of the Comintern and its central unit for 'global' operation, the Eastern Secretariat. The latter was the 'oriental' node at

12 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers, Report by Comrade Achkanov, presented at meeting of the Executive Bureau of the RILU, 8.1.1929, 534/5/207, 16, RGASPI.

13 The composition of the delegations is not known, as I have not been able to trace the list of participants.

14 "Eröffnungsrede von Kamerat Atschkanow," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 7–8.

15 For a discussion on the Baku Conference and its repercussions in Asia, see Carolien Stolte, "Uniting the Oppressed peoples of the East: Revolutionary Internationalism in an Asian Inflection," in *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views 1917–39*, eds. Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2015), 56–85.

the Comintern headquarters in Moscow and produced the strategic outline for work in China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Turkey as well as the British, Dutch and French colonies in Asia and Africa.[16] In late January/early February 1922, the Congress of the Toilers of the Far East convened in Petrograd, setting the stage for work in the 'East'.[17] In November 1922, the RILU adopted the Comintern's theses on colonial work at its second world congress. As its member organisations as well as the International Propaganda Committees were slow in adapting to the new course, the RILU General Council published a stiff reminder on work in Asia in October 1923. Harsh critique was directed towards the revolutionary minorities within the unions in countries possessing colonies, namely Great Britain, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the USA, reprimanding them for having failed to erect special organs in the colonial metropoles to keep up communications with the labour unions in the colonies. The American, British, French, and Dutch sections were ordered to correct their negative attitude and establish such units within the next three months. At meetings and special gatherings as well as in their publications and press, the sections were instructed to infuse an understanding and a sympathetic sentiment towards the plights of the exploited masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The binding objective of the communist fraction and revolutionary minorities in the trade unions was to fight alongside the proletariat of the colonies; the guiding principle being 'equal pay for equal work', irrespective of nationality, sex or colour of ones' skin.[18]

The RILU General Council further projected a spatial division of anti-colonial work to enhance the politicisation and radicalisation of the workers in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Here, the colonial maritime transport workers played a crucial role. The British section of the RILU, i.e. the Minority Movement, was to concentrate on the 'Lascars' or Indian seamen as they were identified as an effective means of supporting the revolutionary labour movement in India. The French section of the RILU, especially the communist-dominated Confédération générale du travail unitaire or CGTU, was instructed to work in the French African colonies as well as in Indo-China; the American section, i.e.,

16 A blueprint outlining the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist objectives in Africa and Asia was forwarded by the Eastern Secretariat to the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) in 1925, see Bericht der Ost-Abteilung [1925], 495/154/238, RGASPI.

17 See further *Alliance of Adversaries. The Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, ed. John Sexton (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019). The edition contains the minutes and documents of the congress.

18 Resolution für die Arbeit im Fernen und Nahen Osten an den Generalrat der Profintern [n.d., ca 1923], 534/2/11, 7–9, RGASPI; published as "Resolution on the Work in the Far and Near East," *Inprecor* 3, no. 65 (6 October 1923): 724–725.

the Trade Union Educational League, was to focus on the Philippines, the Dutch section on Indonesia, the Spanish section on Tangier, whereas the Greece section was charged to establish connections with unions in Egypt.[19]

However, the RILU General Council did not publish any specific instructions on colonial work by the International Propaganda Committees in conjunction with work among non-white maritime transport workers. These had to wait for the next step of the RILU's move towards the 'East' when Moscow started to address the revolutionary potential of existing of labour unions and associations in the Western Pacific Rim. Especially in China, where the radical Guomindang (Kuomintang) movement or Chinese Nationalist Party had started to cooperate with the communists,[20] the ground looked fertile to intervene in national seamen's and railwaymen's unions. In January 1922, the Chinese Seamen's Union organised a strike in Hong Kong, which was joined by other transport workers. By early March, some 120,000 workers were involved in the strike, closing much of the city. The communists in Guangzhou (Kanton) and Hong Kong supported the strike but did not lead it. The British colonial government, in turn, intervened to crush the strikers and banned the Chinese Seamen's Union in Hong Kong. Despite the harsh measures, the colonial government agreed to negotiate and the strike was called off after an agreement on wage increases. Commenting the strike and its outcome, Comintern analysts demanded the Chinese Communist Party to closely cooperate with the Chinese Seamen's Union.[21]

1.1 *A World Port to and a Global Port in the Pacific: Vladivostok and Shanghai*

Port cities were central operational nodes for the Comintern and RILU in their ambition to connect with national parties, revolutionary groups and trade union minorities outside Soviet Russia. Two main transnational routes of communication emerged during the 1920s, one Western and one Eastern. Soviet ports were the gateway to and from 'Fatherland of the revolutionary working-class'. The

19 Resolution für die Arbeit im Fernen und Nahen Osten an den Generalrat der Profintern [n.d., ca 1923], 534/2/11, 7–9, RGASPI. The clause on connections to Egypt is missing in the published version.

20 The Communist Party of China (CPC) had been founded in Shanghai in June 1921. The communists dominated the left-wing of the Guomindang. In 1923, the Guomindang and its government in Guangzhou accepted aid from Soviet Russia, paving the way of the establishment of a 'united front' between the CPC and the Guomindang. See further Hans J. van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

21 Michael Share, "Clash of Worlds: The Comintern, British Hong Kong and Chinese Nationalism, 1921–1927," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 4 (2005): 607–608.

harbour area in the Soviet ports was a space controlled by the state and party apparatuses and was infused by communist ideology. Soviet ports they were not closed territories but were visited by foreign vessels who called at the ports, mariners disembarked while the ships were staying in port, at best interacting with local maritime functionaries but always under controlled conditions. Sometimes, the crew returned to their ships unimpressed and unaffected of the Bolshevik propaganda although generally, the functionaries of a local Port Bureau were successful in their mission and managed to convince at least some crew members to join the revolutionary opposition of a national maritime trade union.

Soviet ports opened potential routes for Comintern and RILU networks of communication and transfer. Those in the European part of Russia facilitated various possibilities to connect with the 'West' and the Atlantic – through Petrograd/Leningrad via the Baltic, the Black sea ports to the Mediterranean and beyond, and Archangelsk and Murmansk to the northern Atlantic. However, there was only one port serving as the gateway to the 'East' and the Pacific, namely Vladivostok. Together with Shanghai, these two ports emerged as nodes of the 'Eastern route'[22] through which the Comintern and, by extension, the RILU and IPC-TW, connected with communists and revolutionary opposition groups and trade union minorities in the Western Pacific.

Vladivostok was the eastern terminus of the Trans-Siberian railway and the naval base of the Russian Pacific fleet until the Civil War. (The city resumed to be a naval base in 1932.) Its commercial harbour started operations in 1871, telegraph connections to Shanghai and Nagasaki opened in the same year. In 1916, the trans-Siberian railway connected Vladivostok with Moscow. During the Russian Civil War, a multinational intervention force controlled the town. During this period, the population of the town increased from 97,000 to 410,000, most of them refugees. Japanese forces stayed until October 1922 when the Red Army took over the control of the town and port; most of the refugees evacuated, too, and by 1926, its population had declined to 108,000. The Bolshevik control of Vladivostok paved the way for the IPC-TW to start its work in the 'East'. In January 1923, local functionaries opened a Port Bureau and Interclub at 52, Ulitza Lenina, serving as the 'gateway to the Pacific'.[23]

The main propaganda tools of the Vladivostok Port Bureau were its Chinese, English and Japanese bulletins as well as its periodical publications in Chinese

22 Akito Yamanouchi, "The Early Comintern in Amsterdam, New York and Mexico City," *Kyushu University Institutional Repository* [2009?]: 100.

23 Josephine Fowler, "From East to West and West to East: Ties of Solidarity in the Pan-Pacific Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, 1923–1934," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 66 (Fall 2004): 102; Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 105.

and Japanese.[24] The Vladivostok Interclub aimed actively to engage with Dutch, English, German, and Norwegian mariners although its prime target group were Chinese and Japanese seamen. Key objective was to establish direct links to the seamen's unions to enable a "regular exchange of views, opinions and experiences and mutual information about seamen's conditions in the countries of the Pacific." The Interclub therefore sent letters to the opposition groups, among others in Japan, to inquire about "by which means and where to we have to address our correspondence (information, letters, literature)."[25]

The lack of functionaries fluent in Japanese and Chinese severely hampered work of the Vladivostok Port Bureau. Initially, the bureau's staff comprised only Western, non-Russian functionaries and a Japanese comrade, although the engagement of the latter was restricted to editing the Japanese bulletin.[26] Responding to the plea from Vladivostok, the Interclub was staffed with a Japanese instructor who, among others, managed to interact with Japanese fishers. Communications with Chinese seamen also prospered, and the Port Bureau sent an instructor to Shanghai in 1925 in order to establish connections between the two ports.[27]

Nevertheless, conditions for agitation and propaganda work were never optimal in Vladivostok. An evaluation of the Interclub, conducted in 1927, depicted its premises as well as its operations as pitiful if not pathetic. The Interclub composed of two small rooms, one occupying the office, the other serving as a meeting room. The meeting room could not seat more than 20 persons altogether. "I cannot see how real work can be done under these conditions," the investigator critically remarked, and noted that the lack of space hindered the Interclub to arrange meetings for foreign seamen. Besides, the Interclub was located on a far distance from the harbour area and was difficult to find. The investigator's conclusions were harsh: "In a big and important port like Vladivostok, a decent club should be established because this port is the connecting link between East and West." In order to meet its political objective, the Port Bureau needed "a place where Eastern and Western nationalities can be worked separately."[28]

24 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 65, RGASPI.

25 Secretary/International Seamen's Club Vladivostok to "Dear Japanese Comrades," no date [ca. May/June 1923], 495/154/191, 6–7, RGASPI.

26 Minutes of Meeting of Port Bureau July 27, 1923 and August 5, 1923, 495/154/191, 11, 14, RGASPI; Fowler, "From East to West," 103.

27 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 65–66, RGASPI.

28 NN to Achkanov, Conficential Report [handwritten], [Vladivostok] 25.3.1927, 534/5/187, 103, RGASPI. The author of the report was most likely the same person who had been sent

Shanghai stands out as (relatively) open space in contrast to the controlled one in Vladivostok. While the Russian port was of regional importance, Shanghai evolved into a modern industrialised and commercial global centre during the 1920s and 1930s. Shanghai ranked among the largest cities in the world with some 3 million inhabitants, predominantly Chinese, located at the intersection of multiple local, regional, national and global transport networks, not least via its harbour. The city was a multicultural and cosmopolitan metropolis composed of three sections with separated administration and police, the Chinese municipality, the French Concession and the International settlement. The two latter ones were extra-territorial areas with protected status and inhabited more than 50,000 people of European and Japanese descent, many of the former being Russian refugees who had settled in Shanghai after 1918. The availability of legal protection as well as the existence of modern communication systems and a large international community made Shanghai the ideal node for the Comintern and RILU legal and underground activities in China and beyond.[29]

Shanghai was the ideal place to work for foreign and local communists, as Onimaru Takeshi has demonstrated. There was no restriction on movements between the three sections of Shanghai, leading to what Takeshi defines as "a grey zone within and between these divisions." According to him, "a grey zone was a place where certain degree of ambiguity existed in law enforcement and administrative control." This was the case in Shanghai with its division of police and legal territories in combination with the freedom of passage between the sections. Not surprisingly, Shanghai developed into a major hub for political activism and communist organisations.[30]

Work among foreign seamen seemed to have started in Shanghai in 1925 as an outcome of 1924 Conference of the Transport Workers of the Orient, see

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to Shanghai as staff member of the RILU bureau, namely comrade Schwanke. In one of his letters from Shanghai, Schwanke complained about the bad quality of the forged visa and passport that he had received in Moscow. Other reports from Shanghai indicate that the bureau in Shanghai composed of Schwanke, Alex, Grisha and Nadja in 1927, see 534/5/193, RGASPI. At least Alex – or another person using the same pseudonym, perhaps one Nick Alexander (although this name could also be an alias) – figured as head of the (re-established) Hamburg Port Bureau in 1924, see 534/5/164, 24, RGASPI, and 534/5/172, 3, RGASPI. Documentation seems to indicate that Alex and Schwanke were running a bureau concentrating on work among foreign seamen in Shanghai but this needs further investigation.

29 Onimaru Takeshi, "Shanghai Connection: The Construction and Collapse of the Comintern Network in East and Southeast Asia," *Southeast Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 2016): 118–121.

30 Takeshi, "Shanghai Connection," 120.

below Chapter 2.1.2. Operations in the harbour area were initially organised by one A. Lindner who seemed to have acted as the local organiser of the RILU and/or IPC-TW in Shanghai. At first, working conditions were constrained due to a strike among Chinese seamen that also affected and paralysed the harbour area in the International settlement. In addition to unruly local conditions, a constant lack of funding curbed Lindner's work in Shanghai. Communist agitators were constantly harassed and faced persecution both by the Chinese authorities and by the leadership of the local branch of the Chinese Seamen's Union. Publishing an own periodical was impossible as the branch leadership collaborated with the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and was not interested in promoting the radical, i.e., communist, fraction of the branch.[31] Still, Lindner gradually managed to start his operations in the port and, in cooperation with (communist) members of the Chinese Seamen's Union, interacted with foreign crews. German sailors, he lamented in a report, were badly organised, in comparison to the "revolutionary" potentials of Scandinavian and Dutch mariners.[32]

1.2 *The 1924 Conference of the Transport Workers of the Orient*

In early 1924, a RILU-report positively noted about the revolutionary mood among transport workers in China, Japan and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).[33] A first step of consolidating contacts was taken at a conference organised by the Comintern in Guangzhou (Canton) in the latter part of June 1924, called the Conference of the Transport Workers of the Orient (also known as the Pan-Pacific Labour Conference). Delegates representing Chinese, Philippine and Javanese railway and maritime workers attended the meeting.[34] A declaration was drafted in Moscow, outlining the anti-colonial and anti-imperial agenda of the Communists and their willingness to cooperate with the "oppressed nations of the East." What they needed, the declaration stressed, was to have their own "people's parties" to defend the interests of the "toiling masses" and to link up with the "revolutionary movement of the world proletariat" in their fight against colonial exploitation. To achieve this end, the "toiling masses of the colonial and semi-colonial countries" were impelled "to make a united front" with the workers in the colonial metropoles in their fight

31 "The Chinese Seamen's Union," *Inprecor* 6, no. 46 (10 June 1926): 755.

32 A. Lindner, Tätigkeitsbericht über die Propaganda unter den internat. Seeleuten im Shanghaier Port, Shanghai XI. Monat 1925 [November, 1925], 534/5/168, 76–82, RGASPI.

33 Fowler, "From East to West and West to East," 103.

34 G. Voitinsky, "First Conference of Transport Workers of the Pacific," *Inprecor* 4, no. 65 (11 September 1924): 704–706.

against imperialism. Addressing the attendants at the conference, "the labouring masses in the colonies in the Pacific must take heed of this phenomena [...] and organise the toiling masses in real militant bodies against imperialism."[35]

The RILU must have regarded the 1924 Canton Conference as a major success. The conference adopted a resolution that had been prepared in Moscow and declared its commitment to open an office in Guangzhou. The RILU envisioned the Bureau of Transport Workers of the Pacific, also known as the Canton Bureau, as the window of the IPC-TW towards the 'East'. Previously, work among Chinese and Japanese seamen had been restricted to the Port Bureau in Vladivostok. Whereas the Vladivostok Port Bureau had few means to link up with unions and associations outside Soviet Russia, the RILU believed conditions to conduct trans-national and trans-regional work in countries bordering the Pacific and Indian Ocean to be excellent in Guangzhou. To achieve this end, the Canton Bureau was to be composed of members – secretaries – from China, Philippines, Dutch India, British India and Japan. Further, the task of the bureau was to create and monitor a network of Interclubs in Manila, Hong Kong and Batavia (Jakarta); "[t]he clubs may have small libraries[,] arrange lectures and proper entertainment for the visiting sailors." The bureau secretaries, in turn, were requested to edit a bulletin in Chinese and English languages, to translate its essential parts into the respective language of their countries, and to distribute the bulletin among the (maritime) transport workers.[36]

Hopes for establishing a trans-regional office in Guangzhou were shattered a few months later when the local merchants turned against the Guomindang government of Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen). As the Guomindang had adopted new policies such as "Unite with Russia" and "Accept Communism" in early 1924, the merchants were afraid that Sun Zhongshan might even adopt Communism. In August, when strikes paralysed Guangzhou, the merchants established their own corps and received weapons from the British. Backed by the communists, the Guomindang army eventually managed to quell the uprising in October 1924. At this point, the regional conflict had grown into an international crisis as various imperial governments supported the warlords combatting the Guomindang government. The shipments of armament and ammunition to China, in turn, resulted in the first 'Hands off China!'-campaign orchestrated

35 Outline of the Report on the Labour Movement and the Struggle for Independence of the Colonial Peoples, handwritten add: to the Conf. of Transp. Work. of the Orient, 23.VI.1924, 495/154/233, 27–30, RGASPI.

36 Organization Resolution Passed by the Organization Commission [handwritten add: of the Transport Conf. of Orient], 23.6.1924, 495/154/233, 32, RGASPI.

by the Comintern and RILU. In November 1924, the IPC-TW followed suit and published a call to expose the transportation of military equipment to China, to boycott and to refuse to load ships carrying arms to China as well as to convene protest meetings against the imperialist intervention in China.[37]

The Canton Bureau was never established, neither were the projected Interclubs in Manila, Hong Kong and Batavia. Still, a window had been opened to the Global South and, as Indian Communist Manabendra Nath Roy would declare at the end of 1924: Europe is not the World. His vision was a global united (radical) working class movement of organised and unorganised workers outside Europe and America, declaring: "Until all the Chinese, Malay, Indian, Arab and Negro workers are organised and the same wages and labour-conditions as enjoyed by the White workers are secured for them, the employers will stand on a vantage-ground, because of their ability to draw upon the unlimited reserve of cheap and unorganised labour."[38] The only question was how to achieve the envisioned global unity?

1.3 *The Fate of the Chinese Seamen's Union*

From the perspective of the IPC-TW, connections to the transport workers' unions in East and South-East Asia were of top priority. Closely linked to the strategic interests of Soviet Russia, and in tune with the general push of the Comintern and the RILU towards China, the focus of the IPC-TW was on the Chinese Seamen's Union. Established in 1920 as the National Seamen's Union of China, and reorganised in Hong Kong in 1921, the union had its headquarters in Guangzhou and counted some 2,000 members.[39]

The establishment of direct links to the Chinese Seamen's Union and its communist opposition members proved difficult. Although representatives of the union had participated at the conferences of the IPC-TW in 1922 and 1924, materials and communications from the conferences had never reached China as the delegates had been jailed by [British? – this is still unclear] authorities on their way home and their luggage was confiscated. Another setback was the aborted plan to establish the Canton Bureau, constraining the publication

37 "Appeal of the International Propaganda Committee of the Transport Workers," *Inprecor* 4, no. 81 (27 November 1924): 81.

38 M.N. Roy, "Europe is not the World," *Inprecor* 4, no. 90 (31 December 1924): 1045–1046.

39 Gregor Benton and Edmund Terence Gomez, *The Chinese in Britain, 1800-Present: Economy, Transnationalism, Identity* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 266. On the activities of the Hong Kong Seamen's Union, see Daniel Y. K. Wang, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement: A Study of Deng Zhongxia* (*1894–1933*) (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

of propaganda material in Chinese. The Chinese delegate at the 1928 Moscow Conference therefore called for a new approach, and suggested that written material was to be published outside China and distributed among Chinese seamen when they called at European ports.[40] In other words, to focus on agitation among Chinese seamen on foreign vessels as well as to establish or strengthen sections of the Chinese Seamen's Union in ports outside China. This, in turn, was to become a new mission of the Port Bureaus.

Nevertheless, the main link between Moscow and China was the trans-Siberian overland route. Directives from the Comintern and RILU headquarters reached China, including the call for a 'United front' of all maritime trade unions and associations. The leader of the Chinese Seamen's Union, Lin Wei-min (1887–1927), attended a meeting of the IPC-TW in Moscow in 1924 and joined the CPC.[41] On 1 May 1925, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (also: All China Labour Federation or ACLF) was founded with Lin Wei-min serving as chairperson of the First Executive Committee; after its inauguration, the communist-controlled ACLF joined the RILU.[42] Thirty days later, British police troops killed Chinese demonstrators in Shanghai. The May 30th Incident resulted into widespread demonstrations including a strike of Chinese seamen in Shanghai, and Lin Wei-min instigated strikes in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou in support of the Shanghai strikers. The strike in the two southern Chinese ports lasted until 1926, and the seamen proved among the most militant.[43] Internationally, the Comintern and the RILU called for the reinvigoration of the 'Hands off China'-campaign.[44]

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40 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 30–31.

41 "Lin Wei-min (Lin Weimin): Spearhead of Workers Movement," http://www.cityofzhuhai.com/2019-07/08/c_386458.htm (checked 23.1.2020).

42 Wang, *Marxist Intellectuals*, 103.

43 See further Robert James Horrocks, The Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike, 1925–1926, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1994; Arif Dirlik, "Narrativizing Revolution: Guangzhou Uprising (11–13 December 1927) in Workers' Perspective," *Modern China* 23, no. 4 (October 1997): 372–373; Share, "Clash of Worlds."

44 On the 1925–1927 'Hands off China'-campaign, see further Hans Piazza, "The Anti-imperialist League and the Chinese revolution," in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between triumph and disaster*, eds. Mechthild Leutner, Roland Felber, Mikhail L. Titarenko and Alexander M. Grigoriev (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 166–176; Tom Buchanan, *East Wind. China and the British Left 1925–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fredrik Petersson, *"We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers": Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern* (Lewiston: Queenston Press, 2013), and Kasper Braskén, *The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

At the height of the strike, the General Congress of the Chinese Seamen's Union convened [in Guangzhou?] at the end of 1925. Expectations at the RILU headquarters must have been high. Union membership had increased to over 30,000 maritime transport workers. The union had branches in all larger ports in China, the strongest ones being those in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Although conditions in all ports except Guangzhou were difficult, RILU informants assured that the main bulk of the union members supported the revolutionary minority within the union. These, in turn, constituted the majority of the 200 delegates at the Congress. Not surprisingly, the communist agenda triumphed at the Congress. As an outcome, the Congress voted in favour of joining the RILU and for affiliating with the IPC-TW.[45]

Moscow hailed the 1925–26 Chinese seamen's strike as a success but disturbing news soon followed. Inspired by the 1924 Canton Conference as well as a reaction to British imperialism in China, the communist fraction within the Australian Trades Union Congress launched the idea to organise the Second Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference in Sydney under the auspices of the communist-led New South Wales Trades and Labour Council at the end of July 1926.[46] Moscow supported the idea and issued a call for the conference.[47] However, the Australian nationalist government dashed the plan of the communists by denying visas for the delegates to enter Australia. The RILU made a new attempt to organise the conference in the following year in conjunction with the May Day celebrations in Guangzhou. Perhaps for the first time, the organisers put "the question of emigration of coloured workers" on top of the agenda and, as Lozovsky highlighted, to direct its attention "to the whole medley of national, racial and religious antagonisms at present prevailing in the Pacific countries."[48]

45 "The Chinese Seamen's Union," *Inprecor* 6, no. 46 (10 June 1926): 755.

46 G.V. Portus, "The Australian Labour Movement and the Pacific," *Pacific Affairs* 3, no. 10 (1930): 927; Sophie Loy-Wilson, " 'Liberating' Asia: Strikes and Protest in Sydney and Shanghai, 1920–39," *History Workshop Journal* 72, no. 1 (October 2011): 74 – 102.

47 A. Losovski[sic], "The Trade Union Conference of the Countries of the Pacific Ocean," *Inprecor* 6, no. 41 (13 May 1926): 661–662.

48 A. Lozovsky, "On the way to Trade Union Unity in the Countries of the Pacific," *Inprecor* 6, no. 70 (28 October 1926): 1227. Invitations had been sent to the trade unions of China, Japan, Soviet Russia, India, South Africa, Java, the islands in the Pacific, South America, Canada, the USA and the United Kingdom. Apart from the Australian government being negative to idea of a communist conference in Sydney, most of the invited unions declined to come either due to financial constrains or political considerations. See further Farrell, International Socialism and Australian Labour; Frank Farrell, "The pan-Pacific trade union movement and Australian labour, 1921–1932," *Australian Historical Studies*

These plans, too, had to be aborted due to the rapidly deteriorating political situation in China. In April 1927, the new Guomindang leader Chiang Kai-shek broke with the communists and launched an attack on the communist stronghold in Shanghai.[49] The British authorities, in turn, crushed the Hong Kong branch of the seamen's union and forced its leaders into exile.[50] In tandem with other communist organisations, the IPC-TW protested against the onslaught of the 'imperialists' and called the marine transport workers to block the transportation of war equipment to China, see Figure 3.[51] In May 1927, the united front between the Guomindang and the communists had collapsed, and the Guomindang government started to suppress the communist-controlled seamen's union. The Guangzhou branch was closed down; the union's headquarters were moved to Shanghai and were put under Guomindang control.[52] In December 1927, Guomindang forces brutally quelled a communist uprising in Guangzhou,[53] triggering a new international communist-orchestrated protest wave.[54] In the midst of this depressing news, the IPC-TW reported an immense success: the amalgamation of all seamen's unions into one 'unity' union in early 1928.[55] In August 1928, its Executive Committee called upon Chinese seamen to "organise your fellow seamen in Europe and America," paving the way for a global network of revolutionary nuclei of Chinese seamen.[56]

Communist trade union activities among Chinese seamen continued through the Port Bureaus in Europe and the European branches of the Chinese Seamen's Union (see Chapter 4.2.2). Inside China, illegal work came under the direction of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat or PPTUS. This unit had been established by the RILU during the midst of the crisis in China. Although the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had been destroyed in the aftermath of the Guomindang purge of the communists in Guangzhou, the

17, no. 69 (1977): 441–457; Frank Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labour* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1981).

49 Dirlik, "Narrativizing Revolution."

50 Share, "Clash of Worlds."

51 "Transport av trope- og krigsmateriel til Kina må hindres," *Den internasjonale transportarbeider* 2, no. 3 (1927): 3.

52 Benton and Gomez, *The Chinese in Britain*, 266.

53 See further Dirlik, "Narrativizing Revolution," 363–397.

54 "Appeal of the E.C.C.I. on the Events in Canton," *Inprecorr* 7, no. 72 (22 December 1927): 1633.

55 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 19.

56 Fowler, "From East to West and West to East," 105.

Pris 10 øre.

Arbeidere i alle land foren dere!

Nr. 6. — Juni 1927
2. Årgang

Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider

Transportarbeidernes Internasjonale Propagandakomites Organ.

Enhetlig arbeiderfront mot verdensimperialismen.

Til hele verdens arbeiderklasse.

Den engelske Baldwin-regjering har opsagt handelstraktaten og brutt den diplomatiske forbindelse med Sovjet-Unionen. Hvad betyr så det? Hvad er følgene? Efter Baldwin-regjeringens utsagn er dette «*ikverken fred eller krig*». Baldwin erklærer sogar at handelsforbindelsen vil fortsette uforandret. *Dette er en loddrett løgn!* Hensikten er å føre hele verdens arbeiderklasse på villspor, føre det internasjonale proletariat i stupiditet og hisse det mot verdens første arbeider- og bonderepublikk. Vi kjenner av tidligere erfaringer hvorledes den elendige bande som nu avgjør England og dets koloniers skjebne ikke er å stole på, vi har sett dens løgn og bedrag. Det var den samme klikk som førte arbeiderklassen bak lyset i 1920. Den samme *Churchill* som nu sitter i Baldwins ministerium, erklærte f. eks. dengang i 1919 officielt til hele verden fra parlamentets talerstol at den engelske besettelse av Arkangelsk vilde bli trukket tilbake. Men en kjensgjerning er det at det var det motsatte som skjedde, nye militære styrker blev sendt avgårde mot arbeiderstaten. Bare arbeiderpressens agitasjon og trykket fra det engelske proletariats side maktet dengang å tvinge det engelske borgerskap til å opgi intervensjonen. Den nuværende Baldwin-regjering kunde bare ved hjelp av et forfalsket Sinovjev-brev komme frem til statsroret.

Tsang-Tso-Lin i opdrag å overfalle sovjetambassaden i Peking. Krigens annet aktstykke var innbruddet i handelsdelegasjonen i London. Krigen vil kanskje ikke bli først åpent eller direkte. Det vil kanskje bli, for å kalle det så, *en krig med strømenn*. Det engelske borgerskap *selv* vil ikke føre kampen, men vil efter gammel tradisjon *få andre til å kjempe for sig*. Det vil la krigen utfoldes ved Sovjet-Unionens grenser, vil føre sine tallrike vasaller i illdinjen for sig. En slik krig er ennu farligere derved at den skjuler kampens virkelige karakter og kan sløre verdensproletariatets vaktsomhet.

Hvad kan regjeringen Baldwin legge Sovjet-Unionen til last? *Dens «forbrytelse» ligger deri at den eksisterer og vokser*, at den ved sin blotte eksistens maner *hele verdens undertrykte folk frem til kamp og tilintetgjørelse av borgerskapets herredømme*. Dens «forbrytelse» er *dens sympati for det internasjonale proletariat* som kjemper mot det borgerlige slaveåk; *dens «forbrytelse» at den ikke stod passiv og likegyldig overfor de engelske grubearbeideres heltemodige kamp* — men hjalp dem efter beste evner, og tilslutt ligger dens «forbrytelse» deri at *den sympatiserer med all verdens undertrykte*

ring i England som tramper de engelske arbeideres årelange oparbeidede rettigheter under føttene, den regjering som siste år satte hele statsmakten inn på å knekke grubearbeidere, den regjering som drev dem inn under grubeeiernes uinnskrenkede slaveri, den regjering som nu skalter og valter med det «uavhengige» Kina som om det var et erobret land, legger hele byer i aske og gjør tusener av fredelige innbyggere helt brødløse, — *den regjering våger nu å beskylde Sovjet-Unionen for «innblanding i de kinesiske anliggender»!*

Det engelske borgerskap er for tiden verdens mest reaksjonære. Det understøtter alle rasers og kontinenters Tsang-Tso-Lins. Beddelregjeringene i Bulgarien, Ungarn, ja den europeiske reaksjon i det hele tatt, holder sig utelukkende i troen på at England står bak dem.

Det engelske borgerskap føler jorden ryste under sine føtter. Det imperium som er sammenrøvet gjennem århundreder knaker nu i alle sine fuger. De undertrykte folkeslag reiser sig. Det engelske herredømmes endelige avslutning nærmer sig. Men jo mer tingene utvikler sig, desto mere raser England som et såret rovdyr.

Amsterdamer-Internasjonalen og

riat mot krigsfaren. Tvertimot slår de på de samme strenger som verdenskapitalismen når det gjelder Sovjet-Unionen, gjentar og gjentar atter den borgerlige myte om den røde imperialisme o.s.v.

Et nytt historisk avsnitt begynder. Nye intervensjoner truer, denne gang under ny maske. *All verdens reaksjon reiser hodet.* De vil knuse den første proletariske republikk for derefter å gjøre det av med det klassebevisste proletariat i andre land. I denne kritiske situasjon er det at Den røde faglige Internasjonales eksekutivkomite retter hele verdensproletariatets opmerksomhet på den truende krigssituasjon som er fremkalt ved den reaksjonære Baldwin-regjerings forbryderiske skritt.

Proletarer i alle land, slutt rekkene tettere sammen. På vakt for freden og då kriseskampanjen tilbake!

Hendene vekk fra Sovjet-Unionen!

Hendene vekk fra Kina!

Gjennemfør blokaden av all ammunisjonstransport bestemt for krig mot Sovjet-Unionen!

Leve den enhetlige proletariske front mot verdensimperialismen og kapitalismen!

31. mai 1927.

DEN RØDE FAGLIGE INTERNASJONALES EKSEKUTIVKOMITE.

Send alle oplysninger av interesse for sjøfolk, jernbanefolk og

FIGURE 3 Towards a united front of the workers against imperialism ("Enhetlig arbeiderfront mot verdensimperialisme"), call published in *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 3, no. 6 (June 1927), in support of the international 'Hands off China'-campaign.

RILU managed to move the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference to Hankou, which was controlled by a local coalition of leftist-Guomindang members and communists. The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference convened in May 1927 and was opened by RILU Secretary Lozovsky. The main outcome of the

conference was the establishment of a permanent secretariat headed by George Hardy to coordinate left-wing trade union work in the Western Pacific as well as to publish its own journal, the *Pan-Pacific Worker*. Active from October 1927, the secretariat operated at first openly in Hankou but the split between the Guomindang and the CPC forced it underground. The Secretariat was then moved to the foreign-controlled International settlement of Shanghai, where American communist Earl Browder, who replaced Hardy in February 1928, ran its operations.[57]

Shanghai emerged as the communist centre of the East in early 1928. A few years earlier, the Comintern had established its Far Eastern Bureau (FEB) in Shanghai, and, as outlined by Onimaru Takeshi, the FEB and PPTUS were in charge of supervising communist parties and labour movements in East and Southeast Asia. The original mission of the FEB was to supervise the communist party organisations in China, Japan and Korea, while the PPTUS focussed on supporting and promoting labour union movements in China, Japan, Korea, India and Southeast Asia. Although formally separate organisations, most of their personnel and activities overlapped.[58]

1.4 *Shattered Hopes: Japan and Indonesia*

Communist agitation and propaganda among Asian transport unions proved much more difficult outside China. Initially, the conditions for organising the working class seemed positive with the establishment of communist parties in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) in 1920, the Communist Association of the Indies, renamed as the Communist Party of Indonesia in 1924, and in Japan in 1922. However, an imminent revolution was, according to Comintern analysts, not foreseeable in Japan or in Indonesia.

The Comintern exhibited an ambivalent attitude especially towards Japan. Industrially developed, never colonised, and with a large military force and an

57 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 76. See also Portus, "The Australian Labour Movement," 928. Farrell, International Socialism; David McKnight, *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War* (London: Frank Cass, 2006), esp. chapter 4: The Comintern Underground in Shanghai. The extent to which Hardy effectively operated the PPTUS in China is unclear. According to Special Branch and other information in his dossier, Hardy resided in Moscow at least from April to August 1927, among others writing and publishing articles in the Communist press on the 'Hands off China'-campaign. At least in February 1928, he was believed to be in China. When he returned to England on 20 August 1928 without a passport, he claimed to have lost it in China, see George Hardy personal file KV 2/1027, TNA.

58 Takeshi, "Shanghai Connection". See also Frank Farrell, "Australian Labour and the Profintern," *International Review of Social History* 24, no. 1 (April 1979): 34–54.

imperialistic agenda towards Korea and China, Japan was identified as a threat to Soviet Russia. On the other hand, the country had a large agricultural sector and was governed by feudal-imperial institutions, thus depicting it at the same time as a 'semi-feudal' state. The Comintern analysts therefore argued that Japan had to go through the same process as China and India, namely via a bourgeois revolution and a subsequent proletarian revolution. In praxis, this meant that the Japanese communists were to enforce a similar united front-policy as in China, namely the formation of a united anti-imperialist front with the bourgeois revolutionaries. The Comintern therefore termed Japan as a "semi-colonial" country and tasked the Japanese communists to engage in the anticolonial struggle against Japanese imperialism. Nevertheless, as Tatiana Linkhoeva demonstrates, Japanese communists refuted the Comintern analysis. Instead, they claimed that the primary task of the Communist Party of Japan (CPJ) was to foment a proletarian revolution that would overthrow the capitalist system at home.[59]

Initial communist activities in Japan ended short. Japanese authorities banned the CPJ one day after it had been set up in 1922. Police arrest of hundred party members in June 1923 severely hampered underground activities. Another blow came in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1 September 1923 when Japanese working-class mob ignited Japanese army reservists and civilian volunteers to kill several thousand Korean and Chinese residents whom they accused of burning houses, killing people, and stealing money and property. Terrified by these pogroms, the remaining party leadership reconsidered the readiness of the Japanese proletariat for an internationalist socialist revolution, and disbanded the party on 22 October 1923. In March 1924, members of the CPJ, who had managed to escape to Vladivostok and Shanghai, established a bureau in Vladivostok that acted as an intermediary between Moscow and underground communists in Japan.[60]

Meanwhile, Soviet-Japanese relations ameliorated after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Japan in January 1925. However, the anti-Japanese strikes in Shanghai (the May Thirtieth Movement) in the same year cooled the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement, and with the known anti-Communist general Tanaka Gi'ichi being appointed prime minister in

59 Tatiana Linkhoeva, "New Revolutionary Agenda: The Interwar Japanese Left on the "Chinese Revolution"," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*. E-Journal No. 24 (September 2017), 86–88, http://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-24.

60 Linkhoeva, "New Revolutionary Agenda," 90–91.

April 1927, Japan's foreign policy turned aggressive. In May 1927, Japan made its first (but not last) military intervention in China.[61]

As Japanese authorities had outlawed the Communist Party, communist activities within the seamen's unions were both illegal and insignificant during the 1920s. In 1921, 23 Japanese seamen's organisations had united and formed the Nippon Kai-in Kumiai or Japan Seamen's Union (JSU). The organisation was firmly in the hands of the non-communists, and its leadership was in contact with ITF. In October 1929, the JSU affiliated with the ITF. In addition, the JSU belonged to a group of unions that founded the left-wing but anti-communist Rodonominto or Labour-Farmer (Workers-Peasants) Party in 1926. Nevertheless, members of the disbanded CPJ managed to join the Labour-Farmer Party and gradually came to occupy strategic positions in the party. In the same year, an underground Communist Party was reconstituted. In 1927, the Comintern intervened and instructed the CPJ to organise itself as a vanguard party, working with and within mass organisations like the Labour-Farmer Party. The latter became the legal platform for the left in Japan and, among others, joined the international 'Hands off China'-campaign. Accused for its links with the communists and the illegal CPJ, Japanese authorities banned the Labour-Farmer Party in April 1928.[62]

The RILU regarded the transformation of the Japan Seamen's Union into a revolutionary union to be futile. According to an assessment of the trade union movement in Japan by Japanese Comintern member Sen Katayama in 1926, there existed four seamen's unions with a total membership of 47,500. Some of them represented the upper echelon of the seamen and, according to Katayama, had few connections to the labour movement. "All of them are conservative and possess little class consciousness," he concluded.[63] Agitation and propaganda work among Japanese seamen was not possible inside Japan and was at this point concentrated to Vladivostok. However, the Vladivostok Port Bureau faced several constraints, not least the lack of functionaries who were fluent in the Japanese language. The Port Bureau cooperated with the exile

61 Boris Slavinski, *The Japanese–Soviet Neutrality Pact: A diplomatic History, 1941–1945* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 13.

62 See further Nishida Yoshiaki, "Labour and Farmers' Movements in Prewar Japan," in *Political Economy of Japanese Society*, ed. Banno Junji (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 237–276.

63 Sen Katayama, "Latest Development of the Trade Union Movement in Japan," *Inprecor* 6, no. 25 (1 April 1926): 396–397.

Japanese comrades who published a Japanese bulletin once a month but its editor was criticised in a confidential report for not being "politically fitted."[64]

Similar hopes for prospective communist activities and agitation also existed for Indonesia during the early 1920s. The mastermind of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its policy of a united front between the nationalists and communists was the Dutch communist Hendrick Sneevliet. He was also a key figure in the Dutch East Indies labour movement.[65] Apart from Sneevliet, the two prominent figures in the Indonesian Communist Party and labour movement were the Javanese Semaoen (Semaun, ca. 1899–1971) and Tan Malaka (1897–1949). The former had started as a railway worker in Java but quitted his job to become a full-time activist in the Vereeniging van Spoor-en Tramweg Personeel or Union of Train and Tramway Personnel (VSTP) in 1915. Being at first a member of the (Dutch) Indies Social Democratic Association and the nationalist Sarekat Islam, he became the first chair of the PKI in May 1921. He was exiled to Amsterdam in 1923 after the Dutch colonial government had crushed a general strike and Tan Malaka took over as leader of the PKI. In Amsterdam, Semaoen headed the PKI bureau.[66]

Semaoen was also president of the Sarekat Pegawai Laoet Indonesia (SPLI), the Union of Indonesian Seamen, which he had established in Amsterdam in 1924. At this point, the SPLI-office functioned as headquarters of the PKI abroad. As Ruth McVey notes, the SPLI was the partner of the Serilagu, i.e., the Semarang-based Serikat Laut dan Gudang (Union of Seamen and Dockers). Both associations aspired to organise the 24,000 Indonesian seamen employed on ships operated by the Rotterdam Lloyd Company and the Netherlands Steamship Company. The key idea was to organise groups on each large steamship and harbour installation in which they were active, with a "consul" in charge of each group. The consuls, in turn, would serve as couriers for the PKI.[67]

The 1924 Canton Conference of the Transport Workers of the Orient spurred communist trade union activities in Indonesia. Semaoen wrote a lengthy report about the prospects for work in October 1924. His main concern was the Serilagu that, according to him, had recently emerged as a hub for radical

64 Cuen to Achkanov, Confidential Report [handwritten], [Vladivostok] 25.3.1927, 534/5/187, 104, RGASPI.

65 Anna Belogurova, "Communism in South East Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, ed. Stephan A. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 236–251.

66 Cheah Boon Kheng, *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924–1941: The Apprenticeship of the Malayan Communist Party* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University South East Asia Program, 1992), 126.

67 Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), 215.

activities as it had discharged its "reactionary" leaders. Not surprisingly, the Dutch authorities banned the union.[68]

In December 1924, the PKI decided to reactivate the VSTP as a means to expand its trade union activities and intensify its propaganda in communist-controlled unions. In addition, the plan was to re-establish new unions, among others, the Serilagu. In addition, the Indonesian Red Trade Union Secretariat (Secretariaat Vakbonen Merah Indonesia) was established in Surabaya and was affiliated to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat in Guangzhou. As a result, Surabaya emerged as a major centre for communist trade union activity in 1925, counting 900 members in the VSTP, 2,000 in the machine shop workers' union and 1,500 in the Serilagu.[69]

In February 1925, the Serilagu merged with the local harbour workers' and seamen's unions of Surabaja and Batavia, formed the Serikat Pegawai Pelabuhan dan Lautan (SPPL) or Indonesian Seamen's and Dockers' Union, and affiliated with Samoen's Amsterdam-based SPLI. One month later, the SPLI-headquarters were moved to Indonesia and were merged with the SPPL office.[70] The SPPL, in turn, joined the Indonesian Red Trade Union Secretariat and announced that it would internationally link up with the Port Bureaus and offices set up (or planned to be set up) under RILU auspices.[71] In 1925, British intelligence sources claimed that the SPPL had established close connections with the People's Partnership in Malaysia. In Indonesia, the SSPL spearheaded the formation of the Federation of Indonesian Trade Unions. The Federation, in turn, received funding from Moscow via Guangzhou, British intelligence stated; the key intermediate being Tan Malaka who at that point organised the connections from the Chinese port to Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia.[72]

Guangzhou, and later Shanghai and Singapore rather than Amsterdam/Rotterdam, emerged in the mid-1920s as the main communist connection centres for South East Asia. This was due to the harsh measures adopted by the Dutch authorities in their attempt to block the transmission of communist literature, such as the Amsterdam-edited PKI journal *Pandoe Merah* (The Red Guide), to Indonesia. While communist activity was legal in the Netherlands,

68 Semaoen to RILU and IPC-TW, Amsterdam 16.10.1924, 534/5/163, 54–55, RGASPI.

69 Takashi Shiraishi, "Policing the Phantom Underground," *Indonesia* 63 (April 1997): 4, 13.

70 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 276, 461. The SPLI claimed at this point to list some 3,000 seamen and 9,000 dockworkers rank and file members (McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 442).

71 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 276–277.

72 Kheng, *From PKI to the Comintern*, 8; Leon Comber, *Dalley and the Malayan Security Service, 1945–48: MI5 vs. MSS* (Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019), 62.

the Dutch colonial authorities prohibited the dissemination of communist literature in September 1924, and started to arrest seamen who carried illegal literature and post to the Dutch East Indies.[73]

However, as Jean Duval notes, Indonesia was never identified by the Comintern as one of its main regions of operation, and was too remote and inaccessible for effective intervention by Moscow. The PKI leaders in Indonesia, Duval claims, conceived revolution as a putsch, an event that would trigger off a general uprising.[74] The Dutch repressed strike waves in 1924 and 1925. In December 1925, the PKI decided to prepare for insurrection, a plan heavily criticised by its exiled leaders Semaoen and Tan Malaka but they were incapable to influence the subsequent cause of events. The communist uprising in late 1926 had not the backing of Moscow and ended in a disaster for the communists. The Dutch colonial government crushed the uprising and arrested 13,000 persons after the revolts. A few of them were shot, 4,500 were sentenced to prison after trial, about one thousand interned. The PKI and its affiliated associations and organisations, including the Red Trade Union Secretariat, were banned and destroyed. Communist agitation and activities, in turn, went underground, became clandestine and tried to infiltrate nationalist non-communist organisations.[75] The RILU, too late and post factum, tried to unleash an international protest campaign against colonial brutalities in the Dutch East Indies.[76]

1.5 *Challenging Work: Indian, Arab and African Seamen*

Communist agitation and propaganda among the unions of maritime transport workers in the Indian sub-continent, in the Arab world as well as in sub-Saharan Africa proved difficult during the early 1920s. This was due to several reasons. Maritime transport workers' associations existed in India but the British colonial authorities rigorously controlled union activity. Besides, union

73 Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet* (*alias Maring*) (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 723.

74 Jean Duval, "The First Period of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI): 1914–1926," 29 August 2005, https://www.marxist.com/indonesian-communist-party-pki2000.htm (checked 26.4.2020).

75 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*; Audrey R. Kahin, "The 1927 Communist Uprising in Sumatra: A Reappraisal," *Indonesia* 62 (October 1996): 19–36; Michael C. Williams, *Sickle and Crescent: The Communist Revolt of 1926 in Banten* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2010). See further Harry J. Benda and Ruth T. McVey, *The Communist Uprisings of 1926–1927 in Indonesia: Key Documents* (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2009), and Klaas Stutje, *Campaigning in Europe for a Free Indonesia: Indonesian Nationalists and the Worldwide Anticolonial Movement, 1917–1931* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2019).

76 "Manifesto of the RILU on the Revolt in Indonesia," *Inprecor* 6, no. 84 (2 December 1926): 1438.

functionaries and leaders effectively impeded the formation of a radical left-wing opposition within the unions. Moreover, the ambitions for affiliating the All-India Trade to the RILU and the PPTUS were staved off by the mid-1920s. Infiltrating the seamen's union in India had little effect, and even more frustrating was the work among unorganised Indian seamen and dockworkers.[77] Even less promising was the situation in the British and French colonies and mandated areas in the Near East where union activities was minimal. Almost nil potentials for a revolutionary trade union movement seemed to exist in Sub-Saharan Africa as Moscow could not identify an existing class-conscious working-class outside South Africa.

Together, the three macro-regions posed a strategic challenge not only for the Comintern and RILU but also for the IPC-TW. The solution to the Indian problem was to focus on Indian seamen residing outside India and to shift the attention to European ports. Arab and African seamen, too, were included in the considerations, although it took several years for Moscow to frame a distinctive approach towards the latter group. The basic idea was that the national communist parties and revolutionary opposition groups in the colonial metropoles were either to promote the establishment of exterritorial branches of 'colonial' – Indian, Arab or African – seamen's union in European ports or to open the respective national seamen's unions for non-white members. Not surprisingly, the national unions in Europe rejected both strategies.

The communist approach towards non-white maritime transport workers in Europe was both novel and radical. If successful, it would have opened a new chapter in the organisation of maritime transport workers. The foundations for such an approach certainly existed and was a consequence of the global 'steamship revolution' during the latter part of the nineteenth century. During this period, the employment of non-white unskilled maritime worker of different ethnic backgrounds became a marked feature on European and US American merchant vessels.[78] During the first decades of the twentieth century,

77 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 48. See further Carolien Stolte, "Bringing Asia to the World: Indian trade unionism and the long road towards the Asiatic Labour Congress, 1919–37," *Journal of Global History* 7 (2012): 257–278.

78 Jonathan Hyslop, "Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c. 1885–1945," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 44, no. 1 (2009): 49–67; Ravi Ahuja, "Mobility and Containment: The Voyages of South Asian Seamen, c. 1900–1960," *International Review of Social History* 51, S14 (2006): 111–141. See further Diane Frost (ed.), *Ethnic Labour and British Imperial Trade: A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the UK* (London: Routledge, 1995), and Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

their number counted already tens of thousands. Indian seamen, known as "lascars",[79] constituted the largest group or circa 10 percent of the 240,000 seamen employed on British merchant vessels in the early 1890s, rising to 52,000 or 17.5 percent in 1914, and 25 percent during the 1920s and 1930s.[80] Gopalan Balachandran estimates that the total number of colonial seamen amounted to nearly 235,000 in the 1930s.[81]

A common nominator among white maritime workers in post-war Europe and the USA was the fear of losing their job to colonial workers. The task of the national unions was to defend the position of their members instead of propagating the unrealistic gospel of international or even racial solidarity; at best, trade unionism was what Jonathan Hyslop defines as "white labourism."[82] Consequently, non-white workers above and below deck were not protected by the unions; they received lower wages, worse accommodation and smaller daily rations than white workers on board the ships. Their homes in the port cities were located in peripheral quarters with notorious or dubious reputation.[83]

79 The term lascar was pejorative, racial, and blurred the fact that the so-called Indian seamen comprised a great diversity of ethnic and religious groups. See further F.J.A. Broeze, "Muscles of Empire – Indian Seamen and the Raj 1919–1939," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 18, no. 1 (1981): 43–67.

80 Figures from Gopalan Balachandran, "South Asian Seafarers and Their Worlds, c. 1870–1930s," in *Seascapes: Maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges* (2007), 186–202, available at http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/p/2005/history_cooperative/www.historycooperative.org/proceedings/seascapes/balachandran.html (checked 28.1.2020). See further Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalising Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, 1870–1945* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

81 Gopalan Balachandran, "Conflicts in the International Maritime Labour Market: British and Indian seamen, employers, and the state, 1830–1939," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 39, no. 1 (2002): 77. See further Marika Sherwood, "Race, Nationality and Employment among Lascar Seamen, 1660 to 1945," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 17, no. 2 (1991): 229–244; Marika Sherwood, "Lascar Struggles Against Discrimination in Britain 1923–45: The Work of N.J. Upadhyaya and Surat Alley," *The Mariner's Mirror* 90, no. 4 (2004): 438–455.

82 Jonathan Hyslop, "The imperial working class makes itself 'White': White labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 398–421. See further Michael Quinlan and Constance Lever-Tracy, "From Labour Market Exclusion to Industrial Solidarity: Australian trade union responses to Asian workers, 1830–1988," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 14, no. 2 (June 1990): 159–181, and David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 71–72.

83 See further Diane Frost, "Racism and Social Segregation: Settlement patterns of West African seamen in Liverpool since the nineteenth century," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 85–95; Diane Frost, "Diasporan West African Communities: the Kru in Freetown and Liverpool," *Review of African Political Economy*

Racial discrimination and white chauvinism gained momentum in Britain when a post-war slump in British trade and shipping resulted in racial tension and conflicts, leading to riots and attacks on Indian and black (African and Caribbean) seamen in the United Kingdom.[84] The British government responded to the 'race riots' of 1919 by introducing the Coloured Alien Seamen's Order in 1920, aiming to regulate and restrict the employment of foreign, especially Chinese, African and Caribbean seamen. Little sympathy was received from the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU), renamed National Union of Seamen (NUS) in 1926, who rather backed discriminatory government policies, culminating in the amendment and expansion of the Coloured Alien Seamen's Order in 1925, and the introduction of the PC5[85] card in 1930 as a system to register seamen looking for work.[86]

Discontent with the "white laborism" of the NSFU was initially voiced by a few of its black members, most notably Harry O'Connell and Chris Braithwaite. O'Connell, a Cardiff-based mariner from British Guiana, led a deputation of three 'coloured' seamen from Cardiff and criticised the discrimination of black union members at a meeting of the executive council of the NSFU in 1922.[87] Braithwaite, a London-based mariner from Barbados who worked as NFSU/NUS organiser and functionary of the Shipping Federation, clashed with NFSU officials about the barring of Asian and black seamen from the British labour market in 1920s.[88] The two were later to emerge as the key organisers of the

29, no. 92 (2002): 285–300; Gopalan Balachandran, "Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, Racial Governance and Multiculturalism: Britain, c. 1900–45," *Social History* 39, no. 4 (2014): 528–546.

84 Neil Evans, "Across the Universe: Racial Violence and Post-war Crisis in Imperial Britain, 1919–25," *Immigrants and Minorities* 13, no. 2–3 (1994): 58–88.

85 Under the PC5 or Port Consultant's system, any seamen who wanted to get a job needed an identification card signed and stamped by the Shipping Federation and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. The PC5-card effectively blocked "unwanted" seamen as the union only passed the card to its paying members. See further Basil Mogridge, "Militancy and Inter-Union Rivalries in British Shipping, 1911–1929," *International Review of Social History* 6, no. 3 (1961): 399.

86 Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925," *Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 1 (1994): 54–98.

87 David Featherstone, "Harry O'Connell, maritime labour and the racialized politics of place," *Race & Class* 57, no. 3 (2016): 74. O'Connell founded the Cardiff Coloured Association during the 1920s, see further Hakim Adi, "The Cominern and Black Workers in Britain and France 1919–37," *Immigrants and Minorities* 28, no. 2–3 (2010): 236.

88 Christian Høgsbjerg, *Chris Braithwaite: Mariner, Renegade & Castaway. Seamen's Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist* (London: Socialist History Society & Redwords, 2014), 27–28.

radical black waterfront in Britian; both of them joined the Communist Party of Great Britain or CPGB in the late 1920s and were active in the Seamen's Minority Movement (see below). George Hardy, then RILU organiser in Britian, tried to present the communist position as a 'multi-ethnic alternative' in his 1927 pamplet on the aims and objectives of the Minority Movement. "The Laskar, Chinaman, Arab or West African Negro" were not to be blamed for the loss in wages, overtime and condition on British vessels, he reminded his (white) readers, "the policy of the shipowners is to 'divide and conquer'. Ours is to unite internationally, East and West [...]."[89]

The situation was not much better elsewhere. In the USA, black mariners were discriminated by Jim Crow legislation in the US South and by white chauvinism and blatant racism in the seamen's unions.[90] Chinese and Japanese maritime workers suffered on the US Pacific.[91] The only exception was the IWW who tried to enlist Asian and black seamen and strived for interracial unionism. However, by the mid-1920s, the IWW had lost its momentum.[92] In France, too, black and Asian seamen and harbour workers were regarded as second-class, unskilled workers.[93]

British shipping principally employed Indian seamen as a way of replacing organised/unionised high-cost white mariners with relatively unorganised low-cost non-white crew members.[94] Indian seamen were lowest paid, and cost less to house and provision on board than European or even Arab or Chinese seamen. They also worked longer hours, typically 84 hours a week. Trade union organisation was rudimentary but did exist, such as the Asian Seafarer's Union for deck personnel as well as the Indian Seamen's Union for engine room personnel, both established in 1918. The two unions merged in 1919, legalised in 1926 and were officially registered in 1927 as the National Seamen's Union of India. Neither the Raj, the British colonial state, nor the shipping industry were

89 George Hardy, *The Struggle of British Seamen* (London: Transport Workers' Minority Movement, Seamen's Section. Published for the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers), 26. For a critical discussion on Hardy's division between British seamen and seafarers of 'colour', see Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 88.

90 Gerald Horne, *Red Seas: Ferdinand Smith and Radical Black Sailors in the United States and Jamaica* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005).

91 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*.

92 See further Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism*.

93 Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racism en France* (*XIX^e–XX^e siècle*). *Discours publics, humiliations privies* (Paris: Karthala, 2007); Sylvain Pattieu, "Souteneurs noirs à Marseille, 1918–1921. Contribution à histoire de la minorité noire en France," *Annales. Historie, Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 6 (2009): 1361–1386.

94 See further G. Balachandran, "Recruitment and control of Indian seamen: Calcutta 1880–1935," *International Journal of Maritime History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 1–18.

in favour of Indian union activity and thwarted union activism. Consequently, membership appears to have been some 300–400 core men of all rank in Mumbai (Bombay) and Kolkata (Calcutta), the two main places of organised union activities. During the 1920s, the National Seamen's Union of India sought affiliation with the ITF but the latter was lukewarm in addressing the plights of the Indian seafarers.[95]

Communist agitation among Indian maritime transport workers was characterised by recurrrent setbacks during the 1920s. As work in India was effectively checked by union leadership, shipowners and the colonial authorities, the ambition was to interact with Indian mariners in the United Kingdom. This was to be the task of the Communist Party and the revolutionary minorities in the trade unions. Basically, the idea was to promote associations for Indian seamen in British ports and to link up with them. However, this plan backfired almost immediately as neither the party nor the revolutionary minority within the unions seemed to be unwilling to do so. Work within the unions remained confined to white British maritime transport workers.[96]

The second strategy proposed by the IPC-TW, namely to approach 'colonial' seamen through the Port Bureaus and Interclubs in Britain, also backfired. The intial plans for opening Port Bureaus in London and Liverpool with special purpose of working among Indian seamen had to be shelved due to the incapacity and organisational restrictions of the British Party and the Minority Movement.[97] However, IPC-TW Secretary Achkanov raised the question anew in early 1927 and ordered the Minority Movement to organise a Port Bureau and, if possible, an Interclub in London "in the near future." This plan, he reported, had been accepted by the IPC-TW, the RILU and the British Section of the Comintern.[98] Most importantly, his instructions included a blueprint for work among 'colonial' seamen in London: The projected Port Bureau was to employ an Indian seaman for work among Indian as well as Arab and "other colonial" seamen.[99] This, it seems, was the first time when the IPC-TW referred to other than Indian seamen in their tactical considerations on work among 'colonial' seamen.

95 Balachandran, "South Asian Seafarers and Their Worlds."

96 See further Sarah Glynn, *Class, Ethnicity and Religion in the Bengali East End: A political history* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

97 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 67, RGASPI.

98 Achkanov to Minority Movement London, Moscow 25.2.1927, 534/5/186, 62, RGASPI.

99 [IPC-TW,] Work among Seamen in Britain, no date [February 1927; the document is an attachment in Achkanov's February 1927-letter to the Minority Movement], 534/5/186, 66–68, RGASPI.

Operations in London were slow to start. Achkanov urged Minority Movement leader Harry Pollitt in April 1927 to consult Clemens Palme Dutt, the head of the CPGB Colonial Bureau, about identifying a suitable Indian seaman.[100] Achkanov must have regarded the latter as the key link to the Indian community in Britain. Together with Nathanal Jagivan Upadhyaya and Ajoy Banerji, Dutt had been active in organising Indian seamen in London and had visited Liverpool several times in an attempt of organising Indian seamen.[101] This must have resonated well with Achkanov whose blueprint for the two envisioned Port Bureaus included a close cooperation with local Indian associations.[102] However, it was Upadhyaya (1895-?) who was the key agitator among Indian seamen. He had arrived in Britian in 1922 and soon connected with the communists for whom he recruited Indians, organised meetings, distributed litterature and wrote articles. In 1925, he was instrumental in founding the Indian Seamen's Union in London, assuming himself the role of secretary and organised meetings to protests against the application of the Coloured Alien Seamen's Order and against racial discrimination of Indians.[103] Not surprisingly, the British colonial authorities branded the Indian Seamen's Union as a being nothing else than a communist- and Comintern-controlled organisation.[104]

The main concern of British authorities at home and in India was the claim that Indian seamen were lured by communists to act as agents and vehicles of anti-colonial agitation in India. Hamburg and Marseille, especially, were identified by them as subversive 'hotspots' during the 1920s as Indian seamen would call at these ports and were believed to be enlisted as carriers of

100 Achkanov to Harry Pollitt, Moscow 15.4.1927, 534/5/186, 79, RGASPI. The Colonial Bureau or Colonial Commission of the CPGB had been established in 1925. It was an attempt to form connections in India, Palestine, China, Egypt and Ireland. George Hardy was present at its meetings in fall 1931 when Upadhyaya's case was up for discussion, see entry for 24.8.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

101 "Clemens Palme Dutt," The Open University, Making Britain: Discover how South Asians shaped the nation, 1870–1950, available at http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/clemens-palme-dutt (checked 28.1.2020).

102 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 68, RGASPI.

103 Marika Sherwood, "Lascar struggles against discrimination in Britain". On Upadhyaya, see further "Nathalal Jagivan Upadhyaya," Making Britain: Discover how South Asians shaped the nation, 1870–1950, http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/nathalal-jagivan-upadhyaya (checked 21.5.2020).

104 Muhammad Ali Raza, Interrogating Provincial Politics: The Leftist Movement in British Punjab, c. 1914–1950, PhD thesis, Oxford University, 2011, 46. On the attempts to radicalise Indian seamen, see further Muhammad Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist internationalism in colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

subversive litterature if not arms, as Ali Raza and Benjamin Zachariah have outlined.[105] The assumption of the British secret police proved right. In late 1927, the Indian communist Nalimi Gupta notified Moscow about the situation in the two ports. Although there was no regular shipping service from Hamburg to India, Gupta reported, the port was of substantial interest for the communists as a large number of Indian seamen visited Hamburg.[106] What is interesting in Gupta's communication is his claim that the "International Transport Union refuss[es] to pay" for its operations in Hamburg and Marseille or its activities in India. He might be referring to the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers. If this is the case, then Gupta's letter is one of the few documents hinting about a subversive dimension of the IPC-TW. Or, perhaps it is the opposite – the IPC-TW had not been informed about the plans of the Indian revolutionaries and its Port Bureau in Hamburg rejected to support clandestine operations unless ordered to do so by the headquarters in Moscow?

Thus, whereas work among Indian seamen in Britain had achieved some limited success by 1927, work among Arab and African seamen was yet to start. Until then, neither IPC-TW nor the RILU had paid any attention towards them. The main reason, it seems, was the lack of information in Moscow on existing maritime transport workers' unions in the British mandated areas and colonies in the Middle East and Africa. In addition, it even seems as if the Comintern and RILU headquarters were not aware of the existence of Arab and African proletarian diaspora communities in Britain.

A rather different situation prevailed in France where African, Arab, and Asian (mainly Vietnamese) maritime workers constituted a target group for the communists. However, agitation in the French ports proved as viscous as in Britain. This must have been a disappointment as the Comintern considered the political conditions for communist agitation to be much better in France than in Britain. In 1924, the Comintern even established a Colonial Bureau in Paris, tasked to cooperate with the Colonial Commission of the French Party as well as to supervise its anti-colonial work in the French colonies.[107] Local

105 Ali Raza and Benjamin Zachariah, "To Take Arms Across a Sea of Trouble: The "Lascar System," Politics, and Agency in the 1920s," *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (December 2012): 19–38.

106 Nalim Gupta to Secretary [name cut away] (Eastern Section) Moscow, no date (stamped: 1 Jan. 1928), 534/5/194, 4, RGASPI. As the letter is archived in the RILU-archive (fond 534), it is likely that Gupta addressed his letter to someone at the RILU headquarters rather than the Comintern Eastern Secretariat.

107 Mustafa Haikal, "Das Internationale Kolonialbüro der Komintern in Paris," *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* (1993): 126–130.

functionaries opened a Port Bureau in the same year and managed to connect with African and Asian seamen.[108] However, operations in Paris came to a standstill when the French Sûreté deported Manabendra Nath Roy, the head of the Colonial Bureau in Paris, in early 1925.[109]

The organisation of the (radical) African diaspora in France gained momentum a few years later, first with the foundation of the Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre and, after its split in 1927, the radical Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre (LDRN). The LDRN, headed by the Senegalese Communist Lamine Senghor (1889–1927) and Garan Tiemoko Kouyaté (1902–1942) from the French Soudan (Mali), received financial support from the French Communist Party PCF. Most importantly, however, Kouyaté had links to black seamen and dockworkers in the French ports.[110] In 1927, a Port Bureau started operating in Marseille, the main centre for colonial maritime transport workers in France.[111]

1.6 *Bleak Prospects? The 1926 Montevideo Conference and Work in Latin America*

Left-wing syndicalism had made its roads to South America already before the war. In general, the unions were small and the national federations weak and most of them were dominated by the syndicalist International Workers of the World of IWW. In Chile and Mexico, the IWW had its strongest foothold among seamen and dockworkers, but also attracted other transport workers, bakers, shoemakers and female factory workers. In Chile, the main stronghold of the IWW was the port of Valparaiso where it mustered some 9,000 members during the early 1920s. Interestingly, it was at Valparaiso where exiled Tom Barker arrived in 1918. In Mexico, the IWW branch was formally established in 1919 and had its main stronghold in the port of Tampico with some 6,000 members, too. In Ecuador, they controlled the port of Guayaquil, in Uruguay the port of Montevideo.[112] A first attempt to summon the radical left-wing maritime transport workers was made by the Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union (MTWIU) of the IWW in at a conference in New Orleans in 1925. Harrison

108 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 60, RGASPI.

109 Haikal, "Das Internationale Kolonialbüro."

110 See further Philippe Dewitte, *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919–1939* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985).

111 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter,* 39.

112 See further Anton Rosenthal, "Radical Border Crossers: The Industrial Workers of the World and their Press in Latin America," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y Caribe* 22, no. 2 (2011): 44–53.

George (1888-?),[113] a militant IWW-member who had joined the communists and tried to use the MTWIU as a vehicle to establish a communist-controlled international maritime organisation, participated at the conference which also listed several delegates from South America. A second gathering had originally been scheduled to be held in Havana, but had to be transferred elsewhere due to a military coup d'état and the establishment of the Machado dictatorship in Cuba. Eventually, the MTWIU organised the conference in Montevideo.[114]

Communist agitation among maritime transport workers had made little inroads in Latin America during the early 1920s. The exception was Uruguay where the socialists under leadership of Eugenio Gomez (1892–1973) managed to control the port workers' union, the Federación Obrera Marítima (FOM), at the end of the 1910s. In September 1920, a fraction within the Socialist Party led by Gomez accepted the 21-Points of Membership to the Comintern and became the Partido de Comunista Uruguay (PCU). This was magnificent news from Moscow's perspective. In contrast to other Latin American states, the PCU gained legal status and could operate in public. Even more important, as the PCU had grown out of the trade union movement, its prime objective was to propel a communist trade union movement and to compete with the anarcho-syndicalist Federación Obrera Regional Uruguaya (FORU) and the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores. The main vehicle for communist agitation was the communist-controlled maritime union that had joined the anti-anarchist Comité Pro Unidad Obrera.[115]

Nevertheless, the communists failed to infiltrate the Comité Pro Unidad Obrera and compel its affiliation to the RILU. Reorganised as the Unión Sindical Uruguaya (USU) in 1923, the union leadership effectively blocked any further communist attempts to control the union. Although officially denounced as 'anarchist', the communist remained and constituted a revolutionary minority group within the USU. Union work itself was facing stiff challenges at the same time as the economy was in a state of depression. Consequently, membership in the unions declined from 10,200 in 1922 to 6,500 in 1926, divided among numerous small unions.[116]

113 On Harrison George and his work for the Comintern and RILU, see Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 49–57.

114 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 466; Vernon L. Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront: Revolution, Reform, and the Quest for Power* (Lanham: Lexington Boos, 2020), 7.

115 Robert J. Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Uruguay and Paraguay* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 25–26.

116 Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in Uruguay and Paraguay*, 27.

From Moscow's perspective, therefore, work in Latin America opened both potentials and challenges. At the Comintern headquarters, the so-called Latin Secretariat monitored organisational matters concerning the activities of the parties on the continent.[117] In 1925, the Comintern established a Latin American Secretariat in Buenos Aires to strengthen its supervision of the parties in Latin America.[118] The RILU, too, planned to open an office in South America; an opening to make this move occurred in March 1926 when the Second Continental Conference of Marine Transport Workers convened in Montevideo. The main manager and organiser of the conference was Harrison George.[119]

Harrison George arrived at Montevideo and delivered a lengthy speech that seemingly impressed his audience.[120] Present at the venue were mainly representatives from syndicalist harbour worker associations and federations from Brazil, Uruguay, and the USA, those from Mexico, Cuba and Peru had cancelled their attendance due to financial constraints while the delegation from the Argentinian Maritime Federation arrived late and missed the event. Although the syndicalist leanings were strong at the conference, Harrison George managed to convince them about Moscow's idea of centralism and trade union unity. As an outcome of the negotiations, a unity committee, known as the Comite Continental de Obreros Maritimos y Portuarios, was established. The Comite Continental was to promote the IWW's programme of militant struggle but adhere to the RILU programme of 'World Trade Union Unity'. Its headquarters was to be set up in Montevideo and its main project was to summon a new congress within the next two years.[121]

The conference also accepted and published a thirteen-point programme of concrete demands that encapsulated the demands for improving the conditions of the maritime transport workers "in their united struggle." Echoing

117 The Latin American Section of the Secretariat of the Comintern was established in 1921. In 1926, it was renamed as the Latin Secretariat and supervised the parties in the "Latin" countries in Europe, including Belgium, France, Spain and Portugal, and in Latin America. The secretariat was split in 1928, and the Latin American Secretariat existed until 1935. The Anglo-American Secretariat, in turn, supervised the parties in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

118 Manuel Caballero, *Latin America and the Comintern 1919–1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 26–27; Silvio Pons and Robert Service (eds.), *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 197.

119 Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, 7.

120 Speech of Harrison George – representative of the IPCT at the United Front Conference of the Marine Workers of the Western Hemisphere, held at Montevideo March 20–21, 1926, it was delivered in Spanish [English translation], 534/5/185, 16–28, RGASPI.

121 Harrison George, "The Western Marine Workers' Conference at Montevideo," *Inprecor* 6, no. 48 (24 June 1926): 794–795.

earlier resolutions of the IPC-TW, they summarised the visions of the revolutionary trade union opposition and its call for radical union activism in an eight-point declaration:

1) Eight-hour working days for seamen and six hours for stokers;
2) 44-hour week for all maritime workers that have an eight-hour day,
3) Holiday work at double time and overtime double the present rate;
4) Uniform scale of wages for seafarers of all countries on equal ships an equal lines;
5) Uniform number of personal in crew,
6) Vacation with pay after six months service, two weeks for deckhands, one month by stokers;
7) Full wages and passage home for workers discharged or left in foreign ports,
8) Right to leave ship at will in any port, without punishment or loss of pay,
9) Dining rooms for crews with all comforts;
10) Tub and shower baths for crews;
11) Establishment of the cabin system for crews, with all sanitary conditions;
12) Unions to be consulted when new ships are planned, to assure good conditions for the workers;
13) The recognition of ship committees, composed of representatives from all departments of the same ship.[122]

These demands were revolutionary in a world where seamen and stokers had few rights and even less comfort on board merchant vessels, and they were to constitute the core demands of the communists over the next decade. What was new – the national unions had similar demands on their programme – was the uncompromising urge of the communists for the immediate realisation of the demands instead of a prolonged period of tactical negotiations.

Controlling the activities of the Comite Continental or Montevideo Bureau proved difficult, if not impossible. Dispatches from Montevideo took months to reach Moscow making it difficult for the RILU and IPC-TW secretariats in Moscow to react and respond to, not to speak interfere with practical planning and tactical considerations. Correspondence and, most likely funding [?], was sent via the RILU Berlin Bureau, where Max Ziese functioned as intermediary.[123] In June 1927, the Comite Continental informed Moscow that it decided

122 George, "The Western Marine Workers' Conference at Montevideo," 795.

123 P. Garcia to Achkanov, Montevideo, [?] February 1927, 534/5/192, 1, RGASPI. In this letter, Garcia informs Achkanov about the contacts via Max Ziese. Achkanov replied in April that he had received the letter, see Achkanov to Garcia, Moscow 14.4.1927, 534/5/192, 5, RGASPI. I have not (yet) been able to identify P. Garcia.

to focus on the maritime unions in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay.[124] Agitation within the FOM in Uruguay was not necessary as the communists already controlled the union. However, no further information was forthcoming for the rest of the year, and the RILU and IPC-TW headquarters must have suspected that the communist or revolutionary groups within the maritime transport workers' unions were either insignificant or out of reach of Montevideo's and, by extension, Moscow's control.

Moreover, the lack of a Port Bureau and/or Interclub in South America hampered the ambitions of the IPC-TW. Initially, the IPC-TW planned to establish a Port Bureau in Buenos Aires in 1926 but a lack of suitable functionaries nullified these plans.[125] In April 1927, Achkanov requested the Comite Continental to make a new attempt.[126] A Port Bureau in Buenos Aires was of top priority, Achkanov stressed – the city was the largest port in South America and the terminus for twelve international steamship lines.[127] Nothing happened and a new start was needed for work in South America. At a meeting in Moscow in mid-December 1927, the RILU therefore announced its intention to set up a Latin American Trade Union Secretariat in Montevideo.[128]

2 The Operational Units: The Regional Secretariats and the Port Bureaus

The Port Bureaus focussed on agitation and propaganda among foreign seamen. While this was the sole objective of the units in Soviet Russia, those operating outside Soviet Russia also attracted native mariners as well as local harbour workers, which generated confusion among local functionaries about the focus and scope of their work. The root cause of this was a conflicting interpretation of the spatial dimension of a Port Bureau's operational framework. Ideally, a Port Bureau constituted an extra-territorial unit and served as a link between the IPC-TW, and by extension the RILU, and the various national red trade unions or revolutionary minorities and oppositions within the national trade unions. The organisational structure was further complicated as the IPC-TW started to set up regional secretariats and sub-secretariat in 1925 to monitor and supervise the operations outside Soviet Russia, see Table 1.

124 P. Garcia to Achkanov, Montevideo, 11.7.1927, 534/5/192, 7, RGASPI.
125 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 67, RGASPI.
126 Achkanov to Garcia, Moscow 14.4.1927, 534/5/192, 5, RGASPI.
127 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 67, RGASPI.
128 "Towards a Latin American Trade Union Secretariat," *Inprecor* 7, no. 72 (22 December 1927): 1636.

TABLE 1 The regional units of the IPC-TW, ca. 1927/1928

Location	Secretariat	Subordinated Countries	Port Bureau
Berlin	Central European Secretariat	Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland	Hamburg, Rotterdam
Paris	Latin Secretariat	Algeria, Belgium, France, Italy, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Syria, as well as the French colonies	Bordeaux, Marseille
Oslo	Scandinavian Secretariat	Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden	Copenhagen [Plan: Oslo]
London	British Secretariat	Ireland, United Kingdom, as well as the British colonies	[plan: London]
[?]	North American Secretariat	Canada, USA	New York
Montevideo	Latin American Secretariat	Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay	[plan: Buenos Aires]
[?]	Sub-Secretariat for the Baltic countries	Estonia, Latvia, Livonia	
[?]	Sub-Secretariat for the Balkan countries	Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia	
Shanghai	Sub-Secretariat for the Far Eastern countries	China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Pilippines	[plan: Shanghai]
[?]	Central American Secretariat	Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela	
[?]	Sub-Secretariat for Australia and the Pacific countries	Australia, New Zealand, US West Coast	[plan: Sydney]

SOURCE: *DIE 5. INTERNATIONALE KONFERENZ DER REVOLUTIONÄREN TRANSPORTARBEITER, ABGEHALTEN IN MOSKAU APRIL 1928* (MOSKAU: INTERNATIONALES PROPAGANDA- UND AKTIONSKOMITÉE DER REVOLUTIONÄREN TRANSPORTARBEITER, 1928), 74

The geographical location for some of the secretatiats and sub-secretariats is difficult to establish due to the paucity of available sources. Only a few of them can be traced, others were listed in the publication of the Fourth IPC-TW Conference only by names but without any information on their location.[129] The Central European, British and Latin Secretariats seemed to have been attached to or worked in tandem with the RILU-units in Berlin, London and Paris, and supervised acivities at the Port Bureaus in Hamburg and Rotterdam (Berlin) as well as Bordeaux and Marseille (Paris). The operations of the unit in Oslo, the Scandinavian Secretariat, and the Port Bureau in Copenhagen will be discussed in detail further below. The location of the North and Central American Secretatiats of the IPC-TW is unclear/not known; I assume that they were either located in Moscow or in New York, perhaps in tandem with the Trade Union Educational League, the RILU-unit in the USA. Similar speculations apply to the Baltic and Balkan Sub-Secretariats; my hyptothesis is that they were located in Moscow, the Baltic one perhaps in Riga?

The unit in Montevideo was the Comite Continental; it operated from mid-1929 in conjunction with the Confederación Sindical Latino Americana (CSLA), the new RILU-unit for Latin America. The CSLA had been established at a congress in Montevideo held in May 1929. The establishment of the CSLA also affected the operations of the IPAC-TW in Latin America. A detailed assessment of the files in the Comintern Archives on the attempt to radicalise and organise maritime transport workers Latin America is still missing but research literature and contemporary documentation enables a rough sketch of the organisational outline after 1929. In congruence with the Montevideo Congress in May 1929, a conference for maritime transport workers was organised by the Federación Obrera Marítima of Uruguay. Headed by Eugenio Gómez and attended by representatives of unions in Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, the conference resulted in the establishment of the Comité Marítimo y Portuario Latino Americana.[130]

The location of the Pacific Sub-Secretariat is dubious. Perhaps it was a unit that was planned to be placed in Sydney? The operations of the IPC-TW in the Far East and the Pacific area were constrained due to the insecure working

129 My discussion of the location of the IPC-TW secretariats and sub-secretariats revises my earlier identification, especially with regards my suggestion of locating some of the units in Hamburg, see Weiss, *För kampen internationellt*, 87, table 1.

130 Alexander and Parker, *International Labor Organizations and Organised Labor in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 53. At least some of the correspondence and reports by the Comité Marítimo y Portuario for 1929 is filed in 534/5/207, 534/5/212, and 534/5/218, all RGASPI.

conditions in Shanghai where the RILU-units existed as underground offices from 1927 onwards. Public activities in the Shanghai harbour were more or less impossible, including agitating foreign seamen. A new structure for work in the Pacific area were laid in August 1929 when the Second Conference of the Transport Workers of the Pacific convened in conjunction with the Second Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference held in Vladivostok. The key role of organising seamen, especially the so-called "coloured" or non-white, was stressed by the PPTUS. This became the key objective of the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers or TOST, formed at the conference and with temporary residence in Vladivostok. At first, the TOST was run by the Finn Väinö Pukka as secretary, the Japanese member Takasaki, the Chinese member and former instructor at the defunct Shanghai Interclub Kichi, and the Japanese member and editor of the Vladivostok Interclub's Japanese newsletter Saiki Shinzo (alias Kavata). Its main task was to publish and disseminate periodicals and non-periodical publications in Chinese and Japanese language. The TOST co-operated with the Vladburo, established in December 1929 as the central co-ordinating unit of the RILU in Vladivostok, and the local Port Bureau and Interclub which were under the direction of the Vladburo.[131] In contrast to the Comité Marítimo y Portuario Latino Americana, the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers was not affiliated to the successor of the IPC-TW, the International Action and Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers.

Initially, the IPC-TW had planned to open Port Bureaus in Petrograd and Odessa as well as outside Russia in Antwerp (Belgium), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Constantinople (Turkey), Genova (Italy), Gothenburg (Sweden), Hamburg (Germany), Liverpool (Britain), Marseille (France), New York (USA), Piraeus (Greece), Port Said (Egypt), and Rotterdam (Netherlands).[132]

However, the vision of a global network of radical maritime propaganda centres never materialised. What had come into existence by 1926 was a truncated version of the grand plan. Not surprisingly, the establishment of Port Bureaus in Soviet Russian ports was a rather easy affair as the Bolsheviks were in full control of Russia by 1922. Within the next year, the IPC-TW operated Port Bureaus in Archangelsk, Novorossiysk, Odessa and Petrograd (from 1924: Leningrad), followed by those in Batumi, Feodosia, Kherson, Mariupol, Murmansk, Nikolayev (Mykolaiv), Poti, and Vladivostok. In addition, the IPC-TW was running so-called liaison centres for the distribution of literature among seamen in Berdyansk, Nikolayevsk-on-Amur, Sebastopol, and Tuapse. Outside Soviet Russia, the vision proved difficult to accomplish, and Port

131 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 83–84, 111.

132 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 56, RGASPI.

Bureaus existed only in four ports by 1926, namely Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Rotterdam. In addition, the IPC-TW was operating a liaison centre in Shanghai.[133] One year later, the situation had changed. Operations in Shanghai went underground due to the suppression of communist activities by the Guomindang. On the other hand, positive news were the opening of a Port Bureau and Interclub in Marseille as well as an Interclub in New York.[134]

The functionaries of the Port Bureaus rather than the regional secretariats approached foreign seamen when they visited vessels while moored in a harbour. The visits had two purposes. The ambition of the functionaries was to assemble the crew and distribute propaganda literature as well as to invite them to visit the premises of the Port Bureau. Here, the crew was to find the International Seamen's Club or Interclub that operated in conjunction with the Port Bureau. The Interclub was the public space of the Port Bureau, and usually consisted of a library and a reading room, often a bar or a restaurant. Here, the functionaries of the Port Bureau organised meetings and discussion events as well as film, music or theatre shows. In addition, they invited the crew to excursions and sport events.[135] Ideally, each Interclub comprised several language sections, usually defined as the Anglo-American, German, Latin or Scandinavian sections. A few of them also listed Chinese and Japanese sections. However, the number of sections varied according to the availability of functionaries fluent in foreign languages or representatives who had been detached by a national party or a revolutionary opposition/minority to work at a specific Interclub. This turned out to be a handicap of all Interclubs during the 1920s.[136]

The core mission of a Port Bureau was political agitation and propaganda as well as the organisation of revolutionary cells and committees on board the ship. The task was to disseminate the decisions and resolutions of the Comintern and RILU as well as the directives of the IPC-TW. Their main propaganda tool was the magazine, periodical and wall journal produced by the functionaries and seamen who visited the Interclub and published by the Port Bureau. In addition, the Port Bureaus were to establish and to maintain

133 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 56, RGASPI.

134 Internationale kommunistische Hafenbüros, included in report by the German police on the communist movement in Germany, dated Berlin 15.10.1927, Reichskommissariat für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordning und Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Inneren, R 1507/2035, BarchB. According to police informants, a liaison office (rather than an outright Port Bureau) existed in Duisburg-Ruhrort in a small tavern close to the harbour. However, the existence of such an establishment at this point can be doubted as there are no reference to it in the contemporary correspondence from the Hamburg Port Bureau to the RILU Berlin Bureau.

135 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 57–58, RGASPI.

136 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 416.

contacts to the revolutionary opposition and minorities in the national unions of maritime transport workers. In some cases, the Port Bureau functionaries represented national unions or the minorities/revolutionary opposition within the unions as well as served as arbitrators to settle disputes among the crew or between the crew and the captain. In addition, their assignment was to instigate campaigns in support of national conflicts.[137]

The most visible activity of the Port Bureaus were their appeals for international proletarian solidarity, which at times caused concern for the shipowners and government authorities. Some of these campaigns were politically motivated, such as the global 'Hands off China'- campaign of the Comintern and RILU that called for demonstrations against British interventions in China during the mid-1920s, or the call of the RILU to protest against Dutch imperialism in Indonesia in 1926. Most of the international campaigns orchestrated by the Port Bureaus, however, were in support of national strikes, such as the British and Australian seamen's strike in 1925, the seamen's strike in Sweden in 1925, and the British miners' and general strike in 1926.[138]

Local political conditions constituted a major barrier for establishing and running a Port Bureau. Objectively, this was not the case in Soviet Russia, although internal reports by liaison agents of the bureaus sometimes criticised local Soviet party, police and trade union officials for obstructing work among foreign seamen. As early as 1923, the RILU initiated an assessment of the operational basis of the Port Bureaus in Russia.[139] The commission, headed by Grigorii Achkanov, heavily criticised the Port Bureaus for their lax commitment to agitation and propaganda work among foreign seamen.[140] As a consequence, work in the Russian Port Bureaus was overhauled, and especially the Leningrad Port Bureau emerged as a key operational node (see Figure 4).[141] In contrast, the situation was more difficult outside Soviet Russia where the union, police

137 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 57–58, RGASPI.

138 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 57–58, RGASPI; "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 22–23. On the British seamen's strike of 1925 and its international dimensions, see further B. Hirson and L. Vivian, *Strike Across the Empire: The Seamen's Strike of 1925 in Britain, South Africa and Australasia* (London: Clio Publications, 1992); Jonathan Hyslop, "A British Strike in an African Port: The mercantile marine and dominion politics in Durban, 1925," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 5 (2015): 882–902. The seamen's strike in Sweden has not received academic attention.

139 Protokoll Nr 58 der Sitzung des Vollzugsbüros der Profintern vom 8.8.1923, 534/3/46, RGASPI.

140 Protokoll Nr 64 der Sitzung des Vollzugsbüros der Profintern vom 6.9.1923, 534/3/46, RGASPI.

141 Protokoll Nr 67 der Sitzung des Vollzugsbüros der Profintern vom 29.9.1923, 534/3/46, RGASPI.

Friseurstube und ein Restaurant angeschlossen, wo der ein nur geringes Gehalt beziehende ausländische Seemann eine nahrhafte und wohlschmeckende Abendmahlzeit erhalten kann. Während des Sommers befindet sich das Restaurant im Garten des Klubs. Fußballspiele mit Sowjetarbeitern, Fahrten auf der Newa und an den Strand auf Segeljachten, Besuch von „Alle-fünf-Tage-Erholungsheimen" von Sonnabend auf Sonntag usw. bilden ebenfalls einen Teil der kulturellen Bedienung der ausländischen Seeleute durch den Klub. In der UdSSR fühlt sich der ausländische Seemann nicht in der Fremde, sondern in einem Lande, in dem sich die Macht in Händen des Proletariats — seiner Klassenbrüder — befindet.

Das Heim des Internationalen Seemannsklubs in Leningrad. Hier finden die Seeleute, die aus allen Ländern der Welt kommen, gastliche Aufnahme und alles, was sie brauchen, um sich wirklich zu Hause zu fühlen.

Der Klub besitzt einen Lesesaal und eine Bibliothek. In ihnen findet der Seemann Zeitungen, Zeitschriften und Bücher in seiner Muttersprache.

Das Gartenrestaurant des Seemannsklubs bietet für wenig Geld nahrhafte und wohlschmeckende Mahlzeiten.

Englische und sowjetrussische Fußballspieler nach einem Match auf dem Sportplatz des Seemannsklubs. Zwischen den Leningrader Arbeitern und den Gästen des Seemannsklubs finden regelmäßig sportliche Veranstaltungen statt.

Im Seemannsklub von Leningrad

Der Leningrader Handelshafen ist der größte und einer der belebtesten Häfen der Welt. Er wird von Dampfern vieler Länder besucht, besonders aus Deutschland, Skandinavien, England und den baltischen Randstaaten. Tausende von ausländischen Seeleuten kommen alljährlich in das größte Industriezentrum des ersten proletarischen Staates der Welt.

In den bürgerlichen Ländern sind die am Hafen gelegenen Stadtviertel überfüllt von kleinen Schenken der schlechtesten Art, wo der Seemann die kurze Zeit seiner Erholung auf dem festen Lande zubringen gezwungen ist.

In der Sowjet-Union hat die Gewerkschaft der Seeleute, die Sektion der Seemanns- und Hafenarbeiterinternationale, für die Seeleute internationale Klubs eingerichtet, die ihnen die Möglichkeit bieten, sich wirklich zu erholen.

Der Leningrader Internationale Klub organisiert für die ausländischen Seeleute Exkursionen in die Museen Leningrads und seine Umgegend. Er veranstaltet Konzerte, in denen die besten Musiker und Sänger Leningrads auftreten. Der Klub besitzt eine Bibliothek und einen Lesesaal, wo der Seemann in seiner Sprache Zeitungen und Bücher lesen kann. Ein Sportsaal und Massenspiele geben ihm die Möglichkeit einer gesunden Zerstreuung. Dem Klub ist eine

FIGURE 4 The Leningrad Interclub, article published in *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* XI, no. 44 (1932): 1058. The Interclub was renovated and enlarged in 1932. After the extension, the Interclub was added with a boarding house for visiting seamen, a large buffet restaurant, a gym, and a library.

and port authorities as well as the shipowners and the non-communist parties either blocked or thwarted the efforts of the communists and revolutionary opposition groups. In some places, IPC-TW Secretary Achkanov lamented, the Communist Party and communist-controlled unions either had an indifferent attitude or were incapable of assisting a Port Bureau.[142]

The lukewarm interest of the local communist party and union leaders towards the Port Bureaus was due to its position within the communist

142 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 56, RGASPI. Although not directly stated, Achkanov's critique about the disinterest of the Communist Party seems to have been directed towards the CPGB and CPUSA.

world-system. Whereas national communist parties constituted sections of the Comintern and red trade unions sections of the RILU, the Port Bureaus operated outside the control of a national party, a red union or a revolutionary opposition/minority. Instead, the Port Bureaux was – at least on paper – directly subordinated to a regional IPC-TW secretariat and, ultimately, headquarters in Moscow. In practice, however, the situation was more complicated. In Soviet Russia, the management of a Port Bureau consisted of its secretary who represented the IPC-TW, three representatives of the local branches of the railway, water transport and motor transport unions as well as to a representative of the local party unit for agitation and propaganda. Outside Soviet Russia, a Port Bureau consisted of fewer salaried officials, in most cases only the secretary-cum-representative of the IPC-TW and a representative of the local red union or revolutionary minority within the transport workers' union.[143]

The (relatively) independent position of the Port Bureaus in relation to the local party and red unions/minorities was due to its designation as agitation and propaganda unit for reaching out to foreign seamen. Most Port Bureaus had functionaries who spoke at least one, sometimes even several languages. This was usually a foreign seaman who had been enlisted by the Port Bureau to target vessels flying the flag of a nation which language the seaman mastered. In some cases, the person also acted as liaison person for one or several national maritime unions. This was, among others, the case in the Leningrad and Archangelsk Port Bureaus whose functionaries had the mandate to represent Scandinavian and German maritime unions (see further below).

2.1 *Foreign Seamen in Soviet Ports*

The first Port Bureau and Interclub was established in Petrograd (Leningrad) in 1922, located in an old palace of the Russian nobility surrounded by a large garden at 15, Prospect Ogorodnikova. Although the interior of the palace witnessed of its former grandeur, it had been transformed into a political space by the Bolsheviks by placing a large bronze statue of Lenin in the vestibule. Large signposts on the doors oriented a visiting seamen to a specific section, such as the Anglo-American, Colonial, French, German or Scandinavian, which were in charge of work among various national seamen. The building further hosted a library, a gym and a large dining hall.[144]

Leningrad was the largest and most important port of Soviet Russia, and was regularly visited by German and Nordic merchant vessels. Consequently,

143 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 56–57, RGASPI.

144 Eröffnung des Internationalen Seemannsklubs in Leningrad, Deutsche Botschaft. Deutsches Generalkonsulat Leningrad, 8.6.1932, R1501/20224, 126, BArchB.

the most important sections of at the Interclub were the German and the Scandinavian ones. Both were organised by the German communist Hermann Knüfken who also was the secretary of the Interclub.[145] In addition, Knüfken was the local representative of the Seamen's section of the German Transport Union (Deutscher Verkehrsbund, Abteilung Seeleute), the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union (Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøterunion), the Danish Stokers' Union (Søfyrbødernes Forbund), and the Danish Seamen's Union (Sømændenes Forbund i Danmark).[146] On the other hand, although both Swedish and Finnish vessels regularly called at Leningrad, the national unions of these two countries had no representative at the Interclub.

The Leningrad Port Bureau and Interclub emerged as the leading unit of the IPC-TW. In 1927, some 24,000 foreign seamen had visited the Interclub, of which 1,500 participated in excursions to factories and cultural institutions whereas 5,000 engeged in sporting events. All of them made use of the library and reading hall, and 8,000 attended music events and concerts.[147]

The other Soviet Port Bureaus had a more limited outreach and scope of activities. Norwegian merchant vessels predominated in Archangelsk.[148] British, French, Greek, and Italian ships, in turn, dominated the Black Sea ports. The Interclub in Novorossiysk included a Latin Section that focussed on work among French, Greek, Italian and Spanish seamen, and an Anglo-American one for British, Dutch, German, North American and Scandinavian seamen.[149] Key functionary in Novorossiysk was the Italian communist Luigi Polano, who started a campaign against the Fascist regime in Italy in February 1927, and edited an anti-fascist and anti-syndicalist bulletin, *Il Lavoratore Rosso dal Mare*, which was sent to the Interclubs in Marseille, New York and Rotterdam for distribution among Italian mariners.[150]

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145 Hermann Knüfken (1893–1976) gained acclamation and respect among the radical left when he, together with other German communists, hijacked the German steam ship *Senator Schröder* to Murmansk and participated at the Second World Congress of the Cominern in 1920. See further Hermann Knüfken, *Von Kiel bis Leningrad. Erinnerungen eines revolutionären Matrosen 1917 bis 1930* (Berlin: BasisDruck Verlag 2008).

146 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 64, RGASPI; Daten über das Leningrader Bureau M.K.P. Transport [ca. 1927], 534/5/187, 5, RGASPI. Before the amalgamation with the German Transport Union, Knüffken had represented the Schiffahrtsbund at the Leningrad Interclub.

147 Daten über das Leningrader Bureau M.K.P. Transport [ca. 1927], 534/5/187, 5, RGASPI.

148 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 64, RGASPI.

149 [Luigi] Polano, Report [in French] on work in Novorossiysk, 15.2.1927, 534/5/187, 57–60, RGASPI.

150 [Luigi] Polano, Report [in French] on work in Novorossiysk, 16.2.1927, 534/5/187, 61–63, RGASPI.

TABLE 2 Activities of Soviet Interclubs, 1925

	Activity	Frequency	Participants
1.	Excursions	280	3,910
2.	Political meetings (topic: United front)	149	2,923
3.	Demonstrations	5	575
4.	Sporting events	12	1,377
5.	Concerts	188	14,190
6.	Meetings	156	10,189
7.	Interlocutions in the Club	670	5,177
8.	Entertainment evenings	267	4,300
9.	Meetings on board the ships	922	7,793
10.	Discussion evenings	181	844
11.	Established ship libraries	111	-
12.	Visits to the club libraries	-	18,633
13.	Wall journals and bulletins	64	-
14.	Participation of crew members in preparation of wall journal and bulletins	-	68
15.	Pamphlets bought by seamen	171	-
16.	Pamphlets received from various organisations	68	-

SOURCE: ATSCHKANOW, BERICHT DES I.P.K.T. ÜBER DIE HAFENBÜROS, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 59, RGASPI

Achkanov was full of praise of the prospects and successes of the Soviet Port Bureaus in his 1926 assessment report. Almost 60,000 foreign seamen, representing 15 countries, had visited the five largest Soviet Port Bureaus who had organised 936 meetings, 207 excursions and 26 demonstrations in 1925. However, an analysis of the statistical data on visits to the Port Bureaus reveals that the most events counted only 10 participants. Popular ones were the concerts, meetings and sporting events, while political meetings and discussions attracted on average less than 10 persons, see Table 2.

More important than face-to-face indoctrination was the indirect one via political pamphlets and magazines at display in the reading rooms as well as the production of wall journals and bulletins by foreign seamen. In addition, the Archangelsk Port Bureau published a bulletin in German and Norwegian, while that in Vladivostok published one in Chinese, Japanese and English.[151]

151 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 66, RGASPI.

Similar rosy descriptions about the Interclubs were circulated in the communist and left-wing press outside Soviet Russia. The German *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* hailed the abundant variation of sport and cultural events organised by the Leningrad Port Bureau. A foreign mariner was treated (almost) like a prince, the paper claimed; he could visit a barber or a gym at the Interclub or participate in a football game or an excursion along River Neva. Alternatively, he could visit a vacation home for recreation if he stayed over the weekend and attend concerts at the club where the best musicians of the town played classical music.[152]

Internally, however, criticism started to amount on the activities of the Interclubs and the conditions of work in the Soviet ports. For example, Bolshevik indoctrination generated sarcastic comments by Dutch seamen: "The [Leningrad] Club has become like a monastery and an alien space for the seamen, who are not interested to listen every evening to an inane sermon about Lenin by a landlubber."[153] Critical voices were raised over the harsh rules when a seaman lost his *propusk* (permit) in Leningrad; the fine amounted to the equivalent to one month salary, and Knüfken begged the rule to be either liquidated or that the seamen was to be given a new *propusk* for free.[154] Some years later, an internal memorandum heavily criticised conditions in Archangelsk. Seasonal workers at the sawmills in the Archangelsk area had climbed on board foreign ships and begged for bread and clothes from the crew. Prostitutes approached seamen in public and offered their services; illegally produced vodka was sold in the streets. The local militia did nothing; rather, they were accused for corruption and organising illegal services. Moreover, the local party and union officials had little understanding of how to approach foreign seamen and did not offer any assistance to the Port Bureau.[155]

The organisational setup of work among foreign seamen in the Soviet ports underwent far-reaching structural changes when the Soviet authorities subordinated the Port Bureaus and Interclubs to the Russian Union for Maritime Transport Workers in March 1927. The plans of a re-organisation must have been unknown to Achkanov when he drafted the assessment report in late 1926. The decision implied that the sole objective of the Soviet Port Bureaus and Interclubs was political propaganda about social and economic achievements

152 "Im Seemannsklub von Leningrad," *Arbeiter Illustrierte-Zeitung* XI:44 (1932): 1058.

153 R. Rohde/International Port Bureau Rotterdam to IPC-TW, Rotterdam 20.8.1924, 534/5/163, 32–33, RGASPI.

154 Knüfken to Achkanov, Leningrad 17.8.1929, 534/5/187, 120, RGASPI.

155 Viktor Olsen, Bericht über Archangelsk, Moskau 1929, 534/5/209, 64–65, RGASPI.

in the 'Fatherland of the working class'. Political agitation against the shipowners among foreign seamen was restrained if not suppressed, not least the support to strikes in foreign countries. Hence, the IPC-TW refrained from addressing Russian maritime workers in its calls for international proletarian solidarity campaigns.[156]

The consequences of the decision in 1927 were drastic and changed the focus of the IPC-TW. While the Soviet units would officially be included in the list of Port Bureaus and Interclubs, only those outside the Soviet Union remained as agitation and propaganda centres under the control of the IPC-TW. The reasons for the reorganisation were never announced or discussed in public, although it is likely that the decision followed instructions from the Kremlin. Interestingly, the decision followed the collapse of the bilateral negotiations between the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions and the British TUC.[157]

Although officially under Russian direction and supervision, the Soviet Port Bureaus and Interclubs continued to rely on foreign functionaries to fulfil their mission. Knüfken remained in Leningrad until 1929 when the Soviet authorities arrested him for having embezzled funds from the Interclub. The accusations proved faulty, and after an international campaign for his release, the RILU transferred him to Hamburg in 1931.[158] Work in Archangelsk stagnated due to the lack of functionaries who mastered Norwegian; even worse, the Interclub had ceased to publish its own journal by 1929.[159] A different situation prevailed in Vladivostok where the operations of the Interclub gained a boost after the establishment of the Vladburo.[160]

2.2 *Gateway to the World: The Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub*

Work at the Hamburg Port Bureau resumed its activites during spring 1924. At first, operations were run by 'Alex', presumably Nick Alexander, although it is not known if the name was an alias or not. Assumably, he left Hamburg in early 1925 and was replaced by Adolph Greenberg, who monitored the affairs of the Port Bureau until September 1925 when Albert Walter took over. Walter's main obligation had hitherto been to supervise the amalgamation of the

156 "Bericht der Kommission über die Arbeit der Interklubs und ihre Aufgaben," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 57–58.

157 See further Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians 1923–1928* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

158 Knüfken, *Von Kiel bis Leningrad*, 227–315.

159 Viktor Olsen, Bericht über Archangelsk, Moskau 1929, 534/5/209, 64–65, RGASPI.

160 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 84.

Schiffahrtsbund with the German Transport Workers' Federation (Deutscher Verkehrsbund).[161] This process was finalised in 1926, thereafter the former communist and radical left-wing members of the Schiffahrtsbund constituted the 'revolutionary opposition' within the maritime section of the Federation, the Abteilung Seeleute.

One of the first objectives of the comrades in Hamburg was the extension and renovation of the premises of the Port Bureau. Already Greenberg noted that the bureau needed at least 4 to 5 rooms to work properly: one hall large enough to accommodate at least 150 people for meetings and gatherings, one library, one room for entertainment and leisure, one "refreshment room" (i.e., a bar or dining room), and one room for the bureau's office.[162] Renovations started in late April, and in late September the large hall and the "Bierausschank" (i.e., bar) were ready to be used.[163]

Work in the Hamburg harbour area faced several practical challenges. The harbour area streched over 40 square kilometres and could only be covered by the use of motorised longboats. Initially, the Port Bureau did not own its own longboat and the functionaries had to rent a vessel each time they toured the harbour for visiting ships. At times, the police prohibited the longboat drivers to carry communist agitators while some captains barred the functionaries to board a ship. Despite these restrictions, operations in the harbour area expanded and a growing amount of foreign crews were reached, see Table 3. Although the figures seem to indicate that activities had more or less collapsed in December 1925, this was not the case, Walter explained; rather, harsh weather conditions including the freezing of the harbour area prevented the use of the motorised longboat.[164]

The activities of the Hamburg Port Bureau expanded in 1926. Most notably, the Interclub started its operations and soon evolved as the main centre for agitation and propaganda. On average, the Interclub was visited by 1,500 to 2,000 German and foreign seamen each month. The Port Bureau had also started to edit its own journal, *Der Sturm*, which was published in 5,000 copies on a monthly basis,[165] reaching 6,000 in 1927 and 8,000 in 1928.[166] Until

161 Adolph Greenberg to Genosse Schachnowski, Hamburg 16.4.1925, 534/5/172, 14–15, RGASPI.

162 Adolph Greenberg to Genosse Schachnowski, Hamburg 16.4.1925, 534/5/172, 14–15, RGASPI.

163 Walter, Tätigkeitsbericht des Internationalen Hafenbüros Hamburg für September 1925, 534/5/172, 30–33, RGASPI.

164 Walter, Tätigkeitsbericht Dezember 1925, 534/5/172, 72–75, RGASPI.

165 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 66, RGASPI.

166 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht März-April 1928, 534/5/201, 23, RGASPI.

TABLE 3 Foreign ships visited by the Hamburg Port Bureau, 1925

Period	Total	UK	USA	Nor	Swe	Den	Fra	Holl	Rom	Ital	Braz
23.5. – 18.6.	76	61	4	5	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
October	41	21	0	0	0	0	12	6	1	1	0
November	26	13	1	1	1	0	5	2	0	2	1
December	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: GREENWOOD TO AMOSOV, 18.6.1925, 534/5/172, 18, RGASPI; WALTER, TÄTIGKEITSBERICHT OKTOBER 1925, 534/5/172, 41–46, RGASPI; WALTER, TÄTIGKEITSBERICHT NOVEMBER 1925, 534/5/172, 52–56, RGASPI; WALTER, TÄTIGKEITSBERICHT DEZEMBER 1925, 534/5/172, 72–75, RGASPI
(UK = UNITED KINGDOM; USA; NOR = NORWAY, SWE = SWEDEN; DEN = DENMARK; FRA = FRANCE; HOLL = HOLLAND; ROM = ROMANIA; ITAL = ITALY; BRAZ = BRAZIL)

1928, however, it was an illegal journal, i.e., the authorities and shipowners had banned its distribution in the harbour area.[167] In July 1928, an additional magazine, *Die Galeere*, was launched for agitation among the crew of deep-sea fishing vessels; the first (and probably only?) issue was printed in 600 copies.[168]

The Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub had four, sometimes five salaried functionaries in 1927/1928. The chief manager and secretary of the Port Bureau was "Y" or Albert Walter. Then there was "Z" whose identity is not revealed in the available documentation. The third person was "A" or Alvine; his identity is neither known. The fourth was "S"; this was Arthur Samising who organised work among Scandianvian seamen (see further Section 2.3 in this chapter). The fifth was "R", this was "Genosse [A.] Rath" who was replaced in Juli 1929 by a certain "Rost", probably Richard Rast. In addition, there was "Genossin Rath", seemingly Rath's wife, who was in charge of the restaurant.[169] Expenses, including the printing costs of the publications, were covered by monthly transfers of funds from Moscow via the RILU bureau in Berlin, see Table 4.[170]

167 Walter to "Lieber Freund," no date [ca. January 1929], 534/5/207, 46, RGASPI. Walter addressed his letter either directly to Achkanov or to someone at the RILU Berlin Bureau who transferred it to Moscow.

168 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juli 1928, 534/5/201, 40, RGASPI.

169 Information extracted from reports on monthly expenses, attached to monthly reports for 1928, filed in 534/5/201, RGASPI.

170 Oplysninger vedrørende kommunistisk propaganda (april 1926), Stockholmspolisens kriminalavdelning Rotel 6 med föregångare, F X:8 Utländska kommunistiska handlingar, SNA.

TABLE 4 Monthly transfer of funds (German Reichsmark) from Berlin to the Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub, 1928

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,200	1,200	[...]	1,200	1,500	[...]	1,200	1,200	[...]	[...]	[...]	1,200

SOURCE: INTERNATIONALE HAFENBÜRO HAMBURG, MONTLY REPORTS 1928, 534/5/201, RGASPI

The expansion of activities by the Hamburg Port Bureau were matched by an increase in vistors at the Interclub. Soon voices were raised for larger and more suitable premises; those at hand were cramped and too small for large meetings.[171] As Moscow did not respond to the complaints from Hamburg, Walter decided to act himself, and started a total overhaul and renovation of the building at Rothesoodstrasse in June 1928.[172] Although headquarters in Moscow declined to support the renovation,[173] Walter managed to finish it one year later. The first two floors were reserved for the Interclub and its activities. The restaurant, the reading room and the recreation room with its "Lenin corner" were located on the ground floor. Two meeting halls were located on the first floor, a larger one for 350 persons and a smaller one for 80 persons. During special occasions, the first two floors could host up to 600 persons. The offices of the Port Bureau as well as storage rooms were located on the second floor.[174] The larger spaces were certainly needed – the Interclub listed 34,000 visitors in 1928![175]

The Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub were more than mere agitation and propaganda centres. Albert Walter claimed that the main reason for its popularity among German as well as foreign seamen was his efforts to represent them at the local courts. Seamen visited his office to complain about abuses, excesses, infringements and maltreatment by local authorities, captains and shipping companies. Whenever possible, Walter would take their case to court. In most cases, the outcome was a positive one for the plaintiffs. Not surprisingly, this infused a positive aura of the Hamburg Port Bureau

171 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1928, 534/5/201, 81, RGASPI.

172 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juli 1928, 534/5/201, 41, RGASPI.

173 See the negative responses to inquiries from Hamburg, filed in 534/5/207, 187 and 191, RGASPI. The former response was probably sent by Max Ziese in Berlin, the latter one by someone in Moscow.

174 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1929, 534/5/210, 66, RGASPI.

175 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1929, 534/5/210, 101, RGASPI.

among radical seamen and boosted its reputation for constituting a radical free-space.[176]

By 1929, the premises at Rothesoodstrasse had developed into a red territory (see Figure 5). Apart from hosting the Port Bureau and the Interclub, local communist organisations started to use its halls for their meetings. Walter even claimed it had become a "red trade union building" (Rotes Gewerkschaftshaus). Such meetings and gatherings were welcomed as long as the organisers paid for their expenses – this had become the major source of income for the Interclub – but outsiders were not allowed to permanently occupy the building: its prime users were the radical maritime transport workers and the house was theirs and only, Walter declared emphatically.[177]

However, the Hamburg Interclub was also a contested territory. On the one hand, its premises were controlled by the club functionaries who, in turn, had to deliver monthly activity reports to Albert Walter, who headed the Port Bureau. Apart from organising the evening programme at the club and running the restaurant, the leading club functionary was also responsible for the financial balance of the activities. Nevertheless, Walter's main objective was to create an 'open space' for foreign seamen and local visitors, one that was not controlled by 'bourgeoise' and 'capitalist' autorities. On the other hand, as the communists in Germany were at loggerheads not only with the local state and police authorities but also social democratic and Nazi organisations, the Hamburg Interclub became a contested territory. A rather common feature were fistfights in the restaurant if Nazi finks tried to interup a meeting at the club, usually resulting in the arrival of a police commando to calm down the situation. Moreover, police raids were politically sanctioned and occurred either for internal or exteral reasons. Strikes in the harbour area usually unleashed a police raid against Rothesoodstrasse as both the shipowners and the bourgeoise politicians (rightly) claimed that they were orchestrated by the Interclub. Occasionally, foreign authorities criticised the German authorities for their 'lax' attitude towards international communist agencies operating in Germany, such as the Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub. Nevertheless, as long as communist activities were legal in Germany, a police raid and closure of the Interclub was seldom a protracted affair.[178]

176 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Januar 1928, 534/5/201, 4–5, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Oktober 1928, 534/5/201, 74, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1929, 534/5/210, 109, RGASPI.

177 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, September 1929, 534/5/210, 96, RGASPI.

178 Police raids were often reported in the internal reports, for example the raid on 1 February 1930, in Internationales Hafenbüro für Seeleute, Hamburg, Bericht Februar 1930, 534/5/216, 14–15, RGASPI, depicted as outrageous onsloughts by the "bloodhounds" in the

FIGURE 5 The Hamburg Interclub, photograph accompanying a presentation on the activities of the Hamburg Interclub, "Den Internasjonale Sjømansklubb i Hamburg," *Internasjonal Sjøtransportarbeider* 6, no. 10 (1931): 5. It is likely that the original photograph had been shot by an unknown person before the elections in Hamburg in 1931. The four-storeyed building carried banners with slogans urging the mariners to vote for the KPD. The banner in the middle of the first floor depicted a ship named 'Rotes Hamburg' and carried the slogan: Seeleute Eure Losung […] Sowiet-Deutschland! (Mariners, your parole [is?] Soviet Germany).

2.3 *Work among Scandinavian Seamen*

One of prime target groups of the Hamburg Port Bureau were the crews of Scandinavian cargo vessels. The reason for this was obvious: Communist activities were legal in the Scandinavian countries but the trade fleet of these countries, especially the Norwegian one, seldom called at their home ports. Work among Scandinavian seamen had therefore to be conducted outside Scandinavia, and Hamburg was one of the major ports for Scandinavian shipping. However, effective work needed a person fluent in a Scandinavian language. The Swedish comrade Smålan, who had been in charge of the Scandinavian section at the Port Hamburg Bureau and Interclub before operations were shut down in October 1923, had left Hamburg whereupon the Scandinavian section ceased operations. The section reopened in October 1925 when the Norwegian Arthur Samsing (1889–1945) arrived in Hamburg.[179]

Samsing was an old acquaintance of Walter. He had joined Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøterunion in 1916 and belonged to its militant left-wing minority. After the war, he had also been a member of the British General Workers' Union and the Schiffahrtsbund. In 1925, the Norwegian union sent him to London to organise its local branch and he used the opportunity instead to organise a communist fraction within the union. Samsing's period in London ended short as the British authorities expelled him for illegal activities after only a few months. He then moved to Hamburg and established a new base for his operations at the Port Bureau. One year later, he officially joined the Communist Party of Norway. Not surprisingly, the social democratic leadership of the Norwegian union was not in favour of Samsing's communist activities in Hamburg, and the union called him back in 1926.[180] At this point, Samsing even raised the idea of establishing a series of Interclubs in Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger and Trondheim along the Norwegian coast,[181] but nothing came out of it and he had to shelve the proposal.

Work among Scandinavian seamen resumed anew when Samsing returned to Hamburg in late 1927. This time, he was a salaried functionary of the Port Bureau.

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journals of the Interclubs and IPC-TW, for example "Socialfascisternes Blodhunde i Hamborg angriber International Sømandsklub. 46 Sömænd fænglsede!" *Lanternen* 3, no. 2 (1930): 1; "Det socialdemokratiske bøddelpoliti i Hamburg stormer Hamburg internasjonale sjømandsklubb," *Den internasjonale transportarbeier* 5, no. 2 (1930): 2.

179 Walter, Tätigkeitsbericht Oktober 1925, 534/5/172, 41–46, RGASPI.

180 Autobiography, dated Leningrad 10.2.1935, Arthur Samsing personal file, 495/247/540, 50–51, RGASPI; Finn Olstad, *Vår skjebne i vår hand. Norsk Sjømannsforbunds historie*, Bind I (Oslo: Pax, 2006), 209–210.

181 A. Samsing, "Får vi sjømansklubb i Oslo," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 1, no. 5 (1926): 6.

His sole task was to re-establish the Interclub's Scandinavian section. The kick-off event was a meeting Samsing organised at the Interclub on 7 December 1927.[182] In January 1928, he published a declaration in Norwegian, informing about organising weekly meetings every Wednesday evening for Scandinavian seamen at the Interclub.[183] At the same time, he started interrogating with Scandinavian crews; by the first half of 1928, he had visited 227 vessels, mainly Norwegian ones. In addition, he organised 35 meetings attended by 1,900 visitors, though only 190 of them participated at political meetings.[184] Walter was highly impressed by Samsing's work; in 1928, 3,038 seamen had visited the section, and 203 of them had even participated at the 19 evening courses arranged by Samsing.[185]

Another target group of Samsing's concern were unemployed Scandinavian seamen in Hamburg without any means at their disposal of returning home. Samsing's idea was to set up a support committee; its main task was to dole out financial assistance to needy Scandinavian mariners. The committee started its work in December 1928.[186] Walter praised Samsings' efforts highly and Leif Foss, the head of the IPC-TW Scandinavian Secretariat in Oslo, soon recognised his organisational capacity. Foss even proposed that Samsing should return to Norway and establish an Interclub in Oslo.[187] The plan was shelved for the time being due to an unexpected revision of work among maritime transport workers (see further Chapter 4.2.3), and Samsing remained in Hamburg.[188] Nevertheless, Samsing's activities in Hamburg abruptly ended in early July; accused for illegal activities, the German police wanted him expelled within three days. Walter managed to extend the expulsion order by four weeks and Samsing embarked from Hamburg on 9 August 1929.[189]

Samsing's successors as functionaries of the Scandinavian section were the Norwegian Fred Nilsen and a certain "Emil" whose identity is not known.[190]

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182 "Sjømens intresse for politiske spørsmål," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 3, no. 1 (1928): 5.

183 A. Samsing, "Til alle skandinaviske sjøfolk," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 3, no. 1 (1928): 7.

184 A. Samsing, "Hamburg Sjømansklubb – Virksomheten bland skandinavierne," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 3, no. 8 (1928): 2.

185 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1928, 534/5/210, 3, RGASPI.

186 "Hjelp de arbeidsløse skandinaviske sjømenn i Hamburg," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 3, no. 13 (1928): 2.

187 Foss to "Georg" [Achkanov], Oslo 15.2.1929, 534/4/291, 29, RGASPI.

188 Foss to "Georg" [Achkanov], Oslo 3.4.1929, 534/4/291, 53–55, RGASPI.

189 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juli 1929, 534/5/210, 80, RGASPI.

190 Raport fra Københavns Opdagelsepoliti, 17.5.1941, Politiets Efterretningstjenste, Wollwebersagen, Pakke 2, DNA.

At this point, the Danish mariner Gustav Långfors (Langfors) also started to figure among the members of the Scandinavian section. Lacking a passport or identity card, he had roamed jobless in various European ports during the mid-1920s. In 1928, he was back in Denmark and drafted for military service but never enlisted due to ill health. In the following year, he turned up in Hamburg and started to work at the Interclub as a functionary, most likely running the Scandinavian section.[191] Långfors worked closely with Albert Walter; he seems to have been fluent in several languages and translated correspondence from France, Spain and Portugal into English (Walter was fluent in English but not in Romance languages). However, Långfors' stay in Hamburg ended when the police arrested and expelled him in April 1930.[192]

2.4 *Rotterdam*

The Rotterdam Port Bureau put special attention on outreach to Asian and especially Indonesian seamen. This was of strategic importance as Rotterdam was the gate to the Dutch East India as well as being one of the largest ports in the world. In contrast to Hamburg, Rotterdam was an important port for American, British and Norwegian shipping industry and thousands of non-white mariners visited the port. Initially, however, the functionaries of the 1923-established Rotterdam Port Bureau faced similar problems as their colleagues in Hamburg, and work among colonial as well as foreign (white) seamen was rather limited. The Port Bureau lacked English and German-speaking functionaries, Port Bureau Secretary Langkemper complained, and business was therefore running low during its first year of operation.[193] In addition, as in Hamburg, the lack of a motorised long-boat hampered the activities of the Port Bureau. Neither were the premises of the Port Bureau appropriate and complaints were raised about the lack of an Interclub with a bar, a library, a reading room and a leisure room.[194] Nevertheless, the Port Bureau managed to publish a journal, *Rotterdamer Hafenbericht*, in English and German.[195] The Port Bureau mainly interacted with European crews; about 40 percent of its visitors were German and

191 Monatsbericht des Interklub/Hamburg, Januar 1930, 534/5/216, 10–12, RGASPI.

192 Internationales Hafenbüro für Seeleute, Hamburg, Bericht April 1930, 534/5/216, 21, RGASPI.

193 Langkemper/Port Bureau Rotterdam to IPC-TW, 19.2.1924, 534/5/163, 3–4, RGASPI.

194 Anlage II. Kostenvorschlag für das kommende Jahr, no date [ca. 1924], 534/5/163, 9, RGASPI.

195 Langkemper/Port Bureau Rotterdam to IPC-TW, 7.5.1924, 534/5/163, 13–18, RGASPI.

30 percent Scandinavian. In contrast, the functionaries made few efforts to reach out to Asian seamen.[196]

Leading members of the local trade union opposition accused Langkemper for being ineffective and incapable for organising work at the Port Bureau, and replaced him by Robert Krüger in November 1924. As the operational constraints had not changed, Krüger urged the RILU Berlin Bureau to invest in appropriate premises, not least, as the Port Bureau had started to cooperate with Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøterunion.[197]

A lack of functionaries fluent in any of the Indonesian or Chinese languages hampered work among East and South East Asian seamen during the first years of the bureau's existence. Objectively, the potentials to reach out to them in Rotterdam were excellent, not least, as the communist-controlled Union of Indonesian Seamen (SPLI) had its headquarters in Amsterdam. Poor working conditions at the Port Bureau further aggravated the situation.[198]

Conditions for work improved in 1925 as the Port Bureau managed to move to a better location at 48 Wilhelmstraat and establish an Interclub as well as received funds from Berlin to hire its own motorised longboat.[199] Consequently, visits of foreign seamen to the Interclub rapidly increased to 1,800 to 1,900 per month. Given the slow start, this were rather impressive statistics: The bureau targeted about one-tenth of all foreign crews who sojourned at the port each month. A similar number of visitors were also reported from Hamburg but those represented a much smaller portion of the total number of crews visiting the port in 1925.[200]

However, what really mattered was the Asian factor in Rotterdam. As outlined in detail by Kris Alexanderson, Indonesian mariners figured prominently as communist liaisons during the 1920s.[201] They connected the PKI bureau in Amsterdam with its cells and groups in Indonesia, serving as illegal carriers and transmitters of correspondence and printed matters.[202] However, government surveillance measures in the harbour area made work among Chinese,

196 Port Bureau Rotterdam, Activity Report for 23.6.-2.9.1924, 534/5/163, 35–36, RGASPI.

197 Rob. Krüger, Bericht des Rotterdamer Portbüros, 11.11.1924, 534/5/163, 60, RGASPI; Krüger to RILU Berlin Bureau, 27.11.1924, 534/5/163, 67, RGASPI.

198 NN to IPC-TW/Comrade Sachnowsky, Amsterdam 29.1.1925, 534/5/173, 9–10, RGASPI.

199 Francois Sperbert to Schachnowsky, Rotterdam 21.4.1925, 534/5/173, 25–29, RGASPI.

200 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 61–62, RGASPI. According to port statistics, about 1,400 ships called at Rotterdam each month, with a total number of 16,000 to 18,000 crew members. According to Achkanov, more than 13,000 ships had called at Hamburg in 1925.

201 Kris Alexanderson, *Subversive Seas: Anticolonial Networks across the Twentieth-Century Dutch Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

202 Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China*, 723.

Indonesian and Malay seamen extremely difficult.[203] The Dutch authorities imposed further restrictions after the failed uprising in Indonesia in 1926, effectively curtailing the communist outreach to Indonesian seamen. In early 1927, Port Bureau Secretary E. Schneider noted that it had become almost impossible to contact Indonesian seamen as they were watched by guardians and police spies; even worse, they had stopped visiting the Interclub as the Dutch authorities had banned any contacts with communist and radical organisations and used this as an excuse for their dismissal of service. Somewhat better conditions existed for conducting work among Chinese seamen. According to Schneider, the Port Bureau itself was not directly involved in these activities. Instead, Chinese liaison persons handled the dissemination of literature as well as contacts to Chinese mariners.[204]

Despite its ambition to evolve as a hub for agitating Asian seamen, the Rotterdam Interclub constituted a predominantly 'white' space by 1927. Its visitors were mainly English, Dutch, German, Hungarian, Latvian, Romanian, and Scandinavian mariners who would find appeals and leaflets at display in the club in their languages: Danish, English, Estonian, French, German, Latvian, Norwegian, Russian, and Swedish. Arab and Chinese crews who visited the premises would also find publications in their language.[205] Financial constrains continued to restrict activities and was a constant source of complains.[206] At one stage, the Port Bureau was not even capable to hire a motorised longboat.[207] Even worse was the lukewarm interest of the Dutch Communist Party to support of the Port Bureau.[208] Nevertheless, the situation stabilised by the end of the year and the Interclub noted a marked increase of visitors, rising from 700 in April to almost 2,400 in December 1927.[209] In addition, its German, Greek, Italian, and Norwegian functionaries had started to produce a wallpaper.

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203 Sperbert to IPC-TW, Rotterdam 24.8.1925, 534/5/174, 26–27, RGASPI.

204 E. Schneider, Port Bureau and Interclub Rotterdam Monthly Report for February 1927, 534/5/190, 8–10, RGASPI.

205 E. Schneider, Port Bureau and Interclub Rotterdam Monthly Report for February 1927, 534/5/190, 8–10, RGASPI.

206 Port Bureau and Interclub Rotterdam Monthly Report for June 1927, 534/5/190, 47–51, RGASPI.

207 Port Bureau and Interclub Rotterdam Monthly Report for July 1927, 435/5/190, 68–69, RGASPI.

208 NN [probably E. Schneider], International Seamen's Club Rotterdam, Report Nr. 39, Rotterdam, 12.5.1927, 534/5/190, 27–39, RGASPI.

209 Port Bureau and Interclub Rotterdam Monthly Reports May to December 1927, 435/5/190, RGASPI.

2.5 *Envisioning a Global Network of Port Bureaus*

The establishment of Port Bureaux and Interclubs in Britain, France and the USA turned out to be a protracted affair. Initiatives to establish such units in London or Liverpool never materialised during the 1920s. This was largely due to the weak position of the communists and revolutionary minority within the dominant maritime transport workers' unions in the United Kingdom, the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union as well as the 1922-established Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union. Neither George Hardy's initial attempts in 1922 (see Chapter 1.2.2), nor those of Minority Movement had resulted in the formation of IPC-TW units in Britian by 1928. The situation was somewhat better in France and the USA where three units came into existence by 1927: the Port Bureaux and Interclubs in Bordeaux and Marseille as well as the Interclub in New York.

The Bordeaux Port Bureau was established in 1924. Its two functionaries mainly focused on agitation among British, Dutch, German and Scandinavian mariners. African and Asian seamen occasionally visited its premises but did not receive much attention.[210] Constituting the first maritime unit of the IPC-TW in France, its position was a few years later eclipsed by the Port Bureau in Marseille. This unit had been set up in 1926 but started its operations at 10, Rue Fauchier in March 1927.[211] The premises of the Marseille Port Bureau were perfectly outfitted for work in the harbour. The Interclub contained a bar, a hall with a theatre scene and a library divided into sections and reflecting the language-groups whom the Interclub intended to approach: Anglo-Saxon, Annam (Vietnamese), Arab, Argentinian, Black ("Noirs"), Brazilian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish.[212] The Bordeaux and Marseille units were under the direction of the IPC-TW Latin Secretariat in Paris, channelling funds from Moscow to pay for their activities. The internal allocation of funds in 1927 demonstrated the ambitions of Auguste Dumay, the head of the IPC-TW Latin Secretariat in Paris,[213] to develop the Marseille Interclub into a central hub of maritime activities. While the Port Bureau in Bordeaux received about 1,500

210 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 60, RGASPI.

211 Antoine Olivesi, "Auguste Dumay," Le Maitron: Dictionaire Biographique Mouvement Ouvier Movement Social, (24 novembre 2010), http://maitron.fi/spip.ph?article111304 (checked 14.4.2020).

212 Outline of the premises of the Interclub in Marseille, 534/5/181, 12–13, RGASPI.

213 Auguste Dumay (1888–1955) had been a militant mariner who joined the SFIO in 1917 and gained a reputation for his revolutionary activism during the 1920s. See further Antoine Olivesi, "Dumay Auguste," *Le Maitron*, 24.11.2010, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article111304, checked 18.11.2020.

Franc, the ITC-TW boosted the launching of the centre in Marseille with ca. 21,000 Franc.[214] In the next year, the IPC-TW transferred 440 US dollars to both Interclubs each month.[215]

The establishment of an agitation and propaganda unit in New York was a protracted affair and demonstrated the limited outreach of the RILU and IPC-TW in North America. The Workers' Party (from 1925: Communist Party of the USA or CPUSA) and the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), the RILU platform in the USA, did not consider maritime work to be of top priority. Neither had the communist or revolutionary left-wing groups within the maritime unions, the IWW-controlled Maritime Trade Workers Industrial Union and the anti-communist/anti-anarchist International Seamen's Union (ISU), the capacity and strength to push for the plan. However, what really mattered was funding. Although TUEL Secretary William Z. Foster was in favour of establishing a Port Bureau in New York, CPUSA leader Charles E. Ruthenberg replied to him as late as January 1927 that the party lacked funds for new ventures and rejected the proposal.[216] It must therefore have been somewhat of a surprise when the TUEL-organ *Labor Unity* informed in April 1927 that an Interclub had been set up in New York.[217]

The mastermind behind the New York Interclub was George Mink (1899–?). Agitation and propaganda on board US merchant vessels was of prime importance, Mink recalled in his report to the Fifth IPC-TW Conference in 1928. Twenty percent of the world's shipping was carried on American vessels, 30 percent of the crew members were US natives, 10 percent US citizens of foreign extraction, the rest being foreign citizens.[218] Based on a critical assessment of Russian archival sources, Vernon L. Pedersen has been able to refute earlier presentations of Mink as a somewhat mysterious if not dubious radical. Born as Godi Minkowsky in Russia, he had been abandoned by his parents and was sent by his grandparents to the USA to live with relatives in Philadelphia. In 1916, he joined the US Navy and changed his name to George Martin Mink. Discharged in 1919, he became a merchant seaman and union organiser within the International Seamen's Union. Being disappointed about the performance of the ISU in a strike in 1921, he joined the IWW. In the same year, he joined

214 C.I.P. les Transportens Pour Les Pays Latins (Paris), Rapport Financier Janvier a Decembre 1927, 534/5/205, 1, RGASPI.

215 Annexe en rapport du Dumay, 21.7.1928, 534/5/205, 2, RGASPI.

216 Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, new ed., second print 2009), 205.

217 "International Seamen's Club," *Labor Unity* 1, no. 7 (1 April 1927): 8.

218 George Mink, "The Marine Transport Industry," *Labor Unity* 2, no. 6 (July 1928): 5–7.

the Worker's Party and its seamen's fraction. In 1925, after having been on the sea for several years, the party transferred him to Philadelphia with the task of building up a communist fraction within the IWW.[219]

Mink established the New York Interclub in March 1927 at 28, South Street. His idea was to develop the Interclub into a transnational and interracial meeting place where American and foreign seamen could interact and mingle with each other. "Fraternisation of the different races is encouraged," the *Labor Union* informed, and noted that "there is often a dance [after the meetings], and we may see how an Italian seaman waltzes or foxtrots with a German, or better yet witness a white seaman promenading around the hall with a Negro or Hindu."[220] Soon, the Interclub gained dubious reputation for its attacks against the local Seamen's Church Institutes, resulting in an onslaught against its activities in the *Seamen's Journal*, the organ of the ISU.[221] The party, on the other hand, remained lukewarm to the Interclub, which resulted in harsh criticism by Achkanov (although with little effect).[222]

2.6 *The Northern Centres: Oslo and Copenhagen*

The operations of the Scandinavian Secretariat in Oslo and the Copenhagen Port Bureau demonstrates the hierarchical and complex relationship between a regional secretariat and a Port Bureau. The basic difference of the two units was their different scope on focus and outreach. Established as the regional unit of the IPC-TW, the Scandinavian Secretariat was obliged to monitor and prepare material for all revolutionary opposition groups within land and maritime transport workers' union. The Copenhagen Port Bureau, in contrast, focussed only on agitation and propaganda among foreign mariners as well as directed its activities towards the local waterfront.

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219 Vernon L. Pedersen, "George Mink, the Marine Workers Industrial Union, and the Comintern in America," *Labor History* 41, no. 3 (2000): 308–309.

220 "International Seamen's Club," *Labor Unity* 1, no. 7 (1.4.1927): 8.

221 George Mink, "The Seamen's Clubs and the M.W.P.L.," *Labor Unity* 2, no. 10 (November 1928): 16–17. Mink was not anymore residing in the USA when *Labor Unity* published his article. His activities in New York were cut short as he enlisted on a US merchant vessel that sailed for the Soviet Union in spring 1927. Arriving at the Black Sea port Novorossiysk, he did not return with the freighter but travelled to Moscow where he attended the RILU World Congress and the Fifth IPC-TW conference in April 1928. See Pedersen, "George Mink," 310.

222 "Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers, Report by Comrade Achkanov," presented at meeting of the Executive Bureau of the RILU, 8.1.1929, 534/5/207, 17, RGASPI.

The Scandinavian Secretariat was established in the aftermath of a regional conference held in Gothenburg in February 1925. Regional cooperation between the left-wing/communist fractions within the national transport workers' unions had been non-existent prior to the Gothenburg Conference. Neither the conference nor the activities of the Scandinavian Secretariat have left much documentation, apart from a short report written by its Norwegian secretary Leif Foss in April 1928. However, the report together with the correspondence between him and Sven Linderot provide a rough outline of its activities. Leif Olaf Foss (1899–1982) had been a sailor until 1919 when he started work as a dockworker. He was a member of Norsk Matros og fyrbøterunion as well as Dokkearbeidernes forening, the Norwegian harbour workers' association, which he headed from 1921 to 1925. Foss belonged to the radical left and joined the Norwegian Communist Party, Norges Kommunistiske Parti (NKP, established in 1923). In 1925, he became a member of the direction of Norsk Jern- og Metallarbeiderforbund, the Norwegian metal workers' union. Apart from running the Scandinavian Secretariat, Foss was also NKP secretary for trade union work. Sven Linderot (1889–1956), in turn, belonged to the inner circle of the Swedish Communist Party, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti – Sektion av Komintern (SKP), and acted as party secretary for trade union work during the latter half of the 1920s.[223]

Communist agitation among the trade unions and their national federations in the Nordic countries had seen several vicissitudes during the 1920s. In Norway, where communist activity was legal, the central organisation of trade unions initially decided to join the RILU but eventually voted for neither joining the RILU or the IFTU. In Sweden and Denmark, the central organisations were members of the IFTU. In Finland, where the communist party was illegal since 1918, the left-wing dominated the Finnish central organisation of trade unions but had also decided to stay outside the internationals. The formation of the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council in 1925 raised hopes in the Finnish and Norwegian trade union movements for creating a united trade union international. After the collapse of the Anglo-Russian negotiations at the end of 1926, the Russians started to discuss cooperation with the Nordic trade unions in early 1927, culminating in the formal agreement of Norwegian-Russian-Finnish cooperation at a conference in Copenhagen in February 1928.[224]

223 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!,* 88, 259.

224 Tauno Saarela, "Nordic Communism in the Communist International," in *Regional Cooperation and International Organizations: The Nordic model in transnational perspective*, eds. Norbert Götz and Heidi Haggrén (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 242; Tosstorff, "Moscow Versus Amsterdam," 87.

United Front-tactics also framed the activities of the Scandinavian Secretariat. Its main field of activities was propagandistic and concentrated on the formation and strengthening of communist and left-wing fractions within the unions and national federations. However, the results had been disappointing, Foss noted, especially in Sweden where the left-wing and communist fractions had a weak position within the unions. Better results had been achieved in Norway where communist/left-wing fractions existed in all districts as well as in the leadership of the Transport Workers' Union, the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, the Railwaymen Union, and the Railway Functionaries' Union. The only exception was the Norwegian Locomotive Drivers' Union. Less promising was the situation among the Railway Workers' Union in Denmark where the communist/left-wing minority was not represented in the union's leadership.[225]

Similar to other regional IPC-TW bodies, the Scandinavian Secretariat concentrated its main energy on railway and other land-based transport worker unions. This is clearly reflected in the contents of *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider*, the organ of the Scandinavian Secretariat (see Figure 6). Launched in June 1926, its monthly edition being initially as high as 6,000 copies but soon dropped to 3,400 copies. Officially claimed to the mouthpiece of the radical maritime and railway transport workers, it carried few articles concerning issues of seamen and harbour workers.[226] In addition, the mimeographed publications of local sections of opposition groups correlated with the operational basis of the Scandinavian Secretariat. All but one were published by minority groups in Norway: *Huk'en* by the harbour workers in Oslo, *Sporvekslen* for the railway workers in Oslo, *Signalet* by the railway functionaries in Hedemark, *Signal* by the railway functionaries in Trøndelag, *Verkstedsarbeideren* by the railway functionaries in Drammen, and *Transportproletaren* by the local opposition group of harbour workers and seamen in Bergen. Most of these publications were occasional and were issued in small editions, in total about 6 to 8,000 copies. The exception was the publication of the Copenhagen Interclub, *Lanternen*, as will be discussed below.[227]

Nevertheless, some positive notes were received from the waterfront in Denmark. Although communists and radical left-wing influence among the Danish Seamen's Union was less profound and organised groups were small, the situation was markedly different in other maritime unions. The

225 Leif Foss, IPKs arbeide i Skandinavien februar 1925 – februar 1928. En kortfattet oversikt, dated Moscow 2.4.1928, 534/5/190, 46–47, RGASPI. Hereafter: Foss, IPKs arbeide i Skandinavien.

226 Foss, IPKs arbeide i Skandinavien, 48.

227 Foss, IPKs arbeide i Skandinavien, 49.

NUMMER 7. — 1. ARGANG. DESEMBER 1926

DEN INTERNASJONALE

TRANSPORTARBEIDER

TRANSPORTARBEIDERNES INTERNASJONALE PROPAGANDAKOMITES BULLETIN — SKANDINAVISK UTGAVE

Arbeiderklassens opmarsj mot fascismen

Et oprop fra R. F. I.

Alle Transportarbeiderorganisasjoner i Norge på en enhetlig front mot fascismen.

Et møte i Oslo efter innbydelse av Norsk Transportarbeiderforbund, Norsk Jernbaneforbund, Jernbanekontorfunksjonærenes Forbund, Norsk Lokotivmannsforbund og Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøter-Union.

Taler av Eugéne Olaussen og Alfr. Wåtvik.

Den Røde Faglige Internasjonale har utsendt et oprop, hvorav vi hitsetter:

Til protest mot det fascistiske redselsregime! Ned med Mussolinis diktatur!

R. F. I.'s eksekutivkomite opfordrer alle arbeidere og arbeidersker til å innlede en systematisk protestkampanje mot blodsutgydelsenes og provokasjonenes regime og mot det fascistiske diktatur. Der maa settes en stopper for utryddelsen av de beste representanter for Italias arbeidende masser og de fascistiske banders forhånelse av det italienske folk.

De italienske Amsterdamere, som den hele tid har anpasset sig til det fascistiske regimé og vegret sig for sammen med kommunistene og de revolusjonære arbeidere å føre kamp mot det fascistiske diktatur, er nu likeledes fordømt til en illegal tilværelse. De blev av fascistene utnyttet til bekjempelse av arbeiderbevegelsens revolusjonære fløi, og nu da de har utført sitt smussige arbeide, blir de vekkjaget med et spark av de fascistiske bander. Således pløiet den italienske reformisme, som lettet fascistenes makterobring og diktatur, selv grunnen for de forfølgelser, som har ført til oplösning og sønderslåning av endog de reformistiske organisasjoner.

For det italienske proletariat finnes der ingen annen utvei enn å styrte dette blodige diktatur enn den revolusjonære kamp mot den fascistiske reaksjon som understøttes av det italienske borgerskap. I Italia som utenfor Italia finnes der nu bare to leire: For og mot den fascistiske reaksjon, for og mot det fascistiske diktatur. Den som ikke er mot fascismen, er for den. Således står spørsmålet, anderledes kan det ikke stilles.

I alle land, i enhver by, i enhver bedrift, overalt hvor selv bare et proletarisk hjerte slår, må stemmene heves til protest mot voldsmennene, mot forhånelsen av Italias arbeidende masser, mot de fascistiske banders ødelæggelse av arbeidernes organisasjoner, mot de fascistiske bestialiteter.

Leve enhetsfronten i kampen mot fascismen!

*

Mussolinis redselsregime er av den art, at ethvert menneske med følelse i livet må vredes over blodbøddelens behandling av sine medmennesker. Vi skal ikke her opfordre til vrede over Mussolini og sympati for de forfulgte arbeidere i Italia —, men gi vår fulle tilslutning til R. F. I.'s oprop, og da i første rekke: *«Leve enhetsfronten i kampen mot fascismen!»*

Transportarbeiderorganisasjonene i Norge: Norsk Transportarbeiderforbund, Norsk Jernbaneforbund, Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, Jernbanekontorfunksjonærenes forbund og Norsk Matros- og Fyrbøterunion, har ikke bare blitt indignert over Mussolinis bøddelregime, men de har enhetlig optatt *kamp* mot dette.

Mandag den 6. desember var der således innkalt til massemøte av transportarbeiderne i Oslo — samtlige ovennevnte forbund stod

Eugené Olaussen gav en redegjørelse for stillingen innen den internasjonale fagbevegelse og de farer som var tilstede ved at de fagorganiserte, internasjonalt, stod i en spaltet stilling og som følge herav kunde bli et lett bytte for den hvite terror. Efter å ha omtalt de forskjellige terroristiske metoder som anvendes for å knekke fagorganisasjonen, omtalte kamerat Olaussen Mussolinis behandling av fagorganisasjonen i Italia.

A. Wätvik, sekretær i Norsk Jernbaneforbund, fremholdt derpå i et klart, konsist foredrag hvorledes transportarbeiderorganisasjonene i Norge burde optre i kampen mot fascismen. Efter Wätviks foredrag, blev der enstemmig vedtatt følgende uttalelse:

«Transport-, jernbane- og sjøfolk samlet til fellesmøte den 6. desember 1926 nedlegger en harmfylt protest mot det barbariske herredømme som nu regjerer i Italia.

De fascistiske sammenslutninger

FIGURE 6 *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider*, journal published by the Scandinavian Secretariat of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers.

radical opposition within the Danish union for transport and harbour workers (Transport- og havnearbeiderne i Danmark) had organised an 80-person strong minority group in Copenhagen in addition to smaller communist fractions and minority groups in several other Danish ports. Most promising, however, was the situation among the Danish Stokers' Union (Søfyrbødernes forbund) where

the communists controlled its section in Copenhagen, held strong positions in the other sections and listed three out of seven members among the union's leadership.[228]

The dominant position of the communists among the harbour workers and stokers in Copenhagen was largely the achievement of Richard Jensen (1894–1974), the founder of the Copenhagen Port Bureau and Interclub. Jensen had been a stoker before the war and cooperated with the syndicalist agitator Thøger Thøgersen. Jensen joined the syndicalist opposition already in 1916 and engaged in the Danish Stokers' Union, which he headed in 1919–20. Thøgersen had at this point emerged as the key driving force for the unification of the radical Left, resulting in the establishment of the Danish Communist Party (DKP) in 1921. Jensen joined the party in the same year and became a close aide to Thøgersen who sent him on several missions to Moscow.[229]

Jensen gained a strong position in the DKP as well as within the Comintern and RILU-apparatus during the 1920s. He was head of the party's cell or section for maritime workers in Copenhagen, which, in turn, dominated the maritime unions, and, ultimately, the port of Copenhagen. His official position with the RILU and IPC-TW is not known although as head of operations in Copenhagen, he was subordinated to the IPC-TW Scandinavian Secretariat. Moreover, his role as courier and facilitator of special missions was of equal importance. Documentation for his clandestine operations is patchy. As early as 1919, he seems to have received funds from Moscow.[230]

Jensen's position as key facilitator of the IPC-TW commenced after the foundation of the DKP-maritime section in 1925. This move had been instigated by the RILU and IPC-TW who had instructed the parties to establish special units to support the activities of the radical/communist minorities within the maritime transport workers' unions.[231] Jensen received 5,367 Danish crowns (DKK) from RILU-funds to cover his expenses in 1925, of which he used 1,115 DKK for "agitation."[232] Jensen's next step was the established of a Port Bureau and Interclub in Copenhagen in March 1926. The first mission of the Copenhagen Interclub was the launching of its own organ, *Lanternen*, published monthly in

228 Foss, IPK s arbeide i Skandinavien, 48.

229 See further Erik Nørgaard, *Richard Jensen – historien om en mand* (Copenhagen: Holkenfelt, second revised edition 2007).

230 Erik Nørgaard, *Drømmen om verdensrevolutionen: Komintern og de revolutionære søfolk* (Lynge: Bogan, 1985), 88–95.

231 Christian Tortzen, *En sømand han maa lide: Sømændenes Forbund 1897–1997* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Pantheon og Sømændenes Forbund i Danmark, 2001), 224.

232 Richard Jensen, Regnskab for 1925, 534/5/184, 3, RGASPI.

LANTERNEN

JANUAR 1929

NR. 1 UDGIVET AF INTERNATIONAL SØMANDSKLUB 4. AARG

Den skandinavisk-russiske Sømandskonference.

Paa Billedet ses:
1. Rusland: Bystroff. 2. Rusland: Krukloff. 3. Birkeland, Norge, 4. Erik Jacobsen, Danmark. 5. Peter Bach, Danmark. Ahorun, Finland. 7. Westermann, Sverrig. 8. Didriksen, Norge. 9. Mikkelsen, Norge. 10 Rich. Jensen, Danmark.

Som vi forleden meddelte afholdtes der omkring den 5. December en skandinavisk-russisk Sømandskonference i København hvor der opnaaedes Enighed om et Forslag til Samarbejde, der nu er til Ratificering i de respektive Organisationer.

Ovenfor bringer vi et Billede af Konferencens Deltagere.

FIGURE 7 *Lanternen*, journal published by the Copenhagen Interclub. The front page of *Lanternen* 4, no 1 (January 1929) carries a photograph showing the participants at the conference of Scandinavian and Russian maritime transport workers, held in Copenhagen in December 1928.

TABLE 5 Expenses of the Interclub in Copenhagen, 1926–1928 (Danish crowns, DKK)

Month/ Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1926	[...]	604	692	844	723	631	684	548	[...]	530	673	706
1927	617	579	[...]	490	565	533	467	502	620	517	540	575
1928	617	597	573	573	573	9,661	188	188	183	276	276	276

SOURCE: (1926) RICHARD JENSEN, REGNSKAB FOR JANUAR ... DECEMBER 1926, 534/5/184, RGASPI; (1927) INTERKLUB KØBENHAVN, REGNSKAB FOR JANUAR ... DECEMBER 1927, 534/5/189, RGASPI; (1928) INTERKLUB KØBENHAVN, REGNSKAB FOR JANUAR ... SEPTEMBER 1928, 534/5/202, RGASPI, AND RICHARD JENSEN, REGNSKAB FRA MARTS 1928 TIL 31/3 1929, NO DATE [1929], 534/5/211, 10, RGASPI

2,300 copies (see Figure 7).[233] Not surprisingly, Jensen's expenses increased, see Table 5. Although the accounts for 1926 to 1927 do not reveal how much was sent to Copenhagen, Jensen's reporting of his accounts for March to December 1928 reveals that he had received 13,736 DDK from the IPC-TW Berlin Bureau. This sum more or less covered the costs for running the Interclub as well as publication and travel expenses.[234]

British intelligence was certainly right when it assumed that Moscow had paid of the activities of the Copenhagen Port Bureau. According to their informants, Jensen had received 20,000 DKK in 1926 to pay for his activities in Denmark while he at the same time had expenses amounting to 100,000 DKK.[235] Another British report stated that he had received 1,200 British pounds for running the Copenhagen Interclub in 1927.[236]

The Copenhagen Port Bureau and Interclub had a limited target group in comparison to the 'world ports' of Hamburg or Rotterdam. The port of Copenhagen was a regional hub, linking the Baltic with the North Sea. British, Finnish, German, Norwegian and Swedish vessels frequently called at the port; Southern European or even non-European mariners rarely sojourned

233 Foss, IPKs arbeide i Skandinavien: 49; Oplysninger vedrørende kommunistisk propaganda (april 1926), Stockholmspolisens kriminalavdelning Rotel 6 med föregångare, F X:8 Utländska kommunistiska handlingar, SNA.

234 Richard Jensen, Regnskab for Marts-September Maande 1928, 534/5/202, 5–6, RGASPI.

235 Extract from letter to Cuthbert Laws Esq., The Shipping Federation, 52, Leadenhall Street, E.C.3., dated 25.7.27, Richard Jensen personal file, KV2/2158, TNA.

236 Extract of report, dated 3.11.27, Richard Jensen personal file, KV2/2158, TNA.

in Copenhagen. On the other hand, Copenhagen was the node of the Danish shipping industry.[237]

The first location of the Copenhagen Port Bureau was at 15, Toldbodgade in the Nyhavn district. The Interclub was open every evening from seven to 11 pm; special thematic lectures were organised on Wednesdays, and the reading room was stuffed with newspapers, magazines and socialist literature in Scandinavian languages.[238] Soon activities expanded and the Interclub organised mass meetings and musical evenings twice a week; on average 1,000 foreign and Danish mariners visited its premises in 1926.[239] Further progress was reported by Jensen in 1927: The Interclub listed 8,760 visitors of which 60 percent were Danes and it had managed to organise the left-wing opposition within the Seamen's Union (62 members) and the Stokers' Union (138 members).[240] Nevertheless, the premises at Toldbodgade were soon cramped and Jensen moved the Port Bureau to larger offices at 53, Havnegade in May 1928.[241] The Port Bureau rented two floors in the building. The Interclub operated a restaurant in the basement and a café, a library, a reading hall in addition to a writing hall on the first floor (see Figure 8). In addition, the Interclub managed a spacious cloakroom where visiting seamen could leave their belongings.[242]

The paucity of communication between Oslo and Copenhagen restricted the operational capacity of the Copenhagen Port Bureau. Directives and instructions sent from Oslo were usually one to two months late. Jensen was at times at loss and had to make his own decisions, especially when he was arranging for illegal transport of couriers and dispatches. Such circumstances were to cause frictions between the two units, and Jensen asked Foss to come to Copenhagen for a meeting late 1927.[243]

2.7 *The Radical Spaces of the Interclubs*

The rationale of a Port Bureau and its Interclub was their legal status. Outside Soviet Russia, they could only be established in a location if communist activity had not been banned and declared illegal by the national authorities. Consequently, a bureau that was constantly raided by the police or closed

237 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 61, RGASPI.
238 "Klubben," *Lanternen* 2, no. 7 (July 1927): 4.
239 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 61, RGASPI.
240 Richard Jensen, Regnskab fra Marts 1928 til 31/3 1929, no date [1929], 534/5/211, 10–11, RGASPI.
241 Richard Jensen to 'IPK', Copenhangen 1.4.1929, 534/5/211, 14, RGASPI.
242 "Nye Klub-Lokaler," *Lanternen* 3, no. 4–5 (May 1928): 3.
243 Richard Jensen, Beretning for August & September Maaned, København 10.10.1927, 534/5/189, 13, RGASPI.

FIGURE 8 The Copenhagen Interclub, located at 53, Havnegade. The person standing in front of the building is Richard Jensen. Source: 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives.

by the local authorities was of little value. According to a report sent to the Swedish Secret Service, the Port Bureaus and Interclubs had three main missions: To agitate among seamen, to disseminate illegal communist literature, and to provide a safe space for the gatherings of the international propaganda committees.[244] Their task was to combat the 'false' message of the Christian seamen's missions and 'reformist' leadership of the maritime unions as well as to support the maritime workers in their struggle for better working conditions and salaries.[245] Their objectives were publicised in magazines and leaflets and were thus known for both the target groups as well as the authorities. For example, the Copenhagen Interclub published regularly advertisements in its magazine, calling class-conscious seamen to visit the Interclub instead of the Christian seamen's missions.[246] The New York Interclub, in turn, was

244 Internationella hamnbyråer, 1.11.1928, UD:s arkiv 1920 års dossiersystem, HP 1459 32D, Den bolsjevikiska rörelsen: Sverige och utlandet, 1927–1928, SNA. A copy of the German report, dated 15 October 1927, is filed in R1507/2035 Reichskommisariat für die Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung und Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Inneren, BarchB.

245 "Hampurin merimiesklubi 10-vuotias", *Majakka* 6 (1932): 21.

246 *Lanternen* 2:6 (1927).

strategically located close to the Seamen's Church Institute.[247] Leaflets distributed in the latter premises invited the seamen to visit the Interclub: "DONT [sic] EAT IN DIRTY STEW POT JOINTS / THE GRUB IS BAD ENOUGH ABOARD SHIP / TRY THE CLEANIEST PLACE ON SOUTH ST. INTERNATIONAL SEAMEN'S CLUB RESTAURANT."[248]

Naval mariners and visiting war vessels were special targets of agitation. Leaflets and brochures printed by the Interclubs were smuggled on board men-of-wars. "Use every opportunity to carry our propaganda among the blue jackets," urged Achkanov in his correspondence. Top security was the order of the day – appeals should never be issued in the name of the Interclub.[249] Other activities were always public manifestations in every port where communist actities were legal – participation in demonstrations with banners and slogans printed or painted on banderoles, organisation of mass meetings at the Interclub with open invitations to everyone who was interested to participate.

Government authorites, the labour unions as well as the shipowners and Christian seamen's missions, in turn, denounced the Interclubs as dangerous agitation nests where seafarers were radicalised and lured them to adopt the communist credo. Press cuttings collected by the German police witness about the fear of these radical establishments or 'free spaces' which neither the authories, the union leadership or the Christian mission were able to control. The Catholic newspaper *Germania* warned its readers that the Interclubs were perilous sites where seamen were radicalised and revolutionised;[250] the IWW magazine *Marine Worker* branded them as "scratch-a-way-Inn" that were used by the communists to "lure penniless seamen, especially in the winter months, to come in and partake of watery stew and political propaganda."[251] The Australian government authorities as well as the Seamen's Union of Australia viewed the Interclubs with suspicion and regarded them to be nothing else as clandestine agitation centres of the RILU: "The Club in Sydney was full of Communist literature and prominence is given to a photograph of Lenin."[252] In the USA, the *Seamen's Journal* warned its readership that the only task of

247 Stephen Schwartz, *Brotherhood of the Sea: A History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, 1885–1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1986), 70.

248 Seamen's Church Institute, "Hospital Flyer," *SCI Digital Archives*, http://seamenschurch-archives.org/sci/items/show/1828, accessed November 23, 2015.

249 Achkanov to "Dear Comrades," Moscow 30.6.1927, 534/5/186, 57, RGASPI.

250 "Sowjetpropaganda auf dem Seewege", *Germania* Nr 5, 7.1.1931.

251 *Marine Worker*, 15.10.1928, quoted in Schwartz, *Brotherhood of the Sea*, 71.

252 *Canberra Times,* 3.5.1928.

the Interclubs was "to make use of the world's seamen as the shock troops for Communism."[253]

3 A New Unit: The Revolutionary Nuclei

The core unit for communist agitation and propaganda among maritime transport workers was the revolutionary nucleus or cell. Following a RILU-resolution on the organisation of land-based trade union work in 1924, the communist parties started to establish so-called sea cells. Members of the sea cells were party-members of a local branch of the seamen's and/or stokers' unions; members of the sea cell constituted the communist fraction within the revolutionary opposition in the local branch of a trade union. The sea cell was active in those harbours where its members were residing or living when they were not at sea, i.e., either waiting for a job or being unemployed. The main task of the sea cell was the publication of a handwritten stencil, sometimes a mimeographed seamen's journal. Another important objective was to summon and organise jobless seamen in association with the party's local committee for work among the unemployed,.[254]

Communist agitation among maritime transport workers was land-based until the mid-1920s. Their activities on board the merchant ships remained unorganised although individual crews might set up a ship committee or ship council. This unit was a novel institution during the 1920s. The ITF had pushed for the institutionalisation of ship councils by the International Labour Organization in 1924. The general idea was to constitute a body for the intervention of the crews in the following questions: 1) abandoning of vessel in case of shipwreck, 2) testing of seaworthiness of the vessel, 3) control of food supplies on board, 4) reduction in grade of seamen, 5) dismissal for insubordination, and 6) searching of a seaman's kit. According to the ITF proposal, the ship council was to be composed of one representative of the officers, one of the deck hands and one of the engine room hands on vessels numbering a crew of seven or more members. The composition of

253 *Seamen's Journal*, September 1928, quoted in Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront. Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1990 [1988]), 76.

254 "Die organisatorischen Richtlinien zum Aufbau von Schiffs- u, Bordzellen," in Max Barek, Jahresbericht der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg, Jahr 1928, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 95, BArchB-SAPMO.

a ship council on vessels with a crew of less than seven members would be smaller.[255]

The RILU and the IPC-TW did not in principle object the proposal of the ITF on the formation of ship councils. However, as will be outlined below, their drive establishing ship cells on board vessels aimed for the politicisation of the ships councils and, ultimately, to take control of them. The main argument of the communists was that the ship's councils were not "democratic" bodies as they only represented members of trade unions. The communists therefore demanded that the ship committees were to include all members of a crew, including those who were not union members. Besides, the ship committees were to nominate a leading group that was to plead the cause of the crew and its individual members in meetings with the officers. Not surprisingly, the reformist leadership of the national maritime trade unions as well as the shipping industry rejected this idea, as it would have opened the door for a radicalisation of the crews. Nevertheless, the push for the establishment of ship committees became an integral part of the communist attack on the ITF and the reformist leadership of the national maritime unions and added to the friction within the unions.

The initial attempt to organise communist seamen within the sea cells of the party proved soon inefficient. The main flaw was the incapacity to reach out to seamen on their place of work, namely the ship. This, however, had been a fundamental cornerstone in communist trade union strategies that impelled the communists to form nuclei in the workshops and factories. This policy was effective for land-based members and created communist spaces at the workplaces and in residential areas. For example, in some of the working-class areas of Hamburg, such as the Gängeviertel of Hamburg Neustadt or those in Barmbek or Schiffbek, the Communists dominated the local political space and were able to create 'free-zones' controlled by the party and its organisations.[256]

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255 "Resolution on Ship's Councils, submitted by the International Seamen's Conference meeting in Hamburg on 4,5 and 10 August to the International Labour Office," in *Report on the International Congress held from 7 to 12 August 1924*, 149–150.

256 Elisabeth Pape and Leonie Barghorn, "Klein Moskau wurde die Gegend genannt" – Nachbarschaft und Politik im Hamburger Gängeviertel," available at asg-hh.de/download.html?&filename=g_ngeviertel … pdf, checked 20.8.2017. A detailed description of communist organisation of local space and time is presented in two studies on the Hamburg waterfront, see Klaus Weinhauer, *Alltag und Arbeitskampf im Hamburger Hafen: Sozialgeschichte der Hamburger Hafenarbeiter 1914–1933* (Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich: Schönigh, 1994), and Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Hansestadt Hamburg*. For a general description of communist organisation of time and space in Weimar Germany, see Klaus Mallmann, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996).

Depicted as 'Little Moscows' and known for their 'small-place communism and counter-communities', they existed in several locations in inter-war Western Europe.[257]

The solution for organising party members on ships was the ship cell or revolutionary nucleus on board a vessel. The RILU and IPC-TW launched new strategy in 1926, and Achkanov ordered all Port Bureaus and revolutionary groups of maritime workers to implement it immediately.[258] The RILU, too, sent a circular letter about the new strategy to the communist parties in Australia, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the USA.[259] Following the new strategy, all party-members of a ships' crew were urged to form a nucleus or ship cell as soon as a vessel had left the harbour. Once the ship cell had been established, its members were to nominate its leader. Next, the ship cell was to press for the formation of a ship committee and get its member elected into the leadership of the ship committee. The land-borne sea cells as well as the Port Bureaus, in turn, were to get in contact with the ship cells, and to provide them with literature and propaganda material to be distributed among the crew members as well as to get feedback and testimonies to be used and published in the sea cell's publications, see Figure 9.[260]

The Port Bureaus and Interclubs constituted the nodes in the new strategy. Apart from serving as extra-territorial centres for national revolutionary minority groups, their new task was to convince visiting crews to form ship cells and ship committees on board their vessels. Once a ship cell had been formed and the vessel visited a harbour with a Port Bureau, its leader was to inform the officials of the Port Bureau about its existence.[261] Ideally, the Port Bureau notified the other Port Bureaus as well as the local sea cells in the home destination of the crew about the existence of a new ship cell. Together, the three units, the Port Bureaus, the sea cell ashore and the ship cell on board,

257 Ad Knotter, " 'Little Moscows' in Western Europe: The Ecology of Small-Place Communism," *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 3 (2011): 475–510; Kevin Morgan, "Bastions, black spots and other variations in and beyond the specificities of the Little Moscow," *Twentieth Century Communism* 5, no. 5 (2013): 193–209.

258 Achkanov, To all Port Bureaus and Revolutionary Seamen's groups of all countries [ca. 1926], 534/5/177, 14–15, RGASPI.

259 RILU Org. Department, Circular letter, [ca. 1926], 534/5/177, 16–18, RGASPI.

260 "Die organisatorischen Richtlinien zum Aufbau von Schiffs- u, Bordzellen," in Max Barek, Jahresbericht der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg, Jahr 1928, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 95, BArchB-SAPMO.

261 Reports on the formation of sea cells are scattered in the archival deposits of Soviet Port Bureaux but I have not been able to conduct a systematic assessment of the files.

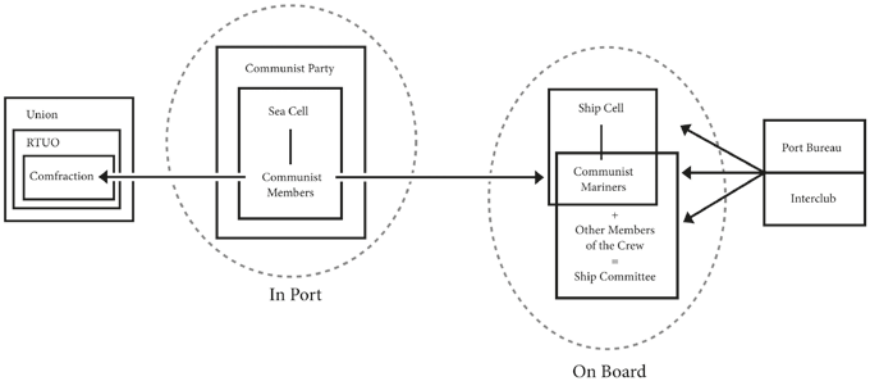

FIGURE 9 The sea cell, the ship cell and the ship committee.

constituted the global communications network of the IPC-TW, the RILU and the Comintern. In practice, the establishment of 'thick' transnational connections proved difficult to achieve as the horizontal links between the Port Bureaus were rudimentary at best during the 1920s. Besides, the extension of a transnational network depended on the lifespan of a ship cell, as it only existed when its members were part of a crew. Once a vessel returned to its port of origin, the crew usually signed off and the ship cell was disbanded.[262]

3.1 *Establishing a Global Communication Network: The Hamburg Method*

Achkanov's instructions for the new strategy reached the Port Bureaus outside Soviet Russia in March 1926. However, its implementation was rather uneven. While the Bordeaux Port Bureau only managed to establish about six ship cells on board French vessels, the Rotterdam Port Bureau reported the formation of 41 ship cells by the end of October 1926. Most successful, however, had Albert Walter been in Hamburg where the Port Bureau had contact with 84 ship cells.[263]

Walter managed to establish a global communication network one year later. During the last quarter of 1927, the Hamburg sea cell (Seezelle Hamburg, sometimes also termed as Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg) listed 103 members on board 85 German merchant vessels travelling to various ports in North and

262 Die organisatorischen Richtlinien zum Aufbau von Schiffs- u, Bordzellen, enclosed in Max Barek, Jahresbericht der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg, Jahr 1928, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 95, BArchB-SAPMO.

263 Atschkanow, Bericht des I.P.K.T. über die Hafenbüros, 1.12.1926, 534/5/178, 61–63, RGASPI.

South America, Africa, Asia and Australia.[264] The Copenhagen Port Bureau, too, registered a take-off; its Interclub listed 400 members of which 200 were members of the DKP sea cell.[265] Soon, however, bad news were pouring in at the IPC-TW headquarters. Activities in Copenhagen had stagnated (see below), while those in France had more or less collapsed. "In France little attention is paid to the question of organising transport workers, and especially seamen. No revolutionary nuclei are formed on the vessels," Achkanov critically noted.[266] Even more alarming was the situation in Britain, and Achkanov accused the Minority Movement for deliberately obstructing orders from Moscow: "They organise no revolutionary nuclei on board ships."[267]

The only positive development was the Seezelle Hamburg which counted 270 members at the end of 1928 (see Table 6). In addition, Samsing had managed to establish a Norwegian sea cell in Hamburg, listning 25 members at the end of the year.[268] Nevertheless, Walter's world-wide network was not without flaws as about 40 percent of the members of the Seezelle Hamburg were either jobless, out of reach for the sea cell ("auf wilder Fahrt"; i.e., on unknown destinations) or had not reported to the sea cell after signing off from the ship.[269] Still, this did not retard the extension of his operations; in June 1929, the Seezelle Hamburg numbered already 358 members, and increased to 512 members by the end of the year.[270]

Activities in Germany seemed to boom as the comrades at the Hamburg Port Bureau managed to start actities in Bremen. A sea cell was formed in Bremen in March 1927, seven months later it had established a reading room, was running an Interclub at 111, Lloydstrasse, and had started to publish its own journal, *Der Scheinwerfer* (although very irregularly; in 1928, only one number had been printed). The Bremen Interclub emerged soon as a hub for local seamen; in 1928, it reported an average of 350 visitors per month and was in contact with five ship cells.[271]

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264 Information provided in map about destinations of Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg, 534/5/194, 212, RGASPI.

265 Richard Jensen, Beretning for Aaret 1927, København 1.12.1927, 534/5/189, 16–17, RGASPI.

266 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers, Report by Comrade Achkanov, presented at meeting of the Executive Bureau of the RILU, 8.1.1929, 534/5/207, 17, RGASPI.

267 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers, Report by Comrade Achkanov, presented at meeting of the Executive Bureau of the RILU, 8.1.1929, 534/5/207, 17, RGASPI.

268 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1928, 534/5/210, 3, RGASPI.

269 Mitgliedsstand der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg im Jahre 1928, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 96–98, BArchB-SAPMO.

270 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1929, 534/5/210, 67, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1929, 534/5/210, 107, RGASPI.

271 Jahresbericht der Schiffahrtszelle Bremen für das Jahr 1928, 534/5/201, 92–95, RGASPI.

TABLE 6 Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg, members and vessles with ship cells, situation 1.1.1929; numbers given in bracklets are from Walter's report to Achkanov

Ship route (from Hamburg to NN)	Members	Number of vessels
North America East Coast (New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, etc.)	17	7
North America West Coast (San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, etc.)	5	3
Central America and Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Havana, Vera Cruz, etc.)	19	14
South America East Coast (Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, etc.)	15	12
South America West Coast (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru och Chile)	9	7
West, South and East Africa (Dakar, Cape Town, Mombasa)	10	9
Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, Adelaide)	4	2
East Asia (China, Japan)	15	12
Mediterrannean Sea and Black Sea	26	22
North Sea, Baltic Sea (Netherlands, France, Scandinavia, Finland, Soviet Russia)	20	16
Unknown destination ("Auf wilder Fahrt")	40	31
German deep-sea fishing fleet (White Sea, Greenland, North Sea)	18 (16)	7
Unknown whereabouts or not reported	40 (44)	
On land	30	
Total	268 (272)	

SOURCE: MITGLIEDSSTAND DER ZELLE SCHIFFAHRT HAMBURG IM JAHRE 1928, INTERNAT. HAFENBÜRO FÜR SEELEUTE HAMBURG, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 98, BARCHB-SAPMO; WALTER TO IPAC-TW SECRETARIAT, HAMBURG 25.2.1929, 534/5/210, 31, RGASPI

Walter's global communication network was an outcome of the so-called Hamburg method. The core idea was to establish personal contacts between an agitator and a seaman when a new ship arrived in Hamburg. A small group of Interclub functionaries and harbour activists visited the ship in order to distribute leaflets and pamphlets among the crew. Moreover, the crew members

were invited to the club and participate in its evening programmes. Most importantly, a report was written after every visit, listing reliable contacts and identifying potential partners for future co-operation. The names of individuals, cells and ships were thereafter collected in a catalogue. Walter's database included hundreds of individual seamen and ships, and constituted the core of his communications network.[272]

Walter claimed the Hamburg Method to be the key to his success. In his mind, all the other revolutionary trade union opposition groups should elaborate their work among seamen in similar ways. The revolutionary nucleus constituted the core unit in his strategic considerations. The formation of a sea cell was time-consuming, Walter reminded, and should not be restricted to the premises of the Interclubs but must involve daily visits to the docks and ships mooring in the harbour. Once established, the sea cells and their member formed the basic unit of operations; they would carry out agitation on board, take command of strike committees, and compose the core of the revolutionary opposition within the trade unions. Of utmost importance was the publication of a journal for the sea cell as it was the visible (but mostly illegal) mounth-piece of the opposition.[273]

Apart from serving as vehicles for communist trade union agitation among crew members, trusted members of a ship cell handled the illegal transportation of printed agitation and propaganda material, the illegal transfer of cash subsidies to parties and unions as well as organised the hiding of stowaways, including couriers and emissaries. However, these operations were never organised by the IPC-TW and RILU bureaus, and there are only a few hints about them in the monthly and annual reports of the Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub. Clandestine operations, it seemes, were organised by another unit for which the Port Bureau functionaries and seamen served as mere transmitters. As Peter Huber and Niels Erik Rosenfeldt have emphasised, the core unit directing the Comintern's clandestine communications networks was its International Communications Office (OMS), among others its international courier service and the transfer of money to parties.[274] Consequently, Walter's ships units were but cogs in a larger apparatus over which he and his bureau in Hamburg had no influence. Instead, the nodal point

272 Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 186.

273 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Januar 1928, 534/5/201, 4, RGASPI.

274 Peter Huber, "The Cadre Department, the OMS and the 'Dimitrov' and 'Manuil'sky' Secretariats during the Phase of Terror", in *Centre and Periphery: The History of the Comintern in Light of New Documents*, eds. Mikhail Narinsky and Jürgen Rojahn (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1996), 129; Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *The "Special" World. Stalin's Power Apparatus and the Soviet System's Secret Structures of Communication, I–II* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009).

of the Comintern's clandestine communication network was the OMS office in Berlin, headed by Max Ziese (at least) from 1929 to 1932.[275]

Still, Walter's cogs needed reliable "shop stewards" or ombudsmen (Vertrauensmänner) when they called at a port. A shop steward could be a functionary of a Port Bureau or Interclub, a member of a local sea cell or a revolutionary trade union opposition. In Albert Walter's mind, the most reliable were the members of a sea cell but he had to admit that such trusted agents existed in but a few places outside Germany. His communication network was therefore an unstable one, as was demonstrated in autumn 1928. Walter had received information from Australia about need for new propaganda material, he informed Moscow that he could arrange for its transport but needed a safe address for the delivery.[276] Moscow replied that the material should be sent to the Interclub in Sydney but also notified him that they had no information about the unit or who was running it.[277] Neither had Walter. A similar situation occurred in May 1929 when Walter was unable to organise the transfer of material to Egypt, Greece, Palestine and South Africa as he lacked secure adresses for delivery.[278] The main reason for this, Walter stressed, was the poor performance if not neglect by the revolutionary trade union opposition groups of forming revolutionary nuclei outside Germany and the Scandinavian countries.[279]

3.2 *The Revolutionary Nucleus in Action*

The specific nature of maritime work posed operative challenges for the sea cells ashore. A mariner was out of its reach while working on board a ship and usually stayed at home only when searching for a new job or being unemployed. The average period for a German seaman to stay ashore was around four to six weeks in Hamburg. The Seezelle Hamburg tried to offset these restrictions by arranging study courses for the seamen at the Interclub. However, the organisation of political campaigns limited the amount of courses that were offered; in 1928, for example, the functionaries were capable of arranging only a course on the topic "What are the communists calling for?" for twelve participants. More effective proved the political education organised by members of a the ship cells while they were at sea.[280]

275 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 88.

276 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht August 1928, 534/5/201, 52, RGASPI.

277 NN to Walter, September 1928, 534/5/201, 56, RGASPI. The sender was perhaps Achkanov.

278 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Mai 1929, 534/5/210, 56, RGASPI.

279 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht August 1929, 534/5/210, 84, RGASPI.

280 Bericht über die Schulungsarbeit der Genossen in der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburgs und den Bordzellen, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 101, BArchB-SAPMO.

Documentary sources about the activities of ship cells from the latter half of the 1920s are scanty.[281] One of the few written testimonies is the activity report written by the ship cell on board the German steamer *Gera* from 1928. While moored in Antwerp, the members of the ship cell visited other vessels in the harbour area and distributed propaganda leaflets among their crews. While steaming towards South Africa, the *Gera* ship cell organised an evening event on the topic "Why is there an opposition in the unions" with ten crew members attending. A few days later, the ship cell organised a festive First of May-gathering on board; the event lasted for two hours and was attended by nine seamen, six stokers and one steward. The group started by singing the socialist anthem *Brüder zur Sonne zur Freiheit*, the German version of the Russian worker-song Brothers, towards the sun and freedom, followed by recitation of three German poems (*Die Weber*; *Wahlesel*; *Die Ratten*). The climax of the festivities was a speech on the theme "May First and its significance", followed by singing the *International*, playing the *Red Guard March* and reciting Karl Liebknecht's text *Wir beugen uns nicht* (We do not bend). The ship cell arranged two other discussion events for the crew before the steamer reached South Africa, the first about the relationship between the communist and social democratic party in Germany, the second about the conditions in the Soviet Union. On its arrival in East London, the ship cell visited British vessels and distributed English propaganda material among their crews.[282]

The *Gera* continued to Durban where it remained for a couple of weeks. During this period, the ship cell organised the commemoration of the Russian revolution with 21 persons participating, in addition to five meetings with lectures on the US American workers' movement as well as on pacifism and world peace, and training events for its participants in agitation and distribution of propaganda material. The *Gera* ship cell seems to have gained a remarkable position on board the steamer as it was able to furnish a "Red corner" and even manufacture its own flag. The peak of its activities was the solemn commenoration of those who had died during the revolution – the stem was decorated, the 45 participants sang the German version of the Russian Bolshevik dead march Вы жертвою пали (You fell victims), held speeches in honour of the fallen heroes, and went ashore to solemnely inaugurate the ship cell's

281 An account on the operations of a ship cell is provided by Hartmut Rübner, "Das Bordzellenbuch des Dampfers BOCKENHEIM," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 17 (2003): 131–150.

282 Bericht über die Schulungsarbeit der Genossen in der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburgs und den Bordzellen, encosed in Max Barek, Jahresbericht der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburg. Jahr 1928, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 101, BArchB-SAPMO.

flag. A few weeks later, the chip cell organised a joint meeting with their comrades on board the German steamer *Urundi* and marched together through the streets of East London singing the *International*.[283] Unfortunately, the activity report stopped here. The ship returned to Germany and its crew signed off. This was also the end of the *Gera* ship cell.[284]

The example of the *Gera* ship cell was used by Walter to demonstrate the systematical application of the Hamburg Method. A ship cell was obliged to organise agitation and propaganda meetings each time when moored at a foreign port. The sea cell, in turn, was responsible for fostering the political awareness of its members. The input of the Interclub was of crucial importance; its task was to organise evening courses on trade union activism.[285]

Work of the sea cells was effective in places where a Port Bureau existed. However, as those units existed in but a few places outside Soviet Russia in the 1920s, the activities of the cells relied solely on the support of the local party. Most often, the party had a rather lukewarm attitude towards the sea cell. The situation in Kiel serves as an example. Here, the local party leadership had ordered the sea cell to place a party member on board every German ship that called at the harbour. This proved challenging, especially if no ship cell had been formed on board a vessel. The local police was well aware of the activities of the communists on the waterfront but had no clue who directed them. Most probably, they speculated, directives and funds had been sent from the Interclub in Leningrad. The local party itself, police sources assured, did not finance these activities and neither had the communists been able to infiltrate the local hiring offices. Rather, the sea cell's agitation was described as a mere nuisance and as clumsy attempts to place their propaganda material in the reading halls of the local seamen's house.[286]

283 Bericht über die Schulungsarbeit der Genossen in der Zelle Schiffahrt Hamburgs und den Bordzellen, Internat. Hafenbüro für Seeleute Hamburg, RY 1/I 2/708/54, 101, BArchB-SAPMO.

284 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht November 1928, 534/5/201, 87, RGASPI.

285 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht September 1928, 534/5/201, 58, RGASPI.

286 Regierungsrat Muttray, Betr. Den internationalen Seemannsklub, Schleswig, 5.8.1929, Abt. 301 Akten des Ober-Präsidiums der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein betreffend die KPD, 4530 (1928–1929), LAS.

PART 2

The International Propaganda and Action Committee for Transport Workers

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Introduction to Part 2

The year 1928 marked a turning point in the global communist movement. Lenin's death in 1924 was followed by a bitter tug of war between different factions within the Bolshevik Party, ending with the expulsion of Trotsky and Stalin's rise to power. Comintern General Secretary Nikolai Bukharin coined the term 'Third Period' at the Seventh Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) in 1926, anticipating a new rise of the revolutionary movement outside Soviet Russia. According to him, capitalism had moved from a post-war crisis to a (second) period of consolidation and stabilisation and had pushed the international proletariat on the defensive. Nevertheless, in Bukharin's mind, the inherent weaknesses of capitalism were to lead to an outburst of renewed working class radicalism during the forthcoming Third Period.[1]

Under Stalin's aegis, the Soviet Union turned inwards and focussed on rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of agrarian production. Soviet direct involvement in China, its support to the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party had ended in a debacle in 1927. International relations with the major imperial powers, Britain and France, had turned sour. Soviet foreign policy had hitherto achieved only one positive result, namely the 1922 Rapallo agreement with Weimar Germany. Other states considered the Soviet Union to be a pariah at best and a threat to the existing world-order at worst, especially as long as the call for World Revolution continued to be disseminated from Moscow. However, Stalin's push for "Socialism in One Country", which theses had originally been formulated by Bukharin but put forth by Stalin in 1924, resulted in a shift in Soviet foreign policy that was to have grave consequences for the global communist movement for the coming decade.[2]

The new era deeply affected the Comintern and its affiliated organisations and "sympathising mass-movements." The expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev, the leaders of the 'left-wing opposition', from the Bolshevik Party in November 1927, the crisis in China, and an impending "imperialist" attack on the Soviet

1 Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, "Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 3 (1989): 387–410.

2 See further Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed. European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan, and Matthew Worley (eds.), *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

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Union dominated the agenda of the Eighth and Ninth Plenary Meetings of the ECCI in May 1927 and February 1928. The meetings resulted in calls for an intensification of class struggle, a radicalisation of the working class, and an increased vigilance to defend the Soviet Union. The latter meeting also put an end to the United Front-tactic. The bourgeoisie had launched an offensive against the working class, the ECCI declared, and branded social democratic politicians and trade union leaders as lackeys of the bourgeoisie and betrayers of the working class at the most critical moment. Therefore, the ECCI instigated that the communist's task was to apply new tactics for seizing the leadership of strikes. Most importantly, it was their duty "to expose the treacherous attitude of the reformists and, when the opportunity is favourable, organise strikes against the will of the trade union bureaucracy." The new tactic put heavy focus on approaching the unions and their members "from below." The key unit for capturing the local branches of trade unions was the factory committee; existing or new factory committees were to be dominated by the communists, and were to constitute the basic organisations of industrial unions.[3]

The new tactic was cemented at the Fourth World Congress of the RILU in April 1928 and the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in August/September 1928. The congresses condemned the former tactic of cooperation with socialist/reformist/social democratic parties and organisations,[4] and issued the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine and declined any further cooperation with the socialist or radical bourgeois organisations and activists. The Comintern's reading of the current situation was that the class struggle had reached a new phase – the Third Period – and a new wave of revolutionary activity was expected. The 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine resulted in the 'Stalinisation' of various national communist parties.[5] Ultimately, the strategic

3 "Resolution of the 9th ECCI Plenum on the Trade Union Question," *The Communist International*, 25.2.1929, available at http://ciml.250x.com/archive/comintern/english/ecci_nineth_plenum_trade_union_question_february_1928.html (checked 7.2.2020).

4 See Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Theses On the United Front, adopted by the Executive Committee of the Comintern, December 1922, https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/united-front.htm.

5 However, the Stalinisation Thesis has resulted in heated debates on its impact among others in Germany, see Klaus Mallmann, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), and Andreas Wirsching, ""Stalinisierung" oder entideologisierte "Nischengesellschaft"? Alte Einsichten und neue Thesen zum Character der KPD in der Weimarer Republik," *Vierteljahrhefte für Zeitgeschichte* 46 (1998): 449–466. For a recent discussion, see Bert Hoppe, *In Stalins Gefolgschaft. Moskau und die KPD 1928–1933* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2007); Hermann Weber, "Stalinization of the KPD: Old and New Views," in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern*: 22–44, and Marcel Bois, *Kommunisten gegen Hitler und Stalin.*

turn of the Comintern was closely linked to the political manoeuvres in the Kremlin, Stalin's rise to power and the fear of the Bolshevik leadership of an imminent military attack against Soviet-Russia and an 'imperialist war' by Great Britain and France to erase the 'Fatherland of the Toilers'.

The 'United-Front'-tactic of the RILU came to an end with the shift to the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine. Branded as the 'United front from below'-tactic, the new policy was sanctioned at a meeting held in Strassburg in January 1929. According to the so-called Strassburg Theses, rank-and-file union members were to be organised in "independent" strike committees led by the communist trade union opposition – independent, as their leadership were to be elected by the union members and not nominated by trade union functionaries and leaders. The latter were branded as 'social fascists', and declared to be the main enemy of the working class. If the 'social fascist' onslaught within a union barred the activities of its revolutionary opposition, its members were ordered to establish independent revolutionary or red trade unions.[6] Moscow subsequently sent directives to all communist parties about the formation of red unions. In Germany, this resulted in the foundation of the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition (Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition, RGO).[7] In the USA, the CPUSA created several revolutionary craft unions as well as established the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) as a red union centre; in Canada, the Workers' Unity League (WUL) was established in December 1929 while the Minority Movement (MM) was revived in the United Kingdom.[8]

Die Linke Opposition der KPD in der Weimarer Republik (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2014). For Britain, see Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002). On the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine, see *In Search of Revolution. International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, ed. Matthew Worley (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

6 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 657–661.

7 Eric Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890 – 1990: From popular protest to socialist state* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 152–153.

8 Manley, "Moscow Rules?," 18–22.

CHAPTER 3

1928 and Beyond

Establishing the United Front from Below

The leading comrades at the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers wholeheartedly supported the claim of the beginning of a Third Period in 1928. ITCNW Secretary Achkanov witnessed an "unrepresented intensification" and observed hitherto unseen increase in the number of disputes and strikes in the transport sector all over the world. In Germany, 25,000 Rhine water transport workers were on strike for over one month; in eastern India, some 14,000 railway workers were on strike for more than half a year and were backed by a solidarity strike involving 20,000 workers, followed by a strike of 10,000 employees on the South Indian railway. The docklands, too, were unruly in several countries. About 5 to 6,000 harbour workers went on strike in several ports in France, thousands of them were on strike in Antwerp, ten thousand in Australia. In Finland, the general strike of harbour workers lasted from June until winter 1928/29; in Hamburg, the harbour workers joined the shipbuilders' strike; in Altona, the crews of the fishing boats went on strike.[1]

Most of the above listed strikes occurred during the latter half of 1928, i.e., after the introduction of the 'United front from below'-tactic. The new tactic, in turn, had been discussed at the Fifth Conference of Revolutionary Transport Workers that summoned in conjunction with the RILU World Congress in April 1928. The shortcomings of the earlier United Front-tactic resulted in fierce (self-) criticism among the delegates. Above all, communist and revolutionary opposition groups were weak within the trade unions and disinterested in work among colonial transport workers. Not least, they had failed to launch effective international boycotts in support of national strikes and to block the transportation of war material to East Asia. Although the strategy of agitation and propaganda within the unions was claimed to have generated greater awareness of and support for the revolutionary opposition, few militant workers had joined it. Consequently, the vision of a united front proved illusionary. The main reason for this was blamed on the lack of concrete action

1 Figures presented by Achkanov in Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers, Report by Comrade Achkanov, presented at meeting of the Executive Bureau of the RILU, 8.1.1929, 534/5/207, 10, RGASPI. Hereafter: Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929).

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of the revolutionary opposition. The remedy, it was believed, was to focus on action when applying the new 'United front from below'-tactic, encapsulated by adopting a new name for the organisation – The International Propaganda and Action Committee for Transport Workers or IPAC-TW.[2] Like its predecessor, work among maritime transport workers was given top priority.

1 The 1928 Conference and Its Aftermath

The adoption of the new United Front from Below-tactic was publicised through a resolution. In contrast to earlier instructions, the 1928 Resolution also highlighted the importance to integrate the transport workers in colonial and semi-colonial countries in the global proletarian class struggle. The new policy was to be implemented by strike committees as well as by the revolutionary opposition within the trade unions. All transport workers were urged to demand for the abolition of overtime work and to organise the fight for shorter hours, particularly in those branches of the transport industry where intensive rationalisation was in progress. Besides, they should insist for social insurance, unemployment benefits, paid vacations and sick relief. Most importantly, they were compelled to rally behind the slogan 'Equal pay for equal work'. The new credo of radical workers was anti-racist and anti-discriminatory and was committed to anti-colonial international proletarian solidarity, the 1928 Resolution stressed. Therefore, the 1928 Resolution stressed the need to support transport workers in semi-colonial and colonial countries in their fight against capitalist and colonial exploitation.[3]

The 1928 Resolution listed several specific demands to be pushed forward by the radical maritime transport workers. Apart from the general demand for 7-hour working shifts above and 6-hour working shifts below deck, the 1928 Resolution ordered to struggle for the recognition of the ship committees. Addressing anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and anti-colonial international proletarian solidarity, the 1928 Resolution called the revolutionary mariners, i.e., the members of the sea and ship cells, to expose the exploitation of non-white members of a crew by the shipowners and to struggle for equal pay for equal

2 As outlined in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter Abgehalten in Moskau im April 1928* (Moskau: Internationales Propaganda- und Aktionskommittee der revolutionären Transportarbeiter, 1928).

3 "Task of Militant Transport Workers. Resolution Adopted at the Fifth International Conference of Revolutionary Transport Workers, April 5–11, 1928, Moscow, USSR," *Labor Unity* 2, no. 8 (September 1928): 2–5.

work both for white and non-white seamen. Most importantly, however, the 1928 Resolution instructed white seamen to get all seamen irrespectively the colour of their skin organised in the unions and to insist on the admission of non-white seamen into the unions on the same conditions as white seamen.[4]

The new Secretariat or Bureau of the IPAC-TW discussed the implementation of the new tactics immediately after the conference. It is likely that the body had existed already in previous years although I have not been able to find any information about who belonged to it. For the 1928 Secretariat, on the other hand, a photograph published by George Mink in the journal *Labor Unity*, gives a hint of its international composition. Some of the names were published in the caption, namely Walter (Germany), Shuesmith (Canada), Mink (USA), Foss (Norway), Dumay (France), Bulatsil (USSR), Achkanov (USSR), Bitov (USSR), while the Danish member can be identified as Richard Jensen. Others remain unidentified, such as an additional French member as well as the Bulgarian and the five Chinese members.[5] About half of its members represented maritime transport workers' unions, namely Dumay, Jensen, Mink and Walter, certainly also one of the Chinese. George Hardy's name is missing from the list, which is surprising as he participated at the conference and was the key organiser in Britain.

The Secretariat decided to put a special focus on work among maritime transport workers and outlined five impending areas of immediate action. Three of them concerned the activities in Britain, France and the USA, the fourth on invigorating the 'United front from below'-tactic among the revolutionary nuclei, while the fifth was to reach out to 'coloured' and colonial seamen.

1.1 *One Step Forward and Two Steps Back in Britain*

The most pressing needs for immediate action was the pitiful performance of the Minority Movement and the Communist Party in the United Kingdom in terms of organising the radical British seamen. Few of them were members of the Minority Movement or even party members. Consequently, the influence of the communists was about nil in the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, from 1926 the National Union of Seamen (NUS), and its main rival, the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union which had been dissolved in 1927. The NUS, in turn, was at loggerheads with the Trades Union Congress and the Transport and General Workers' Union, whose leader Ernest Bevin pushed for

4 "Task of Militant Transport Workers," 2–5.

5 Mink, "The Marine Transport Industry," 6.

the formation of a new seamen's union.[6] The ambition of the IPAC-TW was to launch its own programme and organise a red seamen's union in England, to start organising revolutionary nuclei on British vessels, and to hasten the establishment of Interclubs in British ports.[7]

The IPAC-TW Secretariat appointed George Hardy as its representative and instructor in Britain. Hardy had joined the British section of the RILU after his relocation to Britain in late 1923, his chief activity being the organisation of the seamen's section of the Minority Movement as well editing and publishing its mouthpiece, *The International Seafarer* (apart from his sojourn in China in 1927/1928).[8] Hardy's task was to organise a secretariat for the IPAC-TW in Britain as well as to supervise activities in Britain. His office was also responsible to create and maintain communications and contacts with the British Dominions and colonies.[9] Hardy returned to England in August 1928 and immediately started to reorganise the seamen's section of the Minority Movement. Together with Fred Thompson, they opened a small office at 27a, Grundy Street in Poplar, London.[10] However, Hardy soon recognised that the prospects for a new militant seamen's union were slim. Neither the NUS nor the Trades Union Congress allowed double union membership, and Hardy reasoned that only a few seamen would join a red union. Still, a red union might have chance, he wishfully noted, especially if it vehemently pushed for the abolition of the PC5-card and managed to attract unorganised and non-white seamen.[11]

Agitation and propaganda work among British seamen had also suffered, as the Minority Movement had not been capable to publish *The International Seafarer* for a long time. This, in turn, was critically commented by the officials of the Interclubs in Hamburg and Rotterdam, who complained about the lack of propaganda material as it restricted their capacity to reach out to British seamen. At one point, the comrades in Rotterdam even proposed to publish

6 Mogridge, "Militancy and Inter-Union Rivalries in British Shipping."

7 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 18, RGASPI.

8 Memorandum on 'The International Seafarer', 21.4.1925, and J. Bell to Sir Vernon Kell, Report re George Hardy, 12.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/2127/2, 21A and 66b, TNA.

9 Instructions from Moscow to NMM [ca. April/1928], 534/5/194, 89, RGASPI.

10 (Half-burnt) notes by Special Branch etc., 20.8.1928, 19.9.1928, 21.9.1928, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

11 [George Hardy,] Tasks and Position of Seamen in the British Shipping Industry [ca. 1928], 534/5/194, 165–168, RGASPI. A (half-burnt) copy of Hardy's memorandum is filed in George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. Hardy's memorandum was addressed to Achkanov.

an English journal by themselves.[12] Eventually, this was not necessary as *The International Seafarer* resumed publication in July 1928.[13]

The grandiose plan to establish a red seamen's union in Britain soon backfired. Most of the militant mariners joined the Minority Movement but few of them backed the idea of a red union. Instead, they rather wanted to join Bevin's new union.[14] The plan finally collapsed when the leadership of the Minority Movement turned against the idea. In late October 1928, Achkanov lamented that work among maritime transport workers in Britain continued to remain unsatisfactory: "[T]he reformists will organise a new union and we will later play the role of opposition in the new union."[15] Neither were there any prospects for establishing Interclubs in Britain: "In no way can we push this question forward."[16] Even worse, the Minority Movement had not even started to organise revolutionary nuclei on British vessels.[17] Hardy's activities came to a standstill by the end of the year when he received orders from Moscow to head the bureau of PPTUS and direct its underground work in Shanghai.[18]

Nevertheless, the vision of establishing a red seamen's union in Britain was kept alive by Achkanov who believed that neither the NUS nor Bevin's new union served the "class defence" of the seamen. If only the opposition exposed the "fascist" nature of these unions, the militant seamen would eagerly join a red union, he assured.[19] In early 1929, Achkanov sent new directives to the Minority Movement and its seamen's section, and ordered them to speed up the formation of "a class seamen's union" and ship cells on British vessels. In addition, the Minority Movement was urged to immediately set up so-called

12 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Januar 1928, 534/5/201, 4–7, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Mai 1928, 534/5/201, 25–27, RGASPI.

13 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juli 1928, 534/5/201, 39–41, RGASPI.

14 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Oktober 1928, 534/5/201, 73–75, RGASPI.

15 Achkanov to RILU Secretariat, Moscow 29.9.1928, 534/5/194, 100–106, RGASPI; also Achkamov to Lozovsky, 24.10.1928, 534/5/194, 121–123, RGASPI.

16 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 15, RGASPI.

17 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht November 1928, 534/5/201, 86–87, RGASPI.

18 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 76. Hardy's second term as head of the PPTUS lasted until April 1930. According to British intelligence sources, Hardy left Britain on 15 December 1928 and was reported to be in Shanghai at least in September and October 1929 and was believed to be on a clandestine mission in Japan in March 1930, see (Half-burnt) notes, dated 15.12.1928, 4.9.1929, 6.10.1929 and 19.3.1930, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

19 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 13, RGASPI.

'Initiatory Seamen's Groups' [or: Initiative Groups] consisting of "class-conscious" organised as well as unorganised seamen. The objective of these groups, Achkanov underlined, was to struggle for the everyday demands and grievances of seamen and, in line with the new United Front from Below-tactic, to oppose "the opportunist policy of Wilson and Bevin."[20]

The IPAC-TW directives on work in Britain were disseminated to all affiliated units and revolutionary opposition groups. The IPAC-TW denounced Bevin's attempt to initiate a seamen's section within the Transport and General Workers' Union as a camouflaged attempt to infuse 'fascism', i.e., social democratic tendencies among the seamen, and to lure them in an organisation resembling that of the NUS. It further instructed the Minority Movement to draft a 'United front from below'-program for its work among seamen, and to send information about the Initiatory Seamen's Groups to all revolutionary opposition groups as well as the Interclubs. The latter, in turn, were ordered to inform visiting British seamen about the existence and addresses of these groups.[21]

However, something went wrong in Britain. In contrast to the IPAC-TW directives, the seamen's section of the Minority Movement sent a letter to its members in early February 1929 and advised them to join Bevin's Transport and General Workers' Union! Achkanov was at loss – had the comrades deliberately obstructed his orders or what had happened?[22]

Communications between Moscow and London were patchy and Achkanov could do little to interfere. Documentation reveals that the Minority Movement had set up a Provisional Seamen's Committee at this point, led by Fred Thompson. Its members included N.J. Upadhyaya who represented the London-based Indian Seamen's Union. Activities were in its infancy but at least one group existed in Tilbury, one of the deep-water ports of London.[23] Although the Provisional Seamen's Committee had no resources at its disposal to establish an Interclub, it had opened an office in Poplar, London, at 86, East India Dock Road. It soon managed to expand its activities to several British ports; *The International*

20 Achkanov to RILU on meeting of IPAC-TW Secretariat 23.2.1929, 534/5/207, 89, RGASPI.

21 Georg, Bureau des IPAKT, An die Seeleute-Sektion der Einheitsbewegung, an die revolutionären Seeleuteverbände, and die revolutionäre Opposition der Seeleuteverbände aller Länder und an die Internationalen Klubs, 534/5/207, 33–37, RGASPI. The instructions were (at least) sent in German, French and Spanish versions. I have not yet been able to locate the English version of the text; the filed one is an undated draft version but it is likely from its context that it was written in early 1929.

22 Achkanov to RILU on meeting of IPAC-TW Secretariat 23.2.1929, 534/5/207, 89, RGASPI.

23 Minutes of meeting of Provision Seamen's Committee, 18.2.1929, 534/5/207, 59–61, RGASPI.

Seafarer appeared regularly each month and the first Initiatory Seamen's Groups were set up in spring 1929. Finally, it looked as if the revolutionary seamen movement was making progress in Britain.[24]

1.2 *Opening the Doors in the USA*

Promising news reached Moscow from the USA where George Mink was operating as official IPAC-TW representative in organising the militant waterfront in the USA.[25] A first step towards a radical platform was the Marine Workers Progressive League, MWPL, an organisation he had launched before he left for Soviet Russia in 1927. The MWPL directed its attention towards un-organised maritime workers who frequented the New York Interclub. At first, Mink's idea was to organise them as a "progressive opposition" within the existing unions but they declined to do so (as much as the unions resisted the formation of militant groups within their ranks). However, the adoption of the 'Class-against-Class' doctrine opened the floor for the establishment of a militant – red – union of maritime workers in the USA in 1928.[26]

Mink's position as IPAC-TW representative gave him the mandate to launch a "red" seamen's union in the USA.[27] After his return to the USA in 1928, Mink contacted his old associates within the IWW who joined him in his effort to expand the MWPL.[28] Mink was rather successful as the MWPL managed to establish branches also on the US West Coast by the end of the year,[29] in addition to opening ten new Interclubs, among others in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia and San Francisco, and publishing the first editions of its mouthpiece, *The Marine Worker*.[30]

Mink's career as a red union organiser almost came to an abrupt end in late 1928/early 1929 when CPUSA leader Jay Lovestone accused him for belonging to James P. Cannon's faction of Trotskyites. Like many other communist parties, the CPUSA was heavily affected by the purge of Trotsky and his followers in the Soviet Union as well as within the Comintern and its affiliated parties

24 Report on MM work among seamen [undated, probably ca. Mach/April 1929], 534/5/207, 139.

25 Pedersen, "George Mink," 310.

26 George Mink, "The Seamen's Clubs and the M.W.P.L.," *Labor Unity* 2, no. 10 (November 1928): 16–17.

27 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 18, RGASPI.

28 Pedersen, "George Mink," 311.

29 Leonard Emerson, "The Marine Workers Progressive League on the Pacific," *Labor Unity* 2, no. 10 (November 1928): 18.

30 Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, 20.

and mass movements. However, Lovestone seemingly was not aware of or, as Pedersen suspects, had not been informed about Mink's position within the RILU and his IPAC-TW mandate. Upon being informed by the events in the USA, the RILU headquarters sent a stiff reminder to Lovestone: Mink was the representative of the IPAC-TW and could not be removed without approval from Moscow. Lovestone backed and Mink immediately returned to work. In 1929, he organised three conferences for mariners, one each on the East, the West and the Gulf coasts. Mink's ambition was to push rigorously for an independent red union. His ambitions climaxed at a national convention of maritime workers, held in New York in April 1930, resulting in the establishment of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU). In August 1930, Mink travelled to Moscow and proudly reported to the RILU about the successes of the new organisation – the MWIU boasted of having 6,000 members and for having set up eleven new Interclubs. However, the MWIU faced two serious problems – it had a strained relation with the CPUSA and it suffered from an extremely instable membership. Despite the impressive member statistics, most of them were former IWW-members, only 1,600 of them paid dues and merely 400 belonged to the party.[31]

1.3 *Hamburg: More than the Secretariat for the Western Coast of Europe*

News about communist achievements on the waterfront in Western Europe had initially been positive in 1928. A revolutionary opposition had been formed in the port workers' union in Belgium; the Hamburg as well as the Rotterdam Interclub both listed revolutionary nuclei on 120 vessels, of which 35 had been formed since the conference, whereas the opposition within the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union had organised 15 revolutionary nuclei and had representatives on 26 ships.[32]

Hopes were high for an organisational breakthrough in France. Following the instructions received after the Fifth Conference, Auguste Dumay and the IPAC-TW Latin Secretariat in Paris had organised a conference of French seamen that laid the foundations for the Unitarian Seamen's Federation.[33] The main task for the IPAC-TW, Achkanov highlighted, was to strengthen the new

31 Pedersen, "George Mink," 311–313; Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, 21–31.

32 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 14, RGASPI.

33 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 14, RGASPI.

organisation and to assist it in the establishment of sections in all French ports and ship cells on board French vessels.[34]

On the other hand, the implementation of the new strike tactics, namely international support to national strikes, had been disappointing in 1928. The opposition within the Dutch Seamen's Union had failed to support the strike of the German Rhine River transport workers; even worse, Achkanov accused the revolutionary opposition as well as the Dutch and German communist parties for insufficient political vigilance to extend the strike. In Britain, the Minority Movement had failed to support the Australian waterside strike.[35] In France, the seamen's strike in Marseille was lost in part because the UGTC and the Party did not enlist the support of the Marseille Interclub, "whose authority amongst the seamen is so great that last year it succeeded in capturing the temporary leadership of the reformist union."[36]

The IPAC-TW headquarters promptly reacted on the bleak transnational coordination during strikes. It instructed the RILU Berlin Bureau to summon Albert Walter and a representative of the communist fraction in the German Transport Workers' Federation as well as Dumay and Lebègue from France, Jensen from Denmark, Foss from Norway, Dekker from Holland and Alex from the IPAC-TW for a conference in Berlin. On top of the agenda was the coordination of work in the ports in Western Europe.[37] However, for reasons not known, the conference was postponed and transferred to Hamburg where it convened in July 1928.[38] The meeting resulted in the establishment of a new unit in Hamburg, the Secretariat of the Western Coast of Europe. The new unit was projected to maintain connections with the IPAC-TW headquarters, to coordinate transnational activities in support of national strikes as well as to form port committees of seamen and port workers in Western Europe.[39]

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34 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 18, RGASPI.

35 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 11, RGASPI.

36 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 12, RGASPI.

37 [Achkanov?] to Genosse Max/Berlin [1928], 534/5/194, 78, RGASPI.

38 Letter [in German] to "Lieber Freund," no date [ca. January 1929], 534/5/207, 46, RGASPI. The letter was written by someone at the Hamburg Port Bureau/Interclub and was perhaps addressed to the RILU Bureau in Berlin. As it was a response to a message dated 7.1.1929, the letter seems to have been written in January 1929. I have not yet been able to trace the minutes of the July 1928 Hamburg Conference.

39 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 10, RGASPI.

The Secretariat of the Western Coast of Europe has left few documentary traces. In fact, the only direct reference of its existence is found in Achkanov's report of activities he presented to the RILU Executive Bureau in January 1929. Interestingly, one looks in vain for references to the unit in the monthly reports of the Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub for 1928 and 1929. Several explanations for the silence in the documentary sources can be put forward. The first one is obvious: The Secretariat's office was not located at Rothesoodstrasse. This could explain the silence of its existence in the reports of the Port Bureau and Interclub but not the missing traces in the Comintern Archives. Rather, another explanation emerges after a close and critical examination of the reports from Hamburg, namely that the Hamburg Port Bureau assumed the role of the Secretariat as Albert Walter headed both units. In fact, as will be argued below, Hamburg emerged as a liaison and global communication centre of the IPAC-TW at the end of 1928.

Information about the trans- and international connections of the Hamburg Port Bureau are patchy before mid-1928. As previously outlined, the unit in Hamburg had close links with those in Bremen and Rotterdam although it seems likely that the main liaison centre was the RILU and/or IPC-TW bureau in Berlin. The new position of the Hamburg Port Bureau as a unit for the coordination of joint inter/transnational activities was demonstrated during the shipyards workers' strike in Hamburg in October 1928. Walter's directives "to our representatives in Belgium, England, France and Holland" reveal a hierarchical relation as they were instructed to launch a boycott to overhaul German ships in their respective ports. "Our comrades answered positively," Walter noted, and underlined further that "[t]his clearly demonstrates the importance of our Port Bureau as a liaison centre."[40]

The reason for choosing Hamburg as central liaison centre was due to the success of the Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub in rapidly increasing the numbers of revolutionary nuclei on board German merchant vessels. By October 1928, the Zelle Schiffahrt listed already 256 members and "reliable" ship cells existed on board 120 ships. The nuclei formed the backbone of Walter's global communications network as they covered shipping routes connecting Hamburg with North America (East and West Coast), Mexico, the Caribbean, South America (East and West Coast), Africa, Australia, East Asia, India, the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea. His plan was simple but clever. Walter planned to set up legal or illegal liaison offices in all ports abroad where German ships were calling at; trusted members of a nucleus would serve as

40 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Oktober 1928, 534/5/201, 73, RGASPI.

couriers. The crux of the matter was the restricted number of legal liaison centres. Most of the liaison centres were underground offices and the couriers were sometimes at loss in locating their addresses. Another problem was the long duration of travel between Hamburg and East Asian and Australian ports; usually, the members of a nucleus would sign off the ship when reaching the port of destination, resulting in a break in the chain of communications.[41] In addition, the German police uncovered at least the clandestine channel of communications between Europe and India already in 1929.[42]

Hamburg was therefore not the ideal location for a global liaison centre of the IPAC-TW, less for the Comintern and RILU-apparatus in Moscow. Although the Hamburg Port Bureau was running a clandestine courier service to Indian, Australian and Chinese ports, connections were highly irregular due to restrictions in German shipping services to these ports. This weakness was highlighted in an internal report in November 1928. Instead of solely relying on German nuclei members, other revolutionary opposition units and Interclubs were compelled to set up sea and ship cells. Top priority was to get work started in British and French ports. The former ports were important for the connections to Australia, the latter ones – especially Marseille – for the connections to China and Japan. Moreover, work had to be started in US East and West Coast ports. Once established, dispatches could easily be sent via Hamburg on a German ship to New York from where the local liaison bureau would be able to distribute it to the West Coast and further to any destination in the Pacific.[43] By the end of 1928, the contours of this communication network were already visible, and included "branch offices" (Zweigstellen), namely the Interclubs in Rotterdam, New York, Philadelphia and Sydney.[44]

2 The Scandinavian Secretariat and Activities in Northern Europe

The introduction and application of the United Front from Below-tactic became a protracted process among the IPAC-TW sections in the Nordic countries. The task of Leif Foss and the Scandinavian Secretariat's had been to ignite and deepen the coordination between the various revolutionary trade union opposition groups in the Nordic countries. Foss prepared the ground

41 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Oktober 1928, 534/5/201, 75, RGASPI.

42 P.F. 41314, 18.3.29, Albert Walter personal file, KV 2/1799, TNA.

43 "Y"/Port Bureau Hamburg to IPAC-TW Secretariat, Hamburg 7.11.1928, 534/5/201, 81, RGASPI.

44 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht November 1928, 534/5/201, 86, RGASPI.

at a conference held in Copenhagen in October 1927, originally called by the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union to discuss the formation of a Scandinavian-Finnish-Russian Unity Committee.[45] Finland was not part of Foss' tactical considerations as communist trade union activity was considered a special case; although communist activity was illegal, the unions were controlled by the radical left-wing who officially had no ties to Moscow or the illegal, underground communist party.

The 1927 Copenhagen Conference outlined the organisational foundations for work among the national transport workers' unions. Each executive committee of the Scandinavian communist parties was to nominate a person (i.e., secretary) responsible for trade union work. The person was also to serve as the liaison person for the Scandinavian Secretariat and to meet twice a year. Further, each of the parties was to nominate a country committee (landsutskott), consisting each of representatives for land transport, railway and maritime workers as well as the party's trade union secretary. In addition, the opposition groups within the national trade unions were each to establish a steering body consisting of three members. The local communist fractions within a union, in turn, were obliged to be in contact with the country committee as well as with the executive committee of the party. Finally, the Copenhagen Conference repeated the urge to form ship cells.[46]

Discussions concerning intra-Scandinavian cooperation continued at a conference held in Copenhagen in May 1928. On top of the agenda were the decisions of the RILU Congress and their implementation in the Scandinavian countries. Present were, amongst others, Leif Foss, Richard Jensen and Sven Linderot. Not much is known about the outcome of the conference, apart from it discussing ways of opening links to the Baltic countries and Finland.[47]

The intra-Scandinavian dimension gained momentum during the Finnish harbour workers' strike during latter half of 1928. The strike had started in autumn 1928, and the Scandinavian Secretariat issued a call for launching supporting actions in Scandinavian ports in September 1928. Foss' plans failed in Norway; here, the harbour workers' union rejected the call to boycott Finnish

45 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter.*

46 Leif O. Foss, Utkast til arbeidspan for 1928, Moskva 27.3.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

47 Foss to Linderot, Oslo 2.7.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB; Den skandinaviske faglige partikonference, 21.5.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

shipping.[48] The situation was difficult also in Sweden, Linderot informed, as the communist fractions had little influence in the unions. Besides, he excused himself for not having had time to devote himself to trade union agitation as he had been touring northern Sweden as part of the party's election campaign.[49] The only positive response to the call came from Copenhagen where the Interclub had started a nation-wide campaign amongst the port workers in support of the Finnish strikers and against the blackleg position of the reformist leaders of the union, who refused to declare a promised solidarity strike.[50]

The Finnish harbour workers were on strike for ten months. The tactics of the export industry owners relied on the excessive use of non-organised workers, usually provided by the paramilitary strikebreaking organisation Vientirauha Oy ("Peace of Export Joint Company"). The IPAC-TW, in turn, tried to counteract and launched an international solidarity campaign in support for the strikers in Finland through the Hamburg Port Bureau. The Hamburg Interclub conducted a campaign against the blackleg stand of the German Transport Workers' Federation.[51] The Hamburg Port Bureau, in turn, published three flyers, each of them in German, English and French, and sent them to its liaison offices in Western Europe. However, the conditions for an international solidarity campaign and a boycott of Finnish shipping proved illusory and clearly indicated the limited capacity of the revolutionary transport workers' opposition groups – no answer to the calls for a boycott was ever heard from Belgium or Holland, and not much was achieved in Britain and France.[52]

2.1 *Establishing Revolutionary Nuclei and Organising Conferences*

Propelling international solidarity campaigns was an important but secondary task of the Scandinavian Secretariat. Its main obligation was to strengthen the revolutionary trade union opposition groups in the Scandinavian countries. However, Foss soon realised that he had to tackle two major obstacles – the lack of inter-Scandinavian communication as well as the weak, if not pathetic situation in Sweden. Foss addressed the first issue in a circular letter to all national committees, and instructed them to send him information on impending tariff

48 Foss to Linderot, Oslo 25.9.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

49 NN [probably Linderot] to Foss, 26.9.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

50 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 14, RGASPI.

51 Theses of Report on Activities of IPCAA of Transport Workers (8.1.1929), 534/5/207, 11, RGASPI.

52 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1929, 534/5/210, 105–111, RGASPI.

negotiations and planned strikes as well as on conferences and meetings of the national transport unions.[53] Furthermore, all units were to send him information on the number of existing ship cells.[54]

Foss tackled the Swedish issue at an inter-Scandinavian conference held in Stockholm in November 1928. Linderot informed him that the most promising unit was the Stockholm sea cell as it had managed to organise 16 ship cells operating on 50 vessels. He further claimed that the position of the communists was rather strong in the Swedish Stokers' Union (Svenska eldareförbundet) where they counted three out of seven functionaries. On the other hand, their position was rather weak in the Swedish Seamen's Union (Svenska sjömansunionen) where they only listed two out of seven functionaries, and was pathetic in the other transport workers' unions. Similar conditions prevailed in Denmark, Foss noted; the position of the communists was shallow among the railway workers' union in contrast to their relatively strong position among the maritime workers' unions. (The discussion about conditions in Norway was postponed to the next conference.) Finally, the one-day conference closed by nominating the Swede Gunnar Carlsson as second secretary of the Scandinavian Secretariat and by calling for the establishment of an Interclub in Stockholm.[55]

Work at the Copenhagen Interclub also prospered; almost 11,500 mariners had visited 114 meetings in 1928. The club members engaged in the ongoing anti-war campaign of the Comintern and RILU ("Defend the Soviet Union"), among others by printing and distributing leaflets among visiting US American, British, Polish and Swedish naval ships. The activities of the Interclub among Danish maritime transport workers resulted in 200 seamen joining the DKP and the establishment of a revolutionary nucleus among the harbour workers in Copenhagen. Most importantly, however, was the establishment of a new Interclub in Esbjerg on the Danish North Sea coast.[56]

An unexpected plan of the RILU to establish its own Scandinavian Bureau shelved the plans for invigorating the capacity of the IPAC-TW Scandinavian Secretariat at the end of 1928. At first, the idea was to merge the IPAC-TW

53 Foss to "fraksjonslederne innen transportorganisasjonerne i Skandinavien," Oslo 20.10.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

54 Foss to Linderot, Oslo 31.10.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 4. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

55 Protocol of Inter-Scandinavian Conference held in Stockholm, 16.11.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 7. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

56 Jensen, Rapport for aaret 1928, 534/5/211, 16, RGASPI.

Scandinavian Secretariat with the RILU Scandinavian Bureau, to locate the new unit in Stockholm and to head it by Sven Linderot.[57] However, the Norwegian delegates vehemently opposed plan when it was up for discussions at the inter-Scandinavian conference held at Oslo in early February 1929.[58] If the Norwegian protests were successful is not known, neither is there much information of the RILU Scandinavian Bureau and its activities.

The main issue on the agenda of the 1929 Oslo Conference was the report about conditions in Norway as well as the formation of revolutionary nuclei on board vessels. Foss and Samsing painted a rather depressing picture of work in Norway. In short: The influence of the communists was minimal in the transport workers' unions.[59] The only positive news where Samsing's successful engagements at the Hamburg Interclub. Norwegian seamen had started to find their way to the Interclub and Samsing's activities had yielded some results. The most notable outcome of his agitation was the removal of the official representative of the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union in Hamburg and the replacement of him with a left-wing member.[60] In Norway, Foss had successfully interfered in a smear campaign of the union leadership against Samsing and his activities in Hamburg.[61] Samsing's efforts paid off; by the end of the year, he had established a 20-members Norwegian sea cell in the Scandinavian Section of the Hamburg Interclub.[62]

Samsing's successful activities in Hamburg was fed into the new directives on work among Norwegian – and by extension, Scandinavian – seamen. The key for success was agitation and propaganda conducted by the Interclubs, the directives highlighted. The establishment of new Interclubs in Scandinavian ports was therefore of utmost importance as the sea cells operated in tandem with the Interclubs. The duties of the sea cells was to establish ship cells on board the vessels, to carry out agitation and propaganda campaigns, run courses and organise discussion events as well as to disseminate the IPAC-TW journal *Den internasjonale transportarbeider* and lead international solidarity campaigns. Echoing existing IPAC-TW and RILU-directives, the ship cells, in

57 Linderot to Foss, Stockholm 31.12.1928, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, 9. Mapp med diverse handlingar, R/7/F/3, ARAB.

58 Foss, Protocol of Scandinavian trade union conference held in Oslo, 14.2.1929, 534/4/291, 7–9, RGASPI.

59 Foss, Protocol of Scandinavian trade union conference held in Oslo, 14.2.1929, 534/4/291, 7–9, RGASPI.

60 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Februar 1928, 534/5/201, 12, RGASPI.

61 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht August 1928, 534/5/201, 51, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht September 1928, 534/5/201, 58, RGASPI.

62 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht November 1928, 534/5/201, 86, RGASPI.

turn, were obliged to set up and lead a ship committee, initiate campaigns in accordance with the directives of the party and the IPAC-TW as well as to make sure that the ship crew found their way to an Interclub instead of a Christian seamen's mission when visiting a port.[63]

2.2 *Annus Horribilis of 1929 in Copenhagen and Stockholm*

The year 1929 opened with a vigorous campaign orchestrated by the newly established RILU Scandinavian Bureau to push for a United Front between Nordic and Russian transport workers' unions.[64] A preliminary agreement for closer cooperation between the unions had been reached at a Scandinavian-Russian conference for maritime transport worker unions in December 1928 that was up for ratification by the national unions in the Nordic countries. The campaign ended in a failure. While the agreement was quickly accepted by the Norwegian and Russian maritime transport workers' trade unions, first the Swedish and then the Finnish maritime unions declined its ratification.[65] Additional negative news soon followed.

The adoption of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine created a deep rift in the Scandinavian communist parties and trade union fractions in 1929. Several leading members questioned the advisability of a full confrontation with the social democrats; others were not convinced about the 'ultra-left turn' of the Comintern and Moscow's interpretation of the beginning of a Third Period. Confusion followed and by autumn 1929, the communist movement was split in two antagonistic factions. In Sweden the majority of the party members, including all communist Members of Parliament, the communist press as well as most of the communist trade union functionaries had decided to cut their ties with Moscow and established an independent Communist Party under the leadership of Karl Kilbom. The minority rallied behind Hugo Sillén, who became the leader of the Communist Party of Sweden, Section of the Comintern. The split of the Swedish Party was to have grave consequences for the Comintern-loyal minority: They had to build up a new party and trade union apparatus from scratch.[66] Similar

63 Foss, Protocol of Scandinavian trade union conference held in Oslo, 14.2.1929, 534/4/291, 7–9, RGASPI.

64 Linderot/Scandinavian Bureau of the RILU to Achkanov, Stockholm 19.1.1929, 534/4/291, 19, RGASPI.

65 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 97–98, 281.

66 See further Bernt Kennerström, *Mellan två internationaler. Socialistiska Partiet 1929–37* (Lund: Arkiv förlag, 1974); Jan Bolin, *Parti av ny typ? Skapande av ett svenskt kommunistiskt parti 1917–1933* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2004).

frictions also affected the Danish and Norwegian parties although they never split.[67]

The internal chaos in the Scandinavian parties had negative consequences for communist trade union activities. The RILU Scandinavian Bureau in Stockholm ceased its operations, mainly as Sven Linderot devoted his time in the reorganisation of the remaining Comintern-loyal trade union opposition groups in Sweden. The hitherto rather strong position of the communist fractions within (some of) the unions was gone. Instead, there existed three factions within the unions: The 'reformists' or social democrats who together with the second faction, the (independent) 'majority-communists', dominated the unions, and the Comintern-loyal 'minority-communists'. This also reflected the state of affairs within in the Swedish maritime transport workers' unions. Gone were the days when Linderot could claim that the communists had a strong position in the seamen's and stokers' unions.[68] Foss and Carlsson at the Scandinavian Secretariat must have been frustrated – the erstwhile success of the Stockholm sea cell was nullified; it hardly existed after the split of the party.

Internal frictions, too, shook the Danish Party. Two blocks evolved in 1929, one around party leader Thøger Thøgersen, the other around Aksel Larsen who had recently returned from Moscow and claimed to have the backing of the Comintern. Richard Jensen was deeply engaged in the fight, being a close friend of Thøgersen. However, Jensen was also the key person of the IPACT-TW in Denmark. Matters became complicated during spring 1929 when Larsen accused Jensen for mismanagement of funds for operating the Copenhagen Interclub.[69]

News from Copenhagen had been troubling already at the beginning of 1929. Foss had been informed that the Interclub had moved to new premises but he never received the address of the new location. Foss was puzzled. The connections between the Scandinavian Secretariat in Oslo and the Interclub had been patchy, and Jensen had been continuously late in sending the balances and activity reports of the Interclub to Oslo. Foss knew that Jensen was acting on a "special mandate" from Moscow but was also aware that Jensen had been

67 See further Einhart Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet litet. NKP 1923–1931* (Oslo: Pax, 1983); Kurt Jacobsen, *Mellem København og Moskva* (Copenhagen: Tiden, 1989).

68 Bernt Kennerström, "Kommunistisk facklig politik 1929–1932," *Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia* 1 (1972): 29; Tom Olsson, "Oppositionen mot socialdemokratin i svensk arbetarrörelse under 30-talet," *Årbog for arbejderbevægelsens historie* 6 (1976): 2.

69 [Handling IV.A.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, odaterad rapport [Reg. 20.12.41 BW], 20–21, SÄPO Vol. 169 IV A, SNA; Kurt Jacobsen, *Aksel Larsen. Stifteren af SF* (Copenhagen: Informations forlag, 2010), 107.

careless in his use of external funding. Foss therefore contacted Achkanov, informed him about his suspicions of the potential misuse of Interclub funds, and asked him to intervene, as he himself had no funds to travel to Copenhagen and investigate the matter.[70]

Shortly after having notified Moscow, Foss received a report from Einar Nilsen about the state of affairs in Copenhagen. Nilsen reported about the conflict between the two factions in Denmark as well as informed him that the Interclub at Havnegade had been closed and had moved to the backyard of a guesthouse at St. Annæs Plads. He further reported that Jensen – for reasons not stated – had been sent to Hvidøre outside Copenhagen.[71] Foss promptly notified Achkanov: The situation in Copenhagen was getting worse every day. Not a word from Jensen; instead, the Danish Party informed Foss that Jensen was accused for having hired an agitator who turned out to be a waiter not knowing anything about the trade unions or the party. The reputation of the IPAC-TW and the Interclub was suffering, Foss informed Achkanov, and called for outside intervention to reorganise of activities in Copenhagen.[72]

Foss received additional information from Copenhagen in early February, one letter each from Jensen and Larsen. Foss replied to Jensen, criticising him for not having sent any balances and reports for the Interclub. In the same vain, he informed him about the accusation brought forward against him. The gravest ones were the claims that Jensen had neglected contacts with the newly established Interclub in Esbjerg and for not informing the "North Sea Secretariat", i.e., the Hamburg Port Bureau/Albert Walter, about his activities.[73] At this point, the soup in Copenhagen was boiling as Larsen claimed that the IPAC-TW had nominated him to investigate the accounts of the Interclub.[74] Foss was puzzled as none had informed him about Larsen's intervention. Of utmost importance, Foss assured Achkanov, was to ensure that the position of the communist fraction in the stokers' union was not jeopardised by the chaos at the Interclub. He even proposed to transfer Arthur Samsing from Hamburg to Copenhagen as interim head of the Interclub.[75]

The course of events culminated in an in situ examination of the Copenhagen Interclub by Foss and Walter on Wednesday 6 March 1929.[76] It

70 Foss to Achkanov, Oslo 11.1.1929, 534/4/291, 10–11, RGASPI.
71 Einar Nilsen, Report on the Interclub in Copenhagen, no date, 534/4/291, 12, RGASPI.
72 Foss to Achkanov, Oslo 18.1.1929, 534/4/291, 17, RGASPI.
73 Foss to Jensen, Oslo 5.2.1929, 534/4/291, 24–25, RGASPI.
74 Foss to Achkanov, Oslo 6.2.1929, 534/4/291, 23, RGASPI; Foss to "Georg", i.e. Grigorij Achkanov, Oslo 15.2.1929, 534/4/291, 29, RGASPI.
75 Foss to "Georg" [Achkanov], Oslo 26.2.1929, 534/4/291, 31–32, RGASPI.
76 Foss to "George", Oslo 12.3.1929, 534/4/291, 35 – 37, RGASPI.

is somewhat unclear who had called the meeting. Jensen told Achkanov that he had asked Foss and Walter to intervene although Walter seems to have responded to an earlier call by Foss.[77] Be as it may, Foss and Walter arrived in Copenhagen at the height of the conflict. Jensen had refused to hand over the accounts for the Interclub for an investigation by the party. The Larsen block, in turn, had orchestrated a smear campaign against Jensen, insinuating him to be a lazy alcoholic, fraudster and embezzler of funds. Jensen, in turn, attacked the party for totally neglecting work among seamen and for turning their back on the Interclub.[78] Foss and Walter managed to meet the loggerheads and were capable to conduct a thorough check of accounts and receipts of the Interclub. The accusation of misuse turned out to be false. Jensen had received 10,565 DKK as well as taken a bank loan of 1,500 DKK to cover for the expenses of the Interclub. The sums corresponded with the receipts. This was the positive part of the investigation. On the other hand, Foss and Walter criticised Jensen by for not sending monthly balances and reports to the Scandinavian Secretariat.[79]

Next, the two comrades inspected the old premises of the Interclub at Havnegade and the new ones at Sankt Annæs Plads. Foss was not impressed by the new premises. The building was a 32-beds hostel with a restaurant. It turned out that the Interclub rented two small rooms in the backyard that were not optimal for its purpose. A private person, who paid 7 percent of its incomes to the Interclub and was supposed to offer six beds in the hostel free of charge to the Interclub, ran the restaurant. Foss and Walter regarded this to be an "unholy" experiment, and suggested that the Interclub bought the whole building and operated the restaurant and hostel by itself. The feasibility of their suggestion was dubious as Foss in the same vein stressed that the IPAC-TW was not capable of funding the project.[80]

The meeting continued the next day. Foss' and Walter's auditing had not cleared the air, the situation was tense and soon the quarrel started again. The party representatives demanded to have full insights on the balances of the Interclub and insisted on external instalments for running the Interclub to be paid into the party's bank account. Foss and Walter rejected the proposal. Instead, they suggested that 1) the leadership of the Interclub was to include two party members, 2) IPAC-TW funds were to be controlled by the leader of

77 NN [Achkanov] to "Dear Friend" [Jensen], no date [Russian original dated 21.3.1929], 534/5/211, 9, RGASPI; Jensen to IPAC-TW, Copenhagen 1.4.1929, 534/5/211, 14, RGASPI.

78 Jensen to IPAC-TW, Copenhagen 1.4.1929, 534/5/211, 14, 16, RGASPI.

79 "Y" [Walter], Bericht über die Besprechung in Kopenhagen, Hamburg 11.3.1929, 534/5/210, 37–38, RGASPI; Foss to "George" [Achkanov], Oslo 12.3.1929, 534/4/291, 35–37, RGASPI.

80 Foss to "George" [Achkanov], Oslo 12.3.1929, 534/4/291, 35–37, RGASPI.

the Interclub, and 3) the party and the Interclub were to closely collaborate. The party representatives rejected the second suggestion. Walter reminded the party representatives that IPAC-TW funds were out of their control and Moscow would make the ultimate decisions on this matter.[81]

The meeting ended in a cul-de-sac. The two emissaries had wanted to reorganise work at the waterfront in Copenhagen and suggested a renovation of the Interclub, the party representatives declined. Walter left Copenhagen on 7 March, Foss remained for another three days. The conflict in Copenhagen deepened and Jensen insinuated that he would leave the party. Thøgersen suggested that the Interclub was to be put under the control of the party, Foss declined and reminded him that the Interclub was controlled by the IPAC-TW.[82]

Further unpleasant news reached Jensen from Moscow during the midst of the conflict. Jensen must have been completely unprepared when Achkanov informed him about the total revision of international operations including the suspension of several journals as well as the liquidation of the Interclubs in Bordeaux and Rotterdam. His activities, too, were to be affected by the reorganisation, informed Achkanov: "We are compelled […] to stop sending materials to several of our International Clubs, the Copenhagen Club included, after March."[83] Nothing more, nothing less. What Jensen did not know at this point was that the IPAC-TW headquarters also decided to suspend the transfer of funds to Copenhagen (see further Chapter 4.2.3).

Neither did Foss at this point knew that Moscow planned to liquidate activities in Copenhagen. Instead, he suggested to Achkanov that the Copenhagen Interclub should resume activities "in one way or the other." Most important, however, was to ensure the continuation of the Interclub in Esbjerg. Being the main Danish North Sea port, operations in Esbjerg were of great strategic importance for the IPAC-TW.[84] All in vain. In early April, Achkanov informed Foss as well as Jensen about the ultimate decisions made in Moscow: IPAC-TW funding for Copenhagen had been suspended. "We trust you will be able to manage to preserve the Club in Copenhagen without our support," Achkanov assured Jensen,[85] well knowing that this would not be the case. Foss immediately informed Thøgersen about the new course of events: Moscow had

81 "Y" [Walter], Bericht über die Besprechung in Kopenhagen, Hamburg 11.3.1929, 534/5/210, 37–38, RGASPI.

82 Foss to "George" [Achkanov], Oslo 12.3.1929, 534/4/291, 35–37, RGASPI.

83 NN [Achkanov] to "Dear Friend" [Jensen], no date [Russian original dated 21.3.1929], 534/5/211, 9, RGASPI.

84 Foss to "George" [Achkanov], Oslo 26.3.1929, 534/4/291, 44–45, RGASPI.

85 [Achkanov?] to Jensen, no date [April 1929], 534/5/211, 22, RGASPI.

drastically reduced IPAC-TW funding. Operation in Copenhagen were possible only if the party intervened, and Foss urged Thøgersen to sell the club's inventories at Havnegade and to use the money for work on the waterfront. The only positive news from Moscow was that the Interclub in Esbjerg would receive a monthly stipend of 30 DKK for running its operations.[86]

Thus ended the operations of the IPAC-TW in Copenhagen. Reduced to an office without meeting spaces, the Interclub continued merely as the editing body of its journal *Lanternen*. Contemporary observers described the situation as pathetic: "Though the Club apparatus at present is not worth anything, there is very favourable objective conditions for work."[87]

86 [Foss] to Th. Thøgersen, Oslo 2.4.1929, 534/4/291, 60–61, RGASPI.

87 Smith to Achkanov, Copenhagen 5.8.1929, 534/5/211, 27, RGASPI.

CHAPTER 4

Reopening Work among Colonial Seamen

The bleak records of work among colonial seamen in Europe generated a lively debate at the IPC-TW conference in April 1928. The harshest critique on the pitfalls of work among colonial maritime workers came from Auguste Dumay. He accused the RILU for neglecting the colonial question in the maritime industry and for downplaying the potential impact of colonial maritime workers in both anticolonial and anti-imperial activities. African and Caribbean mariners consituted the majority of the colonial seamen in France, he noted, but most of them were organised in the Féderation Nationale des Laboureurs de la Mer, a 'yellow'[1] union where the communists had no influence at all. Why where there no representatives from Africa or the Caribbean at the conference, he critically asked, and why where there no representatives of the Arab seamen? Dumay was backed in his criticism by George Hardy who urged the IPC-TW and its European sections to focus on work among colonial seamen in European ports.[2]

Dumay's and Hardy's criticism resulted in a reorientation and reorganisation of work among colonial seamen. The task of the revolutionary trade union opposition groups within the national maritime trade unions was to demand that membership was to be based on class only, not race or nationality. Maritime transport workers, who had emigrated to and resided in another country, were to be allowed to join a national union based on the principles of equal rights and equal standing.[3]

However, the IPAC-TW never formulated any directives or issued any instructions on work among colonial seamen after the 1928 Moscow Conference. In part, this might have been due to the total overhaul of communist agitation which followed after the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in July-August 1928. In late 1927, the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) had initiated the 'left turn' calling for 'intensified class struggle', warning about 'the treachery of social democracy' and demanded

1 A yellow union is a workers' organisation which is dominated or influenced by the employers and collaborates with the government.

2 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 39, 41.

3 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 55–56.

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a 'radicalisation of the working class'. According to the new interpretation, bourgeois stabilisation was to give way to a new wave of class struggle due to the believed imminent radicalisation of the working class. Condition for revolutionary work in the colonies and 'semi-colonies', i.e. India and China, were discussed at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928. The discussions resulted in a new strategy presented in the Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries, better known as the Colonial Theses.[4]

The ultimate objective, the Colonial Theses declared, was the unconditional and complete independence and sovereignty of all colonial people. In contrast to the previous 'United Front'-tactic, the Colonial Theses accused the European social democrats as well as the colonial bourgeoisie for betraying the anti-colonial struggle and for seeking rapprochement with the imperialist powers and capitalist governments. Instead, the Colonial Theses stressed the global class-unity of the labouring masses. The Colonial Theses called for the creation of communist parties as well as workers and peasants unions in the colonies, and rejected all collaboration with nationalist movements. At the same time, it criticised the communist parties in the colonial metropolises for their hitherto bleak performance, and for neglecting the existence of hidden racial barriers within the parties. Therefore, it instructed the metropolitan parties to expand their activities into the colonies, to support the formation of colonial centres of trade union activities, and to impel a revolutionary character in the existing peasant movements.[5]

However, as Neil Redfern has underlined, neither before nor after the 1928 Colonial Theses did the Comintern break with its Eurocentric analysis of world affairs.[6] Instead, the Colonial Theses proclaimed a closer unity between revolutionary movements in the colonies and the Soviet Union, and underlined the need for an alliance between the Soviet Union, the Western industrial proletariat and the oppressed masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.[7]

4 See further Fredrik Petersson, "The 'Colonial Conference' and the Dilemma of the Comintern's Colonial Work, 1928–29," in *Communist Histories, Volume 1*, ed. Vijay Prashad (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2016), 72–127.

5 See further Petersson, "The 'Colonial Conference'," and Fredrik Petersson, "Imperialism and the Communist International," *Journal of Labor and Society* 20, no. 1 (2017), 23–42.

6 Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism, and Two World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

7 Edward T. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1974), 166–167, 171–172.

1 Visions and Setbacks in Europe

Communist agitation and propaganda among Asian maritime transport workers in Europe had yielded few lasting results by 1928. Work had been concentrated to British ports as most of the Chinese and Indian seamen were employed on British vessels. However, due to the weakness and at best lukewarm interest of the Minority Movement, communist agitation among Asian seamen had been shallow if non-existing. George Hardy, at the 1928 Moscow Conference, had heavily criticised the pitiful performance of the Minority Movement. Returning to England after the conference, Hardy drafted a blueprint for future work in Britain, underlining the necessity to focus on colonial seamen. More than 140,000 registered African and Asian seamen resided in Britain, he noted, and 26 percent of seamen on British ships were Asian workers. Hardy's proposal for future work was radical and placed the colonial seamen as the prime target group for the projected red seamen's union, see Chapter 3.1.1. In contrast to the existing unions, the new red union was to open sections for Chinese and Indian seamen "which would add to the power of our colonial fellow workers, especially when they cannot organise legal organisations in their own countries." Hardy was fully aware of the 'revolutionary' anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-segregationist tenor of his blueprint: "This would cause such agitation among British seamen that would have great political value and break down their prejudices as well as enabling us to use such a union for practical colonial work."[8]

Nothing happened. Hardy himself was unable to push for his ideas as the RILU transferred him to Shanghai to head the PPTUS apparatus in early 1929.[9] The Minority Movement, in turn, rejected the idea of forming a red seamen's union. Britain remained a peripheral arena for communist agitation among colonial maritime transport workers. Although there was an ongoing radicalisation among colonial seamen in British ports, resulting among others in the establishment of the Indian Seamen's Union in London and an association for colonial seamen in Cardiff, their links to the Minority Movement and its seamen's section were shallow.[10] Neither had the Minority Movement or its

8 [George Hardy,] Tasks and Position of Seamen in the British Shipping Industry [ca. 1928], 534/5/194, 165–168, RGASPI.

9 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 76.

10 See further Sherwood, "Lascar Struggles Against Discrimination in Britain;" Christian Høgsbjerg, "Mariner, Renegade and Castaway: Chris Braithwaite, Seamen's Organiser, Socialist and Militant Pan-Africanist," *Race & Class* 53 (2011): 36–57; Featherstone, "Harry O'Connell," 71–87.

seamen's section been active on establishing ship cells on board British vessels, not to speak about sea cells in British ports, for which it was criticised by Albert Walter.[11]

Work among colonial seamen ended in a cul-de-sac in Britain and had to be concentrated elsewhere. Three possible locations were at hand for the IPAC-TW: Hamburg, Marseille and Rotterdam. Each of these ports had its potentials but also drawbacks. The Hamburg Interclub was the best organised one but the port was not a major destination for British shipping. The Rotterdam Interclub, on the other hand, had reported major difficulties in reaching out to the crew on British vessels. Marseille, in turn, was not a target of British shipping and the Interclub had a poor record on work among colonial seamen. After evaluating the pros and cons of the different options, the IPAC-TW headquarters decided to shift its work among colonial seamen to Hamburg by detaching Asian functionaries to the Hamburg Interclub.

The first to arrive in Hamburg was the Indian comrade Silva. He started to work at the Interclub in February 1928. At first, the Interclub functionaries were extremely positive about his work.[12] However, Silva's job ended prematurely after only one month as he became ill and decided to move to Berlin. Work among Indian seamen ceased as there was no replacement for him.[13] A new attempt to start work among Asian seamen in Hamburg was made in September 1928. Achkanov informed Walter about sending a Chinese seaman from Hong Kong to work in Hamburg.[14] However, it seems as if nothing came out of these plans and there are no references about work among Chinese or Indian seamen for the rest of the year in the monthly reports of the Interclub. The first push for work among colonial seamen in Hamburg had ended in a cul-de-sac, too.

2 Opening a New Chapter: Work among Black Seamen

While the Comintern had debated at length about the prospects and conditions for the radicalisation of the working class in India and China at its world congresses in the early 1920s,[15] the Atlantic world and especially sub-Saharan

11 See, among others, Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht März 1929, 534/5/210, 46–47, RGASPI.

12 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Februar 1928, 534/5/201, 12, RGASPI.

13 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht März-April 1928, 534/5/201, 23, RGASPI.

14 NN [probably Achkanov] to Walter, September 1928, 534/5/201, 56, RGASPI.

15 John P. Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1963): 93–101.

Africa remained a blanc spot on the world-map of the forthcoming World Revolution. Although John Reed vehemently called upon the comrades to focus on the downtrodden black population in the USA in a famous speech at the Second World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in 1920,[16] the Comintern was slow in developing a distinctive strategy for agitation and propaganda among the black working class in the Atlantic world. At first, the Comintern addressed only the conditions of the black working class in the USA and in South Africa in the so-called 'Negro Theses' of 1922 and 1924; the situation in the African colonies, in the Caribbean or in Latin America (especially Brazil) remained marginal if recognised at all.[17] A similar case was the 1920 Theses on the National and Colonial Question that heavily criticised British and French imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, and had placed the metropolitan parties in the West in the forefront for orchestrating anticolonial and anti-imperial agitation and propaganda.[18] However, the biggest dilemma for the architects of the Communist anticolonial doctrine was an apparent lack of left-wing militant agents for leading the anticolonial struggle in the African and Caribbean colonies; those existing were not workers but black intellectuals and so-called 'petty-bourgeois anticolonial nationalists' who rather adhered to radical pan-Africanism as their ideology than communism.[19]

Initially, Moscow's tactical considerations included a temporary alliance between the communists and the anticolonial nationalists in colonial and 'semi-colonial' countries as stipulated in the Lenin's thesis on the National and Colonial Question.[20] In contrast to the social democrats and the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), the rhetoric of the Comintern and the

16 See John Reed, "America and the Negro Question," Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International, Fourth Session 25 July 1920, available at https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch04.htm#v1-p121.

17 Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 57–62.

18 "Theses of the Second Congress of the Communist International on the National and Colonial Questions," in Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Routledge, 2013).

19 Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa*; Heinz Deutschland, "Zu den Beziehungen zwischen der RGI und den sich formierenden Gewerkschaften in Tropisch-Afrika," in *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen. Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung. 16. Linzer Konferenz 1980*, ed. Helmut Konrad (Wien: Europaverlag, 1982), 138–147; Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's 'Agitators'. Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939* (London: Hurst, 2008).

20 D. Bing, "Lenin and Sneevliet: The origins of the theory of colonial revolutions in the Dutch East Indies," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 153–177.

communists was in its essence anti-imperial and anti-colonial, calling for the national independence of the colonies and fully backing the struggle against capitalist and colonial exploitation.[21] In the USA, the anticolonial and antiracial sentiments of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern were embraced by black radical activists such as Cyril Briggs, Otto Huiswoud and Richard B. Moore, who joined the Communist Party, and was articulated by radical black organisations such as the African Blood Brotherhood and the American Negro Labor Congress.[22] Most importantly, the rationale of communist doctrines positioned US black radicals-cum-communists in the vanguard of anticolonial and anti-imperial agitation and propaganda in the Black Atlantic. However, the ultra-left turn and the introduction of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine of the Comintern and the RILU in 1928 terminated any existing cooperation with black radical nationalists. Instead, radical international proletarian solidarity demanded the cooperation between the black and white working class and the new doctrine called for a new approach for the radicalisation of workers throughout the Black Atlantic. This was materialised in the establishment of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U or ITUCNW-RILU in July 1928; its key propagator being the African American communist trade union organiser James W. Ford (1893–1957).[23] Best known for being the mastermind for the communist push into the Atlantic world, his activities propelled the IPAC-TW to reframe its work among colonial seamen and to put the "coloured" or black seamen on its agenda.

2.1 *The Red Push into the Black Atlantic*

James W. Ford joined the CPUSA in 1926 and became an industrial organiser in the Southside of Chicago. Thereafter, he rapidly rose in the party hierarchy, although his chief engagement was in the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), the US section of the RILU. One year later, he was elected to the District

21 Fredrik Petersson, "The Labour and Socialist International and 'the Colonial Problem': Mobilisation by Necessity or Force, 1925–1928," in *The Internationalisation of the Labour Question: Ideological Antagonism, Workers' Movements and the ILO since 1919*, eds. Stefano Bellucci and Holger Weiss (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 119–144.

22 See further Minkah Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International: The African Blood Brotherhood, Asian Radicals, and Race, 1919–1922", *The Journal of African American History* 96, no. 2 (2011): 151–178; Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919–1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

23 Holger Weiss, "Framing Black Communist Labour Union Activism in the Atlantic World: James W. Ford and the Establishment of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 1928–1931," *International Review of Social History* 64, no. 2 (2019): 249–278.

Party Committee and Industrial Committee of the Trade Union Committee of Chicago. Having experience of trade union work, he was nominated as US delegate to the Fourth World Congress of the RILU, and arrived in Moscow in March 1928. At the RILU Congress, he was selected to its Executive Committee. Ford stayed in Russia for the next nine months and attended the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, held from July to September 1928.[24]

Ford's sojourn in Moscow opened a new chapter in his own life as well as in communist engagement with black workers throughout the Atlantic world. The engagement of the RILU with the Black Atlantic had hitherto oscillated between non-existence (Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean) and, at most, a lukewarm attitude (USA and South Africa). For the RILU, its Fourth World Congress marked the beginning of a new era in the approach towards the Black Atlantic. This was mainly due to the intervention of Ford at the congress. Ford highlighted the need for revolutionary work in Africa and criticised the RILU and its sections for underestimating, if not totally neglecting, work among the black workers in the Atlantic world. However, his main attack was on white chauvinism that existed among the working class. He charged the RILU to change its policy towards the so-called 'Negro Question': The suppression of the black population in the USA and South Africa and their struggle for political rights and self-determination.[25] Ford repeated his criticism at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in August 1928 where he attacked the Comintern and the metropolitan communist parties for neglecting the plight of the oppressed masses in the Black Atlantic. Even worse, Ford claimed that neither the Comintern leadership nor the metropolitan parties had fully understood the global importance of activating the oppressed masses throughout the Black Atlantic.[26]

Ford's criticism at the RILU World Congress started a process that culminated in the foundation of a new radical organisation for black workers a few months later. Concurrent with the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, the Executive Committee of the RILU summoned for a separate meeting in July 1928, and decided to establish the International Trade Union Committee

24 James Ford, Life and activities, dated 20.4.1932, RGASPI 495/261/6747 [hereafter Ford, Life and activities (1932)].

25 "Antrag zur Organisierung der Neger", in *Protokoll über den 4. Kongress der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale abgehalten in Moskau vom 17. März bis 3. April 1928* (Moscow: Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale, 1928), 479; James W. Ford, Negro Work in America, 11.5.1928, 495/155/59, 1–14, RGASPI.

26 Extract from Ford's speech at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, published in *Inprecor* 8, no. 44 (3 August 1928): 772–773.

of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U. or ITUCNW-RILU[27]. The objective of the ITUCNW-RILU was to reach out and agitate among the black workers throughout the Black Atlantic so that they would join the labour unions. The goal was either to open the unions for black workers or, if this was not possible due to racial discrimination and barriers within the unions, to establish independent black ('Negro') trade unions. Equally important was the establishment of a global network, i.e., "the work of setting up connections with the Negro workers of the whole world and the unification of the wide masses of Negro workers on the basis of class struggle."[28]

Ford had hitherto concentrated on trade union work Chicago and had no reference to maritime transport workers. Consequently, he had not participated at the Fifth Conference of Revolutionary Transport Workers in April 1928. However, his ambition to embrace all black toilers in the radar of the ITUCNW-RILU made him aware of the plight of the black seamen. The trigger was a disaster at sea when the British passenger liner SS *Vestris* sank about 200 miles off the coast of Virginia on 12 November 1928, resulting in the loss of 111 people. The accident was due to a fatal neglect of security on board and many of the drowned were black mariners. The disaster made headlines on both sides of the Atlantic although it probably was Ford's article in the *International Press Correspondence* in January 1929 that caught the attention of the leading comrades at the Comintern and RILU headquarters.[29]

One who definitively had noted Ford's activities in Moscow was IPAC-TW Secretary Achkanov who called him for a meeting together with representatives of the RILU and Japanese seamen at his bureau on 14 December 1928. Two topics were on the agenda, namely the organisation of Japanese and black

27 The abbreviation ITUCNW-RILU is used as to distinguish this organisation with two other ones, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers established at the July 1930 conference in Hamburg and the so-called 'Negro Bureau' of the RILU (RILU Negro Bureau), the latter organisation being the successor of the ITUCNW-RILU. See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*.

28 Resolution of the Executive Bureau of the RILU on the Organisation of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 31.7.1928, 534/3/359, 1–6, RGASPI; On the RILU International Bureau of Negro Workers, copy, no date [handwritten add: 1928], 495/155/53, 1, RGASPI. See further Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 151; Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919–1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013), 42 – 46; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 130–133.

29 [James] Ford, "The "Vestris" Disaster and Coloured Seamen," *Inprecor* 9, no. 4 (18.1.1929): 63–64.

("Negro") seamen.[30] While Josephine Fowler has scrutinised the former topic, the latter one has hitherto not been analysed in academic texts.

The *Vestris* disaster together with the December 14-meeting were cataclysmic for the IPAC-TW. The 'coloured' or black seamen had hitherto played a marginal if any role in the strategic deliberations in Moscow and neither had the Port Bureaus and Interclubs paid any attention on them. Ford and the ITUCNW-RILU started a campaign after *Vestris* disaster to attract the attention of the exploitations of black seamen.[31] It is likely that Achkanov had conceived the campaign although certainly not initiated it. On the other hand, Achkanov noted in his report to the RILU Executive Bureau in early January 1929:

> [T]he question of the organisation of the coloured seamen, especially in view of the unceasing efforts of the shipowners to gradually substitute them, as the lower paid and unorganised, for the white crews on the ships of all countries, which circumstances drew the attention of the Fifth Conference of Revolutionary Transport Workers.[32]

While this summarised Dumay's and Hardy's criticism at the 1928 Conference, the beginning of work among black seamen was set in the aftermath of the *Vestris* disaster when the New York Interclub started a campaign for organising black seamen. The IPAC-TW itself was prepared to take a leading role, Achkanov assured, and noted that it was planning to call for a conference of colonial seamen to discuss the creation of organisation amongst them.[33]

It is likely that the idea of summoning a conference for colonial seamen had been raised at the meeting on December 14; perhaps it even was the brainchild of James W. Ford. The task of the ITUCNW-RILU had been to call for a conference of black workers, and it is not farfetched to argue that the planned conference for colonial seamen was to be organised in tandem with the ITUCNW-RILU conference. The planned conference, at least, was on top of the agenda when Ford embarked on a tour to Western Europe in January 1929. Travelling via Cologne, Brussels, Paris, Berlin and Hamburg, he had discussions with leading party members in Belgium, France and Germany about their work among black residents as well as their links to the African and Caribbean colonies.

30 Fowler, "From East to West," 110–111.

31 James W. Ford, "Report on the Work of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U.," *The Negro Worker*, Special Number (1st November 1930): 7.

32 Achkanov, Report on activities 1928, 534/5/207, 12, RGASPI.

33 Achkanov, Report on activities 1928, 534/5/207, 12, RGASPI.

Back in Moscow in mid-February 1929, Ford sent a detailed report about his trip to the ECCI.[34] He also sent a detailed report to the Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern,[35] including a detailed list of recommendations for its future work. On top of the list was his intention to send an official letter to the French and German Parties outlining the special tasks of both the Negro Bureau and the two parties. Second, a special letter was to be sent to the British Party, highlighting their task in concentrating on the work among the coloured seamen, on work in Africa and the other colonies as well as to work among the black population in England.[36]

Ford's specific attention on the black seamen raises several questions. First, work among maritime transport workers, organised as well as unorganised ones such as the black mariners, was the task of the IPAC-TW, not of the ITUCNW-RILU. Was Ford breaking new grounds for his organisation, was he fishing in another RILU-unit's water or was he acting on mandate of the IPAC-TW? Second, who was to organise the daily work among black mariners if not the Port Bureaus and Interclubs rather than the ITUCNW-RILU as the latter unit was nothing else but an office in the RILU-building in Moscow? Third, were black seamen to be organised within existing unions or in new (red?) unions to be formed on a colour-basis?

A hint about Ford's agenda regarding work among black seamen is found in his discussions in Hamburg. After his meeting in Berlin in late January 1929, Ford travelled to Hamburg where made a speech at the Interclub's 'Lenin-Liebknecht Celebration' and had a meeting with key communists in Hamburg, including the Secretary of the KPD-Hamburg Ernst Grube[37], Albert Walter

34 James W. Ford, Report on trip in interest of the work of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU and the Negro Bureau of the Comintern, and the Meeting of Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism, copy, no date [probably written after 14.2.1929], 495/155/70, 62–68, RGASPI, copies also in 534/3/450, 53–59, RGASPI, and 495/155/78, 34–49, RGASPI.

35 The Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat was headed by British Communist Robin Page Arnott and had been established in the aftermath of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern. Its task was to instruct the European communist parties about their work in the African and Caribbean colonies. See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 123–124, and Petersson, "The 'Colonial Conference'," 87–92.

36 (Ford), Recommendations to Negro Bureau, copy, no date [reference in the document to Ford's report, i.e., the document was written in February 1929], 495/155/70, 61, RGASPI. Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 146, 150. The letter to the CPGB is also discussed in Sherwood, "The Comintern," 140.

37 Ernst Grube (1890–1945) was 'Polleiter' (Politischer Leiter) of the KPD Wasserkante in Hamburg from 1928 to 1930, see further "Ernst Grube," in Hermann Weber/Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 326.

and a certain Comrade "Deadman"[38]. The German comrades presented Ford a detailed overview of the working conditions in the Hamburg harbour and the potentials for work among foreign seamen. Currently, they stated, work among Chinese and Indian maritime transport workers was usually easy as they had their own sub-groups and restaurants where the communists could reach them and distribute propaganda leaflets. African seamen were more difficult to reach as they were not organised and had no special designated meeting places or clubs. On the other hand, Hamburg was one of gateways to the Atlantic world and Walter's global courier system could easily be expanded to African ports. Not only that, Grube and Walter also suggested that they could work out some concrete plans for smuggling Africans out of the continent. Last, but not least, Ford considered it advisable to have a "Negro comrade" assigned for work at the Hamburg Port Bureau.[39]

2.2 *Hamburg as the Centre for Colonial Work*

Achkanov was certainly aware of Ford's report as its copies circulated in the Comintern and RILU headquarters. However, what Ford might not have been aware of is the existence of a memorandum on his meeting in Hamburg. Put together, the December 14-meeting as well as the memorandum of the Hamburg meeting shed some light on the revision and readjustment of IPAC-TW engagement in Western Europe.

The revision projected a total reorganisation of work among colonial and 'coloured' seamen. In late January 1929, the IPAC-TW headquarter sent an urgent message to Walter, informing him about the planned new strategy. Work among 'coloured' seamen was to become the main focal area of work; an official statement was planned to be made at the next plenary meeting of the IPAC-TW Bureau. Walter was ordered to send in a statistical report on the numbers of colonial and "coloured" seamen visiting Hamburg. Also, the IPAC-TW headquarters asked for Walter's opinion on the feasibility to establish a special 'corner' or section for the 'coloured' and colonial seamen at the Interclub. Likewise, Walter was urged to contact the Indian Seamen's Union in London for material to be displayed at the Interclub.[40]

38 In fact, "Deadman" was the communist member of the Hamburg parliament Friedrich Dettmann (1897–1970), as noted in Walter's minutes of the meeting, see Sitzungsbericht, no date [stamped 12.2.1929], 534/5/210, 28, RGASPI. Dettmann was, among others, editor in chief of the communist semiweekly newspaper *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, see further "Friedrich Dettmann," in Hermann Weber/Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 185.

39 Ford, Report on trip [ca February 1929], 495/155/70, 65, RGASPI.

40 NN to Walter, Russian original letter dated 30.1.1929, German version undated, 534/5/210, 18–19, RGASPI.

A few weeks later, the IPACT-TW headquarters received Walter's memorandum on his meeting with Ford. The main issue on the agenda, Walter informed, was the current state of affairs with regards to work among 'coloured' and colonial seamen. So far none or not much agitation, was the answer, although Walter presented a detailed description of places and spots colonial seamen visited during leisure time spent ashore. While there existed several bars and restaurants frequented by Chinese and Indians, no such localities existed for black seamen. Neither had Grube or Walter any idea about the number of the resident black/African population in Hamburg but they promised to ask the communist student association to make an inquiry about this matter. Most importantly, however, was Grube's and Walter's critical remark that Hamburg was not an ideal place for work among 'coloured' seamen as only a few steamers with black crew members called at the port. Rather, the noted, work should be concentrated to Antwerp as both the Belgian Lloyd's steamers to the Congo and most of the French steamers calling at the port were manned with black seamen. On the other hand, the drawback with Antwerp was that agitation among 'coloured' seamen had hitherto been almost nil. Interestingly, the critical deliberations on the prospects for work in Antwerp and Hamburg were missing from Ford's report.[41]

Nevertheless, Walter assured that it was not impossible to start work among 'coloured' seamen in Hamburg. What he needed were addresses of black seamen in other ports; after receiving them, he could organise communications with Africa and the Caribbean. His first dispatch, he informed, was to include the forthcoming 'Action Programme' of the 'RILU Negro Bureau'.[42]

The last item on the agenda was the forthcoming 'Negro Conference', the organisation of which had been Ford's main objective. Interestingly, and what hitherto has not been recognised in academic research, Ford originally planned to summon the conference to Hamburg [instead of London, as previous research has claimed]! According to Walter's memorandum, Grube had assured Ford that the local party leadership would take care of the practical arrangements for the conference.[43]

41 Sitzungsbericht, no date [stamped 12.2.1929], 534/5/210, 28, RGASPI.

42 Sitzungsbericht, no date [stamped 12.2.1929], 534/5/210, 28, RGASPI. The brochure Walter referred to was the *Trade Union Programme of Action for Negro Workers*, issued by the 'International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU' but published by the 'International Propaganda and Actional [sic!] Committee of Transport Workers'.

43 Sitzungsbericht, no date [stamped 12.2.1929], 534/5/210, 29, RGASPI. On the plans for organising the 'Negro Conference', see Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*.

Walter's memorandum set the stage for the next phase of the reorganisation process. The IPAC-TW headquarters informed Walter that Ford still regarded Hamburg to be the best place for work among 'coloured' seamen and had pushed for an immediate start of operations. Therefore, Walter was relieved from all other duties apart from his engagement with the Interclub as to enable him to concentrate on 'international' work among seamen and harbour workers. His prime task was to develop the outreach to 'coloured' seamen.[44]

Walter's investigation on conditions for working among 'coloured' seamen in Hamburg seemingly confirmed Ford's positive vision of Hamburg. Black seamen predominated the crew on the British shipping company Elder Dempster, of which on average four steamers arrived each month with about 55 black mariners. In addition, some French liners employed black stokers. Altogether, Walter calculated that perhaps 100 to 120 black seamen would monthly visit the Interclub. However, black seamen constituted only a small proportion of all colonial seamen visiting Hamburg each month. Indian seamen, predominantly employed on British steamers, counted 600 to 800; Chinese seamen, mainly on Dutch and German vessels, 250 to 300; as well as about 500 Brazilian seamen. In total, some 1,200 to 1,500 colonial seamen visited Hamburg each month, Walter underscored, although and agitation and propaganda work among them had hitherto been neglected.[45]

2.3 *Readjustment in Practice: Closing Activities in Bordeaux and Rotterdam*

Ford's intervention had paid off: The organisation of black workers was given top priority by the RILU. Unfortunately, little is known about the discussions at the RILU headquarters in winter 1928/1929. Their outcome, however, deeply affected the organisational setup of the IPAC-TW. The core issue, it seems, concerned the funding the international apparatus of the IPAC-TW, and this turned out to be a major challenge. The economic resources of the headquarters were limited and most external units relied heavily on monthly instalments from Moscow.

The adjustment to the new strategy gave rise to drastic revisions in the transfer of funds from Moscow. Already in September 1928, the IPAC-TW headquarters had informed Dumay about cutting the funding for the Latin Secretariat. The reduced budget deeply affected its operations. Work among Italian seamen in Marseille had to be scaled down, the publication of the

44 NN [Achkanov?] to "Werter Genosse" [probably Walter], 26.2.1929, 534/5/210, 26–27, RGASPI.

45 [Walter?] an das Sekretariat des IPAKT, Hamburg 25.2.1929, 534/5/210, 31, RGASPI.

Le Travailleur International des Transport had to be suspended, and work in Dieppe, Le Havre and Rouen had to be terminated.[46] Similar information about drastic reductions reached the comrades in Rotterdam in February 1929.[47]

Worse was to come. In spring 1929, the IPAC-TW headquarters informed all affiliated units about its constrained economic situation. Funds were running dry and could barely cover the expenses for campaigns and publications, headquarters declared. Therefore, the IPAC-TW secretariat instructed all sections and revolutionary opposition groups to generate their own funding by collecting membership dues "to be paid by each and every revolutionary transport worker."[48] As part of the budgetary adjustments, the Port Bureaus in Bordeaux, Copenhagen and Rotterdam were to be closed by April 1929, headquarters informed Walter:

> [T]hings have changed to the detriment of our general position and we are now compelled to suspend the publications in German, Spanish and Arabic and also to liquidate the Port Bureaus [...] Of course you will understand that only exceedingly difficult circumstances could have forced us to take such a step.[49]

Jensen in Copenhagen, in turn, received a longer explanation: "The Rotterdam Club, which as you know is not only a very significant club in itself, but is exceedingly important in view of the 5th Conference decision on organising a Unity Committee of Dockers and Seamen of the North Sea, will have to be completely closed down."[50] Dumay, too, received a similar notification at the end of March 1929: The Latin Secretariat was to concentrate its operations to the Marseille Port Bureau and Interclub, to publish *Le Cri des Marins*, and to focus on strengthening the Federation Unitaire des Marins.[51]

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46 Revised budget for the Latin Section, [handwritten add: 13.IX.28], 534/5/205, 11, RGASPI.

47 NN to "Dear Comrade," Rotterdam 11.2.1929, 534/5/207, 56, RGASPI, containing a complaint about the lowered budget.

48 IPAC-TW Bureau to all TU Organisations and Groups Affiliated to the TWIP&AC, no date [ca March/April 1929], 534/5/207, 142–143, RGASPI. Similar directives were distributed in French, German, and Spanish.

49 NN to "Dear Friend," no date [ca. March 1928], 534/5/207, 128, RGASPI. The recipient of the letter was most likely Albert Walter as reference is made in the letter that the recipient was to contact "our friend in Berlin." A similar letter in German is filed in 534/5/207, 126, RGASPI.

50 [Achkanov?] to Jensen, no date [April 1929], 534/5/211, 22, RGASPI.

51 NN to Dumay, no date [Russian original text dated 31.3.1929], 534/5/207, 130, RGASPI.

Moscow's order created an outcry, the Dutch Party protested vehemently.[52] All in vain, the three Port Bureaus were liquidated. (On the intricate process of closing the Copenhagen Port Bureau and Interclub, see Chapter 3.2.2.) More successful was the intervention to rescue operations in the newly opened Interclub in Bremen as the comrades in Hamburg assured that they had enough funds at their disposal to support the activities in Bremen.[53] Moreover, the Esbjerg Interclub managed to survive, as it was not depending on external funding.

Apart from Marseille, the only European unit unaffected by Moscow's readjustment process was the Hamburg Port Bureau. Achkanov notified Walter about the impending cuts and liquidations of the Port Bureaus. The Hamburg Interclub was the only exception, and Achkanov ordered Walter to muster all efforts to support work among American, British and French seamen. This was of utmost importance, Achkanov highlighted, as the organisation of revolutionary trade union organisations made good progress in France, where the Federation Unitaire des Marins already counted some 4,000 members, and in the USA, where the Marine Workers Progressive League was to be transformed into a red union in near future. The only disappointment was Britain where the Minority Movement still rejected the plans for a red seamen's union.[54] However, additional funding was not to be expected and the RILU Berlin Bureau declined Walter's application for extra funding to cover for the total renovation and extension of the premises at Rothesoodstrasse.[55]

2.4 *"Work among Black and Colonial Seamen is Making Steady Progress"*

Work among black seamen started at the Hamburg Interclub in April 1929. Activities were at first restricted by the ongoing total renovation of the building at Rothesoodstrasse.[56] Then, with the opening of the new and extended premises in June, an increased number of 'coloured' seamen started to visit

52 See letter from Communist Party Holland to the RILU, 5.4.1929, 534/5/207, 135, RGASPI.

53 NN "an das IPAK der Transportarbeiter," Betrifft Seemannsklub Bremen, 11.3.1929, 534/5/207, 113, RGASPI; Note (in German), NN to NN, no date, 534/5/207, 152, RGASPI. The author of the letter was a functionary at the Hamburg Interclub, the recipient most likely the RILU Berlin Bureau.

54 Achkanov to "Lieber Freund" [Walter], no date [Russian version dated 21.3.1929], 534/5/210, 41, RGASPI.

55 NN [probably Max Ziese] to "Lieber Freund," no date, 534/5/207, 187, RGASPI. It is likely that this is an internal communication from Berlin to Hamburg as the author asks the recipient to inform Walter about the decision. Similar information in NN to "Lieber Freund," 26.8.1929, 534/5/207, 191, RGASPI.

56 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht April 1929, 534/5/210, 51, RGASPI.

the Interclub.[57] Initially, the IPAC-TW suggested that a special corner for the 'coloured' seamen to be designated at the club but Walter declined due to lack of space. Instead, he proposed to establish such a corner in the new premises of the club.[58] A few months later, Achkanov reminded Walter about the importance of such a corner.[59] This time, the functionaries of the Interclub questioned the idea of confining black and colonial seamen to a special corner or section. In their mind, one should not create artificial barriers, as this would imply that the Interclub was segregating white and non-white mariners. All comrades here, they underlined, were against the plan, and even the 'coloured' seamen preferred to sit with their white mates instead of occupying a corner by themselves.[60] The plan for the special corner was for the time being shelved – only to be reintroduced by Ford when he started his work in Hamburg in late 1930, see Part Three.

The immediate impact of communist agitation and propaganda among black seamen is difficult to assess. Visiting the Interclub and spending an evening did not result in them joining the revolutionary trade union opposition. Perhaps they did so when returning home but little if any information about this reached Hamburg. It is even likely that this was not the case in 1929; if they resided in the United Kingdom or were British colonial subjects, they would still face the stiff racist and discriminatory rules of membership in the British maritime unions. Neither was the seamen's section of the Minority Movement a trade union per se. Walter had to admit that work among black seamen was slow to start – the Interclub lacked comrades who were suitable for the job and, consequently, only a few of them visited the Interclub and its outreach to the black Atlantic was almost nil.[61]

However, far better conditions prevailed for work among Chinese seamen in Hamburg. At first, the Interclub functionaries were only capable to approach them when they visited a British or Dutch vessel.[62] The arrival of a Chinese comrade in October 1929 set the stage for special work among Chinese mariners.[63] The Chinese comrade in Hamburg was Liao Chenghzi who worked as a special functionary at the Interclub. His main task was to produce communist leaflets in Chinese and to develop an underground communication network

57 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1929, 534/5/210, 65, RGASPI.
58 [Walter?] "an das Sekretariat des IPAKT," Hamburg 25.2.1929, 534/5/210, 31, RGASPI.
59 NN [Achkanov?] to "Lieber Freund" [probably Walter], no date [ca May 1929], 534/5/210, 64, RGASPI.
60 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1929, 534/5/210, 65, RGASPI.
61 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Juni 1930, 534/5/216, 39, RGASPI.
62 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht August 1929, 534/5/210, 83, RGASPI.
63 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Oktober 1929, 534/5/210, 98, RGASPI.

TABLE 7 Agitation among Chinese mariners in Hamburg during spring 1930

Vessel	Flag	Chinese crew (stokers)	Meetings	How many came
March 1930				
ss Telean	NL	30	1	6
ss Ficimius	UK	26	1	5
ss Peisander	NL	27		
ss Samarinda	NL	31		
ss Maaskerk	NL	30		
ss Eurymedon	UK	20		
ss Drechtland	NL	28		
ss Ouderkerk	NL	27	2	5+3
ss Blitar	NL	12		
April 1930				
ss Poelean Bras	NL	27		
ss Bendaran	UK	28		
ss Oldenburg	German	28		
ss Cherry Beach	UK	27	2	6+5
ss Havenstein	German	25		
"Oel-dampfer" [tanker]	UK	26	2	[not stated]
ss Gripselain	NL	27		
ss Peisander	NL	25		
ss Niaas	NL	28		
ss Rifronten	NL	27		
ss Ouderkerk	NL	27	1	3

SOURCE: BERICHT ÜBER DIE ARBEIT UNTER DEN CHINESISCHEN SEELEUTEN, 1–31.3.1930 & 3–28.4.1930, 534/5/216, 36–37, RGASPI

between China and various European ports.[64] His main tool was the Chinese ship magazine, the 'Chinese Seamen', which he edited and had published

64 Annual Report of the Hamburg Interclub for 1930, 534/5/216, 77–81, RGASPI. On Liao Chenghzi, see Gregor Benton, *Chinese Migrants and Internationalism. Forgotten histories 1917–1945* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 55.

several issues already by the end of the year.[65] The Interclub, probably through Liao Chenghzi, engaged a Chinese mariner in early 1930, and the two agitators commenced in laying the foundations of the extra-territorial network of the Chinese Seamen's Union in Europe.[66] The two mainly engaged with Chinese crews on board British and Dutch vessels, see Table 7.

Liao Chengzhi systematically distributed Chinese papers and literature among Chinese mariners, including 'The Red Flag', 'The Worker' and other pamphlets of the red All China Workers Federation that were sent directly to him three times a month. The two agitators were in most cases only capable of approaching the Chinese crews on board the steamers, only a few of them attended the seven meeting they arranged at the Interclub in March and April 1930. However, it seems as if Liao Chenghzi had managed to establish a sea cell on board the SS *Ouderkerk*. Sometimes, he distributed papers to crew members on land as was the case with the SS *Tirpitz* of the Hamburg America Line (HAPAG). Another case was the British tanker whose 27 Chinese stokers came ashore and stayed in a hotel where Liao Chenghzi was capable to interact with them. A special case was the Japanese steamer *Atlas Maru* who listed a crew of 60 members (it is unclear in Liao's report how many of them were Chinese); Liao managed to arrange four meetings for the crew. In total, five (probably Chinese) stokers and one (probably Chinese) cook attended the meetings, and Liao euphorically noted that he had succeeded in organising a ship committee. Also, he enlisted two young Chinese workers who were willing to help him in agitation in the lodgements of the "Seamen's Quarter" at Schmuckstrasse in the S:t Pauli area, the site of Hamburg's Chinatown.[67]

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65 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht November 1929, 534/5/210, 101, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht für 1929, 534/5/210, 107, RGASPI.

66 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Januar 1930, 534/5/216, 11, RGASPI. A similar network was already in the making in South East Asia where Chinese communists infiltrated and dominated seamen's associations and unions in, e.g., Malaysia and Singapore, whose membership predominantly constituted of Chinese emigrants and diaspora groups. See further Anna Belogurova, "The Chinese International of Nationalities: The Chinese Communist Party, the Comintern, and the foundation of the Malayan National Communist Party, 1923–1939," *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 3 (2014): 447–470; Anna Belogurova, *The Nanyang Revolution: The Comintern and Chinese Networks in Southeast Asia, 1890–1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

67 Bericht über die Arbeit unter den chinesischen Seeleuten, 1–31.3.1930 & 3–28.4.1930, 534/5/216, 36–37, RGASPI. On Hamburg's Chinatown, see Lars Amenda, *Fremde, Hafen, Stadt: Chinesische Migration und ihre Wahrnehmung in Hamburg 1897–1972* (München: Dölling und Galitz, 2006), and Lars Amenda, "Metropole, Migration, Imagination: Chinesenviertel und chinesische Gastronomie in Westeuropa 1900–1970," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/ Studies in Contemporary History* 4 (2007): 287–310; also Susann Witt-Stahl, Das vergessene

Chinatown: Die Schmuckstrasse auf St. Pauli (6.4.2020), https://www.shz.de/regionales/hamburg/das-vergessene-chinatown-die-schmuckstrasse-auf-st-pauli-id27944002.html (checked 29.4.2020). See further Lars Amenda, "Between Southern China and the North Sea: Maritime Labour and Chinese Migration in Continental Europe, 1890–1950," in *Asian Migrants in Europe: Transcultural Connections*, eds. Sylvia Hahn and Stan Nadel (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2014), 59–80.

CHAPTER 5

Class-Against-Class and the Red Trade Union Opposition

One of the topics raised at the Fifth Conference of the IPC-TW in 1928 was the need to organise a World Congress of Transport Workers. The delegates supported the plan but its implementation had to wait for the realisation of another idea, namely the establishment of a new special designed radical umbrella organisation, namely an International for (revolutionary) Transport Workers. Delegates representing English, French, Irish, and Soviet transport workers' unions had raised the idea at a meeting held in Moscow in September 1927.[1] The proposal was discussed at the Fifth Conference but was not publicised through an official declaration, most probably because the Moscow headquarters had not made any preparations or had not managed to draft a resolution on the topic. In addition, the transition to and implementation of the 'United front from below'-tactic, not least the directive to consolidate the revolutionary trade union opposition groups, dominated the agenda for the next years to come. Two positions of how to organise work crystalised, one putting the revolutionary nuclei in the forefront while the other one focussed on either organising the opposition within the existing unions or establishing new red unions.

1 Walter's Position: "You Have to Start from the Bottom"

The organisation of revolutionary nuclei, namely sea and ship cells, had been the bravura of Albert Walter and the Hamburg Interclub. He and his associates had put all their energy in achieving this task and had been rather successful in doing so. The strategy had resulted in the establishment of a strong communist sea cell, the Seezelle Hamburg, that dominated the revolutionary fraction of the Hamburg section of the German Transport Workers' Federation. Communist agitation and propaganda activities expanded to other German ports in 1928,

1 "Tätigkeitsbericht des IPAK," in *Die 5. Internationale Konferenz der Revolutionären Transportarbeiter*, 18.

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and sea cells were successively created in Bremen, Bremerhaven, Cuxhaven, Kiel and Lubeck.[2]

Walter had repeatedly criticised the functionaries of the Interclubs and the revolutionary minority groups outside Germany for neglecting or downplaying the importance of forming revolutionary nuclei. In his mind, the "from the bottom" or grassroots level approach was to yield best results, namely engaging with the seamen in person, convincing them about the objectives of the revolutionary opposition, and building up a network of trusted persons. This ought to be top priority for all revolutionary units, he argued. Unless the formation of sea and ship cells was not hastened, there was no point of pushing for a new International, Walter reasoned.[3]

Walter's lukewarm position towards the envisioned new International might reflect his stance on the radicalisation of communist trade union activities in Germany. His attitude differed from the general urge of forming independent red trade unions in Germany, the Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition (RGO; Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition). The beginning was set in 1928 when the opposition within the unions tried to form own strike committees and tried to form a unified block in union elections. The social democratic-controlled unions, in turn, countered these tendencies by dismissing its most militant members. Among others, the seamen's section of the German Transport Workers' Federation silenced the radical opposition by expelling Walter and three other communists from its ranks.[4] However, in contrast to other leaders of communist trade union opposition groups, Walter did not push for the formation of an independent red seamen's union in Germany. Rather, one could argue that his initial tactics relied on working through comrades of the Seezelle Hamburg who were still members of the union. In addition, his "from the bottom"-approach relied heavily on engaging unemployed seamen in the union. This was contested by the union leadership as unemployed or jobless seamen were seldom capable of paying their membership fees and were therefore not considered full, if at all, members of the union. The crux of the matter was the right to vote: Was it limited to fee-paying members as the union leadership declared or had unemployed ones who once had been members the right to vote? Communist tactics of including unemployed/jobless members clashed with the position of excluding them that dominated among the union leadership. For communist agitators such as Walter, the unemployed

2 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1929, 534/5/211, 103, RGASPI.

3 Sitzungsbericht, no date [stamped 12.2.1929], 534/5/210, 28, RGASPI.

4 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Bericht Februar 1928, 534/5/201, 27, RGASPI. The three other expelled members were K. Lesse, F. Dalmar and A. Rath.

constituted a reservoir of potential militant and radical members who had to be captured by the revolutionary opposition.

The focus on forming revolutionary nuclei remained the prime obligation of the Hamburg Interclub in 1929. In September, Wall Street crashed and world shipping slumped by the end of the year, followed by global crisis, depression and rising numbers of unemployed in 1930. The Hamburg waterfront was hard hit. More than 20,000 harbour workers had a job in 1929, one year later only 15,500. German shipping industry plunged and about 12,500 out of 50,000 mariners were unemployed at the end of 1930. Walter's tactic on focusing on work among unemployed seamen paid off – the local revolutionary trade union opposition increased to 714 members of which 250 were members in the party. The Seezelle Hamburg, in turn, listed 630 members.[5]

Walter's tactical considerations might explain the slow pace of forming an independent red union for maritime transport workers in Germany. Interestingly, Walter never raised the issue in his (identified) correspondence with Achkanov and the IPAC-TW headquarters in Moscow. Walter had definitively adopted the vocabulary of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine: The social democratic union leaders were denounced in his letters and reports as 'social fascists'. He certainly adhered to the new strike tactics, i.e., the Strassburg Theses, of forming communist-led strike committees, and called for a 'United front from below'. Nevertheless, no red seamen or maritime transport workers' union had been established by 1930.

2 Organising the Opposition within or outside the Unions?

The singularity of Walter's focus on the top priority of forming revolutionary nuclei stands in contrast to the dominant strategy of either consolidating the revolutionary opposition within the unions or establishing independent red union. The strategy contained two interlinked parts. First, the consolidation of the revolutionary opposition remained the prime target after 1928. Second, the establishment of independent red unions was a necessarily consequence if the 'United front from below'-tactic had failed. Revolutionary opposition groups existed in most, if not all unions, the novelty of the new strategy was to formalise and organise the opposition under communist leadership. The quintessence of the new strategy was the application of so-called confrontation tactic. This implied that the opposition was to attack and denounce the union

5 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Jahresbericht 1930, 534/5/216, 77–82, RGASPI.

leadership and its non-communist functionaries whenever possible as 'traitors of the working class', 'supporters of the bourgeois exploiters', and 'social fascists'.

An idea of the application of the new strategy is found in a rare document on the establishment of revolutionary trade union opposition groups in Sweden. Intra-union conflicts and clashes were blamed on the 'reformist trade union leaders' whose activities had caused a rift in the union. The existing opposition groups, however, were weak and unorganised and therefore in need for a total systematic overhaul if they were to achieve the capacity to organise, release and lead the 'fight of the working class'. The new unit to be established was the 'red union opposition' (Röd facklig opposition, RFO) and to be composed of the opposition groups on the working places and in the existing unions. The RFO was not envisioned to constitute an independent organisation with its own statutes and members, the directives stressed, as this could provoke counter-measures by government authorities and the unions and would lead to the expulsion of RFO-members. Instead, the directives ordered to utilise so-called 'half-legal' methods in their work, namely to organise meetings but camouflage them as study circles, radio associations or 'special committees'. Leaflets and flyers were never to be distributed in public on the workspaces but to be discretely placed on the tables in dining halls and lunchrooms, or put in jackets hanging in the cloakrooms. On the other hand, the RFO should not make a secrecy of its existence, it should sign the leaflets and organise demonstrations and mass meetings and appear as a single, unified group at union meetings.[6]

Nevertheless, the formation of RFO-units in the Scandinavian maritime unions was a slow process. The split of the Communist Party in Sweden shattered the erstwhile strong position of the communists in the seamen's and stokers' unions, and the activities of the Comintern-loyal minority had to start from scratch in late 1929. From spring 1930 onwards, the confrontation tactic applied by the minority-communist-led opposition gained momentum, resulting in the expulsion of two of its leaders, Knut Björk and Bernt Svenson. By the end of the year, the RFO increased its public agitation by publishing its own journal, *Hamn- och Sjöproletären*.[7]

The situation was also complicated in Denmark and Norway. As the communists had a profound influence in the Danish stokers' union, they reorganised

6 Draft text about instructions for organising the red union opposition (Instruktion for RFO:s uppbyggande), no date, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, R/7/F/3, ARAB. The text was probably written in 1929/1930. See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 111–116.

7 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 282–283.

themselves as a RFO as late as 1931. About the same time, the opposition formed a RFO within in the Danish Seamen's Union. Positive conditions for communist agitation also existed in Norway. Artur Samsing had returned to Oslo in early 1929 and immediately started to form an RFO within the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union, the Sjøfolkens Revolusjonære Fagopposition. A few months later, the RFO had established branches in Bergen, Haugesund, Stavanger and Tromsø, one year later in Porsgrunn and Tønsberg. Moreover, Samsing had contacts with 67 ship cells. The union reacted promptly: Samsing was excluded already in mid-1929.[8]

The course of events in the Scandinavian countries exemplifies the process of forming RFO-units within maritime transport workers' trade unions. Their implementation of the 'United front from below'-tactic was an intra-union affair and focused on replacing the union leadership with members of the opposition. In other countries, such a France, Greece and the USA, the confrontation and 'United front from below'-tactic provoked split and division within the unions and resulted in the establishment of independent red or so-called unitary unions.

3 Exit Port Bureau, Enter Interclub

The readjustment and revision of IPAC-TW strategies in 1928/29 also affected the Port Bureaus and Interclubs. The former had hitherto constituted the backbone of the previous IPC-TW to influence the maritime transport workers' unions. The Port Bureau served as operational nodes for local agitation while the Interclub was one of the Port Bureau's arenas of action. All units planned and established before 1928 had been Port Bureaus. All of them complained repeatedly about the lack of space for running a proper Interclub, most of them managed to solve this limitation and were capable of expanding their range of operations. Then, for reasons discussed in Chapter 4.2.3, most of the Port Bureaus were closed in 1928, including those in Bordeaux, Copenhagen and Rotterdam. The only remaining Port Bureaus apart from those in the Soviet ports existed in Hamburg and Marseille.

The closure of the Port Bureaus did not imply the termination of communist waterfront activities. On the contrary, members of the local revolutionary opposition had set up International Seamen's Clubs or Interclubs, sometimes in assistance by the party; the first one being the New York Interclub

8 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 268, 271, 275–276, 282–283.

established in 1928. An Interclub lacked the hidden space of the Port Bureau; it was a public space open for any visitor. Some of them even included a backstage office. All of them had been established without the direct (or indirect) input of the IPAC-TW, none would send monthly or annual activity reports and financial balances to the IPAC-TW Secretariats or headquarters in Moscow. A loose network of internally unconnected nodes in the solar system of the IPAC-TW emerged with the establishment of the New York Interclub. The Interclubs constituted a mere list of places a radical maritime transport worker was invited to visit but whose operations and activities were controlled by its local management (and at times, the local party functionaries), not the IPAC-TW: Bremen, Esbjerg, Marseille, Philadelphia, Sydney …

4 Towards an International of Transport Workers?

The RILU Executive Bureau summoned for a meeting in Moscow in January 1930. On top of its agenda was the transformation of the largest and most effective International Propaganda Committees into outright Internationals. The reason for this step was obvious: Internationals with member sections were believed to be more effective organisations to carry out the Strassburg Theses' directives on establishing independent strike committees than the International Propaganda Committees. Also, the implementation of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine and the 'United front from below'-tactic was believed to be more effective by an International and its sections, the national revolutionary union oppositions, as they were to constitute the counterparts to the International Trade Secretariats and their national member unions.[9]

The RILU Executive Bureau identified the IPAC-TW to be best suited for a gradual transformation into an International. Leif Foss and Albert Walter were instructed to start the preparations by orchestrating an international campaign among the transport workers to push for the establishment of a counter-organisation to the ITF at the meetings of their national unions. The IPAC-TW headquarters was ordered to publish a brochure on the need for an International while Walter was directed to prepare a blueprint for grass-roots agitation and propaganda. The core idea was to "expose" the social democratic trade union leaders as well as the ITF for siding with the employers and the shipping industry, not least for advocating the use of blacklegs.[10]

9 See further Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*.

10 Letter (in German) to "Lieber Freund," 20.1.1930, 534/5/216, 3, RGASPI. The sender was most likely someone at the IPAC-TW headquarters, the recipient probably Albert Walter.

Walter received additional information from Achkanov at the end of January 1930. The idea of establishing a Transport Workers' International was still on the table, and Achkanov briefed Walter that the plan was up for discussion at the forthcoming Fifth World Congress of the RILU in July 1930. However, Achkanov told Walter that he had received a competing proposal by "the Americans, English and Scandinavians" to establish a special organisation for the radical seamen. Achkanov himself was not negative about the idea and asked for Walter's opinion about launching a Seamen's International instead of one for all transport workers.[11] Walter's reply is not known but his activities during the first half of 1930 points to the fact that preparations for the launching of a new organisation were in full swing.

4.1 *Regional Conferences for the River Rhine and the Black Atlantic*

The Hamburg Port Bureau and Interclub evolved as the central node of activities for the IPAC-TW and the RILU in 1930. Work among foreign seamen intensified and had resulted in the establishment of new sea cells in London, New York and Oslo. Communist agitation and propaganda on the Hamburg waterfront was met by stiff countermeasures by the Christian seamen's missions and the local police – the former increased their outreach in the harbour, the latter increased its pressure on the Interclub and arrested 40 seamen when it raided the Interclub on 1 February.[12] The raid evoked an international outcry against "the brutality of the social fascists' bloodhounds" in the communist press.[13] The German shipowners, especially the HAPAG in Hamburg and the Norddeutscher Lloyd in Bremen, tried to counteract communist infiltration on their vessels by calling the right-wing Stahlhelm organisation as well as Nazi groups to form units on board their steamers. The increase of fascist leaning German mariners raised concern among the communists, and Walter noted that 77 out of 187 seamen who had registered to vote in the German Reichstag election of 1930 had supported the Nazis, 48 the SPD and only 27 the KPD.[14]

Meanwhile, Walter managed to organise a conference of the maritime transport workers along River Rhine in Duisburg on 1–2 February 1930. Present were

11 [Achkanov?] to 'Lieber Freund', [Moscow] 27.1.1930, 534/5/214, 49, RGASPI.

12 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht Februar 1930, 534/5/216, 14–15, RGASPI.

13 See "Socialfascisternes Blodhunde i Hamborg angriber International Sømandsklub," *Lanternen* 2:5 (Februar 1930), 1.

14 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht August-September 1930, 534/5/216, 67, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht November 1930, 534/5/216, 70, RGASPI.

delegates from German (Bremen, Emden, Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Cologne, Mannheim and Minden), Dutch (Rotterdam) and Swiss (Basle) ports as well as the Free Town of Danzig. Originally projected by the IPAC-TW to summon already in 1929,[15] its main achievement was an agreement on prospective trans-regional cooperation. Although the immediate practical outcomes of the conference were slim if not nil, the delegates gave their full backing of establishing an Interclub in Duisburg-Ruhrort.[16]

Back in Hamburg, the German transport union rejected the call of the revolutionary opposition for a new International.[17] This came as no surprise for the comrades in Moscow who did not regard the decision of the German union as a setback. On the contrary, communist publications termed the rejection as proof of the 'social fascist' inclinations of the union leadership, and fervently highlighted the need to establish an 'independent', i.e., red Seamen's International.[18] However, other setbacks in Hamburg in late spring and early summer 1930 were more problematic. The Norwegian functionary of the Interclub had been expelled, the Chinese comrade Liao Chenghzi was wanted by the police, and three other Interclub functionaries had been arrested.[19]

Documentation is patchy about when the decision was made in Moscow to organise a conference in Hamburg for launching a Seamen's International. Seemingly, it was made sometimes in February/March 1930 although no written directives or publicised calls have yet been identified in the archives. Whatever the case, Walter received in February a note regarding a completely different upcoming event – the forthcoming 'Negro Trade Union Conference'. The sender of the letter was George Padmore, a Trinidad-born and CPUSA-member who had arrived in Moscow in late 1929. Walter was certainly aware of the plans for arranging a conference for black workers; the topic had been on the agenda when James W. Ford visited Hamburg in January 1929 and Walter had backed the plan to summon the conference in Hamburg (see Chapter 4.2.1). However, no further information had been forthcoming and Walter must have

15 I.P.A.K.T an die Rheinkonferenz der revolutionären Transportarbeiter, no date [ca. 1929], 534/5/207, 198, RGASPI.

16 Konferenz der Rheinschiffer und Hafenarbeiter in Duisburg am 1. Und 2. Februar 1930, einberufen vom IPAKT, no date [February/1929], 534/5/214, 51, RGASPI.

17 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht März 1930, 534/216, 17–18, RGASPI.

18 "Alexander" to "Lieber M," 9.3.1930, 534/4/304, 12, RGASPI. The sender can be identified as RILU General Secretary Alexander Lozovsky, the recipient was most probably M[ax Ziese].

19 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht April 1930, 534/5/216, 21, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht Mai 1930, 534/5/216, 25–26, RGASPI; Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht Juni 1930, 534/5/216, 38–39, RGASPI.

been rather perplexed about Padmore's notification that the conference was to take place in London. Walter replied to Padmore that the Hamburg Port Bureau only had contact to a few Caribbean and Liberian seamen. Nevertheless, Walter assured Padmore that "I have the pleasure to state that everything will be done to assist you" but at the same time reminded him that he needed "trustworthy addresses at the port of calling, so that our men are not forced to search for hours in order to find someone to whom to deliver the material."[20]

The arrangement of the 'Negro Trade Union Conference' turned out to be a protracted affair. The decision to organise the conference in London had been made at 'Negro Trade Union Conference' organised by Ford in congruence with the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism,[21] held in Frankfurt am Main in July 1929. The RILU Secretariat authorised Ford's plan at the end of October 1929;[22] Ford returned to the USA in November 1929 and was replaced by Padmore at the RILU headquarters. This was a strategic move to 'neutralise' the organiser by locating the official headquarters of the organisation in New York and referring to it as the ITUCNW only (i.e., dropping the suffix -RILU). However, due to the rather cryptic response from the British government, i.e. not an outright rejection but neither an acceptance, the organisers changed their plans in May 1930 and decided to move the conference to Hamburg.[23] The Hamburg Port Bureau together with the West European Bureau of the Comintern in Berlin took care of the practical and technical preparations for the conference scheduled to convene in the premises of the Interclub in early July 1930.[24]

The July 1930 Hamburg Conference resulted in the official establishment of the ITUCNW. Euphorically, the published report of the conference claimed that

20 Walter to Padmore, Hamburg 26.2.1930, 534/5/216, 13, RGASPI. Padmore's letter to Walter is yet to be identified in the Comintern Archives.

21 On the League Against Imperialism, see further Fredrik Petersson, *'We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers': Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern*. Lewiston: Queenston Press, 2013.

22 Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr 62 der Sitzung des Sekretariats der RGI vom 21.10.1929, 534/3/450, 87, RGASPI.

23 Minutes of Meeting of the Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU, 29.5.1930, 495/155/63, 96, RGASPI. See further Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 107–110; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 229–239.

24 Internationales Hafenbüro der Seefahrer Hamburg, Monatsbericht August 1930, 534/5/216, 67–69, RGASPI; Protokoll des WEB Nr 77, 11.4.1930, Nr 79, 14.4.1930, Nr 105, 7.7.1930, all filed in RGASPI 499/1/17; *Report of Proceedings and Decisions of the First International Conference of Negro Workers* (Hamburg: International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 1930), 40; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 240–246. The preparations in Germany are not discussed in Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*.

the 17 delegates from the USA, Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa represented 20,000 black workers, 7 countries, 11 different trade unions, 2 national trade union centres, one national political party and 2 non-trade union organisations in the USA, the Caribbean, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly, none of them represented black maritime transport workers.[25]

The most notable outcome of July 1930 Hamburg Conference was the reorganisation of work at the RILU headquarters in Moscow. As the ITUCNW was to be presented as a 'new' organisation, the unit in Moscow was renamed as the 'Negro' Bureau of the RILU (and claimed to have existed since 1928) with George Padmore being in charge of the unit. The (new) RILU Negro Bureau, not the ITUCNW, was to be the "ideological leader of the international work among the Negro masses for stimulating the trade union work"; its geographical outreach was the total Black Atlantic, including the USA and Latin America, and was to be composed of representatives from the USA, South Africa, West Africa and the Caribbean.[26] The objective of the ITUCNW, in turn, was to organise black workers and peasants and to connect them with the RILU and the Peasants' International (Krestintern).[27] The consequence of the reorganisation in Moscow was the formalisation of a hierarchical relationship between the two organisations with the ITUCNW being subordinate to the RILU Negro Bureau. The ITUCNW was to publish its own journal whereas *The Negro Worker* remained the official organ of the RILU 'Negro' Bureau.[28]

4.2 *Moscow, July 1930*

Following established practice, the IPAC-TW organised its own conference in conjunction with the Fifth World Congress of the RILU. Held in July 1930, the Sixth Conference of the Revolutionary Transport Workers (hereafter: The Sixth Conference) was remarkably silent about the plans for the transformation of the IPAC-TW into an International lest the ponderations about launching a specific Seamen's International. Neither did the IPAC-TW publish any records nor proceedings of the conference as it had done in 1928. The silence in Moscow can be interpreted as either a strategic manoeuvre or an indication of the

25 *Report of Proceedings*, 40; Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 110–121; Weiss, *Framing Radical African Atlantic*: 248–268.

26 ECCI, Resolution on Negro work, 30.8.1930, 495/18/810, 75, RGASPI.

27 ECCI, On the Organisation of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 5.9.1930, 495/18/810, 77, RGASPI. See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 286–288. The two resolutions of the ECCI are not discussed in Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*.

28 "Statement to our readers," *The Negro Worker: Special Number on the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U.* (1 November 1930): 1.

uncertainty about the future prospects of the IPAC-TW. Both interpretations seem possible. Typical for the Comintern and the RILU, radical organisations, such as the League Against Imperialism or the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, were portrayed as having emerged as an outcome of a 'mass movement from below' and were described as 'independent'. Any links with Moscow were either blurred or negated. The plan of launching a Transport Workers' or a Seamen's International resembled similar tactical considerations as they were envisioned as the apex or culmination of a world-wide campaign orchestrated by the revolutionary opposition, not the communist fractions. However, what speaks for the uncertainty in Moscow is the existence of two plans for the transformation of the IPAC-TW. While it seems as if the idea of establishing a Seamen's International had gained support and was pushed forward, that of a general Transport Workers' International seemed to have been dropped or at least shelved by the mid-1930.

At least two fundamental issues were discussed at the Sixth Conference, both concerning work among maritime transport workers. The first one reflected the focus of the IPAC-TW on agitation and propaganda among 'coloured' and colonial seamen, the second one redefined the work of the Interclubs and is discussed below in Section 4.3. Both issues were closely tied to achievements of the IPAC-TW since its Fifth Conference in 1928. A positive aspect was the strengthening of its regional units in Latin America and the Far East as well as the establishment of red seamen's unions in France, Greece and the USA. On the negative side were the deploring, if not pathetic, records of the revolutionary trade union opposition in most land-based transport workers' unions. Even worse, the IPAC-TW headquarters had to admit that it lacked reliable and stable connections to most of its secretariats and its sections. Inter-regional cooperation during strikes was weak if non-existing, and demonstrated the incapability of the revolutionary trade union opposition groups to embrace the Strassburg Theses.[29]

The Sixth Conference adopted a resolution which confirmed the 'United front from below'-tactic but added a global twist to them as work among colonial and 'coloured' maritime workers were to constitute a core activity. The IPACT-TW and its sections were compelled to apply an uncompromising stance against discrimination, racism and segregation; the revolutionary opposition was directed to fight for equal pay for equal work and to stand up against white chauvinism. The 1930 Resolution identified the shipping industry as the key

29 Resolution über die Tätigkeit des IPAKT und seiner Sekretariate und über die organisatorischen Aufgaben der revolutionären Transportarbeiter [1930], 534/5/214,137–140, RGASPI.

arena for prospective agitation. 'Coloured' crews on ships under a European flag, the resolution highlighted, received up to 50 percent less in wage than white mariners; on Japanese ships, Korean crews received 20 percent less than Japanese mariners. Therefore, the 1930 Resolution ordered the revolutionary opposition to systematically press for equal pay for equal work when the unions were negotiating tariffs and agreements with the shipping industry.[30]

The 1930 Resolution also addressed some specific tasks of the revolutionary opposition in the maritime transport workers' unions. In Japan, their objective was to fight against the 'social fascist' Japan Seamen's Union as well as the Japanese shipping industry and their 'chauvinist' policies towards Chinese and Korean seamen. In addition, the Japanese revolutionary opposition groups were ordered to assist Korean seamen to set up revolutionary nuclei. The sections in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the USA were instructed to focus on organising 'coloured' seamen and to ensure that 'coloured' seamen were included in the tariffs and agreements and were treated as equals on board the ships.[31]

4.3 *The 1930 Resolution on the Interclubs*

The Sixth Conference was the first one to elaborate specific instructions for the Interclubs. There existed already 19 Interclubs outside Soviet Russia by 1930 (see Map 1), all of them lacking guidelines and general instructions. Consequently, the closure of the Port Bureaus and the opening of new Interclubs in Western Europe, Australia and the USA necessitated a definition of their obligations and tasks. (The eleven Soviet Interclubs were not under the surveillance of the IPAC-TW.)[32]

A first step towards streamlining the operations of the Interclubs was taken in March 1930. With the exception of the Hamburg Interclub, none of them kept any track of their activities and neither did they inform Moscow about their work. As a corrective measure, the IPAC-TW headquarters "categorically insists that each International Club must keep a systematic account of its activities" that "should be sent without fail every month" to Moscow. The "systematic account" entailed a 20-point list of statistical data to be collected, among others (1) Number of boats, sailing under the various flags, entering the

30 Resolution über die Tätigkeit des IPAKT und seiner Sekretariate und über die organisatorischen Aufgaben der revolutionären Transportarbeiter [1930], 534/5/214, 141, RGASPI.

31 Resolution über die Tätigkeit des IPAKT und seiner Sekretariate und über die organisatorischen Aufgaben der revolutionären Transportarbeiter [1930], 534/5/214, 142–143, RGASPI.

32 "Die Internationalen Klubs," in: Verkehrswirtschaft und Lage der Transportarbeiter [1930], 33–36, 534/5/214, 178–181, RGASPI.

MAP 1 Global extension of Interclubs in late 1930

port; (2) Number of seamen visiting the Club, giving figures for each nationality separately; (3) Number of demonstrations, showing number of participants and why organised; and (4) Number of meetings, number attended, subjects of reports, speeches, by seamen, giving information as to nationality and resolutions adopted. In addition, the Interclubs were instructed to forward information on (5) number of vessels visited as well as number of ship's libraries organised (7), number of ship nuclei organised (10), number of members of revolutionary opposition and revolutionary unions in the given port (12), contact with other International Clubs (15), and leaflets, posters, etc issued by the Club (21). Moreover, the Interclubs were ordered to photograph all interesting events "in the mass work of the International Clubs" and forward the photographs to the IPAC-TW headquarters.[33]

It is unclear if any of the Interclubs ever complied with the March 1930 instructions. A few of them did send some data on their activities to Moscow that was analysed in an internal assessment on the Interclubs. If they ever forwarded photographs is not known and I have (so far) found any traces of them in the Comintern Archives (apart from a few unidentified ones depicting activities in Soviet Interclubs). Nevertheless, the statistical data and activity reports by the Interclubs revealed that that most of them were engaged in establishing revolutionary nuclei, although only the Hamburg Interclub as well as the clubs in North America had registered any success in their activities by 1930. A positive sign was also the start of work among black, Chinese and Philippine seamen by the US Interclubs, among Indian and Arab seamen in British ports, and among Chinese seamen by the Hamburg Interclub. A negative aspect were police raid and mob-attacks on the Interclubs and their functionaries in Hamburg, Baltimore, New Orleans, San Francisco, and San Pedro. In the USA, especially, both the police and the white mob often interrupted inter-racial meetings and gatherings of the Interclubs.[34]

The Sixth Conference also discussed a draft for instructions to the Interclubs. Echoing earlier regulations for the Port Bureaus, the instructions contained few concrete directives apart from one paragraph highlighting the central role of the Interclubs as inter- and transnational communication centres. This had not been achieved so far, the instructions noted, and urged the Interclubs to pay utmost attention on this task.[35]

33 Instructions, dated 21.3.1930, 534/5/217, 28, RGASPI.

34 "Die Internationalen Klubs," in: Verkehrswirtschaft und Lage der Transportarbeiter [1930], 33–36, 534/5/214, 180–181, RGASPI.

35 Resolution über die Interclubs, 534/5/214, 126–130, RGASPI.

4.4 *Outlining the 'Basic Principles' for the 'Red Marine Workers' International'*

Among the documents filed in the Comintern Archives is a three-page typewritten text with handwritten corrections, titled 'Basic Principles (Draft Decision)'. In essence, the text is a detailed blueprint for the setup of a 'Red Marine Transport Workers' International'. The text seems to have been drafted in 1930 and outlines the objectives and organisational structures of an organisation for the unification of "seamen and dockers, and likewise the workers employed on the international water ways ~~connected with~~ [corrected: working for] marine transport." In fact, a closer examination of the document reveals that it provided the framework for the (yet to be established) red "Marine Workers' International."[36]

It is likely that the 'Basic Principles'-document is linked to decisions made by the ECCI in July 1930. The Political Commission of the ECCI backed the idea of establishing a Seamen's International and ordered the RILU at its meeting on 3 July to initiate the process and to report on its activities at the next session of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI.[37] Three weeks later, the Political Secretariat approved the plan, ordered the RILU Secretariat to raise the question at the forthcoming conference of revolutionary transport workers (see below), and to draft an outline of work of the new organisation.[38] Most probably, therefore, the 'Basic Principles' was the document the RILU Secretariat drafted after it being ordered to do so by the ECCI.

The first part of the document sketches the relationship between the new International and the RILU. "The Marine Workers' International is affiliate to the R.I.L.U, wholly accepts its Constitution, and submits to all decisions of the R.I.L.U., the international congresses and conferences." This paragraph clearly indicated a hierarchical relationship as the 'Marine Workers' International was to be subordinated to the RILU. Independent red unions and revolutionary minorities were to affiliate with the new International although the latter ones were to remain inside the 'reformist unions'. The executive organ of the new International "is to be situated in London or Hamburg" – indicating that a final decision on the headquarters of the 'Marine Workers' International' was still on the table when the 'Basic Principles' were drafted. Important, however,

36 Basic Principles (Draft decisions), 1, 534/5/219, 81, RGASPI. Hereafter: Basic Principles (Draft Decision), the pagination refers to the page number of the document.

37 §5, Frage der Bildung einer Seeleute-Internationale, Protokoll Nr 70 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des EKKI vom 3. Juli 1930, 495/4/41, RGASPI.

38 §2, Frage der Gründung einer Seeleute-Gewerkschaftsinternationale, Protokoll Nr 69 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI am 23. Juli 1930, 495/3/170, RGASPI.

were its links to Moscow: "In order to coordinate its actions with the R.I.L.U. and for the speedy settlement of all question arising, the Executive Committee of the International is to have representation in Moscow," i.e., a bureau either in connection with the IPAC-TW or the RILU Secretariat.[39]

The launching of the new International was to be a two-stage process. An "Organisational Committee" was to be nominated at the "Second International Conference of Marine Workers", whose task it was to work for the organisation of the International and to call for a world congress where the International was to be constituted "not later than May 1931 in Hamburg."[40] The "Second International Conference" was the conference organised by Albert Walter in Hamburg in October 1930, thus indicating that the 'Basic Principles' were drafted before the event.

According to the 'Basic Principles', the Organisational Committee, i.e., known as the '(Provisional) Executive Committee of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers' after its nomination in October 1930, was to include representatives of the RILU, the IPAC-TW, the USSR, Germany, Britain, France, the USA, Latin America, China and the "India Seamen's Union (London)." The Organisation Committee was to direct the work of the national sections of the (yet to be established) International as well as to "take over the network of International Seamen's Clubs." Consequently, the new International was projected as the new platform for the radical waterfront whereas the IPAC-TW "remains only as a Committee of railwaymen and transport workers."[41]

The headquarters or "Bureau" of the Organisational Committee was to be placed in Hamburg. As understood from the 'Basic Principles', the Bureau was to be operated by the German member of the Committee, i.e., Albert Walter, while "the other members work in their countries as representatives of the Committee along the directions and instructions of the latter." Neither the Bureau nor the Committee were to act independently; following the typical outline of the Comintern-apparatus, the Committee was to have a representative in Moscow.[42]

Apart from preparing the World Congress, the "most urgent task" of the Committee "should be the complete crystallisation [...] of the independent revolutionary seamen's unions of Britain, France, Italy, India," i.e., to compel the formation of red unions in accordance to the RILU directives. Another

39 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 1.
40 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 1, 4.
41 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 2.
42 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 2.

"most urgent task" was the formation of "national centres" for revolutionary minorities within the unions, i.e., the unification of the opposition groups. To achieve this end, the Committee was to commence the "mass publication" of leaflets, pamphlets and bulletins in German, French, English, Spanish, Norwegian, "and other languages."[43]

The World Congress was to be preceded by an international political propaganda campaign orchestrated by the Committee and carried out by the national red unions and opposition groups as well as the Interclubs. The core message of the campaign was 'Leave the ITF': The revolutionary opposition was to press the national unions to vote for affiliating with the new International.[44]

Interclubs and 'coloured' (i.e., black) seamen were earmarked as special targets for the International. Echoing earlier IPC-TW/IPAC-TW visions, the Interclubs were projected as "the centres of mass agitation"; therefore, new Interclubs were to be set up "without fail" in Antwerp, London, Montevideo, Rotterdam, Thessaloniki, Singapore, "and elsewhere." Linking up with earlier memoranda, perhaps even indicating Ford's participation in drafting the 'Basic Principles' (?), work among 'coloured' (black) seamen was to be given top priority. Therefore, the International was urged to "consider it necessary to have special organisers" in the ports of the colonial metropoles to conduct work among 'coloured' (black) seamen.[45]

4.5 *The Road to Hamburg*

At the same time as the comrades gathered Moscow and discussed the activities of the Interclubs in April 1930, a commission assessed the activities of the Hamburg Port Bureau. It is unclear who had instigated the assessment and why it was conducted. Perhaps it was part of the ongoing revision of the IPAC-TW as the commission's report was sent to Moscow. In any case, the report raised some alarming issues. Most critical was the increasing external attacks and restrictions upon the Hamburg Interclub. These had detrimental consequences for the Hamburg Port Bureau and Albert Walters' international communication network. Communist agitation on board German merchant ships was increasingly challenged by the Nazi seamen's organisation. Seamen who were known to be communists were disregarded and not hired by the shipowners. Walter's network was shrinking and he was urged to establish an

43 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 2–3.
44 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 3.
45 Basic Principles (Draft Decision), 3.

'illegal' international communications network that was capable of taking action in case of a crisis.[46]

Equally disturbing was the extensive use of the premises of the Hamburg Interclub by the local party and land-based communist organisations. The assessment report critically remarked that the party did not render any assistance to the Interclub. Neither did the party pay rent when using the Interclub nor did it have any functionary who was capable of working on the waterfront. Third, the Interclub, in turn, was criticised for not having paid any attention on work among harbour workers. Fourth, and in line with the new instructions on discussion in Moscow, the Interclub was to establish an international communications network and link up with all other clubs.[47]

Albert Walter most likely backed the outspoken criticism articulated in the assessment report. He had more than once declared that the premises at Rothesoodstrasse were the domain of the radical mariners, not the party. In fact, the assessment report strengthened his ambition to turn Rothesoodstrasse into the centre of the envisioned Seamen's International. Furthermore, Walter informed Moscow that the international call for attendees to the conference was in progress.[48]

A decision of the ECCI on 23 July 1930 set stage for the final act when it sanctioned the plan for an International for maritime transport workers. The ECCI projected the official launching of the new organisation to take place at the international conference scheduled to commence at the Hamburg Interclub in August 1930.[49] However, in August it was realised that the Maritime Workers' Conference had to be postponed until October; instead, Walter organised two mass rallies in Hamburg in early August to manifest the support the Sixth Conference of the radical transport workers that recently had gathered in Moscow. About 2,800 seamen participated at first rally on 9 August, Walter claimed in his report. The second one on 10 August counted almost 10,000 participants who marched through the streets of Hamburg, boasted Walter. A sizeable number of them mustered afterwards at an international meeting at the

46 Bericht der eingesetzten Untersuchungs-Kommission zur Kontrolle der Arbeit und aller damit zusammenhängenden Aufgaben des Hafenbüros Hamburg, 28.7.1930, 534/5/216, 40–51, RGASPI.

47 Bericht der eingesetzten Untersuchungs-Kommission zur Kontrolle der Arbeit und aller damit zusammenhängenden Aufgaben des Hafenbüros Hamburg, 28.7.1930, 534/5/216, 40–51, RGASPI.

48 Internationales Hafenbüro für Seeleute, Monatsbericht für Mai 1930, 534/5/216, 25–26, RGASPI.

49 Protokoll Nr 89 der Sitzung des Politischen Sekretariats des EKKI am 23.7.1930, 495/3/170, RGASPI.

Interclub. When closing the event, Walter read out in front of some 1,600 participants the official declaration that the 'Fighting International of the Maritime Transport Workers' (Kampfinternationale aller Seetransportarbeiter) was to be launched in Hamburg on 1 October 1930.[50]

50 Internationales Hafenbüro Hamburg, Monatsbericht August-September 1930, 534/5/216, 67–69, RGASPI.

PART 3

The International of Seamen and Harbour Workers

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CHAPTER 6

An International for the Global Radical Waterfront

The 'International Conference of Seamen and Harbour Workers' was scheduled to start on 1 October 1930. As the delegates were expected to arrive at Hamburg a few days earlier, Albert Walter's plan was to organise a mass rally and had hired a spacious hall for the event. However, only the British, Dutch, German and Scandinavian delegations had arrived at the end of September. Other participants were delayed and the start of the conference had to be postponed until 3 October 1930.[1]

Typically for communist conferences, a full list of participants was never published. According to an internal memorandum, 38 delegates from 26 countries attended the conference although few of them had been nominated by their national trade union opposition groups to represent them at the conference.[2] Others, especially those claiming to represent opposition groups in 'semi-colonial' and colonial countries, seems to have been handpicked among mariners residing in Hamburg.[3] A pamphlet published shortly after the conference listed delegates originating from 24 countries and territories, including Algiers, "Arabia," Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, the Soviet Union, Sweden, Uruguay, and the USA. The idea of the pamphlet was propagandistic: Its objective was to tell its reader about the establishment of a new radical global organisation for rallying seamen and dockworkers under its – existing or planned – national sections in all of the aforementioned countries. Most importantly, however, was the denunciation of the ITF, depicting it as the traitor of the working class as well as being a lackey of the shipowners and of the aggressors towards the Soviet Union.[4]

1 Y [Walter,] Sonderbericht zu der internationalen Konferenz der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter am 3. Okt[ober] 1930 in Hamburg, 534/5/219, 22–24, RGASPI.

2 ISH, Half-Year Report October 1930 – April 1931, 534/5/221, 68, RGASPI. According to the report, the delegates arrived from Argentina, Algiers, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Uruguay, the USA and the USSR.

3 Handwritten report about the meeting of 3rd October 1930 (in German), 534/5/219, 21, RGASPI.

4 Declaration to seafarers and harbour workers in German, no date [ca. October 1930], 534/5/219, 12–16, RGASPI. The declaration was published as supplement titled "An alle Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter! To all seamen and harbour workers! Proletarier aus den Häfen und von den Schiffen!," in *Hamburger Volkszeitung,* Beilage zu Nr 233, 7.10.1933.

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The conference started by electing a presidium, consisting of Albert Walter as chair and George Mink as secretary as well as Fred Thompson, a "Negro delegate,"[5] and George Hardy as members.[6] Next, Hardy presented a lengthy report on the impact of the global depression on world economic and political affairs and the need to establish an International for the maritime transport workers. The ITF and the Amsterdam International, i.e., the International Federation of Trade Unions or IFTU, had betrayed the proletariat, Hardy declared, and further criticised them for supporting the 'imperialists' in their onslaught on the working masses in the colonies, not least in China and India. The key objective for the new International was therefore to render full support to the fight for national self-determination and independence of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. After Hardy's one and half hour speech, comrade Ray[7] from the USA took the floor and read out a petition signed by the US American, British, Chinese, French and German delegations, calling for the establishment of an International for maritime transport workers. Storming applause: The petition was unanimously accepted and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers or ISH had officially been launched. The Italian delegate asked for a condemnation of fascism to be included in the resolution text. Acclamations and accepted. Then the Chinese delegate stood up and presented a proposal by the Chinese, French, and Scandinavian delegation for the statutes of the new International. Storming applause: The statutes were accepted.[8] So far, the conference gave the impression of expressing the unanimous and resolute will of the global revolutionary maritime transport workers. No hints about the conference having been prepared in Moscow or articulating a plan outlined by the RILU and the IPAC-TW. Instead, it was presented in public as having been initiated at the national conference of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union held in New York in April 1930.[9] The conference

5 I have not been able to identify the "Negro delegate." It certainly was not James W. Ford as he resided in Moscow in October 1930, and together with George Padmore organised the RILU Negro Bureau.

6 "Til alle Søfolk og Havnearbejdere," *Lanternen* 5, no. 7 (Oktober 1930): 1. Conflicting information consists for the composition of the Presidium; according to a handwritten report, Walter was elected chair, Thompson and one Toussaint from the USA as secretaries while Mink, Hardy, Dumay and one 'Centurion' are instead as members, see Handwritten report about the meeting of 3rd October 1930 (in German), 534/5/219, 21, RGASPI.

7 This was probably Tommy Ray, the organiser of the MWIU in San Diego.

8 Bericht über die internationale Konferenz der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter am 3. Oktober 1930 in Hamburg, no date [ca. October 1930], 534/5/219, 2–5, RGASPI.

9 "Til alle Søfolk og Havnearbejdere," *Lanternen* 5, no. 7 (Oktober 1930): 1.

ended with the adoption of a resolution, summarising the objectives of the new International and appealing to

> all seamen and dockers to unite, to join the revolutionary class unions and minorities for the purpose of struggling to increase wages, the improvement of labour conditions, the shortening of the working day, for equal wages for equal work, for full economic, social and political equality of all transport workers irrespective of colour, creed, nationality or race, against capitalist rationalisation, and fully in a struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.[10]

The communist press hailed the establishment of the ISH as a landmark for the radical maritime transport workers, see Figure 10. The new organisation was heralded as the bulwark against the shipowners, the fascists and the social democratic union leaders;[11] an official declaration on its establishment was published in the *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz* on 14 October.[12] Internally, not all comrades acclaimed to the gloss image of a historic landmark. Leading members of the ISH Executive Committee critically commented the decision to shorten the conference into a one-day event, leaving no room for discussions or debates about the statutes and objectives of the new organisation. Walter, in an internal report to the IPACTW headquarters, replied that it would have been practically impossible to extend the conference, not least, as none of the participants had any financial means at their disposal to pay for their return. Consequently, he had to cover their expenses and the Port Bureau had run out of money at the end of the conference.[13]

10 Resolution adopted by the International Conference of Seamen and Dockers, held at Hamburg, October 3rd, in George Hardy, *A Fighting International of Marine Workers* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, 1930), 30.

11 "An alle Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter! To all seamen and harbour workers! Proletarier aus den Häfen und von den Schiffen!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung,* Beilage zu Nr 233, 7.10.1933; "Til alle Søfolk og Havnearbejdere," *Lanternen* 5, no. 7 (Oktober 1930): 1; "Kampinternational för sjöfolk bildad," *Kalmardemokraten* 8.10.1930.

12 *Inprekorr* 86/14.10.1930, copy checked in Reichsministerium des Inneren. Internationale Hafenbüros und Seemannsklubs, Jan. 1930–Nov. 1933, R1501/20224, BArchB.

13 [Walter,] Sonderbericht zu der internationalen Konferenz der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter am 3. Okt[ober] 1930 in Hamburg, 534/5/219, 22–24, RGASPI.

LANTERNEN

OKTOBER 1930

NR 7 ORGAN FOR SØENS ARBEJDERE 5. ÅRG

TIL ALLE SØFOLK OG HAVNEARBEJDERE

„Søfolkenes og Havnearbejdernes Internationale" i Tilslutning til R. F. I. konstitueret paa nternational Konference i Hamburg den 2. Oktober.

FIGURE 10 The International of Seamen and Harbour Workers has been launched!, first page news published in *Lanternen* 5, no. 7 (October 1930): 1.

1 October 1930: Framing the Fighting International of Marine Workers

Moscow's grand strategy was to present the ISH as a revolutionary but independent organisation. Hamburg, not Moscow, was the seat of the new organisation; its statues were silent about the relationship between the RILU and the ISH. According to the statutes, the ISH Bureau and/or the ISH Executive Committee made all decisions and signed all declarations. In reality, all declarations and decisions had to be in tune with the instructions issued by the RILU Secretariat and had to be approved by the RILU Berlin Bureau. At first, this strategy seemed to have worked. The new unit was for several months an unwritten chapter for government authorities. A lengthy report by a German police informant even claimed that the ISH had been established at an international meeting of harbour workers and seamen held in Altona on 10/11 January 1931![14] A critical evaluation of the situation soon corrected this assumption: The

14 Report 'Internationale Konferenz der R.G.O.' by C.3 and C.4 to Abteilung IA, dated Altona 12.1.1931, Abt. 301 Nr. 4532, LAS.

ISH had already been established in October 1930.[15] In fact, the January 1931 meeting concerned the formation of a German section of the ISH.[16] On the other hand, the local police authorities did not change their position: No international activities had been reported before January 1931, thus they reasoned that the ISH became effective only after the meeting in January.[17]

1.1 *The (Provisional) Statutes of the ISH*

The most important decision of the October 1930 Hamburg Conference was the adoption of provisional statutes for the new organisation. These had been prepared in advance in Moscow as they were published by the German communist periodical *Rote Fahne* on 3 October 1930, claiming that the conference had summoned already on 2 October;[18] in fact, the Political Commission of the ECCI had approved them at its meeting on 20 September.[19] According to the provisional statutes, the official name of the new organisation was International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, abbreviated ISH. Echoing the wordings of the 'Basic Principles' (see Chapter 5.4.4), the objectives of the ISH were 1) to unite seamen, river transport workers and harbour workers in revolutionary opposition groups, minorities or red trade unions, 2) to organise and lead the fight of the maritime transport workers in their struggle for increased salaries, reduced working hours and the introduction of social insurances, and 3) to unite them in the fight against deteriorating working conditions and reductions in wages. Further, the ISH was to adhere to the 'United front from below'-tactic and invite organised as well as unorganised maritime workers to join in the struggle against the exploitations of the shipowners, the bourgeois governments, the 'social fascist' trade union leaders, the International Labour Office and the ITF.[20]

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15 Letter from 'Preussische Minister des Inneren an den Oberpräsidenten in Kiel', Berlin 5.3.1931, Abt. 301 Nr. 4532, LAS.

16 Report on the 'Reichskonferenz der Hafen- und Wasserarbeiter', Berlin 5.3.1931, Abt. 301 Nr. 4532, LAS.

17 Report by the Preuss. Polizei-Präsident Altona-Wandsbek in Altona, 15.4.1931, Abt. 301 Nr. 4532, LAS.

18 *Die Rote Fahne* 201, no. 3 (Oktober 1930), copy checked in Reichsministerium des Inneren. Internationale Hafenbüros und Seemannsklubs, Jan. 1930–Nov. 1933, R1501/20224, BArchB.

19 §2, Statuten der Internationale der Seeleute, Protokoll Nr 82 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 20.9.1930, 495/4/52, RGASPI.

20 "Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter hissen die rote Fahne!," *Rotes Gewerkschafts-Bulletin* (Red Labour Unions Bulletin – Bulletin Syndical Rouge), Sondernummer Nr. 68 (18. Oktober 1930), checked at Reichsministerium des Inneren. Internationale Hafenbüros und Seemannsklubs, Jan. 1930–Nov. 1933, R1501/20224, BArchB.

The provisional statutes prescribed an active engagement of the ISH in relation to its sections. In contrast to the IPAC-TW, the ISH was to initiate, coordinate and lead international campaigns in support of national strikes and global proletarian solidarity campaigns. The ISH Secretariat was directed to continuously supply its member organisations with agitation and propaganda material as well as to collect information about national conditions and notify its sections about impending national negotiations on wages and tariffs. Moreover, all Interclubs, existing and projected ones, were to be directly subordinated to the ISH Secretariat.[21]

Furthermore, the provisional statutes laid the organisational structures of the ISH and sanctioned a hierarchical relation between its three units, the world congress, the executive committee and the secretariat. The highest decision-making organ was the world congress while the 21-member executive committee issued binding declarations and orders. The 5-member bureau or secretariat was the operational unit of the organisation.[22] As a reflection of its global ambitions, the ISH Executive Committee was to be composed of members from the revolutionary trade union oppositions and red unions in "the Arab countries", Britain, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Latin America, the Philippines, Scandinavia, the Soviet Union and the USA. The ISH Bureau or Secretariat, nominated after the first meeting of the ISH Executive Committee, see below, George Hardy as Chair (President), and Albert Walter and Auguste Dumay as First and Second Secretary respectively.[23] The identity of the two members was not revealed as they represented illegal organisations.[24]

1.2 *3 October 1930: The First Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee*

The ISH Executive Committee summoned for its first meeting immediately after the conference. Six topics were on the agenda. The first one concerned propaganda, and the ISH Executive Committee decided upon Hardy's advice to publish a general declaration on the establishment of the ISH as well as a pamphlet on the fight for 8-hour working days and a pamphlet pinpointing

21 "Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter hissen die rote Fahne!"

22 "Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter hissen die rote Fahne!"

23 Bericht über die internationale Konferenz der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter am 3. Oktober 1930 in Hamburg, no date [ca. October 1930], 534/5/219, 2–5, RGASPI. As with the statues of the ISH, the ECCI had decided upon composition of the ISH Executive Committee well in advance, see §3, Zusammensetzung der leitenden Organe der Profintern, Protokoll Nr 79 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 3.9.1930, 495/4/49, RGASPI.

24 "Til alle Søfolk og Havnearbejdere."

the detrimental impact of the ITF in the colonial countries. In addition, the plan was to publish the statutes of the ISH as well as a brochure containing Hardy's speech at the conference together with the aims and objectives of the ISH. Each of the publications were to be published in five languages, namely English, French, German, Spanish and 'Scandinavian'. The Chinese delegate Liao Chengzhi reminded the comrades to also publish in Chinese while Arthur Samsing emphasised the need to publish in Finnish and Icelandic.[25]

The second topic on the agenda was the organisation of an international congress. This was a crucial issue as the forthcoming congress – which according to the 'Basic Principles' had to convene not later than May 1931 – was to proclaim the official formation of the International. This followed communist logics of establishing new organisations – a 'provisional' one was launched at an international conference while its 'official' formation was declared at a subsequent world congress. Consequently, the executive committee and the statutes of the ISH were provisional until the congress. On the other hand, a central prerequisite for calling a world congress was the establishment of red unions in Britain, France, India, Italy and Spain.[26]

The next two tasks concerned the organisation of local work. The ISH Executive Committee decided on the publication of a member bulletin, starting in January 1931. Work at the Interclubs was debated at length but without making any decisions. Finally, the Executive Committee nominated a Bureau or Secretariat as its operational unit. President of the ISH Bureau was George Hardy while Albert Walter was nominated International Secretary. The other bureau members were Auguste Dumay, George Mink and Arthur Samsing. Hardy was to be placed in London, Dumay in Paris, Mink in New York, Samsing in Oslo, while Walter was to run the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg.[27]

2 The Operational Unit: From Five Bureaus to One Secretariat

The first organisational outline of the ISH projected a decentralised model of five regional bureaus, and was adopted in autumn 1930. The central unit was Albert Walter's International Secretariat (hereafter: ISH Secretariat),

25 Bericht über die Executive-Sitzung der Intenationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 3.10.1930, 534/5/219, 6–7, RGASPI.

26 Bericht über die Executive-Sitzung der Intenationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 3.10.1930, 534/5/219, 7, RGASPI.

27 Bericht über die Executive-Sitzung der Intenationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 3.10.1930, 534/5/219, 7–9, RGASPI.

occupying an office in the Port Bureau and Interclub at Rothesoodstrasse. Walter was also in charge for operations in Germany, including the moderation of the Interclubs in Hamburg, Bremen and Bremerhaven as well as the maintenance of contacts with the Rhine river transport workers. The main challenge to his work was cooperation with the local party and RGO-officials, who Walter criticised for neglecting work among harbour workers. Nevertheless, Walter was confident in boosting his work and planned to open new Interclubs in Duisburg and Danzig, the latter one as the gateway for illegal agitation and propaganda among Polish seamen.[28]

The second location of operation was London where George Hardy was running the 'English' (i.e., British) Secretariat. Not much is known about its activities or whereabouts. Arguably, it constituted of Hardy's office in Poplar, sharing the same premises with the seamen's section of the Minorities Movement. Among his first accomplishments was the publication of the pamphlet *The Fighting International of Marine Workers*, containing his speech at the Hamburg conference as well as the resolution on the establishment of the ISH.[29] Hardy's main task was the reorganisation of work in England and, ultimately, the establishment of a red seamen's union.[30] Consequently, his first goal being the formation of the Seamen's Minority Movement (SMM). This organisation was subordinated to the Minority Movement while it at the same time constituted the British section of the ISH (see further Section 3.1 in this chapter). However, Hardy's work was slow to take off and had almost immediately run into a standstill as he received orders to travel to Moscow as he had been nominated to work for the RILU Far Eastern Bureau. Walter and Leo Pechmann, the (new) liaison officer at the RILU Berlin Bureau, managed to revoke the order; instead, Hardy was instructed to proceed to Hamburg.[31]

The third location was Paris where Auguste Dumay was running the Latin Secretariat. This unit was projected to monitor and supervise activities in

28 International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH), Monthly Report (MR) for October 1930, 534/5/219, 32, RGASPI; ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 45–46, RGASPI. Hereafter: ISH, MR.

29 George Hardy, *A Fighting International of Marine Workers* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, 1930).

30 Home Office Warrant, taken out by Scotland Yard 28.10.1930, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 39a, TNA.

31 ISH, MR October 1930, 534/5/219, 32, RGASPI; ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 45, RGASPI. Hardy left for Hamburg on 11 November 1930, (Half-burnt) Inf. Notes, 11.11.1930, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. The ECCI approved Hardy's transfer to Hamburg on 18 November, see §20, Vorschlag der Komfraktion der Profintern, Protokoll Nr 101 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 18.11.1930, 495/4/66, RGASPI.

Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain as well as to ignite work in the Belgian and French colonies. Dumay also served as ISH liaison and contact person to the RILU Latin American Secretariat in Montevideo. However, both Dumay's and Walter's connections to South America were patchy if not outright bad, and Walter repeatedly complained about not having received any information from Montevideo. This was frustrating, as Walter wanted to transfer funds to the bureau in Montevideo to cover the expenses for setting up an Interclub in Buenos Aires.[32]

The fourth location was Oslo where Arthur Samsing was heading the Scandinavian Secretariat.[33] His plan was to open an Interclub at the end of the year in Oslo.[34] Samsing, too, published a manifesto on the establishment of the ISH.[35] The fifth member of the bureau was George Mink who monitored the Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU) from his office in New York.[36]

2.1 *Hamburg and Paris: Two Operational Units and the Instructions from Moscow*

The decentralised setup with five bureaus proved soon unpractical. A reorganisation of the operational unit was initiated in December 1930 when Hardy moved to Hamburg. Work at the ISH Secretariat was streamlined and a 'Plan of Immediate Tasks' was sent to Moscow for approval. The Plan listed, among others, the establishment of an international solidarity fund, the formation of port control and action committees, and to set up new Interclubs in Copenhagen, Danzig, Dunkirk, Le Havre, London and Kiel as well as "at other Baltic, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Bosphorus[sic] and other French ports."[37] According to the Plan, Hardy served as editor of the ISH member bulletin as well as coordinator of activities in the English-speaking countries and the Far East. Walter, in turn, headed the technical apparatus of the ISH Secretariat. Further reorganisations followed in January 1931 after an intervention by Walter in the mandate of the Latin Secretariat and disbandment of the Scandinavian Secretariat. The consequence of the reorganisation in January 1931 was the dissolution of the five-member Bureau and establishment

32 ISH, MR October 1930, 534/5/219, 33, RGASPI; ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 46, RGASPI.

33 ISH, MR October 1930, 534/5/219, 33, RGASPI.

34 "Besök de Internasjonale sømannsklubber! Ny klubb i Oslo!," *Den Internasjonale Transportarbeider* 5, no. 15 (November 1930): 4.

35 Internasjonalensmanifest.Tilallesjømennoghavnearbeidere!Ini<Kampinternasjonalens> rekker!, Grå Guld Fagopposition 33.136, Mapp 1. RFO Diverse, ARA.

36 ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 47, RGASPI.

37 Plan of Immediate Tasks, no date, 534/5/219, 54–57, RGASPI.

of two Secretariats, one in Hamburg, the other in Paris. Thereafter, Walter at the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg coordinated activities the Baltic area (Estonia, Latvia and Finland) and Scandinavia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland and the German-speaking countries whereas Hardy concentrated on the English-speaking countries. Dumay, in turn, continued as Second Secretary and head of the ISH Latin Secretariat in Paris; his main task was to monitor activities in the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports.[38]

The ISH Secretariat started to prepare the ground for its immediate work and sent a plan of its intended operations for approval to Moscow. Hardy communicated to the RILU headquarters his impressions of work on the waterfront in France after visiting Paris in late 1930 ("neither the Party nor the CGTU take this work seriously"). In addition, he notified the RILU headquarters that he, together with James W. Ford and Liao Chengzhi, had started to prepare a blueprint for work among colonial seamen,[39] and informed that he had drafted a resolution on Unemployment Day, a global demonstration called by the communists for 25 February. Lacking addresses to whom he could send the call, he urged RILU headquarters to forward him a detailed list of all harbour workers', seamen's and river workers' unions and "mark them off 1) revolutionary, 2) sympathetic, 3) independent, and 4) reactionary."[40]

Furthermore, Hardy informed the members of the ISH Executive Committee in February 1931 about the plans to organised an international conference for harbour workers, scheduled to convene in Hamburg in April 1931. "Our position among the dock workers is not up to the strength of our forces among the seamen," Hardy admitted. Therefore, "our aim is not only to deepen our influence amongst dock and port workers generally, but to form groups or union branches where none exist and the enrolling of large numbers of recruits where they do exist." All sections were obliged to focus on agitation among dockers and to prepare for the upcoming international harbour workers' conference, Hardy reminded. "Mass meetings of port workers can be called and their opinions ascertained by fruitful discussion [...], proposals for the conference can be passed by mass meetings of port workers and resolutions passed endorsing the conference should be sent to the International Secretariat and will be placed before the conference," he assured. Most importantly, those members of the

38 Confidential. Duties and tasks of secretariat members, no date [ca March 1931], 534/5/220, 128–129, RGASPI. An analysis of the document reveals that it had been written in Hamburg and sent to Moscow in March 1930.

39 See further Section 4 in this chapter.

40 George [Hardy] to Alexander [Lozovsky], [Hamburg] 20.1.1931, 534/5/220, 14–16, RGASPI.

ISH Executive Committee "that are not situated in too far distant countries" were to meet before attending the conference.[41]

The ISH Secretariat never received the requested list of addresses. Instead, the RILU headquarters replied by sending detailed instructions in February 1931, clarifying the objectives and tasks of the ISH. "The [RILU] Secretariat notes that the whole of this extremely extensive Plan [of Immediate Tasks] contains a number of points insufficiently concrete, stressing chiefly agitational and propaganda work, not guaranteeing the transfer of gravity of work of the International to the organisational field." Consequently, the RILU's corrections focussed on the operational framework of the ISH and stressed that the ISH was not to replicate the IPAC-TW. Instead, the ISH was instructed to establish and maintain its own global network of sections. In addition, the ISH was to engage in the (ongoing) anti-war campaign and to infuse its sections to counter-act the imagined impending 'imperialist' attack upon the Soviet Union. Therefore, as part of achieving this objective, the ISH was instructed to expedite the formation of a red seamen's union in England, to establish contacts with the illegal Italian union FILM, to reorganised the MWIU, and to re-establish the (illegal) Greek Seamen's Union. Further, the RILU instructed the ISH Secretariat to develop a plan for strengthening the revolutionary union opposition within the existing maritime trade unions as well as consolidating its outreach in Latin America and in Asia. Last, but not least, the ISH was ordered to create a pool of special instructors to enhance its capacity to directly intervene in the operations of the national sections. The objective of the ISH, the RILU reminded, was to appear as "an organisationally-powerful and politically serious world mass organisation" in order to evolve as "one of the most important factors of the world revolutionary T[rade] U[nion] movement generally, and one of the most decisive weapons in the struggle against war, in particular."[42]

Hardy and Walter were baffled. "Dear comrades," they replied, "to excite sweeping criticism regarding the work of I.S.H. Secretariat based upon this limited plan, together with the official documents, and whatever information you have in your possession, we believe has led you to wrong conclusions."[43]

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41 [George Hardy] President to the Provisional Executive Committee Members, Hamburg 5.2.1931, 534/5/220, 61–62, RGASPI. On the projected conference for dock workers, see Call for International Dockers, Hamburg 5.2.1931, 534/5/220, 64–65, RGASPI; Hardy to Provisional Executive Committee Members, Hamburg 5.2.1931, 534/5/220, 61–62, RGASPI. The conference was never organised.

42 Resolution on Work of the Seamen's and Docker's International, 17.2.1931, 534/5/220, 75–76, RGASPI.

43 ISH Secretariat to 'Dear Comrades', [Hamburg] 9.3.1931, 534/5/220, 95, RGASPI.

Hardy was even more frank in a personal letter to RILU General Secretary Lozovsky: "How could the Profintern Secretariat adopt such a resolution without having any report from the ISH Secretariat?"[44] While the Plan had been drafted when Hardy arrived in Hamburg (in mid-December) and thus only reflected two months of work, the ISH Secretariat had since then carried out a lot of work which – seemingly – had not been noted in Moscow. "While the comrade was busy scrutinising his naturally limited materials and drawing upon his very elastic imagination we were in constant contact with USA, England, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Danzig, France, Canada, China, and had communication with Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Philippines, Australia, Uruguay," Hardy sarcastically remarked.[45]

Although Moscow had criticised the ISH Secretariat for failing to link up with its sections, the comrades in Hamburg rejected the accusations and assured that the ISH Secretariat had already been in contact with the Italian and Greek unions. Assisting the MWIU to overcome its difficulties was impossible, as the ISH Secretariat had no instructor who could sent to the USA. The agitation of the ISH Secretariat in Germany was tactical, "our leaflet to the German dockers was issued to stimulate actions to increase the tempo of the struggle, and to bring the face of the I.S.H. before the German workers. [...] If this is 'duplication' we absolutely reject this interpretation."[46] Therefore, "instead of being guilty of the charge of losing the contacts I.P.C. had we have considerably extended them far beyond those which existed," Hardy concluded.[47]

Furthermore, interference in England and Scandinavia had yielded some first results. Fred Thompson had changed his earlier negative position of launching a red union. The Scandinavian Secretariat in Oslo had been liquidated and the ISH Secretariat now communicated directly with the sections in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Finally, the ISH Secretariat had started to investigate the work of the Interclubs: "We hasten to remind you [that] some of these Clubs have existed under the direct control of the I.P.C.T.W. for double the number of years than the [four] months of existence of the I.S.H., and without achieving this very much desired result."[48]

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44 George [Hardy] to 'Alexander' [Lozovsky], Personal and Confidential, Hamburg, 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 117, RGASPI.

45 George [Hardy] to 'Alexander' [Lozovsky], Personal and Confidential, Hamburg, 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 118, RGASPI.

46 ISH Secretariat to 'Dear Comrades', [Hamburg] 9.3.1931, 534/5/220, 96–97, RGASPI.

47 George [Hardy] to 'Alexander' [Lozovsky], Personal and Confidential, Hamburg, 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 118, RGASPI.

48 ISH Secretariat to "Dear Comrades," [Hamburg] 9.3.1931, 534/5/220, 98, RGASPI.

Nevertheless, the ISH Secretariat self-critically noted that its apparatus had major flaws that immediately needed to be corrected. The limited staff of the ISH Secretariat was overburdened with daily tasks, effectively blocking it from visiting the national sections in person to give political and organisational advice. The leadership of many national sections, in turn, had failed to respond to the suggestions and instructions of the ISH and rarely reported to the ISH Secretariat, "thus depriving the I.S.H. of its proper role and leadership." However, equally disturbing was "the failure to answer our requests and letters, and the comrades in the U.S.S.R. Secretariat are no exception, including some departments of the Profintern" as well as "the tendency to send in communication and complaints to the Profintern, while withholding them from the I.S.H., and the failure of the Profintern on its part to forward information it receives to the Secretariat of the I.S.H." To overcome these weaknesses, the ISH Secretariat called upon the RILU to strengthen its apparatus by two additional instructors as well as to order the national sections of the Comintern and RILU to carry out a campaign to popularised the ISH "among the masses."[49]

2.2 *One Centre: The ISH Secretariat at Hamburg*

Moscow's criticism resulted in yet another reorganisation of the ISH Secretariat. The dual location of its office proved cumbersome, hence all activities were concentrated to Hamburg in March 1931. An application was sent to Moscow for the placement of a third member of the secretariat in Hamburg, the task of the person being to supervise and monitor activities in France, Portugal, Spain, and Yugoslavia as well as in the French, Portuguese and Spanish colonies. In addition, the person was to be in contact with the RILU units in Latin America. The three secretaries were to act as 'referents' and each give special attention to the different categories of sea transport: Hardy to the seamen's section, Walter to the Interclubs and the member to the dockers' section. Apart from these three members, the ISH Secretariat was to be staffed with a technical secretary who could speak and write English, German and French, and preferably Spanish, as well as a stenographer-typist.[50]

Nevertheless, Hardy had never regarded Hamburg to be the ideal location for the headquarters of the ISH. "It must be remembered that our International is primarily English, and your first suggestion to have the

49 ISH Secretariat to "Dear Comrades," [Hamburg] 9.3.1931, 534/5/220, 101–102, RGASPI.

50 Confidential. Duties and tasks of secretariat members, no date [ca March 1931], 534/5/220, 128–129, RGASPI. An analysis of the document reveals that it had been written in Hamburg and sent to Moscow in March 1930.

headquarters in London is the only one to get maximum development," he notified Lozovsky.[51] Hamburg was not the ideal place for the ISH Secretariat, connections with the national sections were dysfunctional and the ISH was invisible. "I don't want to remain the chairman of the International without leadership. This is a position I would regard as very unsatisfactory," he complained in another letter. The ISH Secretariat should be moved to London, he insisted, as it then could better promote and direct the establishment of national sections. His vision included the nomination of a new management board, composed of himself, Walter, Dumay, one representative of the RILU Berlin Bureau, Harry Hynes of the MWIU, Fred Thompson of the SMM, and James W. Ford of the ITUCNW.[52]

Hardy's main criticism concerned the poor communications between the ISH Secretariat and the national sections. Already Albert Walter had commented upon deficient and insufficient connections from Hamburg, among others to the USA and South America, but assured that his communications system provided alternative contact avenues that enabled him to keep in touch with all ISH sections worldwide.[53] Hardy, in contrast, claimed that Walter's communications system had severe limitations: "There was heavy criticism [by the CPGB] revealing the fact that the connections are still to be created to guarantee an immediate transfer of letters by seamen. I am aware of the other special apparatus existing, but as far as we are concerned we have to build our own."[54]

The bad atmosphere at the ISH Secretariat soon paralysed work in Hamburg. Arguably, Hardy's and Walter's background mattered – the former had pursued an international career within the RILU apparatus, the latter had achieved an organisational success through the 'Hamburg' or 'from the bottom'-method. An operational basis did not exist in London, the CPGB as well as the Minority Movement had little capacity in assisting the ISH. Therefore, it made strategically and tactically little sense for the RILU to shift its centre for maritime agitation from Hamburg to the British capital.

Not much is known about the rift between Hardy and Walter as it has left few traces in the internal communications between Hamburg and Moscow. British

51 George [Hardy] to "Alexander" [Lozovsky], Personal and Confidential, Hamburg, 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 119, RGASPI.

52 George [Hardy] to "Dear Comrade" [Lozovsky]. Very Confidential, Hamburg 30.3.1931, 534/5/220, 143–148, RGASPI.

53 ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 45–47, RGASPI.

54 George [Hardy] to "Dear Comrade" [Lozovsky]. Very Confidential, Hamburg 30.3.1931, 534/5/220, 143–148, RGASPI.

intelligence reports, on the other hand, claim that the two loggerheads were at odds about the leadership of the Interclub: Hardy wanted to replace Johannes (Hans) Krause, Walter opposed the idea.[55] Additional stress for Hardy must have been his 'semi-legal' status in Germany – officially, he informed the police that he working as a free-lance journalist.[56] Hardy's cover blow up in mid-April when the police conducted a thorough investigation about him, cancelled his permission to work and wanted him deported from Germany. Incapable of running the International Secretariat, Hardy returned to England in early June.[57]

2.3 *Enter Henri Maurice and Adolf Shelley*

Two new comrades arrived in Hamburg during the midst of the power struggle at the ISH headquarters. The first was the Italian Communist Luigi Polano whom the RILU Secretariat had nominated as third member of the ISH Secretariat. Polano had a solid background in maritime work, among others serving as instructor at the Port Bureaus and Interclubs in Odessa (1925), Novorossiysk (1926–1928) and Batumi (1929–1931). After his arrival in Hamburg in April 1930, Polano started to use the pseudonym Henri Maurice.[58]

The second person to arrive in Hamburg was the Polish communist Alfred Bem. He had been politically active in Poland during the 1920s, among others organising the transport workers in Poznan, and belonged to Regional Executive Committee of the (illegal) Polish Communist Party. He started to use the pseudonym Alfred Stolarski after his transfer to the USSR in November 1929. Bem/Stolarski was deputy head of the Balkan section of the RILU from March 1930 to April 1931.[59] In contrast to Polano, Bem/Stolarski acted as emissary of

55 Minutes 10.10.1932 and 17.10.1932, KV2/1799, TNA; copy of minutes for 17.10.1932 also in George Hardy personal file, KV2 /1027, 84B, TNA. The British intelligence reports are challenging to interpret. Although dated in October 1932, they seem to discuss events in spring 1931; this is evident through crosschecking with internal ISH-minutes sent to Moscow in April 1931. Moreover, Hardy resided in Hamburg only during spring 1931.

56 George [Hardy] to "Alexander" [Lozovsky], Personal and Confidential, Hamburg, 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 119, RGASPI.

57 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. notes 14.4.1931, 28.4.1931, 8.6.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, THA; (Half-burnt copy of letter) Hardy to Thompson, [Hamburg] 29.4.1931, George Hardy personal file KV 2/1027, TNA; Polizeibehörde Hamburg an das Reichsministerium des Inneren, Hamburg 12.6.1931, Reichministerium des Inneren. Internationale Hafenbüros und Seemannsklubs, Jan. 1930–Nov. 1933, R1501/20224, 71, BArchB; Hardy, *Those Stormy Years*, 217.

58 Biografia Luigi Polano, 26.7.1939, 495/221/425, 63–66, RGASPI.

59 See further Wikipedia, "Alfred Brunon Bem," https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Brunon_Bem, checked 19.11.2020. See further entry on Alfred Brunon Bem ("Stolarski")

the RILU, instructed to monitor and supervise the ISH Secretariat. His mission was strictly confidential and he was never in public connected to the ISH Secretariat. Instead, he set up an underground 'Illegal Secretariat', located at an unknown site in Hamburg. Bem/Stolarski used the alias Adolf Shelley after his arrival in Hamburg.[60]

Shelley found the ISH Secretariat to be dysfunctional, as Polano had sided with Hardy against Walter. "Practical work [was] impossible," he reported. Most notably, the chaos at the headquarters in Hamburg resulted in the cancellation of the scheduled international conference for harbour workers. Shelley interfered in the quarrel and backed Walter, perhaps instructed by Moscow. British intelligence sources even claim that Hardy received a reprimand from Moscow.[61]

Work at the ISH Secretariat was reorganised after Shelley's intervention. He abrogated the endless and weeklong consultations on strategic and tactical matters, and replaced them with short meetings.[62] The ISH Secretariat finally managed to publish its member bulletin, the *Informations-Bulletin der ISH*. Originally projected to be launched in January 1931, its first English and German issues were delayed until June.[63] In addition, the ISH Secretariat published a small propaganda pamphlet on the Interclubs and the ISH, *Der Internationale Seemannsklub – Euer Heim, die ISH – Eure Kampfinternationale*, see Figure 11. Nevertheless, the international outreach of the ISH Secretariat was hindered by its limited capacity to publish in any other languages but English and German. Although the colonial sections of the Interclubs in Hamburg and Rotterdam circulated mimeographed magazines and journals in Chinese and Indonesian languages (see Section 4 in this chapter), they lacked propaganda material in Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish, Shelley critically noted.[64]

The language issue was never properly resolved. The ISH Secretariat was only capable to communicate in German and English, and the non-German and non-English-speaking sections continuously complained about not

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in Buckmiller and Meschkat (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale*.

60 ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 176, RGASPI. This is the first report with a reference to "Gen[osse] Ad[olf]," i.e., Adolf Shelley.

61 Minutes 10.10.1932 and 17.10.1932, Albert Walter personal file, KV2/1799, TNA.

62 ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 176, RGASPI.

63 *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 1 (June 1931).

64 ISH, MR June–August 1931, 534/5/222, 65, RGASPI.

FIGURE 11 Informing mariners about the Interclubs and the ISH, cover of the ISH pocket publication *Der Internationale Seemannsklub – Euer Heim, Die ISH – Eure Kampfinternationale*, Kleine Bibliothek der ISH 1 (Hamburg, 1931).

receiving material in Spanish, Portuguese or French, or about having trouble in translating German and English directives. Similarly, the ISH headquarters was in trouble when receiving messages and reports from its sections – it took days if not weeks to have them translated into German and vice versa. Polano was of little help as he was absent from Hamburg for long periods in 1931 (see below).

For Shelley, this was a major problem and he urged Moscow to find a solution to it: "We should not be a German-English International!"[65]

2.4 *The Berlin Connection and the Money from Moscow*

The ISH Secretariat was an integral part of the RILU-apparatus. Two units within the RILU-apparatus supervised and monitored its activities, namely the 'Illegal Secretariat' in Hamburg as well as the RILU Bureau in Berlin. The latter had already served as the liaison office for communication of information and transmission of funds from Moscow to Hamburg. Two persons served as contact persons at the Berlin RILU Bureau. The first one was Max Ziese who already had communicated with Albert Walter's during the 1920s. More importantly, Ziese monitored the OMS Bureau in Berlin, camouflaged as the Führer-Verlag.[66] The second one was Leow Smolianski alias Leo Pechmann,[67] who together with Adolf Shelley and Luigi Polano (Henry Maurice) seemed to have constituted the 'Illegal Secretariat' of the ISH.

The Moscow-Berlin-link was crucial for the ISH. Ideally, the national sections as well as the Interclubs were supposed to generate funds by themselves for covering their expenses. In practice, only a few of them were ever capable of doing so. Most of them relied on subsidies from the ISH headquarters. Moreover, the ISH Secretariat relied on monthly instalments from Moscow via Berlin to pay the salaries of its personnel, see Table 8.

Unfortunately, the available data is both insufficient and difficult to interpret to give a definite answer to how much money was sent on a monthly or an annual basis from Moscow to Hamburg. In early 1931, the ISH Secretariat received a monthly instalment of USD 1,364 to cover its expenses, including the salaries of two secretaries, two instructors and two technical functionaries. In addition, the ISH Secretariat received USD 1,950 each month to be allocated to the various affiliated sections of the ISH.[68] Consequently, Walter could have received more than USD 3,300 per month or almost USD 40,000 per year.

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65 Letter from Adolf [Schelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 88, RGASPI.

66 Minutes, 25.1.1933, Albert Walter personal file, 6s, KV 2/1799, TNA; [Handling IVA.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, unpublished report [filed: 20–12.1941], 11, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2–IV A 4, volym 169, SNA.

67 Schedule of the Principal Revolutionary Organisations Controlled by Moscow (end 1935), 20.4.1936, KV 3/128 International Organisations of Communist Parties, TNA; Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, unpublished report [filed: 20-12.1941], 12, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2–IV A 4, volym 169, SNA.

68 Monthly budget of the ISH, no date [ca. 1931], 534/8/156, 131, RGASPI.

TABLE 8 Monthly transfer of sums from RILU to ISH, 1931–1933

Month/Year	Sum paid (USD)	Source (RGASPI)
1/1931	500	534/8/177
2/1931	500	534/8/177
3/1931	500	534/8/177
4/1931	500	534/8/177
5/1931	500	534/8/177
6/1931	500	534/8/177
[...]	[...]	
3/1932	300	534/8/216, 61
4/1932	373	534/8/216, 61+116
5/1932	373	534/8/216, 61+116
6/1932	173	534/8/216, 168+116
7/1932	75	534/8/216, 200
8/1932	2,200	534/8/216, 227
[.]	[.]	
10/1932	2,200	534/8/216, 283
11/1932	1,900	534/8/216, 306–307
12/1932	2,200	534/8/216, 306–307
1/1933	1,828	534/8/216, 375–376
2/1933	1,828	534/8/216, 375–376
3/1933	1,828	534/8/216, 375–376

Perhaps this was even the case during the first half of 1931, as documentary sources indicate.[69] However, figures concerning financial transactions during the latter part of 1932 and early 1933 reveal that this was not necessarily the case. While the ISH was to receive monthly instalments of USD 300 from March to May 1932, this amount was reduced to USD 100 in June and USD 75 in July 1932. For the rest of the year, the allowances increased to more than 1,100 USD per month; in August, October and December 1932, the ISH Secretariat received USD 2,200 per month, and from January to March 1933 USD 1,828 per month.[70] At least in 1932, therefore, the total amount sent to the ISH Secretariat was perhaps even less than USD 20,000. On the other hand, special campaigns, such as

69 ISH Budget January – June [1931], 534/8/177, 140, RGASPI.

70 Monthly calculations for RILU transfers, 534/8/216, 61, 116, 168, 200, 227, 306–307, RGASPI.

the organisation of the ISH World Congress in 1932, were funded through extra payments from Moscow (see below).

Walter distributed the subsidies to the various ISH sections via his courier system.[71] At times, this proved challenging, especially if direct contacts were difficult to establish or were insecure. This was among others the case with his connections to England. British Intelligence claimed that the ISH Secretariat had sent Hardy a budget for work in Britain of no less than USD 900 in 1931.[72] The clandestine transfer to the Seamen's Minority Movement was uncovered in November 1931 when British Intelligence traced a contribution of GBP 175 to the Interclub in Amsterdam. One month later, British Intelligence had established that the Amsterdam Interclub served as Walter's intermediary for the transactions, as was revealed in his instructions: "Owing to the special embargo on sending out capital from Germany arrangements were made to send the money on this occasion from Amsterdam."[73]

The financial basis of the ISH and its sections remained problematic even with the transfer of funds from Moscow. Most of the sections numbered only a few paying members and few sections were capable to pay the rent for the Interclubs and their offices, not to speak about the salaries of their functionaries and staff. The financial constraints restricted their activities and they criticised the ISH Secretariat for lukewarm engagement in their work. A solution to the impasse was discussed by the ISH Executive Committee at its meeting in September 1931. The ISH Executive Committee decided to introduce a new economic blueprint for the organisation. The new regulations required each section to secure its own funding; only the expenses of the Interclubs and their publications were to be covered by transfers from Hamburg. In addition, all sections were obliged to send 1.5 percent of their monthly incomes to the ISH headquarters to cover the costs for running the ISH Secretariat.[74]

3 Aiming for a Global Outreach – Building National Sections

The RILU had projected the ISH as a mass organisation with its own national sections and global activities. Membership was restricted, the target group

71 A. Walter, 25.1.33/Cross-Reference, Albert Walter personal files, KV 2/1799, TNA.

72 (Half-burnt) Inf. Notes, no date [ca. mid-1931], George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

73 Minutes 14.11.1931 and 19.12.1931, Albert Walter personal file, KV2/1799, TNA.

74 Letter from Adolf [Schelley] to 'Werte Genossen', Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 86, RGASPI.

being revolutionary trade union oppositions and red unions. As the RILU adhered to the unity principle, i.e., the amalgamation of unions operating in an industrial sector into one industrial union. In principle, this also applied to the maritime unions, namely to bring crew members of merchant vessels, fishing boats and river transport ships as well as all harbour workers into one union. The implementation of this programme proved difficult. So far, the combination of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine in combination with the 'United front from below'-tactic introduced by the IPAC-TW in 1928 had yielded few tangible results in transforming hitherto peripheral opposition groups into mass movements. Consequently, the ISH was not to replicate and build on the organisational shortcomings the IPAC-TW; even the most diehard members at the RILU headquarters in Moscow must have recognised that the IPAC-TW was a propaganda tool rather than a member-organisation. This was painfully evident at the October 1930 Hamburg Conference: Few of the delegates represented an established organisation, most of them only small unorganised opposition groups. The ISH Secretariat, therefore, had to start from scratch in its mission to rival and challenge the ITF.

The leading members of the ISH were fully aware of the almost impossible task they were facing. George Hardy's analysis to Alexander Lozovsky in March 1931 clearly addressed the challenges and complicated state of affairs. Echoing Albert Walter's 'from the bottom'-approach, Hardy noted:

> We are weak organisationally in almost every country. Our task is to turn these organisations into mass organisations. This can only be done by energetic efforts in each country, by building a base at every port, starting with the most important one first, placing a union delegate on every dock and ship as a step to form ship and dock committees, issuing programmes of immediate demands after thorough discussion by the rank and file as a means to keep down bureaucracy, making every struggle, no matter how small, a means of rallying the masses to wider action, cultivating a wider interest by drawing into the leadership new elements in every country, training cadres and carrying systematic education aiming the masses etc etc. But this will be done by individual attention given to each country.[75]

75 George [Hardy] to Alexander [Lozovsky], Hamburg 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 119, RGASPI.

Hardy and Walter soon had to realise that the transformation of small amorphous opposition groups into mass movements lest organised red unions, was a time-consuming process if not uphill battle. Their immediate task was to establish contacts with all those organisations and groups who had been represented at the October 1930 Hamburg Conference. A few months later, they were in regular contact with liaison persons in Europe, North and South America, China and Australia. "It is true [that] many of these communications are not very strong," Hardy noted, "but to some countries we have contacts both open and confidential."[76] What he did not highlight was the fact that the difference in regular contacts and (irregular) communications reflected the restricted outreach of the ISH about six months after its launching – sections existed at this point only in those countries with regular connections to the ISH headquarters.

Commenting upon the slow pace of rocketing the ISH into a militant counterpart to the ITF, Lozovsky identified the lack of commitment by the national parties as a major obstacle. After receiving his assessment in May 1931, the Political Commission of the ECCI ordered him and Osip Piatnisky, head of the International Department of the Comintern, to draft a stern reminder of the utmost importance of focusing on the waterfront and to send it to the Communist Party of Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, and USA.[77] Whether their letter had any effect is doubtful.

One country is missing in Hardy's list from March 1931, namely the Soviet Union. The Soviet Russian maritime transport workers' union had already been outside the orbit of the IPAC-TW and its predecessor. Although officially affiliated to the RILU, it was under the control of the Kremlin. An official representative of the Russian union had participated at the 1930 October Hamburg Conference but had not been elected to the presidium of the conference, perhaps being an attempt of downplaying Moscow's presence at the conference. It is also unclear when the Russian union affiliated with ISH as it was not represented in the ISH Executive Committee or the ISH Bureau/Secretariat. Neither are there any references to the Russian union in the monthly reports of the ISH Secretariat for 1931. Curiously, the 'Russian Water Workers' Union' is listed as an affiliated member in a compilation made at the RILU headquarters in mid-1931, see Table 9.

76 George [Hardy] to Alexander [Lozovsky], Hamburg 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 118, RGASPI.

77 Protokoll Nr 141 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 17.5.1931, 495/4/108, RGASPI.

TABLE 9 Affiliated and sympathising organisations of the ISH, summer 1931

ISH: Affiliated organisations	*Members*
USSR: Water Workers' Union	300,000
Germany: Einheitsverband	9,760
France: FUMP	4,675
England: SMM	3,000
Scotland: Scottish Seamen's Group (Glasgow)	61
Danzig: Einheitsverband	450
USA: MWIU	1,200
Greece: Rev. opposition within the seamen's union	2,000
Italy: FILM	450
China	1,000
The Netherlands	"No information"
Sweden	"No information"
Norway	"No information"
Denmark	"No information"
Austria	"No information"
Latin America: Comite Maritimo y Portuario	5,000
Uruguay: Rev. opposition within the seamen's union	800
Argentina: "Class Unity Committee"	100
ISH: sympathising organisations	
Romania	"No information"
England: Indian Seamen's Union, London	1,800
Australia: Seamen's and Docker's Federation	1,500
New Zealand: Rev. opposition within the seamen's union	2,700
Spain: Andalusian union for seamen and fishermen	2,700

SOURCE: MATERIALS ON THE WORK OF INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES, NO DATE, 534/2/92, 86–87, RGASPI

3.1 *The Establishment of Sections in Western Europe*

The largest and best organised ISH section outside Soviet Russia was the German one, the *Einheitsverband der Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter und Binnenschiffer*

(Einheitsverband). The German section was the only one to include separate units of seamen, dockers, river workers and fishermen. The Einheitsverband was launched at a conference in Altona in January 1931,[78] and started full operations one month later with branches in most German ports.[79] The first leader of the Einheitsverband was Johannes (Hans) Koschnik (1902–1944) who had a known constrained relationship with George Hardy, mainly due to the latter's criticism of the Einheitsverband's slow progress in expanding its membership and for neglecting work among the harbour workers.[80] Koschnik and Walter had boasted that the Einheitsverband would list more than 10,000 members by June 1931;[81] yet by April, the red union only counted some 3,500 members about half of which were seamen.[82] Extended agitation and propaganda as well as the positive impact of the strike among German seamen in October 1931 resulted in an increase of membership, counting circa 11,000 members in November 1931. Nevertheless, harbour workers were still hard to convince to join the ranks of the Einheitsverband, its members mainly being seamen and river transport workers.[83] Besides, in accordance with the general instructions of the RILU, the Einheitsverband had focussed on enlisting unemployed seamen and dockworkers, and had been quite successful with this. Nevertheless, although impressive on paper, membership was substantially less than those of the other maritime unions.[84]

Successes were also reported from the Free City of Danzig. Walter had participated at a meeting on 18 January 1931, resulting in the formation of the *Einheitsverband der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter Danzigs* (Einheitsverband Danzig). The Einheitsverband Danzig listed 270 members, mainly harbour workers, and immediately affiliated with the ISH. As in Germany, the red union was a minor player among the maritime transport workers in Danzig; about 800 of the 1,800 harbour workers were members of the reformist unions.[85]

78 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 13, RGASPI.

79 Weinhauer, *Alltag und Arbeitskampf im Hamburger Hafen*, 317.

80 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/221, 60, RGASPI. On Koschnik, see "Johannes Koschnik", in Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 484–485.

81 ISH, MR February 1931, 534/5/220, 84, RGASPI.

82 ISH, MR April 1931, 60, 534/5/221, 60, RGASPI.

83 Letter from Adolf [Schelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 89–90, RGASPI.

84 Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 186–188. See also Hartmut Rübner, "Arbeit, Milieu und Konfliktverhalten: Syndikalismus in der Schiffahrt bis in die 1930er Jahre," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 16 (2001): 165–212.

85 ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 72, RGASPI; ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 10, RGASPI.

Nevertheless, communist agitation and propaganda paid off, and three months later, the Einheitsverband Danzig had increased to 450 members, of which 80 were seamen.[86] Walter regraded the ISH section in Danzig to be of strategic importance; the section set up an Interclub whose prime target were Polish seamen, and sought to establish contacts with radical maritime transport workers in Gdynia, the main Polish port.[87] In 1931, the Interclub Danzig was fully operating, consisting of English, Estonian, Finnish, Latin, Latvian, Polish and Scandinavian sections.[88]

Invigorating activities in France turned out to be complicated. The headquarters in Hamburg received distressing news about the malfunctioning of its two French ISH units, the *Federation Unitaire des Marines et Pécheurs* (FUMP) and the Interclub in Marseille. The former one was controlled by reformists, while the *Federation Unitaire des Ports et Docks*, the harbour workers' union, was controlled by "our opponents," i.e, 'trotskyists' or communists who had cut their ties with the Comintern. Although the FUMP was affiliated with the radical French trade union congress CGTU, it declined to join the ISH and had effectively blocked communist agitation within the union.[89] George Hardy went on an inspection tour to France in early January 1931 to consult with Auguste Dumay. Conditions proved worse than anticipated. The Marseille Interclub was hardly functioning, the FUMP lacked collective leadership, and neither the party nor the CGTU paid much interest in work on the waterfront. Even worse, the local party section in Marseille had occupied the premises of the Interclub.[90] Dumay complained that the FUMP was not working at all; its finances had collapsed, and Dumay had to cease activities in Bordeaux and Le Havre as well as to stop the publication of the *Cri du Marin*. He further stressed that the idea of establishing new Interclubs was unrealistic; instead, he wanted to use the limited funds to finance special campaigns for radicalising the waterfront in France.[91]

86 Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 71, RGASPI.

87 ISH, MR June–August 1931, 534/5/222, 64, RGASPI.

88 Länderbericht Danzig, in Zweite Plenartagung der Exekutive der ISH, 10–12.9.1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI. A description of the activities by the Scandinavian section is provided in Kurt Mineur, *Tukthus. En proletärs minnen* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 1970), 56–59.

89 ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 73, RGASPI.

90 Hardy to Lozovsky, 20.1.1931, 534/5/220, 14, RGASPI. See further Report of Comrade Hardy upon the Situation in the French Shipping Industry, [Hamburg] 13.1.1931, 534/5/220, 1–9, RGASPI.

91 Dumay to "Liebe Genossen," Paris 15.1.1931, 534/5/228, 2–6, RGASPI.

Hardy's investigation must have alarmed the comrades at the RILU Berlin Bureau as they summoned for a meeting in late January 1931 to discuss the bleak prospects for work in France. As an outcome, the RILU Berlin Bureau ordered the ISH Secretariat to send an instructor to Marseille. The main task of the 'special emissary' was to reorganised work in France.[92]

Immediate action did not follow due to the limited capacities of the ISH Secretariat to monitor the operations of the national sections. However, news from France continued to raise concern, and the ISH headquarters decided in April to deploy comrade "Ts" or Thomsen as instructor to Paris.[93] Thomsen's mission turned out to be difficult. Neither the French Party nor the CGTU appreciated his attempt and rejected any interventions in the FUMP.[94] Dumay, in turn, was not in favour of moving the FUMP headquarters to Marseille.[95] Thomsen's second objective was the revitalisation of work in Marseille. This probably followed a plan outlined in Hamburg as he installed the French Soudanese activist Garan Kouyaté as head of the Interclub in June 1931.[96] Kouyaté was not unknown for the comrades at the ISH headquarters; James W. Ford had already cooperated with him at the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism held in Frankfurt am Main in July 1929, perhaps they even met when Ford visited Paris in January 1929.[97] Dumay, too, had cooperated with him, and Kouyaté had started to make a name as an agitator among black workers in France during the late 1920s.[98] Impressed by his credentials, Ford invited Kouyaté to Hamburg where he spent a couple of weeks cooperating with Ford before his return to France in June 1931 (see further Section 4 in this chapter).[99] Kouyaté must have made a positive impact on the comrades in Hamburg as Shelley and Walter recommended him as unofficial third

92 Paul [Max Ziese] to "Herrn Alexander" [Lozovsky], [Berlin] 26.1.1931, 534/4/354, 21, RGASPI.

93 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/221, 60–61, RGASPI. The identity of Thomsen is yet to be established; according to Margain, he was of Danish nationality (Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 151.).

94 Ts [Thomsen] to "W[erte] G[enossen]," Bericht Nr 12, Paris 13.8.1931, 534/5/228, 163–165, RGASPI.

95 ISH, MR June–August 1931, 534/5/222, 69, RGASPI.

96 Ts [Thomsen] to "Dear Friends," no date [stamped: II/VI/1931], 534/5/228, 50–54, RGASPI.

97 See further Weiss, "Framing Black Communist Labour Union Activism."

98 Rapport du camarade Dumay (des marins) sur le question coloniale, Moscou 13.9.1930, 534/5/217, 49–55, RGASPI.

99 It is likely that Kouyaté, in addition to Liao Chengzhi and Ford, attended at the national conference of water transport workers called by the Eineitsverband and held in Hamburg 7 June 1931, as indicated in the *ISH-Bulletin*. Although their names is not

secretary of the FUMP and instructed him to organise the colonial work of the ISH in France.[100]

Kouyaté's transfer to Marseille did not turn the tide in France. Dumay had collapsed due to heavy workload and threatened to quit his assignments for the ISH; Kouyaté quarrelled with the local party about funding the Interclub and, to make things worse, the police arrested him at a local rally.[101] Work on the waterfront had totally stagnated when Thomsen left France in autumn. The FUMP membership had declined from 6,000 to 1,200; significant local groups existed only in Dunkirk (1,200 members), Boulogne (480), Rouen (250), and Marseille (200). The only positive news were Kouyaté's achievement after his release from detention to enlist black seamen in the FUMP as well as the opening of a new Interclub in Rouen. Moreover, Dumay and the CGTU had accepted the proposal to move the FUMP headquarters to Rouen. The ISH headquarters, in turn, responded by sending comrade "Marcel" as ISH instructor to Rouen and ordered the Marseille Interclub to open an Interclub in Oran, Algeria.[102]

Similar bleak prospects existed in Belgium and the Netherlands. Walter went on a tour to Antwerp and Rotterdam in December 1930 to inspect conditions for work and realised that it had to start from scratch.[103] His first measure was to transfer the supervision of work in Belgium from the Latin Secretariat to the ISH headquarters and instructed the Latvian seaman Ernst Lambert (1902–1943) to establish local organisations.[104] Lambert was an old acquaintance to

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mentioned in the article, I assume that Kouyaté was the representative of the "kolonialе Neger-Seeleute" (colonial black seamen), Liao the representative of the "chinesischen Wassertransportproletariats" (Chinese maritime transport workers), and Ford, obviously, the representative of the "Neger-Internationale" ("Negro International", i.e., the ITUCNW), see "Reichskonferenz der Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter, Binnenschiffer und Fischer Deutschlands am 7. Juni 1931," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 1 (June 1931): 2.

100 NN [probably Adolf Shelley] to Pechmann, [Hamburg] 13.6.1931, 534/5/221, 155–161, RGASPI; AW, Arbeitsbericht des Sekretariats, Hamburg, 16.6.1931, 534/5/221, 183, RGASPI. The signature 'AW' probably refers to A = Adolf [Shelley] and W = Walter; documents signed by Walter were marked Y or W.

101 Ts [Thomsen] to "Werte Freunde," Bericht Nr 9, Paris 20.7.1931, 534/5/228, 168, RGASPI; Ts [Thomsen] to "Liebe Freunde," Bericht Nr 13, Paris 16.8.1931, 534/5/228, 166–167, RGASPI.

102 Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 71, RGASPI; Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 95, RGASPI. The identity of "Marcel" is not known.

103 [Walter,] Bericht über die Lage in Antwerpen, Belgien, no date, 534/5/220, 120 – 123; Walter, Bericht über die Lage in Rotterdam, 13.12.1930, 534/5/221, 175, RGASPI.

104 Minutes, 16.12.1930, Albert Walter personal file, KV 2/1799, TNA.

Walter; he had left Latvia in 1918 and worked on British and Dutch vessels since then. He was a member of the local SMM branch in Antwerp and had participated at the 1930 October Hamburg Conference.[105] Lambert immediately launched a broadside campaign in *The International Seafarer*, a journal published by the SMM branch in Antwerp (and probably edited by Lambert), in support for the establishment of a red seamen's union in England: "The Seamen's Minority Movement itself is not a trade union, but will become as such in the nearest future … a real militant organ in the class struggle."[106] Not surprisingly, Lambert's campaign received little positive acclamation. British authorities declared him *persona non grata* and arrested him when visiting England in February 1931. Released in April, he returned to Antwerp only to be expelled by the Belgian authorities in June, and spent the following months illegally and jobless in Hamburg until he moved to Rotterdam in late September.[107]

Meanwhile, the Belgian and Dutch comrades started to report some success in their endeavours to start up waterfront activities. The Antwerp Interclub was moved to a new location with more suitable facilities than the old one at the end of 1930. In January 1931, a small revolutionary opposition group had been established within the Belgian Seamen's Union, headed by comrade Verkeest who was also in charge of the Interclub.[108] Six months later, the opposition counted 125 members and constituted the ISH section in Belgium. Work among the harbour workers, on the other hand, backfired in Antwerp; as in France, 'Trotskyists' controlled the union.[109] Similar conditions prevailed at first in Rotterdam: No Interclub and no work among seamen. Albert Walter's commissioned the Dutch communist Joseph (Joop) Rimbertus Schaap (1898–1943) to re-establish work in Rotterdam.[110] A breakthrough was achieved in April 1931 when Schaap reopened the Interclub in Rotterdam and established

105 NN to Walter [introducing Ernst Lambert], 26.9.1930, 534/5/232, 66, RGASPI.

106 *The International Seafarer. Organ of the SMM Antwerpen group* 2, no. 2 (February 1931), filed in Ernst Lambert (Avotin) personal file, KV 2/3729, TNA.

107 Minutes, 30.3.1931, 25.6.1931, 3.8.1931, 1.10.1931, Ernst Lambert (Avotin) personal file, KV 2/3729, TNA.

108 Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 74, RGASPI; ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 183, RGASPI.

109 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 12, RGASPI; ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 183, RGASPI.

110 Bericht über die Lage in Rotterdam, Holland. Aussprache mit der Leitung der Holländischen Partei, Hamburg 13.12.1930, 534/5/221, 175, RGASPI. On Schaap, see Etienne Verhoeyen, " 'De zaak Block en Celis'. De moeizame relatie van de Antwerpse gerechtelijke politie met de Gestapo (1938 – 1941). Deel 1," in *Cahiers Inlichtingenstudies/Cahiers d'études du renseignement* 2, eds. Marc Cools et al. (Antwerpen, Apeldoorn: Maklu, 2012), 19.

a revolutionary opposition group in the seamen's union. Walter sent an instructor – probably Liao Chengzhi – to Rotterdam with special order to start work among Chinese seamen.[111] First results were promising: The opposition counted already 275 members by the end of May. Still, it was a long way for the opposition to gain recognition – the social democratic seamen's union listed 13,000 members, the Catholic seamen's union 2,090 and the nationalist one 1,750.[112]

3.2 *Towards a Red Seamen's Union in Britain?*

The situation in England raised also concern at the ISH headquarters. A promising start was the formation of the Seamen's Minority Movement or SMM in 1929. One year later, the SMM was recognised as the ISH section in England. Following a nationwide campaign, the SMM listed some 2,000 members by the end of 1930.[113] However, the transformation of the SMM into an outright red union backfired almost immediately. In part, this was due the CPGB leadership opposing Hardy's nomination as Secretary of the Minority Movement. Harry Pollitt and William Gallagher, two leading members of the CPGB, tried to block Hardy's nomination at a meeting in Moscow in August 1930. RILU General Secretary Lozovsky intervened and suggested that Hardy was to return to England on the payroll of the RILU and to operate organisationally outside the Minority Movement.[114] Pollitt agreed to this but sent a telegram to Berlin asking them to notify Otto Ville Kuusinen at the Comintern headquarters that the CPGB leadership was "unanimous against proposal making him [i.e., Hardy] Second Secretary MM."[115] The ECCI, in turn, overruled the protest and backed Hardy's nomination as first secretary of the Minority Movement in November 1930.[116]

Hardy's first sojourn as main organiser of the radical waterfront in Britain was a short one. Returning to England after the launching of the ISH, and amply supplied with financial resources, his first ambition was to establish an Interclub in Poplar, London. For this, he approached the leaseholder of 27a Grundy Street with a view to taking over the premises. In addition, the ISH

111 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/221, 62–63, RGASPI.

112 ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 181–182, RGASPI.

113 ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 72–73, RGASPI.

114 (Half-burnt) Inf. Notes, no date (ca. January 1931), George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

115 MASK 25.9.1930, intercepted telegram from Pollitt to COMPARTY Berlin, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 37b, TNA.

116 Protokoll Nr 80 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des EKKI vom 11.11.1930, 495/4/50, RGASPI.

Secretariat was prepared to supply him with more money if he and his mates succeeded in enrolling 5,000 new members within a period of six months. The target, therefore, was set for a campaign to break, at all costs, the NUS.[117] Equally important was the reorganisation of the Indian Seamen's Union in London, being the task of N.J. Upadhyaya under the direction of Hardy.[118]

As Hardy already relocated to Hamburg in mid-November 1930, he could not himself in person monitor the campaign for launching a red seamen's union. Instead, Fred Thompson and other SMM functionaries took over as organisers of the campaign. However, to Hardy's big disappointment, the leadership of the Minority Movement rejected the idea of a red union. Hardy sarcastically remarked to RILU General Secretary Lozovsky: "There is too much talk of 'preparing the basis' etc instead of telling seamen that every member who joins the SMM does so as a definite act of forming the new union."[119] In his mind, the leading comrades of the Minority Movement had totally misunderstood the purpose and tactical outline of the campaign: "The SMM is not organisationally the central point to emphasise. The SMM is only a temporary vehicle for the enrolled members previous to calling port and district conferences to definitively create organisational forms of the new union."[120] Hardy visited England for a meeting with Gallagher in March 1931 and the Minority Movement (probably after having received a reminder from Moscow) finally backed the plan: Regional conferences were to be held in July and August; a national one to be organised in September at with the new red seamen's union was to be established.[121]

However, progress was slow and the ISH headquarters drafted a stiff reminder but, after Pechmann's intervention, never sent it to London.[122] Hardy's deportation from Germany in early June infused new energy into the campaign.[123] In addition, Hardy planned to boost work among Indian seamen. He therefore drafted a leaflet where he invited them to join the new (projected) seamen's union, and ultimately form a union of their own.[124]

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117 J. Bell to Sir Veron Kell, Report re George Hardy, 12.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 66A, TNA.

118 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. Note 7.11.1930, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

119 Hardy to Lozovsky, 20.1.1931, 534/5/220, 15, RGASPI.

120 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Hardy to Watkins, 31.1.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

121 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Gallagher to G. Allison, 21.3.1931. Hardy arrived at Harwich on 17 March and returned on 27 March 1931. George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

122 ISH, MR May 1931, 534/5/221, 176, 185, RGASPI.

123 (Half-burnt) Inf. note 3.7.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

124 (Half-burnt) Inf. note, no date (ca. July 1931), George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

Nevertheless, the expected results were not forthcoming, and according to a police fink's report, Hardy and Thompson were expected to send a memorandum to Moscow about their difficulties. Although Thompson and a few other comrades were continually visiting ports, few of the participants at "enthusiastic" propaganda meetings would remain for longer periods sympathetic to the SMM or even join it, the police fink noted. "It has been found in the great majority of ports that, soon after Thompson and others have departed, the groups formed ceased to function," the main reason being mundane – a lack of sufficient funds to set up an efficient local organisation completed with paid staff and office. The prospect for launching the projected union according to the original time schedule was as far away as ever before: "From what I have seen and been told about the movement by comrades actively working in the group, it will not cut much ice with its present ship shod [sic] organisation."[125] In August, Hardy and Thompson were reported of having a dispute about the date for launching the new union;[126] in early September, Hardy reported to "either Berlin or Moscow" that it would be futile to launch a new union due to the poor organisation in the ports, and warned that it only could end in the collapse of the SMM.[127] Besides, Hardy was disappointed about Upadhyaya's bleak achievements in agitating among Indian seamen, and proposed to the CPGB Colonial Commission to have him replaced by comrade Gunawardena.[128]

The ISH Secretariat, in contrast, had received some positive news about the local activities of the SMM. Fred Thompson reported in February 1931 that branches had been established in most ports, SMM membership had increased to 3,000, and the establishment of Interclubs was in full swing in Hull, Liverpool, London, Newcastle and South Shields.[129] However, the euphoric news soon turned out to be an overstatement. The Interclub in London at 233, High Street, Poplar mainly attracted unemployed youths rather than "real" seamen, its premises being described by a police fink as "beginning to get dirty" and "a certain amount of 'dry rot' has set in there."[130] No work was conducted

125 Report by "F.1," 18.7.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 43A, TNA.

126 (Half-burnt) Inf.note 13.8.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

127 British Intelligence notes, 12.9.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 47A, TNA.

128 (Half-burnt copy) Inf.note, 24.8.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. However, hardy changed his mind at the next meeting of the Colonial Commission and decided to give Upadhyaya one more chance in the Indian Seamen's Union ([Half-burnt copy] Inf. note, [?]10.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

129 ISH, MR February 1931, 534/5/220, 86, RGASPI; Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 72, 75, RGASPI.

130 Report by "F.1," 18.7.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 43A, TNA.

among harbour workers and the Interclubs turned out to be mere offices of call ("Anlaufstellen") rather than outright clubs; "and all of them are badly run, even the one at Poplar," Thompson had to admit.[131] SMM membership fluctuated greatly, and by November, only 350 of its 3,600 members were paying their monthly fees.[132]

3.3 *The Dissolution of the Scandinavian Secretariat and Work in Northern Europe*

The push of the ISH towards Northern Europe faced initial challenges. Gone were the previous units of the IPAC-TW, not least the Interclub in Copenhagen. The situation in Denmark and Sweden was unclear, that in Norway pathetic. The key facilitator in Denmark, Richard Jensen, was marginalised due to the struggles within the Danish Party whereas the split of the Swedish Party in fall 1929 had resulted in a collapse of the revolutionary trade union opposition in the Swedish seamen's and stokers' unions. Even worse, Arthur Samsing, who headed the ISH Scandinavian Secretariat in Oslo, reported that he had no contacts with the comrades in Denmark and Sweden. As few signs of improvement reached the ISH headquarters, Albert Walter decided to disband the Scandinavian Secretariat in April 1931 and instructed Samsing to limit his work to Norway only. However, the publication of *Den internasjonale Transportarbeider*, renamed in January 1931 as *Internasjonal Sjøtransportarbeider – Organ for Sjøfolkenes og Havnearbeidernes International*, was to continue, see Figure 12. The ISH headquarters, in turn, were to open direct connections with the revolutionary opposition groups in Denmark and Sweden.[133]

The decision of dissolving the ISH Scandinavian Secretariat occurred during the midst of an industrial conflict in Norway. The revolutionary opposition in Norsk Matros og fyrbøterunion, the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union, had established itself as Søfolkens RFO (Mariners' Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition) in late 1930. Samsing concentrated his main effort on launching a broadside national campaign as new tariffs were up for negotiations in Norway – the union leadership proposed a prolongation of the tariffs, the shipping industry demanded substantial cuts, and the communists called for salary increases. The initial position of the communists was rather weak – out of the previous 67 ship cells, only ten remained. The Søfolkens RFO had little influence in the union and the Norwegian Party was lukewarm in supporting work

131 Report by "F.1," 15.9.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 46A, TNA.

132 ISH, MR September 1931, 534/5/223, 24, RGASPI; Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 91, RGASPI.

133 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/221, 73, RGASPI.

Nr. 1. Januar 1931. 6. årgang.

INTERNASJONAL — SJØTRANSPORTARBEIDER"

ORGAN FOR SJØFOLKENES OG HAVNEARBEIDERNES INTERNASJONALE

Sjøfolk og Havnearbeidere.

Frem for oprettelsen av Internasjonale Sjømannsklubber.

Den 4. februar 1930 bragte «Arbeideren» et oprop med følgende titel: *«Skap et møtested for de klassebevisste sjøfolk. Et prisverdig tiltak av den kommunistiske sjømannscelle i Oslo».*

Opropet gav en redegjørelse for de forhold som sjøfolkene har å kjempe mot såsom De kristelige sjømannsmisjoners virksomhet, ja ikke bare denne, opropet gav ogsåklarhet over reformistenes virksomhet og særlig disse såkalte «arbeiderledere»s understøttelse av misjonenes arbeide ved å bevilge til misjonens husleie osv. Opropet konkluderte med en opfordring til alle klassebevisste arbeidere og til sjøfolkene selv om å sende bidrag til oprettelse av en Internasjonal sjømannsklubb i Oslo.

I hele det forgange år har dette arbeide pågått, inntil man nu den 1. desember kunde åpne klubben i Oslo.

Den virksomhet som har vært drivet av klubben i den første måned viser klart nødvendigheten av disse klubber. En rekke møter har vært avholdt i desember, møter hvor ordet har stått enhver sjømann fritt. Aviser så å si på alle sprog ligger utlagt. Illustrerte tidsskrifter, sjakkspill osv. Sjøfolkene i Oslo er da også i ganske stor utstrekning fornøiet med klubben og

besøket tiltar daglig. Det er mange som ser på klubben som kun et møtested, oprettet av sjømannscellen. Dette er naturligvis feil. Klubbens opgave, *den største opgave* er å organisere opposisjonen av sjøfolk og havnearbeidere og gi disse anledning til gjennem diskusjonsaftener osv. å få et fullstendig innblikk i den revolusjonære faglige politikk, *som må praktiseres for at arbeiderne kan høine sine lønns- og arbeidsvilkår.*

Klubben er dog ennu ikke økonomisk sikret og har man for å kunne klare sine utgifter vært nødt til både å avholde basar og annet for å holde det gående. Tross det meget gode resultat som innsamlingskampanjen blandt sjøfolkene selv har bragt, står man dig allikevel økonomisk dårlig stillet og vi tillater oss derfor pånу å henstille til alle klassebevisste arbeidere, som forstår betydningen av vårt arbeide blandt sjøfolkene, at disse støtter op om vårt arbeide med økonomiske bidrag.

Vi henstiller også til alle kamerater kysten rundt om å opta arbeidet for oprettelsen av internasjonale sjømannsklubber. Utenom Oslo har vi i Norge *internasjonal sjømannsklubb* kun i *Tromsø*. Der hele vår lange kyst og vi håper inderlig at dette arbeide nu virkelig kommer til å skyte fart både i Bergen og andre steder.

Frem for de internasjonale sjømannsklubber!

Frem for organiseringen av S. H. I. opposisjonsgrupper!

Leve R. F. I.!

Alle bidrag til klubben kan sendes til *Arthur Samsing, box 407, Oslo.*

Styret.

Moskvaprocessen.

Arbeidernes domstol i Moskva har nu avsagt dom over de kontrarevolusjonære banditter som hadde drevet sin forbryterske sabotasjevirksomhet for å hindre den socialistiske opbygging.

De hovedanklagede blev dømt til døden og de øvrige til 10 års fengsel. De anklagede optrådte meget feigt i retten og uttalte ennvidere under rettsforhandlingene at hvis de blev benådet så skulde de sette hele sitt livs energi inn på å delta i den socialistiske opbygging og gjøre godt igjen hvad de hadde forbrutt mot arbeiderstaten.

Ved fornyet behandling blev dødsdommen omgjort til 10 års fengsel og for de øvrige til 8 år.

Sjøfolkene og arbeidsløsheten.

På møte av arbeidsløse sjøfolk i Oslo den 10. desember blev følgende resolusjon vedtatt:

Den økonomiske krise og dens følger for sjøfolkene blir nu for hver dag krassere og krassere.

Skibsopleggingen øker i uhyggelig grad i de fleste kapitalistiske land og fører til en voldsom tilspissning av klassekampen.

I Hamburg alene går over 11 000 arbeidsløse sjøfolk, i England ca. 23 000 og også i andre sjøfarende land som Japan, Amerika, Italia og de skandinaviske land går tusener av sjøfolk uten beskjeftigelse. Elendigheten og nøden vokser fra dag til dag.

Også i Norge går tusener av sjøfolk ledige og nye skarer kommer stadig til gjennem den stadige økning av skibsoplegg.

I en sådan tid ser vi at våre klassefeller i alle land går den rene sultedød i møte. I denne tid ser vi likeså at så å si intet blir gjort for effektivt å avhjelpe arbeidsløsheten.

Sjøfolkenes taglige organisasjon Norsk matros og fyrbøterunion har i en tid som denne kun filantropisk virksomhet å ty til.

Idet de arbeidsløse sjøfolk på det kraftigste protesterer mot at krisens byrder blir lagt på deres skuldre uttaler møtet følgende:

«Det er nødvendig at alle sjøfolk, arbeidsløse som de som står i arbeide, samler sig til kamp for bedring av stillingen.

Møtet vil uttale som sin optatning og overbevisning at den eneste måte virkelig å avhjelpe arbeidsløsheten på blandt sjøfolkene er å sette hele klassens makt inn på gjennemførelsen av kravet om 3 vakter på dekk og 4 vakter i maskinen, uten reduksjon av lønningene eller arbeidsvilkårene forøvrig.

Møtets deltagere uttaler å ville sette hele sin kraft inn på gjennemførelsen av dette og henstiller til sine klassefeller som står i arbeide å delta i denne kamp.

Vi uttaler ennvidere vår tilslutning til de retningslinjer og kamp-

FIGURE 12 *Internasjonal Sjøtransportarbeider – Organ for Sjøfolkenes og Havnearbeidernes International*, journal published by the Scandinavian Section of the ISH.

on the waterfront.[134] The shipping industry attempted to break the unions by declaring a lockout. Negotiations broke down on 3 March 1931, followed by a boycott of Norsk Matros og fyrbøterunion. The Comintern and RILU headquarters ordered the Norwegian Party and the communist trade union opposition to prepare for actions. Communist strike tactics were to follow the 'Unite front from below'-tactic, organised and un-organised seamen were to form communist-led strike committees. Activities were concentrated to Bergen, the main port of the Norwegian coastal shipping fleet. Here, the communists dominated the local branch of the union. On 7 May, the Bergen branch called for a strike on the coastal fleet. However, union leadership rejected the call and the strike failed miserably. The communist opposition was pushed aside and was incapable of stopping the commencement of negotiations. The conflict ended in August/September with the defeat of the shipping industry – and the almost total marginalisation of the Søfolkens RFO. The union excluded all communist members who refused to sign a declaration of support for the union leadership, affecting heavily the Bergen and Oslo branches where the communists had a strong backing.[135] Samsing protested vehemently but only gained the support of the Danish revolutionary opposition.[136]

A far more promising development was at the same time noted in Denmark. New Interclubs had been set up in Odense (summer 1930) and Copenhagen (late fall 1930). Richard Jensen, who had remained his dominant position within the Søfyrbødernes Forbund (Danish Stokers' Union), managed to unite the revolutionary trade union opposition within the union by summer 1931. Although his attempt to topple its socialist leadership failed at the union congress in August, the opposition remained strong with Jensen in control of the Copenhagen branch of the union. Less promising was the situation within the Sømændenes Forbund (Seamen's Union) and the Havnearbejdernes Fællesforbund (Harbour Workers' Union), the Communist revolutionary trade union opposition counted 550 members in the former and only 42 members in the latter union. The three revolutionary trade union opposition groups merged during summer 1931 and subsequently constituted sections of the *Søfolkenens og havnearbejdernes RFO* (The Mariner's and Dockers' RTUO), with branches in Aalborg, Copenhagen, Esbjerg, Odense and Sønderborg. Following a decision made at its first annual conference ("Landskonferens") in September 1931,

134 Walz, Bericht über die Vorbereitung des Kampfes bei den Seeleuten, 18.3.1931, 495/31/134a, 61, RGASPI.

135 Olstad, *Vår skjebne i vår hand*, 141–142, 214–216.

136 "Den norske søfolks kamp under den revolutionaere oppositions ledelse," *Lanternen* 6, no. 8 (1931): 11.

the *Sø- og Havnearbejderen*, the local RFO-journal published by the Esbjerg Interclub, became the mouthpiece of Søfolkenens og havnearbejdernes RFO, renamed in early 1932 as *Rød Kurs* (see Figure 13), while the *Lanternen*, hitherto published by the Copenhagen Interclub, was transformed into the organ of the revolutionary mariners.[137]

The formation of a revolutionary trade union opposition within the maritime unions in Sweden, too, gained momentum in 1931 although the date of its constitution is unclear. Some loosely organised and (minority) communist-led groups continued to exist after the split of the Communist Party. Communist agitation made the headlines in late 1930 when the unions expelled two of its leaders, Knut Björk and Bernt Svensson (see Chapter 3.2.2). The first manifestation of an existing organised opposition was at the First of May parade in 1931 when the revolutionary trade union opposition marched as an own group behinds its own banner. An Interclub was set up in Stockholm and opened its doors on 1 May; a second one was opened in Gothenburg in December 1931. The (minority) Communist press noted that opposition groups had been established in "all ports along the coast" by mid-summer 1931. The formation of the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO climaxed at the first conference of the opposition ("Landskonferens") in August/September. The publication of the first issue of the *Hamn- och sjöproletären* in October 1931 finalised the formation of the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO, see Figure 14.[138]

The slow start in Scandinavia was debated at length at the meeting of ISH Executive Committee in early September 1931.[139] The meeting hastened in the effective formation of the revolutionary trade union opposition within the Scandinavian national maritime unions, e.g., the *Søfolkenes og havnearbejdernes revolutionære fagopposition* in Denmark, the *Sjøfolkens revolusjonære fagopposition* in Norway and the *Sjötransportarbetarnas revolutionära fackopposition* in Sweden. The ISH Executive Committee ordered each of the national communist – revolutionary – trade union oppositions, shortened as RFO, to establish organisational structures, including a national secretariat and local sections or groups. However, as the RFO:s were not independent bodies or trade unions, none of the Scandinavian RFO:s ever applied for membership in the ISH as this could only have been done in the name of a union. On the other hand, the Scandinavian RFO:s claimed in their public appeals and on the front pages of their journals and magazines to constitute the national sections of the ISH – as did the ISH in its own publications.[140]

137 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 268–273, 443, 448.
138 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 284–286, 459, 459.
139 Zweite Plenartagung der Exekutive der ISH, 10-12.9.1931, 534/5/224, 52, RGASPI.
140 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*

RØD KURS

Nr. 1 Januar 1932. 2. Aarg

Organ for Søfolkenes og Havnearbejdernes revolutionære :: Fagopposition i Danmark (R. F. O.) Sektion af I. S. H. ::

Redaktion, Ekspedition og Annonceafdeling: Store Sendervoldstræde 9, 2., København K, Kontortid 9—10 og 19—22

Bryd Hunger-Overenskomsterne!

Nægt at anerkende Kronenedskæringens kæmpemæssige Lønreduktion! — Frem for R. F. O.s Kampkrav! — Forbered den selvstændige Kamp! — Slut Søfolkenes og Havnearbejdernes fælles Front!

Søfolkene og Havnearbejderne er ved at formere deres internationale Samarbejde!

Vi skildrer andetsteds Kampene i Tyskland, England og andre Lande, og gengiver en Del af I. S. H.s Opraab om at tage Kampen op!

Det gælder for hvert eneste Lands Søtransportarbejdere om at virkeliggøre Kampene og udvikle de enkelte Fremstød til et almindeligt Modangreb mod Kapitalens Offensiv!

Vor Lille maa være at skabe den bredeste proletariske **Enhedsfront** — ikke blot for at afværge Klassefjendens Angreb, men for at føre Kampen videre over Frontlinien som en Offensiv for bedre Kaar!

Frivillig Lønreduktion?

Det er lykkedes Rederne ved de socialdemokratiske Forbundsledelsers Hjælp at gennemtvinge en Serie af Forlængelse af Overenskomsterne for Søfolkene! — Forlængelse! Men betyder dette, at Søfolkene skal arbejde videre under de samme Kaar!

Her gælder det for enhver Søtransportarbejder at fastslaa, at den Hyre og den Havnearbejderforening, som talmæssigt under en Forlængelse er den samme, i sin Værdi, i sin Købekraft allerede er forringet, og at den i de kommende Maaneder vil forringes yderligere!

Paa Spørgsmaalet, om Forlængelse betyder samme Kaar, maa vi svare et dundrende:

NEJ!

Vi maa gøre os klart, at:

Kronenedskæringen indebærer en Prisstigning paa indtil 50 pCt.

Dette betyder en reel Lønreduktion paa indtil 33 pCt.

Prisstigningerne har allerede sat ind, f. Eks. for Brød og andre livsnødvendige Varer!

Søfolkenes Hyrer i udenlandske Havne er allerede reduceret med en Tredjedel!

Andre Landes Søfolk arbejder Side om Side med os for den samme Hyre som før, mens skandinaviske og engelske Søfolks Hyrer er reduceret med en Tredjedel, hvad der betyder et halvsmalt Fremstød for de skandinaviske og engelske Rederes, der fragter til de internationale Rater! Havnekapitalisterne opnaar en lignende Fordel!

Kapitalist-Offensivens Omfang!

Ved en frivillig Forlængelse fra vor Side lykkes det saaledes Kapitalisterne at undvige at tilbrage sig et langt større Løntryk, end f. Eks. Metalindustriens Kapitalister opnaaede ved Reduktionen paa 8 pCt. sidste Aar!

Og yderligere gennem Indskrænkning af Besaadningen, gennem Forceringen af Arbejdstempoet i Skibe og i Havne har Kapitalisterne gennemført en Forringelse af den betalte Løn!

Dampskibene lægges op, mens Motorskibene er i Fart, og her er Besætningernes Antal ofte kun en Tiendedel af Fyrbødernes Antal paa Dampskibe af lignende Størrelse. Atter Besparelse — paa vor Bekostning!

„Forlængelse" betyder under disse Forhold Vedtagelse af Hunger-Overenskomster!

Bryd Overenskomsterne!

Under disse Forhold kan Søtransportarbejdere under ingen Omstændigheder fortsat arbejde under de gamle Overenskomster!

Ved Erik Jacobsen og Chr. Borglund.

(Fortsættes Side 2).

Femaarsplanen paa tre Aar.

Ifølge Femaarsplanen skulde Leningrads Industri i Økonomiaaret 1932—33 levere en Produktion til en Værdi af 3450 Millioner Rubler. Den 31. December kunde det imidlertid fastslaas, at Aarets Produktion havde været 3460 Mill. Rubler.

Paa de 3 Aar er Produktionen forøget med 114 pCt., Arbejderens reelle Gennemsnitsløn er steget med 42 pCt., og over fire Femtedele af Byens 414,000 Industriarbejdere har fået gennemført 7 Timersdagen.

Sammen med en Række andre Byer og Industriområder staar Lenins By saaledes som Bevidst paa den fulde Gennemførelse af Femaarsplanen for den socialistiske Opbygning — ja, paa langt kortere Tidsrum end beregnet.

Som en straalende Kendsgerning knuser den en Abramowitsch's kontrarevolutionære Løgne!

MATROSER! Stem et afgjort Ja!

Ud af I. T. F. og S. T. F.! Ind i I. S. H.!

Sømandenes Forbund har nu udsendt Stemmesedlen, som gengiver den Resolution, der blev vedtaget af Generalforsamlingens Flertal!

Ingen Matros maa snige General-forsamlingens Beslutning! Skriv paa den punkterede Linie efter Spørgsmaalet: „Ønsker du Forslaget ... blot Ordet: „JA"!

Spørgsmaalet maa drøftes overalt paa Skibe og Kontordistrikter. Kammerater, tilhørende uavsluk Socialfascisternes Indflydelse!

„Ny Tid" indeholder saaledes en Artikel, hvor Lars Larsen forsøger at forvirre Matroserne.

Det er karakteristisk, at kun en **I. T. F.** ikke kan nævne eet eneste Eksempel paa, at den har været Sømandene til Nytte!

Om Skandinavisk Transportarbejder-Federation er hans „Argument" den finske Konflikt i 1928, — netop et tydeligt Bevis paa S. T. F.-Pamperes Forrederi, idet Lyngsie og de øvrige D. A. F.-Ledere under en Flom af Fraser hindrede de danske Havnearbejderes Solidaritetskamp! Og ved Lappos Hjælp fik Reformisterne i Finland de revolutionære Fagforeninger splittet, saa deres gule Fagforeninger kunde faa frit Spillerum! Transportfagforeningerne er tilsluttet S. T. F.! Disse Kendsgerninger er det mest afgørende Bevis paa saavel S. T. F.- som I. T. F.-Pampernes Samspil med Kapitalister og Fascister, — og netop derfor søger Pamperne at bilde Matroserne deres Løgne ind!

Stemmer! Tilbagevis Pampernes Løgnekampagne og stem JA!

— — Vi henviser til Spidsartiklen Side 3.

I. S. H. raaber til Kamp!

Af I. S. H.s Opraab til det internationale Søtransportproletariat:

Paa eet Punkt er de internationale Udbyttere og Undertrykkere dog enige: at for den Sags Skyld den eneste Udvej af Krisen, den eneste Redning fra deres Herredømmes Sammenbrud i nye Lønner, nye Forringelser af Arbejdsbetingelserne, i skærpet fascistisk Terror, fremskyndede Rustninger til nye imperialistiske Krige, i nye Krigsprovokationer.....

Søfolk og Havnearbejdere i alle Lande! Vor paa Vagt! Jeres Løsninger er paany trængt. Rust til Kamp mod den internationale Kapitals nye Undertrykkelsesplaner! Rust til Kamp mod hver Dros Lønnedskæring!...

Valg paa hvert Skib, paa hver Havnearbejdsplads, paa hvert Kontrolsted forberedende Kampudvalg, som Organer for Enhedsfronten.....

I har ingen Tid at tabe, Søtransportens Proletarer i Tyskland og Danmark, Havnearbejdere i England, Frankrig, Sverige, Norge, franske og hollandske Søfolk! Jer alle trues Lønnevet allerede nu! I maa alle afvarge det ved Strejke!

Proletarer paa Skibe og i Havne! I. V. F. i Amsterdam og dens Sektioner organiserer Strejkebrudslet og Lønsvet, tjener Kapitalens Interesser.....

Søtransportproletariatets eneste Kampinternationale er I. S. H., Sømandenes og Havnearbejdernes Internationale i Hamburg.....

Søtransportarbejdere i alle Lande, foren jer under I. S. H.s Banner! Svar med Strejke paa hvert Lønnedskæring! Styrk den internationale Enhedsfront af Søfolk og Havnearbejdere til Kamp mod Kapitalens Offensiv!

120 døde Skibe.

Katastrofal Vækst i Arbejdsløsheden! Styrk Kampen mod Arbejdsløshed og Undertrykkelse!

I December overtraf de indregistrerede Arbejdsløsses Antal de 100,000. Hertil kommer de utallige Titusinder Landet over.

Utrolig stiger Tallet med omkring en halv Snes Tusind. Den 8. Januar naaede Tallet 136,000!

Heriblandt er **mange Tusind** [illegible]

Opsugningsevne har aldrig haft et Omfang som denne Vinter. Allerede nu har Tallet passeret 120 paa halt langt over 350,000 Tons.

Arbejderantallet i Havnene og Mandskabet om Bord indskrænkes, bl. a. ved Bygningen af nye, store Motorskibe som ø. Ka „Ferrie".

Borgerskabet udfordrer!

Netop dette Skib — bygget under den voldsomme Krise, mens Massernes Nød og Elendighed stiger, mens Søtransportarbejderne skal paatvinges Hungerovereenskomsterne ved Forlængelse trods Kronefald — vorer Rederne og Dagspressen i høje Toner at skraale op om den hidtil skændte Luksus, som præger H. N. Andersens Nyerhvervelse.

Det er der Penge nok til — her gælder det Udbytternes Selvopholdelsesdrift og Overlevningshed!

Borgerskabet bygger nye Forlystelsespalæer — som „National-Scala", der vurderes til 12½ Mill. Kr. eller mere end hele Stauninger Bluff-Kriseh jælp til de Arbejdsløses Titusinder!

Alene Nytaarsnat soldede Bourgeoisiet en Million Kr. op i de store Restauranter.

— — — Imens sulter de Arbejdsløse, som Beregnet deres Familier udgør en Hær paa op imod en halv Million Mennesker, prisgivet Elendigheden!

De Arbejdsløse svarer med Kamp!

I fælles Front med de Arbejdende organiserer de Arbejdsløse deres Kamp for Arbejde og Brød!

Arbejdsløshedskonferencen d. 13. December lagde Retningslinierne for Arbejdet.

„Det grundlæggende Princip er," hedder det i Beslutningen, „at kun de Arbejdsløse selv, i Samarbejde med de arbejdende Kammerater og under egen, af dem selv valgt Ledelse er i Stand til at bekæmpe Arbejdsløshedens og dens Følger. Vi vil ikke danne nye Organisationer, ikke organisatorisk skille de Arbejdsløse ud fra de Arbejdende. Den saalænge Fare er derfor de direkte paa Kontrolstedet valgte Aktionsudvalg."

Aktionsudvalgene valgte paa det vedtagne Grundlag og udarbejder Program med Krav. Det hilses derefter af Møder med de Arbejdende og samarbejder med andre Kontrolsteders Udvalg gennem Fællesudvalget. Det tager sig af alle Spørgsmaal vedrørende de Arbejdsløse.

Fællesudvalget har som Organer: Organisationsudvalg, Hjælpekassenudvalg, Fagligudvalg, Udv. for Samarbejde med Bedrifterne, fagligt Udvalg. De Arbejdsløse oges registreret, uden at dette maa føre til Organisationsdannelse.

Økonomien skaffes ved frivillige Indsamlinger bl. a. de Arbejdsløse og [illegible] Fagforeninger o. l.

Mobilisér til Kampen!

Paa dette organisatoriske Grundlag maa Kampen føres.

D. 14. Januar gennemføres en Kampdag i Landsmaalestok.

D. 31. Januar og d. 1. Februar gennemføres Vinterens første Landskonference.

Hvor Søfolk og Havnearbejdere endnu ikke er gaaet i Gang med Arbejdet, maa dette øjeblikkelvet tages op! I alle Havnebyer maa vi organisere Udvalg og det daglige Arbejde, mobilisere til Deltagelse i Landskonferencen, i Demonstrationerne, i alle Aktioner!

Vi maa slutte Fronten mellem Arbejdende og Arbejdsløse — til Kamp mod Hunger-Overenskomster og Arbejdsløshed!

Frem til Kamp for **Arbejde, Brød og Frihed!**

Knipler for Brød!

Den 14. Januar fornyedes 18,000 københavnske Arbejdere en mønstervordig Arbejdsløshedsdemonstration for Arbejde og Brød! Store Grupper af Søfolk og Havnearbejdere deltog.

Paa Raadhuspladsen blev Demonstrationen overfaldet af knippebevæbnet Politi, der med enestaaende Brutalitet hagsede Forfrappen med, saa Blodet flod, og splittede Demonstrationen! 6 Anholdelser og 2 Hospitalsindlæggelser — deriblandt vor E.F.O.-Kammerat, Matros Mads Jensen, der frygtes for at have faaet Kraniebrud — var Politibanditternes „Høst" den Dag! Ordren var givet af den socialdemokratiske Kommune og af Stauning-Regeringen!

Men Arbejderne finder sig ikke i at faa Knipler for Brød! Kampen forstærkes, ved med Polititerroren. Gaden fri! Under Fællesudvalgets Ledelse frem til nye Kampe for Arbejde, Brød og Frihed!

— — — Opraa i Provinsen gennemførte store Demonstrationer 14. Januar. Saaledes i Esbjerg, hvor Søtransportarbejderne mødte frem i Masser, og hvor Smedens paa Jensen & Olsens Maskinfabrik nedlagde Arbejdet for at deltage!

FIGURE 13 *Rød Kurs*, the organ of the Danish section of the ISH.

Proletärer i alla land, förenen er.

HAMN- OCH SJÖPROLETÄREN

ORGAN FÖR SJÖTRANSPORTARBETARNAS R. F. O.

Nr 1. Årg. 2 | För SJÖMANS OCH HAMNARBETAR INTERNATIONALEN Box 2102, Stockholm II | Januari 1932

Sjötransporten är kapitalismens vitalaste nerv.

Kamp mot reduceringar!

Avtalen äro »prolongerade» för Eldare- och Sjömans-Unionerna enligt reformisternas önskan. Så fort man räknat röstetalet samt konstaterat majoritet för *prolongering* av avtalet verkställde styrelserna detta och basunerade ut sin seger om vilket oerhört förtroende medlemmarna visat sin »ledning».

Den Röda Fackliga Oppositionen har betecknat denna av reformisterna genomdrivna »prolongation» som förräderi och skoj med medlemmarnas intressen. Som bevisföring för detta konstaterar oppositionen att det avtal som reformisterna säger sig ha prolongerat var underskrivet 1929 och hyressatsernas kronoantal baserat på guldvaluta. Man har ej prolongerat vårt gamla avtal utan REFORMISTERNA HAR UNDERTECKNAT ET AVTAL PÅ GRUNDVAL AV INFLATIONSKRONA LIKA MED ENLÖNEREDUCERING PÅ 25—30 %. Reformisterna själva skall få bekräfta vad vi här ovan slagit fast:

I decembernumret av tidningen »Eldaren» finnes en artikel med rubrik AVTALSOMRÖSTNINGEN i vilken Eldar-Unionens »förtroendeman» SVEN LUNDGREN skriver följande: HOS OSS KRÄVER ARBETSGIVAREN INOM INDUSRIN LÖNEREDUCERINGAR OCH SJÖFOLKET, SOM PROLONGERAT AVTALET *FÅR EN VISS LÖNEREDUCERING* GENOM ATT DEN SVENSKA KRONAN SJUNKIT I VÄRDE FÖR UPPKÖP AV FÖRNÖDENHETSARTIKLAR I UTLANDET. Nu konstaterar pamparna själva att de har lurat medlemmarna, men innan avtalet var »prolongerat» förklarade dessa herrar uttryckligen för medlemmarna att man inte skulle gå med på några försämringar utan strid. Den ende av reformisterna som varit någorlunda »ärlig» i sina uttalanden till medlemmarna innan avtalet »prolongerades» var herr ombudsmannen Nilsson i Malmö. På ett avdelningsmöte för Sjömans-Unionen tvingades han av oppositionen att yttra sig om det nuvarande avtalet. Herr Nilsson kunde endast konstatera faktum att REDARNA LYCKATS VÄNDA »SEGERN» FÖR UNIONERNA FRÅN 1929 TILL ETT NEDERLAG. Vår kamrat fann sig föranlåten att ställa en direkt fråga till herr Nilsson om det var hans mening att förorda medlemmarna att »prolongera» detta nederlag? Herr Nilsson blev svarslös.

På ett annat ställe i detta nummer återfinnes en artikel som belyser reformistpamparnas förutseende när det gäller att skydda sig själva vad det gäller en kommande dyrtid (här syftas på Unionernas styrelsers krav om löneförhöjning vilket de genomdrev på kongresserna 1930). För att ytterligare belysa reformisternas politik i dessa valutakrisernas tider skall vi citera ett litet uttalande av I. T. F:s Exekutivkommittés sammanträde den 18—19 november 1931. Där det låter så här: *Även inkomsterna i form av medlemsavgift uppvisade en sund utveckling, varav upphävandet av guldmyntfoten i en del länder medförde SVÅRIGHETER. Man beslöt emellertid rikta de anslutna organisationernas uppmärksamhet på att medlemsavgiften skall erläggas i Holländsk valuta.* Så låter det från I. T. F. i valutafrågan när det gäller att bibehålla sina inkomster. Här konstaterar vi att reformisterna deltager hänsynslöst i den av kapitalisterna inledda hungeroffensiven mot arbetarklassen.

Vilka blir det som får bära följderna av detta I. T. F:s beslut? Naturligtvis blir det medlemmarna i de länder vars valuta har fallit katastrofalt. Här ser vi återigen konsekvenserna av reformisternas förräderi: För det första har reformisterna gjort upp ett avtal på basis av inflationskronan som innebär att vi fått lönereducering. För det andra kräver reformisterna i I. T. F. av de medlemmar som först fått lönereducering, att när medlemsavgiften skall betalas skall detta ske med Holländsk valuta vilket innebär en direkt kontingentförhöjning. Nu återstår blott det tredje angreppet mot medlemmarnas lönenivå och det blir väl antagligen att våra pampar i El-

Så här tänker sig tecknaren framtiden för de arbetslösa om fackföreningspamparna skall leda de arbetslösa.

FIGURE 14 *Hamn- och sjöproletären*, the organ of the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO, the Swedish section of the ISH.

The situation in the Baltic Sea region, in turn, was a complicated one and the ISH headquarters had few if any directs links to Estonia, Finland, and Latvia in 1931.[141] The situation in Finland had been very disappointing. Communist party and trade union activities was illegal since the end of the Civil War in 1918. Nevertheless, the communists circumvented the ban and had via radical left-wing socialist organisations managed to gain a strong position within the unions during the 1920s. The chaos of 1929 unleashed by the implementation of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine heavily affected the hitherto communist-dominated unions, not least in the Finnish Seamen's and Stokers' Union (Suomen merimiesten ja lämmittäjien unioni/Finska sjömans- och eldareunionen). Finnish Communism split into two fractions, the left-wing socialists and the Comintern-loyal communists. The tug of war between the two fractions also paralysed the union in 1930. The communists pushed for the implementation of the Strassburg Theses, the left-wing socialists including union leader Karl Ahonen rejected them. When Ahonen and the union leadership voted against the acceptance of the so-called Copenhagen treaty on cooperation between the Scandinavian, Finnish and Russian water transport unions, the communist fraction deposed the left-wing socialist leadership at the union congress in May 1930. As a counter-measure, the left-wing socialist and social democratic members established a new union and registered it with the same name as the old union. The communist-controlled old union lingered on during summer but its existence was cut short by the introduction of the so-called Communist Laws by the Finnish Parliament in September 1930. Former members of the old union joined the new union – never openly as Communists – and the union leadership reported about the existence of a cryptic 'revolutionary trade union opposition' (Vallankumouksellinen ammattillinen oppositio, VAO) in autumn 1931. Not much is known about the activities of the VAO and at least Albert Walter and the ISH headquarters had, at this point, no connections to it. One year later, Hamburg emerged as the centre for not only the Finnish but also the Estonian and Latvian revolutionary opposition as will be outlined in Section 6.3 in this chapter.[142]

3.4 *Southern Europe*

Following the strategic outline of the ISH, the ISH Latin Secretariat in Paris was responsible for coordinating and supervising the activities of the ISH sections in the Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain).

141 ISH, MR September–October 1931, 534/5/223, 26, RGASPI.

142 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 294–300.

Top priority was the reactivation of the illegal Italian union FILM. Already in January 1930, the RILU ordered its reorganisation and emphasised the need for agitation and propaganda among Italian seamen residing outside Italy. About 40,000 of them, the RILU stated, had emigrated from Fascist Italy and worked on vessels of other nations. So far, the FILM had been inactive and the IPAC-TW instructed the FILM headquarters in Marseille to cooperate with the Interclubs in order to start illegal activities in Italy and among Italian seaman.[143] However, work in Marseille was slow to take off. Meanwhile, the Interclubs in Soviet Black Sea ports had organised the largest units of the FILM.[144]

Other operational areas in the Mediterranean were also difficult to open up. Anarcho-syndicalists controlled the maritime unions in Portugal and Spain; the communist-led fractions were marginal and their contacts with the ISH weak. A different situation prevailed at first in Greece where the revolutionary trade union opposition within the seamen's union affiliated with the ISH. The position of the opposition seemed to be strong – listing about 2,000 of the union's 4,500 members, with major branches in Piraeus (800 members) and Thessaloniki (400 members). However, the clampdown on communist trade union activities by the Greek government and the arrest of the leaders of the opposition paralysed activities.[145] On the other hand, the opposition had managed to set up an Interclub in Piraeus and planned to open another one in Thessaloniki. The ISH Secretariat reacted promptly and sent an (unidentified) instructor to Piraeus.[146] Nevertheless, the comrades at the ISH headquarters were not impressed by the achievements of the ISH Latin Secretariat and sent Luigi Polano on a mission to Paris in October 1931.[147]

The ISH also projected to establish opposition groups in ports along the Danube. The core idea was to establish a transnational network parallel to the one projected for the River Rhine, originally initiated at a conference held in Duisburg in February 1930 (the 1930 Duisburg Conference, see Chapter 5.4.1). An opportunity to form the Danube link opened when the local trade union opposition groups in Austria contacted Albert Walter in January 1931 and proposed

143 NN to Comité de reorganisation et de reconstitution de la FILM, 2.2.1930, 534/5/217, 10, RGASPI; Theses sur l'activité de la FILM, 16.2.1930, 534/5/217, 11 – 15, RGASPI; NN to "Werte Genossen," 14.6.1930, 534/5/216, 31, RGASPI.

144 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/221, 61, RGASPI; Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 72, RGASPI.

145 German translation of Comrade Maurice's [Luigi Polano] report on the situation in Greece, 23.8.1931, 534/5/222, 72–73, RGASPI.

146 ISH, MR September – October 1931, 534/5/223, 24, RGASPI.

147 Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 88–89, RGASPI.

to establish an Interclub in Linz.[148] The news induced Walter to form the so-called Danube Committee in April 1931 as a co-ordination body for transnational activities in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Romania.[149] A few months later, he reported the first promising achievements: Revolutionary trade union opposition groups had been formed in Linz and Vienna, agitation had started among port workers in Romania, and the ISH considered to establish Interclubs in Bratislava and Vienna.[150] That in Vienna started its operations in fall 1931, consisting of Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, German, Hungarian, Romanian and Yugoslavian sections.[151]

3.5 *North America, Latin America, Asia and Australia*

The ambition of the ISH was to become a global player and its first manifesto invited all revolutionary maritime transport workers' unions and opposition groups to affiliate with the new organisation. The 1930 October Hamburg Conference, the starting point of the ISH, raised high hopes for the revitalisation the global outreach of the IPC-TW/IPAC-TW which, at its heydays, had links to opposition groups on all continents apart from Africa. However, the global ambition proved much more difficult and time-consuming to accomplish than the leading comrades had foreseen.

The main obstacle for achieving a global outreach were dysfunctional intercontinental communications or rather their absence. Intra- and trans-European contacts between Hamburg and the various national sections and Interclubs proved difficult to maintain although the ISH Secretariat had the capacity to intervene by sending instructors to various locations in Europe. On the other hand, the ISH Secretariat had only weak and indirect links to extra-European sections and units. Instead, the ISH Secretariat totally relied on the regional units of the RILU and IPAC-TW in New York, Montevideo, and Vladivostok. As communications with these units were usually slow and irregular, the ISH Secretariat had few if any means at its disposal to intervene lest to direct and monitor activities outside Europe.

Initially, the extra-European units of the ISH constituted of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU) in the USA, the Comite Maritimo y Portuario Latino Americana (CMPLA) in Montevideo, and the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of

148 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 12, RGASPI.

149 Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 73, RGASPI.

150 Walter, Arbeitsbericht der ISH, Hamburg 21.8.1931, 534/5/222, 67, RGASPI.

151 Länderbericht Österreich, in Zweite Plenartagung der Exekutive der ISH, 10–12.9.1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

Transport Workers in Vladivostok. However, only the two former ones were officially affiliated with the ISH (see Figure 2), the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers was organisationally never subordinated or even linked to the ISH. The MWIU and the CMPLA, in turn, communicated at times directly with the RILU headquarters and the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow.

An illuminating example of the complex if not complicated relationship between the ISH Secretariat and the extra-European units occurred in 1931 when the ISH headquarters made an effort to intervene in the MWIU. Communications had been patchy and irregular after George Mink's return to the USA in autumn 1930. Distressing news started to reach Hamburg a few months later. Returning German seamen informed the ISH headquarters about chaotic conditions within the MWIU and the Interclubs. The crisis resulted in an intervention of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), the US-branch of the RILU, not the ISH, during spring 1931. At the end of the crisis, out of 6,000 MWIU-members only 1,200 remained, and the MWIU was active only in New York, Norfolk and New Orleans.[152] As a solution to the impasse in the USA, the ISH Secretariat presented a list of radical changes among the MWIU-leadership. Most notably, Harry Hynes was to replace George Mink as president; Mink was to reorganise and lead the Interclub in New Orleans; work was to focus on seamen only and to be concentrated to New York, Chicago, New Orleans and San Francisco.[153] However, the ISH Secretariat had no means to insure the implementation of its instructions.[154]

Monitoring activities in Latin America also proved unrealistic. Walter planned to strengthen regional activities and reserved USD 300 to pay for the establishment of an Interclub in Buenos Aires. The sum was to be sent to the CMPLA but no news was received from Montevideo for months.[155] Walter attempted to contact the CMPLA via the RILU Berlin Bureau and even recommended to move the Montevideo Bureau to Buenos Aires.[156] Finally, a report

152 ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 73, RGASPI; ISH, MR February 1931, 534/5/220, 86, RGASPI; Kurze Übersicht der Tätigkeit der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter im Zeitraum vom Oktober 1930 bis April 1931, 12.5.1931, 534/5/221, 72, RGASPI.

153 Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 97, RGASPI.

154 Eventually, the CPUSA and the TUUL intervened and nominated Roy Hudson and Harry Hynes as collective leaders of the MWIU; Mink was placed as head of the Interclub in New Orleans (Bericht der ISH, 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 44–45, RGASPI). See further Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, 36–48.

155 ISH, MR November 1930, 534/5/219, 46, RGASPI; ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 73, RGASPI.

156 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 11, RGASPI; ISH, MR February 1931, 534/5/220, 85, RGASPI.

from the CMPLA reached Hamburg in April 1931. The comrades in Montevideo assured him that they did their utmost to popularise the decisions of the 1930 October Hamburg Conference. However, the plans for opening an Interclub in Buenos Aires proved illusory.[157]

The ambitions to intervene or instruct the comrades in Montevideo were impossible as long as the ISH Secretariat lacked technical personnel fluent in Spanish (or Portuguese). Consequently, and much to the dismay of the comrades at the ISH headquarters, the ISH reported about sections existing in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay but it had no direct links to them. In fact, a Resolution by the RILU on the activities of ISH, the RILU June 1931 Resolution, see further Section 5.1 in this chapter, clearly indicates that the ISH Secretariat had not managed to establish direct contacts with any union or opposition group in Latin America and the Caribbean by mid-1931. Somewhat unrealistically, the Resolution instructed the ISH Secretariat "to give broad and systematic assistance" to the CMPLA and its affiliated organisations in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Further, it ordered the ISH Executive Committee to "set up close connections with the revolutionary class organisations of seamen and dockers, in particular with the Federation of Seamen of Uruguay, the Calao Seamen's Union (Peru), and like wise [sic] with the Paraguayan Seamen's League." Similarly, Moscow expected the ISH Secretariat to get in contact with organisations "not yet affiliated" to the CMPLA. In addition, the RILU impelled the ISH Secretariat to "systematically maintain connections with the Carribean [sic] sub-committee of the fraternal Latin American Trade Union Confederation" and to establish contacts with "countries belonging or closely situated to the Caribbean zone."[158]

A special target group were maritime transport workers in the British Caribbean. Interestingly, the thrust into the Caribbean was raised by the ECCI Eastern Secretariat already in February 1931. In its instruction to the Central American Bureau, the CPUSA and the All-America Anti-Imperialist League of work in the British Caribbean, the ECCI Eastern Secretariat identified the maritime transport workers as the "leading section of the West Indian proletariat." Agitation and propaganda among them had been conducted by the Interclubs in New York and New Orleans, the Instructions noted, although the MWIU, in particular, was urged to put more effort on its engagement, not least

157 ISH, April 1931, 534/5/221, 62, RGASPI.

158 The Situation, The Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (Resolution on the report of Comrade Hardy and Walter --- the Chairman and General Secretary of the Seamen and Dockers' International), 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 121–122, RGASPI.

in establishing contacts and either forming revolutionary unions or establishing revolutionary groups within the unions in the British Caribbean islands. Once such groups had been formed, the MWIU together with the RILU Sub-Committee for Caribbean Countries in New York and the ITUCNW, should render assistance in the formation of a West Indian Marine Workers' Union. In order to achieve this objective, the ECCI Eastern Secretariat proposed the opening of an Interclub "in a leading port."[159] Interestingly, the Instructions made no reference to the ISH Secretariat. On the other hand, the MWIU figured as this point as the "American Bureau" of the ISH, especially in its outreach to the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the ECCI Political Commission charged the Eastern Secretariat to discuss the location of the envisioned Interclub in the British Caribbean with the RILU Secretariat.[160] The deliberations in Moscow, it seems, rendered few results. If there were any concrete plans, the ISH Secretariat were never informed about them. Besides, in its own strategic planning, the ISH Secretariat never identified a port in the British Caribbean for the location of an Interclub.

The only direct extra-European interventions of the ISH Secretariat concerned work among Chinese and Japanese seamen. The ISH Secretariat was in contact with the illegal Japan opposition through telegraph connections to Vladivostok although the PPTUS was in charge of strategic supervision of the Japanese section. Nevertheless, international campaigns in support of the Japanese section were to be directed by the ISH International Secretariat.[161] Far more ambitious were the plans to boost the activities of the illegal Chinese Seamen's Union. The union, which was an affiliated member of the ISH and listed some 1,000 members, was also monitored through the PPTUS and the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers. The ISH Secretariat, in turn, disseminated the Chinese Seamen's Unions' calls for an international campaign to support the seamen's strike in China.[162] A "semi-legal" Interclub was established in Shanghai in April 1931 as an attempt to reactive underground activities

159 Draft. Confidential letter, translated from Russian, [ECCI Eastern Secretariat] To the Central American Bureau, CCCPUSA, and the Secretariat of the Anti-Imperialist League. Proposals for the Organisation of Work in the British West Indies, 12.2.1931, 495/4/85, 338, RGASPI.

160 Protokoll Nr 117 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 3.2.1931, 495/4/85, RGASPI.

161 [George Hardy] President to Provisional Executive Committee Members, Hamburg 5.2.1931, 534/5/220, 62, RGASPI.

162 ISH, MR December 1930, 534/5/219, 73, RGASPI; ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 12, RGASPI.

in China.[163] However, the main target of the ISH Secretariat were Chinese seamen residing in European ports, see further Section 4.4 in this chapter.

Direct connections with the two ISH sections in the Far East were of strategic importance, not least from Moscow's perspective. The Chinese section "must do everything to intensify activities on the coasting [sic] ships, which are of great importance in transporting munition against Soviet districts," the RILU resolution stressed. In addition, the Japanese (illegal) section was to strengthen the revolutionary trade union opposition among the seamen as well as "take all necessary measures to penetrate into the masses of dock workers." However, the role of the ISH Secretariat remains unclear in the Resolution, apart from being impelled to "set up firm connections" with its organisations in China and Japan.[164]

Similar weak links existed with the opposition in the Seamen's Union of Australia. Nevertheless, connections had been established by April 1931 and the opposition was listed as a "sympathising" member of the ISH. In practice, the ISH Secretariat had no capacity to influence the opposition or to supervise activities at the Sydney Interclub.[165] Interestingly, the RILU Resolution did not instruct the ISH to intensify its connections to Australia.

4 Guidelines for Work among Colonial Seamen

One of the prime target groups of the national sections of the ISH were colonial seamen. Already the October 1930 Resolution of the ISH underscored the ambition of "uniting workers of imperialist, colonial and semi-colonial countries under one revolutionary banner." Colonial mariners, the Resolution emphasised, were exploited and robbed of their elementary rights. The shipowners as well as the "social fascist and fascist" union leaders, in turn, were accused to promote chauvinist tendencies and race hatred among white maritime transport workers.[166] The objective of the ISH was to fight against chauvinism, exploitation, racism and segregation, its task to emerge as the

163 ISH, MR February 1931, 534/5/220, 87, RGASPI; ISH, Half-Year Report October 1930–April 1931, 534/5/221, 74, RGASPI.

164 The Situation, The Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (Resolution on the report of Comrade Hardy and Walter --- the Chairman and General Secretary of the Seamen and Dockers' International), 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 122, RGASPI.

165 ISH, Half-Year Report October 1930–April 1931, 534/5/221, 74, RGASPI.

166 Resolution adopted by the International Conference of Seamen and Dockers, held at Hamburg, October 3rd, in Hardy, *A Fighting International of Marine Workers*, 29.

champion of the oppressed colonial maritime transport workers and to support them to develop their unions in every country. "Economic, political and social equality will be its central slogan in defending and organising coloured and colonial seamen," declared George Hardy.[167]

The British and the French sections were especially to focus on black seamen. This was in tandem with the instructions the ECCI sent to the CPGB and PCF in August 1930.[168] The Minority Movement, the instructions stressed, was to organise black seamen in Cardiff, Liverpool and South Shields.[169] The CGTU, in turn, was to intensify its work among black maritime transport workers, and to establish separate black unions or locals in Bordeaux and Marseille. The Port Bureaus in France were ordered to take responsibility for agitation and propaganda work among black mariners instead of leaving it in the hands of the LDRN, as hitherto had been the case.[170] However, as previously noted and will be discussed further below, work among colonial, especially black, seamen remained weak and the parties and revolutionary trade union opposition were slow in targeting them. As a reaction to this, the ISH Secretariat published in 1931 its guidelines for work among colonial seamen, termed *Resolution on the Colonial Work of the Sections of the I.S.H. in the Capitalist Counties* (hereafter ISH Colonial Resolution) to which all national sections had to commit themselves. The tenor of the guidelines was radical: All ISH sections as well as the revolutionary trade union opposition groups were to adhere to strict colour-blindness and open their ranks to non-white members.

The drafting and redrafting of the ISH Colonial Resolution was a protracted affair. George Hardy opened the discussion in January 1931, and proposed the formation of branches for colonial seamen within the ISH sections unless there already existed national unions in the home countries of the colonial seamen, such as China and India. Existing extra-territorial units of the Chinese and Indian seamen, he proposed, were to become branches of their respective unions. The critical point was Hardy's suggestion of establishing special

167 Hardy, *A Fighting International of Marine Workers*, 26.

168 Protokoll Nr 77 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 23.8.1930, 495/4/47, RGASPI.

169 (Draft) Confidential letter to the CPGB, 16.8.1930, enclosed in Protokoll Nr 77 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 23.8.1930, 495/4/47, 20–23, RGASPI. This letter echoes an earlier one sent by the 'Negro Bureau' and the Anglo-American Secretariat of the Comintern in March 1929, calling the attention of the British Party to focus on work among black seamen, see further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 150.

170 (Draft) Confidential letter to the CC of the CPF, 22.8.1930, enclosed in Protokoll Nr 77 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 23.8.1930, 495/4/47, 28–33, RGASPI.

branches of colonial seamen within the national revolutionary trade union opposition:

> Where no colonial union exists, then colonial seamen must be organised into a branch of the revolutionary union in the imperialist country, after which, and when sufficient members exist to warrant it, a national union of these colonial seamen can be organised with headquarters in their own countries, if possible (for instance West Africans). The branches of colonial unions must work always according to the policy of their own union, but also as an integral part of the union in the imperialist countries. This should ensure close cooperation, although language will be a barrier as well as economic and social conditions, making it necessary to hold separate meetings, with an exchange of delegates, etc. When special political meetings are being discussed, they must, of course, be joint meetings with interpreters. Joint discussions over special claims can be had such compensation for crippled colonial seamen's claims for unpaid money, victimisation, etc.[171]

Liao Chengzhi and James W. Ford, the two organisers of work among colonial seamen by the Hamburg Interclub, supported Hardy's idea and he commissioned them to redraft his original text for the guidelines in January 1931 (see below, Section 4.4).[172] Ford had arrived in Hamburg on 16 November 1930, officially as secretary of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Worker which headquarters was located at 8 Rothesoodstrasse on the second floor above the Interclub, next to Albert Walter's office. Following Moscow's instructions, Ford was to assist the ISH Secretariat and the Hamburg Interclub in their "special work" among black seamen.[173]

Practical work among colonial seamen was slow to take off in Europe. Shelley and Walter remarked in June 1931 that the missing guidelines greatly hampered activities on how to organised colonial mariners who sailed on ships with a European flag; seemingly, Hardy's proposal had only been discussed among an inner circle in Hamburg and Moscow. Shelley and Walter backed Hardy's idea, and argued for identifying the ship as a 'floating factory' and for organising the

171 George [Hardy] to Alexander, 20.1.1931, 534/5/220, 15, RGASPI.

172 Leo [Liao Chenghzi] and [James W.] Ford, Plan of Work Outlined For the Seamen's International Amongst Colonial Workers. Immediate Tasks, no date [filed 28.2.1931], 534/5/220, 82, RGASPI.

173 Duties and Tasks of [ISH] Secretariat Members, (undated), filed 17.3.1931, 534/5/220, 128–129, RGASPI.

colonial seamen within the national revolutionary trade union opposition of the vessel's flag. On the other hand, they also claimed that such 'organisational principles' were difficult to carry out due to the "Rückständigkeit" (political 'immaturity') of the colonial seamen. Therefore, they proposed that a) Chinese seamen were to be organised as groups affiliated to the Chinese Seamen's Union but at the same time be part of a so-called ship group, for example, the group of the Einheitsverband on a German vessel or the SMM of a British ship. In addition, branches of the Chinese Seamen's Union were to be set up in European ports (indicating, that this process had not yet started). Further, b) the Indian seamen were to be organised through the Indian Seamen's Union in London; the association was to be transformed into the European Secretariat of the Indian red seamen's union as soon as such a union had been established in India. Last but not least, c) the black seamen were to be organised through the European national unions, namely black French colonial subjects within the FUMP, black British colonial subjects residing in Britain within the SMM, and black mariners sailing on German vessels within the Einheitsverband.[174]

The call for a radical, anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-segregationist approach was also raised in the RILU June 1931 Resolution. Although the idea of establishing branches of colonial national unions, in particular Chinese and Indian, in Europe was not a new one, these had been slow in materialising. Even less had been achieved in opening the European national unions for colonial mariners – white chauvinism and overt racism effectively blocked membership of non-whites. The Resolution, therefore, impelled the ISH to wage a "determined fight" against the "opportunist ignoring of activities among coloured seamen" on part of the European sections of the ISH. Furthermore, it prompted the ISH and its European sections to pursue an "insistent fight" against the manifestations of white chauvinism among its own rank-and-file members, not least in denying the application of the slogan of "equal pay for equal work" to coloured seamen. Moreover, the Resolution urged the ISH to pay serious attention to the organisations of black seamen, "who are the worst-paid, the most oppressed section of the transport workers. A determined fight must be waged against race prejudices and the slightest attempts to maintain the race bar or passivity towards same." Although the Resolution text did not specifically address Hardy's idea of forming colonial branches within the (European) national revolutionary trade union oppositions, the reference to the fight against discrimination, racism and segregation within the unions

174 AW, Arbeitsbericht des Sekretartiats der I.S.H., Hamburg 16.6.1931, 534/5/221, 183–184, RGASPI.

echoes such a proposition. Not least as the Resolution impelled the ISH to become "the militant organisation of seamen and dockers of all countries, races, and continents."[175] However, the binding guidelines for the sections of the ISH – the ISH Colonial Resolution – were still in preparation …

4.1 *The ISH Colonial Resolution*

The ISH Colonial Resolution served as the guidelines for agitation and propaganda work among colonial seamen by the ISH Secretariat and its national sections. Ford's and Liao Chenghzi's draft version of the text was adopted by the ISH Secretariat in May 1931.[176] At this point, the ISH Secretariat planned to translate the text into Indian and Chinese language(s).[177] The ISH Executive Committee discussed the guidelines at its plenary session in September 1931 but did not approve of them as Shelley criticised the text for not specifying the concrete tasks of the various national sections of the ISH. Shelley decided to draft a third version of the text and sent it to the RILU Secretariat in Moscow for comments in late 1931. The ISH World Congress, in turn, adopted Shelley's redrafted version of the guidelines, i.e., the ISH Colonial Resolution, in May 1932.[178]

According to the ISH Colonial Resolution, the capitalist class was splitting the workers' ranks globally and nationally and prevented national and international solidarity. It further attacked the trade union bureaucracy for assisting the shipping industry and its owners for assisting in the exploitation of the colonial masses and in preparing war against the revolutionary working class and the Soviet Union. "This is especially the case in the shipping industry,"

175 The Situation, The Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (Resolution on the report of Comrade Hardy and Walter --- the Chairman and General Secretary of the Seamen and Dockers' International), 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 122, RGASPI.

176 Resolution on the Colonial Work of the Sections of the I.S.H. in the Imperialist Countries, no date [type-written copy, ca. May 1931], 534/5/222, 140–144, RGASPI. The text is identical to I.S.H. Organise Colonial Seamen, copy of printed version of resolution, 534/5/221, 65–67, RGASPI. I have not yet been able to identify which magazine or journal that published the printed version.

177 Ford to "Dear Comrades," [Hamburg] 4.5.1931, 534/5/221, 64, RGASPI. Ford asked the Colonial Resolution to be printed in "thousands of copies" in each language. However, it is not known if the text was ever translated and printed.

178 Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 86, RGASPI. For a full text, see Resolution on the situation and struggles of the seamen and harbour workers in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and the tasks of the sections of the ISH, in: *The World Unity Congress of the International Water Transport Workers and it's Decisions* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, no date [ca. 1932]), 16–19.

the ISH Colonial Resolution argued, and further attacked trade union officials for assisting the shipping industry to obtain crews of a specific nationality at wages less than national rates, while at the same time fostering race, colour and religious prejudices, and acting as agent provocateurs and spies of the shipowners. The national sections of the ISH, on the other hand, were ordered to reject all forms of race prejudices and white chauvinism as well as to counteract the splitting tactics of the shipowners and "Social Fascist and Fascist trade union officials."[179]

The ITF was the main target of the verbal onslaught of the ISH Colonial Resolution, being accused of splitting the ranks of the maritime workers throughout the world and blocking the fight for colonial independence. The ISH Colonial Resolution, therefore, urged the national sections of the ISH to organise the colonial seamen into a "militant class union." Ultimately, the ISH Colonial Resolution called for the enrolment of colonial and "coloured" seamen "on the basis of absolute equality in every respect with the seamen of imperialist countries" and to elect colonial seamen as members of ship committees.[180]

Most important, however, was the need to establish branches of "militant class unions of colonial and semicolonial countries" in the ports of the imperialist countries, i.e., local branches of black, Indian, Chinese and other national seamen's unions. The key idea was to establish transnational networks of colonial/semicolonial seamen's unions linked to the national seamen's unions in Europe. In praxis, these local extraterritorial colonial/semi-colonial branches were to be linked to the national headquarters in a respective country where such unions existed, notably Belgium, Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the USA. "Unity of action" was the guideline. The colonial/semicolonial branches were to cooperate with the national unions although "while collectively working under jurisdiction of the district or national organs, they shall carry out the political line of the union of their native country in order to ensure the greatest possible assistance in the general struggle against imperialism and their native oppressors, and to enhance the struggle for complete national independence."[181]

The ISH Colonial Resolution further instructed its sections to develop cadres for organising African and other colonial seamen. Of equal importance was the need to enlighten the membership of the national unions in the imperialist countries about exploitation of non-white seamen and their everyday struggle

179 Resolution on the Colonial Work of the Sections of the I.S.H. in the Capitalist Counties (hereafter: ISH Colonial Resolution), 495/25/1334, 1–2, RGASPI.

180 ISH Colonial Resolution, 2–3.

181 ISH Colonial Resolution, 3–4.

against racism and white chauvinism. In addition, efforts were to be made to establish organisations of colonial seamen in a port where no militant class organisation existed. These branches were to be under the control of the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg "until a class seamen's organisation is formed in the particular port."[182]

4.2 *Brothers in Arms? The ITUCNW and the ISH*

The intimate structural connections between the ISH and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) were part of the grand strategy designed in Moscow. The reorganisation of the ISH Secretariat in mid-December 1930 framed the close relationship between the ITUCNW and the ISH. Hardy instructed Ford to participate at the meetings of the ISH Secretariat and encouraged him to agitate among seamen. The ISH Secretariat, in turn, promised to assist him in his work. Nevertheless, Hardy recognised that Ford's public engagement could endanger his activities in Hamburg: "For him to become a constant visitor to the ships, increased dangers would arise from his attendance at the Secretariat meetings." In addition, Ford's obligation to edit the ITUCNW-journal was time-consuming and restricted his capacity to attend the meetings of the ISH and the Interclub.[183]

Ford's main propaganda tool was *The International Negro Workers' Review,* the mouthpiece of the ITUCNW. Edited by him, and renamed in March 1931 as *The Negro Worker*, it was sent by post to those countries were communist and anti-colonial agitation was legal (such as the USA and the United Kingdom). However, British and other colonial governments were quick to banish its circulation in the Caribbean and in sub-Saharan Africa. This posed few problems for Ford as the journal was illegally stowed on board ships and distributed by seamen when reaching a port.[184]

The tenor of the ITUCNW-journal was in tune with the general strategic considerations of the ISH leadership of organising the black mariners via the sections of the ISH. Ford even publicly stated in an article in *The Negro Worker* that black seamen primarily were to join the ISH rather than the ITUCNW as the latter was not a trade union organisation per se:

> Negro seamen in their travels and experiences must establish contact and connection with the international revolutionary workers' movement, and in the first place, join and help build the International of Seamen and

182 ISH Colonial Resolution, 4–5.
183 George [Hardy] to "Alexander," Hamburg 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 117, RGASPI.
184 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 341–342.

> Harbour Workers, fight to better their own conditions and in the same timer to bring the principles of the international revolutionary workers' movement to their brothers in Africa.[185]

This position was further underlined in an English bulletin of the ISH that Ford had helped to edit, titled *Concrete Work Among Negro Seamen During the Last Period*.[186]

The ITUCNW organ became the main propaganda tool for the ISH in its outreach to black seamen. Early in 1931, *The International Negro Workers' Review* informed its readers about the struggles of the German harbour workers in Hamburg against intended wage cuts. In Britain and Japan, the journal informed, shipowners were planning an attack against seamen and harbour workers. The leaders and bureaucrats of the national unions of maritime transport workers, branded as 'social fascist', were accused to betray the workers by siding with the capitalist owners and by backing the reduction of wages and splitting the maritime working-class. This was no surprise, the journal reminded its readers: The reformist and 'social fascist' trade union bosses had "always betrayed the Negro and 'coloured' seamen." However, a new era of radical international solidarity among the maritime workers had started with the establishment of the ISH, the journal assured. This organisation, the journal heralded, was the only one that was prepared to fight back against wage cuts and the reduction of living conditions on board, "for equal pay and equal conditions, for the complete equality of the workers of all races." The announcement ended in calling the black seamen and harbour workers throughout the world to join in the united front with the Hamburg harbour workers and, even more important, to enlist in the militant sections of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers: "UNITE IN INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY! STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR!"[187]

The Negro Worker carried a similar but much longer call for radical international solidarity among maritime workers in July 1931, addressing two main points. First, the struggle against the 'imperialist war', i.e., the campaign against the (presumed) 'imperialist' plan to attack against the Soviet Union, was part of the daily struggle of the maritime transport workers for bettering their

185 James W. Ford, "Negro Seamen and the Revolutionary Movement in Africa – Some lessons from Chinese seamen", *The Negro Worker* 1, no. 4–5 (April–May 1931): 10.

186 Ford to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, [Hamburg] 6.8.1931, 534/3/668, 109, RGASPI. Unfortunately, I have not found any traces of the bulletin.

187 NN, "Negro Seamen and the German Harbour Workers," *The International Negro Workers' Review* 1, no. 1 (January 1931): 5.

conditions on ships, in ports and in the transport industry. Second, the most exploited ones on board as well as ashore were the colonial seamen: "They are nothing but slaves to the ship-owners." Trade unions affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions and the ITF were branded as lackeys of the capitalist owners and "storm brigades and war inciters against the Soviet Union", backing the exploitation of colonial workers and propagating race hatred between black and white maritime workers. The ISH, in contrast, was the only organisation that adhered to proletarian international solidarity among black and white maritime workers.[188]

Although the author of the two calls to the "Negro" seamen is not stated, it is evident that the ISH used the journal of the ITUCNW as a propaganda tool and someone at the ISH headquarters had drafted the texts. A textual analysis of the articles and notes published in *The Negro Worker* clearly indicates that the two calls differed in style and language and resembled those of the ISH.[189]

4.3 *Work among Colonial Seamen in Hamburg: Promises and Pitfalls*

Work among colonial seamen in Hamburg had since 1929 been restricted to Chinese crews and was carried out by Liao Chenghzi who worked as a special functionary at the Interclub (see further Chapter 4.2.4). Liao Chenghzi's efforts slowly paid off and in early 1931, he had established an organised and well-functioning group of radical Chinese seamen in Hamburg.[190] A few months later, he managed to set up a similar group in Rotterdam.[191] Impressed by his achievements, and to further boost work among Chinese seamen in Europe, the ISH Secretariat decided in May 1931 to establish a West European Secretariat for the Chinese Seamen's Union. Most likely headed by Liao Chenghzi, it was to set up branches of the Chinese Seamen's Union in Belgium, England, and France as well as monitor the activities of those already existing in Germany (Hamburg) and the Netherlands (Rotterdam).[192]

Work among other colonial seamen in Hamburg was weak. In part, this was due to few of them visiting the Interclub but the main problem was the lack of foreign (non-white) functionaries.[193] In January 1931, however, Liao Chenghzi

188 NN, "August First and the Negro Toilers," *The Negro Worker* 1, no. 7 (July1931): 4–6 (quotation from page 6).

189 See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 320–323.

190 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 12, RGASPI.

191 ISH, MR April 534/5/221, 63, RGASPI; RGASPI; ISH, Half-Year Report October 1930–April 1931, 534/5/221, 74, RGASPI.

192 AW, Arbeitsbericht des Sekretartiats der I.S.H., Hamburg 16.6.1931, 534/5/221, 177, RGASPI.

193 Monthly Report of the Hamburg Interclub for June 1930, 534/5/216, 38–39, RGASPI. According to Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, an unspecified number of Africans were

started to co-operate with James W. Ford and they established the colonial section at the Interclub. Following George Hardy's proposal, they outlined a double strategy for work among colonial seamen. Chinese and Indian seamen, on the one hand, were to be informed about the extra-territorial branches of their national unions and the revolutionary trade union opposition groups within the (European) unions. Black seamen from Africa and the Caribbean, on the other hand, were to be utilised "to develop work in their country." In addition, the local Interclubs in Rotterdam and Marseille were to focus on black, Indonesian and Chinese seamen residing in these two ports.[194]

Ford and Liao Chenghzi divided the colonial section of the Hamburg Interclub into three subsections, a Chinese, an Indian[195] and a 'Negro' one. The outline of the 'Negro Corner' was similar to that of the other Colonial Corners in the Interclub and is the only one of which there exists a description of its setup. The central spot was a map, showing the extent of the "developing struggles of the Negroes in Africa." Further, there was a huge notice board with pictures and cuts from newspapers and magazines about the life and struggles of the African working class terror, life of black workers. "From time to time we enlarge this," Ford explained.[196] Last, but not least, the Chinese and Indian subsections were commissioned to publish their own respective bulletins.[197] Walter, at first, was full of praise and hailed the close cooperation between the ISH and the ITUCNW.[198]

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living in Hamburg during the 1920s, notably in the working-class districts of St Pauli and Neustadt, and were working in the harbour. However, it is unclear to what extent they visited the Interclub, see Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany. The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 122.

194 Leo [Liao Chenghzi] and Ford, Plan of Work Outlined for the Seamen's International Amongst Colonial Workers. Immediate tasks, no date, filed 28.2.1931, 534/5/220, 77–80, RGASPI; Duties and Task of Secretariat members, 17.3.1931, 534/5/220, 12–19, RGASPI.

195 In his report of April 1931, Ford stated that there was no comrade in charge of the Indian subsection. He had inquired from LAI Secretary Chattopadhyaya in Berlin about helping him solving the problem, and Chattopadhyaya had proposed to send a young Indian student from Frankfurt to Hamburg. At the time of writing his report the issue had not been settled. See Ford, Work among Negro Seamen, report sent to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, [Hamburg] 30.4.1931, 534/3/669, 145, RGASPI. Hereafter: Ford, April 1931 Report.

196 Ford to Padmore, 6.8.1931, 534/3/668, 104–107, RGASPI.

197 Plan of Work Outlined for the Seamen's International Amongst Colonial Workers. Immediate Tasks, no date [filed 28.2.1931], 534/5/220, 82, RGASPI; Ford, April 1931 Report, 145. Ford did not mention if the Negro Subsection was charged to launch an own bulletin. This, one could argue, was unnecessary as Ford was already publishing *The Negro Worker.*

198 ISH, MR January 1931, 534/5/220, 10–13, RGASPI.

Apart from being in charge of the Negro Subsection, Ford was at times engaged in the work of the Anglo-American Section of the Interclub. In addition, he organised a weekly course on the colonial question in the Club. During alternate weeks, special focus was given to the Chinese and 'Negro' Questions as well as to daily political and organisational tasks among seamen from these regions. While the colonial course gathered up to 50 participants, the course on the 'Negro' Question collected only a handful of listeners.[199] The Interclub, in turn, organised special courses for training colonial cadres, among others six Chinese comrades who the ISH planned to utilised in Belgian, British, Dutch and French ports.[200]

Much to the dismay of Ford, cooperation with Walter and the ISH Secretariat turned out to be rather lukewarm and was not always forthcoming. Already in his first report of activities in Hamburg, Ford made some critical remarks about "subjective factors" that hampered his work in Hamburg. Some members of the ISH were critical about hosting a suspicious black organisation at Rothesoodstrasse, as they feared the ITUCNW to invite the local police authorities to raid and to shut down all activities at the Interclub. In addition, the promised technical assistance by the ISH Secretariat and the RGO was not forthcoming – Ford had to handwrite his letters as he had no access to a typing machine and the secretaries of the ISH were always "busy."[201]

Ford's grievances about his troubles in Hamburg must have reached the RILU headquarters as RILU General Secretary Lozovsky criticised Hardy for having erected a "Chinese Wall" between the ISH Secretariat and Ford. Hardy promptly rejected the accusations: "I assure you there is no Chinese wall existing;" Ford had been invited by him to join the weekly meetings of the secretariat and accompany them on their tours to the harbour but Ford himself had informed Hardy and Walter "that he is too busy to attend all the meetings."[202]

Nevertheless, Ford's working conditions in Hamburg did not improve. In April 1931, Ford complained about the negative attitude of comrade Krause who was in charge of the Interclub in Hamburg. The atmosphere at the Interclub seemed to have improved after Ford aired his grievances at a joint meeting

199 Ford to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, [Hamburg] 6.8.1931, 534/3/668, 108, RGASPI. The plans for the colonial courses were already outlined in his April report, see Ford, April 1931 Report, 534/3/669, 145, RGASPI. In this report, he also stated that he and his group had started to outline plans of colonial work for the English, French and Dutch sections of the ISH.

200 ISH, MR September-October 1931, 534/5/223, 22, RGASPI.

201 Ford, January 1931 Report, 534/3/669, 99–100, RGASPI; Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 135.

202 George [Hardy] to Alexander, Hamburg 15.3.1931, 534/5/220, 117, RGASPI.

with the ISH and party leadership where it was decided to replace Krause with another comrade (this was perhaps linked to the quarrel between Hardy and Walter, see Section 2.2 in this chapter). Nevertheless, the attitude of Walter remained problematic: "I must say that it is necessary for comrade Walters himself to take a different attitude to the colonial work. I demand that the comrade Walters give me the support in my work that my responsibility to the Executive of the RILU demands."[203] A meeting with Walter and Hardy was called to discuss the differences in their conception of colonial work. Ford had the impression that while Hardy was in favour of colonial and 'Negro' work, Walter was not. In Ford's opinion, Walter did not give any assistance to his work but was negative about any of Ford's initiatives. Between the lines, Ford even hinted that Walter had a racist attitude towards him:

> He has always said that you cannot get colonial workers to come to the Club, but my work here during the last month has clearly and disagreeably disproved this statement. Of course the excuse is that I am a Negro and have a better approach, this is true to a certain extent, but I contend that if the leadership of the Club would take the proper interest and give the proper support we can get white comrades to help in this work.[204]

Consequently, in Ford's mind Walter was nothing but an opportunist. Ford claimed that Walter was afraid that if too many colonial seamen were drawn to the Interclub the police would close it. Even worse, Ford realised that much of the material that the ITUCNW had produced during the last year had never been distributed but was stored at the Interclub.[205] Walter, on the other hand, critically replied to Ford that it was much easier for a 'coloured' comrade ("farbiger Genosse") to invite the 'coloured' seamen to the Interclub than it was for a white one – implying that it was Ford's task to work among 'coloured' seamen which he had neglected.[206] Whether or not this was true is unclear as Ford's report for April 1930 stated that the number of 'coloured' seamen visiting the Interclub was increasing, especially those from Africa.[207]

However, the main drawback for Ford's work was Hamburg's peripheral position as a hub for black seamen. On average only about four to six ships that had black crew members called at the port each week. In general, the crew

203 Ford, April 1931 Report, 534/3/669, 147–148, RGASPI.
204 Ford to Padmore, handwritten date: April 30 [1931], 534/3/668, 72, RGASPI.
205 Ford to Padmore, 30.4.1931, 534/3/668, 72, RGASPI.
206 Protokoll der Sitzung der Parteifraktion der ISH, 30.4.1931, 534/5/220, 45–56, RGASPI.
207 ISH, MR April 1931, 534/5/220, 57–63, RGASPI.

counted between half a dozen and a dozen black seamen and they would stay in Hamburg only for a few days. None of the black seamen Ford had interacted with had residency in Germany. Especially on board English and Dutch vessels, there were no ship cells or revolutionary trade union opposition groups. Despite these constraints, Ford made quite an impact during his ten-month sojourn in Hamburg. By mid-September 1931, he had managed to form cells or at least enlist some individuals on board of twelve British ships: the *Dagomba*, the *Dalcross*, the *Daru*, the *Daunkwa*, the *Deido*, the *Dixcove*, the *Ethiopian*, the *Henry Stanley*, the *Jonathan C. Holt*„ the *Thomas Holt*, the *Thornlia*, and the *William Wilberforce*.[208] Presumably, they all joined the SMM – in accordance to the plan to enlist black seamen in national unions of the flag of their vessel, although Ford did not state this in his report. At least those on the *Thomas Holt* did so, and Hardy notified SMM Secretary Thompson in London that they were prepared to assist in creating the (projected) British red seamen's union.[209]

4.4 *Agitation among Colonial Mariners in France*

Garan Kouyaté served as the prime agitator and organiser of black and colonial mariners in France. He had started as a special envoy for work among black mariners in Marseille in 1930 and managed in the course of two weeks in drawing 208 of them into the FUMP. He also established so-called "Cultural Committees" on board French vessels, each consisting of three "colonial comrades," and had instructed them to explain to their fellows the contents of "our political and TU revolutionary press." However, membership declined drastically after Kouyaté left Marseille. According to him, this was mainly due to "bureaucratic methods of working" of the Madagascan secretary Adriamanatena and accused him for having failed to organise meetings on the ships, to collect the dues on board the ships, to agitate ashore, and to organise any meetings for colonial seamen at the Interclub.[210]

When Kouyaté returned to Marseille in July 1931, all "colonials" had left the union and he had to start his agitation from scratch. On 12 July, he organised a meeting that was attended by 135 black seamen in addition to "Indo-Chinese and Arabs." The gathering marked the starting point for his assignment as key organiser of the Interclub. A "Colonial Fighting Committee" was elected which included representatives of each colonial group: African ("bambara, ouolof,

208 [Ford,] ITUCNW Report 1930–1931, 534/3/669, 230, RGASPI.

209 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Hardy to Thompson, [Hamburg] 8.4.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

210 G[aran] K[ouyaté], Report on colonial seamen, no date [ca. January/February 1932], 534/5/230, 23, RGASPI.

soussou, ivorien, comerien, dahomeen, sarankole"), Madagascan, Arab, Somali and Indo-Chinese. Furthermore, he organised a "school" to train trade union cadres. 30 black seamen attended the courses for elementary literacy whereas 12 "comrades" were participated in political and trade union courses. The promising progress was cut short when the police arrested Kouyaté. After his release from prison, Kouyaté energetically resumed his activities on the waterfront in Marseille and by December 1931, the local branch of the FUMP listed 320 members of which "at least" 40 percent were black mariners. In addition, he had established an Unemployment Committee, counting 145 members of which 80 were black seamen.[211]

Kouyaté embarked on a nation-wide agitation tour in November and December 1931, organising meetings and gatherings for black and colonial seamen in Rouen (60 present), Le Havre (80 present), Dunkirk (50 present at the first meeting, 78 at the second), Bordeaux (110 present). Organising black and colonial seamen proved challenging as their previous encounters with communist trade union activists had been a negative one. In Rouen, for example, Kouyaté was told that white seamen working on board the steamer *Medja* had demanded to live in separate quarters from their black mates. The shipping company first rejected their demand but gave in after the communist trade union organiser Le Minter had backed their demand. Kouyaté urged the communists to adhere to the racial principles of anti-chauvinism and anti-racism: "These complaints are of great significance in the struggle against race chauvinism that, unfortunately, is displayed only too frequently by the white seamen on the ships. It gives rise to profound lack of confidence among the colonials to the united front movement."[212]

Despite the negative experiences of the black and colonial mariners, Kouyaté achieved some notable results in enlisting them in the FUMP. Black and colonial seamen joined local "Vigilance Committees" and participated in strike pickets in Rouen, committees of unemployed black and colonial seamen affiliated to the central (communist-controlled) unemployed committee in Rouen and Bordeaux. Inspired by his success in France, Kouyaté wrote to his contacts in Dakar (Senegal) and Conakry (Dahomey/Benin), and urged them to "speedily consider the possibility of setting up unitary seamen's and docker's unions in these ports."[213] Reading his report in Hamburg, the comrades at the

211 G[aran] K[ouyaté], Report on colonial seamen, no date [ca. January/February 1932], 534/5/230, 24, RGASPI.

212 G[aran] K[ouyaté], Report on colonial seamen, no date [ca. January/February 1932], 534/5/230, 19, RGASPI.

213 G[aran] K[ouyaté], Report on colonial seamen, no date [ca. January/February 1932], 534/5/230, 19–23, RGASPI.

ISH Secretariat certainly deemed Kouyaté as their key asset in extending the revolutionary waterfront to French West Africa and beyond.

4.5 *A Potential Connection? The Kroomen's Seamen Club in Freetown*

One of Ford's obligations was to visit ships in the Hamburg harbour and get in touch with black seamen. One of these meetings occurred in mid-April 1930. At this occasion, he was to hear about the existence of a potential radical organisation in West Africa, the Kroomen's Seamen Club in Sierra Leone. Although the club was not a trade union, Ford notified George Padmore, the head of the RILU Negro Bureau, it had put forth demands for better wages, shorter hours, better working conditions and pay for overtime as well as better food on board. The club had been established in 1923 but due to internal rifts and "tribal differences", it had not been able to coordinate its work and had been prevented from unity and concerted action. Two years later, they managed to bring about some unity between the two main ethnic groups in the club. They achieved some of their demands and started to put pressure on the Elder Dempster Shipping Company to be recognised as the representative of the West African seamen. So far, Elder Dempster had refused to acknowledge them and told them that they were first to establish contacts with some trade unions in Europe before they could be recognised as a partner in the negotiations.[214] The Africans, on the other hand were reluctant to comply with this demand as they regarded the British National Union of Seamen (NUS) of having few sympathies to their cause.[215]

The person whom Ford had met on board introduced himself as a member of the executive committee of the Club, living at the time in Liverpool.[216] Ford became even more interested in the group when the African seaman disclosed to him that the Club had plans to affiliate with a militant seamen's union. Ford therefore arranged for representatives of the Club to meet with George Hardy,

214 Ford to Padmore, Hamburg 20.4.1931, 534/3/668, 65, RGASPI. Elder Dempster was also criticised for refusing to employ unionised shore workers and seamen. On the constrained relationship between Elder Dempster and West African labour and trade unions during the 1920s and 1930s, see Marika Sherwood, "Elder Dempster and West Africa 1891–c.1940: The Genesis of Underdevelopment?," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 30, no. 2 (1997): 265–267.

215 Sherwood, "Elder Dempster," 266.

216 Hakim Adi suggests that the Sierra Leonean living in Liverpool who met Ford in mid-April 1931 was Ebenezer Foster Jones. According to Adi's information, before becoming a seaman, Foster Jones had been employed as a police in Sierra Leone and was one of the leaders of the Kroomen's Seamen's Club. See further Adi, "The Comintern and Black Workers," 234.

who outlined the programme of the ISH for the black seamen. At another meeting with the Africans, Ford had a long talk with them about the objectives of the ITUCNW, the RILU and the ISH. When Ford wrote his report to Padmore about the Club, the question of affiliating the Kroomen's Seamen Club to the ISH and the ITUCNW was still open – neither Ford nor the Secretariat of the ISH for the time being ready to accept the affiliation of the group as they had little information on the group. Ford regarded the group to be a sort of social club that was typical in West Africa but with the potential to become one of the radical spearheads in West Africa.[217]

However, the Sierra Leonean fellow did not know that the Kroomen's Seamen Club had ceased to exist. Intertribal clashes had split the association into two rivalling fractions, and the shipowners used this situation to play one group against the other. Sometimes in mid-1930, the two groups reached a truce, paving the way for the formation of a new organisation, the United Seamen's Club, located at 3 Krootown Road, Freetown.[218] At this point, the ISH heralded the new group as a prospective unit in Sierra Leone, and included the club in its list of Interclubs.[219] However, the comrades in Hamburg must have realised by the end of the year that the United Seamen's Club was never to develop into a revolutionary hub. Consequently, they removed the club from the list of Interclubs.[220] On the other hand, the plan of establishing a spearhead of the ISH in Freetown or somewhere else in West Africa was to resurface in the years to come.

4.6 *Mobilise Colonial Seamen for August First*

International proletarian solidarity was the catchword of the Communists and its annual manifestation were the rallies and demonstrations organised on August First. For 1931, the ISH Secretariat planned to introduce a new theme to the mobilisations – the united front of colonial and white water transport workers. Instructions were sent in early July to all sections, ordering them to highlight the plight of the exploitation of their colonial "class brothers" and to pay special attention to work among colonial seamen. Echoing the Imperialist War Theses of the Comintern, the ISH sections were to combine in their propaganda the obligation to defend the "Fatherland of oppressed peoples" and

217 Ford to Padmore, Hamburg 20.4.1931, 534/3/668, 66, RGASPI.

218 Foster Jones, "Situation of Native Workers in Sierra Leone," *The Negro Worker* 1: no. 4–5 (April–May 1931): 3–5.

219 *Der Internationale Seemannsklub*, 534/5/222, 105–117, RGASPI.

220 The United Seamen's Club was not even mentioned in the joint ISH pamphlet *Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers*, 534/5/223, 175–183, RGASPI.

the fight against colonial oppression and suppression of colonial masses. "The campaign against imperialist war danger and intervention in the USSR must be connected with the daily struggles of the transport proletariat for bettering their conditions on ships, in ports and in the transport industry," the Instructions noted. The most down-trodden were the colonial seamen, the ISH Secretariat reminded, who "are threatened with wage cuts, speeded-up and reduced unemployment by undermanning and have the most horrible conditions on the ships." The colonial workers were nothing but "slaves of the shipowners," lowest paid and facing worst working conditions on board. Most importantly, and in tune with the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine and ISH's verbal onslaught on the ITF, the ISH trumpeted: "(I)t must be made clear to the colonial seamen that the reformist unions of the Amsterdam International not only pay the role of storm brigades and war inciters against the Soviet Union but do everything in their power to carry out the policies of the bourgeoisie in dividing the ranks of the workers."[221]

The demonstration of international proletarian solidarity on August First was an utmost priority in 1931, the ISH Secretariat declared. As the shipowners as well as the "reformist" trade union leaders and the ITF were known for utilising colonial seamen against white seamen and white seamen against colonial seamen in economic and other struggles, the sections of the ISH were ordered to invite colonial seamen to meetings on board the ships, ashore in ports and to "fraternal meetings" in the Interclubs. The core idea was to mobilised "the broad masses" of the colonial seamen for the August First demonstrations by drawing them into committees, participating them in drawing up slogans for the colonial seamen. Special bulletins and leaflets addressing the colonial question were to be published. The committees were instructed to address the living conditions and standards of colonial seamen as well as to mobilised colonial and white seamen "for the defense of the 8 Negro boys in Alabama."[222]

Furthermore, the August First-campaign was to be used as a means to organisationally strengthen the ISH among the colonial seamen. Therefore, the sections and committees were to propagate specific slogans for the colonial seamen in addition to the general slogans issued by the RILU, namely:

> Equal pay for equal work – Down with fascism, white terror and lynching – Complete evacuation of imperialist soldiers from the colonial

221 For Work Among Colonial Seamen, [Hamburg] 4.7.1931, 534/5/222, 22–23, RGASPI.
222 For Work Among Colonial Seamen, [Hamburg] 4.7.1931, 534/5/222, 23–24, RGASPI.

FIGURE 15 Calling black mariners to join the ISH; photograph depicting a rally in Hamburg, published in *The Negro Worker, Special Colonial Number* 1, no 10/11 (October-November 1931): 32. The all-white participants carried a banner with the slogans: "Negro Seamen! Join the Fight for Better Conditions on Ships! Down with Imperialism in Africa! For International Solidarity Join the I.S.H. the Fighting International of Seamen!" Interestingly, the subtitle in *The Negro Worker* claimed the rally to be "international solidarity with Negro Workers, 100,000 workers demonstrating at Hamburg, Germany, for international solidarity and against imperialism in Africa." However, the slogans on the banner indicate it to be addressed to black seamen and them joining the radical trade union opposition and the ISH.

> countries – For complete independence and self-determination – Down with the boarding house masters and serangs – The right of trade unions and assembly in the colonial countries – Long live international solidarity![223]

Whether the August First-campaign turned into a global movement is not known. Ford, at least, published a call in *The Negro Worker*. At the August First-mass demonstration, banners urging "Negro seamen" to join the ISH were carried through the streets of Hamburg, see Figure 15.

223 For Work Among Colonial Seamen, [Hamburg] 4.7.1931, 534/5/222, 24, RGASPI.

5 RILU Criticism and ISH Self-Criticism

Moscow was not impressed by the achievements of the ISH. Expectations had been high in 1930 for rallying the revolutionary trade union opposition behind a new umbrella organisation and attacking the ITF. "Despite the objectively favourable conditions of the development of the mass movement for the immediate economic demands of the seamen, river workers and dockers [...] a decisive improvement has not yet been accomplished in the whole work of the ISH."[224]

Rationalisations on board reduced a crew needed to operate a steamer or a motorised vessel. Consequently, the shipping industry introduced wage-cuts and lowered social benefits, leaving an increasing number of the mariners ashore unemployed and jobless. The RILU accused the 'reformist' unions of racist and chauvinist attitudes when barring colonial and 'coloured' seamen to join their ranks as well as demanding that only national, i.e., white organised union members should be hired as crews. Therefore, the RILU underlined the need for a radical bulwark against the unions and the ITF. Although the ISH had witnessed some successes in Germany, Danzig and England, the RILU accused it for having missed several opportunities to mobilise the maritime transport workers, not least by actively engaging and directing national strikes – such as the Norwegian one – and for vigorously pushing the formation of revolutionary trade union oppositions within the national unions. "The fundamental weakness of the ISH is the absence of live connection with and the instruction of local organisations," the RILU analysts noted.[225]

The most critical point addressed by the RILU was the insufficient organisation of work. "Hardly anywhere is there any systematic work of the formation of revolutionary trade union groups and committees on the ships," the RILU critically observed (and, interestingly, echoing Albert Walter's 'from the bottom'-position). The ISH Secretariat had "insufficient" connections with the sections in the Far East, Latin America and Italy. Further, it had neglected the transformation of the Interclubs into recruitment hubs for new members and facilitators for new ship cells: "Their most important shortcomings consists in the absence of concreteness in the approach to seamen of the various countries, also in the inability of connecting the questions of a general political

224 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 115, RGASPI.

225 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 115, RGASPI.

nature with those questions which interest and touch the immediate needs of the seamen."[226]

Admittedly, the RILU headquarters identified the "insufficient attention" of the leadership of its own national sections as one of most important reasons for the weaknesses and bleak performance of the ISH.[227] Taken together, the shortcomings were addressed in a resolution in June 1931 that also included new instructions to the ISH. Moscow's harsh criticisms, in turn, prompted the ISH Secretariat to call a meeting of the ISH Executive Committee.

5.1 *The RILU June 1931 Resolution and the ITUCNW*

Moscow's new directives were sent to Hamburg in June 1931. Main emphasis was put on direct action. The ISH Secretariat as well as its sections were obligated to participate in every manifestation expressing the dissatisfaction of the maritime transport workers, to use every opportunity to attack the leadership in the unions, and to expose the preparations for war, i.e., the imperialist attack on the Soviet Union. Key focus was on building up the organisation at grassroots level: "It is necessary to unite the members of the revolutionary trade unions working on one ship and in one particular port, etc., in trade union groups or trade union sections at the place of industry." These local groups were to become the core units in the daily fight against wage reductions, extended working hours, or illegal dismissals of crews. Echoing the earlier instructions of the RILU, the ISH sections and the revolutionary union opposition groups were reminded to turn their attention to the unorganised and colonial seamen; both groups were identified as crucial potential new members for the revolutionary opposition and only through their mobilisation the ISH sections were to emerge as proper mass organisations.[228]

The June 1931 Resolution further highlighted the need to transform the Einheitsverband into a mass movement. Local units were to be established in England and a red seamen's union was to be launched at a national congress at the end of the year. In France, top priority was to organise the harbour workers, whereas illegal activities were to be promoted inside Italy. The Spanish section, in turn, was to link up with the revolutionary organisations in the ports, whereas the MWIU was to focus on black seamen and harbour workers. "The

226 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 116, RGASPI.

227 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 116, RGASPI.

228 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 117–118, RGASPI.

most important task [...] is the stubborn struggle for the capture of the majority of sailors and dockers who are at present the members of the reformist and other reactionary unions."[229]

Likewise, all sections were to devote special attention to recruit the unorganised as well as the unemployed into the red unions or the revolutionary trade union opposition. "By heading the discontent of the widest masses of the unemployed, by organising their struggle for their immediate demands," the ISH and its sections would develop into genuine mass organisation. A cornerstone for the realisation of this objective was the strengthening (i.e., reorganisation) of the Interclubs, their transformation into "real organisational and political centres" and genuine "international clubs [...] of sailors of all nationalities."[230]

In addition, the ISH Secretariat was impelled to link up with revolutionary opposition groups in Latin American and the Caribbean, especially those in Argentina, Brazil Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay and Peru. The Asian target groups were the illegal seamen's unions in China and in Japan as well as the (illegal) revolutionary opposition groups among the maritime transport workers' unions in French Indochina, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore. Finally, an equally urgent task was to intensify work among colonial and 'coloured' seamen in Europe.[231]

The special focus on colonial and 'coloured' seamen was an answer to Ford's earlier critique about the lax attitude of the ISH Secretariat to support his ambition to establish a radical network in the Black Atlantic. Parallel with the ISH directives, the RILU headquarters issued a resolution about the tasks of the ITUCNW and its relationship with the ISH in July 1931.[232] The sixth paragraph of the list of immediate organisational tasks concerned the relationship between the ITUCNW and the ISH:

> 6) In view of the insufficient attention paid by the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers to the every-day activities of the Hamburg Committee, likewise the unwillingness of individual leaders of the

229 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 119–121, quote from p. 118, RGASPI.

230 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 118–199, RGASPI.

231 The Situation, the Work and the Tasks of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, [Moscow] 12.6.1931, 534/5/221, 121–122, RGASPI.

232 This resolution is referred to as the July 1931 Resolution. However, as with the earlier resolutions, draft version of the resolution text had circulated already in June.

> International Seamen's Club to assist in carrying out mass work, to charge the ISH to ensure systematic assistance in all practical work of the Hamburg Committee. To propose to the leadership of the ISH that they give assistance to the Committee in editing the "Negro Worker".[233]

George Padmore, who headed the RILU Negro Bureau in Moscow, wrote thereafter a letter to Albert Walter, highlighting about the duties of the ISH to cooperate with and to render systematic assistance to Ford and the ITUCNW. He further stressed that Paragraph Six of the Resolution underlined that although the ITUCNW was subordinated to the RILU and its European Bureau, Walter and the other comrades of the ISH Executive were expected, together with Ford, to discuss and decide upon questions that required immediate action. Last, but not least, Padmore ensured that "under your collective leadership the work of the Negro Committee [i.e., the ITUCNW] will be carried out with the fullest results."[234]

5.2 *The ISH Executive Committee Meeting in September 1931*

The ISH headquarters must have regarded the criticism from Moscow to be at least to some extent unfair. True, the cooperation with Ford had at times been constrained but they had settled their difficulties. Also, as previously noted, the power struggle between Hardy and Walter that had paralysed work at the headquarters in Hamburg during spring – and where, it seems, Ford had unwillingly been part of – had been resolved and the ISH Secretariat was in full operation by June. Although the ISH headquarters had still few means at its disposal to monitor, lest to initiate national strikes, it started to disseminate information about conflicts and strikes, local and national, to its member organisations via its bulletin. The *ISH Bulletin*, however, was not circulated in public but only to be used by the sections and its functionaries in their respective agitation and propaganda campaigns.[235] Amongst its first international campaigns, the ISH Secretariat called its sections to organised rallies on August First to protest imperialist rearmaments,[236] and attached a disposition for a speech on

233 Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, 10.6.1931, 534/3/668, 27, RGASPI.

234 Padmore to Walter, [Moscow] 21.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, 96, RGASPI.

235 I have been able to identify a few individual numbers of the German edition of the *ISH Bulletin* and, so far, none of its English versions for 1931 and 1932. Full series of the *ISH Bulletin* are not likely to exist due to its limited and "semi-legal" circulation. However, a comparison of the 1933 German and English versions of the bulletin indicates that the issues had the same content.

236 "Der 1. August und der Hoover-Plan," *Informationsbulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 2 (10. Juli 1931): 2–3.

the World Depression, its impact on the shipping industry and the tasks of the revolutionary opposition for use at meetings.[237]

Colonial work was certainly not of peripheral interest as each issue of the *ISH Bulletin* informed about the plights and struggles of the colonial seamen although nearly all text published in the June to August issues of the bulletin concerned Chinese seamen.[238] In addition, the anti-racist and anti-discriminatory commitment was put in the forefront when the ISH Secretariat urged its sections to join the worldwide Scotsboro campaign in defence of nine black boys facing death penalty in the USA. Already the *ISH Bulletin* of July 1931 noted that the Interclubs in Bremen, Hamburg and the Soviet Union had arranged protest meetings, and the bulletin urged the other sections and Interclubs to join the international campaign.[239]

Nevertheless, the implementation of new RILU directives impelled a systematic assessment of the operational structures of the ISH. The RILU Berlin Bureau, therefore, urged the ISH Secretariat to summon the ISH Executive Committee for a meeting in Hamburg.[240] Only a few of its members eventually attended the two-day conference in early September 1931, all of them representing European sections: Christensen (Denmark), Koschnik (Germany), Persson (Sweden), Samsing (Norway), Schaap (Holland), Stoeger (Austria) and

237 Rededisposition über DIE INTERNATIONALE KRISE IM WASSERTRANSPORTGEWERBE, attachment to *Informationsbulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 2 (10. Juli 1931).

238 The first issue carried as an attachment a lengthy essay on the exploitation of Chinese seamen at the boarding houses in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, see "Sklavenhandel in Holland," *Beilage zum Informations-Bulletin der ISH No 1 – Juni 1931*. The second issue informed about successful strikes of Chinese seamen on two French steamers in Hamburg; after the intervention of the ISH Secretariat and the Interclub, the Chinese mates received full salaries, see "Glänzender Kampferfolg chinesischer Seeleute," *Informationsbulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 2 (10. Juli 1931): 4. The next issue informed about another protest of Chinese seamen, "27 chinesische Seeleute geben faschistischem Lloydoffizier proletarische," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 3/4 (6. August 1931): 10.

239 "Protestiert gegen die Hinrichtung der acht Negerknaben," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 2 (10. Juli 1931): 10. On the international campaign to free the nine 'Scottsboro Boys' who had been sentenced to death by a local court in Alabama, USA, see further James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931–1934," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001): 387–430, Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), James A. Miller, *Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), and Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 392–397.

240 Walter, Arbeitsbericht der ISH, Hamburg 21.8.1931, 534/5/222, 66, RGASPI.

Thompson (England). An unidentified delegate from Greece joined the conference on the second day. Ford, Liao, Polano, Shelley and Walter represented the ISH Secretariat whereas Pechmann participated as member of the RILU Berlin Bureau. Dumay's, Hardy's and Mink's absence was critically remarked, especially as Hardy initially had responded positively to the invitation while the two others had not even responded to the call.[241]

Six major items were discussed at the conference, the most pressing being the situations of the sections, the reorganisation of the Interclubs, and work among colonial seamen. Most of the delegates indicated that work in the national sections was slowly taking concrete forms. The transformation of the SMM into a red union was debated at length as well as what tactics to be applied by the ISH sections in Denmark, Germany and Norway at the respective forthcoming tariff negotiations. A new militant tactic was to be applied if national strikes occurred: Strike on every national vessel in every port of the world instead of restricting a strike to national ports as hitherto had been the case![242]

The need to reorganise the Interclubs resulted in stiff criticism. None apart a few of the German Interclubs had a collective leadership, and only a few Interclubs had functionaries who mastered foreign languages. Consequently, work among foreign seamen had been neglected in most ports. In addition, communications between the Interclubs was sporadic and minimal and the highly acclaimed "socialist competition" had not been introduced at all for enlisting new members to the Interclubs. Persson, Samsing and Thompson complained about the high costs to run an Interclub and the unclear financial obligations of the ISH Secretariat and the sections. Walter, Shelley and Pechmann underlined that while the Interclubs in principle were subordinated to the ISH Secretariat, their operations were to be supported by the sections and the local party organisation. In addition, they stressed, the Interclub as well as the national section should generate their own funds to cover for their expenses. Sarcastic remarks followed when Thompson declared that the Interclubs in the United Kingdom should refrain from launching anti-religious campaigns as the Catholic maritime workers in Liverpool and Glasgow might turn against the Interclubs. Walter replied

241 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note on ISH and RILU European Secretariat positive response to Hardy attending the plenum of the ISH Executive Committee, no date (ca. August 1931), George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA; Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 21.11.1931, 534/4/353, 81, RGASPI.

242 Zweite Plenarsitzung der Exekutive der ISH, 10-12.9.1931, 534/5/224, 1–47, RGASPI; Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 84–85, RGASPI.

that the revolutions could also be ignited on a Sunday, and Pechmann seconded by reminding that one cannot divert anti-religious from ordinary propaganda.[243]

The last item on the agenda was the forthcoming world congress of maritime transport workers, originally scheduled for September 1931. Not surprisingly, the comrades unanimously declared the need to organise it as soon as possible: The World Congress was to officially sanction the establishment of the ISH and elect an ordinary executive committee. After having decided to organised the world congress in May 1932, the conference ended and the delegates left Hamburg.[244]

5.3 *Reorganising Work of the Interclubs*

According to the ISH regulations adopted in 1930, the Interclubs were not part of the national sections but were to be financed and monitored by the ISH Secretariat. The objective with the parallell structure was that the national sections were to focus on agitation within the national maritime unions while the Interclubs were to focus on foreign ships and their crew.[245] However, the implementation of the rulings proved difficult and Albert Walter drafted new guidelines that were adopted by the ISH Executive Committee at its meeting in September 1931.

Walter's guidelines outlined a clear division of work between the Interclubs and the national sections. In principle, the task of the former was agitation and propaganda among foreign seamen, while the latter units were to concentrate on work among domestic seamen and harbour workers. Walter projected the Interclubs as open spaces that were obliged to welcome not only revolutionary (i.e., communist and militant) seamen but also members of socialist and Christian seamen unions. The cooperation between the Interclub and the national section was of key importance but the guidelines

243 Zweite Plenarsitzung der Exekutive der ISH, 10–12.9.1931, 534/5/224, 48–82, RGASPI.

244 ISH, Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs (September 1931), 534/5/224, 202, RGASPI. A summary of the plenum and its decision was published in the ISH Buletin, see "Das 2. Plenum des ISH," as well as the 10-page supplement, "Anhang: Plenum des Exekutiv-Komitees der ISH," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 6/7 (28 September 1931).

245 (ISH instructions,) An alle Interclubs und sämtliche angeschlossene Organisationen, 4.4.1931, 534/5/221, 1–4, RGASPI; Resolution über die Tätigkeit des Hamburger Internationalen Klubs, no date, filed 15.IV.1931, 534/5/220, 155–161, RGASPI; Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, 191–203, RGASPI.

underlined that the Interclubs were not to be perceived as nurseries for the national sections. The ISH Executive Committee accepted Walter's plan without revisions.[246]

The guidelines also emphasised the strategic and tactical organisation of the Interclubs. Each of them were to receive membership cards and signs from the national sections. The national section, in turn, was to be informed each time an Interclub enlisted a new member. In case of the new member originating from a country where communist activities were illegal, the ISH Secretariat was to be informed instead. The most important task, however, was the formation of ship cells and ship committees, the action plan reminded. The former ones consisted of mariners who belonged to a revolutionary opposition; the latter one comprised all members of the crew and was led by members of the ship cell.[247]

The operational spaces of an Interclub were both the ships and the harbour area at large. If the functionaries of an Interclub were barred from entering a ship, they were obliged to get in contact with the crews when they whet ashore and strolled on the street or visited bars and seafarer's lodges. The guideline of an Interclub was proletarian international solidarity, banning intra-racial barriers as well as any forms of segregation, white chauvinism and discrimination of non-white visiting seamen. The Interclub was to constitute an attractive 'counter-space' for the foreign seamen by arranging programmes and lectures in various languages as well as to cooperate with local socialist unions and invite their representatives as speakers. On the other hand, they were to confront the Christian seamen's mission by sending agitators to their meetings and impel foreign seamen to visit the Interclub. The Interclub, in turn, was to transmit an anti-religious message: Its walls being coated with banners carrying anti-religious slogans, and anti-religious literature was to be on display in its library.[248]

A key obligation was the fight against the imperialist war (i.e., the anticipated attack on the Soviet Union) as well as the fight against "white terror" (i.e., the clampdowns and suppression of communist activities) and fascism. Part of the fight was to be visual and propagandistic: The interiors and journals of the Interclubs were to carry anti-fascist slogans and caricatures. Of

246 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

247 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

248 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

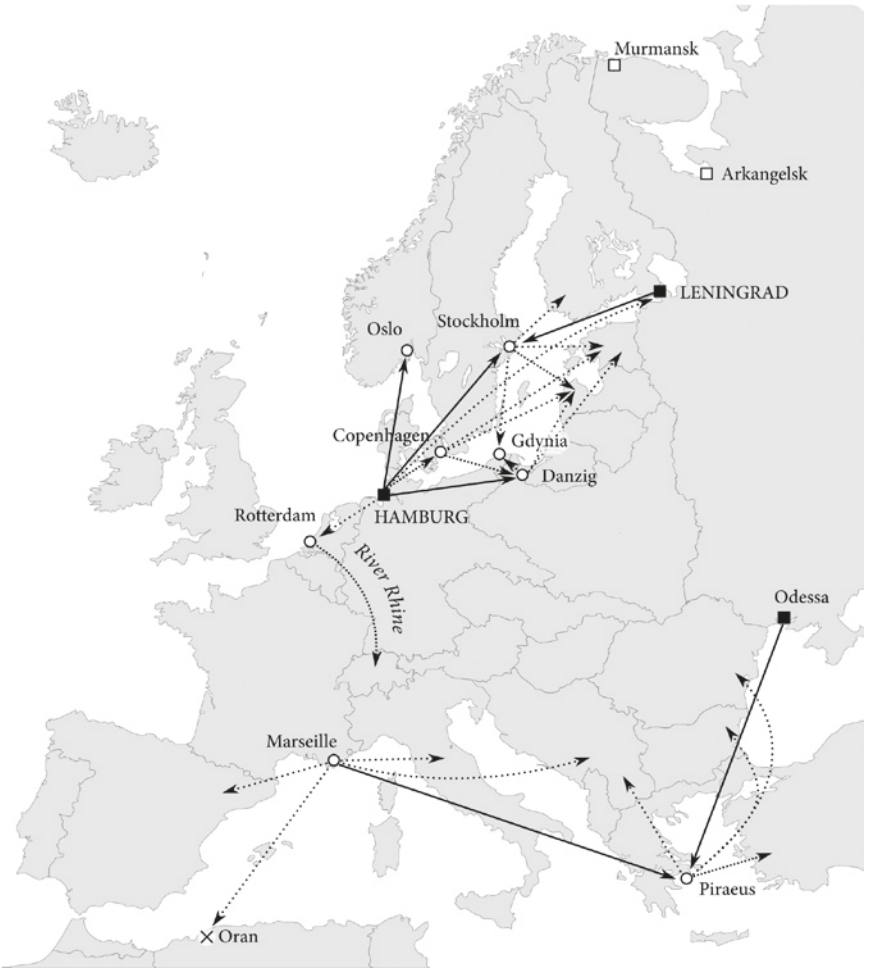
equal importance was the establishment of 'surveillance committees' in the harbours; these were to enlist communist and other union members as well as jobless and un-organised seamen and harbour workers. The 'surveillance committees' were to report on the transport of war material and troops and to organised protest meetings and demonstrations.[249]

Each Interclub was to enlist functionaries mastering several languages. They were to visit the ships and be at hand for foreign seamen every day. In addition, the management of an Interclub was to render assistance to foreign seamen and to organised legal help when needed. Most important, however, was Walter's idea of the Interclub as a social space. The premises were to be cleaned every day and should contain a reading room, a library, a writing room with letter-boxes. Miscellaneous activities were to be organised for foreign seamen while visiting a port: Orchestras, theatre clubs, choirs, sport and excursions. Operational planning was to be conducted by a collective leadership of an Interclub, including the club secretary, a seaman, a harbour worker and representatives for the foreign national sections. Practical day-to-day work was to be carried out by the so-called 'club active' composited of local and foreign mariners.[250]

Inter- and transnational cooperation was another catchword in Walter's guidelines. The leadership of the Interclubs were envisioned to be in constant contact with each other and to challenge each other by arranging 'revolutionary competitions'. Communications between the various Interclubs had been poor hitherto, and Walter's idea was to entrust some of the larger Interclubs to monitor activities in lesser ones (see Map 2). The Hamburg Interclub was to supervise activities of the Interclub in Danzig; the latter club was to establish English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Latvian, and Scandinavian sections as well as to focus on agitation among Polish seamen. The Archangelsk, Hamburg, and Leningrad Interclubs were to monitor the Scandinavian Interclubs; their special target, in turn, were Baltic, Finnish and Polish mariners. The Interclub in Marseille was to concentrate on Greek, Italian, Spanish, and Yugoslavian vessels and Walter instructed it to open an Interclub in Oran. The special target of the Amsterdam and Rotterdam Interclubs were crews on Belgian, Dutch, French, German, and Swiss river steamers. The Interclub in Piraeus was to be monitored by the Marseille and Odessa Interclubs and to focus on

249 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

250 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.



MAP 2 Plan of the internal communication network between European Interclubs

Bulgarian, Italian, Romanian, Turkish and Yugoslavian crews. The Interclubs in New Orleans and New York were to focus on Caribbean, Latin American and Philipino mariners. Finally, work among colonial and 'coloured' seamen was to be conducted by the Interclubs in Antwerp, Hamburg, London, Marseille, Rotterdam and Vladivostok.[251]

251 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

5.4 *"Our Office is in a Total Mess"*

The 1931 September meeting also resulted in a revision of work among colonial seamen in Hamburg.[252] Following by the RILU directives to the ISH and the ITUCNW, the Hamburg Interclub together with the Einheitsverband was to focus on the Indian and Chinese seamen whereas the organisation of black seamen were to be the joint responsibility of the Hamburg Interclub and the ITUCNW.[253] The implementation of the latter part of the plan had to be postponed as Ford was called to Moscow for a meeting.[254]

Ford never returned to Hamburg. Instead, his replacement was George Padmore, who arrived in Hamburg in early November 1931. The German seamen's strike, launched by the Einheitsverband in early October, had delayed his departure from Moscow. His first impressions of working conditions in Hamburg were rather negative: The harbour area was in chaos and the ITUCNW office in "a total mess" as the police had daily raided the premises at Rothesoodstrasse during the strike.[255] Padmore managed to meet the ISH leadership and set up the terms of conditions for his work: He was to receive the services of a stenographer for three days per week.[256]

Padmore's nomination followed a revision of the objectives of the ITUCNW. In October 1931, the ECCI rejected the idea of the RILU to develop the ITUCNW into an outright Black International. Consequently, the RILU adopted a new organisational outline for the ITUCNW, restricting its activities to Africa and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the obligation to focus black mariners remained, and the RILU stressed the utmost importance of cooperating with the ISH: "It

252 Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg, 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 84–98, RGASPI.

253 ISH, Decisions of the II Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the ISH on the Activity and Tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, 197–198, RGASPI.

254 Paul [Max Ziese] to "Pol" [Luigi Polano?], [Berlin] 17.9.1931, 534/4/355, 77, RGASPI. After his arrival in Moscow, Ford wrote a lengthy report about his activities in Hamburg, including the establishment of a network among black seamen, see (Ford), Report on the Work of International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (Hamburg), Covering the Period from December 1930 to September 1931, 8.10.1931, 534/3/669, 221–242, RGASPI.

255 Padmore to "Dear Comrades," add: "für Otto Huiswood," Hamburg, 16.11.1931, 534/3/668, 120r, RGASPI. See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 302–303. On the German seamen's strike and the role of the Einheitsverband and the ISH, see Constance Margain, "The German section of the International of Sailors and Harbour Workers," *Weimar Communism as Mass Movement 1918–1933*, eds. Ralf Hoffrogge and Norman LaPorte (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2017), 170–186.

256 Padmore to Huiswoud, Hamburg, 16.11.1931, 534/3/668, 121, RGASPI. In addition, it was agreed that the ISH continued to give stamps and to cover the printing costs of *The Negro Worker*. See Padmore to "Dear Comrade Adolf" [Shelley], Hamburg, 10.12.1931, 534/3/668, 132, RGASPI.

is necessary to state that the Hamburg Committee [i.e, the ITUCNW] must in no way attempt to isolate the Negro seamen and dockers from the revolutionary organisations of the ISH."[257]

6 Confronting National Unions, the ITF and the Shipping Industry

World depression crippled the shipping industry for its third year in 1931. The ship owners responded to the crisis by terminating tariffs and announcing drastic cuts in wages and preparing rationalisations on board their ships. The leadership of seamen unions tried to handle the situation through negotiations and proposing compromises. Their tactics received heavy criticism from the revolutionary opposition who pushed for confrontation and called the seamen to prepare for strikes. The clashes within the unions resulted in turbulence on the vessels and in the harbours, leading to strikes induced by the revolutionary opposition. The union leadership as well as the shipping industry generally branded these strikes as 'wild' ones, declaring them to breach existing agreements. The ISH and the revolutionary opposition, in contrast, heralded them to be expressions of the suffering masses and signified their resolute fight against the exploitation and 'fascist' methods of the capitalists and their lackeys, the union leaders. Furthermore, the ISH leadership identified confrontation tactics as the best way to promote the revolutionary opposition and to expand its influence among the maritime transport workers' unions.

The ISH and its national sections unleashed a broadside campaign against the ITF and the national unions in fall 1931. The background for the open confrontation was the successful intervention of the ISH and the Einheitsverband Danzig in the Polish seamen's strike in Gdynia by nullifying the attempt of the shipowners to secure blacklegs from Danzig.[258] The ISH Secretariat had managed to establish a Solidarity Fund for assisting strikers, among its first tokens of financial support were sent to striking fishermen in Havana (Cuba) as well as striking harbour workers in Portugal and Copenhagen.[259] The Polish strike spurred the ISH to call for a general application of 'militant international solidarity actions': National strikes were to be supported by international boycotts and interventions. A national strike was to be backed by blocking striking

257 (Draft) Resolution on work of the Hamburg Committee, 18.10.1931, 534/3/668, 45. See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 320–322.

258 "Die polnischen Seeleute geben ein Kampfbeispiel," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 2 (10. Juli 1931): 6–7.

259 ISH, MR September-October 1931, 534/5/223, 20, RGASPI.

vessels in any port of the world, by sending agitators to convince the ship crew to join the strike and to refuse to hire on vessels in boycott. The new tactics of militant internationalisation of strikes was first to be implemented during the impending strike of German seamen, and calls for international actions were sent to the ISH sections in late September 1931.[260]

6.1 *Always Fight to the Bitter End*

The Einheitsverband had launched the German seamen's strike in early October 1931.[261] German crews went on strike of the first time also abroad, among others in Soviet ports, New York, Liverpool, London, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Copenhagen and Danzig.[262] The ISH Secretariat heralded actions in support of the strikers as prime examples of international proletarian solidarity. Kouyaté and the Marseille Interclub, for example, organised a blockade of the German steamer *Patria* and a collection in support for the striking crew. Somali and Djibouti seamen refused to sign on in replacement of the German crew in strike, declaring that they had no intention to serve as scabs. Kouyaté's campaign was effective: The captain was compelled to adhere to the old wage rates; the German General Consul in Marseille verified his decision.[263]

The international actions resulted in the German trade union and the shipping industry to define the strike as a 'wild' one and declared it a breach against German maritime law. Tough counter-measures unleashed by the German authorities and unions quelled the confrontation tactics of the communists. The Hamburg police declared the harbour area as well as Rothesoodstrasse to be under curfew, raided the Interclub, and arrested both the leadership of the strike committee and the members of the ISH Secretariat. The unions, in turn, started negotiations, accepted a compromise, and called the strike off. The Einheitsverband vehemently called for a continuation of the strike but without much success and little backing by the rank-and-file members of the union.[264]

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260 "Aufruf an das internationale Wassertransportproletariat," *Informations-Bulletin der ISH. Deutsche Ausgabe* 1, no. 6–7 (28. September 1931): 4.

261 "Rüstet zum Strejk!," *Rote Wacht*. Reichsorgan des Einheitsverbandes der Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter und Binnenschiffer, Sektion der Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter (ISH) 2, no. 21 (1931).

262 ISH, MR September-October 1931, 534/5/223, 20, RGASPI.

263 G[aran] K[ouyaté], Report on colonial seamen, no date [ca. January/February 1932], 534/5/230, 25, RGASPI.

264 See further Margain, "The German section of the International of Sailors and Harbour Workers."

The defeat in the German strike did not result into a change of tactics. On the contrary, the leadership of the Einheitsverband and the ISH were convinced that the strike had been lost due to the 'betrayal' of the 'social fascist' union leadership. They further vehemently claimed that uncompromising application of the confrontation tactics and the militarisation and politicisation of strikes was the only way to win a strike; negotiations were a sign of weakness and paved the way for capitulation and defeat. Besides, the implementation of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine would open the eyes of the rank-and-file members of the unions and pave the way for the 'United front from below'.

The blind belief of confrontation being the superior tactics turned into a dogma of the ISH leadership. Disregarding news about defeats in national strikes, they stubbornly adhered to the confrontation tactics. A new attempt by the Einheitsverband to launch a strike in Germany in January 1932 failed miserably as it found little support among the seamen. The SMM failed in the same month to highjack the strike committees of harbour workers in England. Similar pathetic results were reported in February 1932 when the SMM initiated work stoppages on British vessels protesting wage cuts agreed by the National Union of Seamen. Nevertheless, the SMM failed in its attempt to call for a nationwide strike and the strike was called off two days later (see further Chapter 7.1.2). The reaction of the ISH leadership on the debacle in England resembled Moscow's instructions: Utilise the (believed) militancy of seamen and launch a red seamen's union![265]

Far better news reached the ISH headquarters from the France and the Netherlands. Here, the revolutionary opposition had gained strength following its successful veto to planned wage cuts.[266] Even better news came from Iceland where the crews on the fishing fleet went on strike in January 1932 and the strike leadership appealed to the ISH for international support. Hitherto, the ISH Secretariat had failed in its attempts to establish contacts with the unions in Iceland; hence, it immediately disseminated the appeal from Iceland to the ISH sections as a call for international support.[267] (If the call ever generated any response is not known.)

6.2 *Interventions and Reorganisations*

National strikes were lost if international support was not forthcoming or if the national section of the ISH was unorganised. Weak but strategically important sections had therefore to be reorganised by the ISH Secretariat, either by

265 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 42–43, RGASPI.
266 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 43–44, RGASPI.
267 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 44, RGASPI.

issuing written orders or directly intervening by deploying an instructor to the section. The first strategy was applied by the ISH Secretariat in its attempt to reorganise work in North America as it had neither funds nor suitable personnel at its disposal for a direct intervention. The reorganisation of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU) in the USA resulted in the nomination of a new collective leadership (in early 1932, although the effect of the ISH intervention it is questionable).[268]

Sending instructors with unlimited power to intervene in national sections was at first only applicable in Europe. Adolf Shelley therefore went to Berlin to discuss a revision of strategic and tactical operations with Pechmann and Ziese at the RILU Berlin Bureau in late October 1931.[269] As an outcome of the meeting, Shelley designed in November 1931 an ambitious plan to expand the number of instructors. Johannes Koschnik was to be nominated as instructor responsible for reorganisation of work in the Netherlands, Northern Europe and Poland. Comrade Kodrnja, whom Shelley regarded as amply qualified as he spoke Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German and Serbian, was to reinvigorate work in the Danube countries and Greece. Liao Chenghzi was to be sent to the Far East, the Sierra Leonean seaman Foster Jones, who had been engaged as contact person already by James W. Ford, to be sent to West Africa, and a certain comrade Contreras to be deployed from Moscow to Latin America.[270]

However, for reasons not known, Shelley's plan was never implemented. Instead, the ISH Secretariat engaged two instructors in France, "Marcel" and "Henry". The former, whose identity is not known, was charged by the ISH Secretariat to start a total reorganisation of the FUMP.[271] The operational area of "Henry", i.e., Luigi Polano, were the Mediterranean countries as well as connections to Latin America. His intervention achieved mixed results. Clandestine work in Italy had resulted in the establishment of local illegal units of the FILM in five ports in addition to sea cells on 80 Italian vessels. By the end of 1931, the FILM counted some 600 members in addition to 100 in Marseille.[272] Polano's activities in Spain, too, were successful – the local branches of the harbour worker's and seamen's unions in Barcelona and Seville considered affiliating to the ISH. Less promising was the situation in Portugal, Greece and Latin America. Communist activities were illegal in the two former countries while the Uruguayan

268 Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*, 37, 47–48.

269 Paul [Max Ziese] to "Pol" [Luigi Polano?], [Berlin] 21.10.1931 and 26.10.1931, 534/4/355, 131, 141, RGASPI.

270 Adolf [Shelley] to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 24.11.1931, 534/5/223, 88, RGASPI.

271 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 44–46. RGASPI.

272 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 21.11.1931, 534/4/353, 82, RGASPI.

government was preparing a proposition to curb communist activities by banning their organisations. As a preventative measure, the RILU Latin American Secretariat in Montevideo moved underground which, in turn, severely blocked its communications with Polano and the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg.[273]

The ISH Secretariat also considered intervening in the German section. The miserable outcome of the German strike in October 1931 as well as stagnating membership of the Einheitsverband raised concern at the ISH headquarters.[274] A replacement of the leadership of the Einheitsverband was effectuated in February (?) 1932 when Ernst Wollweber substituted Johannes Koschnik. Wollweber's nomination as head of the Einheitsverband might have been decided in Hamburg or in Berlin as the plan was discussed in a blueprint for strengthening the organisational work of the ISH in late February/early March 1932.[275] Wollweber was a well-known character to both the party and the authorities. He had served on a submarine during the war and instigated a rebellion among its crew in Kiel in November 1918. He joined the KPD in 1919 and quickly rose in the ranks of the party. By 1921, he had become a member of the party's Central Committee and Political Secretary of the Hesse-Waldeck district. Wollweber was notorious for his work behind the curtains and became a master of clandestine operations. Arrested and charged with high treason in 1924, released in 1926, he was a member of the Prussian Federal State Parliament since 1928.[276] British Intelligence sources claim that Wollweber participated as representative of the Reich Committee of the RGO at the ISH Executive Committee meeting in September 1931.[277]

6.3 *The March 1932 Proposal for Global Work*

Wollweber's relocation to Hamburg was part of an ambitious design by the ISH leadership in early March 1932 to overhaul both the ISH Secretariat and the national sections. According to the March 1932 Proposal, two additional

273 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 44–46, RGASPI.

274 ISH, Situationsbericht 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 44–46, RGASPI. The membership of the Einheitverein had stagnated to circa 10,000 members in early 1932, see Margain, L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 339, Figure 1.

275 Adolf [Shelley], [Albert] Walter, [?] Stein, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, [Hamburg] 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 53, RGASPI. The identity of "Stein" is not known although I assume that it was one of Wollweber's pseudonyms. Margain makes a dubious claim (L'Internationale des gens de la mer, 360–361) that Wollweber took over as leader of the Einheitsverband already in 1931.

276 Ernst Behrend, Formular (1934), Erich Wollweber personal file, 495/205/8628, 4–5, RGASPI. Behrend was one of Wollweber's pseudonyms.

277 Cross-Reference 30.9.1931, Erich Wollweber personal file, KV2/3054, 1a, TNA.

instructors were to be engaged. The first one was to operate in San Francisco, charged to establish a local bureau of the ISH and to start work among Japanese seamen. The second one was to serve as a travelling instructor and monitor the work of the Interclubs. Only two members of the ISH Secretariat were to remain in Hamburg, the rest were to be posted in various countries and strengthen the work of the respective national sections of the ISH.[278]

The blueprint stressed the need to open new avenues for agitation in countries where communist activities were illegal. The key idea was to charge certain Interclubs to concentrate on specific target groups – Danzig on Polish, Stockholm on Baltic and Finnish, Vienna on Romanian and Greek, and Marseille on Italian and Yugoslavian mariners. Underground or illegal Interclubs were to be established in Lisbon and Piraeus.[279]

Colonial seamen were a specific target group in British, Belgian and Dutch ports. The SMM was projected to establish a new Interclub in Cardiff that was to focus on agitation among black seamen as well as to connect with seamen in West Africa. The Interclub in Antwerp, in turn, was charged to open links to Belgian Congo, while the Interclub in Rotterdam was to focus on Indonesian seamen. Outside Europe, the ambition was to establish an Interclub in Freetown in Sierra Leone in cooperation with the ITUCNW. The organisation of Caribbean seamen and harbour workers was to be the prime target of a new Interclub projected in Havana as well as the existing one in New Orleans.[280] The March 1932 Proposal correlated in this respect with the intention of the RILU Latin American Secretariat to establish a new bureau in New York for coordinating its work in the Caribbean region.[281] Further, the ISH leadership projected the (illegal) Interclub in Montevideo together with two new ones in Buenos Aires and Santos to focus on work among Latin American seamen. In the Pacific area, the revolutionary trade union opposition in Australia and New Zealand were envisioned to link up with RILU Pan-Pacific Secretariat and eventually to affiliate with the ISH.[282]

278 Adolf, Walter, Stein, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, [Hamburg] 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 52, RGASPI.

279 Adolf, Walter, Stein, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, [Hamburg] 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 53–55, RGASPI.

280 Adolf, Walter, Stein, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, [Hamburg] 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 53, 55, RGASPI.

281 Confederacion Sindical Latino-Americana, Sub-Comité del Caribe, New York, Resolution of the Work of the Sub-Committee Amongst the Marine and Port Workers in the Caribbean, no date [ca. February/March 1932], 534/4/427, 9–10, RGASPI.

282 Adolf, Walter, Stein, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, [Hamburg] 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 55, RGASPI.

The implementation of the March 1932 Proposal proved difficult. Some of its global visions, such as the push towards West Africa, proved impracticable (see Section 4.5 in this chapter). Others were materialised, such as the organisation of the bureaus in San Francisco and New York. In Europe, the situation in England continued to be pathetic (see Chapter 7.2.2). On the other hand, the ISH headquarters could list two operational successes by May 1932, namely the arrangement of a conference for river transport workers on the Danube as well as the establishment of illegal sections in Estonia, Finland and Latvia.

The Danube Conference has not left many traces. Summoned to an unknown location in April 1932, its outcome was the formation of a special ISH Danube Committee.[283] The operational area and organisational links of the ISH Danube Committee is reflected by the composition of its members, namely representing the ISH Secretariat and the RILU Berlin Bureau as well as the red unions/revolutionary oppositions in Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. The secretariat of the Danube Committee was placed in Vienna and charged to publish a journal, *Donauwacht*, in six languages.[284]

As expected, the conference ended with the adoption of a resolution denouncing the ITF and the 'social fascist' national trade union leaders as well as presenting the ISH to be the only defender of the maritime transport workers.[285] However, the establishing of – mostly illegal – sections in the Danube region proved soon illusionary. The Yugoslavian Party was not interested in detaching a functionary to the Interclub in Vienna, the Czech red trade union never replied to the invitations of the ISH, and the German Party and the RGO seemed indifferent to agitate among the Danube river transport workers. Not less challenging was the situation in the other countries with either non-existing union organisation in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania or a crushed union in Yugoslavia.[286]

Equally challenging was work in the Baltic region. However, the ISH headquarters implemented a successful strategy to circumvent legal barriers by establishing phantom 'sections' of the revolutionary opposition in the seamen's

283 Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg], 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 83, RGASPI.

284 Vertrauliche Beschlüsse zur Resolution der I. Donaukonferenz der Schiffer und Hafenarbeiter, no date [ca. April 1932], 534/5/321, 85–90, RGASPI.

285 Resolution der I. internationalen Donaukonferenz zur Lage der Wassertransportarbeiter der Donau und den Aufgaben der revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung im Kampf gegen die Ausbeuter und den imperialistischen Krieg, no date [1932], 534/5/231, 91–95, RGASPI.

286 Vertrauliche Beschlüsse zur Resolution der I. Donaukonferenz der Schiffer und Hafenarbeiter, no date [ca. April 1932], 534/5/231, 85–90, RGASPI.

unions in Estonia, Finland and Latvia. None of these 'sections' ever existed formally. However, in late spring 1932 three new publications were distributed among Baltic and Finnish seamen – the Estonian *Majakas*, the Finnish *Majakka* and the Latvian *Baka*.[287] Each of them claimed to be published by a national 'sections' of the ISH with editorial headquarters at the Interclub in Hamburg, sometimes even referring to Albert Walter as editor in chief, see Figure 16.[288]

7 "Hands off China!" – Orchestrating a Global Campaign against Japanese Imperialism

Global political campaigns launched by various communist organisations after 1928 adhered to the 'Class-against-Class'-doctrine and had to receive official backing from the Comintern headquarters. However, in contrast to the earlier 'United front'-tactic of inviting non-communist radical organisations and activists to join a campaign, the new doctrine of 'United front from below' rejected any official cooperation with non-communist radical organisations though still inviting non-communists to join the campaign. In addition, any campaign launched after 1928 was to correlate with Soviet foreign security doctrines, as was underlined in the 1927 Imperial War Theses. According to these theses, any so-called imperialist war or conflict could develop into a new World War that ultimately aimed to eradicate the Soviet Union.[289] Communist parties and labour unions where therefore to establish anti-war committees and to organise boycotts of the shipment of military equipment to theatres of war anywhere on the globe.[290]

The test case for the ISH came during the 1931–32 Manchurian Crisis. While Soviet foreign policy officially applied strict neutrality,[291] the Comintern and the RILU started an international solidarity campaign against

287 Interestingly, *baka*, *majakas*, and *majakka* means 'lighthouse' in English.

288 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 307–308.

289 See "Extracts from the Resolution of the Tenth ECCI Plenum on the International Day of Struggle Against Imperialist War, July 1929," in *Communist International 1919–1943. Documents, Volume II. 1919–1943*, ed. Jane Degras (London and New York: Frank Cass, 1971), 377–381.

290 ISH: An alle Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter und Binnenschiffer! Grosse Gefahr des drohenden Angriffs der Imperialisten auf den Sowjetstaat: Schützt die Sowjetunion, in: *Rotes Gewerkschafts-Bulletin* 78, no. 9 (13.12.1930), R1501/20224 Reichsministerium des Inneren. Internationale Hafenbüros und Seemannklubs, Jan. 1930–Nov. 1933, 31, BArchB.

291 Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy 1930–1933: The Impact of the Depression* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1983), 79–82.

FIGURE 16 *Baka*, the publication of the Latvian section of the ISH.

Japanese imperialism and militarism when the West European Bureau of the Comintern and the RILU European Bureau issued a joint statement condemning the Japanese attack on China in September 1931.[292] Georgi Dimitrov, the head of the West European Bureau, sent a message to Moscow and urged the Comintern to issue an order to all communist parties to step up a campaign against the war danger and in defence of the Soviet Union. However, the Comintern headquarters were slow to react. Only in November did the Comintern issue an appeal where it warned that the Far Eastern conflict might lead to a world war and that the Japanese were preparing to attack the Soviet Union. The appeal included a call to establish China aid committees and to organise protest meetings and demonstrations against the Japanese aggression.[293]

The 'Hands off China!'-campaign was rather successfully carried out by communist non-party mass-organisations, such as the Workers' International Relief (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe) which had almost ten years of experience in mobilising for proletarian international solidarity.[294] Mass mobilisation for China through the communist parties, on the other hand, proved difficult. In Britain, for example, George Hardy blamed the lack of political mobilisation during its opening phase in the autumn of 1931 on the fact that few workers had any idea of the conflict, lest knew where Manchuria was located.[295] The inactivity of the communist parties resulted in harsh criticism from the Comintern. After the attack by Japanese forces on Shanghai in late January 1932, the stronghold of the Chinese Communist Party, the Comintern demanded outright action from the communist parties.[296] Consequently, the British Communist Party made substantial effort during the spring of 1932 at popular mobilisation on the left. However, the campaign did not match expectations and the failure to involve the industrial workers resulted in much self-criticism.[297]

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292 "Appeal by the West European Bureau of the ECCI and the European Secretariat of the RILU on the Japanese Invasion of Manchuria," *Inprecorr* XI, no. 93 (29 September 1931): 2080.

293 Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 86–87; Belugova, "Networks, Parties, and the 'Oppressed Nations'."

294 See further Kasper Braskén, "In Pursuit of Global International Solidarity? The Transnational Networks of the International Workers' Relief, 1921–1935," in *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements and Global Politics, 1919–1939*, ed. Holger Weiss (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 130–167.

295 Buchanan, *East Wind*, 53.

296 Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 87–88.

297 Buchanan, *East Wind*, 54–55.

The 'Hands off China!'-campaign was the first global call for international political mobilisation the ISH, see Figure 17.[298] The objective of the campaign, the ISH Secretariat informed its national sections in December 1931, was twofold. First, the task was to expose the ITF for its 'social fascist' tendencies and its support for imperialist war efforts. Second, the national sections were to establish local anti-war committees. The ITF was accused for bluffing – its call to stop the transportation of war material to the Far East was claimed to be bogus; instead, the ISH called to the seamen to boycott all shipments of military material to Japan.[299] Already in its Resolution on colonial work of March 1931, the ISH accused 'social fascist' trade union leaders of the ITF for splitting the ranks of the sea transport workers, among others in Japan and China.[300] In its first reaction to the Manchurian Crisis, the ISH denounced the ITF for not having condemned Japanese imperialism neither the attack against Manchuria.[301] On the contrary, the ISH informed its members, the 'reformist' Japanese seamen union backed its government and the leadership of the British seamen union had rejected the call to boycott Japanese ships. In addition, in line with the Imperialist War theses, the Japanese attack was believed to be the first stage of a forthcoming imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union.[302]

The progress – and difficulties – of the 'Hands off China!'-campaign will be outlined below by focusing on the activities of the national sections of the ISH in the Scandinavian countries. A pamphlet of the ISH was translated into Danish and highlighted the crucial role of the Danish harbour workers as they had the task to block any shipment of war material through the Danish Sounds and on Danish ships.[303] In Sweden, the war danger and the Manchurian Crisis were the prime topic of the national congress of the radical sea transport workers in December 1931.[304] If the initial calls of the ISH and its national sections had any immediate effects is unclear. It is more likely that the national

298 The following sub-chapter paraphrases the first part of my article, Holger Weiss, "Against Japanese and Italian Imperialism: The Anti-war Campaigns of Communist International Trade Union Organizations, 1931–1936," *Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements* 60 (2018): 121–146.

299 "ITF och kampen mot kriget," *Ny Dag* 4.12.1931.

300 Resolution on the Colonial Work of the Sections of the ISH in the Capitalist Countries, 22.3.1931, 495/25/1334, RGASPI.

301 "ITF och kampen mot kriget," *Ny Dag* 4.12.1931; Borgersrud, Wollweber-organisasjonen i Norge, 55.

302 ITF-kongressen i Belysning af Officielle Dokumenter [ca. 1932], p. 2, Richard Jensen's papers, ABA.

303 (ISH pamphet) Søfolk! Havnearbejdere! [published ca. 1932], Richard Jensen's papers, ABA.

304 "R.F.O.:s landskonferens," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 1, no. 2 (December 1931): 5.

Arbeidere i alle land foren Dere!

Løssalg 10 øre

SJØTRANSPORTARBEIDEREN

Utgitt av Sjøtransportarbeidernes revolusjonære Opposisjon i Norge.

Nr. 2. *20. februar 1932.* 6. årg.

Krigen i Østen i full gang.

Til alle sjøfolk og bryggearbeidere.

KAMERATER!

For flere måneder tilbake har I. S. H. i et oprop påpekt at okkupasjonen av Mansjuriet intet annet betyr enn en ny imperialistisk krig. Efter at de japanske imperialister med støtte av de øvrige imperialistiske stater har besatt Mansjuriet, har de nu påbegynt et fryktelig bombardement av Shanghai, Nanking og Charbin. I bombardementet benyttes såvel krigsskib som luftskyts.

Charbin er det centrale punkt på den Østkinesiske bane som står under ledelse av sovjets og kinesiske funksjonærer.

Hvad betyr bombardementet av disse byer?

Besettelsen av Shanghai ved Jangtseinnløpet betyr et strategisk utgangspunkt for offensiven mot sovjetområdene i Kina. På samme måte betyr imperialistenes besettelse av Charbin et center for angrepene på Sovjet-Unionen.

«Folkeforbundet» enig med de imperialistiske røvere.

Folkeforbundet har allerede fra begynnelsen av stilt sig på samme linje som de japanske røvere, fordi de forbereder en nyopdeling av Kina, fordi de forsøker å slå ned de kinesiske sovjet-områder, og fordi de forsøker å organisere en ny imperialistisk krig mot arbeidernes fedreland *S. S. S. R.* Således ser det «fredsinstrument» ut som socialdemokratene vil inbilde arbeiderne kan forhindre krig.

Den imperialistiske krig kan kun forhindres gjennem revolusjonær kamp av verdensproletariatet. 2. internasjonale og I. T. F.s rolle.

De reformistiske fagforeningsførere, den *2.* internasjonale og *I. T. F.*-førerne i alle land understøtter imperialistenes forbrytерske aksjoner.

Edo Fimmen, I. T. F.s generalsekretær, har erklært ordrett: «Jeg forstår Japans situasjon og at det ikke kan ta *sine borgere* i Kina stå ubeskyttet». Gjennem denne erklæring har Fimmen anerkjent de japanske imperialisters røvertokt i Kina.

Under «beskyttelsens dundring, maskingeværenes knatrende lyd, åpnet Henderson, føreren for Englands arbeiderparti, avrustningskonferansen i Genf som skal «bevise» at de imperialistiske makter ikke vil krig, men avrustning. Gjennem fascisme, bedrageriske fraser, gjennem imperialistiske komedier med «avrustning» lar imidlertid verdens sjøtransportarbeidere sig ikke mer bedrage.

Sovjet-Unionens, fredens borg, socialismens land.

Det eneste land som tross alle provokasjoner fra de japanske imperialister i Mansjuriet, tross Serajew-provokasjonen fra den tsjekkiske diplomat Wanjek i Moskva, tross alle de øvrige krigshissere i den imperialistiske leir, så fortsetter Sovjet-Unionen beslutsomt sin fredspolitikk. Det land, sosialismens land, det eneste fredens borg og det er Sovjet-Unionen hvor man bygger op socialismen og som i disse dager gjennemfører sin første 5 års plan.

Rederne hisser til krig.

Sjøfolk! Et internasjonalt organ for redere skriver ordrett: «Det høres kanskje brutalt ut, men ut fra den situasjon som man nu står overfor er en krig meget ønskelig. En krig kommer til å føre til større etterspørsel efter tonnasje, varetransportens risiko vil stige, og dermed også prisene og med dette vil samtidig spekulasjonen stige».

At tusener av sjømenn kommer til å miste livet i en krig, bryr ikke skibsrederne sig om. Deres skib er jo forsikret og hvis disse skulde gå tapt, får rederne i mange tilfelle dobbelt erstatning. For skibsrederne er kun det viktigste å høste større profitt og komme sig ut av krisen, selv om millioner av mennesker derigjennem må sette livet til.

En ny verdenskrig truer

Hvad som for tiden går for sig i Østen, er et *allarmsignal til alle sjøtransportarbeidere om å være årvåkne og øke sin aktivitet.* Det kapitalistiske system er gjennem verdenskrisen og det revolusjonære opsving fra arbeiderklassen i de imperialistiske og koloniale land bragt på avgrunnens rand. Kapitalismen er beredt til alle skurkestreker for å redde sin makt. Det som forekommer i Østen viser påny at imperialistene ikke viker tilbake verdenskrig, for å holde arbeiderklassen nede, gjennem blodig terror og standretter skal man forsøke å bøie massenes utilfredshet, slå ned den revolusjonære kamp og hindre den socialistiske opbygging i Sovjet-Unionen.

Skap en kampens enhetsfront.

Sjøtransportarbeidere i alle land!

De som har satt igang krigen i Østen er de samme som nedsetter deres lønninger og forverrer deres arbeidskår. De samme er det som er årsaken til at tusener og atter tusener av sjøfolk og havnearbeidere er stott ut i arbeidsløshet og elendighet. Organiser på hvert skib, i hver havn en enhetsfront av alle sjøfolk, bryggearbeidere, lektermenn og fiskere *til kamp mot deres utbyttere og undertrykkere.* Dette er samtidig den beste kamp dere kan føre mot de imperialistiske krigsprovokatører.

Bryt igjennem borgerskapets planer.

Sjøfolk og bryggearbeidere!

Husk det eksempel som mannskapene på panserkrysserne «Potemkin» og «Aurora» har vist og følg Martys gloriøse eksempel. Bryt tvers gjennem borgerskapets planer som går ut på å organisere en verdenskrig mot Sovjet-Unionen. Gjennem det imperialistiske eventyr i Kina, dreier det sig jo i første rekke om et overfall på arbeidernes fedreland, Sovjet-Unionen. Forsvar

FIGURE 17 Protesting against the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, reports on actions against Japanese imperialism following the ISH 'Hands-off-China'-campaign, published in *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 2, no 6 (February 1932): 1. The journal was the organ of the ISH section in Norway.

sections started its propaganda and agitation campaign after the new call by the RILU Berlin Bureau in February 1932, directed to all metal and harbour workers to prevent the transportation of military supplies destined for the use against China and the Soviet Union.[305] As the ISH fully backed the call, the national sections had to act. Anti-war meetings were organised, among others, in Stockholm in Sweden and the Swedish section issued a resolution that criticised the Reformist leaders for inactivity and sabotaging local boycotts.[306] In Denmark, both the seamen's and the stokers' unions issued resolutions condemning an (impending) attack on the Soviet Union and Soviet China.[307] The first anti-war committee was established in Gothenburg in March and one month later the *Hamn- och sjöproletären*, the organ of the Swedish ISH section, reminded its readers of the utmost need to establish anti-war committees in each harbour as military equipment also had been shipped to the Far East.[308] Similar calls were published by the RFO-journals in Denmark and Norway.[309]

If the call to form anti-war committees in the Scandinavian countries had a profound effect is not known. Still, there are some indications of their existence. A "mass demonstration" was organised by the harbour workers in Oslo in March, protesting against the Japanese bombardment of Shanghai;[310] while Danish harbour workers protested in Copenhagen against the shipment of war equipment on Danish vessels to Japan.[311] One month later, the RFO in the Oslo harbour tried to block the shipment of war equipment to Romanian and Turkish ports;[312] in May, they protested against the shipment of ammunition on a Norwegian freighter to Japan.[313] The Manchurian Crisis and the

305 Rote Einheitsfront gegen den räuberischen Überfall auf China und gegen das imperialistische Kriegskomplott gegen die Sowjetunion und Sowjet-China. Kampf gegen die eigenen Ausbeuter und ihre Helfer. Reichskomitee Agitprop Anfang Februar 1932, R1501/20442 Reichsministerium des Inneren, KPD – Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsbewegung, Jan. 1932–Mai 1932, 469, BArchB.

306 "Mot det imperialistiska kriget," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 2, no. 2–3 (1932): 2.

307 "Resolution," *Lanternen* 7, no. 2 (1932): 1; "Resolution," *Rød Kurs* 2, no. 3 (1932). Both texts had been put forward by the opposition.

308 "Kamp mot kriget – Bilda antikrigskommittéer!," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 2, no. 4 (1932): 4.

309 "Krigen raser i Østen!," *Rød Kurs* 2, no. 2 (1932); "Enhetsfront mod krigen," *Lanternen* 7, no. 2 (1932): 2; "Organiser antikrigskomiteer i alle hamner og skib!," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 3 (1932): 1.

310 "Massdemonstration i Oslo," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 3 (1932): 3.

311 ""Peter Mærsk" med ammunition til Japan og besætningen udenom Anvisningerne!," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 3 (1932).

312 *Arbeideren* 13.4.1932.

313 "150 ton patroner med "Røsten" fra Oslo til Shanghai," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 5 (1932): 4.

anticipated/feared Imperial War had been one of the central themes discussed at the World Congress of the ISH in Altona in late May 1932,[314] not surprisingly resulting in a condemnation of the ITF and its demand to wait for the final decision of the League of Nations.[315] Danish and Swedish delegates being present at the tactical discussions at the Conference, including the urge to strengthen the work of the national anti-war committees,[316] it is not surprising that a joint Danish-Swedish anti-war meeting was called to be held in Elsinore in early July.[317] At least in Gothenburg, the new tactic resulted in the establishment of a 'Vigilance and action committee', the Röd Hamnkontroll (Red Harbour Control).[318]

Locally organised boycotts and anti-war activities were to be utilised in international propaganda and agitation campaigns. A successful boycott anywhere on the globe was to be reported in the national organs of the sections as they were to serve as an example and stimulate for similar actions in the harbours. For example, the readers of *Majakka*, the organ of the illegal Finnish section of the ISH, were informed about a successful action against the ship *Caronia* "in an English harbour:" The harbour workers had delayed the departure of the ship by pouring sulphuric acid in its engine.[319] The Danish RFO-journal *Rød Kurs* reported about two events, one successful, one failed: in Gothenburg, the dockers' union had rejected the demand of boycotting the freighter *Hemland*, whereas 23 stokers had tried to stop the Japanese-owned steamer *New Amsterdam* in Durban (and, as a consequence, were jailed by the South African police).[320]

As anticipated by the ISH, the 'Hands off China!'-campaign was not backed by the leadership of the national unions of sea transport workers in Scandinavia.

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314 "Struggle against Imperialist War," in *The World Unity Congress of the International Water Transport Workers and it's Decisions* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, no date [1932]), 13–16.

315 "ITF og krigen i Östen," *Rød Kurs – Kongressnummer*, Maj 1932 (special edition, May 1932); "Edo Fimmen sanksjonerer ockupasjonen i Mansjuria og transporten av krigsmateriell," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 5 (1932): 2.

316 "Kämpft gegen den imperialistischen Krieg! Der Erste Einheitskongress des internationalen Wassertransportproletariats an die Seeleute, Hafenarbeteiter, Binnenschiffer und Fischer aller Länder!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, 26.5.1932; "Organisiert das Stoppen der Kriegstransporte! Der internationale Seeleutekongress an das Wasserproletariat der ganzen Welt!," *Ruhr-Echo* Nr. 110, 28.5.1932, 458/9/54, 78, RGASPI.

317 "Till Helsingör," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 2, no. 6 (1932): 4.

318 *Stormklockan* 9–16.6.1932, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 294 Pärm VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 1, SNA.

319 "Miten aselaivan lähtö estetään," *Majakka* 6 ([December] 1932): 32.

320 *Rød Kurs – Kongressnummer*, Maj 1932 (special edition, May 1932).

On their part, the union leadership regarded the campaign to be nothing else than a communist move to split the unions. Why boycott the shipment of war equipment to Japan when the Soviet Union was at the same time allowing the transport of Japanese troops on the Soviet-controlled East Manchurian railway, the editor of the Swedish union journal *Sjömannen* asked?[321] Also, the so-called peace propaganda of the communists was nothing else than a bluff and one of the few successful boycotts in a Swedish harbour turned out to be directed against a ship carrying gun powder to Turkey, mocked the journal.[322] The communist journal *Hamn- och sjöproletären* did not reply to these accusations. Typically, they regarded the reformist critique as nothing else but a veiled attack by the capitalists and ship owners who sided with the Japanese imperialists. Nevertheless, the discrepancies between Soviet and Comintern/RILU policies during the Manchurian Crisis must have been difficult to explain for the party's rank and file when they were confronted by socialist or non-organised seamen and harbour workers.

The problem with the various calls for the boycott of military shipments was that they did not result in a mass mobilisation of the local workers. Although the communists tried to organise local strikes and actions in various harbours throughout Western Europe and the USA, they usually failed to prevent the transportation of war equipment to the Japanese forces. In Britain, for example, the radical left as well as the SMM were unable to persuade harbour workers to take action, and vessels loaded with ammunition, such as the *Glenshiel* in April 1932 and the 'death ship' *Glengarry* in May 1932, managed to embark from British ports.[323] Norway, a correspondent of the *Sjøtransportarbeideren* criticised the unwillingness of the harbor workers' union leadership to organise a boycott in the harbour of Oslo;[324] the only successful blockade was organised in December 1932.[325] In Sweden, where the formation of harbour cells and anti-war committees had been slow, the national section of the ISH critically remarked that several shipments of war material had left Sweden during the spring of 1932.[326]

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321 "Internationell orientering," *Sjömannen* 5 (1932): 131. An identical text was published one month later in the organ of the Swedish stokers' union *Eldaren*.

322 "Vad är krigsmaterial och hur förhindra krig?," *Sjömannen* 8 (1932): 225–226.

323 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. notes 7.4.1932 and 9.4.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. Buchanan, *East Wind*, 52. According to British Intelligence sources, Hardy used eight trusted (unemployed) men to search the docks for ships going to Shanghai.

324 "Oslo bryggearbeidere må ta initiativet til en effektiv blockade av all våben og ammunisjonstransport," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 6–7 (1932): 2–3.

325 "Norske skibe smuggler ammunisjon inn i Kina," *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 12 (1932): 1.

326 "Kamp mot kriget – Bilda antikrigskommittéer!," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 2, no. 4 (1932): 4.

The ISH Secretariat also made use of the ITUCNW to instigate the 'Hands off China!'-campaign among black mariners. A first call on global solidarity was published in *The Negro Worker* in late 1931. In line with the Comintern theses on the forthcoming Imperialist War, the black toilers were called to act against the Japanese aggressors and to defend the Soviet Union.[327] For the next 6 months, *The Negro Worker* was to carry in each issue calls to join the "Hands off China!"-campaign in each issue. In March 1932, the ITUCNW officially rallied behind the ISH's resolution on the war in the Far East and urged black harbour workers and mariners to stop the transportation of war material to Japan.[328] The covers of both the March and the April issues of *The Negro Worker* carried the slogans of the global campaign – "Hands off China" and "Defend the Soviet Union!" as well as demanding "Down With the Imperialist War Mongers!" and "Not a Gun for the Imperialist War Mongers!". In May, its readers were reminded that to defend the Soviet Union is to defend the interests of the working-class and were urged to protest against Japanese imperialism and Western interference in China: "Negro Workers! Rally to fight against the Japanese robber war! Against the war inciters and war criminals! For immediate withdrawal of all imperialist troops and gun boats from China! Against the partition of China and for the defense of the Chinese Soviet districts!"[329] Padmore was quick to notify his readers that both France and Britain were supporting Japanese war efforts by sending war materials to the Far East.[330]

However, a close reading of *The Negro Worker* reveals that the 'Hands off China'-campaign soon became of peripheral interest of the ITUCNW. What mattered more for Padmore was the international campaign in support of the Scottsboro Boys. The 'Scottsboro Boys' were nine young African Americans who had been charged with the rape of two white girls in Scottsboro, Alabama in March 1931. The evidence was dubious and was challenged both by the bourgeois as well as the left-wing press. When the local court sentenced them to death in April 1931, a nationwide wave of protest against the lynch justice in the US South was organised by the International Labor Defence and was made a global affair by the International Red Aid.[331] In June 1931, the RILU Secretariat ordered the ITUCNW to develop the Scottsboro campaign into a

327 "The War Danger. War in the East. Negro Workers, defend the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution!," *The Negro Worker*, 1, no. 10–11 (October–November 1931): 3.

328 G.P., "War in the East," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 3 (March 1932): 9.

329 Cyril Briggs, "Negro Workers, Fight Against Intervention," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 5 (May 1932): 8.

330 George Padmore, "The World Today," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 8 (August 1932): 2.

331 On the international Scottsboro Campaign, see Miller, Pennybaker, and Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright."

mass mobilisation of black workers throughout the Atlantic,[332] a task that especially Padmore was to put in the forefront of his activities when he took over the Hamburg Secretariat. From May 1932 onwards, the ITUCNW and its mouthpiece wholeheartedly focussed on the Scottsboro campaign,[333] leaving the calling black seamen and harbour workers to support the 'Hands off China!'-campaign solely to the ISH.

332 Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, 10.6.1931, 534/3/668, 25–26, RGASPI.

333 See further Weiss, *Framing A Radical African Atlantic*, 392–397.

CHAPTER 7

Assembling the Global Radical Waterfront

The 'Fighting International of the Radical Maritime Transport Workers' was to be officially inaugurated at a forthcoming world congress to be held in Hamburg on 20 May 1932, declared the 'Provisional' Executive Committee after its meeting in September 1931.[1] Projected as a global manifestation of the radical waterfront, invitations were sent to both national unions and opposition groups. The ISH Secretariat initiated a global propaganda campaign, and published a special pamphlet outlining the agenda and objectives of the congress, see Figure 18. Ambitions were set high. The congress was to constitute a 'global front' against the shipowners's attempts to press wages and to deteriorate working conditions, against the threat of an impending world war, and in support of the struggles of the maritime transport workers in the colonial world. In line with the 'United front from below'-tactic, the pamphlet contained two messages. First, communist as well as non-communist members of the national maritime transport workers' union were incited to elect delegations for the congress. Second, and in line with the 'Confrontation'-tactic, the ITF was branded as being thew lackey of the shipping industry while the leaders of the national unions were denounced as traitors of the working class.[2] Not surprisingly, the national unions refrained from responding, and the invitation mainly circulated in the communist press.[3]

A call signed by an 'International Committee' further underscored the projected global outreach of the congress. For an outside spectator (or police informant), it was just a list of names but an examination of the list reveals the composition of the collective ISH leadership and their regions of operations during spring 1932, see Table 10.

Meanwhile in Moscow, the RILU Budget Commission prepared an outline for the congress. It calculated a total of USD 20,000 to cover the expenses for 250 delegates for five days plus for an additional 100 participants for eight days. A special meeting at the RILU headquarters discussed the invitation of

1 Richtlinien an das Europäische Sekretariat, 18.10.1931, 534/4/347, 126, RGASPI.

2 *Kleine Bibliothek der ISH, 20. Mai 1932 in Hamburg. Einheitskongress des Wassertransportproletariats der Welt* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, no date [1931/32]).

3 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 187–189.

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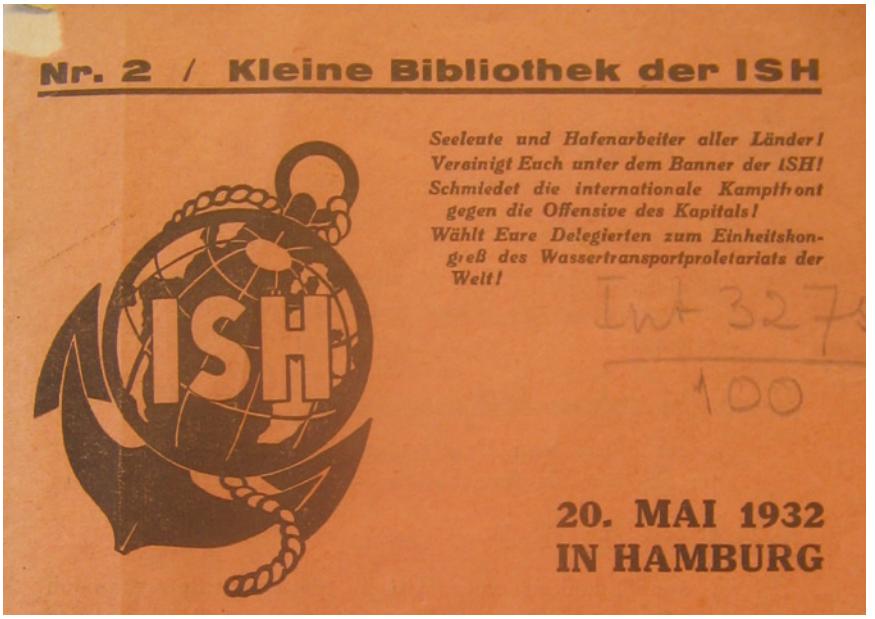

FIGURE 18 Calling the radical waterfront to meet at the world congress, pamphlet published by the ISH in spring 1932. The pamphlet publicised the agenda and the objectives of the forthcoming ISH World Congress.

black seamen and the RILU Budget Commission proposed ten delegates to be invited from Africa; however, the travel costs of 540 USD for two of the African delegates, one from Oran, the other from Sierra Leone, were to be covered by the ISH.[4]

Securing the participation of black seamen at the congress was in tandem with the RILU and ISH visions of mobilising black mariners into the revolutionary trade union opposition. In early January 1932, a high-ranking steering committee summoned in Moscow to outline the cooperation between the ISH and the ITUCNW in relation to the ISH World Congress. The main topic on the agenda was a proposal – perhaps authored by George Padmore – about bringing black seamen to the World Congress as well as establishing Interclubs in Africa (Freetown and Cape Town) and the Caribbean (Curaçao and Jamaica). While the question of establishing new Interclubs remained on the table, the meeting agreed that each of the delegations from Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom should include black members. Finally,

4 Kostenvorschlag zum 1. Weltkongress der ISH, 534/8/157, 192, RGASPI.

TABLE 10 Geographic composition of ISH leadership by spring 1932

Name published in 1932 call	Country published in 1932 call	Not mentioned in 1932 call
Walter	ISH Secretariat	
Hardy, Thompson	England	SMM
Hudson, "Hink" [i.e., Mink]	USA	MWIU
Woll Weber [i.e., Wollweber], Volkman	Germany	Einheitsverband
Kouyaté, Blankaert, Olivier	France	FUMP
Kobayashi	Japan	
Alvarino	Latin America	
Kommissarenko	Soviet Union	UWTW
Ratti	Italy	FILM
Raoul Martinez	Portugal	
Nunez	Spain	
Schaap	Holland	RTUO
Verkeest	Belgium	RTUO
Samsing	Norway	RFO
Jensen	Denmark	RFO
Persson	Sweden	RFO
J. Shuba	South Africa	
Liao	China	CSA
Bart [i.e., Barth]	Danube countries	RTUO

SOURCE: "APPELL TILL SJÖTRANSPORTARBETARNA INFÖR SJÖTRANSPORTARBETARNAS FÖRSTA VÄRLDSKONGRESS," *NY DAG* 26.4.1932

the steering committee commissioned Garan Kouyaté to present a report on the colonial question at the congress.[5]

Preparations for the congress were in full swing by March 1932. Most sections had responded positively and had started to nominate delegations, see Figure 19. The documents prepared by the RILU Secretariat for the congress,

5 Huiswoud to Padmore, [Moscow] 6.1.1932, 534/3/753, 33, RGASPI. The Surinamese-born Communist Otto Huiswoud had replaced Padmore in fall 1931 as head of the RILU Negro Bureau.

FIGURE 19 The radical waterfront heading towards Hamburg, illustration titled "International kampfront" (International fighting front), published in *Rød Kurs* 2 (May 1932).

including the resolution and statutes of the ISH, arrived in early April. Pechmann was pleased, and notified that the ISH instructors in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain did their best to propagate for the congress, and that a fifth instructor was about to be sent to Greece.[6]

However, three of the national sections seemed to have severe problems. News from England continued to be disturbing, Hardy and Thompson quarrelled, and the SMM had not even started its campaign for the congress. Albert Walter therefore rushed to London for a serious discussion with the SMM leadership.[7] In France, the ongoing reorganisation of the FUMP had a negative impact on the campaign and it only started after the removal of Auguste Dumay from his position.[8] Interestingly, this might explain why his name is missing in Table 10. Disappointing news were also received from Vladivostok

6 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 22.4.1932, 534/4/405, 210 – 213, RGASPI.

7 Heckert to "Lieber Alexander" [Lozovsky], Berlin 9.3.1932, 534/4/405, 148 – 151, RGASPI; Leo [Pechmann] to "Cher Camarades," [Berlin] 22.3.1932, 534/4/405, 167–168, RGASPI.

8 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 19.4.1932, 534/4/405, 184–186, RGASPI.

where the ISH representative had failed to get in contact with the illegal/underground ISH section in Japan.[9]

Lozovsky reacted to the problems of enlisting participants to the ISH World Congress by asking the ECCI to interfere. The latter, in turn, ordered Lozovsky to nominate a commission to lead the congress, and to telegraph the British, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Polish, and US American parties and urge them to nominate delegations to the congress. The decision of the composition and sending of a delegation from the Soviet water transport workers' union, however, was a matter of Soviet Party, not the RILU, the ECCI reminded. In addition, the ECCI ordered the RILU Secretariat to draft a condemnation of the ITF for its rejection to participate at the congress, which was to circulate after the congress.[10]

Negative news added up in April 1932 when Walter informed Pechmann at the RILU Berlin Bureau that the local authorities had rejected his application to organise a congress in Hamburg. This must have come as a surprise as none of the comrades had even considered the possibility of a negative reply by the Hamburg police. Pechmann suspected that the rejection was due to a French intervention. Walter had to find a new location for the venue and travelled to Copenhagen to discuss the matter with Richard Jensen. Their solution was to move the congress to the Danish capital but they decided not to issue an official declaration about the decision. Instead, Hamburg was to remain as the location of the venue as long as the Danish authorities considered Jensen's application.[11]

The RILU headquarters in Moscow accepted the plan to move the congress to Copenhagen in early May but reminded the organising committee about necessity for it to be a legal event. In case of a negative answer from the Danish authorities, the RILU Secretariat urged the organisers to prepare an alternative plan for the venue if Copenhagen turned out to be impossible.[12]

At this point, the RILU Secretariat had finished its instructions for the congress and Lozovsky presented them at a meeting of the ECCI Political Commission in early May. A critical paragraph was the affiliation of the ISH with the RILU, and the ECCI underscored that the paragraph had to be reformulated as to leave the decision open, i.e., not to be decided by ISH Congress.

9 Report from Kennedy to Johnson, [Vladivostok] 14.2.1932, 534/4/415, 29, RGASPI.

10 Protokoll (A) Nr 234 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 9.4.1932, 495/4/182, RGASPI.

11 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 22.4.1932, 534/4/405, 201–213, RGASPI.

12 See §19, Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, 11.5.1932, 534/5/232, 35, RGASPI.

Instead, the paragraph was to indicate that the ISH was closer to the RILU than the IFTU (Amsterdam International). Hoping for at least some 'reformist' delegates to participate, the ECCI ruled that if they did not oppose to the idea of an affiliation, the Congress was to authorise the ISH Executive Committee to start negotiations with the RILU. However, the final decision abour the ISH's affiliation with the RILU was to be made at the congress following the impeding one. To ensure the realisation of the plan, the ECCI ruled that the majority of members nominated for the ISH Executive Committee were supporters of the RILU.[13] The decision of the ECCI was a somewhat desperate attempt to present the ISH in public as an 'independent' organisation and to blur its subordination to the RILU. Obviously, the ECCI strategists believed that the 1932 ISH Congress would nominate a leadership whose composition the RILU had prepared in advance, and that a following world congress, perhaps to summon in 1933 or 1934, would ratify the affiliation. While the first part of the plan materialised, the second part never did. Officially, therefore, the ISH never affiliated to the RILU but remained an 'independent' organisation.

Meanwhile in Hamburg, the organisers were approaching the final phase in their preparations. A (new) brochure in English, French, German, Norwegian, and Spanish containing the agenda and objectives of the congress was printed in 57,000 copies.[14] News poured in at the ISH headquarters about positive responses to the international campaign for the congress – the water transport workers in Portugal declared their participation, the harbour workers' union in Cape Town had elected a delegation but the authorities had barred them from leaving South Africa, and unions in Cuba, Iceland, New Zealand, and Peru had been in contact with the ISH.[15] Activities and collections in support of the congress were arranged by the Interclubs and the revolutionary oppositions in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland.[16] Government authorities, in turn, responded by denying passport to delegates bound to Hamburg.[17] For a moment it even seemed that the organisers had to cancel the congress as the Danish authorities – hardly

13 Protokoll (B) Nr 240 der Politischen Kommission des EKKI der Sitzung am 9.5.1932, 495/4/188, RGASPI.

14 Bericht Polizeipräsident Berlin, 15.6.1932, Berichtserstatter Regierungsassessor Dr. Arian, Abt. 301 Akten des Ober-Präsidiums der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein betreffend die KPD, 4534, LAS.

15 "In Kapstadt, Peru, Kuba, Island," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 14/15.5.1932.

16 "Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter in allen Ländern rüsten zum Weltkongress!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 17.5.1932.

17 "Hafenarbeiter in Dünkirchen erzwingen Ausstellung von Pässen," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 18.5.1932.

surprising –rejected the application. Walter hurried to Altona, a town next to Hamburg but administratively part of Prussia, and conviced the local police authorities to permit the congress to convene on Prussian territory.[18]

The announcement of arranging the congress in Altona caused great exitement among the communists in Hamburg. "The delegates of the congress will be the guests of the Hamburg proletariat," the *Hamburger Volkszeitung* enthusiastically declared.[19] A few days later the tone changed to the opposite – the police authorities had also prohibited to summon the congress in Altona![20] "International" protests followed, organised by the Interclub in Hamburg, 500 protesting …[21] A new announcement followed on 20 May: The ban had been revoked![22] The communist press exulted: The organisers had managed to evade the prohibitons enforced by the social democratic trade union leaders and their symphatisers among the Hamburg police auhtorities.[23]

1 A Global Moment: Altona, 21–24 May 1932

Despite police harassment and all sorts of difficulties, 173 delegates representing 31 nations managed to arrive in Altona. The communist press hailed the congress as the global moment of the unified radical waterfront.[24] The congress transgressed racial and political barriers and articulated international proletarian solidarity, trumpeted the ISH:

> In complete unanimity the delegates of all races and nationalities participated in the discussion of the problems in regard to the organisation of economic struggles, the fight against imperialist war, the support of the

18 Kongress der ISH, 534/5/232, 75–76, RGASPI; "Der Kongress tagt in Altona," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 12.5.1932.

19 "Hallo! Die Delegierten des Welteinheitskongresses der ISH sind die Gäste des Hamburger Proletariats," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 12.5.1932.

20 "ISH-Kongress auch in Altona verboten!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 18.5.1932.

21 "Seeleute aller Länder protestieren gegen Verbot des ISH-Kongresses," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 19.5.1932.

22 "Verbot des Kongresses der Wassertransportarbeiter aufgehoben," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 20.5.1932.

23 "Rot Front den Wassertransportarbeitern der Welt!," Hamburger Volkszeitung 21/22.5.1932; "Internationaler Kampfkongress gegen Krieg," *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* XI, no. 24 (1932): 568.

24 "Internationale Kampfeinheit gegen Hunger und Krieg," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 23.5.1932.

doubly exploited and suppressed colonial comrades standing before the Congress."[25]

Half of the delegations represented the revolutionary trade union opposition and red unions, the RILU Berlin Bureau noted, the other half comprised of representatives from "reformist" or syndicalist unions.[26] Some of the delegates represented ITF-member unions, communist observers noted; the delegate of the Danish Seamen's Union even announced that his union just recently voted for affiliating to the ISH, while the delegates from the Danish Stokers' Union and the local union of maritime transport workers in Seville informed that their unions were about to vote leaving the ITF. Clearly, the impression was that the ISH was about to break the ranks of the ITF, see Figure 20.[27]

The Prussian police authorities in Berlin were perplexed when hearing about the congress as they would never have accepted the application for organising the venue. The local police authorities received harsh criticism about their blunder to revoke the ban. The police authorities in Berlin bashed the local police for having failed the recognise that it was a venue where militant radicals convened, some of them publicly known as notorious infesters of suspicious communist and Bolshevik propaganda. Even worse, discrepancies existed in Altona and Berlin about the exact number of participants, local police informants in Altona claimed 242 persons participating while the Berlin police authorities only listed 189 participants. The list prepared by the local police in Altona counted 186 foreign delegates of which only one, Kommissarenko, represented Soviet Russia, while the Berlin police authorities listed only 79 foreigners including a 25-person Russian delegation (although this information was later corrected: only Kommissarenko had participated at the congress).[28] However, the different numbers reflect the daily fluctuations of participants at the congress as was reflected in the two lists of delegates prepared by the ISH, see Table 11.

An analysis of the composition of the delegations indicates the uneven outreach of the ISH. More than half of the mandated delegates originated from Germany and the Scandinavian countries, indicating the relative weight of

25 *The World Unity Congress of the International Water Transport Workers and its Decisions* (Hamburg: International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, no date [ca. 1932]), 4.

26 Kongress der ISH, 534/5/232, 75, RGASPI.

27 *The World Unity Congress of the International Transport Workers*: 4.

28 Dr. Klaussner, Preuss. Ministerium des Inneren an d. Herrn Regierungspräsidenten in Schleswig, Berlin, 27. Juni 1932, Zum Bericht vom 1. Juni 1932 betr. ISH Kongress, Abt. 301 Akten des Ober-Präsidiums der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein betreffend die KPD, 4534, LAS.

FIGURE 20 Seamen giving the clenched-fist salute in front of the International Seamen's Club at Rothesoodstrasse during the ISH World Congress. The photograph was taken in 1932 by an unknown photographer. It was not published in the proceedings of the congress. About twenty years later, it was published in the ITF-monthly *International Transport Workers' Journal* XIV, no. 4 (April 1954): 60.

these sections within the ISH. Most of the delegations comprised only a few members due to the high expenses of traveling to Hamburg. Some organisations, such as the fishermen's association in Havana, had no financial means at their disposal for sending a delegate.[29] Others, such as the Australian delegate, were delayed and only arrived after the congress had closed, while a representative from South Africa was claimed to have participated but was not listed among the mandated members, see Figure 21.[30]

29 "30 Schilling von den Fischern in Havanna für den Weltkongress," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 18.5.1932.

30 Leo Braun, Über den Kongress der Seeleute, 2.6.1932, 534/5/405, 242, RGASPI. The identification of Leo Braun is unclear. It could be an alias of Pechmann who participated at the congress, or refer to another person at the RILU Berlin Bureau who used the name/alias of Braun, sometimes also Brown.

TABLE 11 Delegates at the 1932 ISH World Congress

	LAS1	LAS2
Sweden	12	15
Iceland	1	1
Latvia	2	3
Poland	1	1
Austria	2	3
Hungary	1	1
Czechoslovakia	1	1
Netherlands	6	6
[French] Indochina	1	
China	2	3
Norway	11	11
Estonia	2	1
Finland	1	1
Romania	1	1
Italy	2	3
Spain	1	1
Greece	1	1
[Belgian] Congo	1	
Somaliland	1	
Switzerland	1	1
Indonesia	1	1
Denmark	21	22
Portugal	3	3
France	8	9
Belgium	6	6
Japan	2	2
Sovjet Union	1	
United Kingdom	8	7
Germany	45	56
USA	9	8
Danzig	1	1

TABLE 11 Delegates at the 1932 ISH World Congress (*cont.*)

	LAS1	LAS2
Algeria		1
Yugoslavia		1
In total	156	171

SOURCE: LAS1= ABSCHRIFT. VERTRETEN SIND DELEGIERTE AUS FOLGENDEN LÄNDERN, MATERIAL DES KONGRESSES DER ISH VOM 21–24.5.1932, POLISEIPRÄSIDENT ALTONA-WANDSBEK, 1.7.1932, ABT. 301 AKTEN DES OBER-PRÄSIDIUMS DER PROVINZ SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN BETREFFEND DIE KPD, 4534 (1932–1933), LAS; LAS2= MANDATSPRÜFUNG-SKOMMISSION, PROTOKOLL DES 1. WELT-EINHEITS-KONGRESSES DER REVOLUTIONÄREN WASSERTRANSPORTARBEITER, ABT. 301 AKTEN DES OBER-PRÄSIDIUMS DER PROVINZ SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN BETREFFEND DIE KPD, 4534 (1932–1933), LAS

FIGURE 21 Delegates leaving the premises of the congress venue. The ISH World Congress convened at the convention hall Papstsälen in Altona. In fact, the illustration is a postcard, probably produced during the congress by the ISH, source: Sammlung Rene Serenko, Hamburg. The postcard carries no information of the publisher or photographer. The banner above the entrance carries the text: Hier tagt der 1. Weltkongress der ISH (Here convenes the First World Congress of the ISH). René Seneko kindly forwarded a digital copy of postcard to me. The individuals on the photograph have not yet been identified, at least one of them being a black delegate, another a female participant. See also "Objekt: 1932_ish" at http://niqolas.de/postcard-social.de/1926 (checked 16.12.2020).

The most important task of the congress was to nominate a 35-member executive committee as well as to confirm the statutes and organisational structures of the ISH. As noted above, the RILU Secretariat had prepared the documents and, not surprisingly, the congress unanimously adopted them. While the statutes were published in the congress publication, the composition of the executive committee was never publicised. Neither was there any official announcement about a change in the ISH leadership and the abolishment of the post of ISH president. In effect, George Hardy was deposed – in fact, he was not even elected to the new executive committee, see below – and Albert Walter, as ISH Secretary, came out as the new head of the organisation. Internal documentation give some hints about the composition of the new executive committee which, among others, included Ernst Wollweber (Germany), Joseph Schaap (Netherlands), Garan Kouyaté and Wymiens (France), Alec Robson and Joe Keenan (England), Nunez (Spain), Barth (Austria/Danube Committee), Richard Jensen and Borglund (Denmark) as well as three unidentified members from Norway, Sweden and the USA.[31]

The congress discussed three major themes; the congress publication included at least shortened versions of the three reports, see Figure 22. Each of them starting with a general thematic presentation, followed by lengthy discussions, and ending with the adoption of a resolution (which had been prepared in advance in Moscow). Albert Walter opened the first theme by giving an overview of the concurrent crisis of the shipping industry and the necessity of a united front among the maritime transport workers. Tommy Ray[32] from the USA spoke about the fight against the Japanese invasion in Manchuria and the impending war against the Soviet Union. Garan Kouyaté's report on the organisation of the colonial maritime transport workers' fight for economic justice opened the third theme.[33]

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31 Walter to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 78, RGASPI. The ISH Executive Committee had a meeting in Amsterdam at the end of August 1932 to discuss the launching of a new international campaign for full employment on board the ships and in the harbours. However, apart from a press clipping, I have so far not found any documentation on the meeting. See "Internationale Aktion des Wassertransportproletariats," Internationale Gewerkschafts-Presse-Korrespondenz 70 (1933), enclosed in Nachrichtensammelstelle R.M.I., Betrifft: Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter (Streikvorbereitungen), Berlin 5.10.1932, RAV Botschaft Moskau 196, PAAA.

32 Stated as 'Rey' in the published report of the congress whom I identify as Tommy Ray who represented the MWIU.

33 The texts to the [Resolution on] 'The Situation of the Water Transport Workers and the Creation of the International Unity Front for Struggle against Shipping Capital', [Resolution on the] 'Struggle against Imperialist War', and 'Resolution on the situation and struggles of the seamen and harbour workers in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and the tasks of the sections of the ISH', were published in *The World Unity Congress*.

FIGURE 22 The published proceedings of the ISH World Congress. The proceedings were published in Danish, English, and German, at least.

The congress itself proceeded on three levels. Large plenary sessions were held where a wide range of themes were discussed, such as unjust living and working conditions on board the ships, and demands for seven-hour working days and a just salary. Another theme was the right to establish and join unions as well as the right to strike on board ships (hitherto prohibited by maritime law), strike techniques, and under what circumstances one should pursue specific strike tactics. A third general theme was the positions of seamen a future conflict or even war; a fourth theme was the potential of the revolutionary trade union opposition for gaining more influence in socialist-controlled unions. In general, the discussions ended in the adoption of "demand programmes" which had been prepared in advance at the RILU headquarters.[34]

Apart from large plenary sessions, special commissions on work among Baltic, British and colonial mariners organised their own closed meetings and sub-conferences, see below. In addition, a special conference for women was organised on Sunday 22 May;[35] unfortunately, not much is known about it. The conference for young maritime transport workers numbered twelve participants, convened parallel to the congress, and resulted in the establishment of a specific Youth Commission and the adoption of directives for work among the maritime youth.[36] Last, but not least, the inner circle of the communists and

34 The following "programmes of demand" circulated at the congress (and a copy of them had been obtained by the finks of the police in Altona): Internationales Förderungsprogramm der Binnenschiffer [International programme of demands for river transport workers], Kampfprogramm der Partikulier-Schiffer [Programme of demand for private river skippers], Kampfforderungen der Wasserbauarbeiter [Programme of demands for water construction workers], Internationales Forderungsprogramm der Hochseefischer [International programme of demands for offshore fishermen], Internationales Forderungsprogramm der Hafenarbeiter [International programme of demands for harbour workers], Internationales Forderungsprogramm der ISH für die Seeleute [International programme of demands for seamen], and Vorschläge für ein Kampfprogramm der Küstenfischer [Suggestions for a programme of demands for coastal fishermen], draft versions included in: Polizeipräsident Altona-Wandsbek, 1.7.1932, Material des Kongresses der ISH vom 21–24.5.1932, Abt. 301 Akten des Ober-Präsidiums der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein betreffend die KPD, 4534, LAS.

35 "Frauen kämpfen gegen Krieg und Hunger!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 18.5.1932; "Frauen der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter: Lohnfrage des Mannes – ist die Brotfrage der Frau!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung* 21/22.5.1932.

36 Entwurf über die Lage der jugendlichen Wassertransportarbeiter und die Aufgaben der ISH und ihrer Sektionen, no date [1932], 534/5/231, 179–186, RGASPI; "Resolution of the Youth Commission of the Unity Congress of the International Water Transport Workers," published in *The World Unity Congress*.

trusted activists gathered held behind the curtains out of sight of the public and non-invited delegates.[37]

1.1 *Opening the Baltic Dimension*

Scandinavia and the Baltic region constituted a promising arena for the ISH. After the dissolution of the Scandinavian Secretariat in early spring 1931, the ISH Secretariat established direct links to its national sections in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. One year later, it drafted a plan for connecting with opposition groups in the Estonian, Finnish and Latvian seamen's unions.[38] A first step was the publication of journals in the name of fictive ISH sections in spring 1932, see Figure 23; the next one was to summon delegates from the Baltic region to the World Congress. The plan materialised although only the Finnish delegate came from his home country whereas the five Estonians had arrived from Antwerp and Rotterdam. The Latvian delegation was the largest one, comprising of eight members, probably also arriving from Northern European ports. Walter held a meeting with the so-called 'Baltic delegation' in conjunction with the World Congress to discuss strategic and tactical matters. As an outcome, the 'Baltic Committee' was set up at Rothesoodstrasse. Its main task was to coordinate the activities of the Baltic sections of the Interclubs in Antwerp, Danzig, Hamburg, and Rotterdam.[39] Operations of the Baltic Committee commenced in September when L. Avotin, a.k.a. Ernest Lambert, started as its head.[40]

Another important operational field of the ISH was Denmark as the Danish Straits were the lock to the Baltic Sea. The ISH Secretariat must have regarded organisational developments in Denmark as highly promising. The Søtransportarbeidernes RFO, the Danish section of the ISH, announced the expansion of the revolutionary opposition in the maritime unions in Denmark at its second national conference in March 1932. Counting 800 members and 31 ships cells, the stage was set for its next goal, namely the conquest of union leadership and the affiliation of the unions with the ISH. Main attention was at first towards the Danish Seamen's Union whose social democratic leadership

37 Erik Nørgaard, *Revolutionen der udeblev. Kominterns virksomhed med Ernst Wollweber og Richard Jensen i forgrunden* (København: Fremad 1975), 94–95; Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 183–184.

38 Walter/Stein/Adolf, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, Hamburg, 1.3.1932, 534/5/230, 53, RGASPI.

39 Walter, Bericht über die Konferenz der Baltischen Sektion der ISH, die vom 19–21 Mai 1932 in Hamburg tagte, 534/5/232, 36–37, RGASPI.

40 Minutes 23.9.1932, 23.11.1932, Ernst Lambert (Avotin) personal file, KV 2/3729, TNA.

FIGURE 23 *Majakka*, the organ of the (non-existing) Finnish section of the ISH.

only narrowly had repelled an attempt by the opposition to cut the unions ties with the ITF and to affiliate with the ISH in November 1931. The opposition initiated a new vote half a year later, and to the surprise of the union leadership, the opposition managed to rally a majority behind their proposition. However, the cheers at the ISH World Congress proved premature as the union leadership organised a vote to revoke the decision. What followed was a propaganda war carried out in union and opposition journals.[41] The ISH Secretariat intervened at the end of the year by sending a stiff reprimand to the Danish Party and the DKP sea cell, criticising them for applying the wrong tactic. Above all, it was a mistake to present the ISH in public as a communist international. Instead, the ISH Secretariat urged the Danish comrades to disguise any links between the party and the ISH, and to launch a counter-campaign signed by "a group of ISH-supporters." The counter-campaign was to present the ISH as an independent, non-aligned platform with no links to the Comintern or the RILU.[42]

Meanwhile, the Danish stokers' union – already dominated by the communists with Richard Jensen playing the role as grey eminence – had voted for affiliating with the ISH in May 1932 but the social democratic union leadership managed to postpone the decision.[43]

Apart from the tense situation in Denmark, the ISH Secretariat was aware of the expiration of tariffs in Denmark, Finland and Sweden at the end of 1932. In all three countries, the shipowners had announced drastic reductions in wages. Anticipating tough negotiations and the potential for the revolutionary opposition to take a leading role in upcoming strikes, Walter summoned the representatives of the Scandinavian opposition for a conference in Copenhagen in early January 1933.[44]

1.2 *Exit George Hardy*

Communist agitation and propaganda among the maritime transport workers had a complex if not complicated history in Britain. The formation of Interclubs and revolutionary nuclei had never been successful, neither had the revolutionary opposition any strong position within the national unions. The British Party had been lukewarm in rendering support to work among maritime transport workers, partly as it lacked both functionaries and funds. The Minority Movement had been late in organising a special unit for work among

41 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 274, 313–314.

42 ISH Sekreratiat to DKP Central Committee, 1.12.1932, 534/5/231, 117a–199, RGASPI.

43 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 315.

44 Walter to "Werte Genossen," 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 79, RGASPI.

seamen and had repelled all propositions from the RILU, the IPAC-TW and the ISH to transform the Seamen's Minority Movement (SMM) into a genuine red union.

The ISH Secretariat announced George Hardy's return to England in early June 1931 to be a new injection for the campaign to establish a red seamen's union in Britain. Soon, however, discouraging news reached Hamburg. In early autumn, Hardy and Fred Thompson had to acknowledge the fact that the initial timetable for forming the new union in September was unrealistic. Hardy informed the ISH Secretariat that the project had to be postponed as the SMM lacked a sizeable membership and efficient functionaries and cadres;[45] a few days later, the Minority Movement confirmed Hardy's statement.[46]

Prompted by the negative news, the ISH Secretariat made its own assessment about the situation in England and seemed to have lost confidence in Hardy already during autumn 1931. Hardy, in turn, realised this and confronted Walter by asking how one should interpret the sentence "When you were President of the ISH" in Walter's letter? If he had been dismissed from his post, then surely the comrades in Hamburg could tell him when and why this decision had been made, Hardy reasoned.[47] Walter did not respond. However, Walter, Pechmann and Shelley had probably already made up their mind to dump Hardy from the ISH leadership at the forthcoming World Congress.

Next, the ISH Executive Committee discussed the setbacks in Britain at its meeting in September 1931. Hardy decided not to attend, and his replacement Fred Thompson reported that he "did not do so well" at the meeting. Hardy's "dictatorial methods" were criticised by the ISH Secretariat, and British Intelligence sources believed that "he would have a rough time were he to return" to Hamburg. The main critique ("anger") was the postponing of the conference to launch the new union, and the ISH Executive Committee impelled Thompson to fix a new date and then to adhere to the plan. Thompson received USD 600 to cover expenses for launching the new union and returned to England.[48]

Nevertheless, in contrast to rumours in Hamburg and Berlin, Hardy still clung to the idea of launching a red seamen's union. Instead of attending the ISH Executive meeting, he was organising meetings and rallies as part of the campaign for a red union in Cardiff, Liverpool, South Shields and Swansea in August/September. When Thompson told him about the criticism at Hamburg,

45 Hardy to ISH Hamburg, London 1.9.1931, 534/4/379, 24–25, RGASPI.
46 NMM to ISH Hamburg, London 4.9.1931, 534/4/379, 21, RGASPI.
47 Hardy to ISH Hamburg, London 1.9.1931, 534/4/379, 24–25, RGASPI.
48 Report re SMM, 24.9.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 47f, TNA.

Hardy announced "[…] Time has arrived to do some plain talking about the statements regarding underestimation of the forces against us and the time for the national conference. […] The more I think, the more I am convinced I should have gone to Hamburg."[49]

By mid-September 1931, it must have been evident for everyone but the communist die-hards that the red seamen's union was a stillborn idea. "My deductions are that at present the launching of a new MM Seamen's Union would end in failure," a British Intelligence informant declared, and further noted "although Hardy and Thompson are pushed to do so by some of the militants in the ports, both are aware that the time is not ripe, owing to the lack of sufficient members, trustworthy officials and experienced organisers."[50] Nevertheless, Hardy and Thompson decided to continue the campaign – or was it just stubborn wilfulness from Hardy's side? "3,000 Cardiff seamen have drawn up a list of demands which they were determined to see enforced and for that purpose it was proposed to form a new union, and if necessary, to call for a strike," Hardy boasted in mid-October.[51] The question – and ultimate reason for the fallout between him and Thompson – was when this would occur.

Hardy and Thompson held different opinions on when to launch the new union; Hardy advocated a slow tempo, Thompson an enforced one. Soon they started to quarrel, and the leaders of the Minority Movement asked the CPGB to pay attention to "the peculiar circumstances surrounding Comrades Hardy and Thompson."[52] News about the chaotic conditions at the SMM headquarters also reached the RILU European Bureau, and Pechmann commented upon the situation in England in a frustrated report to Moscow.[53]

Hardy's argument for delaying the establishment of the new union to December – as had been promised by Thompson at the ISH Executive Committee meeting in Hamburg – was tactical as he expected the TUC to back the NUS in its negotiations on cutting the wages of harbour workers and seamen.[54] Hardy anticipated that the negotiations would cause a general outrage, and planned to present the new red union as the only defender of

49 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 25.9.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
50 Report by "F.1," 15.9.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 46a, TNA.
51 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 19.10.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
52 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 30.10.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
53 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 21.11.1931, 534/4/353, 81, RGASPI.
54 See further Plan for mobilising the seamen for fight against the wage cuts, to strengthen the militant Seamen's Minority Movement and to build up the new seamen's union, no author, dated December 1931, copy attached to George Hardy's dispatch to Lozovsky, January 1931, filed in 534/7/54, 24–26, RGASPI.

the maritime workers …[55] The crux of the matter was how to read the 'signs of the hour' and when to strike. Thompson identified the attempt to cut the wages of the harbour workers in Liverpool as the momentum to launch the new union, declared 5 January 1932 to be the date for launching a strike, and ordered 60,000 leaflets dealing with the dockers' cuts and 10,000 union books with skeleton rules for a start.[56] Hardy disagreed and went for Moscow to participate at the Eight Plenum of the RILU General Council in early December.[57]

The dispute in Liverpool ended in a fiasco. Hardy accused Thompson for having created a "hell of a mess" by the "constantly wrong approach by putting the Union before the struggle instead of developing the fight, and the Union out of it."[58] Instructed by the ISH, Hardy took over the political leadership of the SMM and prepared for his own bravura – to organise a strike among the seamen and a complete stoppage of work on the Thames waterfront.[59] On 2 February 1932, a meeting of 1,500 seamen voted for strike actions and Hardy announced "[…] Now it is the opportunity of the dockers to enter the struggle."[60] They did not, and no other mariner did so either. Hardy's tactical manoeuvre, too, ended in a total fiasco. Tactics had to be changed, an assessment report by the SMM reasoned, and shelved the idea of launching a new union.[61]

The tug-of-war between Thompson and Hardy finally resulted in an intervention by Harry Pollitt. Many SMM members, he claimed, accused the two comrades for having "sabotaged" the projected union. Hardy answered by putting the blame on those who had concentrated too much on the new union instead of generating sufficient support for the strike.[62] The first round ended with Thompson threatening to resign, stating that it was impossible to work with Hardy.[63]

News about the crisis in England reached the RILU Berlin Bureau in spring 1932, informing about clashes between Hardy and Thompson in the office of the

55 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 10.11.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
56 (Half-burnt copy) S.B. note 31.12.1931, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
57 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 2.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
58 British Intelligence report, 13.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 66a, TNA.
59 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note […(December)]31, as well as Inf. Notes 20.1.1932 and 30.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
60 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 2.2.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
61 See further Minority Seamen's Movement, Lessons and tasks of the seamen's strike and the work of the Seamen's Minority Movement, no author, dated Poplar, London 16.3.1932, copy attached to George Hardy's dispatch to Lozovsky, January 1931, filed in 534/7/54, 27–33, RGASPI.
62 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 15.2.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.
63 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 22.2.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

SMM in London.[64] The conflict at the SMM headquarters resulted in an almost standstill of activities and compelled Fritz Heckert, head of the RILU Berlin Bureau, to intervene. Hardy and John Mahon of the Minority Movement were called to Berlin for consultations in early March 1932. The meeting decided to dissolve the SMM leadership and replace it with a dual secretariat composed of Hardy and Thompson. In addition, Heckert instructed the SMM to restrict its activities and to concentrate on work in Harwich, Liverpool, London, North Shields and South Shields.[65]

Hardy returned to London and notified the comrades about the decision made in Berlin of a collective leadership and the election of a small secretariat to lead the work of the SMM.[66] Hardy proposed John Joseph McGrath as new leader of the SMM and himself as new secretary. Pollitt had to accept this intervention although it is unclear if he backed it. This was at least the impression by the British Intelligence informant: "All principals of the CPGB, including Pollitt, are disgusted with Hardy, but they cannot oust him. Pollitt told Thompson that he was more than sorry for him, but that orders from 'the other side' were to the effect that Hardy was given preference in the contention between him and Thompson."[67]

Documentary sources are highly uneven to explain the course of events during spring and summer 1932. Special Branch informants claimed that Hardy declared already in March to shift the focus of the SMM towards building a strong opposition within the NUS. This would have meant a total deviation from the position of the ISH and RILU to establish a red union in Britain. Was this the ultimate reason for sending George Padmore on a mission to Britain in April? Hitherto researchers have interpreted Padmore's visit as part of his ambition to extend the network of the ITUCNW in Britain.[68] Some of Padmore's correspondence in early 1932 points towards this direction. In January, Padmore sent a letter to John Mahon, asking him to "try your best to get Hardy to agree upon something concrete re our colonial work. The leading comrades are simply worrying my life out about the MM on this matter. […] As soon as I get word from GH [George Hardy] I shall let him know what colonies we should

64 [George Hardy,] Denkschrift über die politischen Differenzen zwischen den Genossen Hardy und Fred Thompson, 22.3.1932, 534/5/230, 71–75, RGASPI.

65 Fritz Heckert to Alexander [Lozovsky], Berlin 9.3.1932, 534/4/405, 148–149, RGASPI.

66 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 8.3.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

67 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note 7.3.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

68 See further Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 146; Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 365.

concentrate upon."[69] Seemingly not knowing that Hardy was fully occupied in campaigning for the seamen's strike, he received an answer from Hardy in early February which must have made a positive impression upon him: "Now that the ice is broken I intend to stick behind him until we get something definitively accomplished."[70]

Who were the "leading comrades" and was the ice broken? It is likely that Padmore referred to the ISH and RILU bureaus in Hamburg and Berlin with whom he had been closely cooperating. However, planning for work among colonial seamen in Britain or reaching through them the colonies seemed to have been slow in materialising as Padmore informed the ISH Secretariat that he wanted to travel to England to clarify some organisational problems and asked for funding to cover his expenses.[71]

British Intelligence sources, however, claim that Padmore's main mission was to inspect the activities of the SMM. Perhaps the ISH and RILU bureaus had extended his original travel plans and mandated him to serve as their emissary? This seems to have been the case according to one of the informants:

> Harry Pollitt has received definitive instructions that unless there are speedy tangible results, the whole of the CPGB leaders will be superseded. After this was made known the [ISH?/RILU?] Secretariat decided that GH [George Hardy] 'must go'. Padmore asked F[red] T[hompson] to resume his old position. The whole question will be thrashed out at the Congress in Hamburg in May.[72]

Whether Hardy ever met Padmore in April 1932 is not known. However, it must have been obvious for everyone that the ISH and RILU seriously objected Hardy's volte-face, and that his time as ISH President and leading SMM organiser was running out. Hardy travelled to Hamburg and attended the ISH World Congress. His visit in Altona left few traces. Official reports of the congress did not even mention Hardy's name but police informants knew better: Hardy had been dismissed.[73]

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69 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Padmore to Mahon, 13.1.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

70 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Padmore to Mahon, 1.2.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

71 Padmore to "the Bureau of the ISH," [Hamburg] 24.3.1932, 534/3/754, 187, RGASPI.

72 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note, [...]32, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

73 (Half-burnt copy) S.B. Inf, no date (May 1932), George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

Returning to England, Hardy faced another setback. On 11 June, Walter informed the Minority Movement that the ISH Secretariat and the RILU European Bureau had decided to terminate Hardy's assignment to the ISH and the SMM: "We are instructed to let you know that with the end of the month of June the work of comrade Hardy for the I.S.H. expires. At the same time comrade Hardy is to be given to the disposal of the British movement. Will you please take notice of this and arrange for the necessary steps."[74] A few weeks later, Hardy had to accept the nomination of Alec Robson (1895–1979) as new national leader of the SMM and member of the ISH Executive Committee by the CPGB.[75] However, Hardy's removal as leader did not clear the air as some SMM members, the so-called Hardy fraction, remained loyal to him. Walter tried to find a solution to the deadlock situation by sending an instructor to England in early July, and travelled himself to London for a meeting with the leaders of the Minority Movement and the SMM. In Walter's mind, the discussions had validated the decision to dismiss Hardy.[76] On 8 July, comrade Allen informed the ISH that the Minority Movement had confirmed "the termination of the work of comrade Hardy as leader of the SMM [...] and to ask comrade K. to assume responsibility and to bring forward to our next meeting a plan of future work."[77] Comrade K was probably the Australian mariner Joe Keenan whom the ISH Secretariat had nominated to reorganise work on the waterfront in the United Kingdom.[78]

Hardy protested and demanded a written explanation about his removal. Walter sent him an official reply, listing the reasons for the decision: 1) fruitful cooperation between him and the ISH was not anymore possible, 2) totally divergent opinions about the leadership and development of the organisation in England, 3) his activities in England had undermined the expansion of the revolutionary opposition in England, and 4) there existed no prospects for

74 The original letter has not (yet) been identified. References to it are found in (Half-burnt copy of letter) ISH to SMM, 11.6.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA; quotation from Albert Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg] 18.10.1932, 534/5/231, 44, RGASPI.

75 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Hardy to H. Lee, 25.6.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. On Robson, see Martin Levy, "Alec 'Spike' Robson," *https://www.communist-party.org.uk/alec-spike-robson/* (checked 14.12.2020).

76 Albert Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg] 18.10.1932, 534/5/231, 44, RGASPI.

77 (Half-burnt copy of letter) Allen to ISH, 8.7.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

78 According to an intelligence memo, Keenan had succeeded Hardy at the SMM, (Half-burnt copy) Inf. note, 21.7.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. See further Comment by Gallagher in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 39–47, RGASPI.

fruitful work in England as long as he headed the SMM.[79] Pechmann received a copy of the letter, and immediately informed the RILU headquarters that the crisis in England had been solved.[80]

Case closed? Walter returned to Hamburg and ordered the ISH instructor to initiate the revitalisation of activities in Britain. The ISH instructor was Richard Krebs, who used the alias James Anderson while residing in the United Kingdom. Krebs' orders were to enforce the transformation of the SMM into a red union by dismissing Hardy's fraction in the SMM leadership and its local branches in Cardiff, Glasgow, Hull, Liverpool and London.[81] Hardy vehemently objected the ISH intervention and protested to the Political Bureau of the CPGB.[82] In his mind, the whole mess had been caused by the infiltration of "Trotskyists" in the ISH Secretariat, notably Adolf Shelley,[83] and called the Political Bureau to probe the ISH decision to intervene.[84] Krebs, in turn, overruled the protests, organised meetings in Cardiff and Liverpool, and decided to launch the *Unity Movement of Seamen, Port-Workers and Fishermen* at a forthcoming national conference in September.[85]

The radical plans for launching a red union in the United Kingdom never materialised. On 3 September, the police arrested Krebs when he arrived in Glasgow. Realising him carrying a forged passport, the police ordered his expulsion from Britain.[86] Krebs' return to Hamburg resulted in the collapse of

79 To comrade Hardy, [Hamburg] 23.7.1932, 534/5/231, 45, RGASPI.

80 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," 534/4/405, 45, RGASPI.

81 Anderson [Krebs] to "Lieber Freund," 9.8.1932, Richard Krebs personal file, KV2/1102, TNA.

82 Anderson [Krebs] to "Lieber Freund," 23.8.1932, Richard Krebs personal file, KV2/1102, TNA; Hardy to Lozovsky, London 29.1.1933, 534/7/54, 1, RGASPI.

83 In Hardy's mind, Shelley and Walter, not himself, were to blame for the chaos in England as their strategy rested on unrealistic expectations about fixing a concrete date for the establishment of the new seamen's union in England. Their depiction in his – biased – autobiography reflects his deep mistrust in the two comrades; terming Walter a "waverer and opportunist," and Shelley as a "sectarian, Trotskyite;" see Hardy, *Those Stormy Years*, 216–217. Interestingly, Hardy does not discuss his dismissal from the ISH and his quarrel with the Political Bureau of the CPGB in his autobiography.

84 Hardy did not realise that he had a weak position in the CPGB leadership. The party nominated a commission to investigate Hardy's protests. To his bug surprise, the commission turned against him. Although it declared Hardy's "general line" to be correct and condemned "the arbitrary method adopted by the I.S.H." in his removal, it accused him for subjectivity in relation to Thompson, and for being obsessed about a conspiracy against him. See Copy of a document starting "The following points were considered by the Commission," copy attached to George Hardy's dispatch to Lozovsky, January 1931, filed in 534/7/54, 20–22, RGASPI.

85 Anderson [Krebs] to "Lieber Freund," 3.9.1932, Richard Krebs personal file, KV2/1102, TNA.

86 Telegram 4.9.1932, Richard Krebs personal file, KV2/1102, TNA.

the ISH intervention in England and the abortion of the national conference. The plan for launching a red union was quietly buried; what remained was a dysfunctional SMM.

Hardy's dismissal has hitherto been analysed by using his and Krebs' autobiographies.[87] However, the ISH and British Intelligence sources used for the above description of the course of events corrects, and even refutes, to a large part the stories in the two autobiographies. Especially Krebs' claim that Harry O'Connell belonged to the Hardy faction and was the squealer who denounced him is dubious. O'Connell, for certain, had criticised the SMM leadership in public at the ISH World Congress for its lukewarm commitment to work among black and colonial seamen in Britain. In a private letter to Arnold Ward, O'Connell criticised Hardy to be "an imposter and misleader," and for blocking black organisers to be nominated to leadership positions. O'Connell further notified Ward that he had been the leader of the SMM in Cardiff for over a year and only an intervention at the ISH World Congress had made Hardy and his fellows to change their mind about him.[88] Hardy, in turn, claimed O'Connell to belong to the Thompson fraction, to be of "a very doubtful character who made public statements to the effect that I am a police informer," and accused him to be an opportunist.[89]

O'Connell certainly did not belong to the Hardy fraction but neither did he belong to Thompson's group. Krebs's intention to use O'Connell as the main organiser of colonial work in Britain was not a degradation or limitation of his work as some researchers have claimed.[90] Rather, Krebs' plan was in

87 Among others, e.g., Waldenfels, *Der Spion der aus Deutschland kam*, 142–145; Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 94–95; David Featherstone, "Maritime labour and subaltern geographies of internationalism: Black internationalist seafarers' organising in the interwar period," *Political Geography* 49 (2015): 13.

88 (Half-burnt copy of letter) H.O. O'Connell to A. Ward, 13.7.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA.

89 Reply of Comrade G. Hardy to the Commission's Report set up by the Political Bureau of the C.P.G.B. to Investigate His Position, dated 4.1.1933, copy attached to George Hardy's dispatch to Lozovsky, January 1931, filed in 534/7/54, 11–12, RGASPI.

90 Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 263; Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 95; Featherstone, "Maritime labour," 13; David Featherstone, "Anti-colonialism, subaltern anti-fascism and the contested spaces of maritime organising," in *Anti-fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism*, eds. Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey and David Featherstone (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 164. Makalani's (*In the Cause of Freedom*, 185) claim that O'Connell was "so irritated by his treatment that he resigned and refused even direct aid from Padmore and Kouyaté, choosing instead to form the Cardiff Coloured Seamen's Committee" is dubious; besides, the Cardiff Coloured Seamen's Committee was established in 1935.

tandem with Padmore's and the ISH's demand to fully engage with black and colonial seamen throughout Britain. However, British Intelligence lured Krebs and other SMM members when they interrogated O'Connell, and spread the rumour that O'Connell was against Krebs' masterplan for the reorganisation of the SMM:

> We are assumed to hear that Krebs thinks that he was given up by the Hardy-Thompson group. We rather hoped that he might put the blame on them, as there was a dispute ending in blows at the Seamen's Club in London which resulted in Police intervention. Hardy and the [N]egro O'Connell were taken to the Police station, and the remainder of the members of the Club were very much perplexed when O'Connell remained talking to the Police for an hour after the question of quarrel had been settled.[91]

Hardy had every reason to be disgruntled. Joe Keenan,[92] who had been charged by the CPGB to run the SMM, and Richard Krebs had cut his funding and no salary had been forthcoming for months. In August, British Intelligence informants claimed that Hardy was "exceedingly 'hard up' " and was an ostracised person within the movement: "No one in the movement will advance him a loan or even the smallest amount, because of his unpopularity." Hardy appealed to Moscow and his old friend Lozovsky, openly declaring that his case was not yet closed "[…] Wait and see what EKKI has to say about me." Nothing happened; Moscow was silent. Hardy remained in control of his fraction, paralysing the SMM. In February 1933, rumours started to circulate that Hardy was about to be reinstated as leader of the SMM. The Minority Movement vehemently denied; instead, they suggested of sending him to Soviet Russia for medical treatment in a sanatorium (Hardy had been diagnosed heart problems) to get rid of him. However, Hardy's return as SMM leader never materialised. Instead, he was back on CPGB-pay roll in March 1933 as assistant to Arthur Lewis Horner's electioneering campaign in South Wales. Moreover, he temporarily assisted the SMM in its blockade campaign during the Swedish seamen's

91 Cross-reference (original in Krebs personal file) 20.9.1932, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, 83B, TNA.

92 Joseph (Joe) Keenan, born in 1900 in Scotland, had arrived in Australia in 1921 and served as a seaman during the 1920s. In the early 1930s, he returned to the United Kingdom and worked as a communist union organiser. In 1934, he returned to Australia to propagate communist policies. See further L. T. Louis, "Recovery from Depression and the Seamen's Strike 1935–6," *Labour History* 41 (November 1981): 78.

strike (see Chapter 8.2.1) and in its attempt to reorganise work among Indian seamen. However, Hardy's engagements in England ended in July 1933 when he embarked the MV *Jan Rudzutak* and travelled to the Soviet Union. Returning in late November, Hardy never resumed as leader of the militant waterfront but started as manager at Collet's/The Political Bookshop in London.[93]

2 Calling Black Seamen

George Padmore reorganised work among colonial seamen in Hamburg when he started as ITUCNW Secretary. While the ISH Secretariat acknowledged the fact that Padmore's main interest focus was on the radicalisation of black workers in the Atlantic world, they underlined that work among black seamen was to be directed by the national sections of the ISH and not the ITUCNW. Therefore, work at the Colonial Section at the Hamburg Interclub was to be carried out as a combined effort of the Interclub functionaries and Padmore; it seems that Liao Chengzhi had left Hamburg at this point, as his name was not listed in the blueprint outlining the reorganisation in early March 1932.[94] Nevertheless, work among Chinese seamen continued to pay off and the Chinese functionaries attached to the Hamburg Interclub were able to establish local branches of the Chinese Seamen's Union in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, London, Rotterdam, the USA, and in Curaçao in the Caribbean.[95]

Marseille and Rotterdam emerged by 1932 as the strategically most important ports for work among colonial seamen. While Marseille evolved as a central hub for work among black, Arab and Vietnamese seamen as well as for connections with the French colonies in Africa and Asia, the Interclub in Rotterdam focussed on work among Chinese and Indonesian seamen and was in charge of connections with Indonesia and South-East Asia. Similar to activites in Marseille, the Interclub in Rotterdam received instructions and

93 (Half-burnt copy) Inf. notes, 11.8.1932; "A" [Krebs] to ISH, 23.8.32, 8.2.1933, 16.3.1933, 27.7.1933, 21.11.1933, George Hardy personal file, KV 2/1027, TNA. Hardy had sent a long letter to Lozovsky, dated 29.1.1933, where he attached copies of several documents in connections with his case, all filed in 534/7/54, RGASPI. However, Lozovsky failed to get the Hardy affaire on the agenda of the Political Commission of the ECCI. Instead, the ECCI Commission on work among seamen in December 1933 had the final word about the matter; see further Chapter 8.5.1.

94 Walter/Stein/Adolf, Vorschläge zur Stärkung der organisatorischen Arbeit der ISH, Hamburg, 3.3.1932, 534/5/230, 53, RGASPI.

95 Albert Walter, Kurzer Bericht des chinesischen Mitarbeiters im Interklub Hamburg, 12.11.1932, 534/5/231, 72, RGASPI.

agitation and propaganda material not only from the ISH Secretariat but also from the RILU headquarters in Moscow.[96]

The central hubs for agitation among Chinese, Korean as well as Japanese maritime workers in the Pacific area were Vladivostok, Shanghai, San Francisco and Vancouver. Interclubs existed in all of the four port cities, although operating illegally in Shanghai.[97] Both the RILU Secretariat and the ISH Secretariat tried to monitor their activities, among others by orchestrating the campaign against the Japanese attack on China in 1931–32 as well as sending invitations for the ISH World Congress.[98] Work among colonial seamen proved difficult at least in Vladivostok but the functionaries tried their best to disseminate the Japanese edition of the *Pan-Pacific Worker*.[99] Conditions for work among Chinese and Japanese maritime workers were slightly better in US Pacific ports. The ISH therefore shifted its focus to San Francisco where the American Bureau of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat had been established in January 1932.[100] ISH Secretary Walter stressed the American Bureau to expand its activities to Vancouver and start to work among Japanese and Chinese seamen.[101]

2.1 *Sensitising Black Seamen and Harbour Workers*

Part of the preparations for the upcoming World Congress was to sensitise African and Caribbean mariners and dockers about the need for them to

96 For example, Instructions from the RILU Eastern and Colonial Section to the ISH regarding a call to Indo-Chinese seamen in France [in German], Moscow 5.2.1932, 534/5/230, 26, RGASPI; Instructions from the RILU Secretariat to the RGO Holland concerning joint actions with the ISH among Malayan and Indonesian seamen, February 1933, 534/6/62, 14–16, RGASPI.

97 The (illegal) Interclub in Shanghai seems to have ceased operation in 1931 when the British secret service uncovered the clandestine Communist units and liaison persons. The Shanghai Interclub was not included in the list of Interclubs in early 1932; see ISH, Situationsberich 1.1.-15.2.1932, 534/5/230, 49, RGASPI.

98 RILU Eastern and Colonial Section to Comrade Kennedy, 25.1.1932, 539/4/412, 13, RGASPI, concerning an appeal to Japanese and Korean seamen about the forthcoming ISH Congress; Kennedy was head of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat Bureau in Vladivostok. See also Simpson to Walter, 3.3.1932, 534/5/235, 19–20, RGASPI, concerning the ISH appeal on the Japanese attack on Shanghai; Simpson was head of the ISH Bureau in Vladivostok. The ISH Bureau in Vladivostok was most likely monitored by the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow, not the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg.

99 Report by Kennedy on work among Japanese seamen in Vladivostok, 14.2.1932, 534/4/415, 23–32, RGASPI.

100 Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists*, 92–94.

101 NN to the American Bureau of the PPTUS/San Francisco, 9.1.1932, 534/5/235, 107, RGASPI; Walter to "Werte Freunde," [Hamburg] 14.6.1932, 534/5/230, 121, RGASPI.

cooperate under the umbrella of a radical platform. Garan Kouyaté informed about his attempts to organise black maritime transport workers in France already in the December 1931 issue of *The Negro Worker*.[102] The March 1932 issue of *The Negro Worker* contained both an article by Kouyaté about his agitation among black seamen in Marseille as well as an announcement of the forthcoming ISH World Congress.[103] The French reformist trade union leaders, Kouyaté warned his readers, were mobilising white against non-white maritime workers by giving priority to French (white) mariners while demanding the repatriation of colonial and foreing seamen from France. Still, he asured his readers, the united front of revolutionary maritime workers was unshaken in France: Arab, black, and Vietnamese mariners were coming in hundreds to the meetings of the local branches of the FUMP and were supporting the call of a united front on board the ships. "In this way we shall not only develop their understanding for economic struggles, but we shall also strengthen the united front between the white and coloured workers against wage cuts, against unemployment, starvation and against all ministerial decrees – the originators of which are in reality the trade union reformists," he declared.[104]

Finally, an "Appeal to Negro Seamen and Dockers" was published in the April 1932 issue of *The Negro Worker*.[105] Officially in the name of the ISH, the 1932 Appeal had perhaps been drafted by Padmore but certainly circulated via the RILU Secretariat[106] – another example of the close collaboration between the ITUCNW and the ISH. In line with its earlier declarations, the 1932 Appeal started by underlining the unity of "White, Black and Yellow water transport workers" and invited them all to participate at the planned world congress of the ISH. Noting that the "Negro workers in Africa, England, France, America, and the West Indies are among the worst paid and treated slaves of the ship-owners and other capitalists," the invitation to participate was especially directed to them.[107]

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102 G(aran) Kouyaté, "Black and White Seamen Organize for Struggle," *The Negro Worker* 1, no. 12 (1931): 19–20.

103 G(aran) Kouyatte [Kouyaté], "Solidarity Between White and Coloured Sailors," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 3 (1932): 27–28.

104 Kouyatte, "Solidarity Between White and Colonial Sailors."

105 "Appeal to Negro Seamen and Dockers," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 4 (1932): 20–24.

106 This is indicated by Otto Huiswoud's inquiry to Padmore whether he had received a copy of the appeal and if he had it printed. Huiswoud to Padmore, 21.2.1932, 534/3/754, 124, RGASPI. A draft version of the 'Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers' is filed in 534/5/223, 175–183, RGASPI, implying that it was prepared sometimes in late 1931.

107 "Appeal to Negro Seamen," 20.

Next, the 1932 Appeal highlighted the exploitation of colonial seamen on board and the increasing number of unemployed African, African American and Caribbean maritime workers in America, the United Kingdom and France. Their misery had been caused by the economic depression and crisis of the shipping industry but it had been worsened by the actions taken by shareholders and directors of the shipping companies by lowering the wages of the maritime workers and applying a policy of 'divide and rule', i.e., playing white seamen against black and "yellow" ones. Not surprisingly, the Appeal launched a broadside attack against the national unions and their leaders who were accused to back the policy of the Capitalists and to foster race hatred among the white seamen and harbour workers against their "colonial class brothers." The worst plight, the Appeal acknowledged, was felt by the black seamen, they were given the heaviest and dirtiest work, were paid lower wages than white seamen, they received the worst food and had the most terrible working conditions. Therefore, the Appeal underlined that the ISH had called the white class-conscious workers to join hands with their "coloured brothers in America and in the colonies" to fight against the exploitation of the bosses, against unemployment, wage cuts and the lengthening of working hours. What mattered in the end was the "united front of all seamen and dockers irrespective of colour, nationality or race."[108]

Who were these black seamen and to whom was the 1932 Appeal directed? As it was published in *The Negro Worker*, it had spread throughout the Atlantic world and was read in the USA, the Caribbean and in Africa. It criticised and condemned working conditions in the Atlantic world – the "betrayal" of reactionary union leaders in the USA, the exploitation of black maritime workers in African and Caribbean ports by the European shipping industry. The Appeal reminded that the 'reformist' national unions in the United Kingdom and France had turned their back to the black workers. Instead, the black seamen and harbour workers were reminded that the only organisation that defended their rights and called them to join their ranks was the revolutionary trade union movement, namely the ISH and its affiliated sections such as the MWIU, the SMM, the CGTU, and the African Federation of Trade Unions in South Africa.[109]

While most of the 1932 Appeal echoed the ISH Colonial Resolution of 1931/32, its last paragraph integrated a new element which had been absent in the resolution, namely the call to boycott the transport of war material to the Far

108 "Appeal to Negro Seamen," 21.

109 "Appeal to Negro Seamen," 22–23.

East. This urge was linked to the campaign by the Comintern and RILU against the Japanese attack on China in September 1931.[110] Following the 1928 adopted Imperial War Theses of the Comintern, the Manchurian Crisis was interpreted and presented in the Appeal as part of a planned imperialist attack on the Soviet Union, "the only country ruled by the working class, the only country which is constructing a new socialist regime, free from exploitation, oppression, race hatred and unemployment."[111]

The 1932 Appeal ended with a six-point list of demands which the ISH called the black seamen to join its rank and files: to fight against discrimination of black seamen in the national unions, for equal pay for equal job irrespectively of race, colour or nationality, and for increasing the wages of colonial seamen. Further, black and white maritime workers were called to work for a three-shift system for the men on deck and four-shifts for the men under deck, seven hours' day during the watch, one free day on shore for every Sunday spent on the journey, social insurance at the expense of the ship owners and the State, unemployment benefit as well as free food, cloths, shelter for the unemployed. Last, but not least, the black maritime workers were urged to organise revolutionary ship and dock groups, and to join the national sections of the ISH.[112]

2.2 *The Rise and Collapse of Work among Black Seamen in England*

Agitation among colonial maritime transport workers was slow to commence in the United Kingdom. Several plans had been put forward but the communists had gathered few followers among them, neither in the CPGB nor in the Minority Movement. The SMM, too, appeared at first as a mainly white radical movement. The only potential opening was the Indian Seamen's Union in London, listed by the ISH as a "sympathising" organisation, i.e., an organisation not directly controlled by the party or the communists. Still, the ISH regarded the Indian Seamen's Union as its main vehicle for agitation among Indian seamen and, most importantly, as a vital cog for the formation of a red seamen's union in India. However, the revelation that most of its 1,500 members were either inactive or only loosely connected to it, and that the association itself was not very well organised, damped the expectations of the ISH Executive Committee in their assessment of the state of affairs in England in September 1931.[113] To boost agitation among Indian seamen, the ISH Executive Committee instructed the London Interclub start systematic

110 See further Chapter 6.5.4.

111 "Appeal to Negro Seamen," 24.

112 "Appeal to Negro Seamen," 24.

113 Zweite Plenartagung der Executive der ISH, 10–12.9.1931, 534/5/224, RGASPI.

work among Indian seamen, to intervene in the Indian Seamen's Union and initiate a reorganisation of its work, and together with the association issue "suitable literature" for the Indian seamen.[114]

Arab (Yemeni) and Somali mariners were an equally important target group for the SMM. Most of them resided in South Shields and Cardiff. Radicalisation among the Arab mariners had gained momentum during the latter part of the 1920s as part of challenging the "white labourism" of the NUS. The protests culminated in 1930 when the NUS declared that Arab and Somali mariners, specifically, should be picked last, if at all, and go on a forced rota, i.e., they had to take any job offered them. Violent clashes followed in Cardiff and South Shields. The SMM supported their protests, hoping to win Arab seamen into its ranks.[115]

Black maritime transport workers were another focal group. The SMM achieved to enlist several black radical union activists among its ranks, most notably the Barbadian Christ Braithwaite (who used the pseudonym Chris Jones as militant activist), Harry O'Connell from British Guiana, and Ebenezer Foster Jones from Sierra Leone. In autumn 1930, Nigerian radical nationalist and trade union activist Frank Macaulay, who had earlier in the year participated at the Hamburg Conference and the RILU World Congress, arrived in England. Ordered by Ford and Padmore to start a campaign among black workers, he stayed in Cardiff and organised meetings for black maritime transport workers before returning to Nigeria in early 1931. Although impressed by his methods, the SMM was critical that his sojourn had resulted into the formation of a 'Negro Welfare Organisation' rather than enlisting black seamen into the ranks of the SMM.[116] Instead, it was to be the task of O'Connell, Braithwaite/Jones and Foster Jones to campaign among black seamen and harbour workers in Liverpool, Cardiff and London. Organised work started in November 1931 when SMM Secretary Fred Thompson called a meeting at the London Interclub. Although only seven black seamen turned up, the participants resolved to form

114 Decisions of the II. Plenary Session of the Executive Committee of the I.S.H. on the Activity and tasks of the International Seamen's Clubs, September 1931, 534/5/224, 198, RGASPI.

115 Richard I. Lawless, "Religion and politics among Arab seafarers in Britain in the early twentieth century," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 5, no. 1 (1994): 35–56; Hassan Mahamdallie, "Muslim working class struggles," *International Socialism: A quarterly review of socialist theory*, Issue 113, posted 4.1.2007, https://isj.org.uk/muslim-working-class-struggles/ (checked 21.5.2020). See also Richard I. Lawless, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside: An Arab community in the North-East of England during the early twentieth century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995).

116 Featherstone, "Maritime labour," 12.

a 'Negro Committee', and elected the Trinidad-born mariner Jim "Jas" Headley as secretary.[117]

The 'Negro Committee' did not exist for long by name as its members "emphatically" declared to Thompson that the term "Negro" should be scrapped and the term "coloured" used instead. Thompson backed the proposition and argued that "to bring the position of the Negro seamen in British ships into a pamphlet, without bringing in the rest of the coloured workers sailing in British ships, is extremely likely to widen the division that already exists between Negro seamen and the rest of the coloured seamen." Vigorously he added, "Let me make this clear. The Negro seamen sailing in British ships claim they are British subjects and for this reason have the right to preference of employment over Arabs, Egyptians, Sonalies [sic], etc."[118] These conditions paralleled to those described a few years earlier by Dumay in his description of the state of affairs in France – French colonial subjects claimed to have the same rights as white French mariners. Besides, the SMM, too, at least in principle adhered to the RILU and ISH directives to stamp out white chauvinism and discrimination among its ranks.

News about the prospective developments in England reached Moscow and Huiswoud informed Padmore in January 1932 that the Anglo-American Section of the RILU had decided to nominate Jim Headley, whom he labelled "a Negro comrade in England," to be responsible for the work, and that he should head a special committee to coordinate work in England.[119]

The 'Negro Committee' and its local organisers in London (Jim Headley and Chris Jones), Cardiff (Harry O'Connell) and Liverpool (Foster Jones) made substantial progress, and some 600 black mariners were reported to have been recruited to the SMM by 1932.[120] However, the crisis in the SMM between the Hardy and Thompson factions negatively affected work among black and colonial seamen. The problems in the UK were finally scrutinised at the World Congress of the ISH in May 1932, resulting in harsh critique of the SMM by Padmore and O'Connell at the congress for it neglecting work among black and colonial seamen.[121] Padmore accused the SMM for having totally failed in its work among colonial seamen and summarised O'Connell intervention at

117 Fred Thompson to George Padmore, [London] 20.11.1931, 534/5/223, 47, RGASPI.

118 Fred Thompson to George Padmore, [London] 28.12.1931, 534/5/223, 123, RGASPI.

119 Huiswoud to Padmore, 6.1.1932, 534/3/753, 34, RGASPI.

120 (Ford), ITUCNW Report 1930–1931, 534/3/669, 229, 232, RGASPI; (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931–1932, 534/3/753, 124, RGASPI; Draft resolutions on the work of the Hamburg TU Committee Nov. 31–32, no author, 13.12.1932, 495/155/100, 29, RGASPI.

121 Featherstone, "Maritime Labour," 11–13; Høgsbjerg, "Mariner, Renegade & Castaway," 36.

the ISH World Congress – the latter had been able to rally more than 500 black, Arab and Somali seamen into the ranks of the SMM but due to political confusion and "opportunistic tactics" the colonial seamen had drifted away from the organisation.[122]

Walter's detachment of Richard Krebs to intervene in the crisis of the SMM also affected Chris Jones' and Harry O'Connell's position within the SMM. Apart from forcing Hardy to resign, Krebs also tried to find a solution to the pathetic state of affairs in Cardiff and London. Krebs believed O'Connell to belong to the Hardy faction and criticised him for blocking his followers to join the reorganised SMM section in Cardiff.[123] A total break was avoided as Krebs threatened O'Connell at a meeting "either to stop his tricks or be kicked out", and the latter "promised to stop his tricks and work together with the rest." One day later a conference was held in Cardiff where O'Connell was given the task of organising colonial committees in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Barry as well as to organise groups of 'Negroes' visiting ships. Moreover, Krebs asked O'Connell to organise a district meeting of colonial seamen.[124]

Chris Jones, on the other hand, was less fortunate. Krebs informed Albert Walter in early September that he had expelled Jones from the SMM, and asked for his expulsion from the CPGB. Krebs accused Jones for working as a police informant or at least on commission for the NUS, and for lending out money "at fabulous interest" to seamen. Jones, in an interview with Krebs, acknowledged on the other hand that he had received "certain instructions" from "a Negro comrade from Hamburg," and frankly refused to tell Krebs anything more.[125] Krebs removed Jones but whether the Hamburg connection led to any investigations by the ISH is not known as Krebs was arrested the same day (3.9.1932) he informed Albert Walter about the turn of events in England and was deported from the country.

The attempt to organise black seamen and harbour workers under the SMM in England never materialised. Padmore was aware of the problems and suggested a merger between the 'Negro' Committee of the SMM and the Negro

122 George Padmore, "World Congress of Seamen," *The Negro Worker* 2, no. 6 (1932): 23–25.

123 Intercepted letter from Anderson [Krebs] to "Dear Friend" [probably Albert Walter as the original letter was written in German], 23.8.1932, TNA KV 2/1102. Krebs describes O'Connell in aggressively racialised terms; see Featherstone, "Maritime labour": 13, and Featherstone, "Harry O'Connell," 77.

124 Intercepted letter from And[erson] to "Dear Comrade," 27.8.1932, TNA KV 2/1102. According to another intercepted letter, 20 Negro seamen participated in the Cardiff conference (of a total 200 participants).

125 Intercepted letter from And[erson] to Albert Walter [English translation], 3.9.1932, TNA KV 2/1102.

Welfare Association (NWA)[126]. In this way, he envisioned, the NWA could be developed into a strong organisation and as the British section of the ITUCNW. However, such hopes were futile. Headley returned to Trinidad in 1932, resulting in the collapse of activities of the SMM 'Negro' Committee in London.[127]

2.3 *Closing the Chapters?*

Padmore was rather critical about the cooperation with the ISH and its national sections. In his mind, all talks about mutual assistance were only lip service:

> The ISH sections, in England SMM, in France and USA, have done little or nothing to facilitate the carrying on of our work thru their organisation. We have made repeated appeals to them during 1932 to help us to distribute our literature thru their clubs.[128]

Padmore notified the RILU Secretariat that the Interclub in New Orleans was the only unit in the USA that assisted the ITUCNW. On the other hand, through the Interclub, connections had been established with Caribbean seamen. An embryo for a future Caribbean connection, therefore, seemed to be evolving.[129]

Cooperation between Padmore and the ISH Secretariat turned sour after the World Congress. The trigger was Padmore's harsh letter to the ISH Secretariat in early August 1932 where he criticised Walter and Polano for not answering to his inquiries and for not forwarding him any funds to cover the cost of posting the ITUCNW-journal. Padmore had received letters from British Guiana and South Africa and wanted to take actions. The first was a note from the Labour Union of British Guiana about their plans to organise a strike among dockers and them accepting the leadership of the ITUCNW. Padmore was exited, this would have opened the doors for the ITUCNW to assume a political role it hitherto never had taken. "We think that the ISH is in a position to help them, and would therefore like to get your opinion so that we may write them at once," Padmore informed the ISH Secretariat. Furthermore, Padmore had received a report from South Africa and had forwarded "certain recommendations" to the ISH Secretariat.[130] Although not stated in

126 The Negro Welfare Association had been formed by Chris Jones and Arnold Ward in 1931, see Høgsbjerg, "Mariner, Renegade & Castaway," 44. Arnold Ward, born 1886 in Barbados, was the NWA's secretary and one of Ford's and Padmore's key contact persons in England.

127 Adi, "The Comintern and Black Workers," 235.

128 (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931–1932, 534/3/753, 127, RGASPI.

129 (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931–1932, 534/3/753, 127, RGASPI.

130 Padmore to the Bureau of the ISH, [Hamburg] 1.8.1932, 534/5/231, 2, RGASPI.

Padmore's letter, the South African information concerned the establishment of Interclubs in Cape Town and Durban as well as the prospect of forming a radical seamen's union. In late October, the ECCI Emissary to the Communist Party of South Africa, Eugene Dennis, reported that a seamen's and harbour workers' union had been formed in South Africa. The union claimed to list over 250 members (although Dennis had to admit that 100 of them already had become passive due to the shortcomings of the CPSA in the Cape Town district), had "fairly strong" committees in Durban and Cape Town, and had established seven ship committees and one dockers' group. Most importantly, 90 percent of the members did not belong to the party but counted influential communist fractions in Durban and Cape Town. The union had also opened Interclubs in the two aforementioned ports.[131] Interestingly, it seems as if the ISH Secretariat had not received the news from South Africa. Be as it may, in early December Walter notified about the formation of an Interclub in Cape Town – but for reasons not known, not about the activities in Durban.[132] In addition, Padmore had perhaps been informed about the plans to organise a strike in Durban among the whaling fleet, and wanted to discuss this matter with Walter. However, nothing came out of these plans due to the early closing of the whaling season in 1932.[133]

The third issue Padmore wanted to discuss was the situation in England:

> After comrade W[alter]'s return from E[ngland] we had a conversation on the colonial work of the SMM in that country. He told me of the unsatisfactory state of affairs which we are well acquainted with, in view of the fact that we made a complete survey and prepared a detailed report for the ISH which you have never discussed with us. In order to improve the situation we would like to make certain concrete recommendations to you which comrade W[alter] had asked us to formulate. We would therefore like to discuss this question as early as possible.[134]

131 Letter from E. Dennis to Comintern, 22.10.1932, published in Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Sheridan Jones and Valentin P. Gorodnov, South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History, Vol. II (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 38–39.

132 Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg] 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 78, RGASPI.

133 Letter from E. Dennis to Comintern, 22.10.1932, published in Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova, Sheridan Jones and Valentin P. Gorodnov, *South Africa and the Communist International: A Documentary History*, Vol. II (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 39.

134 Padmore to the Bureau of the ISH, [Hamburg] 1.8.1932, 534/5/231, 2, RGASPI.

No immediate reaction from the ISH office. Padmore sent further inquiries and was notified that Walter had left for vacation. Further irritation – or was it the ultimate trigger (?) – for him was his lack of funding:

> We must draw your attention to the failure of the ISH to carry out the instructions of the RILU Executive with respect to supplying us with stamps for our work. [...] I have brought this matter to the attention of comrade W[alter] on several occasions. But since the condition still remains unimproved we would like you to take up this matter immediately.[135]

Padmore received a stiff reminder two days later from comrade Henri, i.e., Luigi Polano. Indeed, "it is quite true that contact between us has been rather difficult lately," he replied but noted that this had not only been the fault of the leading comrades of the ISH as they "cannot find you when necessary." They had sent him a message to call them at the Interclub, and Polano had been waiting from 27 to 29 July every evening, but Padmore never turned up. Besides, Walter had been in his office every day until he left for vacation on 1 August. "From this you will perceive that, if you were anxious to meet one of the leading Comrades of the ISH you had ample opportunities to do so." In addition, regarding Padmore's complaints about funding, Henri stressed that a) the ISH had at present not the necessary money to provide the amount of postage required, and b) "because up till now no refunding has taken place to us of all the expenses incurred on your account."[136] The second part was in fact an accusation of either Padmore overusing his account or, more likely, that funding from Moscow to cover for his activities had not been forthcoming, and the ISH had so far covered the expenses of the ITUCNW from its own funding.

Besides, Henri reminded Padmore that the pressing issue of how to handle the affairs in British Guiana and South Africa had been discussed at a meeting with Adolf Shelley on 2 August. "We can only confirm the suggestions and propositions made by Comrade Ad[olf]."[137] Unfortunately, the minutes of the

135 Padmore to the Bureau of the ISH, [Hamburg] 1.8.1932, 534/5/231, 2, RGASPI.

136 Henri to Padmore, [Hamburg] 3.8.1932, 534/5/231, 4, RGASPI. The identity of Henri in this letter is dubious. I assume it is Luigi Polano who used the alias Henri Maurice. However, Henri refers to "Henry" in the letter (as did Padmore in his) and based on references to Henry in other letters and reports, I conclude that "Henry" is used by Shelley and Walter, among others, when referring to Luigi Polano. Thus Henri and Henry were most likely not two persons but one and the same, namely Polano.

137 Henri to Padmore, [Hamburg] 3.8.1932, 534/5/231, 4, RGASPI.

meeting were either not sent to Moscow or are archived somewhere else. Was Shelley's reply that Padmore was fishing in another organisations' water?

Notwithstanding Padmore's criticism of the weak cooperation between the ISH and the Hamburg Committee, the RILU continued to stress the strategic relationship between the ISH and the ITUCNW. In a draft outline of guidelines for the ITUCNW in December 1932, any deviation from the 'United front from below'-tactic were ruled out:

> The already established contacts and those which will be extended to the Negro seamen should be considered chiefly from the view point of the work of the latter in their native ports. On the basis of an agreement with the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, they should be given concrete directives on the organisation of marine transport workers and on conducting the mobilisation of the workers for the struggle for their day to day demand.[138]

Especially the next paragraph can be read as Moscow's criticism about the state of affairs – the ISH for being inactive, Padmore for trying to disengage the black seamen from the ISH and to develop a parallel network of his own:

> In order to successfully conduct this work [i.e., the mobilisation of black seamen] it is necessary to establish closest relations between the Hamburg Committee [i.e., the ITUCNW] and the ISH with its sections. The Negro Committee [of the SMM] jointly with the ISH should write special appeals and leaflets, dealing with the problem of the Negro seamen, these leaflets should be widely distributed through the port clubs. The Negro seamen should be directly organised in sections, ship and port committees of the ISH. It must be noted that the Hamburg Committee should by no means try to isolate the Negro seamen and dockers from the revolutionary organisations and the ISH.[139]

Consequently, the December 1932 statement once again underlined the decision of the Political Commission of the Comintern that the ITUCNW was not to be developed into a Black International. Padmore, it seems, had started to

138 The International Negro Workers' TU-Committee, [.].XII.32, 534/3/753, 155, RGASPI. The document seems to have been written in Moscow after Padmore had delivered his annual report for 1932 while he was in Moscow in November/December that year. It is likely that it was commissioned by the RILU secretariat.

139 The International Negro Workers' TU-Committee, [.].XII.32, 534/3/753, 155, RGASPI.

deviate from the official line and was reminded about who made the decisions and who was to implement them.

3 Full Speed Ahead?

The ISH World Congress was the visible manifestation of the radical maritime transport workers and envisioned a unified front against the assault of the shipping industry. Lessons learned so far from the economic and political struggles against capitalist and colonial exploitation as well as imperialist aggression was that international proletarian solidarity could only be promoted by cutting the ties with the national trade union leaders and the ITF. Course was set on full confrontation with the 'social fascists' and the transformation of the ISH into a full-fledged mass organisation by either conquering existing unions from within or establishing rivalling red union.

The realisation of this vision proved hard to achieve. Apart from the promising developments in Denmark, the red unions were either insignificant (USA), weak (France), or marginal (Germany). The attempts to launch a red union in the United Kingdom had been aborted and the intervention of the ISH had ended in a failure. A similar setback occurred in France where the police had arrested Luigi Polano immediately after his arrival in Paris in early August 1932 and had to return to Hamburg.[140] As the ISH Secretariat did not have any funds to pay the salary of a third secretary, Shelley and Walter proposed that Polano was sent to either Latin America or the Iberian Peninsula. A third alternative was to nominate him as head of the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow.[141] The RILU Berlin Bureau discussed the proposal in late December, and Pechmann advocated his transfer to Moscow.[142]

Another crucial matter to be resolved was the maintenance of a secure and reliable communications network. Intra-European contacts were rather easy to establish while extra-European ones, especially transcontinental links with the sections and units in the Pacific region, proved challenging. The Hamburg Interclub, in turn, was instructed to recruit reliable liaison persons serving as couriers of messages and instructions from Hamburg to China, Indochina, Japan and Korea.[143]

140 Leo to "Werte Genossen," 5.9.1932, 534/4/405, 45, RGASPI.

141 Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg] 9.11.1932, 534/5/231, 71, RGASPI; [Shelley, Walter and Polano,] to "Werte Genossen," no date [ca. December 1932], 534/5/231, 82, RGASPI.

142 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," 25.12.1932, 534/4/405, RGASPI.

143 ISH Sekretariat to "Sekretär des Interklubs und Leiter der Sektion der ISH," Hamburg 18.11.1932, 534/5/235, 131–133, RGASPI.

However, it is questionable if the ISH headquarters ever supervised activities in the Pacific region. The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat in Vladivostok had opened a bureau in San Francisco in June 1932 and instructed it to assist the ISH in its agitation and propaganda work among Chinese and Japanese seamen, among others by publishing a Chinese and Japanese version of *The Pan-Pacific Seaman*.[144] Work in the port was delayed and only started during autumn.[145] At this point, the head of the San Francisco bureau notified Walter that the bureau was not an office of the ISH.[146] Walter critically responded and demanded the comrades to consolidate their activities along the US West Coast and to establish Interclubs in Seattle and Vancouver.[147]

The limited capacities of the ISH headquarters in Hamburg to monitor activities in the Pacific region raised concern at the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers. Direct connections between Hamburg and the units in Vladivostok, the Interclub and the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, had failed to be established, and no answers had been received from Hamburg on how to mobilise the organisations in the Pacific region. A correction to the dysfunctional connections was outlined at a meeting in Moscow in December 1932. According to the plan, the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow was to assume the role as a liaison centre as direct communications with Hamburg proved difficult to establish. However, for reasons not known, the implementation of the plan was delayed. Even worse, communications between Vladivostok and Moscow, too, were poor. In late March 1933, the secretary of the Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers urged Luigi Polano, who at this point had relocated to Moscow and headed the ISH Sovbureau, to intervene: Inquire from Hamburg why the ISH had not sent any reply and notify the RILU headquarters about the difficulties of work in Vladivostok.[148]

The meeting at the RILU headquarters in December 1932 resulted in a new attempt to revise the organisational structure of the ISH. Work among maritime transport workers as well as the organisation of the ISH sections and the

144 Report on Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, [San Francisco] 8.6.1932, 534/4/423, 8–10, RGASPI; letter from "Eddy" to "Alex" about costs for printing *The Pan-Pacific Seaman*, [San Francisco] 11.6.1932, 534/4/423, 11–12, RGASPI.

145 "Eddy" to "Alex," [San Francisco] 1.9.1932, 534/4/423, 35, RGASPI.

146 American Bureau of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat to the ISH, [San Francisco] 23.10.1932, 534/4/423, 42–43, RGASPI.

147 Walter to The American Bureau, Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, San Francisco, Hamburg, 9.11.1932, 534/5/235, 107, RGASPI; Plan for work among the Pacific marine transport workers, no date [ca. late autumn 1932], 534/4/423, 85–87, RGASPI.

148 NN, Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers to Luigi Polano, ISH Sovbureau, Vladivostok 22.3.1933, 534/5/239, RGASPI.

work of the revolutionary opposition within the trade unions was outlined in detail. Nevertheless, the directives remained a dead letter. Although they were sent to Hamburg in late 1932, Albert Walter was never capable to reply or even implement them.[149]

4 The Scandinavian Conference

The RILU directives of December 1932 compelled Walter to summon the ISH Executive Committee for a meeting in conjunction with a regional conference of the radical waterfront in Scandinavia, the Scandinavian Maritime Unity Conference, see Figure 24, scheduled to be held in early January 1933. The venue for the meeting was the Copenhagen Interclub as the ISH Secretariat decided to focus on the Scandinavian countries where negotiations for new tariffs in the shipping industry were about to start. Hopes were high in Hamburg that the revolutionary trade union opposition would manifold its support as it was claimed that the rank and file members of the unions were discontent with their leaders.[150]

For reasons not known, the meeting of the ISH Executive Committee was cancelled, perhaps due to the incapacity of its members to travel to Copenhagen on a short notice. Besides, the date of the Scandinavian Conference had to be postponed to the end of January due to an intermezzo in Gothenburg.[151] On 22 December 1932, the Swedish RFO had organised a demonstration in support of unemployed and jobless seamen that resulted in the storming of the building of the seamen's union in Gothenburg. The police intervened and the situation remained tense for the following weeks, interrupting the propaganda work of the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO in support of the forthcoming conference.[152]

Eventually, the Scandinavian Conference materialised, and Pechmann, Shelley and Walter arrived at the Danish capital on 23 January 1933. The communist press hailed the conference as a "milestone" in the fight against the "offensive of the shipowners." Ninety-nine delegates attended the conference, almost all representing the red trade union opposition in the Scandinavian unions. Not surprisingly, the seamen's unions declined to send official

149 Die organisatorischen Aufgaben der ISH, 21.12.1932, 534/5/231, 125–130, RGASPI.

150 Walter to "Werte Genossen," [Hamburg] 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 78 – 81, RGASPI; Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 25.12.1932, 534/4/405, 77, RGASPI; Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 26.12.1932, 534/4/405, 84, RGASPI.

151 Walter to "Werte Kameraden," [Hamburg] 31.12.1932, 534/5/231, 168, RGASPI.

152 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 319–322.

FIGURE 24 Flyer calling for the nomination of delegates to the Scandinavian Maritime Unity Conference, filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

representatives.[153] Pechmann critically remarked that the conference therefore missed the opportunity to manifest itself as a "unify from below."[154] On the other hand, the conference reached its goals – the ITF and its regional counterpart, the Scandinavian Transport Federation (STF), were condemned as traitors of the working class and a declaration of demands for a new collective agreement and tariffs was adopted. Most importantly, strategies and tactics were outlined for the upcoming campaigns in Denmark and Sweden: National strikes and blockades were to be orchestrated internationally by the ISH and carried out in every port by its national sections.[155]

153 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 323.

154 Leo [Pechmann] to "Werte Genossen," [Berlin] 3.2.1933, 534/4/460, 8–9, RGASPI. See also "Die Tagung der ersten Einheitskonferenz der skandinavischen Seeleute in Kopenhagen," *Rote Wacht* 4, No. 2 (February 1933).

155 Shelley to "Die führenden Genosen der Sektionen der ISH und Interklubs," [Hamburg] 30.1.1933, 534/5/236, 9, RGASPI.

CHAPTER 8

The Copenhagen Secretariat

Pechmann, Shelley and Walter returned to a country that was in turmoil. Unemployment had increased in Germany from 8.5 to nearly 30 percent in 1932 while industrial production dropped by more than 40 percent. The NSDAP had won a landslide victory in the July 1932 national elections and the party became the biggest one in parliament. The KPD, too, had won seats. Street fights between paramilitary units of the NSDAP, SPD and KPD paralysed public space. Violent clashes between the SA and the communists in Altona on 17 July 1932 resulted in 18 people dead, 16 of them by police bullets. The "Altonaer Blutsonntag" (Altona Bloody Sunday) triggered the German Chancellor Franz von Papen to declare a state of emergency on 20 July, dismissed the Prussian SPD-led government of Otto Braun, and put Prussia under direct administration of the federal government. New national elections followed in November 1932 with some losses for the NSDAP and a slight increase of the KPD. The political crisis further escalated in December when President Hindenburg dismissed Chancellor von Papen and replaced him with Defence Minister Kurt von Schleicher. However, von Schleicher's ambitions to build up a coalition with the left-wing of the Nazi Party failed. Unable to form a coalition government, von Schleicher resigned on 28 January 1933, and Hindenburg nominated Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933. The German Parliament was dissolved the following day, and new elections were called for March 5.

Neither the Comintern nor the KPD identified the national socialists to be their main enemy. In their view, the rationale of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine rightly identified the 'social fascists', the SPD and its auxiliary organisations as well as the social democratic trade union leaders, to be their first target. According to communist logic, the "masses of the working class" would rally behind the KPD once the "treachery" of the SPD had been revealed. The workers were called to form a 'United front from below' against the capitalist exploiters and their lackeys, the 'social fascists', any cooperation between the communists and social democrats was not on the agenda.[1]

1 See further Bernhard H. Bayerlein, "Deutscher Kommunismus und transnationaler Stalinismus – Komintern, KPD und Sowjetunion 1929–1943," in *Deutschland, Russland, Komintern. I. Überblicke, Analysen, Diskussionen*, ed. Hermann Weber, Jakov Drabkin, Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Aleksandr Galkin (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 225–400.

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The operations of ISH Secretariat and the RILU Berlin Bureau were at first unaffected by the political turmoil in Germany. Focus was rather on recent developments in the Netherlands, on agitation among colonial seamen, and the impending danger of a new World War. The two first issues were good news: Colonial seamen had launched an "uprising" on board the Dutch armoured vessel *De Zeven Provincien*. Although it failed, the RILU Berlin Bureau interpreted the uprising as a clear sign of the rising anti-imperialist mood among the Dutch colonial subjects, and ordered the Dutch revolutionary trade union opposition to deepen its anti-colonial agitation and propaganda. Most importantly, the ISH Secretariat called the Dutch revolutionary trade union opposition to launch a campaign in support of the 130 Malay and 32 Dutch seamen who were threatened by death sentence for mutiny,[2] and published a call for an international support campaign.[3] In addition, Shelley ordered in early February 1933 the Dutch section and the Rotterdam Interclub to organise a boycott and a campaign in support of the crew on board four Greek vessels in Rotterdam.[4] The Hamburg Interclub, in turn, alerted its liaison persons on board vessels (Bordvertrauensleute) about an impending attack on the Einheitsverband by the shipowners, urged them to be ready for the next fight for the betterment of working conditions, and called them to organise ship cells and ship committees on board their vessels.[5]

The impending war danger, in turn, was the renewed tension in the Far East and – most important, according to Shelley – the increase of military shipments to Japan from England, France, the Scandinavian countries, and the USA. This was depressing reading about the failure of the communists to block or boycott the shipments, and Shelley urged the ISH sections and Interclubs to reinforce their vigilance committees and harbour watches, and to organise mass demonstrations and mass protests especially against Japanese freighters

2 Brief an die RGO Hollands, 2[?].2.1933, 534/6/62, 8–10, RGASPI.

3 "Internationale Solidarität mit der Besatzung der 'Zeven Provincien'," *Rote Wacht* 4, no. 2 (February 1933). In fact, the international campaign had been sanctioned by the ECCI, see Aktionsprogram in Beziehung zum Aufstand in der holländischen Flotte Indonesiens, dated 13.2.1933, supplement to Protokoll (B) Nr. 294 der ausserordentlichen Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI vom 11.2.1933, 495/4/230, 4–5, RGASPI.

4 Shelley to "Chers camarades" at "La Conéderation génerale du travail unitaire, Athènes," [Hamburg] 3.2.1933, 534/6/86, 186, RGASPI; Pamphlet: Aan de Rotterdamsche Havenarbeiders, 534/6/86, 188, RGASPI; Mimeographed call: Strike on Greek ships! Not one seamen as blackleg on board of this ships, 534/6/86, 189, RGASPI.

5 Richard Krebs, Merkblatt für Bordvertauensleute, no date, transcript enclosed in file of the Nachrichtensammelstelle Reichsministerium des Inneren, dated Berlin 25.2.1933, R 31.758_ Bd. 43, PAAA.

and Japanese imperialism.[6] Shelley's instructions was a response to Moscow's criticism of the lukewarm anti-war efforts by the communist parties and organisations and the futile attempts to boycott the transport of war equipment to Japan.[7] The ISH Secretariat reacted promptly, and Albert Walter published a call to "maritime transport workers of the world," claiming that the Japanese imperialists were heading towards the borders of the Soviet Union and that military equipment was loaded in British, French, German, Scandinavian and US American ports for transport to Japan: Block the shipments, form vigilance groups, and stop Japanese imperialism![8] It turned out to be Walter's last proclamation.

Besides, the situation in Germany also raised concern. Not totally unaware of the rising tide of Nazism in Germany, the RILU Berlin Bureau called its sections to launch an international anti-fascist campaign "on the basis of the broadest united front tactic from below." The slogans of the campaign, it ordered, were to protest against the recent development in Germany: Against fascism in Germany, against the bloody terror of the fascists against the working class and the working people, against the declaring illegal of the RGO and KPD, against the national chauvinism of the German Hitler-Papen government, and against the growing danger of war which, the RILU reminded, in the first place was directed against the Soviet Union.[9]

1 Evacuating Hamburg

German public space constituted an uneven battleground for parties on the extreme Right and Left in February 1933. The Prussian Ministry of Interior was headed by a member of the NSDAP who deployed the Nazi Storm Troops (Sturmabteilung, SA) as auxiliary police forces to quell communist activities. On 23 February, police and SA troops occupied the headquarters of the KPD in

6 Shelley "an die führenden Genossen der Sektionen der ISH und Interklubs," [Hamburg] 30.1.1933, 534/5/236, 9, RGASPI.

7 "Kriget i Fjärran Östern och kommunisternas uppgifter i kampen mot det imperialistiska kriget och interventionen mot Sovjet-Unionen. Resolution till kamrat Okanos referat," in *Det internationella läget och Kominternsektionernas uppgifter* (Stockholm: Arbetarkultur, 1933), available at marxistarkiv.se.

8 An alle Wassertransportarbeiter aller Länder!, declaration signed by Albert Walter and the ISH Executive Committee, Hamburg January 1933, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet 294 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 2, SNA.

9 European Secretariat of the Red International of Labour Unions, Letter to "Dear comrades," 3.2.1933, 534/4/460, 256, RGASPI. A copy of the letter is filed in 534/6/142, RGASPI.

Berlin, the Karl-Liebknecht-Haus; on 27 February, the Reichstag building was set on fire. Hitler accused the communists for the blast, declared a state of emergency "as defensive measure against communist acts of violence endangering the state" which unleashed an attack by the state against the KPD and its organisations. Assisted by its Nazi auxiliary police forces, the police arrested thousands of communists, including party leader Ernst Thälmann, in an attempt to crush the organisational apparatus of the KPD. Those who escaped the onslaught went underground or left the country.

The assault against the KPD affected the Comintern and RILU bureaus in Germany as well. The police attacks in Berlin on 23 February were also directed against the offices of the West European Bureau, the League Against Imperialism and the RILU Berlin Bureau. However, while the police arrested the Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov – not knowing that he was 'Neptun', the head of the West European Bureau – on February 28, the members of the two other units managed to escape and went underground.

The crackdown on the communist apparatus in Weimer Germany had been anticipated for years. The Cominern and RILU headquarters had reminded the German Party and its affiliated organisations as well as the various international units such as the ISH to prepare for illegality. The inner circles of the ISH leadership seems to have discussed worst case-scenarios, including preparing for underground activities. Already in mid-February 1933, the archives of the ISH, including Albert Walter's card index of sea cells and liaison persons, were moved from Rothesoodstrasse and stored at safe premises in the harbour area. The printing press of the Interclub, too, was moved to an underground safe place.[10] Thus, when the police and the SA-troops raided Rothesoodstrasse on 5 March, they only found an empty building. The police finally closed the Interclub and the ISH office on 16 March, officially boasting that they now had quelled the last centres of international communism in Germany.[11]

The German Party as well as the Comintern quickly reorganised its apparatus. An underground apparatus started operations in Germany in March 1933, backed by legal units in Copenhagen, Paris, Prague and Saarbrucken. The offices of former Berlin-based units of the Comintern and RILU, too, were relocated to these cities and reorganised. The RILU Berlin Bureau was dissolved; part of its units, including its financial transfer office, were moved to Paris. The

10 Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Hansestadt Hamburg*, 583; Reinalda, *The International Transportworkers Federation*, 209.

11 *Vossische Zeitung*, 17.3.1933.

new bureau, the Latin European Secretariat, was headed by comrades 'René' and 'Willi'.[12] Other units, such as the editorial board of the *Internationale Gewerkschafts-Korrespondenz*, were moved to Copenhagen. The Copenhagen unit was known as the RILU Central European Secretariat, headed by Leo Pechmann.[13] He had fled to the Danish capital in early March; one month later, he had managed to establish a regular courier service between Paris and Copenhagen.[14]

The crackdown on communists in Hamburg in late February/early March 1933 also hit members of the ISH and the Einheitsverband. The most prominent "fish" to be caught by the police was ISH Secretary Albert Walter, who had declined to go underground, as well as Etkar André, a leading functionary of the Interclub and ISH instructor. However, most members of the ISH Secretariat, including Adolf Shelley, as well as the leader of the Einheitsverband, Ernst Wollweber, managed to escape the police. Shelley joined Pechmann in Copenhagen in early March while Wollweber went underground and established a network of illegal cells of the Einheitsverband in Germany.

The arrest of Albert Walter, the ban on the Einheitsverband, and the closure of the Hamburg Interclub generated an international outcry. Mobilised to a large extent by the sections of the ISH as well as the Interclubs, the general tenor was a condemnation of Nazi brutalism – and, in line with the 'Class-against-Class'-doctrine, an accusation of the social democrats for having paved the way for Hitler's dictatorship. A typical case was the demonstration organised by the Vladivostok Interclub, as noted by the ISH in its "press release" in early April 1933:

> English, German, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese seamen – one hundred men – launch flaming protest against bloody suppression of German toilers by Hitler dictatorship. Experiences of all fascist countries demonstrate that fascism come to power with the help of socialdemocratic [sic] treachery only means misery and suppression.[15]

12 Willi to "Werte Genossen," report dated 31.2.1933 [sic!, this is a misprint as the author claims that Pechmann was already in Copenhagen which was not the case in February 1933], 534/4/460, 52, RGASPI; Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 582–584.

13 Reorganisation of the RILU apparat, no date, no author [ca. 1933], 534/4/459, 10–11, RGASPI.

14 Leo [Pechmann] to "Liebe Freunde," 25.4.1933, 534/4/460, 97, RGASPI.

15 ISH, Press release: Telegram from Vladivostok, Copenhagen 7.4.1933, 534/5/236, 38, RGASPI.

It is likely that Pechmann's and Shelley's relocation to Copenhagen followed an emergency plan outlined already in 1932. Both Richard Jensen and Gustav Långfors claim that secret discussions about an emergency plan had been held in conjunction with the World Congress.[16] In addition, it is possible that Pechmann, Shelley and Walter discussed the relocation of the ISH – perhaps even that of the RILU Berlin Bureau – to Copenhagen at the Scandinavian Conference in January 1933. Be as it may, according to Ernst Wollweber, the ISH Secretariat, or at least part of it, already operated in Copenhagen from the end of February.[17]

1.1 *Firma A. Selvo et Co*

Officially, the office of the ISH Secretariat was in conjunction with the Copenhagen Interclub at Toldbodgade 16. The Interclub and the Danish section of the ISH assumed the role as the new centre of operations; Richard Jensen was presented in public as ISH (interim or acting) Secretary. However, the relocation of Shelley and other ISH members to Copenhagen enabled the re-establishment of the dual secretariat. As in Hamburg, Shelley was running an "illegal" secretariat, hereafter ISH (Illegal) Secretariat. The transport of the hidden archives of the ISH was organised by Hermann Knüfken and Max Barek in Hamburg, and Richard Jensen in Copenhagen. Almost in front of the German police, the material was packed on Danish and Swedish freighters and transported to Copenhagen.[18] Jensen hired an office for Shelley's and Pechmann's (illegal) units in the Vesterport office building opposite to the central railway station in central Copenhagen.[19] Soon at least Danish and British intelligence were well aware who was acting behind the curtains: "The illegal office of the I.S.H. is at room 289, Trommesalen, Copenhagen, under the name of a firm styled 'Selvo Co'. The camouflage is very bad and it is quite obviously

16 Raport fra Københavns Opdagelsepoliti, 11.2.1941, Politiets Efterretningstjenste, Wollwebersagen, Pakke 2, DNA; Richard Jensen, *Frem i lyset*, 104.

17 Ernst Wollweber, Lebenslauf, 175, NY 4327/10, BArchB.

18 Letter from Hermann Knüfken to Edo Fimmen, Antwerp 24.4.1936, published in Knüfken, *Von Kiel bis Leningrad*, 329–330.

19 Richard Jensen, *En omtumlet tilvaerelse* (Copenhagen: Fremad, 1957), 104; Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 581; See also Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *Verdensrevolutionens generalstad. Komintern og det hemmelige apparat* (Copenhagen: Gads forlag, 2011), 203–204; Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, "Komintern og det hemmelige apparat," in *Komintern og de dansk-sovjetiske relationer*, eds. Jesper Jørgensen, Alexander Chubarayan, Andrei Sorokin and Thomas Wegener Friis (Copenhagen: Arbejdermuseet og ABA, 2012), 104.

the H.Q. of the I.S.H. The entrance is in the middle room where the records are kept."[20]

The new operational unit of the ISH was a troika consisting of Jensen, Pechmann and Shelley who started their work in mid-March; a replacement for Walter as ISH Secretary was to be nominated at a later stage.[21] Other members were Gustav Långfors, Richard Rast and a stenographer. The three former comrades had worked at/for the Hamburg Interclub during the early 1930s.[22] The ISH sections were informed of the successful relocation of the ISH Secretariat to Copenhagen in announcement published in the *ISH Bulletin*. The national sections were further notified about Albert Walters' arrest and his harsh treatment by the German police as well as the plans to organise a European anti-fascist workers' congress in Copenhagen. In addition, the *ISH Bulletin* called for a boycott of Swedish vessels as part of an international campaign in support of the Swedish seamen's strike, see Figure 25.[23] Outwardly, the ISH Secretariat seemed unaffected by the Nazi takeover and was back in business.

1.2 *The Fate of the Baltic and Colonial Sections*

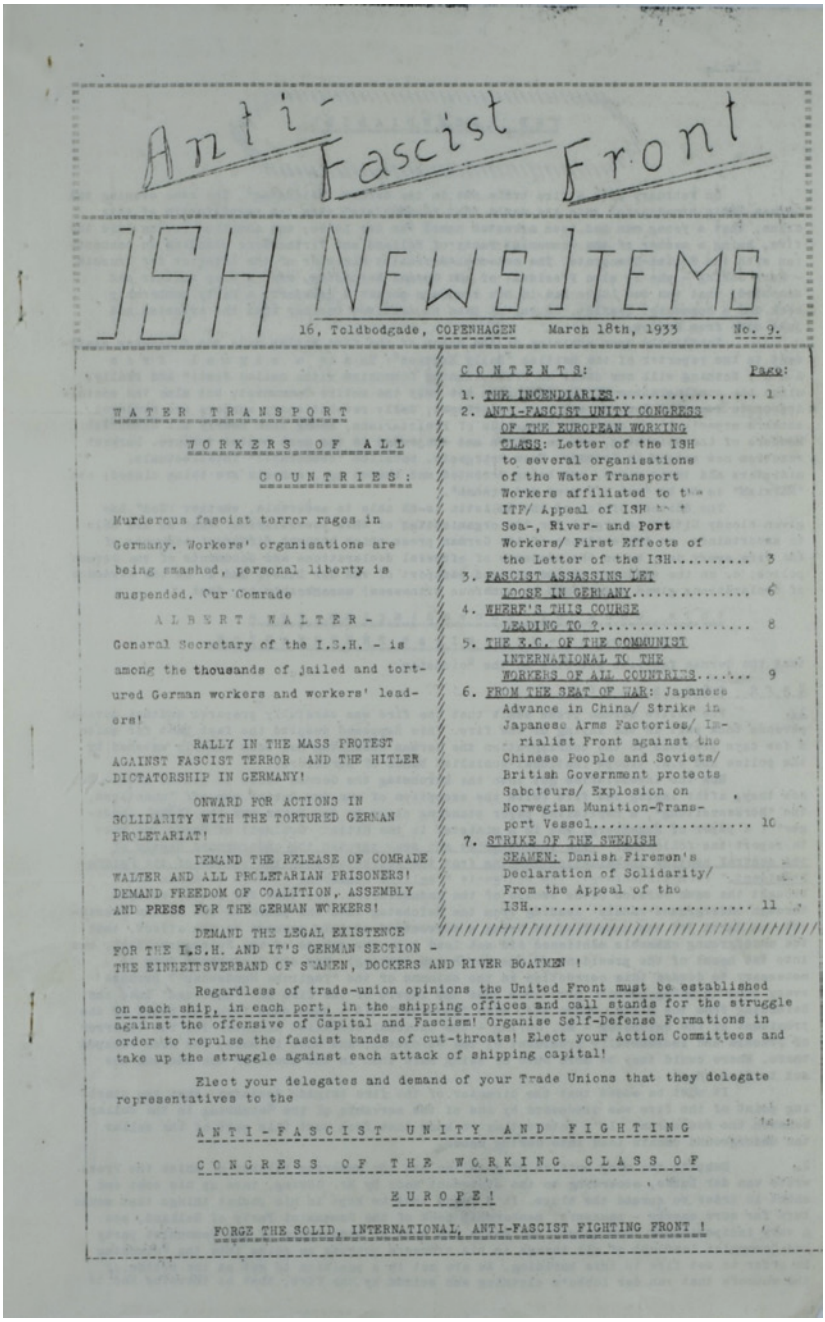
The crackdown on communists in Hamburg also affected foreign citizens who worked at the ISH headquarters. A first sign of the deteriorated conditions was the arrest of George Padmore on 11 February 1933. The reasons for his arrest are obscure although a hitherto unknown report on his arrest and subsequent deportation indicates that it was linked to his engagement for ITUCNW. The Prussian police in Altona had already wanted to interrogate him in November

20 Minutes 19.4.1933, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA. See further Morten Møller, Niels Erik Rosenfeldt and Jesper Jørgersen, *Den røde underverden: Hemmelig kommunistisk virksomhed i Skandinavien mellem to verdenskrige* (København: Gyldendal, 2019), 222–226.

21 Leo to "Liebe Freunde," K[openhagen = Copenhagen], 15.5.1933, 534/4/460, 130, RGASPI.

22 Minutes 13.7.1933, 26.7.1933 och 3.10.1933, Richard Jensen personal file 2/2158, TNA; [Handling IVA.] Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, undated report [filed 20.12.1941], 16, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet, IV A 2 – IV A 4, volym 169, SNA. Långfors is not listed in the British and Swedish files, the latter document being a Swedish translation of a compilation report by the German state police. British Intelligence believed Richard Rast to be an alias of a certain Paul Richards while German Intelligence claimed him to be a Bulgarian who was fluent in English, German and Russian.

23 *Anti-Fascist Front ISH News Items* 9, 18.3.1933, filed in HO 144/20657, TNA. At least the illegal journal of the German section published the calls for an European anti-fascist workers congress – although not mentioning it being planned to summon in Copenhagen – and an international boycott on Swedish vessels, see *Rote Wacht* 4, no. 3 (21 March 1933).



Anti-Fascist Front

ISH NEWS ITEMS

16, Toldbodgade, COPENHAGEN March 18th, 1933 No. 9.

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WATER TRANSPORT WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES:

Murderous fascist terror rages in Germany. Workers' organisations are being smashed, personal liberty is suspended. Our Comrade

ALBERT WALTER -

General Secretary of the I.S.H. - is among the thousands of jailed and tortured German workers and workers' leaders!

RALLY IN THE MASS PROTEST AGAINST FASCIST TERROR AND THE HITLER DICTATORSHIP IN GERMANY!

ONWARD FOR ACTIONS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE TORTURED GERMAN PROLETARIAT!

DEMAND THE RELEASE OF COMRADE WALTER AND ALL PROLETARIAN PRISONERS! DEMAND FREEDOM OF COALITION, ASSEMBLY AND PRESS FOR THE GERMAN WORKERS!

DEMAND THE LEGAL EXISTENCE FOR THE I.S.H. AND IT'S GERMAN SECTION - THE EINHEITSVERBAND DER SEEMEN, DOCKERS AND RIVER BOATMEN !

Regardless of trade-union opinions the United Front must be established on each ship, in each port, in the shipping offices and call stands for the struggle against the offensive of Capital and Fascism! Organise Self-Defense Formations in order to repulse the fascist bands of cut-throats! Elect your Action Committees and take up the struggle against each attack of shipping capital!

Elect your delegates and demand of your Trade Unions that they delegate representatives to the

ANTI-FASCIST UNITY AND FIGHTING CONGRESS OF THE WORKING CLASS OF EUROPE!

FORGE THE SOLID, INTERNATIONAL, ANTI-FASCIST FIGHTING FRONT !

FIGURE 25 The *ISH News Bulletin* of 18 March 1933, filed in HO 144/20657, The National Archives, Kew. The bulletin published a call by the ISH Secretariat to protest against the imprisonment and torture of Albert Walter and German workers and workers' leaders as well as to nominate delegates to the projected "Anti-Fascist Unity and Fighting Congress of the Working Class of Europe."

1932 but Padmore resided at the time in Moscow where he attended the Second World Congress of the International Red Aid. After returning to his apartment in Altona, Padmore informed his proprietor that he and his wife Frieda Schiff were to move to another place. However, Padmore stayed in the flat where the police found him and his wife on 11 February. The police confiscated Padmore's material and his typing machine. The ISH immediately asked the local branch of the German Red Aid to send a lawyer who started negotiations with the police authorities to prevent his expulsion to England.[24] However, the lawyer of the Red Aid as well as the comrades at the ISH headquarters were not aware that the local police had been in contact with the British consulate in Altona, notifying the consulate about the arrest of the British Trinidad-born subject Malcolm Ivan Nurse. What followed was a cat-and-mouse game. The British consulate informed the Foreign Office that Nurse was a potential troublemaker "who appears to have been operating in Berlin as a journalist," not knowing that Padmore as the alias of Nurse. The German authorities informed the British that they wanted to deport an unwanted British colonial subject and the British believed that Nurse could give them information about the notorious black revolutionary Padmore.[25]

The ISH leadership was informed about Padmore's detention order on the day of his eviction to Britain. However, when they tried to approach Padmore on the vessel, the latter made a secret sign not to interfere. The ISH functionary reasoned (rightly) that the police had not been able to crack Padmore's identity. The ISH leadership therefore decided not to launch a campaign among black and white seamen on his release as it could have blown his cover.[26] Padmore left Hamburg on the SS *Bury* for Grimsby on 22 February. After his arrival in England, he stayed only for one day, borrowed some money and headed towards Paris where he arrived in early March 1933.[27]

Padmore's expulsion did not terminate work among colonial seamen in Hamburg. Neither was it the end of the ITUCNW. Instead, the RILU Berlin Bureau informed Albert Walter that the funding for *The Negro Worker* remained the same for March, and instructed him to print the March issue of the journal.[28] On the other hand, the ISH leadership criticised Padmore for neglecting

24 Bill, Über die Festnahme und Ausweisung des Gen. Padmore [Report on the arrest and deportation of Comrade Padmore], no date [filed: 20.4.1933], 534/4/461, 123, RGASPI.

25 See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 579.

26 Bill, Über die Festnahme und Ausweisung des Gen. Padmore [Report on the arrest and deportation of Comrade Padmore], no date [filed: 20.4.1933], 534/4/461, 124, RGASPI.

27 See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 579–582.

28 Handwritten note: "Was betrifft des Negerkomite," 28.2.1933, 534/4/461, 70, RGASPI.

security measures as he had deposited his files at his apartment. They also informed the RILU Berlin Bureau that Padmore had not been very cooperative and had neglected their security instructions.[29]

The other member of the colonial section of the Interclub, Min Yifan, managed to escape from Germany. Although the Nazi regime did not classify Chinese persons as 'coloured', leftist Chinese who stayed in Germany after March 1933 risked arrest. Following Gregor Benton, Min Yifan relocated to Rotterdam from where he operated the headquarters of the Western European Branch of the Chinese Seamen's Union. In early 1934, the communist-controlled Malayan Seamen's Union asked the RILU to send someone to Singapore to help organise the Chinese seamen. The RILU sent Min Yifan.[30]

Padmore's and Min Yifan's departure from Hamburg terminated the direct involvement of the ISH Secretariat in work among colonial seamen. The new operational basis of the two comrades in Paris respective Rotterdam were outside the orbit of the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat in Copenhagen. While the Western European Branch of the Chinese Seamen's Union had been an independent unit already before 1933, Padmore's relocation to Paris enabled him to disregard the December 1932 Instructions about the close cooperation between the ISH and the ITUCNW. The only remaining visible link to the ISH was the official address of the ITUCNW and *The Negro Worker* – c/o International Seamen's Club, 16, Toldbodgade, Copenhagen.

Neither was the Baltic section affected by the closure of the Hamburg Interclub. Ernest Lambert managed to escape to the Netherlands and operated the Baltic section from Rotterdam. The editors or technical assistants of the Estonian and Finnish journals seemed to have moved to Copenhagen as both *Majakas* and *Majakka* reported the Copenhagen Interclub as the office of its editors. The Latvian journal *Baka*, too, claimed to be published in Copenhagen. However, neither the Finnish nor the Latvian State Police believed this to be the case; instead, they argued that the journals were edited by communists in the Soviet Union and printed by the Interclub in Leningrad.[31]

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29 Bill, Über die Festnahme und Ausweisung des Gen. Padmore [Report on the arrest and deportation of Comrade Padmore], no date [filed: 20.4.1933], 534/4/461, 125, RGASPI.

30 Gregor Benton, "The Comintern and Chinese overseas," in *Chinese Transnational Networks*, ed. Tan Chee-Beng (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 139–138; Gregor Benton, *Chinese Migrants and Internationalism: Forgotten Histories, 1917–1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 55–56. See further Anna Belogurova, "Networks, Parties, and the 'Oppressed nation': The Comintern and Chinese Communists Overseas, 1926–1935," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* E-journal No. 24 (September 2017), https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/e-journal/articles/belogurova.pdf.

31 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 301.

2 The Copenhagen Secretariat in Action

The relocation of the ISH Secretariat to Copenhagen enabled Jensen and Shelley to enforce the strike tactics outlined at previous meetings. Hitherto, the communists had been victorious in local conflicts but had not won any major national strikes; see Figure 26. This was to change by a determined attempt to control the strike committees and to internationalise a national strike.[32] Backed by the decision taken at the meeting of the ISH Executive Committee in Amsterdam in August 1932, the ISH Secretariat therefore started a vigorous international campaign in autumn 1932, calling for full employment on the ships and in the harbours as well as for the election of independent strike committees.[33] The core demands of the ISH campaign listed wage increases, better living conditions and food on board the vessels, two days of paid vacation per month, full compensation for overtime as well as free medical care.[34] The impeding battlegrounds were the Scandinavian countries were the shipping industry had announced substantial decreases in wages and hires in the forthcoming negotiations with the unions. Tactics of the revolutionary trade union opposition had been outlined at the January 1933 Scandinavian Conference, and Shelley informed – perhaps in one of his last circular letters from Hamburg to the ISH sections and Interclubs – about the pending critical situation in Sweden and Denmark.[35] The stage was set for a showdown in Northern Europe where the ISH aimed to develop the revolutionary trade union opposition into a mass movement.[36]

32 See, for example, the call of the ISH in December to refuse unloading and loading of ships rerouted from French ports as the best way in supporting the harbour workers' strike in France, "Zum Streik der Hafenarbeiter in Frankreich," *Rote Wacht* 3, no. 13 (December 1932.).

33 "Internationale Aktion des Wassertransportproletariats," Internationale Gewerkschafts-Presse-Korrespondenz Nr 77 (1932), press-clipping enclosed as Abschrift zu S 3703, RAV Botschaft Moskau 196, PAAA; Walter and Shelley to NN, [Hamburg] 2.9.1932, 534/5/231, 30–31, RGASPI. Walter's and Shelley's document is a copy of a text in German, probably sent to the RILU or Comintern headquarters as they asked Moscow to send a reminder to "the Comintern sections (i.e., parties) in England, USA, France, Germany, Norway, Holland and Poland" to pay serious attention to work on the waterfront.

34 ISH, An alle Sektionen der ISH und Interklubs betreffend Organisierung einer internationalen Aktion unter der Parole 'Volle Besatzung an Bord, volle Gänge der Hafenarbeiter in der Ladung', Hamburg, September 1932, Reichskommissariat für die Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung und Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Inneren, R1507/2084, 136–146, BArchB.

35 Shelley "an die führenden Genossen der Sektionen der ISH und Interklubs," [Hamburg] 30.1.1933, 534/5/236, 10, RGASPI.

36 Apart from engaging in the national seamen's strikes in Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Ireland in 1933, the ISH Secretariat cabled the MWIU in early August announcing that

2.1 *Sweden*

Although the ISH Secretariat prepared for a clash in Sweden, the clampdown on communists in Germany and the liquidation of activities in Hamburg almost nullified its ambitions. Negotiations between the unions and the shipowners collapsed on 8 March, and the Swedish Seamen's Union declared the strike to begin the following day. The position of the revolutionary trade union opposition, the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO, was well known. It had unleashed a campaign against the "defeat tactic" (nederlagstaktik) of the union leadership, the 'reformist' Scandinavian Transport Workers' Federation (STF), and the ITF already in December 1932, and had published its demands after the January 1933 Copenhagen Conference. Anticipating the declaration of a strike, the Political Bureau of the SKP (Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti, Sektion av Komintern) convened together with the RFO leadership in early March to discuss the timetable for future strike activities. Of utmost important was the strict appliance to Swedish maritime law, the SKP leadership stressed, and strictly ruled out any deviations from the 7-days rule; according to the rule, a ship crew had to wait for seven days, and the ship had to return to a Swedish port, before it had the right to start a strike. The effect of the rule was that the strike would take off on 15 March.[37]

The RFO leadership was not happy with the order of the SKP. Instead of being idle for seven days, the RFO wanted to press for an immediate confrontation by calling for a total stoppage of work on vessels at once and not only in Swedish ports but anywhere in the world. However, the party leadership nullified these aspirations. Instead, it underscored the absolute necessity to comply with the 7-days rule and not to endanger the position of the party through the application of illegal tactics.[38]

Neither was the ISH Secretariat capable to render any immediate assistance to the RFO. This was disappointing news for the RFO headquarters in Gothenburg. It had already telephoned Jensen on 9 March about the start of the strike but he replied that he had no means at his disposal to support them. Besides, the ISH Secretariat was at that time fully engaged with organising the European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress (see below). The silence in Copenhagen and in the Swedish communist press, in addition to the inactivity of the communist-led strike committees in the Swedish ports, made the social

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Polish mariners had gone out on strike and urging the MWIU to stop all Polish liners in US ports. However, the strike was a short affair as the strikers were able to win all their demands, and the ISH called off the international boycott, see "International news," *The Waterfront Worker* 1, no. 9 (August 15, 1933): 4. I have not found any further documentation on the engagement of the ISH engagement in the Polish strike.

37 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 329–333.

38 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 335.

Arbeidere i alle land foren Dere!

Løssalg 10 øre

SJØTRANSPORTARBEIDEREN

Utgitt av Sjøtransportarbeidernes revolusjonære Opposisjon i Norge.

Nr. 10 — *Oktober* 1932. — 6. årg.

Handling er veien til seier!

Antikrigs-kongressen.

2500 deltagere på kongressen. Marinekaptein Kullmann's foredrag i Oslo.

Som meddelt i siste nummer av vår avis har en rekke intellektuelle og fremtredende arbeidere tatt initiativet til å organisere en internasjonal *antikrigskongress*. I spissen for denne store opgave stod den bekjente forfatter *Henri Barbusse* og for den norske forberedelseskomite kamerat *Egede Nissen*.

Kongressen blev avholdt i Amsterdam 27., 28. og 29. august og var en mektig manifestasjon av den stadig sterkere vilje til kamp mot de imperialistiske krigsforberedelser, idet der var *2500 representanter* fra alle verdens land.

Kongressen trakk op et internasjonalt manifest til alle folk om å organisere kampen mot den imperialistiske krig.

Stor opmerksombet vakte en representant for de engelske sjøfolk, en av de som hadde vært delaktig i det engelske flåtemytteri foregående år. Fra Norge deltok ennvidere en havnearbeider fra Bergen, *Olav Birkeland*. Ikke minst opmerksombet vakte en annen norsk representant, *marinekaptein Kullmann*, som ifølge referatet fra kongressen har tlalt at hvis det kom til krig måtte det være alles plikt å

(Forts. 4. side)

De polske og hollandske sjøfolk og havnearbeidere i kamp mot skibsrederkapitalen.

I. S. H. kontra I. T. F.

De siste par uker har vært meget lærerike for de sjøfolk og havnearbeidere som har fulgt med i de internasjonale streiker. Det er bare så altfor sørgelig at vår avis, kun rekker ut til 3000 sjøtransportarbeidere av de ca. 30 000 i den norske flåte. Det må være en opgave for alle som leser om den hollandske og polske sjømannsstreik å spre oplysning om disses heltemodige optreden videre ut blandt de bredeste lag av sjøtransportproletariatet.

Den 29. august gikk de polske havnearbeidere og sjøfolk i Gdynia til streik under ledelse av R. F. O. og internasjonalt med I. S. H. i spissen. Streiken blev for havnearbeidernes vedkommende avsluttet den 4. september, ikke med lønnsreduksjon, som forlangt av de umettelige arbeidskjøpere, men med en lønnsforhøielse på 15 grossen i timén. Timelønnen blev således hevet fra 1.10 til 1.25 zloty pr. time. Denne lønnsforhøielse har man dog måttet tilkjempe sig med alle de midler arbeiderklassen råder over. Motstanden har vært stor. Det fascistiske Pilsudski-politi har utøvet den reneste terror for å knekke de kjempendes samhold. Under et stort sammenstøt mellom streikende og politiet i Gdynia den 31. august blev 2 havnearbeidere drept og ca. 80 såret. Men den revolusjonære front holdt! Og den 4. september hostet de sin første seir. De reformistiske I. T. F.-drabanter har i denne kamp som tidligere med alle midler forsøkt å hindre kampen og således hjulpet de fascistiske elementer. Ja, ikke bare det, men de har i en avis i Danzig, offentliggjort at ledelsen for streiken sitter i Danzig. På denne måte optrer socialdemokratene som angivere. Reformistene med hr. Zulawski i spissen er det da også som er skyld i at man til slutt fikk spaltet kampfronten, *og måtte sjøfolkene lore sin kamp videre alene.* Den daglige ledelse av kampen hadde et *aksjonsutvalg*, valgt av sjøtransportarbeiderne selv, et aksjonsutvalg som stod i den mest intime kontakt med R. F. O. og førte kampen på revolusjonært grunnlag og efter de retningslinjer som var trukket op av R. F. O. og I. S. H. Havnearbeiderne gikk dog ikke betingelseslost tilbake til arbeidet. De har fremsatt sine øvrige krav og har uttalt at de den 1. oktober pany går ut i streik, hvis ikke deres øvrige krav til den tid er

lse 4 side.

Sjømennenes agitasjonsuke.

Da norske sjøfolk må våkne til bevist kamp mot nye lønnsreduksjoner og nedskjæringer.

Skibsrederkapitalens angrep på sjøfolkenes usle lønns- og arbeidsvilkår skjerpes fra dag til dag i alle land. I Norge har man i de senere år oplevet det ene lønnsnedslag efter det annet og også alle de øvrige goder man tidligere har tilkjempet sig, fravristes oss nu fra måned til måned, uten at den såkalte «ansvarlige» organisasjon, *Unionen*, gjør noe *effektivt* for å forsvare sjøfolkenes interesser. Hvad oplysningsarbeidet blandt sjøfolkene angår, er det ennu værre og norske sjøfolk står i stor utstrekning fullstendig uvitende om de store kamper som sjøfolkene og havnearbeiderne verden over fører.

I denne anledning har landsstyret for sjøfolkenes R. F. O. besluttet å avholde en *sjømennenes agitasjonsuke* i tiden 22. til 29. september.

Alle grupper og interklubber har blitt tilstillet en agitasjons- og propagandaplan på hvilket grunnlag de skal anlegge uken. En rekke av gruppene har allerede for lengere tid siden behandlet planen og på grunnlag av denne satt op sin egen lokale plan.

Idet vi her ennu en gang min-

Fortsettelse 4. side.

FIGURE 26 ISH leads striking maritime transport workers to victory, front-page news about victorious outcomes of the strikes in Poland and the Netherlands in *Sjøtransportarbeideren* 6, no. 10 (October 1932): 1.

democratic and socialist trade union leadership to declare the total defeat of the strike tactics of the communists and the ISH.[39]

However, the defeat of the ISH proved illusory. The ISH Secretariat published a call for international actions and boycotts in support for the Swedish strike on 14 March.[40] One day earlier, the Danish Stokers' Union had already issued its own declaration, and ordered its members not to hire on Swedish vessels, see Figure 27. The Danish declaration – which probably had been drafted by Jensen and Shelley – was internationally circulated through the *ISH Bulletin*. The Danish declaration was a direct statement against the hitherto applied strike tactics in Sweden and condemned the decision for not including the coastal merchant fleet in the strike. Besides, it launched a broadside attack against Charles Lindley, the leader of the Swedish transport workers' union and the president of the STF, heavily criticising him for prohibiting the harbour workers to engage in the strike. A few days later, the ISH directly intervened in the strike by sending its first instructor to Sweden.[41]

The investigations by the Swedish police after the strike identified Richard Krebs as the instructor sent by the ISH. However, Krebs was the second (and main) emissary of the ISH. Earlier to his arrival, the ISH Secretariat had sent Gustav Långfors on a mission to Sweden. Långfors participated at a secret meeting in Gothenburg on 19 March where the RFO leadership discussed the strike; the meeting had been called by the ISH and the representative of the Comintern in Stockholm. The leadership of the Swedish Party was criticised by the ISH representative for compliancy and for inactivity. Instead, he demanded the full application of the confrontation tactics.[42]

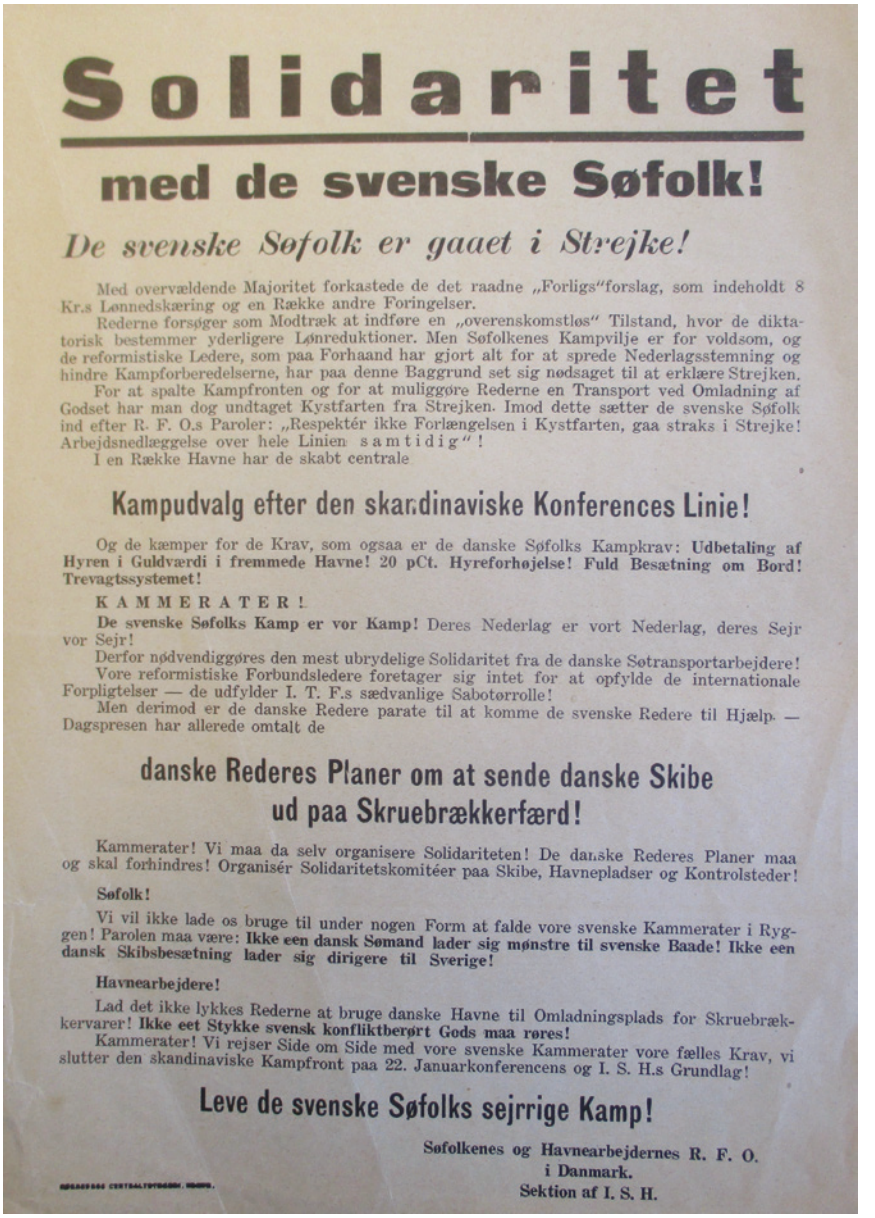
Långfors returned to Copenhagen and the ISH Secretariat sent Krebs to organise the battle on the waterfront. The RFO unleashed the new tactics immediately by taking the lead in the local strike committees in Gothenburg and Stockholm, and by organising "shock brigades" to block blacklegs to enter ships. Strike paroles were painted at night on the walls and pavements throughout Gothenburg and Stockholm, followed by an intensification of demonstrations and boycotts. The main battle was fought in Gothenburg where the situation escalated on 21 March with a six-hour showdown between the strikers and

39 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 333–335.

40 Interestingly, the ISH call for international actions in support of the Swedish strike was noted in national and local journals of opposition groups and independent radical associations, among others on the US West Coast, see "International news," *The Waterfront Worker* 1, no. 4 (April 1933): 6.

41 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 336.

42 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 338–341.



Solidaritet

med de svenske Søfolk!

De svenske Søfolk er gaaet i Strejke!

Med overvældende Majoritet forkastede de det raadne „Forligs"forslag, som indeholdt 8 Kr.s Lønnedskæring og en Række andre Foringelser.

Rederne forsøger som Modtræk at indføre en „overenskomstløs" Tilstand, hvor de diktatorisk bestemmer yderligere Lønreduktioner. Men Søfolkenes Kampvilje er for voldsom, og de reformistiske Ledere, som paa Forhaand har gjort alt for at sprede Nederlagsstemning og hindre Kampforberedelserne, har paa denne Baggrund set sig nødsaget til at erklære Strejken.

For at spalte Kampfronten og for at muliggøre Rederne en Transport ved Omladning af Godset har man dog undtaget Kystfarten fra Strejken. Imod dette sætter de svenske Søfolk ind efter R. F. O.s Paroler: „Respektér ikke Forlængelsen i Kystfarten, gaa straks i Strejke! Arbejdsnedlæggelse over hele Linien s a m t i d i g"!

I en Række Havne har de skabt centrale

Kampudvalg efter den skandinaviske Konferences Linie!

Og de kæmper for de Krav, som ogsaa er de danske Søfolks Kampkrav: **Udbetaling af Hyren i Guldværdi i fremmede Havne! 20 pCt. Hyreforhøjelse! Fuld Besætning om Bord! Trevagtssystemet!**

K A M M E R A T E R !

De svenske Søfolks Kamp er vor Kamp! Deres Nederlag er vort Nederlag, deres Sejr vor Sejr!

Derfor nødvendiggøres den mest ubrydelige Solidaritet fra de danske Søtransportarbejdere!

Vore reformistiske Forbundsledere foretager sig intet for at opfylde de internationale Forpligtelser — de udfylder I. T. F.s sædvanlige Sabotørrolle!

Men derimod er de danske Redere parate til at komme de svenske Redere til Hjælp. — Dagspresen har allerede omtalt de

danske Rederes Planer om at sende danske Skibe ud paa Skruebrækkerfærd!

Kammerater! Vi maa da selv organisere Solidariteten! De danske Rederes Planer maa og skal forhindres! Organisér Solidaritetskomitéer paa Skibe, Havnepladser og Kontrolsteder!

Søfolk!

Vi vil ikke lade os bruge til under nogen Form at falde vore svenske Kammerater i Ryggen! Parolen maa være: **Ikke een dansk Sømand lader sig mønstre til svenske Baade! Ikke een dansk Skibsbesætning lader sig dirigere til Sverige!**

Havnearbejdere!

Lad det ikke lykkes Rederne at bruge danske Havne til Omladningsplads for Skruebrækkervarer! **Ikke eet Stykke svensk konfliktberørt Gods maa røres!**

Kammerater! Vi rejser Side om Side med vore svenske Kammerater vore fælles Krav, vi slutter den skandinaviske Kampfront paa 22. Januarkonferencens og I. S. H.s Grundlag!

Leve de svenske Søfolks sejrrige Kamp!

Søfolkenes og Havnearbejdernes R. F. O.
i Danmark.
Sektion af I. S. H.

FIGURE 27 Calling the Danish maritime workers to support the Swedish seamen's strike; flyer by the Søfolkens og Havnearbejdernes RFO, the ISH section in Denmark, filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

the police. Krebs' shock brigades stormed on the following day the steamer *Kjell* and forced five blacklegs from the boat. The so-called *Kjell* Affaire marked the climax of the strike. The five blacklegs were found badly beaten in the outskirts of Gothenburg, the socialist, liberal and conservative press demanded an immediate end to communist 'terrorism'. The police raided the headquarters of the strike committee as well as the Interclub in Gothenburg, arresting the strike leadership *in toto*. Krebs went underground and rushed to Stockholm.[43]

Officially, the ISH Secretariat refuted to be directly involved in the strike. Although it made no secret of being the mastermind of the international campaign in support of the Swedish strike, the ISH Secretariat never intervened directly in public. Instead, the ISH Secretariat used an organisation called "Skandinaviska sjöfolkens kampkommitté" (The Fighting Committee of Scandinavian Seamen) as its mouthpiece. The Fighting Committee was said to have been established at the January 1933 Copenhagen Conference and was headed by Richard Jensen. Jensen, in the name of the Fighting Committee, sent an invitation to the STF to discuss joint international actions in support of the Swedish strike, and travelled to Gothenburg where the executive bureau of the STF was to meet on 24 March. STF President Charles Lindley was not impressed, rejected Jensen's invitation, and declared the strike to be outright "madness" (vansinne).[44]

The *Kjell* Affaire propelled a new round of negotiations between the union leaders and shipowners. Krebs, in turn, aimed to step up escalations in the Swedish ports while the ISH issued a new call for international boycotts. The RFO leadership was confident and claimed that most members of the union backed the RFO-led strike committees. However, neither the ISH nor the RFO had calculated with the next move by the union leaders. On 29 March the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Löntagarorganisationen LO) intervened in support of the union leadership, and demanded all union members to comply to the statutes of seamen's union; those who did not were to be expelled from the union. Two days later, the opposition-controlled Stockholm branch was excluded from the union and the union leadership accepted the demands of the shipowners. The RFO wanted to continue the fight but without much success. The strike ended on 3 April when the RFO ordered its members to resume work.[45]

Neither the RFO nor the ISH ever considered their tactic to have failed. Instead, the defeat in Sweden was blamed on the "defeat tactic" of the social

43 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 342–347.
44 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 347–348.
45 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 349–353.

democratic and socialist trade union leaders and functionaries, the STF, and the ITF. Instead, they argued that their "revolutionary tactic" had proven right and the strikers would have voted against the deal of the union leaders.[46] However, this was the crux of the matter. The union leadership – perhaps rightly – calculated that the RFO had gained a huge backing at the beginning of April and never arranged a vote (which it should have done, according to union statutes). Whether the RFO ever had the large backing it claimed is not known. According to its own calculations, RFO membership rose from 1,200 before to 3,000 at the end of the strike. These figures were used by the ISH Secretariat as a clear indication for an imminent breakthrough for the revolutionary trade union opposition in Sweden. The course was set for the next union congress where the revolutionary trade union opposition planned to vote against the present union leadership and replace it with a revolutionary one. There was only one problem with these considerations – the next union congress was scheduled for 1935.

2.2 *Finland*

Operations in Finland proved much more difficult. Communist activities were illegal and the opposition in the Finnish Seamen's and Stokers' Union was neither organised nor visible. Direct interventions in Finland were impossible, as Albert Walter repeatedly had noted, not to speak about connecting with opposition groups within the union. The ISH Secretariat therefore applied an indirect approach by publishing a journal, *Majakka*, in the name of the opposition. Whether there ever existed such an opposition is not known, and at least the Finnish State Police had no information on the existence of such a group. However, fictitious or not, what mattered was the existence of a propaganda tool to be used to radicalise Finnish seamen.[47]

The Finnish shipping industry had a dubious international reputation during the early 1930s. Wages were among the lowest in Europe while unemployment among Finnish seamen was high. There was a profound discontent with the situation among the members of the union. As in Sweden, tariffs were open for negotiation in spring 1933 and when they ended in a cul-de-sac, the majority of the members voted for strike. The strike started on 23 April and became a protracted affair. In contrast to Sweden, only a fraction of the seamen belonged to the union and the shipowners made

46 ISH Sekretariat an alle Sektionen der ISH und Interklubs, Betrifft: Streik der schwedischen Seeleute, Kopenhagen 7.4.1933, 534/5/236, 39, RGASPI.

47 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 353–354.

extensively use of blacklegs who were mobilised by paramilitary strikebreaking organisations.[48]

The capability and capacity of the ISH Secretariat to directly intervene and organise the strike were almost non-existent. Initially, the secretary of the Finnish Seamen's and Stokers' Union did not even bother to inform the ISH Secretariat about the outbreak of the strike. When news finally reached Copenhagen, the ISH Secretariat published a call for an international blockade of Finnish ships in early May.[49] Indirectly, the ISH Secretariat used the journal *Majakka* as its main tool to radicalise the strike. The April-issue of *Majakka* carried several articles condemning the decision of the union to apply the 7-days rule and to restrict the strike to Finnish steamers in Finnish and Scandinavian harbours. In addition, the journal accused the union for not having immediately informed the ISH Secretariat about the outbreak of the strike. The next issue of *Majakka* called for an intensification of the strike as well as carried the call of the ISH about an international boycott of Finnish ships. Simultaneously, the ISH had ordered its sections and the Interclubs to boycott Finnish ships, and at least the Baltic and Danish sections published similar calls.[50]

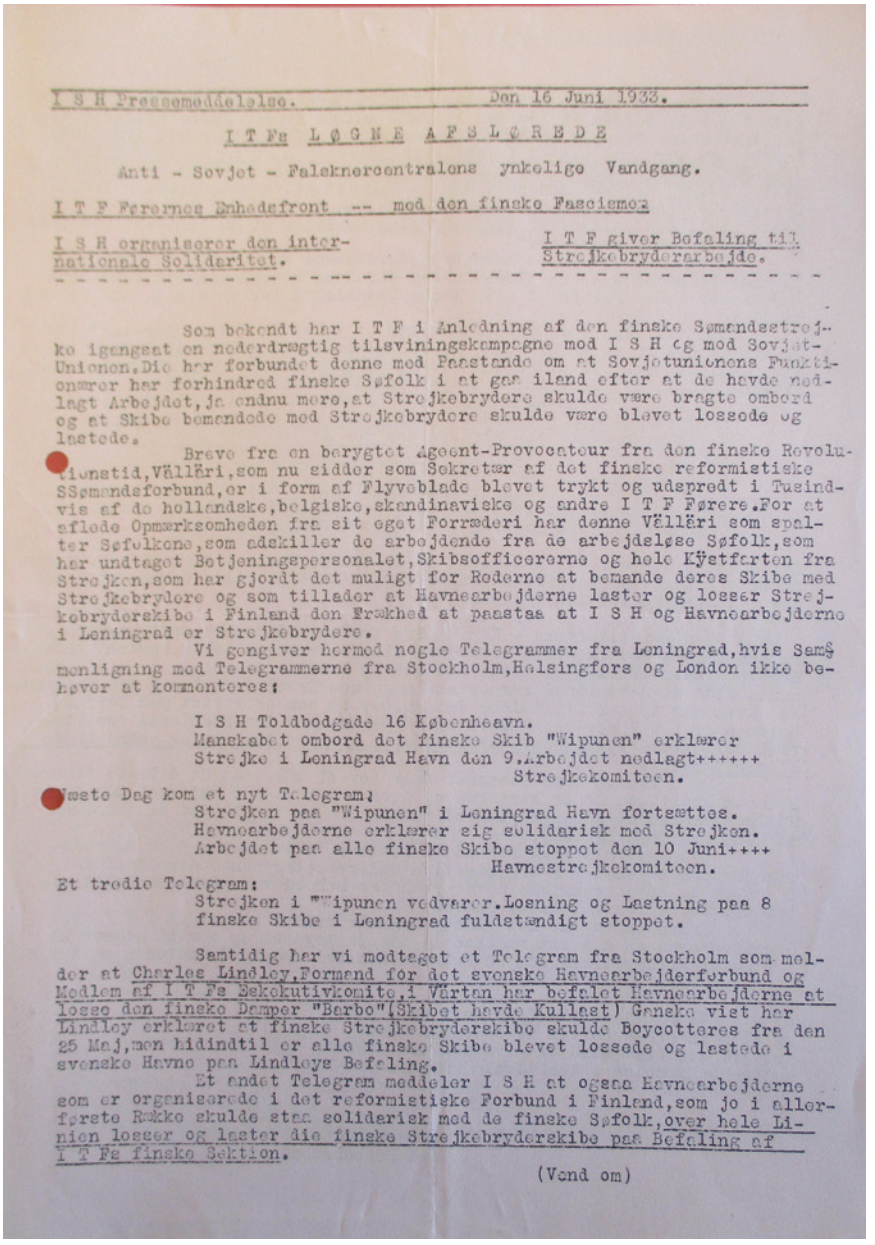
The international campaign of the ISH almost backfired when news about the loading of Finnish ships in the port of Leningrad made international headlines. Especially in Sweden, where the seamen's union had started the expulsion of RFO-members from the union, the Swedish Seamen's Union used the activities of the Leningrad port workers in its propaganda war against the ISH and the RFO. The ISH was portrayed as an empty shell, not capable to organise boycotts even in the Soviet ports. Rather, in the mind of their critics, the ISH and the Soviet Union were supporting blacklegs as the Leningrad port authorities initially had declared the Finnish strike to be a domestic affair and the ISH had not intervened. The embarrassing news compelled Shelley to write to Pat Murphy, the ISH liaison person in England, and asked him to publish an official response in the British press: Finnish ships had been loaded in Leningrad because the Finnish union had officially only asked the ITF for support. Besides, the Soviet Union was obliged to fulfil international agreements with "capitalist" countries. The Danish and Swedish ISH-sections made similar replies and accused the ITF for having failed to organise a boycott of Finnish vessels, see Figure 28.[51]

48 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 354–355. See further Timo Soukola, *Riistorauhaa rikkomassa. Suomen Merimies-Unionin ja sen edeltäjien vaiheita, 1905–2000* (Helsinki: Otava, 2003).

49 ISH Secretariat, Instructions regarding the Finnish Seamen's strike, 4.5.1933, 534/5/236, 55, RGASPI.

50 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 359–360.

51 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 357–358. In fact, the Finnish seamen's strike was one of the few times when the ECCI decided on strike tactics. At its meeting on 27 April, the



I S H Pressemeddelelse. Den 16 Juni 1933.

I T Fs L Ø G N E A F S L Ø R E D E

Anti - Sovjet - Falsknercentralens ynkelige Vandgang.

I T F Førernes Enhedsfront -- med den finske Fascisme.

I S H organiserer den internationale Solidaritet.

I T F giver Befaling til Strejkebryderarbejde.

Som bekendt har I T F i Anledning af den finske Sømandsstrejke igangsat en nedrdrægtig tilsviningskampagne mod I S H og mod Sovjet-Unionen. Dio har forbundet denne med Paastande om at Sovjetunionens Funktionærer har forhindret finske Søfolk i at gaa iland efter at de havde nedlagt Arbejdet, ja endnu mere, at Strejkebrydere skulde være bragte ombord og at Skibe bemandede med Strejkebrydere skulde være blevet lossede og lastede.

Breve fra en berygtet Agent-Provocateur fra den finske Revolutionstid, Vällări, som nu sidder som Sekretær af det finske reformistiske SSømandsforbund, er i form af Flyveblade blevet trykt og udspredt i Tusindvis af de hollandske, belgiske, skandinaviske og andre I T F Førere. For at aflede Opmærksomheden fra sit eget Forræderi har denne Vällări som spalter Søfolkene, som adskiller de arbejdende fra de arbejdsløse Søfolk, som har undtaget Betjeningspersonalet, Skibsofficererne og hele Kystfarten fra Strejken, som har gjordt det muligt for Rederne at bemande deres Skibe med Strejkebrydere og som tillader at Havnearbejderne laster og losser Strejkebryderskibe i Finland den Frækhed at paastaa at I S H og Havnearbejderne i Leningrad er Strejkebrydere.

Vi gengiver hermed nogle Telegrammer fra Leningrad, hvis Sammenligning med Telegrammerne fra Stockholm, Helsingfors og London ikke behøver at kommenteres:

I S H Toldbodgade 16 København.
Mandskabet ombord det finske Skib "Wipunen" erklærer Strejke i Leningrad Havn den 9. Arbejdet nedlagt++++++
Strejkekomiteen.

Næste Dag kom et nyt Telegram:
Strejken paa "Wipunen" i Leningrad Havn fortsættes.
Havnearbejderne erklærer sig solidarisk med Strejken.
Arbejdet paa alle finske Skibe stoppet den 10 Juni++++
Havnestrejkekomiteen.

Et tredie Telegram:
Strejken i "Wipunen vedvarer. Losning og Lastning paa 8 finske Skibe i Leningrad fuldstændigt stoppet.

Samtidig har vi modtaget et Telegram fra Stockholm som melder at Charles Lindley, Formand for det svenske Havnearbejderforbund og Medlem af I T Fs Sekekutivkomite, i Værtan har befalet Havnearbejderne at losse den finske Damper "Barbo" (Skibet havde Kullast) Ganske vist har Lindley erklæret at finske Strejkebryderskibe skulde Boycotteres fra den 25 Maj, men hidindtil er alle finske Skibe blevet lossede og lastede i svenske Havne paa Lindleys Befaling.

Et andet Telegram meddeler I S H at ogsaa Havnearbejderne som er organiserede i det reformistiske Forbund i Finland, som jo i allerførste Række skulde staa solidarisk med de finske Søfolk, over hele Linien losser og laster die finske Strejkebryderskibe paa Befaling af I T Fs finske Sektion.

(Vend om)

FIGURE 28 The ITF supports Finnish fascism, the ISH the Finnish seamen; flyer published in Danish by the ISH Secretariat (ISH Press Release, 16 June 1933), attacking the ITF for blackening the harbour workers in Leningrad and their activities in support of the Finnish seamen's strike, filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

The Leningrad port workers finally joined the lines when they boycotted nine Finnish steamers on 19 June. This was breaking news for the communists. The underground Finnish Communist Party distributed leaflets criticising the union leadership for mismanagement of the strike, and called the revolutionary opposition to take control over the union. Shelley triumphed in a letter sent to the Finnish Seamen's and Stokers' Union. None of the ITF-affiliated harbour workers' unions had joined the boycott and only an ISH-led international boycott had any chance to be effective. However, Shelley refrained to inform that the Leningrad boycott had followed only when Finnish vessels were not anymore shipping annual Soviet exports to England. Only at this point, the Comintern, RILU and ISH received permission to start a campaign against the social democratic parties in Scandinavia, the Finnish union, and the ITF, accusing them to support blacklegging.[52]

The Finnish strike continued for the next months but ended in a bitter defeat in late August when union leaders capitulated and accepted the offer of the shipowners. The ISH Secretariat turned the defeat into victory: The opposition within the union was believed to be stronger than ever before. The opposition had even managed to organise protest meetings at the end of the strike, and an extraordinary union congress had been called for December 1933.[53]

2.3 *Latvia*

Latvia was one of the minor shipping countries in Europe. Here, too, the shipowners had responded to the economic depression by lowering wages, which generated discontent among the crews on Latvian vessels. Both the illegal Latvian Communist Party as well as the Interclubs did their best to promote the opposition within the Latvian Seamen's Union. In April 1933, the communists published an appeal to the Latvian seamen, calling them to prepare for strike actions. Ship committees were subsequently established on board 45 vessels.[54]

ECCI decided that Finnish seamen were to start their in Leningrad after the strike had started in Finnish, British and Dutch harbours. Moreover, the Finnish seamen were to be told that the call of the 'reformist' union leaders to also start the strike in Leningrad was doomed to be the wrong tactic, as the 'reformist' unions in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands would not back it. The decision to start the strike in Leningrad had to be approved by the local authorities in the town, the ECCI ruled. See §7 Zur Frage des Streiks der finnischen Seeleute, Protokoll (B) Nr. 308 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol. Sekr. EKKI vom 27.4.1933, 495/4/242, 6, RGASPI.

52 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 363–367.

53 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 372–376.

54 S. Levitans, "Nelegālā komunistiskā prese cīņā par strādnieku šķiras ikdienas prasībām buržuāziskajā Latvijā (1920–1940)," *Zinātniskie raksti* 40, no. 3 (1961): 27–28.

Not much is known about the oppositions' preparations although it seems likely that Ernst Lambert (alias L. Avotin) and the Copenhagen Interclub was involved in an early stage, perhaps even being the mastermind of the strike. In May 1933, the Baltic section issued an appeal to the ISH sections about the impending strike. Lambert met Shelley in Copenhagen for a meeting on 10 June, outlining strike tactics. Lambert proposed that the ISH would send a telegram in the name of the central strike committee to all Latvian vessels and declare a general strike. Shelley was against the plan and noted that a central strike committee had not yet been established. Instead, he suggested applying gradual tactics: When the first Latvian ship arrived in Copenhagen, the functionaries of the Interclub were to induce the crews to start a strike. The first attempt on 14 June ended in a total fiasco – the crew of a Latvian steamer remained on board and called off the strike when the captain threatened to have them all arrested. Shelley changed tactics the next day when the SS *Kaupo* arrived. This time, the crew left the ship when they started their strike and Shelley sent telegrams in the name of the striking crews to Riga and Rotterdam, urging other vessels to join the strike.[55]

Nothing happened in Latvia. Discouraged by the silence, Lambert wanted to call off the strike. Shelley opposed as he had received three batches containing leaflets printed at the Leningrad Interclub. The leaflets had been printed well in advance, calling for international support for the Latvian seamen who were claimed to have started their strike on 15 June! The date testifies its prefabrication – the strike only started when the *Kaupo* returned to Latvia, igniting the strike in Riga and Liepaja (Libau).[56]

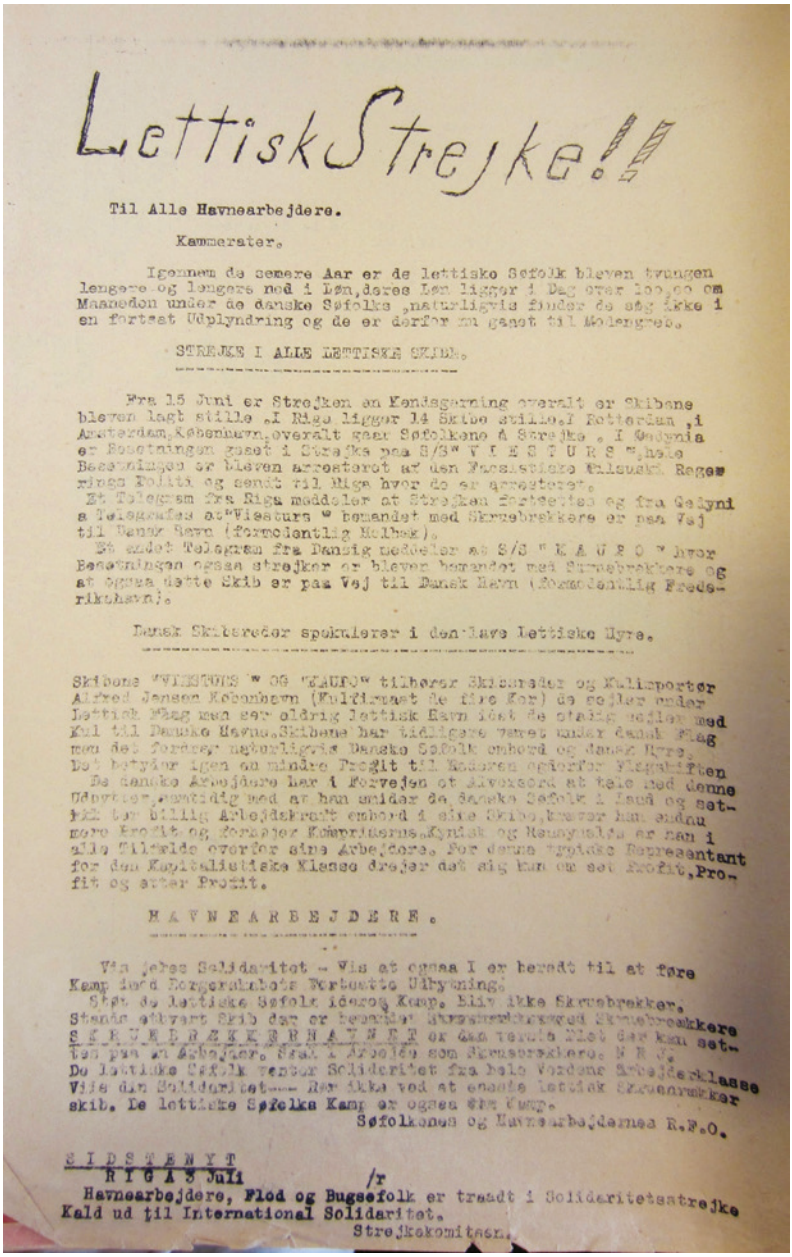
Most Latvian merchant vessels eventually joined the strike. The ISH Secretariat orchestrated the international campaign in support of the strike, and boycotts were, among others, organised by the Interclubs in Copenhagen, Rotterdam, and Stockholm, see Figure 29. The implementation of the strike tactics proved relatively easy as the opposition controlled the central strike committee in Latvia, while Lambert coordinated the activities of the ISH Baltic section from Rotterdam. The harbour workers in Riga and Liepaja, in turn, joined the strike front.[57] Even in Leningrad, the German consulate reported, had the Russian harbour workers joined the boycott and refused to unload two Latvian freighters.[58] This time, for sure, it looked as if the ISH and the opposition would be victorious in a national strike.

55 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 367–368.

56 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 368.

57 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 369–371.

58 Deutsches Generalkonsulat Leningrad: Streik lettischer Seeleute im Hafen von Leningrad, 17.6.1933, filed in RAV Botschaft Moskau 81, PAAA.



Lettisk Strejke!!

Til Alle Havnearbejdere.

Kammerater.

Igennem de sidste Aar er de lettiske Søfolk blevet tvungen længere og længere ned i Løn,deres Løn ligger i Dag over 100,00 om Maaneden under de danske Søfolks ,naturligvis finder de sig ikke i en forøget Udplyndring og de er derfor nu gaaet til Modangreb.

STREJKE I ALLE LETTISKE SKIBE.

Fra 15 Juni er Strejken en Kendsgerning overalt er Skibene blevet lagt stille ,I Riga ligger 14 Skibe stille.I Rotterdam ,i Amsterdam,København,overalt gaar Søfolkene i Strejke . I Gdynia er Besætningen gaaet i Strejke paa S/S" V I E S T U R S ",hele Besætningen er blevet arresteret af den Fascistiske Polsk Regeringes Politi og sendt til Riga hvor de er arresteret.
Et Telegram fra Riga meddeler at Strejken forøgelses og fra Gdynia a Telegrafes at"Viesturs " bemandet med Strejkebrækkere er paa Vej til Dansk Havn (formodentlig Holbæk).
Et andet Telegram fra Danzig meddeler at S/S " K L A U S " hvor Besætningen ogsaa strejker er blevet bemandet med Strejkebrækkere og at ogsaa dette Skib er paa Vej til Dansk Havn (formodentlig Frederikshavn).

Dansk Skibsreder spekulerer i den lave lettiske Løn.

Skibene "VIESTURS " OG "KLAUS" tilhører Skibsreder og Kulimporter Alfred Jensen København (Fuldmagt de fire Kar) de sejler under lettisk Flag men ser aldrig lettisk Havn idet de stadig sejler med Kul til Danske Havne.Skibene har tidligere været under dansk Flag men det førtes naturligvis Danske Søfolk ombord og dansk Løn. Det betyder igen en mindre Profit til Rederen og derfor Flagskiftet
De danske Arbejdere har i Forvejen et Overenskomst at hele med denne Udnyttelse ,samtidig med at han smider de danske Søfolk i land og sætter en billig Arbejdskraft ombord i sine Skibe,kræver han endnu mere Profit og forøger Konkurrence.Kynisk og Kendsgerning er nu i alle Tilfælde overfor sine Arbejdere. For denne tyske Repræsentant for den Kapitalistiske Klasse drejer det sig kun om sit Profit,Profit og atter Profit.

H A V N E A R B E J D E R E .

Vis jeres Solidaritet - Vis at ogsaa I er beredt til at føre Kamp imod Rederforbots Forbudte Udbytning.
Støt de lettiske Søfolk i deres Kamp. Bliv ikke Skrubrækkere.
Standse ethvert Skib der er besejlet Skrubrækkere.
S K R U E B R Æ K K E R N E I H A V N E T er den største Fare der kan sættes paa en Arbejder. Skal i Arbejde som Skrubrækkere. N E J .
De lettiske Søfolk venter Solidaritet fra hele Verdens Arbejderklasse Vis din Solidaritet— Kør ikke ved at ensidig lettisk Skrubrækker skib. De lettiske Søfolks Kamp er ogsaa Eders Kamp.
Søfolkenes og Havnearbejdernes R.F.O.

S I D S T E N Y T
R I G A 8 Juli /r
Havnearbejdere, Flod og Bugsefolk er traadt i Solidaritetsstrejke
Kald ud til International Solidaritet.
Strejkekomitéen.

FIGURE 29 Calling the Danish harbour workers to support the Latvian seamen's strike; flyer published by the "Strike Committee" in Danish calling for the harbour workers in Copenhagen to express their solidarity with the Latvian seamen, filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

The high hopes almost fulfilled in Latvia. The strike ended in a partial victory as wages were increased. However, all the other demands were turned down. Still, the most important accomplishment was the replacement of the old 'reformist' union leadership by members of the opposition. The next target of the ISH Secretariat was to consolidate the position of the opposition in Finland and Latvia as well as to further propaganda work in the Baltic region. This mission was to be directed by Ernst Lambert who relocated to Copenhagen in October 1933.[59]

2.4 *Ireland*

The push of the ISH Secretariat into Ireland was part of its plans to revitalise the SMM. Shelley outlined these plans to John Mahon, a leading functionary of the Minority Movement, in mid-April 1933. Mahon had informed Shelley about a forthcoming meeting of the SMM at the end of the month where comrade Wincott was to be nominated as the new leader of the organisation. Shelley agreed to this, and suggested the nomination of a 'National Working Secretariat' as well as to include comrades Alec Robson, Pat Murphy, A. Cole and a certain comrade Gania to the leadership of the SMM. Robson was to lead operations in the Tyneside, Cole in Liverpool, and Murphy those in Ireland. If Murphy was prevented from moving to Ireland, then he was to be sent to Cardiff to reconstruct "our group," Shelley ordered. The task of Gania was the reorganisation of the Indian Seamen's Union in London. In addition, the SMM branches in Liverpool, London and the Tyneside were induced to establish Interclubs, *The Seafarer* was to resume publication, and Robson, Murphy and Cole alongside "a delegate from the Glasgow Dockers' Union" were to attend the planned European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress in Copenhagen.[60]

The idea of sending Pat Murphy to Ireland was not farfetched, reasoned Shelley: "In Ireland there are the best possibilities for building up a mass movement amongst the seamen. From the experience gathered in our Interclubs we know that the Irish seamen on board the ships are very easy to approach."[61] However, for reasons not known, Murphy's transfer to Ireland was postponed

59 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 372. However, the Latvian strike was to have consequences in Moscow as the ECCI was not pleased with its outcome and dismissed two members of the 'Baltic committee for seamen', see § 8 Über den Streik der lettischen Seeleute, Protokoll (B) Nr. 320 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI vom 27.6.1933, 495/4/251, 6, RGASPI. The 'Baltic committee for seamen' was perhaps the unit who monitored the strike from Leningrad?

60 Shelley to Mahon, [Copenhagen] 19.4.1933, 534/6/20, 4–5, RGASPI.

61 Shelley to Mahon, [Copenhagen] 19.4.1933, 534/6/20, 4, RGASPI.

until June 1933 when he received new instructions from the ISH Secretariat. He was to proceed to Ireland "at once" as representative of the ISH, not the SMM, the order stated. His mission was to establish contacts with the Communist Party of Ireland, and to issue a joint leaflet containing a protest against British and Irish NUS bureaucrats and the ITF as well as to call for the creation of action committees. Another leaflet was to be issued in the name of an "Action Committee of Irish seamen." This committee was yet another attempt by the ISH to cast a smokescreen on its intervention as it was a group "which you [Murphy] in cooperation with the comrades from the Irish Party must let seamen elect." Their leaflet, in turn, was to contain the following demands: No wage cuts, 8-hour working day, full crews, and action committees on board the vessels. Most importantly, however, Murphy was to lay the foundation of red seamen's union in Ireland.[62]

Murphy's operations in Ireland were planned to unleash a strike of the Irish seamen in June 1933. Nevertheless, the plans of the ISH Secretariat backfired almost immediately. Receiving Murphy's strike-leaflets, the ISH Secretariat sent a stiff reminder, and urged him to change the wordings of the slogans and demands of his propaganda. Probably remembering the fatal turn of the Swedish strike, the ISH Secretariat forbade him to publish the slogan "Death to traitors (strike breakers)" unless meetings of unemployment seamen themselves had decided to do so. Murphy was ordered to focus on "mass mobilisation from below," and to organise strike picketing, to prevent strike-breakers from getting on board, and to haul them from ships but not to shout: "Death to scabs!" Finally, reflecting the strategic outlines discussed by ISH Executive Committee in Paris in early June (see Section 4 in this chapter), Murphy was informed that his slogan "No payments to the NUS" was wrong. Instead, it should be replaced by slogans such as "Strike committees and strike decisions of the crew on board", and "Mass pickets on all ships, before the dock gates, the shipping offices, the shipping company's offices and NUS bureaus!"[63]

The news from Ireland remained disappointing and Shelley sent a stiff reminder to the Central Committee of the CPGB in late June, criticising Murphy, Cole and Robson for "opportunist, ultra-left mistakes" in their drafting of the Irish pamphlet and in their preparation for the strike of the Irish seamen.[64] As

62 [ISH Secretariat] to "Dear Comrade Murphy," [Copenhagen] 17.6.1933, 534/6/20, 10, RGASPI.

63 Murphy to Jensen, 28.6.1933, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA; [ISH Secretariat] to "Dear Comrade Murphy," [Copenhagen] 29.6.1933, 534/6/20, 14–15, RGASPI.

64 Shelley to the Central Committee of the CPGB, [Copenhagen] 30.6.1933, 534/6/20, 16–17, RGASPI.

there had been no further news from either Murphy or Cole, Shelley turned a few weeks later to the Minority Movement and urged them to take precautions to prevent the Irish "reformists" to sign an agreement and end the strike. Besides, although the ISH was still in favour of forming a new independent revolutionary Irish union, the Minority Movement was urged not to push for it, as the Copenhagen secretariat had not been able to draft a constitution for such a union.[65] The most important task of the Minority Movement, Shelley underlined, was to "accelerate solidarity actions in aid of the Irish seamen."[66]

Further deviations from the ISH masterplan followed. Irish and Scottish seamen went on strike in July, an Irish "anti-communist and anti-capitalist" seamen's union was established.[67] Pat Murphy appeared at a meeting in Dublin as the representative of the Minority Movement and the Communist Party, which resulted in another stiff reminder from Shelley. Do not come out as a communist, Shelley reminded; instead, Murphy should participate as an Irish seamen and work among the seamen in order to win their confidence by correct proposals "without raising any question of communism or of affiliation to the ISH." Instead, Shelley directed Murphy to impel the comrades in Liverpool to organise a 'solidarity committee' in support of the Irish strike.[68]

Worse was to come. Comrade 'Walter' (whom I have not been able to identify) notified that he had received Shelley's dispatch from late June (regarding the Irish union) and informed him that the comrades agreed to all questions except one, namely the attitude towards the new union. In fact, there was total disagreement. In contrast to Shelley, the comrades at the Minority Movement headquarters in London backed the idea of supporting the new union. Echoing Irish nationalist sentiments, comrade 'Walter' issued an Irish nationalist anti-colonial declaration to Shelley:

> The struggle for Independence of the Irish trade union movement is an integral part of the struggle for national independence and therefore we can't agree with the line of your letter on this question. Of course we understand the Irish Government and the Irish reformists will seek to get an Irish Union which they can control in the interest of Irish Capitalism. But our reply to this is not to remain in the N.U.S. but to fight

65 Shelley to Com-Fraction of the NMM, [Copenhagen] 10.7.1933, 534/6/20, 20, RGASPI.

66 Shelley to "Comrade Walter," [Copenhagen] 11.7.1933, 534/5/236, 91, RGASPI.

67 Aileen O'Caroll & Don Bennett, *The Dublin Docker: Working Lives of Dublin's Deep-Sea Port* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2017).

68 [ISH Secretariat] to Pat Murphy, [Copenhagen] 13.7.1933, 534/6/20, 22, RGASPI.

for a democratically controlled Irish Union and to organise revolutionary trade union work inside the union.[69]

The Irish strike ended in a debacle. The comrades in Copenhagen were disappointed but wanted to turn the defeat into the starting-point for the mobilisation of the revolutionary trade union opposition among Irish seamen. Resembling the masterplan for the opposition in the Danish and Swedish unions to conquer the unions at their next national congresses, the ISH Secretariat directed the Minority Movement to issue a leaflet claiming that the Irish seamen were swindled by the leaders ("traitors") of their union. The leaflet was to signal the start of a campaign to establish a new revolutionary seamen's union. As in Denmark and Sweden, the leaflet was not to be published in the name of the Minority Movement but signed by "a group of Irish adherents of the ISH" and to appear in Dublin. To make sure that the intended leaflet had the right wording, the ISH Secretariat enclosed a draft version of it.[70]

3 Joining the Proletarian Anti-fascist Front

Anti-fascism had constituted an integral part of communist political rhetoric since the 1920s. Initially, the attack was directed against organisations and regimes with a reactionary and ultra-nationalist agenda but after the adoption of the 'Class-against-Class'-doctrine, social democratic parties and socialist labour union leaders were denounced as traitors of the working class and branded as 'social fascists'. The Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933 added an international perspective in communist anti-fascism: Whereas earlier appeals had warned the working class of the lure of fasicsm in general terms, the anti-fascist struggle against the Nazi regime in Germany was to be an international task. This change of policy was to be manifested through a unified front of the international working class and was made public in an appeal by the ECCI in early March 1933, itself being a half-hearted reply to an earlier apeal by the Labour and Socialist International in mid-February. The content of the Comintern's verbal onslaught did not change – the social democratic parties had paved the way for the Nazis and it was the Labour and Socialist

69 Walter to Shelley, London 5.7.1933, 534/5/236, 90, RGASPI.

70 [ISH Secretariat] to Com-Fraction of NMM, [Copenhagen] 20.7.1933, 534/6/20, 24–25, RGASPI.

International that had changed its course while the communists stood for anti-fascist activism.[71]

Anti-fascism consituted the third pillar of the ISH. Similar to other communist organisations, anti-fascism was initially only used by the ISH and its sections in political rhetorics, not as a guiding line for international activities. Thus, the anti-communist laws in Finland, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and the attack of the Guomindang government in China against the Chinese Soviet were all branded as fascist.[72] For example, the Danish radical maritime transport workers were called to demonstrate on May First against war and fascism and in support of the Soviet Union.[73] However, apart from the 'Hands off China'-campaign, the ISH Secretariat never called for international campaign against – in communist vocabulary – fascist regimes, such as Finland, Estonia or Poland. The activities against Nazi and fascist regimes was regarded to be the task of the national sections, i.e., the Einheitsverband and the exiled/illegal FILM.[74] Instead, the ISH Secretariat's main focus was on the anti-war campaign against Japan as late as February 1933.[75] In Denmark, for example, the Danish section (re-)published an appeal by the ISH Secretariat to form 'vigilance and action committees' to stop the shipment of military equipment to the Far East.[76]

The ISH Secretariat was to change its stance towards anti-fascist campaigns after Reichstag fire in February 1933 and the suppression of the KPD in March 1933. The consequences were troublesome for the ISH – its biggest and best organised section was declared illegal, its organisation had been smashed by the Nazis and was about to set up an illegal underground apparatus and organisation. Anti-fascist action was put on the frontline and became a fight for survival for the ISH Secretariat in Copenhagen. The objectives of its anti-fascist campaign were mainly to support the illegal German section, namely

71 "Dok. 311. Aufruf des Exekutivkomitees der Komintern zur Einheitsfront gegen faschistische Diktatur," in *Deutschland, Russland, Komintern. II. Dokumente* (*1918–1943*), eds. Hermann Weber, Jakov Drabkin, Bernhard H. Bayerlein (Berlin/München/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 960–962.

72 "Fascist-Kup i Finland," *Lanternen* 5, no. 5 (July 1930): 1.

73 "Ud til Demonstration 1. Maj mod Krigen, mot Fascismen, for Sovjet-Unionen," *Lanternen* 6, no. 4 (April 1931): 1–2.

74 "Die ISH der Wasserkante an das Wassertransportproletariat: Kämpft in der antifascistischen Aktion gegen den Mordterror der Nazis, für Arbeit und Brot!," *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, 16.7.1932.

75 ISH appeal in Swedish, January 1933, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 294 Pärm VIII C 3, SNA; ISH-Antikriegsarbeit Feb 1933, R1507/2085, 86–91, BArchB.

76 "Kriget raser igen i Østen," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 1 (1933): 1; "Krigen i Østen," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 3 (1933): 3.

to publish and disseminate illegal publications in Germany as well as to call for an international boycott of the Nazi flag. While the former task was to be coordinated in cooperation with the Danish section, the latter one was to be organised through local anti-fascist action committees to be established by each of the ISH national sections.

3.1 *Calling for a European Anti-Fascist Workers' Congress*

One of Adolf Shelley's first measures taken after his arrival in Copenhagen was to address a letter to all sections of the ISH. Apart from urging the sections to establish an anti-fascist front against Nazi Germany, he informed them about the decision of the ISH leadership to join the call to summon a Europan Anti-fascist Workers' Congress. Most importantly, he impelled the sections to put the fight against fascism on top of their agenda. All sections were instructed to set up so-called 'anti-fascist action committees' on board the ships and in the harbours. International solidarity with the German proletariat was to be the new slogan and to be articulated at every meeting. Finally, he informed the sections that the ISH office at Rothesoodstrasse had been closed by the police and Albert Walter jailed.[77]

While the Danish comrades and the Danish section cooperated closely with the ISH Secretariat and immediately issued instructions for the formation of an anti-fascist front in Denmark,[78] anti-fascist agitation was slow to take momentum in Sweden. This was due to the Swedish section being engaged in the national seamen's strike from early to late March 1933. A first appeal for the formation of 'anti-fascist action committees' on board Swedish ships and in the harbours was only issued in early April. Anti-fascist agitation had been late, the appeal noted and, not surprisingly, directed at the same time a stiff critique against the social democratic party and labour movement: "Experience from every fascist country tells us that fascism has come into power with the help of the treacherous social democracy."[79] In contrast, the Swedish seamens' union and its journal were remarkably silent on this issue in 1933.[80]

77 A. Shelley to all sections of the ISH and Interclubs, Copenhagen 8.3.1933, KV 2/2158: 6a, TNA. Copies of Shelley's letter are also found in the archives of the Swedish secret service (Säkerhetspolisen, SÄPO) and Finnish state police (Etsivä keskuspoliisi, EK). Similar information was provided by Richard Jensen to the Swedish section, see Richard Jensen to "riksledningen för Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO," Copenhagen 8.3.1933, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 118 III B3 s 101 111D, 189, SNA.

78 "Slut enhetsfronten mod fascismen!," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 3 (1933): 1.

79 "Bilda antifascistiska kommittéer i varje fartyg och hamn," *Ny Dag* 11.4.1933.

80 See further Marin Estvall, *Sjöfart på stormigt hav: Sjömannen och Svensk Sjöfarts tidning inför den nazistiska utmaningen 1932–1945* (Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2009).

The ISH Secretariat published its first appeal for the formation of an anti-fascist front in mid-March. One week later, the Danish section published a translation of the call. The main tenor of the call was the urge to move from agitation to open action: Seamen and harbour worker all over the globe were to form a united front in support for the German proletariat. Moreover, the maritime workers were invited to send delegates to the planned European Anti-fascist Workers' Conference which was to convene in Prague in April 1933.[81]

The appeal for organising an anti-fascist worker's congress had initially been issued by the revolutionary trade union oppositions in Germany, Italy, and Poland and was soon backed by the CGTU in France and the Czechoslovakian revolutionary trade union opposition. The ISH decided to participate in the preparation of the congress in early March – perhaps one of the last decisions taken by the ISH leadership before exiled from Hamburg. Besides protesting against the situation in Germany, the congress was projected to address the conditions of the proletariat under 'fascist' dictatorship in general, including the situation in Finland, Greece, Latvia, and Yugoslavia.[82] Reference was even made to the Swedish seamen's strike in the call for the Prague congress: "[The Hitler dictatorship] is offering its services to the entire Western bourgeoisie as the gendarme of international finance-capital. It sends Nazi strike breakers to Sweden to stab the striking seamen there in the back and arrests the crews of Swedish ships on strike at Hamburg […]."[83] Shelley and Pechmann, perhaps also Jensen, belonged to the organisational bureau of the European congress whose secretariat was located in Copenhagen.[84] However, the Czechoslovakian government was quick in prohibiting the congress to convene in Prague, the organisers, in turn, decided to relocate the congress to Copenhagen and hold it on 4 and 5 June, see Figure 30.[85]

81 *Anti-Fascist Front: ISH News Items* No. 9. (Copenhagen, 18.3.1933), HO 144/20657, TNA; *Anti-fascistisk Front – ISH:s Meddelelseblad* nr 9 (23.3.1933), ABA.

82 "Für einen antifaschistischen Arbeiterkongreβ Europas!," *Internationale Gewerkschafts-Pressekorrespondenz* 3, no. 17 (4.3.1933), 458/9/84, 147, RGASPI; ISH: Einberufung eines Antifaschistischen Arbeiterkongresses Europas, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 118 III B3 s 101 111D, 175, SNA.

83 "European Fighting Congress Against Fascism," *Inprecor* 13, no. 16 (7.4.1933): 363.

84 *Rundschau* Nr. 7, 31.3.1933, quoted in Sanomalehdistökatsaus No 10, EK 25.4.1933, AMP I L Kansainvälinen kommunistinen toiminta (sekalaisia), 2404, EK-VALPO, FNA.

85 "European Workers' Anti-Fascist Congress to be held at Whitsun in Copenhagen," *Inprecor 13*, no. 18 (21.4.1933): 400. See further Kasper Braskén, " 'Make Scandinavia a bulwark against fascism!': Hitler's seizure of power and the transnational anti-fascist movement in the Nordic countries," in *Anti-fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities and Radical Internationalism*, eds. Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey and David Featherstone (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 102.

FIGURE 30 Establishing a united front against the Swastika flag, poster and call for the European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress, published in the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* XII, no. 20 (1933): 355. The text urges the workers to join hands and tear down the Swastika flag.

Concurrent with the call for the European congress, the Norwegian anti-war committee issued an appeal for a Scandinavian congress against fascism to take place in Copenhagen on 15 April.[86] Jensen, at least, was one of the organisers of the Scandinavian Anti-fascist Congress.[87] The Scandinavian Anti-fascist Congress, which the ISH leadership most likely attended, also made reference to the Swedish strike as an example of the fascist tendencies in the Scandinavian countries: "The police attacks on the striking seamen in Sweden and the treachery of the reformist leaders are clear proof that the fascist attacks of the bourgeoisie are intensifying and that the social-democratic leaders are fully supporting the reactionary offensive against the living and working conditions of the workers." In Finland, "the bourgeois has already established its fascist dictatorship."[88]

April was declared as the 'Anti-fascist Fighting Month' (Kampfmonat gegen Faschismus) while May First was projected as an anti-fascist day of protest (Sturmtag der antifaschistischen Einheitsfront gegen Faschismus und Kapitaloffensive).[89] However, the Danish government dashed the hopes of the organisers of the European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress. As all demonstrations as well as indoor meetings of the planned congress were prohibited, the organisers decided to move the congress to Paris, and merged it with the planned congress of the World Committee against the Imperialist War (the so-called Amsterdam movement), set for early June.[90] Jensen, Pechmann and Shelley left Copenhagen in late-May as they planned to hold a meeting in Paris with members of the ISH Executive Committee who were expected to participate at the congress.[91] Previous to his departure, Shelley had responded positively to the invitation of the International Red Aid to particpate in organising the forthcoming 'Solidarity Week in Aid of the Victims of German Fascism'. The ISH Secretariat, Shelley assured, would render its utmost support to the organisers, and urged them to be in contact with the national ISH sections and the Interclubs.[92] He further authored a call to the sections and Interclubs,

86 "Create a Powerful Anti-Fascist Fighting Front," *Inprecor* 13, no. 14 (24.3.1933): 329. The Scandinavian anti-fascist conference, held in Copenhagen 14–17 April 1933 mustered almost 400 participants, see Braskén, " 'Make Scandinavia a bulwark against fascism!' "

87 Minutes of the British secret police about a meeting in Copenhagen on 14 April 1933, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA.

88 "Appeal of the Scandinavian Workers' Conference," *Inprecor* 13, no. 20 (5.5.1933): 447.

89 "Create a Powerful Anti-Fascist Fighting Front," *Inprecor* 13, no. 14 (24.3.1933): 329.

90 "Anti-Fascist Workers' Congress in Paris, June 4," *Inprecor* 13, no. 23 (26.5.1933): 509; Braskén, "'Make Scandinavia a bulwark against fascism!'," 103.

91 Minutes, British security services, 17.6.1933, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA.

92 Shelley to Exekutivkommittee der Internationalen Roten Hilfe (MOPR), Copenhagen 24.5.1933, 539/2/577, 1, RGASPI.

notifying them that the ISH had decided to join the camgaign and to organise its own solidarity week in Europe from 17 to 25 June, in "America" and the Far East from 15 to 25 July. All sections and Interclubs were urged to grant "a certain – if small – sum" to the Solidarity Fund of the International Red Aid, and to start their preparations for the campaign.[93]

3.2 *Boycott the Nazi Flag!*

The ISH changed its anti-fascist tactis in April 1933 when the German authorities ordered the German merchant fleet to carry the Nazi flag. The ISH Secretariat issued a directive to all its sections, calling for an global boycott of Nazi symbols and urged harbour workers to refuse to unload and load ships that carried the Swastika flag. The rallies on May First were followed in Norway by demonstrations in front of the German consulats in Fredrikstad, Kristiansand, Haugesund and Narvik. In Denmark, the German consulats in Esbjerg and Kolding were attacked by the demonstrators who forcefully removed the Swastika flag.[94] The Swedish bourgeoise press was relieved: No incidences had occurred in Sweden.[95]

The first attacks against German ships took place in Antwerp on 9 and 10 May, soon followed by incidences in Oslo and Bergen, Gothenburg and Stockholm, Copenhagen and Esbjerg, Constanța and Galați (Romania), Barcelona, Le Havre, and New York, see Map 3. The most effective actions occurred in harbours that were in control by ISH sections, namely Seville, Dunkirk and Marseille, where harbour workers boarded German ships, cut the Swastika flag, beat the captain, refused to unload the cargo, and demonstrated by singing the International and shouting 'Red front!'. The news about the successful boycotts was used by the communist press in Sweden to spur for similar actions in Swedish ports.[96] The Danish Havnearbejdernes RFO circulated flyers in the port of Copenhagen urging the harbour workers to boycott German ships, see Figure 31, while the RFO-journal *Rød Kurs* incited the dockers to follow the example of their mates in Antwerp, Oslo and Rotterdam.[97]

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93 Secretariat of the ISH, Solidarity Week in Aid of the Victims of German Fascism, enclosed in Shelley's letter to the Exekutiv-Kommittee der Internationalen Roten Hilfe (MOPR), Copenhagen 26.5.1933, 539/2/577, 5, RGASPI.

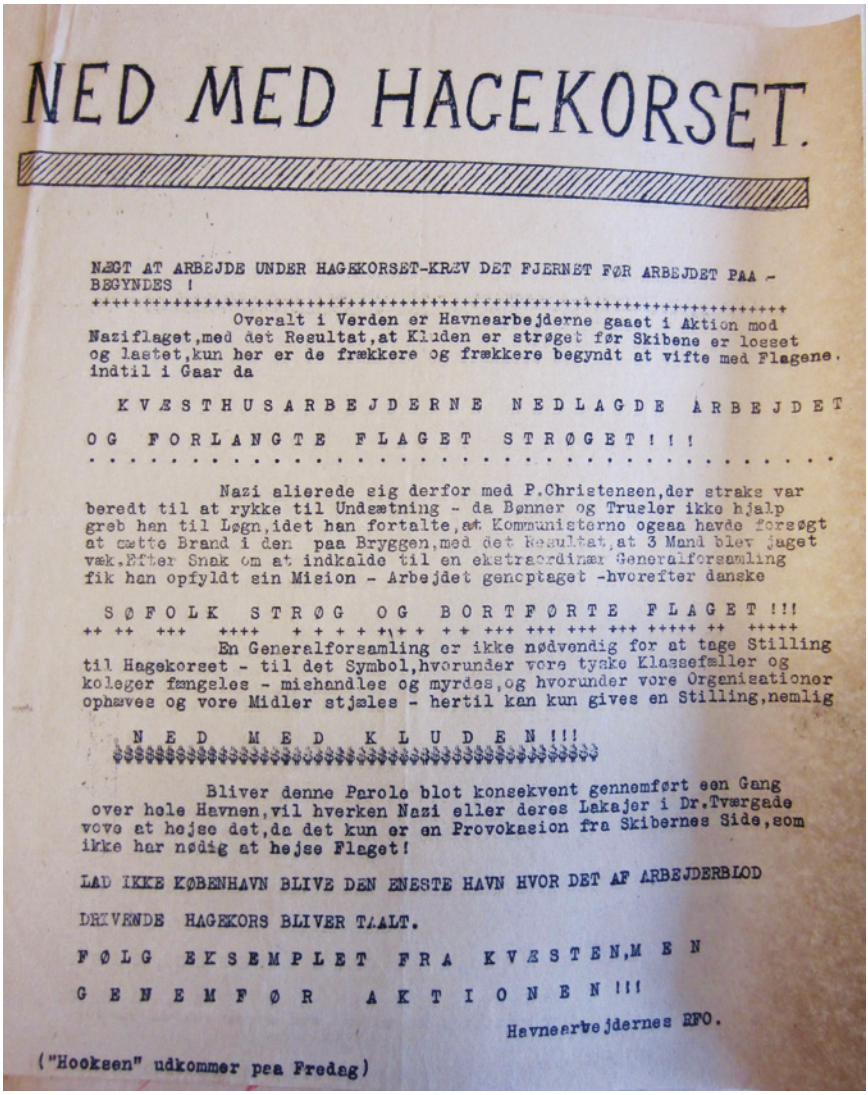
94 "Hakkorsflaggan nedriven," *Norrskensflamman* 2.5.1933.

95 "Hakkorsflaggan nagel i ögat på demonstranter," *Svenska Dagbladet* 2.5.1933.

96 "Hamnarbetarnas aktioner mot hakekorsflaggan," *Ny Dag* 28.6.1933.

97 (Flyger issued by Havnearbejdernes RFO), Ned med hagekorset, Richard Jensen Arkiv, ABA; (Flyer issued by Søfolkens og Havnearbejdernes RFO), Til Alle Danske Havnearbejdere, Richard Jensen Arkiv, ABA; "Havnaarbejderne nægter at arbejde under hagekorset," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 6 (1933): 2.

MAP 3 The campaign against the Swastika flag, 1933–1934



NED MED HAGEKORSET.

NÆGT AT ARBEJDE UNDER HAGEKORSET-KRÆV DET FJERNET FØR ARBEJDET PAA - BEGYNDES !

Overalt i Verden er Havnearbejderne gaaet i Aktion mod Naziflaget,med det Resultat,at Kluden er strøget før Skibene er losset og lastet,kun her er de frækkere og frækkere begyndt at vifte med Flagene. indtil i Gaar da

KVÆSTHUSARBEJDERNE NEDLAGDE ARBEJDET OG FORLANGTE FLAGET STRØGET!!!

Nazi alierede sig derfor med P.Christensen,der straks var beredt til at rykke til Undsætning - da Bønner og Trusler ikke hjalp greb han til Løgn,idet han fortalte,at Kommunisterne ogsaa havde forsøgt at sætte Brand i den paa Bryggen,med det Resultat,at 3 Mand blev jaget væk.Efter Snak om at indkalde til en ekstraordinær Generalforsamling fik han opfyldt sin Mission - Arbejdet genoptaget -hvorefter danske

SØFOLK STRØG OG BORTFØRTE FLAGET !!!

En Generalforsamling er ikke nødvendig for at tage Stilling til Hagekorset - til det Symbol,hvorunder vore tyske Klassefæller og kolleger fængsles - mishandles og myrdes,og hvorunder vore Organisationer ophæves og vore Midler stjæles - hertil kan kun gives en Stilling,nemlig

NED MED KLUDEN!!!

Bliver denne Parole blot konsekvent gennemført een Gang over hele Havnen,vil hverken Nazi eller deres Lakajer i Dr.Tværgade vove at hejse det,da det kun er en Provokasion fra Skibernes Side,som ikke har nødig at hejse Flaget!

LAD IKKE KØBENHAVN BLIVE DEN ENESTE HAVN HVOR DET AF ARBEJDERBLOD DRYPPENDE HAGEKORS BLIVER TAALT.

FØLG EKSEMPLET FRA KVÆSTEN,MEN GENNEMFØR AKTIONEN!!!

Havnearbejdernes RFO.

("Hooksen" udkommer paa Fredag)

FIGURE 31 Down with the Swastika!, "Ned med kluden" (tear down the rag), do not let Copenhagen emerge as the only harbour where the with workers' blood soaked Nazi flag is endured. Flyer published by the Danish RFO section for harbour workers, filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

The actions against German ships in Scandinavian ports gained momentum in late May. Unemployed seamen boarded a German ship in Copenhagen and teared down the Swastika flag; in another action they tried to distribute anti-fascist literature to the German crew.[98] A common form of boycott by harbour workers was to refuse to unload a German freighter as long as it carried the Swastika flag, as was the case in Odense, Oslo, Trondheim and Örnsköldsvik.[99] In Oslo, the boycott of the dockers to unload the German freighter *Holstenthor* extended over several days. At first, the local section of the Norwegian dockers union tried to counteract the "spontaneous" blockade of the German ship by sending a new group to unload the ship but when the Swastika flag was raised again, the Norwegian workers refused to continue their work and the German crew members had to finish the job.[100] At this stage, the boycotts against the Nazi flag in several Swedish (Sundsvall, Gothenburg) and European (Antwerp, Rotterdam, Barcelona, L'Orient, Gdynia and Groningen) ports were hailed in the Norwegian press.[101] The German embassy in Norway reacted by sending an official inquiry to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and asked to receive detalied reports about the attacks;[102] in fact, such activities were in line with similar reports about the ativities of German political refugees in Norway which were sent to the German police authorities.[103]

Instigated by the ISH and the revolutionary trade union opposition, the Danish dockers, in turn, protested in fornt of the German consulates in Aalborg, Horsen and Kolding as well as boycotted German vessels in Aalborg, Copenhagen, Nakskov, Nørresundsby, Odense and Svendborg.[104] When the dockers in Aabenraa in southern Jutland refused to unload a German freighter in August, the incidence resulted into a diplomatic crisis between Germany and Denmark.[105] Consequently, the Danish the secret police opened

98 "Københavnske søfolk i aktion mod hagekorset," and "Søfolk i København demonstrerer mod hagekorset!," *Udkiggen: Organ for søens og havnens arbejdere* 1 (1933), ABA.

99 "Hamnarbetare i strejk mot hakekorsbåt," *Ny Dag* 28.6.1933; "Strejk mot hakekorset i Örnsköldsvik," *Ny Dag* 29.6.1933; "Hakekorsflaggan skars ner i Sundsvall," *Ny Dag* 7.7.1933; Borgersrud, Wollweber-organisasjonen, 78.

100 "Holstenthor blev utlosset," *Arbeiderbladet* 27.5.1933; "Anti-Hitler Utbrudd," *Nordisk Tidene* 30.5.1933.

101 "Hakekorsflagge tåles icke. Havnebyens arbeidere virer det ned," *Arbeiderbladet* 10.6.1933.

102 Borgersrud, Wollweber-organisasjonen, 77–78; Lars Borgersrud, *Die Wollweber-Organisation und Norwegen* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2001): 43; Knut Dørum, "De rødes kamp mot fascismen i Norge i 1930-årene," *Historisk tidskrift för Finland* 1 (2017): 75–113.

103 Arnt-Erik Selliaas, "Politisk politi i Norge 1914 – 1937," *Tidskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie* 2 (1982): 53–92.

104 "Hagekorsflaget," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 7 (1933): 1.

105 F. Mikkelsen, "Denmark 1914–1939: Popular Struggle in the Age of Mass Politics," in *Popular Struggle and Democracy in Scandinavia 1700 – Present*, ed. S. Nyzell (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 90.

investigations about the activities of the ISH and its section in Denmark in 1933.[106] Members of the Danish parliament, Folketinget, called for a ban on the Danish Communist Party. The Danish police raided offices of communist organisations and started a surveillance of "subversive" subjects. In addition, the Danish secret police, the Special Branch D of the Copenhagen police, opened up for colose cooperation with the German state police Gestapo.[107]

The ISH boycott was received with mixed feelings by the social democratic and socialist union leadership. In Norway, the boycotts were declared to be breeches in the industrial peace.[108] The Swedish union leaders were equally negative; in their mind, the boycott was nothing else than an unauthorised 'wild' strike and an illegal protest. The negative stance by the union leadership resulted in mutual smearing in union and opposition journals. The communist journal *Hamn- och sjöproletären* accused the union leaders to prevent actions against a German freighter in Kalmar;[109] the union journal *Sjömannen*, on the other hand, sarcastically noted that the "successful" boycott of the German oil tanker *Kah-Mal* in Stockholm was not surprising as it was carried out by communist harbour workers employed by the Soviet-owned Naftasyndikatet.[110] Meanwhile, the lowering of the Swastika flag onboard the German steamer *Gertrud* in the port of Gothenburg was not commented in the communist press, especially as it turned out that the action had been carried out by the editor of the *Sjömannen*, Waltenin Eliasson.[111] Also, when the communist press fiercly criticised the Swedish government for granting permission for a shipment of Swedish-made Bofors ammunition to Germany,[112] the social democrats and socialists sarcastically countered that there existed no boycott of German ships and no attacks on the Swastika flag in Soviet ports, see Figure 32.[113] What type of united front were the communists calling

106 Torben Jano, "På sporet af kommunisterne. Politiets overvågning af DKP 1932–1941," *Arbeiderhistorie* 1 (1996): 7, 11.

107 Tortzen, *En sømand han maa lide*, 226.

108 "Holstenthor blev utlosset," *Arbeiderbladet* 27.5.1933.

109 *Hamn- och Sjöproletären* 3, no. 7 (1933): 6; "Strejk mot hakekorset i Örnsköldsvik," *Ny Dag* 29.6.1933.

110 "Hakekorsflaggan fick 'stryka' flagg!," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 3, no. 9 (1933): 2; "Sillénaktion med 'positivt' resultat. Den första i Sverige," *Sjömannen* 3, no. 10 (1933): 401.

111 "Tysklands 'kränkta ära' ingenting värd. Hakkorsflagga nedhalad från tysk båt i Göteborg," *Sjömannen* 3, no. 9 (1933): 363–364; "Svensk halade ned flaggan i Göteborg," *Aftonbladet* 14.9.1933.

112 "Reformistisk bojkott," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 3, no. 11 (1933): 8.

113 "Om kryssningar, konsekvens och hakkorsflaggor," *Sjömannen* 3, no. 11 (1933): 415. Similar description in the memoirs of Nisse Lätt, *En svensk anarkist berättar* (1993), 8, https://www.sac.se/content/download/3896/27769/file/nisse.pdf (checked 20.2.2018).

FIGURE 32 The united front in reality; or the dilemma of the communists – while protesting against the ITF call for a boycott on German export trade, Hitler signed a new trade agreement with Stalin. Caricature titled "Klasskämpar" (Class warriors), accusing the communists for hypocracy, published in *Sjömannen* 2, no. 10 (1933): 402. *Ny Dag* was the organ of the Communist Party of Sweden.

for when they refused to participate in a joint demonstration against Germany by declaring that the Soviet Union had not yet cut its trade relations with Germany?[114] Was the communist call for international proletarian solidarity nothing else but hypocrisy: The Soviet Union was to be excluded from the boycott and Soviet export –to a large extent being transported on German vessels – was not to be blocked?[115]

Similar critical remarks were raised in the Norwegian social democratic press. While harbour workers throughout Europe were protesting against the Nazi flag, no calls for boycotts were raised in the Soviet Union. German freighters carrying the Swastika flag were unloaded in Leningrad and in Odessa, and there were no protests against the Nazi flag on May First outside the German consulates.[116]

114 "Aktuellt," *Sjömannen* 2, no. 5 (1935): 158–159.

115 "Skönt samförstånd," *Sjömannen* 2, no. 11 (1933): 412; "Hakkorset i Leningrad," *Sjömannen* 2, no. 12 (1933): 477–478.

116 "Hakekorsflagge tåles icke. Havnebyens arbeidere virer det ned," *Arbeiderbladet* 10.6.1933.

The communist press never responded to the accusations. The ISH leadership was worried about the fate of the campaign; hitherto it had been successful, and the ISH Secretariat noted 97 actions against German ships. However, activities had diminished in July after the onslaught by the Scandinavian transport unions on the inactivities in Soviet harbours where the Nazi flag was never molested and the harbour workers made no attempts to bring them down. The leadership of the ITF sarcastically commented that they were just following the example of the Russian harbour workers. Shelley and Wollweber therefore urged Moscow to impel the Russian transport workers federation to adhere to the ISH boycott.[117] All in vain, the ISH leadership never received an answer from Moscow and the Nazi flag was never boycotted in Soviet ports.

Nevertheless, the campaign continued in Scandinavian ports, and local boycots by harbour workers occurred in Aabenraa, Holmsund and Follafoss in early August.[118] At this point, the campaign had also spread to Iceland. In August 1933, demonstrators attacked the German consulat in Siglufjörður and tore down the Nazi flag while German vessels flying the Swastika flag were boycotted in Reykjavik in September and November 1933.[119] The action in Reykjavik in November was, together with similar activities in French, Belgian and Dutch ports, hailed by the illegal Finnish section as signs of a successful campaign.[120] Similar protests against the Swastika flag were also instigated by local groups of longshoremen in Tacoma, Washington State, Chorpus Christie, Texas, and San Pedro, California,[121] although these were never commented upon in the Scandianvian press or addressed by the ISH. At this point, the boycott had faded away in the Scandinavian ports, in large parts due to the negative response it had received in the (social democratic/socialist-controlled) union press.[122] The last actions in Scandinavian were perhaps the boycotts of

117 Report from Ad[olf Shelley], Schmidt [Wollweber], Rudolf [Adolf Deter], Copenhagen 15.7.1933, 534/5/236, 79, RGASPI. For the identification of Schmidt and Rudolf, see Section 4 in this chapter.

118 "Hagekorsstrejkerne," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 7 (1933): 3; "Fascistflaggan ströks i Djupvik. Strejk mot hakkorsflaggan i Norge," *Norrskensflamman*, 11.8.1933.

119 Ragnheidur Kristjánsdóttir and Pontus Järvstad, "Anti-fascist discourses, practices and confrontations in 1930s Iceland," in *Anti-fascism in the Nordic Countries: New Perspectives, Comparisons and Transnational Connections*, eds. Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey and Johan A. Lundin (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 31.

120 "Protesteerauksia hakaristilippua vastaan," *Kipinä* [Winter 1933/34], SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 3, SNA.

121 The protests in the USA were noted in *The Waterfront Worker* 1, no. 13 (October 31, 1933: Tacoma and Chorpus Christie), and 2, no. 3 (January 29, 1934: San Pedro).

122 "Fackförbundsmötet mot lossning av tyska fartyg," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 4, no. 1 (1934): 14.

the German steamers *Baltic* in Odense, Denmark,[123] and *Gudrun* in Horsens, Norway, in March 1934.[124]

The weak spot of the ISH campaign was that it had never been designed as a boycott on German foreign trade. Although the Labour and Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions had issued an appeal for an international boycott on Nazi Germany in August 1933, the Comintern had dismissed the proposal and instead called for an intensification of the boycott of German ships and the protest against the Swastika flag.[125] Even more strange was the official policy of the Soviet Union towards Nazi Germany and the renewal of the trade treaty between the two countries. For the Swedish maritime trade union leadership, this was nothing else but a revealing the hypocricy behind the communist calls for a unified anti-fascist front.[126]

The extensity and impact of the ISH campaign against the Swastika flag in Scandinavian ports is difficult to assess. Although the actions were visible and effective demonstrations, the boycotts never stopped the unloading or loading of a German ship. As a short-lived protest they were effectful but as the campaign had no political effect,[127] the ISH leadership changed its approach by the end of the year and merged the 'Boycott the Swastika Flag'-campaign with its activities in support of Soviet China. The new campaign was to be designed as a general anti-fascist demonstration. The ISH Secretariat published a eleven-page pamphlett to ignite the 'Hands off China'-campaign and, and called for a boycott of the transport of war equipment to Japan in December 1933.[128] Rethorically, the fight against fascism turned into a national affair. For example, in Sweden the RFO-organ *Storm* depicted blackleggin and excesses of captains against crew members as 'fascism', and declared actions taken by union leadership against any strikers to demonstrate their support as

123 "Tysk søfolk losser i Odense," *Rød Kurs* 4, no. 3 (1934): 2.

124 "Aktionen gegen das Hakenkreuz," *Rote Wacht* 4, no. 1 (March–April 1934): 13. The *Rote Wacht* also noted actions against the Swastika flag in Strasbourg, France, as well as in Alicante and Ibiza, Spain.

125 "Dok. 333. Resolutionsentwurf der Komintern zur Ablehnung eines internationalen Boykotts gegen Hitler-Deutschland, Moskau 11.8.1933," in *Deutschland, Russland, Komintern II. Dokumente*, 1039–1042.

126 E. Victor, "Bojkotten mot Hitler-land och Kominterns mystiska inställning till bojkotten," *Sjömannen* 2, no. 10 (November 1933): 382; Dørum, "De rødes kamp mot fascismen i Norge," 101.

127 Ernst Wollweber, Lebenserinnerungen: 184, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY 4327/10, BArchB.

128 ISH, Forsvar Sovjet-Kina – stop al Transport af krigsmaterial, no date [ca. December 1933], SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 118 III B3 s 101 111D, 99, SNA.

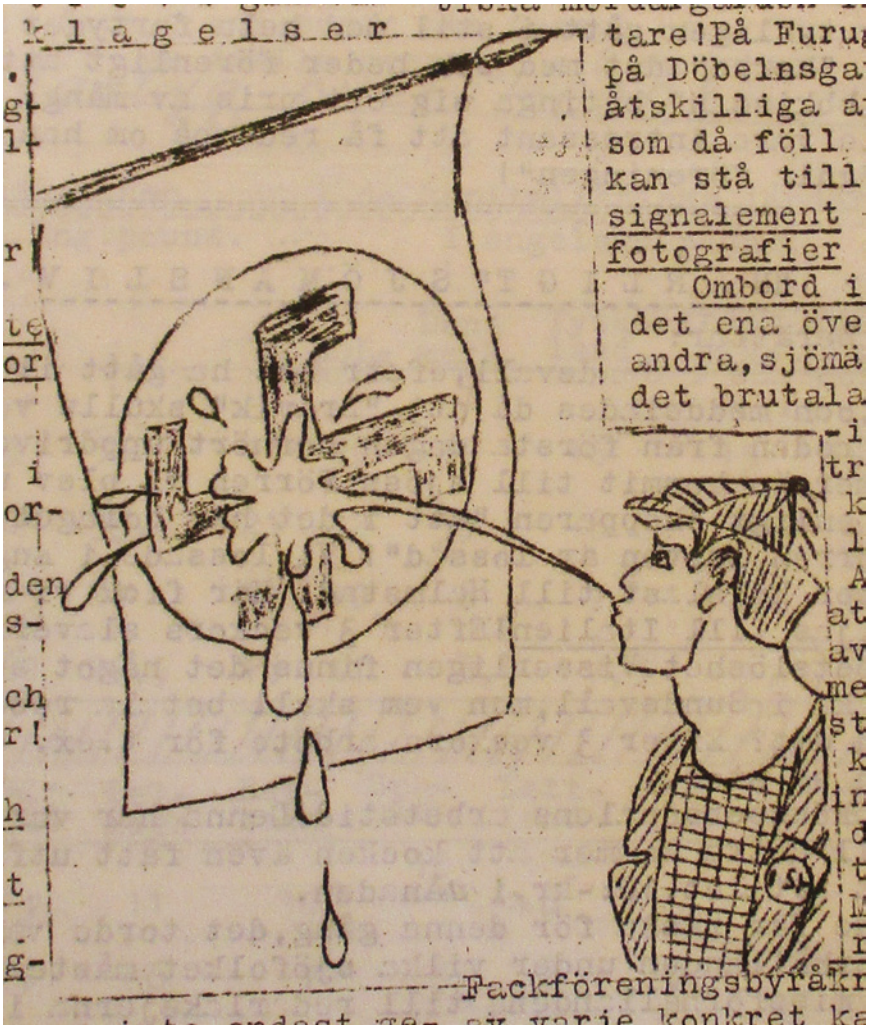


FIGURE 33 Keep up the actions against the brown murder pest. Call to continue the protest campaign against Nazi Germany, published in the mimeographed Swedish RFO-publication *Storm* 1 (1934): 1–2, filed in SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 3, SNA. Caricatures 'mariner spitting at the Swastika flag' were also published in the Finnish mimeographed VAO-publcation *Kipinä* (1934).

'fascism', see Figure 33.[129] The ISH Executive Committee declared in a statement in June 1934 that the rallies on the forthcoming August First were to

129 "Fortsätt aktionen! Mot den bruna mordpesten," *Storm: Organ för Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO* 1 (1934): 2, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 3, SNA.

be demonstrations agaist the imperial war and fascism.[130] The social democratic/socialist-controlled unions were not impressed and declared that the actions taken by the revolutionary opposition had paved the way for fascism and nazism.[131]

3.3 *Disseminating Illegal Literature into Germany*

The second form of anti-Nazi activities by the ISH was the dissemination of illegal publications to underground cells and groups in Germany. This was organised through special liaison persons at the Interclubs. Key nodes in the dissemination network were Antwerp, Copenhagen, and Rotterdam.[132] Interclubs in those harbours with frequent visits of German ships received additional staff members to boost agitation and propaganda work in German.[133] The Interclub in Copenhagen emerged as the operative centre of the clanestine anti-Nazi activites when Ernst Wollweber, the leader of the Einheitsverband, moved to Denmark in August 1933 (see Section 4 in this chapter).[134] Wollweber had established an underground apparatus of the Einheitsverband in Germany and its units outside Germany, the so-called active groups (Aktivgruppe), were led by Herman Knüfken in Rotterdam, Franz Pietrzak in Antwerp, and Hermine Krebs in Copenhagen. The objective of the active groups was to establish contacts with the underground groups in Germany, and to provide them with the illegal bulletins of the Einheitsverband printed outside Germany, including the *Scheinwerfer* (produced in Antwerp), the *Wellenbercher* (produced in Rotterdam) and the *Sturm* and *Hart Backbord* (produced in Copenhagen), see Figure 34. However, as the German police and secret service had smashed most of the underground apparatus by the end of 1933, the activities of the active groups were restricted to disseminate the journal *Rote Wacht* to Germany.[135]

The Interclubs in Sweden, too, emerged as hubs for anti-Nazi agitation among German crews. "Send us illegal newspapers, we shall distribute them to German seamen," the functionaries of the Interclub in Stugsund urged.[136]

130 [Brochure] Appel fra I.S.H.'s Eksekutivkomite – Lad 1. August blive en kampdag imod den imperialistiske Krig og den blodige Fascisme! (Rotterdam, 10.6.1934), Richard Jensen Arkiv, ABA.

131 "R.F.I.:s roll i Frankrike snart utspelad," *Sjömannen* 3, no. 7 (1934): 225–226.

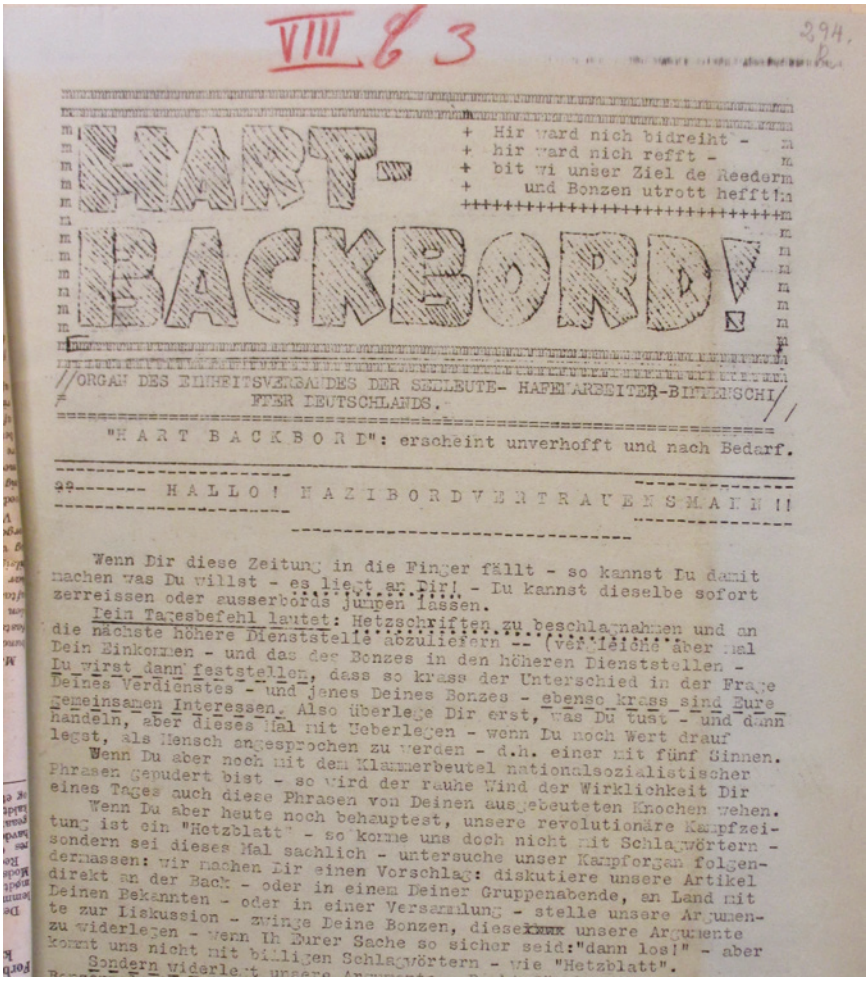
132 Ernst Wollweber, Lebenserinnerungen: 184, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY 4327/10, BarchB; Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Hansestadt Hamburg*, 670; Reinalda, *The International Transportworkers Federation*, 210.

133 Leo [Pechmann], Report, 8.6.1933, 534/4/460, 141, RGASPI.

134 Eiber, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, 591.

135 Nelles, *Widerstand und Solidarität*, 200.

136 Note from Interklubben i Stugsund to "kamrater," 4.9.1933, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 4, 333, SNA.


VIII C 3

394.

HART-BACKBORD!

+ Hir ward nich bidreiht -
+ hir ward nich refft -
+ bit wi unser Ziel de Reederm
+ und Bonzen utrott hefft!

ORGAN DES EINHEITSVERBANDES DER SEELEUTE- HAFENARBEITER-BINNENSCHIFFER DEUTSCHLANDS.

"HART BACKBORD": erscheint unverhofft und nach Bedarf.

?? HALLO! NAZIBORDVERTRAUENSMANN !!

Wenn Dir diese Zeitung in die Finger fällt - so kannst Du damit machen was Du willst - es liegt an Dir! - Du kannst dieselbe sofort zerreissen oder ausserbords jumpen lassen.

Dein Tagesbefehl lautet: Hetzschriften zu beschlagnahmen und an die nächste höhere Dienststelle abzuliefern -- (vielleicht aber mal Dein Einkommen - und das des Bonzen in den höheren Dienststellen - Du wirst dann feststellen, dass so krass der Unterschied in der Frage Deines Verdienstes - und jenes Deines Bonzes - ebenso krass sind Eure gemeinsamen Interessen. Also überlege Dir erst, was Du tust - und dann handeln, aber dieses Mal mit Ueberlegen - wenn Du noch Wert drauf legst, als Mensch angesprochen zu werden - d.h. einer mit fünf Sinnen.

Wenn Du aber noch mit dem Klammerbeutel nationalsozialistischer Phrasen gepudert bist - so wird der rauhe Wind der Wirklichkeit Dir eines Tages auch diese Phrasen von Deinen ausgebeuteten Knochen wehen.

Wenn Du aber heute noch behauptest, unsere revolutionäre Kampfzeitung ist ein "Hetzblatt" - so komme uns doch nicht mit Schlagwörtern - sondern sei dieses Mal sachlich - untersuche unser Kampforgan folgendermassen: wir machen Dir einen Vorschlag: diskutiere unsere Artikel direkt an der Bach - oder in einem Deiner Gruppenabende, an Land mit Deinen Bekannten - oder in einer Versammlung - stelle unsere Argumente zur Diskussion - zwinge Deine Bonzen, diese unsere Argumente zu widerlegen - wenn Ihr Eurer Sache so sicher seid:"dann los!" - aber kommt uns nicht mit billigen Schlagwörtern - wie "Hetzblatt".

Sondern widerlegt unsere

FIGURE 34 *Hart-Backbord!*, one of the illegal publications published by the exile units of the Einheitsverband in Copenhagen. Filed in SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 2, SNA.

Seemingly, the activities had proven effective, or at least the records of distributed illegal literature indicated this to be the case.[137] Not surprisingly, the German authorities regarded the distribution of communist propaganda via the Interclubs in Sweden as highly problematic. In 1935, the German security service identified the Interclubs in Belgium, the Netherlands and the

137 Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO to "Riksledningen," Stockholm 3.1.1934, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 4, 325, SNA.

Scandinavian countries to be the nodes for the dissemination of illegal litterature.[138] As a consequence, German captains were instructed to block communist infiltration by prohibiting the crew to visit the Interclubs and surveilling mariners who did not belong to the Nazi Party.[139]

Not surprisingly, the German auhtorities also regarded the Soviet Interclubs to be dangerous hotspots, as is evident in the communications from the German consulates in Leningrad and Odessa. The Soviet authorities turned a blind eye to the agitation and propaganda efforts of the Interclubs, claiming that they had no authority to intervene.[140] The German Section of the Leningrad Interclub was notorious for its activities, especially the dissemiantion of the monthly magazin *Der Rote Seemann*.[141]

3.4 *Free Albert Walter!*

Apart from the actions against the Swastika flag and the dissemination of illegal litterature to Germany, the ISH launched an international campaign in support of Albert Walter. Together with the German communist leadership and several thousand party members, Walter had been jailed by the German authorities in their clampdown on the German Party in early March 1933.[142]

Albert Walter evolved as the martyr of the ISH who was tortured by the Nazis in the Fulsbüttel concentration camp outside Hamburg, see Figure 35.[143]

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138 Behrends, Preussische Geheime Staatspolizei an die Leitung der Auslandsorganisation der Nazionalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei, Berlin 20.8.1936, 458/9/135, 56, RGASPI; Eiber, Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Hansestadt Hamburg, 677–678.

139 An das SD-Hauptamt des RFSS, Betr. Marxistische Propaganda auf deutschen Schiffen, 19.6.1935 and 17.8.1935, 458/9/135, 9, 15–20, RGASPI.

140 Deutsches Konsulat Odessa, Kommunistische Agitation des hiesigen Seemannsklubs, Odessa 23.8.1933, R 31.759_Bd_44, PAAA; Deutsches Konsulat Odessa, Verstärkte Agitation u. Propaganda unter deutschen Seeleuten, Odessa 4.9.1934, RAV Botschaft Moskau 196, PAAA.

141 Deutsches Generalkonsulat Leningrad, Kommunistische Propaganda des Internationalen Seemannsklubs, 25.2.1936, R 31.763_Bd 48, PAAA. The report includes references to complaints in 1933, 1934 and 1935. The magazine Der Rote Seemann was a double-page publication enclosed in the monthly newspaper *Rote Zeitung*, published in Leningrad from 1933 to 1936.

142 "Amnesti för de dömda sjömännen och alla politiska fångar," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 3, no. 7 (1933): 5. The most visible international campaign had been orchestrated by the International Red Aid in support of Ernst Thälmann, Ernst Torgler and Georgi Dimitrov, the latter two being accused for the Reichstag fire. When the court in Leipzig planned to give its verdict in Dimitrov's case on 21 September, the communist press called for an international protest day when the Swastika flag was to be cut down everywhere, see "Den 21 september skall hakkorsflaggorna ned," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 3, no. 9 (1933): 1.

143 "Albert Walter mishandles af nazisterne!," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 10 (1933): 1; "Albert Walter torteras," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 3, no. 11 (1933): 3; Abschrift eines kommunistischen

ALBERT WALTER
mishandles af Nazisterne!

Fra vore Forbindelser i Hamburg er indløbet Meddelelse om, at I. S. H.s Generalsekretær, *Alb. Walter*, mishandles paa det frygteligste i Fængslet.

Albert Walter er kendt overalt, hvor der findes revolutionære Sø- og Havnearbejdere. Ogsaa de danske Søtransportarbejdere kender ham; han har talt ved flere Møder her, hvor han blev uhyre populær, fordi han forstod at tale til Søtransportens Folk, forstod at drage frem netop det, der laa dem mest paa Hjerte. *Albert Walter* er selv en gammel Sømand, som i 22 Aar har sejlet *before the mast* og kender derfor Søens Forhold ud og ind.

Albert Walter har fra sin Ungdom taget ivrig Del i den revolutionære Bevægelse, og især efter at han for 2 Aar siden blev valgt som Generalsekretær for I. S. H. har han været i Stand til at gøre sin Indsats; overalt, hvor Søtransportarbejderne stod i Kamp mod deres Udbyttere, ligegyldigt i hvilket Land eller paa hvilket Kontinent, var han parat til at organisere Søtransportproletariatets internationale Solidaritet og til at bekæmpe de reformistiske Fagforeningsledereres forræderiske Politik og deres Samarbejde med Udbytterne, overalt satte han ind af al sin Kraft for at forbedre Søtransportarbejdernes Kaar.

Derfor var *Albert Walter* blandt de første, som efter den nazistiske Omvæltning i Tyskland blev arresteret; siden Begyndelsen af Marts har han siddet i Fuhlsbüttel Fængsel i Hamburg.

Hver Nat morer de brune Banditter sig med at pine snart en, snart en anden af Fangerne; vore Kammerater i Hamburg

skriver, at de frygter ikke alene for *Albert Walters* Sundhed, men ogsaa for hans Liv.

Vi har før omtalt, hvorledes Sømanden *August Lütgens*, som var Medlem af „Einheitsverband" (I. S. H.s tyske Sektion), blev henrettet i Altona sammen med 3 andre Kammerater; nu faar vi Meddelelse om, at ogsaa *Jan Templin*, en af Førerne for Havnearbejderne i Hamburg og ligeledes Medlem af „Einheitsverband", har begaaet „Selvmord" i Fængslet. Den officielle Dødsattest lyder paa „Selvmord ved Hængning", men i Virkeligheden fremviste Liget af *Jan Templin* blaa, blodunderløbne Pletter i Tindingen, Ansigtet og paa hele Legemet; hans Lig blev da ogsaa, efter højere Ordre, omgaaende brændt „paa Statens Bekostning" for at udslette Sporene af Mordet.

Det er Hitler-Regeringen og Hamburgs Myndigheder, der er ansvarlig for disse Mishandlinger af vore Kammerater.

(Fortsættes Side 4).

FIGURE 35 Albert Walter is tortured by the Nazis, front-page article published in *Rød Kurs* 3 (October 1933): 1.

The ISH Secretariat issued a resolution demanding his immediate release, and launched an international campaign through its bulletin and the journals of its sections.[144] When legally possible, the campaign was taken to the streets. For example, two huge banderols covered the exterior of the Interclub in Stockholm during autumn 1933, demanding the freedom of Torgler and other 'anti-fascists' and blaming the Nazis for the Reichtag fire. By the end of the year, however, the Swedish police removed them regardless the protests of the Interclub.[145]

An unexpected turn of events silenced the campaign for Albert Walter in October 1933. The German security service responded to the accusations of the ISH by publishing a statement by Walter. In his declaration, Walter denied being tortured in jail and being refused to interact with other prisoners. On the contrary, Walter claimed that the Nazis had treated him well. To further strengthen their argument, the German authorities published two pictures of Walter stripped to the waist and with no signs of any (outer) marks of torture.[146]

Walter's denial put an end to the accusation of the ISH. The ambition of the ISH to elevate Albert Walter among the leading victims of Nazi terror backfired and it quietly terminated the campaign for his release. For reasons not known, the ISH Secretariat in Copenhagen decided not to declare Walter's denial to be a forgery and to step up its activities for Walter's release. Jensen wanted to send a letter to Edo Fimmen to step up the campaign for Walter's release but was ordered not to do so. Rather, a 'defence committee' (Verteidigungskomitee) was to be set up.[147] However, nothing came out of this plan either. Instead,

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Flugblattes aus Antwerpen. Albert Walter wird gefoltert! [ISH's flyer, dated Copenhagen 2.10.1933], 241-1 I_2904 Justizverwaltung I, Staatsarchiv Hamburg.

144 "Resolution för att Albert Walter friges (11.3.1933)," *Ny Dag* 13.11.1933; "Kräv Albert Walter fri!," *Storm: Organ för Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO* 1 (1934); "Albert Walter, Secretary ISH, has been arrested by Hitler's police," *Waterfront Worker* 1, no. 4 (April 1933); [ISH Secretariat to ISH sections] Betrifft: Europäische Konferenz der Wassertransportarbeiter, Antifa[…] Konferenz und Offene Erklärung der I.S.H., [stamp: 13.4.1933], 534/5/236, 42, RGASPI. The letter also includes a call for increased international solidarity actions for the striking seamen in Sweden, indicating that it was written in mid/late March.

145 "Polisövergrepp mot Interklubb," *Ny Dag* 22.12.1933.

146 A. Walter, Generalsekretär der International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, Erklärung zu dem vom Sekretariat der International of Seamen and Harbour Workers in Kopenhagen am 2. Oktober 1933 herausgegebenen Flugblatt mit der Überschrift: Albert Walter wird gefoltert!, Konzentrationslager Fuhlsbüttel, 24.10.1933, 241-1 I_2904 Justitzverwaltung I, Staatsarchiv Hamburg.

147 NN to "Werter Gen. Jensen," [Copenhagen?] 31.10.1933, 534/5/236, 125, RGASPI. The author of the letter is not indicated. It seems to have been written in Copenhagen, most likely by someone at the RILU Secretariat who was in the position to make decisions concerning international campaigns, namely Fritz Heckert or his replacement Adolf Deter.

the comrades in Copenhagen received further disturbing news about Walter at the end of the year, claiming that he had reached an agreement with the Nazis and was soon to be released from prison. At first, the ISH leadership dismissed the rumours as Nazi disinformation but when Walter witnessed at court against communists in spring 1934, their position slowly started to change.[148] After conducting further investigations about Walter, the ISH quietly removed Walter as ISH Secretary. An official or public declaration of his dismissal or his exclusion from the KPD was never published, see Chapter 9.

4 Comrade Schmidt and an Obscure Meeting in Paris

Walter's replacement was Comrade Schmidt. He was no less than Ernst Wollweber who had remained in Germany and was building up an underground apparatus for the Einheitsverband. Shelley had succeeded in establishing contact with Wollweber and the Einheitsverband in April through liaison persons on American, British, Danish and Norwegian vessels that called at German ports.[149]

Conflicting information exists about Wollweber's nomination and his transfer to Copenhagen. British intelligence sources claim that the RILU headquarters had nominated Wollweber in early May but he had declined to travel to Paris for a meeting with Shelley. The latter had then sent Georg

148 André [Adolf Deter] to "Lieber Freund," [Copenhagen] 16.5.1934, 534/5/241, 110, RGASPI. A German report from 1941 sheds some further light on Walter's "strange" behaviour in 1933. According to the report, Walter had been "in constant conflict" with the leadership of the KPD, especially the faction of party leader Ernst Thälmann. However, the party leadership could not remove him as Walter had high-ranking supporters in Moscow, among others Comintern leaders Osip A. Piatnitsky and Jacob Mirov-Abramov, and Jusefovich, the head of the Soviet Russian union of maritime transport workers. Furthermore, the report claims that Walter was a key liaison person of the Department for International Communications of the Comintern (OMS). For reasons not stated, the chief of the political police in Hamburg, Hermann Will, managed to reach a rapprochement with Walter, resulting in Walter's revelation of the M-group (special group for military work) in the Hamburg. Walter's cooperation, the report noted, resulted in the annihilation of at least 37 persons connected to the group. See Komintern. Schematisk uppställning av organisationen och dess underavdelningar, filed 20.12.1941, 14–15, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet IV A 2 – IV A 4, volym 169, SNA. The document is most likely a Swedish translation from an unidentified German report. On the OMS, see further Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *The "Special" World: Stalin's power apparatus and the Soviet system's secret structures of communication 1–2* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009).

149 Copy of letter from Shelley to Wollweber, Cross-Reference to original report dated 30.5.33, Ernst Wollweber personal file KV 2/3054, TNA.

Hegner to Hamburg to tell Wollweber to either follow orders and relocate to Copenhagen or to be dismissed.[150] Wollweber, in turn, presented a divergent version of the meeting with Hegner in his (unpublished) autobiography. According to him, Hegner only brought him the news about his nomination which had been approved by Lozovsky and the Central Committee of the KPD.[151]

It is likely that the British secret service misinterpreted the information from Copenhagen. Apart from its engagement in the various seamen's strikes in Northern Europe, the main objective of the ISH Secretariat was to impel the maritime transport workers to join the global anti-fascist front. Its focus was on propagating for the projected European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress as well as on orchestrating an international campaign in support of the Einheitsverband.[152] Eventually, the congress convened in early June 1933. Behind the curtains, Jensen, Pechmann and Shelley had a briefing with members of the ISH Executive Committee and the RILU Paris Bureau. Their meeting was not an *ex tempore* one but had been scheduled as a plenum of the enlarged Executive Committee already in late 1932.[153]

Not much is known about the meeting in Paris. According to a memorandum from late 1932, the ISH Executive Committee was to summon for a "enlarged bureau meeting" in Copenhagen in early January 1933 and, for a second time, in "May or June 1933." As the meeting in January meeting never materialised, one can assume that Shelley expected to meet the members of the "bureau" later in the year. At a meeting of the "enlarged Secretariat" in March, perhaps indicating that members of the RILU Copenhagen Bureau also participating, the decision was made to organise a 'European Conference of Water Transport Workers' (Europäische Konferenz der Wassertransportarbeiter) in conjunction with the projected European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress in Copenhagen. The agenda of the conference was to outline the concrete organisation of the fight against fascism, to discuss the activities during resent past strikes and their impact on future strike tactics and international solidarity campaigns in line with the ISH slogan 'Better wages and hires, full crews on board, full gangs in the harbours', as well as to outline future activities in the 'mass fight' against the increased danger of an 'imperialist war'. Planned for a minimum

150 Minutes 30.5.1933, 13.6.1933, 28.6.1933, Ernst Wollweber personal file KV 2/3054, TNA.

151 Wollweber, Lebenslauf, 179, NY 4327/10, BArchB.

152 ISH, Toldbodgade 16, Kopenhagen; Kopenhagen 26.3.1933: Erklärung des Sekretariats der ISH an die internationalen Wassertransportarbeiter und alle ihre Organisationen … zur jetzigen Lage, R1501/20224, 177–180, BArchB.

153 Walter to "Werte Genossen," Hamburg 2.12.1932, 534/5/231, 78, RGASPI.

of 71 delegates, the ISH Secretariat envisioned to gather delegations from the Baltic countries (3 members), Belgium (2), Denmark (10), England (6), France (6), the Danube countries (6), Germany (12), Greece (1), Holland (4), Italy (1), Norway (6), Poland and Danzig (3), Portugal (1), Spain (2), and Sweden (8), and sent instructions to the ISH sections and Interclubs to start a campaign for the conference. Most important, the ISH Secretariat underlined, the larger delegations were to include seamen above and under deck, harbour workers, and at least 30 percent should represent the youth; politically they were to be communists, social democrats and non-party members.[154]

The Danish authorities' prohibition to organise the European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress in Copenhagen spoilt the plans of the ISH Secretariat. Documentary sources are missing for the next phase, although it seems likely that the ISH Secretariat reactivated Plan B, and summoned the ISH Executive Committee for a meeting in conjunction with the European Anti-fascist Workers' Congress in Paris. A list of participants at the meeting in Paris has not (yet) been identified but it is likely that ISH members from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands attended the meeting, perhaps also someone from England. Neither is there any information on the agenda and decisions apart from Wollweber and a certain André Rudolph being confirmed as new members of the ISH Executive Committee.[155] However, there is a reference to the discussions in Shelley's report to the Commission on the seamen's question at the XIII Plenum of the ECCI in December 1933. According to him, the main agenda of the meeting was a reorientation of work among maritime transport workers. Analysing the successes and shortcomings of the ISH, the participants decided to shift the operational basis towards the opposition groups within ITF-affiliated unions. It seems that this plan was communicated to Moscow although communications to and from the RILU headquarters have not (yet) been confirmed. Nevertheless, indirect proof for such a communication is the fact that the plan was one of the main topics on the agenda in Moscow in December 1933 (see Section 5 in this chapter).[156]

Wollweber arrived at the ISH headquarters in mid-June but stayed only for one month and travelled via Antwerp to Hamburg to solidify the underground

154 Betrifft: Europäische Konferenz der Wassertransportarbeiter, Anti[...] Kongress und Offene Erklärung der ISH, no date [stamp: 13.4.1933], 534/5/236, 40, RGASPI.

155 Adolf [Shelley] and André [Adolf Deter] to Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro der RGI, 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 256, RGASPI.

156 Shelley's report on activities, in Erste Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 8–29, RGASPI; Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 11.12.1933, 495/171/315, RGASPI.

apparatus of the Einheitsverband.[157] Returned to Copenhagen in early August, he found the ISH Secretariat in a state of chaos …[158]

4.1 *Diminishing Funds and Dysfunctional Connections*

The chaotic situation at the ISH office in Copenhagen had mundane origins: A lack of money. Although Max Barek had managed to transfer the last batches of funding from Moscow to Copenhagen, the illegal status of the RILU units in Copenhagen and Paris nullified the use of direct bank transfers. Funds were instead directed by other means what sometimes proved complicated and time consuming. The financial troubles had started already in May when the transfer of funds from Moscow had been briefly interrupted. This affected both the ISH as well the RILU unit in Copenhagen, and Jensen had to beg for money from the Danish revolutionary opposition groups to cover Shelley's and Pechmann's expenses.[159] A new transfer in June brought a brief relief but funds started to dry up again in August, see Table 12.

The reduction of the ISH budget in August 1933 drastically reduced the capacity of the ISH Secretariat. Although information about the cuts are patchy and no explanation by the RILU headquarters have yet been identified, it is reasonable to assume that they were linked to the decisions of the ISH Executive Committee in June. It might even be an indication that Moscow was responding to the plan to reorient the operational basis of the ISH. The budgetary cuts can also be interpreted as Moscow's decision to initiate a total overhauling of work among maritime transport workers. Be as it may, the effect of the cuts had a detrimental impact on the capacities of the ISH Secretariat for future activities. The salaries of its secretaries were reduced while expenses for running the office had to be cut to a minimal. Worse, there were no funds to pay the instructors or to assist the Interclubs; the few extra funds were earmarked as support to the underground work of the Einheitsverband in Germany and the FILM in Italy.[160] The financial support to strikes had to be abolished totally. Jensen and Shelley were devastated – the personnel of the secretariat worked for ten to eleven hours and now they were forced to cut their already meagre salaries to a bare minimum![161]

157 Leo [Pechmann] to "Liebe Freunde," 19.6.1933, 534/4/460, 144, RGASPI.
158 Wollweber, Lebenserinnerung, 185, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY 4327/10, BArchB.
159 Minutes 14.7.1933, Richard Jensen personal file KV 2/2158, TNA.
160 ISH budget August 1933, 534/8/285, 18, 24, RGASPI.
161 R[ichard] J[ensen] and Ad[olf Shelley], Umstellung des ISH-Budgets, no date [ca. August 1933], 534/5/236, 81–85, RGASPI.

TABLE 12 ISH budget 1933–1934

Month	Sum USD	Sum French Fr
1933		
January	1,828	
February	1,828	
March	1,828	
April		29,995
May	[...]	[...]
June	1,800	
July	650	
August	650+645	
September	745	
[...]		
1934		
March		10,000
April		29,995
[...]		
September		10,320
October		10,320

SOURCE: ACCOUNTS IN 534/8/216, 375 (JAN–MAR 1933), 534/8/285, 7 (APR 1933); 534/4/461, 184 (JUN 1933); 534/4/461, 191 (JUL–AUG 1933); 534/4/461, 193 (SEP 1933); 534/4/494, 32 (MAR 1934); 534/4/494, 33 (APR 1934); 534/4/494, 48 (SEP 1934); 534/4/494, 67 (OCT 1934), RGASPI

Wollweber tried to find a solution to the financial crisis by travelling to Rotterdam. His plan was to ask the Dutch Party and the revolutionary opposition to provide financial assistance to the ISH Secretariat. However, the Dutch units themselves lacked funding and he had to return empty-handed.[162]

Poor international connections also constrained the capability of the ISH (Illegal and Legal) Secretariat to maintain its global network. Copenhagen was not a major hub for international shipping, and Jensen's clandestine network hardly replaced Albert Walter's on the German merchant fleet – Danish shipping was less global while German vessels were rigorously controlled by the Nazis. The transatlantic connections were cut almost totally as is indicated by a complaint sent by the MWIU to Jensen in November 1933: No instructions

162 S.I. Form 0.6. Extract from original report dated 1.9.33, Ernst Wollweber personal file KV 2/3054, TNA.

had been forthcoming from the ISH headquarters for the last six months.[163] Even worse, Shelley and Wollweber complained about their dysfunctional connections with Paris and Moscow – the comrades in Copenhagen had not received any brochures or any other printed material for months and none had therefore been sent to the Interclubs. Two years' work were in danger to collapse due to the lack of up-to-date propaganda material.[164]

Divergent opinion on the proper way to conduct anti-fascist work caused further constraints. Wollweber called for a flexible approach while Pechmann and Shelley stubbornly clung to the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine and rejected any cooperation with the social democrats.[165] The latest setback came when Wollweber's special emissary Richard Krebs, who had been sent to a clandestine mission to Hamburg, was arrested in November. "The conditions of work have become extremely difficult," Pechmann noted.[166]

4.2 *Enter André Rudolf and the Good News from Denmark*

Not all news was depressing or bad in 1933. Those originating from Denmark could even indicate that the ISH finally had achieved a major victory in its onslaught against the ITF. Although the revolutionary opposition in the Danish Seamen's Union failed to stave off the ambition of the union leadership to revoke the 1932 decision to cut the union's ties with the ITF and affiliate with the ISH, Jensen and his mates at the stokers' union succeeded in doing so. Georg Hegner presented a motion at the union congress in August 1933, blaming the Amsterdam International and the ITF for fighting against communism rather than combatting fascism and capitalism. The congress then accepted a resolution that ordered a new vote on leaving or remaining to be organised in December 1933. The outcome of the vote was an overwhelming victory for the communists – 1,014 voted

163 (Copy) Letter from the MWIU to Richard Jensen, no date, filed 22.XI.1933, 534/5/236, 126, RGASPI. In fact, it seems that the instructions sent by the ISH Secretariat to the MWIU in May 1933 were among its last trans-Atlantic engagements. Referring to the upcoming national convention of the MWIU, the ISH Secretariat announced its representative to leave for the USA "in two weeks," and impelled the MWIU to launch a campaign for a collective agreement and minimal wage as well as to start the preparation for a national unity conference. "At this conference a national action committee is to be elected," the instructions outlined. See further ISH to MWIU, Copenhagen 11.5.1933, 534/6/142, RGASPI. The representative, whoever it was, never departed and, it seems, connections between New York and Copenhagen had broken down.

164 Adolf [Shelley] and Schmidt [Wollweber] to "Liebe Freunde," [Copenhagen] 14.10.1933, 534/5/236, 120, RGASPI.

165 Wollweber, Lebenserinnerung, 175, 183–184, 186, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY 4327/10, BArchB.

166 Leo and Rudolf [Adolf Deter?] to "Liebe Freunde," 534/4/460, 239–240, RGASPI.

for leaving the ITF while only 377 voted for remaining. The Danish Stokers' Union was the only national union ever officially affiliated with the ISH.[167]

Positive news also came from France where the communist-controlled harbour workers' union, the Unitaire des ports, docks et beteliers intended to affiliate with the ISH.[168] Whether the union *de facto* did so is unclear; its position was discussed by the Commission on seamen's work in Moscow (see below), the minutes indicate that the affiliation had not been finalised.

Additional relief for the overburdened comrades at the ISH headquarters was the arrival of Adolf Deter (1900–1969) in Copenhagen. He belonged to the top leadership of the German RGO and had remained in Germany after the Nazi clampdown on the communists. The German Party together with the RILU decided in late autumn 1933 to detach Deter to Copenhagen. His main task was to replace Fritz Heckert as head of the (underground and illegal) RILU Copenhagen Bureau; Heckert, in turn, moved to Moscow. In addition, Deter was assigned to the ISH headquarters and nominated to the ISH Executive as the representative of the Einheitsverband.[169] Deter used the alias André Rudolf when working for the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat.[170]

5 Moscow Calling: The Commission on Seamen's Work

Adolf Shelley went to Moscow to participate at the XIII Plenum of the ECCI in December 1933.[171] Here, he attended a special commission on work among maritime transport workers, termed internally as the Commission on seamen's work. Interestingly, the Commission did not discuss the German question or the conditions of the Einheitsverband. Instead, the main topics on the agenda were 1) the plan to focus on (revolutionary) opposition groups within ITF-affiliated unions, and 2) work in Western Europe and among colonial seamen.

167 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!,* 315–316.

168 "Ny sektion af ISH," *Rød Kurs* 3, no. 10 (1933): 2.

169 Deter's position as representative of the Einheitsverband is indicated on an article by a certain R. A., Vertreter des EV im Exekutivkomitee der ISH, "Der Einheitsverband für die Herstellung der Gewerkschaftseinheit," *Rote Wacht* 4, no. 1 (March–April 1934): 3. The initials 'R. A.' correspond to Deter's pseudonym André Rudolf.

170 Lebenslauf Gustav Adolf Deter, Berlin 1.6.1949, 495/205/188, 63–64, RGASPI.

171 Documents written at the end of 1933 reveal that Wollweber remained in Copenhagen, among others the instructions for the ISH Secretariat and addressed (in type-writing) to Shelley but corrected in handwriting: Wollweber, see M. Henri [Luigi Polano] to "das Sekretariat der ISH zu den Händen des Gen. ~~Shelley~~ Schmidt, 27.10.1933, 534/5/236, 123, RGASPI.

5.1 *The End of the British and Colonial Section*

Adolf Shelley opened the discussions at the Commission on seamen's work by presenting a lengthy overview of the prospects and drawbacks of the ISH and its sections. Typically for such overviews, Shelley's presentation started with an optimistic general proclamation. Tremendous progress had been made, he declared, especially in the Scandinavian countries where the opposition was claimed to dominate the unions as well as in Finland where "our representative" was expected to lead the opposition to a victory at the extra ordinary congress of the Finnish Seamen's Union.[172] Similar positive news where heard from the (unknown) Danish member of the Commission.[173] Sven Linderot, the Swedish member in the Commission, even argued that it was only after the establishment of the ISH that the revolutionary opposition had been formed, while Fritz Heckert highlighted that positive results had been achieved in those countries where the party and the ISH had closely cooperated, such as the Scandinavian countries.[174] None of the comrades, however, made any hints about the situation in Norway where the RFO had become totally marginalised. Neither were the comrades aware of the debacle in Finland where extra ordinary union congress ended in a victory of the socialists and totally silenced the opposition.[175]

Nevertheless, Shelley had to admit that the major weakness of the ISH and the revolutionary opposition was its uneven impact among the maritime transport workers. Although the revolutionary opposition had achieved a rather strong position among the stokers, it had a rather weak backing among the seamen, and almost nil among the officers and stewards. Its influence and position among the harbour workers was even more pathetic. The outcome raised concern: The ISH had emerged as a narrow organisation for radical seamen below deck only. "Our main weakness is the work and organisation among harbour workers," Shelley critically remarked.[176]

Even less promising were the achievements of work among colonial seamen. This had almost come to a standstill after the relocation of the ISH

172 Presentation of Adolf [Shelley] on work among maritime transport workers in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 19–20, RGASPI.

173 Comment on work in Denmark by "Vertreter von Dänemark" in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 11.12.1933, 495/171/315, 28 – 30, RGASPI, and by Sven Linderot on work in Sweden in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 51–53, RGASPI.

174 Comment by Fritz Heckert in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 59 – 61, RGASPI.

175 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 376.

176 Presentation of Adolf [Shelley] on work among maritime transport workers in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 7, RGASPI.

headquarters to Copenhagen, Shelley admitted. The colonial section had ceased to exist after the closure of the Hamburg Interclub. Shelley suggested to establish a new section, and proposed to discuss the matter with an Indian and a Chinese comrade as well as a member of the IPAC-TW.[177] (If he ever did so is not known; if there ever was a meeting on this topic in Moscow, it left no documentary traces.)

Interestingly, Shelley made no reference about the fate of Garan Kouyaté and George Padmore and the "special work" among black seamen. Padmore had resided with Kouyaté after his relocation to Paris in early March 1933. The latter had ceased to work at the Interclub in Marseille and concentrated on propagating for his new radical black organisation, the Union des Travailleurs Nègres. This, in turn, was criticised by the French Party and the relation between Kouyaté and the communists turned sour, followed by a purge against him and his expulsion from the Party in August 1933. Padmore, who had quit his links to the ISH and concentrated on re-establishing the Atlantic network of the ITUCNW, was dragged into the conflict as he sided with Kouyaté. The conflict climaxed at a special meeting in Paris in August, resulting in a total rift between Padmore and the communists, and his expulsion from the Comintern, CPUSA and ITUCNW in March 1934.[178] No wonder, therefore, the silence about work among black seamen in France – it had totally collapsed by August 1933 and the ISH had no black comrade to replace Kouyaté or Padmore.

Less problematic was work among Chinese seamen although Shelley had to admit that the ISH had little to do with it. Noting that the European bureau of the Chinese Seamen's Union had successfully transferred its headquarters to Rotterdam and was also operating in Amsterdam and Antwerp, Shelley asked if the ISH and its sections were working among Chinese seamen. No, he answered.[179] However, the Dutch representative Schalker corrected the pitiful state of affairs by reminding Shelley and the others that work among Chinese and Indonesian seamen in Holland followed a plan outlined at a joint meeting with the ISH Secretariat in April.[180] Two cafés had been established in Rotterdam, one for Chinese, the other for Indonesian seamen, he noted, and called for similar establishments to be set up in Liverpool and

177 Presentation of Adolf [Shelley] on work among maritime transport workers in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 28, RGASPI.

178 See further Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 586–610.

179 Presentation of Adolf [Shelley] on work among maritime transport workers in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313,, 28, RGASPI.

180 This must have been a meeting between Shelley and Dutch comrades, the minutes and documents of the meeting are yet to be identified in the Comintern Archives.

New York.[181] Schalker's statement does not reveal if the cafés were part of or run by the Rotterdam Interclub.

However, Shelley's – as well as Heckert's – main critical observation was the weak if not miserable performance of the ISH and its sections in Western Europe, most notably England and France. Work in Britain had totally collapsed while the FUMP in France had stagnated and seemed to receive little assistance from the French Party. William Gallagher, the British delegate at the Commission, repudiated Shelley's and Heckert's blaming of the British Party for the debacle. According to him, the troubles started with George Hardy's arrival in England in June 1931. As ISH President, Gallagher noted, Hardy had demanded a high-ranking position in the CPGB and wanted to be recognised as one of its leaders. Harry Pollitt, the general secretary of the party, had dismissed Hardy's proposition which had resulted in "quite a big quarrel" between him and Hardy. Even more paralysing was the rift between Hardy and the SMM leader Fred Thompson, resulting in futile interventions by the ISH Secretariat and the RILU Berlin Bureau, and finally in the removal of the two loggerheads. The SMM had more or less ceased activities by the end of 1932, and the Minority Movement took over the responsibility to organise work among seamen, starting from scratch in Cardiff, London, Liverpool and Glasgow. "Work is being started in these places but all we ask now is that the ISH sends all its communications to the headquarters of the Minority Movement, all its directions to the rank and file movement, and that we never again have a situation where the ISH has agents in London who are receiving correspondence and money independently of the Party or the M[inority] M[ovement], and quite outside of the control of the M[inority] M[ovement] and the Party."[182]

The final words about the English chapter followed after the ECCI Plenum had accepted a new resolution on work among seamen and harbour workers (see below Section 5.2). Comrade Bradley, who had replaced Gallagher in the Commission, acknowledged the fact that the attempt to launch a red seamen's union in England had failed miserably. "The situation is, that in the past year the movement [i.e., the SMM] had declined to the point where there is practically nothing." Bradley self-critically noted that the party was certainly to blame for its "bad work" but also stated "[…] there is some disagreement with regard to the responsibility on

181 Comment by Schalker in in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 495/171/313, 35, RGASPI.

182 Comment by Gallagher in Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 8.12.1933, 495/171/313, 39–47, RGASPI, quotation from 46–47.

this problem."[183] Comrade Max Maddalena responded: The English question is quite simple, no party work, no activities against the war or fascism. What needs to be done had been said many times earlier, he reminded: The British Party must focus on building up fractions within the existing seamen's organisations.[184] RILU General Secretary Lozovsky, in turn, commented sarcastically: "We will continue to babble about forming a union for ever but nothing will happen."[185] Case closed.

5.2 *The December 1933 Resolution*

The main objective of the Commission on work among seamen was to comment a draft version of a resolution text prepared at the RILU headquarters.[186] In contrast to earlier instructions and directives, the December 1933 Resolution on Work among Seamen and Harbour Workers did not contain a single paragraph on the ISH! Rather, the text indicates a decision to change the focus of work among maritime transport workers. This change seems to reflect a re-evaluation in Moscow about the necessity to operate via an "independent" platform. In other words, the December 1933 Resolution marked a shift from working through the ISH and its sections towards concentrating on the role of the national parties and the (revolutionary) oppositions within the ITF-affiliated unions. The commented draft version was approved by the ECCI Plenum on 11 December and sent to the Political Commission of the ECCI Secretariat for editing;[187] the final version of the resolution was sent to the various ECCI Ländersekretatiate at the end of December 1933.[188]

The December 1933 Resolution was addressed to the communist parties, not the revolutionary oppositions or the sections of the ISH. "In the chief countries," the text started, "the Communist Parties have not yet taken account of the great importance of the merchant seamen and harbour workers." Reflecting the political and strategic considerations of the Comintern and the

183 Comment by Bradley in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 10– 11, RGASPI.

184 Comment by Maddalena in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 11, RGASPI.

185 Comment by Lozovsky in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 11, RGASPI.

186 Protokoll (A) Nr 346 der ausserordentlichen Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI am 5.12.1933, 495/4/272, 3, RGASPI. The Commission on seamen's question discussed the draft version on 8 and 11 December, see the notes on discussions filed in 495/171/313 and 495/171/315, RGASPI.

187 Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr 5 der Sitzung der Kommission zum 1. Punkt der Tagung des XIII Plenums des EKKI vom 11. Dezember 1933, 495/171/316, RGASPI.

188 Büro des Sekretariats des EKKI an die Ländersekretariate des EKKI, 30.12.1933, 495/171/317, 2, RGASPI.

Soviet Union rather than the RILU and its focus on trade union work, main attention was on the struggle "against the transport of war materials" and only second the struggle "against the attack of shipowning capital and fascism."[189]

Thus: The utmost importance was the struggle of the impending imperialist war. Echoing previous resolutions, the party and the communist trade union organs were ordered to appoint members whose task was to establish local control commissions to inform about the movement of military material. Equally important was the development of a mass movement against military transport. The immediate objective of both the parties and the local control commissions was to launch a new 'Hands of China'-campaign and to protest against, if not block, the transport of military supplies to Japan and China directed for the struggle against the Chinese Soviets.[190] These directives resulted into prompt actions, as will be outlined in Chapter 9.1.2.

The second task of the parties – not the ISH – was to provide aid to the strikes of the seamen, harbour workers and railwaymen. Further, "through the organs of the united front" – indirectly referring to the ISH, as will be noted below – the party should lead the struggle of the maritime and land transport workers as well as support and extend "political demonstrations" against vessels flying the fascist flag. The concluding part of sentence makes the only direct reference to the ISH: "and in general to give the greatest help to the ISHW [= ISH] in the work on German, Japanese, Italian and other vessels of the fascist governments."[191]

Interestingly, the party instead of the ISH was to "systematically expose the treacherous work of the ITF."[192] This order was in line with the – not yet articulated – strategic considerations in Moscow for the ISH to cease its campaign against the ITF, as Ernst Wollweber claimed in his autobiography.[193]

The resolution also contained a paragraph on work among colonial seamen. Perhaps reflecting Shelley's idea of demanding a more resolute engagement by the parties on work among colonial maritime transport workers, the resolution ordered the parties to pay serious attention on this task both in Europe and America as well as in the colonies. Interestingly, the sections of the Comintern

189 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, 29.12.1933, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

190 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, 29.12.1933, §c, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

191 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, 29.12.1933, §d, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

192 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, 29.12.1933, §e, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

193 Wollweber, Lebenserinnerungen, 153, 155, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY4327/10, BArchB.

as well as the RILU were directed to appoint "an instructor for work on [the] colonial question in the Interclubs" whose task was to establish colonial commissions in the sections of the ISH "in the chief countries."[194]

Finally, reflecting the crisis of work among maritime transport workers as well as the plan to focus on opposition groups within the ITF member unions, the resolution listed detailed orders for four specific parties. The CPGB was instructed to "carry out energetic work in the reformist unions of seamen, harbour workers and railwaymen and on ships and ports." Not a single word about re-establishing or revitalising the SMM or even a red union but rather a commitment to form strong fractions and trade union oppositions within the unions. The CPUSA was instructed to convert the "Union of Seamen and Harbour Workers" – probably the MWIU? – into a mass movement as well as to develop a "wide opposition movement" within the International Seafarer's Union and the International Association of Dockers. The PCF, too, was instructed to form a "mass oppositional movement with strong Communist fractions" in the reformist and autonomous unions. In addition, the French Party was reminded of the importance of forming revolutionary trade union groups on the ships, perhaps indicating an expectation that these units would constitute the facilitators for a new global communication network? Finally, the CPJ was directed to pay serious attention on work in the "reactionary" Japan Seamen's Union.[195]

5.3 *The 'Confidential Instructions'*

The second text discussed by the Commission for work among seamen were the 'Confidential instructions'. These had been issued by the so-called communist fraction of the Executive Bureau, indicating that they had been drafted by the RILU Secretariat rather than the ECCI and had not been discussed at the ECCI Plenum. The document gives a direct insight about the agenda of the ISH Executive Committee at its meeting in Paris, namely the decision to start a campaign to organise an international conference for national and local unions as well as for branches and sections of unions "belonging to the ITU [= ITF] but in opposition to it." The idea was to organise the conference "not later than May 1934 in Amsterdam." Most importantly, the ISH was not to be identified as the organiser of the venue. Instead, the official initiative for calling the conference was to be taken by unions belonging to the ITF "which have

194 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, 29.12.1933, §f, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

195 Confidential. Work among Seamen and Harbor[sic] Workers, Special considerations and tasks, 29.12.1933, 495/171/280, RGASPI.

had strikes recently," namely the Latvian Seamen's Union, the Polish Seamen's and Harbour Workers' Union, the Stockholm and Gothenburg branches of the Swedish Seamen's Union, the Danish Stokers' Union, one or two branches of the Finnish Seamen's and Stokers' Union, two or three branches of the Norwegian Harbour Workers' Union. Representatives of these unions were instructed to convene as soon as possible but not later than the end of December or in early January 1934. The objective of the meeting was to finalise an open letter signed by the organisations present to all unions belonging to the ITF as well as to elect an initiative committee for calling an international conference of the ITF.[196]

A draft version of the 'Confidential instructions' was discussed by the Commission on its meeting on 12 December. Backing the general idea of an international conference, the Commission underlined the need to broaden the call to also direct it to unions of land transport workers, most notably the railwaymen. Comrades Wassiljew [Vasilyev]and Richter suggested not to fix the date of the international conference while Schalker proposed to include a "colonial delegation" from Holland, composed of Chinese and Indonesian seamen.[197] The Commission members backed the former proposal but rejected the latter one. Losowsky reminded that the call was only to be directed to unions and opposition groups within the ITF, thus excluding any representation of colonial seamen.[198] Shelley reminded that the basic idea was to attack the enemy within his gates. The grand plan was to use the international conference as a stepping stone to solidify the position of the opposition in the reformist unions.[199]

The Commission also debated about where to place the headquarters of the Initiative Committee. The Danish delegate criticised the plan to place it in Amsterdam, and instead proposed to locate it in Copenhagen as the Initiative Committee was to be headed by Georg Hegner who could not move to Amsterdam.[200]

The 'Confidential instructions' outlined the basic principles for future work among maritime transport workers. It contained an outline of the Open Letter

196 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 20, RGASPI.

197 Comment by Schalker in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 24–25, RGASPI.

198 Interuption by Lozovsky in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 24, RGASPI.

199 Comment by Adolf in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 23, RGASPI.

200 Commment by "Vertreter von Dänemark" in Zweite Kommission der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 12.12.1933, 495/171/315, 28, RGASPI.

which was to be used by the Initiative Committee in its call and campaign. The Initiative Committee was to be constituted as the public (legal) institution for the campaign while the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat was to act behind the curtains. In congruence with the wordings of the Open Letter, the ISH was directed to immediately work out concrete demands for each country, industry, union and group of transport workers. Together, the Open Letter and the ISH text were to be used by the opposition groups in their agitation for calling an international conference. The opposition groups, in turn, were to publish in their own name an appeal to other branches and unions to follow their example.[201]

The Initiative Committee and the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat were to cooperate closely. The ECCI instructed the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat to attach a "leading comrade" to the bureau of the Initiative Committee who, during the campaign, was to assist the Initiative Committee. In addition, those unions and opposition groups who decided to participate at the international conference had each the right to nominate a representative to the Initiative Committee. The enlarged Initiative Committee, in turn, was to be transformed into an Organisational Committee with an elected bureau. The participating unions were also ordered to render financial support to the Organisational Committee.[202]

The ISH, in turn, was to start a parallel 'shadow' campaign by publishing anti-ITF and pro-ISH pamphlets and articles. The basic idea was "on the basis of concrete examples [to] expose the role of the ITU [= ITF]" but should not deal directly with the international conference of the ITF-opposition. Most importantly, however, the 'Confidential instructions' ordered the ISH to fully engage in the campaign for calling the ITF-opposition conference for the next months. This was to be its main task, outlined the 'Confidential Instructions', because the ISH "will not [be] striking a serious blow at the ITU, will not widening its basis and will not lead the discontent masses with the policy of the ITU and the reformist bureaucrats, unless it makes a big increase in its work inside the reformist unions and organisationally consolidates its growing political influence."[203]

The RILU, in turn, promised to render material support to the ISH as well as to transfer four additional instructors for carrying out the campaign in the various countries, the first one fluent in French, Spanish or Italian for the 'Latin'

201 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 22, RGASPI.

202 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 23, RGASPI.

203 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 25, RGASPI.

countries, the second one for English-speaking countries, the third one for Central European countries, and the fourth one for the Balkan countries. The ISH Secretariat, on the other hand, was instructed to carry out the campaign in the Scandinavian countries with its own staff.[204] The RILU was to take a background position in the campaign by only making the following public declaration: "Although this oppositional movement does not entirely occupy our position, nevertheless it deserves support insofar as it is directed against the strike-breaking policy and tactics of the ITU [ITF]."[205]

204 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 26, RGASPI.

205 Confidential. The Calling of an International Conference of Oppositional Unions belonging to the ITU, 9.12.1933, 495/171/316, 27, RGASPI.

CHAPTER 9

An Empty Shell

Divergent opinions existed among the ISH leadership about the fate of the organisation after the December 1933 meeting in Moscow. Ernst Wollweber interpreted the instructions as a downscaling of activities and a way for merging the ISH with the ITF.[1] Adolf Shelley, on the other hand, regarded the instructions not as a masterplan for an amalgamation but a guide for developing the activities of the ISH. In his mind, the ISH sections and the revolutionary trade union opposition within the ITF-affiliated unions were to be strengthened, and he therefore outlined a blueprint of actions to be taken in early 1934, see Table 13.[2]

Shelley's basic idea was the adaption of a double strategy. In line with the December 1933 Resolution and the "Confidential instructions", focus was on strengthening the opposition within ITF-affiliated unions, such as the NUS in England, and 'reformist'-controlled ones, such as those in Brazil, Ireland and Mexico. However, in other countries, such as Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland, the unions were to affiliate with the ISH. The plan put a heavy focus on invigorating work in South and Central America; instructors were to be deployed to boost activities and to investigate the possibilities for organising Interclubs in Havana, Montevideo, Rosario, Santos, Valparaiso and Vera Cruz.[3] Shelley's masterplan outlined the Interclubs as key nodes of agitation and propaganda. Therefore, he projected the establishment or reorganising of them in Antwerp, Barcelona, Bratislava, Cardiff, Constanza, Danzig (the existing one seems to have been closed in 1933), Durban, Narvik, New Orleans (the existing one was dysfunctional already in 1933[4]), North and South Shields, Piraeus, Shanghai, Sydney (the existing one seems to have ceased operations in 1931/32), Thessaloniki, and Vancouver. There was only one practical

1 Wollweber, Lebenserinnerungen, 153, 155, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY4327/10, BArchB.

2 Stolarski [Shelley] to the RILU Secretariat, 2.1.1934, 534/5/241, 6–7, RGASPI.

3 Plan to reorganise and strengthen the ISH and the revolutionary opposition, February 1934, 534/5/236, 178–179, RGASPI. The document is an unsigned draft although combined with Shelley's letter to the RILU Secretariat, I assume that it either heavily reflected his ideas or had been drafted by him.

4 As reported by Everett to 'Dear Comrades,' 11.2.1933, 534/7/509, 83, RGASPI: "The hall was lost when the comrades could not pay the rent here. They moved into a place which served them as a combined hall and a place to sleep."

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TABLE 13 Plan to reorganise and strengthen the ISH and the revolutionary opposition, February 1934

Canada	To create a strong central leadership of the Marine Workers' League (the ISH section in Canada) and by concentrating the activity of the League on three points: in Montreal, Vancouver, and the Great Lakes
Australia	To charge the Minority Movement with the task of winning over the leadership of the seamen's union and harbour workers' union and affiliating them with the ISH
New Zealand	To strengthen the opposition movement within the seamen's union as well as the harbour workers' union for the purpose of affiliating the union to the ISH
England	To strengthen the revolutionary opposition within the NUS; to appoint a colonial committee at the Liverpool Interclub for work among Indonesian, Indian, Chinese and black seamen; to organise the union of Indian seamen in London to be headed by "comrade G" and to organise systematic work on the ships among Indian crews
Scotland	To win over the leadership of the harbour workers' union in Glasgow and affiliate it with the ISH
France	To reorganise the Interclub in Marseille as well as to establish new Interclubs with the assistance of the PCF in Dunkirk, Le Havre and Oran
USA	To strengthen the opposition within the International Association of Harbor Workers and the International Seamen's Union; to concentrate work to New York, New Orleans, San Francisco and the Great Lakes as well as to Boston, Norfolk, Philadelphia and Seattle
Brazil	To strengthen the revolutionary trade union opposition within the seamen's union and harbour workers' union in Rio de Janeiro and Santos
Chile	To prepare the convocation of a national unity conference for setting up a national marine workers' organisation
Argentina	To place a representative of the ISH in the leadership of the FOM and to separate FOM unions and propose to set up contacts with the ISH

TABLE 13 Plan to reorganise and strengthen the ISH and the revolutionary opposition, February 1934 (*cont.*)

Uruguay	To call a unity conference for the purpose of uniting all existing craft unions and for organising a single industrial union
Cuba	To organise a revolutionary trade union opposition and to call for a unity conference
Mexico	To strengthen the revolutionary trade union opposition in all existing unions
Indonesia	To strengthen work among Indonesian seamen in Rotterdam, Liverpool and New York; to set up strong contacts from Singapore with the seamen and harbour workers of Indonesia proper
Ireland	To shift the gravity of work among seamen to the reformist seamen's union as well as to establish a united front of harbour workers in Ireland

SOURCE: PLAN TO REORGANISE AND STRENGTHEN THE ISH AND THE REVOLUTIONARY OPPOSITION, FEBRUARY 1934, 534/5/236, 172–180, RGASPI

problem – cash – but Shelley was confident that the RILU would provide extra funding for the (re-)establishment of the global network of Interclubs.[5]

However, Shelley overestimated the capability and capacity of the ISH to emerge as a global player. His own assessment on the achievements and organisational strength of the ISH and its sections must have been disappointing reading in Moscow. Almost nothing of its earlier global outreach existed anymore in early 1934. Data on most national sections was missing, indicating that they either had ceased to function or had dysfunctional connections with the ISH headquarters; see Table 14.[6]

5 Stolarski [Shelley] to the RILU Secretariat, 2.1.1934, 534/5/241, 6–7, RGASPI.

6 Material über die ISH und über die Arbeit unter den Seeleuten und Hafenarbeitern, 20.1.1934, 534/5/241, 74–88, RGASPI. The author of the unsigned document was someone at the ISH Secretariat as is revealed by the dense information on the situation in France, England, USA and the Scandinavian countries as well as the plan (and failure) to intervene at the congress of the Finnish Seamen's Union in December 1933. Especially the information on the Latvian seamen's strike ("begegnete ich in Kopenhagen Gen. Lambert" as well as "das Sekretariat der ISH in meiner Person") suggests Shelley to be the author of the document as Wollweber, at this point, did, not reside in Copenhagen anymore.

TABLE 14 Organisations and opposition groups affiliated to the ISH, January 1934

Country/Organisation	Membership
England: SMM (mainly in Liverpool)	600
USA: MWIU	3 000
Japan: Sasinkai	Not known
France: FUMP	4 500 (1 800 paying members)
Germany: Einheitsverband (illegal)	(previously 10 000), 2 800 paying members
Spain: Seville	3 600
Spain: others (Vera Cruz de Las Palmas, Gijon, San Sebastian, Barcelona)	[...]
Italy: FILM (illegal)	[...]
Greece	[...]
Danzig	[...]
Latin America	[...]
South Africa: Durban	[...]
Southwest Africa: fishermen's association in Lüderitz Bay	[...]
China: European bureau in Rotterdam	400
Poland: majority of seamen's union incl. leadership	[...]
Latvia: majority of seamen's union incl. leadership	[...]
Denmark: one third of seamen's union and 90 percent of stokers' union	[...]
Sweden: Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO	1 200
Norway: six local branches of RFO	[...]
Australia: seamen's union	[...]

SOURCE: MATERIAL ÜBER DIE ISH UND ÜBER ARBEIT UNTER DEN SEELEUTEN UND HAFENARBEITER, 20.1.1934, 534/5/241, 70–88, RGASPI

Shelley's report indicated that the direct outreach of the ISH was restricted to Northern and Western Europe. The best functioning section was the Danish one, i.e. the Danish Stokers' Union. Positive results had been achieved in Estonia and Latvia, and the position of the revolutionary trade union opposition was

relatively strong in Sweden and the Netherlands. However, he had to admit that the general outlook was pathetic, especially in the USA and England. Cooperation with the PCF and the CGTU was bad in France; in Spain, the red union in Barcelona was in a state of agony. The only positive news was the situation in Australia where the majority of the seamen's union had voted to nominate an adherent of the ISH as general secretary[7]. The most revealing part of Shelley's report was his total silence about work among colonial seamen – not a single line, perhaps indicating that it more or less had ceased to exist?[8]

What existed was an empty shell. The global network of Interclubs had retracted into a mainly North Atlantic–Scandinavian one, see Table 15.

Moscow, for certain, was not impressed by the achievements of the ISH. Even though the RILU leadership might have wanted to revitalise the ISH, the situation in Moscow effectively nullified any such aspirations as the Comintern headquarters and its apparatus was undergoing a total overhaul. Following the reorganisations during autumn 1933, all work was concentrated to a *Ländersekretariat* or regional office of the ECCI.[9]

Even more drastic was the reorganisation of the RILU apparatus. The blueprint for the total revision of the RILU apparatus had been initiated already in July 1933. Its central unit, the *Sekretariat der Interkoms* (Secretariat of the International Committees), was abolished and most of the International Committees, i.e., the former International Propaganda and Action Committeres,

7 This was Joseph "Joe" Keenan who sojourned in England as ISH representative in 1933. He was reported to have arrived in Copenhagen in October 1933, and the ISH leadership proposed to send him via Vladivostok and Singapore to Australia "as there is a good chance for him to be elected secretary for the Australian union." (Note/Memorandum to "Lieber Freund," [Copenhagen] 28.10.1933, 534/5/236, 124, RGASPI. The author of the memo was most likely Schmidt/Wollweber.) Keenan was still in Europe (Copenhagen or Moscow?) in January/February 1934 as is indicated in Shelley's plan for future work of the ISH ("Keenan to be sent to Australia and New Zealand"). He arrived in Australia in October 1934, rejoined the Seamen's Union of Australia, immediately emerged as the leader of its communist fraction and was one of the key organisers during the Australian seamen's strike in 1935, see further Louis, "Recovery from Depression and the Seamen's Strike 1935–6," and Donald Sinclair Fraser, Articles of agreement: the Seamen's Union of Australia, 1904–1943 a study of antagonized labour, PhD thesis, Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, 1998, 171. Interestingly, the ISH Secretariat did not launch an international campaign in support of the Australian mariners, or at least it did not refer to it in its correspondence with Moscow.

8 Material über die ISH und über die Arbeit unter den Seeleuten und Hafenarbeitern, 20.1.1934, 534/5/241, 74–88, RGASPI.

9 (Memorandum, translated from Russian) The Reorganisation of the Apparatus of the Comintern. (Confirmed by the Polit Commission Sept. 15, 1933), Appendix to Protokoll (A) Nr. 334 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 15.9.1933, 495/4/261, 114–117, RGASPI.

TABLE 15 Interclubs and "liaison centres" of the ISH, January 1934

Country	Location
A. Interclubs	
Denmark	Copenhagen
	Esbjerg
	Aalborg
Norway	Bergen
	Oslo
	Tromsø
	Haugesund
Sweden	Stockholm
	Stugsund
	Gävle
	Sundsvall
	Malmoe
Netherlands	Rotterdam
Spain	Seville
Uruguay	Montevideo
USA	New York
	Philadelphia
	Baltimore
	Boston
	New Orleans
	San Francisco
	Portland
	Seattle
Soviet Union	"in all ports"
B. Liaison centres/offices of call (Anlaufstellen)	
Belgium	Antwerp
	Gent
United Kingdom	North Shields
	South Shields
	Liverpool
	Belfast
France	Strasbourg
	Marseille
	Rouen

TABLE 15 Interclubs and "liaison centres" of the ISH, January 1934 (*cont.*)

Country	Location
	Dunkirk
Switzerland	Basle
Spain	Barcelona
South Africa	Durban
Australia	Sydney

SOURCE: LIST OF INTERCLUBS AND "ANLAUFSTELLEN," PUBLISHED IN *INFORMATIONSBULLETIN DER I.S.H. DEUTSCHE AUSGABE* 4:1 (JANUAR 1934), 495/20/858, 31, RGASPI

were subordinated to the regional offices (*Ländersekretariat*) of the RILU. The RILU Organisational Department, too, was liquidated and its tasks were transferred to the regional offices of the RILU.[10]

The RILU headquarters decided to stick to its original masterplan for organising future work among maritime transport workers. Following the decisions of the XIII ECCI Plenum, the RILU sent instructions to establish a special Initiative Committee to call for an international conference of the ITF-opposition groups and unions. As outlined by the Commission for work among seamen, the Initiative Committee was to include both maritime and land transport workers' unions. Those listed were the Danish Stoker's Union, the Gothenburg and Stockholm branches of the Swedish Seamen's Union, local branches of the English Railway Workers' Union, the Irish Railway Workers' Union, the Czechoslovakian Railway Workers' Union, and the (illegal) German Transport Workers' Federation. However, in contrast to the draft version of the 'Confidential instructions', the RILU declared a truce on the propaganda front: Neither the ISH nor the International Trade Union Committee for Railway Workers were to attack the ITF during the campaign for the international conference. Most important, and directly affecting Shelley's ambitions, was the strict order to restrain from any activities to extend the organisational basis of the ISH. Instead, it instructed the ISH Secretariat to keep a low profile.[11]

10 (Zum Bericht des Genossen Kostanjan auf dem Fraktionsbüro der Profintern.) Konkrete Vorschläge zur Reorganisierung des Apparates der Profintern, dated 26.7.1933, Appendix to Protokoll (A) Nr. 334 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 15.9.1933, 495/4/261, 143–157, RGASPI.

11 Einberufung einer internationalen Konferenz der ITF-angeschlossenen oppositionellen Verbände, 31.12.1933, 534/5/236, 207–212, RGASPI.

1 The Antwerp Secretariat

Shelley returned to Copenhagen and started to implement the RILU-instructions. An order disseminated via the *ISH Bulletin* instructed the national sections to stop their attacks on the ITF. Focus was instead on the formation of a broad front within the ITF-unions aiming to develop the revolutionary trade union oppositions into national mass movements.[12]

The implementation of the RILU-instructions required a reorganisation of work at the ISH headquarters in Copenhagen. Richard Jensen was made head of the Initiative Committee, established as a legal and public unit in Copenhagen. Due to increased surveillance of the Danish police, all illegally operating units and bureaus of the RILU in Copenhagen were dismantled and transferred to safer locations. This also affected the composition of the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat. Leo Pechmann moved to France where he joined the staff of the RILU Paris Bureau. The ISH (Illegal) Secretariat, in turn, relocated to Antwerp where it started its operations in late April/early May 1934.[13] The ISH (Illegal) Secretariat comprised at this point of only two members, namely Adolf Shelley, who started to use the pseudonym 'George', and Adolf Deter, who continued to use his alias 'André'.[14] Ernst Wollweber, on the other hand, remained in Copenhagen and continued to operate his underground apparatus in Germany from the Danish capital. In public, he figured as ISH Secretary. Official declarations and announcements signed by the ISH Secretariat, therefore, were dated in Copenhagen although being drafted in Antwerp.[15] Luigi Polano, who was running the ISH Sovbureau in Moscow, was the fourth member of the ISH 'inner bureau'.[16]

One of the most pressing issues for the ISH leadership to grapple was Albert Walter's strange behaviour in Germany. The international campaign for his

12 "Organisiert die innergewerkschaftliche Massen-Oppositions-Bewegung," *Informations-Bulletin der I.S.H. Deutsche Ausgabe* 4:1 (Januar 1934): 4–6, 495/20/858, RGASPI.

13 The exact date for the start of operations in Antwerp is not known. According to British Intelligence sources, the RILU Copenhagen bureau had moved to Paris by 8.5.1933, see Removal of Intenational Committees to Paris, no date, KV 3/127, TNA. The ISH Illegal Secretariat, in turn, seems to have moved from Copenhagen at the end of April, see Leo, Fiedler, and Georges to "Alexander," 7.5.1933, 534/4/493, 105, RGASPI.

14 On the identification of 'George' ('Georges') as Adolf Shelley, see Appendix II.

15 Minutes 8.6.1934, Ernst Wollweber personal file, KV 2/3054, TNA.

16 Polano sent a note to Jensen that the Russian federation of transport workers had nominated comrades Jusefovich, Kamenev and Nikolajenko as its members to the ISH Executive Committee as well as Jusefovich, Kamenev, Nikolajenko, Polano, Makarov, Xecher and Sharikov as members of the ISH Sovbureau. Henri Maurice (signed) to Richard Jensen, [Moscow] 20.12.1933, 534/5/236, 231, RGASPI.

release from concentration camp had faded away after the publication of his denial of being tortured by the Nazis. Even more obscure was his refusal to emigrate after his release from prison in January 1934. However, when he witnessed against Richard Krebs in court, his former comrades slowly came to realise that Walter had cut his ties with the communists.[17] In early August 1934, Shelley informed the RILU headquarters that the "company" – i.e., the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat – had expelled Walter.[18] An official announcement was never published.

The Walter Affaire was probably also on the agenda when the ISH Executive Committee convened in Antwerp in early June 1934.[19] However, the main topic of the meeting was the organisation of work at the ISH Illegal Secretariat. Present at the meeting was the "inner circle" of the ISH: Deter, Jensen, Lambert, Pechmann, Schaap and Shelley.[20] Wollweber and the Norwegian Leif Foss were prevented to attend – the British police disclosed them travelling with forged passports when they disembarked at Harwich on their way to Antwerp and they had to return to Denmark (see further below). Working conditions in Antwerp were not good, Shelley was totally exhausted and wanted to be relieved from his duties. His request was not accepted.[21] Besides, the lack of a legal secretariat greatly hampered the activities of the ISH. The Executive Committee therefore proposed to establish a legal secretariat consisting of the French Charles Tillon, to serve as official head, as well as Richard Jensen and Josef Schaap.[22]

17 Report by René, 21.7.1934, 534/4/493, 180, RGASPI; Report by "Berndt", Zur Angelegenheit Albert Walter, 2.8.1934, 495/205/2917, RGASPI; Zur Angelegenheit Albert Walter, 2.8.1934, 534/5/241, 212–213, RGASPI.

18 Excerpt from Shelley's letter, 14.8.1934, 534/5/241, 207, RGASPI; Report by René, 21.7.1934, 534/4/493, 180, RGASPI.

19 Originally, the meeting of the ISH Executive Committee was planned for 20–21 May but it had to be postponed to the end of the month, see Note from Paris, 7.5.1935, 534/4/493, 105, RGASPI.

20 Minutes, 8.6.1934, Ernst Wollweber personal file, KV 2/3054, TNA.

21 Shelley to "Sehr geehrter Herr," 14.7.1934, 534/5/241, 200–206, RGASPI. Shelley repeated his plea to be released from his duties and called back to Moscow in early August; see George to Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro, A[ntwerp] 4.8.1934, 534/3/1041, 178, RGASPI. This letter clearly indicates that Shelley also used the alias 'George' as the application included a summary of his – Shelley's – activities at the ISH: "I was originally sent to work for 5 to 6 months, at most to the World Congress of the [ISH] but it turned out to become almost 3 ½ years … I am neither a seamen nor a docker, and I believe that my job is better done by someone who has a background in the maritime industry."

22 Entwurf. Vorschläge zur Diskussion über die Aufgaben der ISH, 19.8.1934, 534/5/241, 222, RGASPI.

The proposition for establishing a legal secretariat was sent to Moscow but the RILU Secretariat remained silent for months. Deter and Shelley drafted an updated version for the organisational setup of the ISH and sent it to Moscow in October. The dual structure of a legal and an 'illegal' secretariat was to remain. The projected legal secretariat was to be operated by Jensen, Schaap, Tillon, Wollweber, Jusefovich, the leader of the Russian water transport workers' union, and Roy Hudson, the leader of the MWIU. The ISH Illegal Secretariat, in turn, was to be run by Deter and Shelley. In addition, the new plan envisioned Deter, Hudson, Jensen, Jusefovich, Polano, Schaap, Shelley, Verkeest and Wollweber to constitute the new Executive Committee.[23]

An analysis of Deter's and Shelley's proposal gives a hint about the operational basis of the ISH during the second half of 1934. The geographic outreach of the ISH had retracted and comprised only two geographical regions: Scandinavia and Western Europe (Belgium, France, and the Netherlands). The inclusion of Hudson in the inner circle was mere wishful thinking; the ISH Illegal Secretariat had at this point no direct contacts to North America and was not even informed about the strike on the US West Coast.[24]

Following orders from Moscow, the ISH Secretariat prepared statements calling for the opening of discussions with the ITF, and for the establishment of a united front among the maritime transport workers unions in Denmark and France in late 1934.[25] In November 1934, a confidential circular letter was sent to the leadership of the national sections, calling them to submit proposals for a united front with the ITF.[26] In December, the RILU headquarters ordered the ISH Secretariat to write an open letter to the ITF, to call for a world congress of the ISH and last, but not least, to move the ISH Illegal Secretariat to France.[27]

The placement of the ISH headquarters remained a hotly debated issue. Antwerp, noted the RILU Paris Bureau, was not an ideal place due to difficult working conditions for the members of the ISH Illegal Secretariat and should therefore be transferred either to France or the Netherlands.[28] Deter and

23 Adolf [Shelley] and André [Deter] to "Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro der RGI," 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 253–266, RGASPI.

24 (Copy) Letter from George [Adolf Shelley] to the RILU Secretariat, filed 7.VII.1934, 534/5/241, 171–172, RGASPI. On the US Pacific strike, see Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*.

25 Vorschläge zur Diskussion über die Aufgaben der ISH, 19.8.1934, 534/5/241, 220–223, RGASPI.

26 Confidential letter to the leading functionaries of the ISH sections, 8.11.1934, 534/5/241, 271–274, RGASPI.

27 Vorschläge der Kommission über die Arbeit der ISH, 2.12.1934, 534/5/241, 293, RGASPI.

28 Report by René, 22.10.1934, 534/4/493, 261, RGASPI.

Shelley backed the plan and opted for France.[29] No news, no reaction from Moscow for weeks until the RILU Paris Bureau received a positive answer at the end of December 1934: A legal secretariat was to be established in Rouen and headed by Charles Tillon as official ISH Secretary while the ISH Illegal Secretariat was to relocate to Paris.[30] However, an immediate transfer of the secretariat was not possible and it took another two/three months before the new units had been established in France and started their operations in February/March 1935.[31]

1.1 *The Copenhagen Movement*

The December 1933 meeting in Moscow paved the way for a volte-face in the approach of the ISH towards the ITF. The new strategic considerations rested on two pillars. The first one emphasised strengthening the opposition within the ITF-affiliated unions, the second one on establishing direct contacts with the ITF itself. The strategy further outlined the establishment of a new unit, the Initiative Committee, which was to solidify the first pillar while the ISH was to directly approach the ITF.

A first attempt for formulating concrete actions was made by the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat in early January 1934. A letter addressed to ITF General Secretary Edo Fimmen, *in verbatim* following the outlines provided by the Confidential Instructions. Framed as a call for cooperation between the ISH and the ITF, it contained a series of demands, such as joint actions against wage-cuts, extension of the working days, dismissals, and rationalisations. Furthermore, it demanded the introduction of 7-hour day in ports and 8-hour day at sea without reduction of wages, full social insurance at expense of the government and the employers, and full employment relief for every day of unemployment. Last, the draft letter called for establishing joint control (vigilance) and strike committees as well as for organising international strike boycotts.[32]

Fimmen never received the letter. Someone in Moscow (?) must have decided that the ISH should at this stage stay keep a low profile and stay in the

29 Adolf [Shelley] and André [Deter] to RILU, 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 253–266, RGASPI.

30 Report by René, 29.12.1934, 534/4/493, 79, RGASPI.

31 Note from the RILU technical unit to the RILU information unit, 20.3.1935, 534/5/242, 96, RGASPI. According to British Intelligence information, the ISH Illegal Secretariat had moved from Antwerp to Paris on 20 February 1935, Removal of International Committees to Paris, no date, KV 3/127, TNA.

32 Entwurf (nicht abgeschickt). An das Sekretariat der ITF zu Händen des Generalsekretärs Edo Fimmen, 19.1.1934, 534/5/241, 325–326, RGASPI; Statement of the I.S.H. in connection to the manifestations of seamen and harbour workers for employment, no date, received in Moscow [filed] 29.2.1934, 534/5/242, 87–92, RGASPI.

background. Instead, the driving force for the new strategy was to be a 'spontaneous' movement among the opposition groups within the ITF-affiliated unions. Moscow's roadmap focused on the formation of the Initiative Committee. The Initiative Committee, not the ISH, was to send a call to all opposition groups within the ITF-affiliated unions; the second step was to summon representatives of these groups to a meeting and transform of Initiative Committee into an Organisational Committee; the third step was the organisation of an international conference of the opposition groups.

Following the 'Confidential instructions', the Initiative Committee was to be formed not later than January 1934. Officially set up by the Danish Stokers' Union, the 'Initiative Committee for the Calling of an International Opposition Conference of Organisations Affiliated to the ITF' (Initiativkommittén til Indkallelse of international oppositionskonference for Organisationer tilsluttede ITF) published an 'Open Letter' signed by Georg Hegner in several languages.[33] Then – nothing happened.

Most likely, the silence was a combination of internal and external factors delaying operations at the Copenhagen Interclub, the official headquarters of the Initiative Committee. Internally, the move of the ISH Illegal Secretariat to Antwerp must have slowed down operations although the main disturbing factor was an external one, namely the Danish seamen's strike in April 1934.[34] Richard Jensen was its mastermind, effectively being a coup by the RFO to organise a 'wild', i.e., illegal strike. The conflict started on 12 April and the communists and the RFO directed all actions. Jensen emerged as the key strike leader, assisted by Ernst Wollweber in the background. Jensen issued an international call for solidarity actions and boycotts of Danish vessels in the name of the ISH – he presented himself as ISH Secretary – and declared of having the full backing of the ISH. He further announced that the ISH had initiated an international campaign and had send 10,000 Francs in support of the strike.[35]

33 A Finnish version of the call, Avoin kirje kaikkille I.T.F. alaisille järjestöille, is filed in the archives of the Finnish State Police, 2404 L Kansainvälinen kommunistinen toiminta (sekalaisia), EK-VALPO, FNA. A summary of the call was disseminated by the illegal German section as "Die Opposition in der ITF stösst vor!," *Rote Wache* 4, no. 1 (March–April 1934).

34 On the Danish seamen's strike, see further Knud Knudsen, "Arbejderkampe i Danmark under verdenskrisen, 1931–34 – skotøjslockouten 1931 og søfolkenes strejke 1934," *Årbog for Arbejderbevægelsens historie* 6 (1976): 5–84.

35 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 378–379. The financial support by the ISH was claimed to originate from its solidarity fund. Although the existence of the fund is not doubted, there are very few documentary traces about when it was established (probably in 1931), how it generated its assets or when it was used. It is not even clear, where the fund existed and who monitored it (was it transferred from Hamburg to Copenhagen or

Whether the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat had any part in the Danish strike is unlikely. Documentary sources are patchy, and the ISH office in Antwerp seems to have been rather a post box for Jensen's telegrams than an operative centre.[36] Also, given that the ISH at this point had an extremely limited budget (and already in August 1933 had to cut its financial assistance to strikes), it seems farfetched to claim that the ISH had any role in the strike.

The Danish strike was a short but violent affair. The communists managed to engage the harbour workers in the strike and especially the "red" port city of Esbjerg emerged as the main battlefield in the fight between the strikers and the police. A general strike paralysed Esbjerg on 17 April and threatened to spill over to Copenhagen. All in vain, after eight days Jensen unexpectedly terminated the strike. The social democrats and socialists trade union leaders mocked Jensen and blamed him and the RFO for having lost the fight. In their mind, the 'wild' strike demonstrated the hollowness of communist rhetoric before the strike – none of the big promises had been achieved.[37] Wollweber, on the other hand, claimed in his autobiography that the strike had not been a failure. On the contrary, it followed his new strike tactics: Instead of pushing for an endless strike and losing everything, it was to end as soon as one could achieve at least a partial victory.[38]

The strike and its aftermath in Denmark delayed Hegner – or rather Jensen and Wollweber, who pulled the triggers at this state in Copenhagen – from summoning the Initiative Committee for its first (and only) conference in early June. The minutes of the conference reveal that the earlier confrontation tactics and 'Class-Against-Class'-rhetoric was still alive and articulated, not least that the STF and the ITF had betrayed the working class and accepted a "fascistification" of labour laws and a prohibition of (wild/political) strikes. Rather disappointedly (although objectively not surprising), the ITF had reacted negatively to the Open Letter of the Initiative Committee and instead had instructed its member unions to reject any invitations from the opposition. Nevertheless, the delegates at the conference decided to go ahead with the directives from Moscow. Realising that the original plan for summoning

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to Paris?). An indication of it being operated from Paris is the claim that the Vancouver harbour workers had received a check for 1,500 Francs from the ISH in support for their strike, see "B.C. Shipowners Face defeat in Waterfront Strike," *The Waterfront Worker* 3, no. 37 (September 16, 1935).

36 Intercepted telegram Antwerp to Jones/London: Strike Danish Seamen Commenced Stop Danish Ships and Exportwares, signed Richard Jensen, 12.4.1934, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA.

37 See further Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 379–380.

38 Wollweber, Lebenserinnerungen, Nachlass Ernst Wollweber, NY 4327/10, BArchB.

an international conference during summer proved unrealistic, the delegates decided to postpone it to November 1934. Furthermore, following Moscow's masterplan, the Initiative Committee transformed itself into an 'Organisation Committee'.[39]

Together with the Norwegian Leif Foss, Jensen and Wollweber left Copenhagen after the meeting of the Initiative Committee and headed towards Antwerp as they planned to participate at the gathering of the ISH Executive Committee. However, disembarking at Harwich, the British police arrested Foss and Wollweber for carrying forged passports and deported them to a ship returning to Esbjerg. Wollweber managed to escape the Danish police on his return to Esbjerg but realised that underground work in Copenhagen was impossible and fled to southern Sweden. The RILU headquarters, too, came to the same conclusion, and decided in September 1934 to move him to the Soviet Union and placed him as head of the German Section at the Leningrad Interclub.[40]

Wollweber's departure left the ISH without a secretary and someone had to replace him as the official head of the organisation. Shelley and Deter protested against his transfer to Leningrad.[41] However, Shelley was perhaps not too sorry about his departure. An internal memorandum by a certain 'Georg', i.e., Shelley, criticised Wollweber for having caused the breakdown of the Einheitsverband in Germany and vehemently demanded his replacement by Deter as secretary of the ISH.[42] Several earlier dispatches had hinted about the frictions between the two leading members in the ISH Secretariat. Both were in a sense outsiders and "apparatchniki" although Wollweber, as militant submarine crewmember, had participated in the 1918 naval mutiny in Kiel whereas Shelley had no background in maritime work. Did Shelley's intervention result in the proposal to nominate Charles Tillon as a member of the legal bureau, i.e., the secretariat of the ISH?[43]

Moscow did not accept Jensen's proposal for arranging the international conference in November. On the contrary, the RILU headquarters criticised the outline of the Initiative Committee for containing several "political faults."

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39 Sitzung des Initiativkomitees am 2. Juni in Kopenhagen, 534/5/241, 164–170, RGASPI.

40 Minutes, 29.8.1934, Ernst Wollweber personal file, KV 2/3054, TNA; Wollweber, Lebenslauf, Moscow 4.3.1945, 495/205/8628, RGASPI.

41 Adolf [Shelley] and André to "Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro der RGI," 26.10.1934, 534/5/241, 260, RGASPI.

42 Dispatch from "Georg" to "Liebe Freunde," no date (stamp: 4.8[?].1934), 534/4/493, 184, RGASPI.

43 Vorschläge zur Diskussion über die Aufgaben der ISH, 19.8.1934, 534/5/241, 223, RGASPI.

Not least, the activities of the Initiative Committee deviated from the RILU masterplan for a rapprochement with the ITF as the planned conference could result in a total split of the unions instead of strengthening the position of the opposition within the unions. The plans for calling an international conference were therefore scrapped and the campaign for its summoning was called off. Instead, the Organisation Committee was transformed into a 'Fighting Committee' (Kampfkomitee) and ordered to lead the "fight for establishing a united front" within the unions. The ISH Secretariat, in turn, was directed to send an appeal to the ITF, calling for the unity of unions and an amalgamation of the ISH with the ITF.[44]

Meanwhile, the ISH Executive Committee had discussed the idea of launching a campaign for the united front of trade unions at its meeting in Antwerp in June 1934. As part of the campaign, the ISH Secretariat redrafted its manifesto for calling a "militant unity front" of all maritime transport workers' unions as well as its statement on inviting the ITF for joint actions in support for higher wages and improved working conditions.[45] None of the texts were addressed to the opposition but were intended to be sent directly to ITF General Secretary Edo Fimmen.[46] The ISH Secretariat sent the draft versions to Moscow for approval – and silence followed.[47] Luigi Polano, who at this point seems to have been transferred to the ISH Illegal Secretariat, together with Alfred Deter and Adolf Shelley tried to propagate for the 'united front'-campaign by travelling to Czechoslovakia and Austria (Deter), England and France (Polano) and Denmark (Shelley).[48] However, as the RILU headquarters had not officially backed their campaign, their efforts achieved almost nothing. Nevertheless, the ISH Secretariat stuck to their plan of launching its campaign and informed the functionaries of the (few remaining) ISH sections to start their preparations for the united front.[49]

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44 Beschluss des Sekretariats über das Initiativkomitee und über Einheitstaktik, 17.5.1934, 534/5/241, 328, RGASPI; Brief an das Europäische Sekretariat, 7.8.1934, 534/4/491, 31–35, RGASPI.

45 Deklaration der I.S.H. zur Arbeitsbeschaffungsaktionen der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, no date, filed in Moscow 23.12.1934, 534/5/241, 317–323, RGASPI; same text but filed 26.3.1935, 534/5/242, 97–102, RGASPI.

46 Entwurf (nicht abgesendet). An das Sekretariat der ITF zu Händen des Generalsekretärs Edo Fimmen, no date, 534/5/241, 324, RGASPI.

47 Vorschläge zur Diskussion über die Aufgaben der ISH, 19.8.1934, 534/5/241, 220–223; Henri [Polano] to "Gen[osse] Alexander," 3.9.1934, 534/5/241, 234, RGASPI.

48 Henri [Polano] to "Gen[osse] Alexander," 3.9.1934, 534/5/241, 233, 235, RGASPI.

49 Confidential! To the leading functionaries of the ISH-sections only!, 8.11.1934, 534/5/271–274, RGASPI.

Moscow remained silent for more than six months. The only news coming from the RILU headquarters was to urge the RILU bureau in Paris to pave the way for a united front in France and Spain by starting the amalgamation of trade unions including those of the maritime transport workers. In France, the process was to be orchestrated by Charles Tillon who was transferred to the Féderation des ports et docks in July 1934.[50] Shelley was irritated about the unwieldiness of having to send all drafts to the ISH Sovbureau for approval, and suggested that the ISH Illegal Secretariat was mandated to make its own decisions.[51] Meanwhile, disappointing news came in from Amsterdam at the end of 1934 – the ITF had turned down three invitations to cooperate with the World Committee against War and Fascism.[52] The ISH Secretariat decided to change tactics and planned to resuscitate the 'Copenhagen Movement', i.e., the Initiative/Organisation Committee, for launching a broadside 'unity campaign' among the ITF-affiliated unions.[53]

Rumours about what was going on in Moscow finally reached Deter in January 1935. The various draft versions of the declarations and manifestos had been handed over to the ECCI Political Commission for approval. Deter protested: According to ISH statues, the ISH Plenum (i.e., Executive Committee), not the ECCI, was to make the final decision.[54] Instead of waiting for an answer from Moscow, the ISH Secretariat decided to act on its own and sent a letter to the ITF Secretariat in early February 1935. Written in a conciliatory tone (as if the earlier bashing and accusations of "social fascism", "treachery" and "betrayal" never had occurred), the ITF was urged to form a common – united – front against the intentions of the shipowners in Northern Europe to introduce drastic reductions in shipping tonnage.[55]

No response, neither from Moscow nor from Amsterdam.

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50 Report by René, 13.7.1934, 534/493, 165, RGASPI; Brief an das Europäische Sekretariat, 7.8.1934, 534/4/491, 34, RGASPI. Charles Joseph Tillon (1897–1993) was a leading member of the CGTU, see further Denis Peschanski, "Tillon, Charles Joseph," *Le maitron* (2009), https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article24280, accesed 12.6.2020.

51 Adolf [Shelley] and René to "Lieber Freund," 14.11.1934, 534/5/241, 281–282, RGASPI.

52 Leo [Pechmann], Ulrich [?], René, Rudolf [Deter] and Georges [?] to RILU, 12.12.1934, 534/5/241, 300, RGASPI.

53 René, Leo [Pechmann], Georges and André [Deter] to RILU, 12.12.1934, 534/5/241, 299, RGASPI.

54 Georges and André [Deter] to RILU, 21.1.1935, 534/5/242, 4–6, RGASPI.

55 ISH, An das Sekretariat der I.T.F., no date, draft arrived in Moscow [stamped] 19.2.1935, 534/5/242, 31–32, RGASPI.

1.2 *Comrade Edward's Call to Black Maritime Transport Workers*

The reorganisation of the Comintern and RILU apparatuses in Moscow also affected the objectives and capacities of the ITUCNW. In fall 1933, a process started to amalgamate the Eastern Secretariats of the RILU and the Comintern. This also affected the RILU Negro Bureau which was merged with the Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat and formed the ECCI Negro Bureau in January 1934. Strategic and tactical planning for and surveillance of operations in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean were transferred from the ITUCNW to the new ECCI Negro Bureau. The ITUCNW, in turn, was to continue its operations, including its cooperation with the ISH. On 5 January 1934, the ECCI nominated Otto Huiswoud as head of the ITUCNW and new editor of *The Negro Worker*.[56]

Huiswoud arrived in Paris in February 1934. After unfruitful negotiations with George Padmore, eventually resulting in the expulsion of the latter from the Comintern and CPUSA in spring 1934, Huiswoud relocated the office of the ITUCNW to Antwerp where he started his operations in April 1934, using the pseudonym Charles Woodson (in internal communications, he used the alias Edward).[57] About the same time, the ISH Illegal Secretariat, too, moved to Antwerp. Was this a pure incidence or part of a new masterplan? Reference to work among black or colonial seamen is missing in the new instructions for the ISH. Anti-discrimination, anti-racism and anti-segregation were still on top of the political agenda of the ISH but its operational basis was limited to the revolutionary oppositions within the unions and the remaining Interclubs.

The secretariats of the ITUCNW and the ISH operated illegally in Antwerp. Both used the Antwerp Interclub as a site for connections and inquiries, their offices being at other locations in the town, and their "official" addresses being the Copenhagen Interclub. Huiswouds planned to reactivate work among black seamen and harbour workers in Belgium, Britain, France and the Netherlands, to strengthen the local harbour workers associations in South Africa (Cape Town, Durban, East London, Port Elisabeth as well as Lüderitz Bay), and to reconnect with the British Guiana Labour Union as well as the trade union movement in Trinidad.[58] Interestingly, no reference was made to the ISH or the affiliation of the associations, groups and unions with the ISH, perhaps an indication of a strategic reorientation being decided upon in Moscow?

The ITUCNW and the ISH continued to cooperate although neither of the two units were to form an umbrella for black maritime transport workers'

56 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 612–614.
57 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 618.
58 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 619.

unions.[59] In fact, affiliation with international organisations was not even mentioned in the call to black maritime transport workers published in *The Negro Worker* in September 1934. Titled "Organisational Task Among the Water Transport Workers," the call urged black seamen and harbour workers to form unions.[60] Committees of actions were to be set up in every port with the ultimate goal of transforming them into unions:

> With the formation of real live functioning groups, which will take up every grievance of the workers (flogging, bad food, fines, small pay and long hours, etc.), unite the workers to put up an effective resistance to every attack of the bosses and to fight for better conditions, the groups be able to win over the workers for the organization of a strong and militant Union of Seamen and Harbour Workers, which will be the only effective instrument in the hands of the workers, to improve their living conditions.[61]

The text has no author, neither is there any reference to an organisation to be the driving force behind the call other than the ITUCNW. However, a close examination of the text reveals that it must have been drafted by the ISH Illegal Secretariat. The outline of the call as well as its contents closely – almost *in verbatim* – followed similar ones earlier published by the ISH:

> A first step in the direction of organizing a union should be the establishment of small groups of 5 or 7 on the docks, among the seamen on the ships and among the boatmen. As a beginning and to make the work more effective, two or three of the biggest and most important ships and docks or yards should be selected in order to concentrate activities and gain decisive results. After the establishment of such active and functioning groups, general meetings of all workers should be called to discuss their conditions of work and their grievances and the necessity of organization to better their conditions. [...] COMMITTEES OF ACTION should be elected, whose task will be to agitate among the workers and draw them into the groups. [...] The main function of the ship and dock groups

59 The cooperation between the two units is noted by Polano, see Henry to "Lieber Freund," [Antwerp] 1.6.1934, 534/5/241, 111, RGASPI.

60 "Organizational Tasks Among the Water Transport Workers," *The Negro Worker* 4, no. 5 (September 1934): 16–18.

61 "Organizational Tasks Among the Water Transport Workers," *The Negro Worker* 4, no. 5 (September 1934): 18.

> must be the mobilisation of the workers for the struggle to obtain the demands adopted.[62]

The call pushed for cooperation between black and white maritime workers on the waterfront in Europe. Above all, the call advocated the radical parole of the ISH for equal pay for equal work regardless of colour or nationality or sex, the complete equalisation of the colonial and white water transport workers, and the abolition of all discrimination because of colour.[63]

If the call of the ITUCNW had any immediate effects is not known. Perhaps its impact was more indirect as its journal was widely read throughout the Black Atlantic. Huiswoud claimed to have established links with the 'Colonial Seamen's Association' in Britain – was this perhaps Harry O'Connell's group and could it indicate O'Connell's continuation as main black Communist instigator on the black waterfront in Britain?[64]

However, Huiswoud's activities in Antwerp ended abruptly in early September when the Belgian police arrested him and his wife Hermine Huiswoud. The Belgian police was looking for a certain 'Charles Woodson', editor-in-chief of *The Negro Worker* and author of subversive pamphlets. Huiswoud, who carried his official Dutch passport, officially resided in Belgium as free-lance journalist and correspondent or the Crusader News Agency in New York. The Belgian police was never able to link Woodson with Huiswoud but expelled him and his wife. The Huiswouds moved to Amsterdam from where they tried to run the operations of the ITUCNW.[65] This arrangement proved ineffective and in early April 1935, Deter and Shelley asked the RILU to consider relocating them to Paris. Huiswoud was isolated in Amsterdam, they argued, and a closer cooperation between the RILU European Secretariat and Huiswoud could be established if his office was in Paris. Most importantly, they stressed that the ISH, the League Against Imperialism and the Colonial Commission of the French Party

62 "Organizational Tasks Among the Water Transport Workers," *The Negro Worker* 4, no. 5 (September 1934): 18.

63 "Organizational Tasks Among the Water Transport Workers," *The Negro Worker* 4, no. 5 (September 1934): 18.

64 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 626. Huiswoud refers to groups in Cardiff and London. The group mentioned in the call published in the September 1934-issue of *The Negro Worker* is not to be confused with an organisation carrying the same name, the 1935-established Colonial Seamen's Association. The Indian Surat Alley and the Barbadian Chris Jones (Braithwaite) led the latter organisation. Both activists had in the late 1930s/early 1930s worked for the SMM. Jones/Braithwaite had resigned from the CPGB in 1933 and linked up with George Padmore. See further Høgsbjerg, *Chris Braithwaite*.

65 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 628–629.

would support his ambitions to form cadre groups among black mariners and enhance the formation of trade union organisations among black seamen.[66]

Huiswoud, in turn, was sceptical to the idea of moving to Paris. It would be difficult to find an apartment, he claimed, and the costs of printing *The Negro Worker* would be much higher in France than in the Netherlands. Deter and Shelley did not consider this a major concern and claimed that they could organise for the printing and global distribution of journal.[67] However, Moscow was late in responding to their request, in part due to escalation of the Ethiopian crisis (see Section 3 in this chapter). At the end of 1935, the Huiswoud's were instructed to move to Paris where they started operations in January 1936.[68]

1.3 *Hands off Soviet China!*

While Hitler took power in the West, crisis amounted in the Far East. Although the Japanese attack had come to a standstill in northern China, the situation remained tense as Japan refused to return Manchuria to China. Japan was still portrayed as a militarist and imperialist aggressor in communist propaganda publications but a new danger was amounting in China where Nationalist government forces under Chiang Kai-shek started a full-scale attack upon the communist strongholds – the Jiangxi Soviet or 'Soviet China' (Chinese Soviet Republic, established in November 1931) – in Jiangxi Province. Consequently, the Comintern headquarters in Moscow issued a call to defend Soviet China in October 1933 and Polano urged Wollweber to launch a new 'Hands off China'-campaign.[69]

The call for a new campaign was problematic for the ISH Secretariat due to its restricted capacity to act. Wollweber had hitherto spent an uphill battle in organising, supporting and monitoring the underground units of the Einheitsverband in Germany. Effective counter-measures by the German police, however, curbed his ambitions as it had annihilated most of his cells.[70] However, after consultation with the comrades at the RILU Copenhagen Bureau, the ISH Secretariat managed to produce a pamphlet in December

66 André [Deter] and Georges [Shelley] to "Komfraktion der RGI," 12.4.1935, 534/5/242, 121, RGASPI.

67 André [Deter] and Georges [Shelley] to "Komfraktion der RGI," 12.4.1935, 534/5/242, 121, RGASPI.

68 Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 702.

69 M. Henri [Luigi Polano] to "das Sekretariat der ISH zu den Händen des Gen. ~~Shelley~~ Schmidt, 27.10.1933, 534/5/236, 123, RGASPI.

70 Report on activities, "IV. Deutschland," no date [stamp: 16.12.1933], 534/5/236, 230, RGASPI. The author of the report was most likely Wollweber as it contained a briefing on the situation in Germany.

1933,[71] calling the national sections of the ISH for the reactivation of the anti-war committees and the blockade of ships with war equipment for Japan and nationalist China, see Figure 36.[72] By the end of year, the campaign was in full swing. In Sweden, for example, flyers in Danish, i.e., prepared by Danish comrades at the ISH Secretariat, ciculated in the port of Gothenburg while the Swedish RFO-journal *Hamnarbetaren* urged its readers to back the struggle of the Chinese proletariat and to stop the transport of war equipment to the 'Chinese imperialists', i.e., Chiang Kai-shek and the nationalist Guomindang government.[73] Similarly, the (illegal) Finnish mimeographed journal *Kipinä*, hailed the successful actions of the stevedores in Le Havre in November 1933 as an example to inspire the radical harbour workers in Finland to conduct similar expressions of international proletarian solidarity.[74]

The conflict in China intensified in 1934, the communists had to abandon their strongholds in Jiangxi in October and started to retreat to Shaanxi Province (the 'Long March') where they established a new basis for their operations. The RILU European Secretariat in Paris tried at this point to reactivate and coordiante its anti-war activities. It set up a 'planning committee' consiting of the ISH Sectretatiat – which at this point had moved to Antwerp – as well as representatives of the International Propaganda Committees of railway workers and metal workers.[75] The task of the ISH Secretariat was to open up connections with the ITF and to invite them in unified anti-war activities.[76] The national sections of the ISH, especially those in Scandinavia, were urged to intensify their anti-war campaigns, notably to stop the transportation of war material to the Far East.[77] Focus was on Sweden as Gothenburg was the largest export harbour of war material in Scandinavia. As soon as the ISH and the

71 Report on activities, "III. Kampagne zur Verteidigung Sowjetchinas," no date [stamp: 16.12.1933], 534/5/236, 230, RGASPI.

72 [ISH pamphlet] Forsvar Sovjet-Kina – stop al Transport af Krigsmaterial (december 1933), SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 118 III B3 s 101 111D: 99, SNA.

73 ISH flyer, dated December 1933, F X:6 Kommunistiska handlingar 1930–1933, Stockholmspolisens kriminalavdelning Rotel 6 med föregångare, SÄPO, SNA; "Sovjet-Kina," *Hamnarbetaren. Organ för hamnarbetarna* 1, no. 1 (1934): 3–4, SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 3, SNA; "Soviet-Kina," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 4, no. 5 (1933): 13–15.

74 "Satamatyöläset Le Havressa antavat loistavan esimerkin kietäytymällä sotatarvikkeiden lastauksessa," *Kipinä* [Winter 1933/4], SÄPO Äldre Aktsystemet Volym 295 VIII C 3 Interklubb och Röd Marin, Pärm 3, SNA.

75 René, Bericht 24.4.1934, 534/4/493, 224–225, RGASPI.

76 Confidential instructions to the leading functionaries of the ISH sections, 8.11.1934, 534/5/241, 271–274, RGASPI.

77 "Masstransport av krigsmaterial," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 4, no. 2 (1934): 15–16.

FIGURE 36 Hands off Soviet China! The Danish version of the ISH call of December 1933, inciting the mariners and harbour workers to fight against Japanese imperialism, to defend Soviet China and the Soviet Union, as well as to block the transport of war material to any of the imperialists. Flyer filed in 107 Richard Jensen Arkiv, Danish Labour Movement Library and Archives, Copenhagen.

ITF had joined hands, local joint 'anti-war committees' were to be established that effetively could monitor and block any transport of military equipment.[78] Communist anti-fascist rhetoric and anti-war activities had at this point merged, and the ISH leadership declared in June 1934 that the slogan of the forthcoming demonstration on August First was "Against the Imperialist War and Against Fascism."[79]

All in vain: The ITF rejected the invitation of the ISH. This came as no surprise for the ISH leadership; in fact, now they could once again claim that the 'reformists' had blocked and spoiled unified anti-war activities.[80]

2 The Paris Secretariat

News about a crisis in Stockholm reached the ISH Illegal Secretariat while it was establishing its new headquarters in Paris in early February 1935. Its capacities were already limited as the RILU Paris Bureau declined to strengthen the ISH Illegal Secretariat with additional functionaries.[81] Then bad news reached Paris.

Decisions concerning work in England and Sweden made at the RILU and Comintern headquarters during winter and spring 1935 were to have far-reaching consequences for the operational basis of the ISH. In February, Moscow dismissed Deter's and Shelley's outline for future work in England.[82] Worse was to come.

The Swedish section of the ISH, the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO, had run out of steam in 1934. The Swedish Trade Union Council (Löntagarorganisationen) and the Swedish Seamen's Union had enacted drastic measures after the 1933 strike and expelled 130 leading members of the opposition from the union. The RFO launched a vigorous campaign against the union leadership but without achieving much success.[83] Moreover, it tried to counteract further expulsion of opposition members by instructing its remaining union members to sign an

78 "Krigsmolnen tätnar," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 4, no. 11 (1934): 1.

79 Appel fra I.S.H.'s Eksekutivkomite – Lad 1. August blive en kampdag imod den imperialistiske Krig og den blodige Fascisme!, ABA.

80 René, Bericht 10.12.1934, 534/4/493, 273–274, RGASPI.

81 René to RILU, 19.2.1935, 534/4/508, 42, RGASPI.

82 Vertraulich. Zu den Richtlinien der ISH über die Arbeit unter den Seeleuten Englands, 11.2.1935, 534/3/1041, 165–166, RGASPI.

83 "Fortsätt aktionen! Mot den bruna mordpesten!," *Storm: Organ för Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO* 1 (1934); Bertel Lundvik, *Solidaritet och partitaktik. Den svenska arbetarrörelsen och spanska inbördeskriget 1936–39* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1980), 12–13.

official declaration stating that they were not members of the RFO. The strategy was a subversive one – the remaining members were ordered to keep a low profile until the forthcoming union congress. However, the plans backfired and the RFO was in disarray. Shelley went to Stockholm in August 1934 to discuss a change in tactics with party leader Sven Linderot. The outcome was a plan to disguise the opposition by abolishing the member cards of the RFO.[84]

The RFO was to remain as a revolutionary trade union opposition, reasoned Shelley.[85] However, he was not aware that the Central Committee of the SKP had a total different plan. In February 1935, it sent an official request to the ECCI Scandinavian Ländersekretariat to liquidate the Sjötransportarbetarnas RFO. A copy of the letter was sent to the ISH headquarters.[86] Shelley was furious, sent a telegram to Moscow protesting about the Swedish request, and criticised the Swedish Party for misinterpreting the directives of the ISH. The masterplan, he underlined, was not a liquidation of the RFO but its disguise.[87] Deter, too, was perplexed and reminded the Swedish Party of the guiding principles of the original masterplan, i.e., the abolishment of member cards and all visible signs of the RFO, and urged the SKP to cancel its plans for organising a conference to liquidate the RFO.[88] Furthermore, Deter and Shelley notified the RILU headquarters, which, in turn, drafted a similar letter of protest.[89]

The SKP leadership ignored the protest, organised the conference and, without making any public announcement, dissolved the Sjötransportsarbetarnas RFO.[90] The RILU headquarters, in turn, dismissed Deter's and Shelley's

84 Ad[olf Shelley] and Henry [Polano?] to "Lieber Freund André [Deter]," 23.8.1934, 534/5/241, 230–231, RGASPI.

85 Shelley to "Sekretariat des ZK der KPSch zu Händen des Gen. Linderoth," 24.1.1935, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, Mapp med diverse handlingar 12, R/7/F/3, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, ARAB.

86 [Fritjof[L[ager], Till skandinaviska Ländersekretariatet, Komintern, 26.2.1935, 495/15/204, 58–59, RGASPI. The handwritten draft versions of the letter are filed in Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, Mapp med diverse handlingar 12, R/7/F/3, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, ARAB.

87 Telegram by Adolphe [Adolf Shelley] to Dengel, sent from Paris 11.2.1935, received in Moscow 20.2.1935, 495/15/204, 60, RGASPI.

88 Komfraktion der ISH, sign. André [Deter] to ZK Schweden, 2.2.1935, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, Mapp med diverse handlingar 12, R/7/F/3, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, ARAB.

89 Georges [Adolf Shelley] and André [Deter] to RILU, 19.2.1935, 534/5/242, 47–48, RGASPI; Entwurf. Über die Reorganisierung der RGO der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter in Schweden, 15.3.1935, 534/5/1041, 252–253, RGASPI.

90 NN to ISH, Stockholm, 4.3.1935, Handlingar rörande fackliga frågor, Mapp med diverse handlingar 12, R/7/F/3, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti/Vänsterpartiet, ARAB.

protests and accepted the decision of the SKP in early April.[91] The ISH section in Sweden had ceased to exist.

The final decision on the Swedish question still pending, the RILU Secretariat finally broke the ice and informed the ISH headquarters about decisions concerning the 'Copenhagen Movement'. Moscow's answer was puzzling. Not a single comment on the drafts of the manifestos and declarations the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat sent to Moscow. Instead, the ISH was ordered to build up a campaign in congruence with the letter sent by the RILU to the Amsterdam International. Not a word about a separate campaign, only a directive to make an official statement in the name of the ISH Executive Committee to support the call of the RILU for the formation of a united front with the Amsterdam International.[92]

About the same time, the ISH Sovbureau decided to publish the ISH manifesto on full employment.[93] However, the brochure was never printed. Deter complained that the various corrections to the original version of the text made it unreadable; it therefore had to be rewritten by the ISH and RILU bureaus in Paris before it could be approved by the ISH Executive Committee which was to meet in May 1935.[94] Matters were further complicated as the ISH Sovbureau had decided to transform the Copenhagen Movement from an "opposition movement" into a "unity movement" and instructed it to call for an "international unity conference."[95] These plans, however, collided with the ambition of the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat to arrange a world congress by itself; the ISH Executive Committee had adopted the plan already in June 1934 but it had never received any approval by the RILU Secretariat.[96]

Nevertheless, Deter and Shelley clung to the idea of calling for a world congress and reformulated the plan in March 1935 by adding an invitation to 'reformist' and anarcho-syndicalist maritime transport workers' unions as well as the ITF.[97] Moreover, Shelley and Deter proposed that Polano was to

91 RGI [RILU] Fraktionsbüro, Protokoll 79, 4.3.1935, 534/3/971, RGASPI; RGI [RILU] Fraktionsbüro, Protokoll 83, 26.4.1935, 534/3/1041, RGASPI.

92 [RILU] to ISH Secretariat, no date, filed 7.4.1935, 534/5/242, 114–116, RGASPI.

93 Protokoll der geschlossenen Sitzung des Sowbüros der ISH vom 9. April 1935, 534/5/242, 133–134, RGASPI.

94 Georges and André [Deter] to RILU, 24.4.1935, 534/5/242, 120, RGASPI.

95 Protokoll der geschlossenen Sitzung des Sowbüros der ISH vom 9. April 1935, 534/5/242, 133, RGASPI.

96 Henri [Polano] to "Gen[osse] Alexander," 3.9.1934, 534/5/241, 234, RGASPI.

97 Georges and André [Deter], Paris 21.1.1935, 534/5/242, 4–5, RGASPI; Georges to RILU, 26.3.1935, 534/5/242, 95, RGASPI.

tour the Latin American countries to agitate for the projected 'unity congress',[98] while Shelley was to participate at the forthcoming Seventh World Congress of the Comintern.[99] The ISH Sovbureau, however, rejected their proposal in April 1935, and demanded the projected ISH world congress to be part of the RILU campaign for a united front with the Amsterdam International.[100] The RILU Secretariat approved the decision of the ISH Sovbureau, including the plan to summon the ISH Executive Committee for a meeting in Paris. However, the RILU Secretariat rejected the idea of sending Polano to Latin America.[101]

The ISH Executive Committee discussed the transformation of the Copenhagen Movement and the plan to organise a new world congress at its meeting in Paris in June 1935. Organised by the ISH (Legal) Secretariat, which finally had started its operations in early May 1935,[102] the meeting turned out to be the last mustering of the ISH leadership. Whether it reflected the composition of affiliated organisations is questionable as most of its former national sections had ceased to exist, such as those in the USA, in England and in Sweden, or were defunct, such as the RFO in Norway. Nevertheless, 25 delegates turned up at the meeting, including Deter, Polano and Shelley from the Illegal Secretariat. The list of participants indicate the geographical extension of the legal and illegal 'revolutionary waterfront' in 1935: Barneto (Spain), Erikson (Norway), Jensen (Denmark), Hudson (USA), Lambert (Latvia), Robson (England), Rydstedt (Sweden), Schaap (Netherlands), Silverino (Italy), Tillon and Le Winter (France; the former acted as head of the legal secretariat and ISH Secretary in public), and Verkeest (Belgium). Wollweber and Jusefovich did not participate; neither were there any delegates representing the colonial or black maritime transport workers.[103] The ISH had shrunk into a platform representing the white waterfront only, the global network of Interclub barely existed anymore; see Table 16.

The ISH Executive Committee did not back the idea to transform the Copenhagen Movement into a platform of the opposition within the ITF.

98 Extract of correspondence, signed by Georg [Adolf Shelley] and André, 534/3/1042, 207, RGASPI.

99 Note by André and Henry [Polano], no date [stamp: 20.6.1935], 534/3/1042, 221, RGASPI.

100 Protokoll der geschlossenen Sitzung des Sowbüros der ISH vom 9. April 1935, 534/5/242, 132, RGASPI.

101 Bericht und Vorschläge des Sowbüros der ISH an die Fraktion, no date (stamp: attachment to protocol No. 82, para 6 and 7, 15.IV.1935), 534/3/1041, 348–349, RGASPI.

102 Report by René, 22.4.1935, 534/4/508, 65–68, RGASPI.

103 Henry to RILU, 15.6.1935, 15.6.1935, 534/5/242, 188–194, RGASPI.

TABLE 16 Interclubs in 1935

Country	Port	Address
Belgium	Antwerp	Huis der Zeelieden, Brouwerstraat 29
Denmark	Copenhagen	Gothersgade 15
	Esbjerg	Smedegade 18
France	Bordeaux	Quai de Chartrond 126
	Dunkirk	Rue de l'Ecluse des Bergues 9
	Marseille	Place de l'Observance 2
	Rouen	Rue Fontanelle 10, Vauxbaillon
Netherlands	Amsterdam	Y.S. Schilp, Raamgracht huis 37
	Rotterdam	Willemskade 7 a
Norway	Bergen	Halfdan Kjerulfsgaten 82
	Haugesund	Store Strandgaten 3
	Oslo	Rödfyldsgaten 12, 2
	Tromsö	Vestergaten 22
United Kingdom	Hull	Posterngate 24
	Liverpool	19–20 Old Haymarket Room 12
	North Shields	24 Elmwood Road
Sweden	Gothenburg	Café Werdandi, Husargatan 19
	Stockholm	Brunnsgränd 4
Uruguay	Montevideo	Muelle Viejo 1640

SOURCE: *HAMN- OCH SJÖPROLETÄREN* 5, NO. 6 (1935)

Instead, it envisioned the ISH campaigns for full employment and for a united front to be directed towards groups and organisations who were neither affiliated to the ISH nor the ITF; this, it reasoned, would provide the basis for a larger opposition within the ITF as well as an amalgamation of the ISH with the ITF. On the other hand, the ISH Executive Committee buried all plans for organising a new world congress. Instead, it adopted the idea to call for a world congress of all maritime transport workers' unions …[104]

104 André [Deter], Adolf [Shelley], and Henri [Polano] to RILU, 3.7.1935, 534/5/243, 15–16, RGASPI.

3 Calling in Vain for International Solidarity: Hands off Abyssinia

The Ethiopian crisis started as an incidence involving Italian and Ethiopian troops at the Ethiopian border town of Walwal in December 1934 and escalated to an international crisis during spring 1935. In contrast to the Manchurian crisis, the Comintern remained passive during the Ethiopian Crisis and restrained for months to comment on the issue at all. The silence in Moscow was mainly due to the complicated diplomatic conditions that prevailed in late 1934 and during 1935. Least of all, the Kremlin and the Soviet Foreign Ministry was interested in a high-profile campaign orchestrated by the Comintern.[105] Officially, therefore, the Comintern restrained from commenting about the Ethiopian crisis until September 1935 (see below). On the other hand, the Political Commission of the Comintern had established a special committee to organise an international campaign against the Italian aggression already in January 1935.[106] One month later, the ECCI discussed the crisis. At this point, the ECCI's main interest was to connect the Ethiopian crisis with Japanese imperialism, as it was believed that Japan was trying to establish close military, economic and political relationships with the Ethiopian Emperor.[107]

The first guidelines of the ECCI for political agitation outlined a popular campaign that was to highlight the defence of the national integrity of Ethiopia though not to support the Ethiopian Emperor's regime. The campaign in mind was never projected as a defence of the political independence of bourgeois and imperialist Empire of Abyssinia as such.[108] A few days later, telegrams were sent to the communist parties. The CPGB, for example, was instructed to strengthen its effort to mobilise against the danger of an imperialist war and to expose British imperialism as furthering the Italian aggression. The party was ordered to characterise the Italian aggression as a

105 Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 60–63; Keith Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); J. Calvitt Clarke III, *Alliance of the Colored People: Ethiopia and Japan before World War II* (Woodbridge, Suffolk & Rochester, NJ: James Currey, 2011), 106–107, 124; J. Calvitt Clarke III, "Soviet Appeasement, Collective Security and the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935 and 1936," in *Collision of Empires. Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact*, ed. G. Bruce Strang (London and New York: Routledge, 2017 [2013]), 261–286.

106 Ercoli [Palmiro Togliatti] to Lozovsky, 20.1.1935, 534/3/1041, 125, RGASPI.

107 Die japanischen Imperialisten in Abessinien, no author, report dated 22.2.1935, 495/4/459, 1–4, RGASPI.

108 Leitsätze für den Kampf gegen den Krieg in Abessinien, no author, memorandum dated 27.2.1935, 495/11/2, 4–9, RGASPI.

"colonial predatory war". The Ethiopian side was to be presented as fighting a "war of national independence" despite of its connections with Japan as well as the fact that the country was ruled by "Monarchist feudalist group." Moreover, the party was sanctioned to expose the shipment of war armament through the Suez Canal as a rupture of British neutrality and to popularise the anti-war struggle and 'Hands off Abyssinia'-campaign.[109] The League Against Imperialism, who had been among the first to react on the Italian aggression in December 1934,[110] received instructions to get in touch with the World Committee Against War and Fascism in Paris in order to form a delegation for Ethiopia.[111] One month later, in March 1935, the analysis and guidelines were updated by the ECCI,[112] and a reminder on the campaign was sent to the British, French, Swiss, Spanish and US American parties in April 1935.[113]

The translocation of the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat from Antwerp to Paris in early 1935 hampered its immediate capacity to react to the Ethiopian crisis. The ISH (Illegal) Secretariat, too, had received orders from the Comintern headquarters to link up with the World Committee Against War and Fascism and to receive instructions for the coordination of the 'Hands off Abyssinia'-campaign. Anticipating these instructions, the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat issued a call for a 'united front' against Italian fascism and imperialism in March 1935.[114] Like the previous 'Hands off China'-campaign, the ISH call was not an inclusive one as it stressed the need to defend the "Abyssinian people" and not "Abyssinia", i.e., the Emperor and the prevailing political system.[115] However, no such instructions were forthcoming which negatively affected the planning of the activities of the ISH.[116] Consequently, local anti-war agitation in

109 (Intercepted) Telegram Nos. 116–118 from P.C. to C.C., 3 March 1935, published in Nigel West, *MASK: MI5's Penetration of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (London and New York: Routledge), 147.

110 Annual Report of the League Against Imperialism 1934, 542/1/61, 15, RGASPI.

111 (Intercepted) Telegram No. 115 to Anti-Imperialist League, 3 March 1935, published in West, *MASK*, 147.

112 Ferdi: Ethiopie, sous la menance d'invasion imperialiste. Le fascisme italien se lance à une guerre de rapide en Afrique Orientale, 20.3.1935, 495/11/2, 10–27, RGASPI.

113 Peter [Kerrigan] to Harry Pollitt, [Moscow] no date, handwritten add: 3/VI/35, RGASPI 495/20/44, fol. 46. Similar circular letter in German in 495/20/609, 10–12, RGASPI.

114 L'I.M.D. pour l'unité d'action dans la lute contre guerre, *La Correspondence Internationale* 30–31 (13.IV.1935), 495/20/858, 491–493, RGASPI.

115 ISH: Ein neuer Krieg steht unmittelbar bevor – Kriegsmobilisierung Italiens gegen Abessinien (no date but likely written in February/March 1935), 534/5/242, 59–60, RGASPI.

116 Adolf [Shelley] to "Herrn Alexander [Lozovsky]," 3.4.1935, 534/5/242, 109, RGASPI.

the harbours and on board the ships was not organised and the 'Hands off Abyssinia'-campaign never took off in spring 1935.[117]

Responding to the inactivity in Europe, a special commission of the Comintern urged the World Committee and ISH to cooperate closely and ordered the ISH to prepare two brochures, one about the seamen and the war, another about the harbour workers and the war. Officially, the publications were to be published in the name of the World Committee as to shield off the ISH against any attacks by the government authorities. In addition, the World Committee and the ISH were to concentrate their anti-war agitation to a few ports as to achieve concrete results by the action and vigilance committees in their efforts to block and boycott the transportation of war material to East Africa.[118] Moscow's instructions reached Paris in June and comrade René at the RILU bureau discussed them with representatives of the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat and the World Committee in conjunction with the meeting of the ISH Executive Committee in early May 1935. The meeting decided to start a joint campaign although its outcome depended on the active participation of and support by the communist parties. Therefore, René urged the RILU headquarters to remind the parties of the decisions made at the XIII Plenum of the ECCI with regards to work among seamen, as their implementation had been slow in materialising into concrete action.[119]

The first official comments of the Comintern on the Ethiopian Crisis were made by Palmiro Togliatti, who presented a report on 'the preparation of a new world war by the imperialists and the tasks of the Communist International' at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern on 10–11 August 1935. According to him, Japanese imperialism and German fascism were the main advocates of war. Togliatti also attacked Italian imperialism, shortly touched upon the threat of an Italian invasion of Ethiopia and made a passionate declaration of solidarity with the Ethiopian people.[120] The resolution on Togliati's report concluded that Mussolini's impending invasion of Ethiopia was creating a new tension in relations between the imperialist Powers – echoing the position of

117 Report by Henri [Luigi Polano], André [Adolf Deter] and Ad[olf Shelly] on the activities of the ISH in 1935, January 1936, 534/5/245, 12–13, RGASPI.

118 Sitzung der Kommission zur Beratung der im Brief des Genossen Adolf (ISH) aufgeworfenen Fragen über die Zusammenarbeit mit dem Weltkomitee, 3.5.1935, 495/30/1082, 2, RGASPI. Members of the commission were Vassiliev, (Bela) Kun, Polano, Jusofovich and Heckert.

119 Report by René, 12.6.1935, 534/4/508, 112–115, RGASPI. The report was discussed by the RILU secretariat two weeks later, see 534/3/1042, 191–194, RGASPI.

120 Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti. A Biography* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 100–102.

Soviet foreign policy rather than articulating a clear-cut condemnation of Italy and a call to rally behind the cause of Ethiopia.[121]

In late August, the Comintern issued the "Declaration of Support for Abyssinia" and sent it to the Communist Parties of Brazil, Cuba, France, Great Britain, Italy, Panama, Portugal, South Africa, and the USA.[122] These were the first official instructions sent by Moscow, opening the way for the application of a 'United front'-policy in the Ethiopian campaign. Still, no public statement had been forthcoming and a representative of the CPGB inquired whether the ECCI is going to prepare one or if the European parties were supposed to issue a joint one?[123] Back in Moscow, Palmiro Togliatti's Secretariat was ordered to prepare a report on the Ethiopian crisis after the Seventh Congress. The ECCI Presidium discussed Togliatti's report on 26 September 1935.[124] A few days earlier, the ECCI Secretariat had published an appeal by Comintern General Secretary Georgi Dimitrov to form a united front with the Labour and Socialist International to prevent the escalation of the conflict into a new world war.[125] Furthermore, instructions were sent to the CPGB ordering them to establish contacts with the PCF in order to launch a broad public campaign along the popular front-doctrine, i.e., aiming to include the British Labour Party, the Socialist League, and the Independent Labour Party.[126]

The ISH Secretariat started to plan for a new campaign after the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in August 1935. It launched a call for an international boycott of Italian vessels and shipments of war equipment to Italy in September 1935. The ISH even tried to establish a 'unity front' of transport workers by calling – officially by ISH Secretary Charles Tillon – for a joint campaign with the ITF on 21 September 1935 but failed miserably as the ITF refused to recognise the ISH as an equal partner.[127] Dimitrov's invitation to the Labour and Socialist International to form a united front against Italian

121 E. H. Carr, *The Twilight of the Comintern 1930–1935* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1982), 413–416.

122 Declaration of Support for Abyssinia, 28.8.1935, 495/14/60, 22–25, RGASPI.

123 (Intercepted) Telegram No. 97 from West to Secretariat, 11 September 1935, published in West, *MASK*, 80.

124 Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti*, 104.

125 Telegram from the ECCI Secretariat to the LSI Secretariat on the Danger of War in Abyssinia, 23.9.1935, in *Degras* (ed.), *The Communist International*, 378.

126 (Intercepted) Telegram Nos. 380–383 from Peter and Ercoli [Togliatti], 22 September 1935, published in West, *MASK*, 165.

127 Tillon to "Gen[osse] Jusofowitsch," 12.10.35, 534/5/243, 116, 173–177, RGASPI; Report by René, 29.10.1935, 534/4/508, 146, RGASPI About the non–engagement of the ITF in the Abyssinia campaign, see Willy Buschak, *Edo Fimmen. Der schöne Traum von Europa und die Globalisierung* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2002), 188.

imperialism met a similar fate. His first call received no answer; a second call was sent to London a few days after the Italian attack on Ethiopia in early October.[128] Similar appeals for a united front against the Italian imperialism were made by the League Against Imperialism and World Committee Against War and Fascism.[129] All in vain, the Socialist and Labour International was not interested in a unified campaign instigated by the communists.

The ISH call for an international boycott had a global circulation. However, local boycotts had been initiated well before the circulation of the ISH call. In Trinidad, for example, the Longshore Workers' Branch of the Trinidad Labour Party had started its activities before they were contacted by the ISH Secretariat and were asked to join a worldwide boycott of Italian ships. The union members decided to back the ISH boycott and even issued a declaration of it in the *Trinidad Guardian* on 25 October 1935.[130]

The ISH Secretariat issued a new call for international unified cooperation when the Italian troops started its attack on Ethiopia in early October 1935. The call, which was published in the magazines of the national sections of the ISH, underlined that the need for a global blockade of war material to the Italian troops. This blockade was to be organised by the transport workers in the harbours and by the ship crews. Still, however, the vocabulary of the text echoed the communist position: Global support was called for the defence of the "Abyssinian people" and its "war of liberation" as well as for the defence of "world peace."[131]

The October 1935 call of the ISH was in part a response to local actions in Europe and Africa. The crew of five Greek ships protested against shipments of war material for the Italian troops. The harbour workers in Alexandria (Egypt), Cape Town and Durban (South Africa), Bombay (India) and Marseille (France) refused to load Italian ships. None of these activities, it seems, had been coordinated by the ISH Secretariat but by local committees and activists. Instead, the ISH Secretariat used the activities as expressions of international

128 Telegram from the ECCI Secretariat to the LSI Secretariat 7.10.1935, in Degras (ed.), *The Communist International*, 378.

129 R. Bridgeman, Statement by the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence for the Defence of the Independence and Territorial Integrity of Ethiopia, 8.10.1935, 542/1/62, 62–63, RGASPI.

130 Correspondence between the ISH Secretariat to the Secretary of the Stevedores' and Longshore Workers' Branch of the Trinidad Labour Party, 24.9.1935, reply from Trinidad, 6.11.1935, 534/5/243, 156–160, RGASPI. See further Featherstone, "Contested spaces of maritime organising," 166.

131 "Rädda freden … Upprop från ISH till alla världens sjötransportarbetare," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 5, no. 10–11 (1935): 6.

proletarian solidarity.[132] Similar strikes and boycotts were organised in the USA (San Pedro), the United Kingdom (Cardiff; London), France (Port Sant-Louis-Du-Rhone; Marseille), Belgium (Antwerp), Greece (Piraeus), Egypt (Port Said), Algeria (Bone) and Southwest Africa/Namibia (Lüderitz Bay). Although they were listed in the ISH magazines, these actions, too, had either been organised by local anti-war committees, sections of trade unions or ship crews that had few, if any connections to the ISH Secretariat.[133]

Nevertheless, the ISH Secretariat continued its campaign and issued several calls for a boycott of Italian ships throughout the autumn of 1935. In November, the RILU bureau in Paris reported that ITF Secretary Edo Fimmen and the ISH had started discussions on joint actions.[134] However, nothing came out of these negotiations. Disappointed about the negative stance of the ITF, the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat published the correspondence on its attempt to establish a united front.[135] If the ISH publication had any effects is doubtful, as no joint actions were forthcoming in the ports.[136] At this point, however, the campaign had developed – as in 1934 – into a general campaign against the impending Imperialist War. In November 1935, the ECCI instructed the RILU and its affiliated organisations, including the ISH and the ITUCNW, to intensify the campaign against Fascist Italy and to broaden it to include actions against Germany and Japan:

> The beginning of military operations in Abyssinia increases the danger of war in Europe and especially the danger of a military attack by fascist Germany on Lithuania to conquer the Memel district and launch a war against the Soviet Union; Czechoslovakia and Austria are also in danger of an attack by German fascism. [...] The beginning of the war in East Africa and the unleashing of all imperialist desires in Europe is inevitably

132 List of slogans, 534/5/243, 184, RGASPI. See further Featherstone, "Contested spaces of maritime organizing," 165–168.

133 "Internationellt," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 6, no. 1 (1936): 10; "Sjötransportarbetarnas kamp mot det italienska kriget i Abessinien," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 6, no. 4 (1936): 3. The actions and boycotts against Italian vessels noted in *The Waterfront Worker* during late 1935/early 1936, for instance, had no connections to the ISH but had been organised by local groups.

134 Report by René, Gaston and Robert, 12.11.1935, RGASPI 534/4/508, 155, RGASPI.

135 ISH, For the Unity of the Transport Workers in the Struggle Against War – Correspondence between the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) regarding Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia, December 1935, 534/5/243, 173–177, RGASPI.

136 Report by Gaston, Robert and René, 3.12.1935, 534/4/508, 159–162, RGASPI.

> bound to lead to a widening of the war of plunder of Japan in China and to new anti-Soviet provocations by Japan."[137]

In early January 1936, the ISH Secretariat followed suit and published a call for unified action against Italian and Japanese Imperialism. What haunted was the fear of an assault on the Soviet Union: "The Italo-Abyssinia conflict commands our attention today, tomorrow the conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union." The members of the national sections of the ISH were urged to stop the transportation of war materials to the Horn of Africa …[138]

It is doubtful if the ISH appeal of January 1936 had any impact. Few of its national sections existed anymore at this point and effective actions were limited to a few port cities in Europe. Even the ISH leadership had to admit that their appeal had no effect.[139] When the Italian troops entered Addis Ababa in May 1936, the ISH had been silent for over 5 months.

4 Dissolution

The disbandment of the ISH was a direct consequence of the strategic reorientation in Moscow in 1933/34. Although the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine had not been revoked in public, the opening for a united front between the communists, socialists and left-wing leaning bourgeois parties in France and Spain, the so-called Popular Front, signalled a re-orientation at the Comintern headquarters. In fact, the plan of amalgamating the RILU with the Amsterdam International was among the first tactical steps outlined in Moscow. The discussions at the XIII Plenum of the ECCI and especially at the Commission for work among seamen in December 1933 set the turn also for future work among maritime transport workers by focusing on the opposition within the ITF-affiliated unions and, as a consequent end goal, to amalgamate the ISH with the ITF. 'Class-Against-Class'-rhetoric was to be silenced as to give room to strengthen the opposition within the ITF-affiliated unions.

Moscow notified the parties about its new tactical considerations through the December 1933 Resolution on work among seamen and harbour workers. The application of the December 1933 Resolution was detrimental to the

137 The Struggle against the Italian attack on Abyssinia and against the activisation of the military aggression of Germany and Japan, 13.11.1935, 495/20/1, 16–19, RGASPI.

138 Einheitsaktion gegen den japanischen Imperialismus, 3.1.1936, 534/5/245, 1–3, RGASPI.

139 Bericht über die Internationalen Seeleuteklubs und einige Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, 31.3.1936, 534/5/245, 107–117, RGASPI.

global outreach of the ISH. By 1934, it was evident for all that the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat had ceased to be a global player (if it ever had been one). Neither the Copenhagen nor the Antwerp Secretariat had any direct links to revolutionary opposition groups or red unions in the Pacific or Atlantic region; its core units were the few remaining Interclubs in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. Other Interclubs, such as those in New York and Montevideo, were not directly linked to the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat, and none of the Interclubs were at any point monitored or directed by it.

The winding up of the ISH as a global platform for revolutionary trade union opposition units and red unions started with the dissolution of its sections in England and the USA in 1934. The SMM was quietly buried. The MWIU had been involved in the strikes on the US West and East Coast in 1934 but analysing its rather limited impact, the CPUSA favoured its liquidation. Moscow sent an order in December 1934 to dissolve the MWIU: The CPUSA was to focus on working through the opposition in the International Seamen's Union (ISU); the MWIU journal *The Marine Worker's Voice* was to remain as the mouthpiece of the ISU-opposition.[140] Similar directives were sent to Sweden a few month later; the RFO was dissolved, its journal *Hamn- och sjöproletären* was to continue as the mouthpiece of the SKP sjöcell (sea cell) and the communist fraction in the seamen's union.[141] Karlis Ulmanis' putsch on 15 May 1934 marked the end of the communist-controlled Latvian Seamen's Union. The opposition went underground and was incapable to link up with the ISH Secretariat.[142] In Danzig and Finland, too, the (illegal) ISH sections ceased to exist by 1934/35. In 1935, negotiations started on amalgamating the FUMP with the other French seamen's unions.[143] By October 1935, the ISH numbered but one legal national section, the Danish Stokers' Union, and two illegal ones, namely the Greek and Italian seamen's unions.[144]

Moscow's ultimate aim had been to merger the ISH with the ITF. The ISH Secretariat would not be abolished but remain as the mouthpiece of the opposition within the ITF and its affiliated unions. Most importantly, the ISH was to be transformed into a global platform within the ITF embracing all non-affiliated unions of maritime transport workers in Africa, Asia and Latin

140 Vernon L. Pedersen, "It's Hard to be Popular: The Marine Workers Industrial Union and the Coming of the Popular Front," *American Communist History* 11, no. 3 (2012): 285–293. See also Pedersen, *The Communist Party on the American Waterfront*.

141 Weiss, *För kampen internationellt!*, 395.

142 Bericht von Avotin [Lambert], no date [stamp: 12.4.35], 534/5/241, 147–148, RGASPI.

143 Report by René, Gaston and Robert, 12.11.1935, 534/4/508, 155–157, RGASPI.

144 NN to "Liebe Freunde," 5.10.1935, 534/5/243, 112, RGASPI.

America. The kick-off for such vaulting visions were regional conferences to be organised all over the world …[145]

The transformation of the ISH never materialised. The ISH (Illegal) Secretariat attempted to intervene at the congress of the Swedish Seamen's Union in October 1935 but failed miserably. The communist fraction had tried to establish a united front with the socialists in 1935, and the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat believed that the united opposition would constitute the majority at the congress. Shelley, and probably Deter, travelled to Sweden to instruct the communist delegates at the congress.[146] The united front turned out to be a chimera – the socialists did not support the communists at the congress. Tactics failed: Only six of the pre-elected 57 delegates were communists and the congress rejected all of their motions.[147] Deter and Shelley sent a critical note to the Swedish Party and criticised it for its lukewarm engagement in pushing for a united front in the seamen's union.[148]

Autumn 1935 was the swan song of the ISH. The ITF turned down the invitations for the establishment of a united front. The outcome of the Swedish congress cut the plans for a Scandinavian secretariat. The ISH (Illegal) Secretariat was in decay – Deter was ordered to work at the illegal secretariat of the German Party in Paris, Shelley complained about being exhausted, and Polano awaited his transfer to Latin America.[149] By early November, the ISH existed but in name. Work among the maritime transport workers had been transferred to the parties; the revolutionary trade union opposition had ceased to exist. What was left were the Interclubs, and the ISH-troika Deter-Polano-Shelley decided to concentrate their efforts on them.[150]

The last chapter of the ISH as a member organisation closed when the Danish Stokers' Union cut its ties in spring 1936. The U-turn of the Comintern and the official implementation of the 'Popular Front'-doctrine after August

145 Memorandum über die Arten der internationalen Arbeit unter den Wassertransportarbeitern, besonders im Zusammenhang mit dem geplanten Welteinheitskongress, und über die Perspektiven der ISH, 1.9.1935, 534/5/243, 83–88, RGASPI; NN to "Liebe Freunde," 5.10.1935, 534/5/243, 112, RGASPI.

146 Ad[olf Shelley], Henri [Polano] & André [Deter], Report on 'Seeleutegewerkschaft Schweden', 24.10.1935, 534/5/243, 125–126, RGASPI.

147 "Sjöfolket ville icke ha kommunister," *Sjömannen* 9 (1935): 286; "Om kongressen," *Sjömannen* 10 (1935): 305–306.

148 "Komfraktion des Sekretariats der ISH" to "Sekretariat der KP. Schwedens," 1.10.1935, 534/5/243, 127–128, RGASPI.

149 Adolf [Shelley] to "Sehr geehrter Herr Alexander," 5.10.1935, 534/5/243, 115, RGASPI.

150 Adolf [Shelley], Henri [Polano], André [Deter] to RILU, 6.11.1935, 534/5/243, 149–150, RGASPI.

1935 also required the Danish ISH-affiliated stokers' union to follow suit.[151] However, the social democratic-controlled unions in Denmark repelled the invitations of the communists.[152] The Danish question was discussed at a meeting in Moscow in February 1936. Shelley and Jensen were present, the latter's objection to the amalgamation was overruled.[153] Deter and Polano as well as the ISH Executive Committee (or what was left of it; probably only the Belgian, French, and Dutch comrades) accepted the secession of the Danish Stokers' Union in March 1936.[154] The union applied for its re-entrance to the ITF at the conference of the Scandinavian Transport Federation in June 1936. At this point, the ISH had already ceased to exist.

4.1 *Back to Square One: A Liaison Office for Interclubs*

The last signs of the ISH are hazy. The legal secretariat was located in Rouen but used Tillon's office in Paris as its official post box for its correspondence; see Figure 37.[155] The illegal secretariat operated from Paris, consisting of Deter, Polano and Shelley as well as three assisting functionaries until early 1936. At least two of the external members, comrades 'Paul' and 'Gertrud', seem to have been members of the RILU Paris Bureau whereas the third member, 'Boris Ginzburger', was a member of the PCF. Shelley received instructions in late December 1935 to travel to Moscow.[156] Ten days before his departure, an internal control commission consisting of comrades André (Adolf Deter), Henri (Luigi Polano) and 'Barri' (presumably Bari of the RILU bureau in Paris) made an investigation of the accounts of the illegal secretariat. The audit had been prompted by rumours about financial irregularities of the ISH but the investigation cleared Shelley and he was allowed to leave Paris.[157]

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151 Sitzung der Exelutive der RGI am 7.2.1936: Unsere Gewerkschaftsarbeit in Dänemark und die spezielle Lage im Seeheizerverband. Referat Genosse Jensen, 534/3/1089, 26–27, RGASPI.

152 NN to "Werte Genossen," 13.8.1935, 534/5/243, 68, RGASPI; NN to "Liebe Freunde," 5.10.1935, 534/5/243, 112, RGASPI.

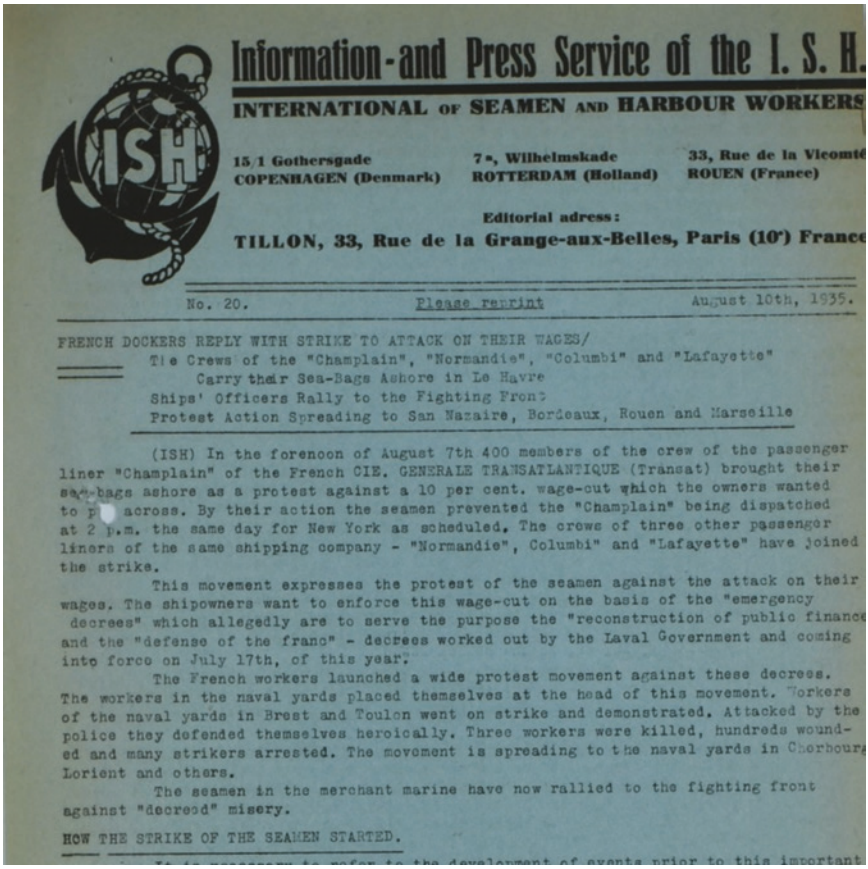
153 Sitzung der Exelutive der RGI am 7.2.1936: Unsere Gewerkschaftsarbeit in Dänemark und die spezielle Lage im Seeheizerverband, 534/3/1089, 68, RGASPI.

154 André [Deter] and Henri [Polano] to "Komfraktion der RGI," 26.3.1936, 534/5/245, 62, RGASPI; Exekutivkommitee der ISH an Hauptleitung des Seeheizerverbandes Dänemarks, no date, 534/5/245, 140–145, RGASPI. I have not found any agenda for the ISH Executive Committee Meeting in March 1936, presumably held in Paris?

155 As stated on the letterhead of the ISH Bulletin, *Service d'Information et de Presse de l'IMD*. Some of its issues are filed in 534/5/246, RGASPI.

156 Report by René, 24.12.1935, 534/4/508, 167–171, RGASPI.

157 Boris Ginzburger (signed) to NN, Paris 29.3.1937. This letter is one of the few documents about Shelley's fate. It is a type-written letter added with hand-written insertions of names



Information-and Press Service of the I. S. H.

INTERNATIONAL OF SEAMEN AND HARBOUR WORKERS

15/1 Gothersgade COPENHAGEN (Denmark) | 7-9, Wilhelmskade ROTTERDAM (Holland) | 33, Rue de la Vicomté ROUEN (France)

Editorial adress:

TILLON, 33, Rue de la Grange-aux-Belles, Paris (10e) France

No. 20. Please reprint August 10th, 1935.

FRENCH DOCKERS REPLY WITH STRIKE TO ATTACK ON THEIR WAGES/
The Crews of the "Champlain", "Normandie", "Columbi" and "Lafayette"
Carry their Sea-Bags Ashore in Le Havre
Ships' Officers Rally to the Fighting Front
Protest Action Spreading to San Nazaire, Bordeaux, Rouen and Marseille

(ISH) In the forenoon of August 7th 400 members of the crew of the passenger liner "Champlain" of the French CIE. GENERALE TRANSATLANTIQUE (Transat) brought their sea-bags ashore as a protest against a 10 per cent. wage-cut which the owners wanted to put across. By their action the seamen prevented the "Champlain" being dispatched at 2 p.m. the same day for New York as scheduled. The crews of three other passenger liners of the same shipping company - "Normandie", Columbi" and "Lafayette" have joined the strike.

This movement expresses the protest of the seamen against the attack on their wages. The shipowners want to enforce this wage-cut on the basis of the "emergency decrees" which allegedly are to serve the purpose the "reconstruction of public finance and the "defense of the franc" - decrees worked out by the Laval Government and coming into force on July 17th, of this year.

The French workers launched a wide protest movement against these decrees. The workers in the naval yards placed themselves at the head of this movement. Workers of the naval yards in Brest and Toulon went on strike and demonstrated. Attacked by the police they defended themselves heroically. Three workers were killed, hundreds wounded and many strikers arrested. The movement is spreading to the naval yards in Cherbourg Lorient and others.

The seamen in the merchant marine have now rallied to the fighting front against "decreed" misery.

HOW THE STRIKE OF THE SEAMEN STARTED.

FIGURE 37 *Information and Press Service of the ISH*, the bulletin published by the ISH Secretariat from Rouen/Paris when the organisation had shrunk into a mere liaison office for Interclubs; No 20 of 10 August 1935, filed in HO 144/20657, TNA.

and organisations as well as the signature 'Boris Ginzburger'. The original letter, most probably in hand-writing, had been addressed to someone at the French Party. A typed copy of the letter was sent by comrade Duclos to Moscow and, for reasons not known, one copy of it (or was it the original dispatch?) is filed in Luigi Polano's personal file, 495/221/425, 81–83, RGASPI, indicating that it either was used by him in his investigation on the ISH in spring 1937 or was added to his personal file by someone at the International Control Commission as part of an internal assessment of Polano. 'Boris Ginzburger' was perhaps the alias of French communist Roger Walter Ginsburger (1901–1980), who assumed the name Pierre Villon as a member of the French Resistance. Ginzburger is known to have worked as ISH instructor in Antwerp in 1935 and collaborated with ISH Secretary Charles Tillon, see Claude Willard, "Villon, Pierre," (2019) *Le Maitron*, https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article134754.

The approvement of the internal control commission did not clear the air but resulted in the intervention of comrade Paul who claimed the investigation to be faulty and called for the nomination of a new control commission. Deter protested, refuted Paul's insinuations about Shelley having added forged receipts to the ISH accounts, and demanded to wait for Shelley's return to hear his explanation. However, Deter's protests were overruled and a second internal control commission was nominated, consisting of comrades 'Robert', 'Barri' and Henri (Luigi Polano). A thorough investigation followed with disastrous results: The accounts were declared a forgery as several receipts consisted falsifications and irregularities. The commission criticised Deter, who had been in charge of the accounts, for having failed to check Shelley's receipts and use of ISH funds. Deter, in turn, responded that he had trusted Shelley and there never was any suspicion against him. On the other hand, comrade Robert rejected Ginzburger's call for an investigation on the cooperation between the ISH and the PCF. According to him, the task of the commission was to check the accounts of the ISH, not its operations. Ginzburger, however, received a box containing the receipts of the ISH and was ordered to hide them in a safe place.[158]

Shelley never returned to Paris. Documentation about his translocation is lacking although he seems to have been working for the ISH Sovbureau until March 1936 when he disappeared from the stage.[159] Whether the investigation on the ISH accounts and the accusations of falsifications were used against him is not known. None of his comrades knew what had happened to him, only a German surveillance report from the Second World War revealed that he was one of the millions who succumbed during Stalin's purges and the Great Terror. Accused for having a bourgeois background, for serving as an officer in the Polish army, and for being a Polish spy during the 1920's, he was arrested by the NKVD on 25 July 1937, sentenced to death on 25 December 1937 and shot the same day, most probably in the cellar of the Lubyanka Building in Moscow.[160]

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158 Letter by Boris Ginzburger, Paris 29.3.1937, 495/221/425, 82–83, RGASPI.

159 My claim of Shelley placement at the ISH Sovbureau rests on two letters addressed to him. The first one was sent by Deter about the committee of the unemployed in Antwerp being infested by fascists, see André to "Alexander" with handwritten add: "Für Adolf," 9.1.1936, 534/5/245, 10, RGASPI. The second letter contained information about Hermann Knüfken and his activities in Antwerp, see "Für Adolf," no date [stamp: 13.3.1936], 534/5/245, 60–61, RGASPI.

160 "Alfred Brunon Bem," https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Brunon_Bem; Wladislaw Hedeler, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen bei der Erstellung von Kollektivbiographien," in *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt*, eds. Michael Buckmüller und Klaus Meschkat

The downscaling of the ISH Illegal Secretariat was a consequence of the dissolution of the ISH as the mouthpiece of the red seamen's unions and the revolutionary trade union oppositions within the maritime transport workers' unions. None of them existed anymore by spring 1936; the red seamen's unions and revolutionary trade union oppositions had either been dissolved or had amalgamated with the existing unions. The communist fractions within the unions were part of the national parties, not the ISH. What remained were the Interclubs whose status remained to be defined – were they to constitute the backbone of a transformed ISH or to be transferred to the national unions? The members of the ISH Illegal Secretariat pushed for the first alternative, namely to transform the ISH into the headquarters for the dissemination of propaganda via the Interclubs. Officially, local groups rather than the ISH were to operate the Interclubs.[161] Seemingly, the RILU Secretariat initially backed the idea as is evident in its outline for future work in the Caribbean, projecting the ISH to organise Interclubs in Colon and Panama.[162]

Among the public activities of the ISH in late 1935/early 1936 were its calls for an international anti-war campaign and boycott of the transport of military material to Italy and Japan. The turn-out was rather meagre as the campaigns were concentrated to ports with existing Interclubs, namely Copenhagen, Dunkirk, Esbjerg, Marseille, New York, Rotterdam, Rouen and Stockholm, and liaison persons stationed in Antwerp, Bergen, Calais, Karlshamn, London, Luleå, Narvik, Sundsvall and Trondheim. Top priority was on work in the French and Scandinavian ports as the ISH Illegal Secretariat regarded them to be of highest strategic importance.[163] By March 1936, however, the ISH leadership must have recognized that its last remaining pillar was a hollow one as

(Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2007), 416. On the purges within the Comintern during the Great Terror, see further Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (Yale: Yale University Press, updated and abridged version 2010 [1999]).

161 Bericht über die Internationalen Seeleuteklubs und einige Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, 31.3.1936, 534/5/245, 107–117, RGASPI. The author(s) of the report has not been identified. The document itself was written in Moscow, perhaps by Shelley who worked at that point at the ISH Sovbureau. However, it is likely that the author used material forwarded by the ISH Illegal Secretariat such as excerpts of evaluation reports on the Interclubs in Copenhagen, Rotterdam and Stockholm. Remarks in the beginning of the text points towards the text being at least drafted by Deter and Polano.

162 Anträge zur Arbeit in Zentralamerika, 15.2.1935, 534/5/1037, 26, RGASPI. If the ISH was ever instructed to establish the proposed Interclubs is not known. Anyway, these plans never materialised.

163 Henri [Polano], André [Deter] and Ad [Shelley] to "Cher camarade," Report on activities 1935/36, 534/5/245, 12–34, RGASPI.

the ISH Illegal Secretariat lacked the financial and organisational capacity to support and monitor the activities of the Interclubs.[164]

The members of the ISH Illegal Secretariat made an evaluation of the situation in March 1936. None of the Interclubs had received any funding from the ISH since 1933 and the national parties had been lukewarm in supporting their activities. Several Interclubs had ceased to exist, notably those in England and the USA. Others were not anymore subordinate to the ISH, such as those in France. Hitherto, the Interclubs had worked in close cooperation with local and national revolutionary trade union opposition groups but as these units had either disappeared or been amalgamated, the remaining Interclubs in Denmark (Copenhagen and Esbjerg), France (Marseille, Rouen and Dunkirk), the Netherlands (Rotterdam) and New York (the Scandinavian Seamen's Club, a new establishment founded in 1935, see below) as well as the liaison offices in Antwerp, Gothenburg, Liverpool, Malmoe, Oslo, San Francisco and Vancouver were to be run as joint establishments by the communists and socialists. Their main task was to focus on work among foreign seamen as well as to propagate for the 'unity' within the trade unions. Therefore, following the example of the Scandinavian unions who established the Scandinavian Seamen's Club in New York, other national maritime unions, such as the English, French and Greek, were to establish liaison offices or branches in foreign ports.[165]

Deter and Polano outlined several scenarios for a future operational superstructure of the Interclubs. Most of the national parties, they claimed, were in favour of transferring all Interclubs to the ITF as part of a joint agreement between the ITF and the ISH. The two comrades rejected the idea, declaring that such a move would inevitably lead to the liquidation of the Interclubs as the ITF and the national unions had little interest of supporting their operations. Instead, they proposed the formation of a new unit, termed 'Society for the support of the international seamen's clubs' (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der internationalen Seeleuteclubs). The idea was to transform the ISH into the named cover organisation, adding to its leadership a group of well-known public persons such as Jensen and Tillon of the legal ISH, the British veteran trade unionist Tom Mann, the German author Theodor Plivier, as well as leading labour union leaders such Bevin, Fimmen and Spence. The crux of the matter was that the plan had to be approved in Moscow.[166]

164 Bericht über die Internationalen Seemannsklubs und einige Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, 31.3.1936, 534/5/245, 107–117, RGASPI.

165 Bericht über die Internationalen Seeleuteklubs und einige Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, 31.3.1936, 534/5/245, 107–117, RGASPI.

166 Bericht über die Internationalen Seeleuteklubs und einige Vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, 31.3.1936, 534/5/245, 113–114, RGASPI.

The new guidelines reflected the establishment of the Scandinavian Seamen's Club in Brooklyn, New York in 1935. Initially, the club closely cooperated with the Norwegian Seamen's and Stokers' Union. However, the Norwegians cut their support when they realised that the club was run by the communists, whereupon the club was supported by the Danish and Swedish unions.[167] Its intimate connection to the communists was not farfetched. In 1938, Richard Jensen strongly backed the nomination of Georg Hegner as head of the club in Brooklyn.[168] A similar attempt to establish a club for Greek seamen in New York was made in 1936. Polano received a positive answer from 'Angelos' who stated that the Spartacus Educational Club was frequented by Greek seamen as did other workers of Greek nationality.[169] This was highly interesting news as the Spartacus Educational Club claimed to be a worker's club and attracted the radical segment of the Greek seamen (in comparison to the Greek club run by the Seamen's Church Institute at 25 South Street) and was added on the list on recipients of literature from the ISH.[170] Moreover, at one point there also existed a section for French seamen at the Clarté office in New York, although not much is known about it apart from a reference to it in the mailing list of ISH publications (see Map 4 and Table 17).

Similar positive news were also heard from Chile, England and South Africa. In spring 1936, a Chilean comrade visited the ISH Illegal Secretariat and Deter and Polano convinced him about the idea to set up an Interclub in Valparaiso. The comrade returned to Chile and managed to accomplish his mission, backed by the "progressive segments" among the Chilean seamen. Similar to the Greek club in New York, the establishment in Valparaiso was not an outright Interclub or used the name in public but rather a "centre for the educational and cultural uplift of seamen."[171] In Liverpool, a group of dockers and seamen met in mid-November 1936 to launch an Interclub.[172] In Cape Town,

167 Finn Olstad, "Norsk sjømann eller internasjonal proletar? Striden mellom Norsk sjømannsforbund og den skandinaviske sjømannsklubben 1935–41," *Arbeiderhistorie* (2010): 101–119.

168 Handwritten letter by Richard Jensen "Kort udlalelse angaaende Georg Hegner Rejse til Amerika," enclosed in 495/208/41, 43 – 46, RGASPI; German translation of Jensen's letter, dated 5.7.1938, in 495/208/281, 17–19, RGASPI.

169 Letter from "Angelos" to Henry [Luigi Polano], New York 21.9.1936, 534/5/246, 24, RGASPI.

170 "Henry: Einige Bemerkungen," in Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 35, RGASPI.

171 "Henry: Einige Bemerkungen," in Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 35, RGASPI.

172 Seamen's and Dockers' Group. Meeting held Sunday, October 25th [1936]. [Copy] Received November 17th, 1936, 534/5/246, 58–59, RGASPI.

MAP 4 Global extension of Interclubs and liaison offices, 1936

TABLE 17 List of Interclubs, ca 1936/37

Name	Address	Country
[no information]	Gomez, Cochrane 552, Valparaiso	Chile
International Seamen's Club	15/1 Gothersgade, Copenhagen	Denmark
Havnearbeiders Club	Toldbodgade 16, Copenhagen	Denmark
Trade Union and Workers' Social Club	11 George Street, Glasgow	Scotland
Club International des Marins	9, rue de l'Ecluse des Bergues, Dunkerque	France
Synd. des Dockers, Bourse du Travail	Rue de l'Academie, Marseille	France
Spartacus Educational Club	269 W. 25th Street, New York	USA
Interklubb	Kronhusgatan 1 B, Gothenburg	Sweden
International Seamen's Club	Brunnsgränd 4 2 tr., Stockholm	Sweden
Club de Marins	Calle Ancha No. 1, Barcelona	Spain
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	202 South Broadway, Baltimore	USA
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	1433 Annunciation Street, New Orleans	USA
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	565 Henry Street, Brookly, New York	USA
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	257, West Bute Street, Norfolk	USA
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	23rd Drum Street, San Francisco	USA
Scandinavian Seamen's Club	903, S. Palos Verdes Street, San Pedro, Cal.	USA
Clarté	148 West 46th Street, Room 606, New York	USA
Union Recreation Center	32 Clay Street, San Francisco	USA

SOURCE: LIST OF ADDRESSES OF CLUBS, 2.3.1937, 534/5/247, 71, RGASPI

a "dockers' cell" (Dockerzelle) had been formed after an English comrade had visited the port on a mission to set up an Interclub. The dockers' cell was in contact with Polano and started to receive anti-fascist propaganda material for distribution among German and Italian crews.[173]

173 "Henry: Einige Bemerkungen," in Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date

Luigi Polano was called back to Moscow during the latter half of 1936 and resumed his work at the ISH Sovbureau (or what was left of it). At this point, the ISH Sovbureau seems to have shrunk into a liaison office for the dissemination of material in the Pacific while the ISH Illegal Secretariat in Paris covered the Atlantic. The contours of the operations of the ISH in fall 1936 is grasped in a letter from comrade "Jack" of the "Bureau du Pacific" in Los Angeles to Polano. Jack's office was the PPTUS (or what was left of it) and he informed about the work among Japanese and Chinese seamen. The assistance of the ISH was highly esteemed, Jack noted, as the Japanese printed matters by the PPTUS were distributed through the global nodes of the ISH (i.e., the remaining Interclubs). "Before the Japanese were watching all ships from US. Now they have to worry about ships from all countries and they are very much alarmed. They really imagine that tons of literature gets in every month. The little incidence reported at Cape Town is valuable especially because now they realise that there is not a single important port that is 'safe' from dangerous thoughts." In similar ways did agitation material reach Chinese seamen, including the PPTUS publication the "Chinese Seamen", mainly distributed via Liverpool.[174]

4.2 *"They Shall not Pass!": Spain and the ISH*

Much has been written about the involvement of the Comintern and especially the Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War.[175] The international solidarity campaigns in support of the victims of the Spanish Civil War as well as the International Brigades are well documented and analysed, both from a national, transnational and international perspective. Although the Ethiopian conflict had elicited a global anti-fascist consciousness regardless of skin colour, the Great Powers had prevented concrete actions to fight Italian imperialism. For people activated and radicalised during the Ethiopian conflict, the civil war in Spain became a new opportunity to

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[ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 35, RGASPI. I have not been able to trace the correspondence from the docker's cell in Cape Town.

174 Lettre du comr Jack, responsible du Bureau du Pacifique (Los Angeles), "Dear Henry," 10.11.1936, 534/5/246, 53, RGASPI.

175 Among others, E.H. Carr, *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Pantheon Books, 1984); Svetlana Pozharskaya, "Comintern and the Spanish Civil War," *Ebre* 38, no. 1 (2003): 47–56; Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004); Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

manifest their proletarian solidarity by volunteering in the pro-Republican International Brigades.[176]

The decision to set up the International Brigades had been made by the Executive Committee of the Comintern in September 1936. The recruitment was to be carried out by the national communist parties. As the European governments, including the German and Italian, as well as the Soviet Union, had signed a non-intervention treaty to prevent escalation of the conflict on 24 August 1936, the enlistment to the International Brigades became illegal. For example, the Danish Parliament passed a law prohibiting volunteers from going to Spain on February 25, 1937; in Sweden, a similar ban was adopted on March 3, in Norway on March 17.[177]

The nationalist coup attempt and the subsequent civil war in Spain became the launching point for the first unified international anti-fascist solidarity campaign. The initiative was taken by the World Committee on War and Fascism on 30 July 1936 when it sent a telegram to the Labour and Socialist International to call for joint actions. The World Committee was formally non-partisan, but advocated the idea of the People's Front as part of the defence against fascism and Nazism. However, the social democrats regarded the World Committee as a disguised communist organisation and were initially suspicious of plans to set up a coordination committee for international humanitarian aid for Spain. The initiative was discussed during late summer before the initiators succeeded in launching the so-called Coordination Committee at a conference on 7–11 September in Paris. In parallel with this initiative, the Labour and Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions set up the 'Spanish committee of the International Solidarity Fund' as part of the Matteotti Fund. The two committees organised relief and humanitarian aid to Republican Spain until 1939; the International Solidarity Fund distributed humanitarian aid worth approximately 50 million French franc, while

176 David Featherstone, "Black internationalism, Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, and the Spatial Politics of Antifascism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no. 6 (2013): 1406–20; David Featherstone, "Black internationalism, international communism and anti-fascist political trajectories: African-American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War," *Twentieth Century Communism – A Journal of International History* 7 (2014): 9–40; Gleb J. Albert, ""To help the Republicans not just by donations and rallies, but with the rifle": Militant solidarity with the Spanish Republic in the Soviet Union, 1936–1937," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21, no. 4 (2014): 501–518.

177 Claes-Göran Jönsson, "SKP och den svenska spanienrörelsen," *Arkiv för arbetarhistoria* 4 (1973): 9; Svend Rybner, "Fairyland – Nordic Communism and the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939," in *Red Star in the North: Communism in the Nordic Countries*, eds. Åsmund Egge and Svend Rybner (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk, 2015), 228–229.

the Coordination Committee's contribution amounted to about 800 million French franc.[178]

At the same time as the conflict escalated in Spain, the purges in the Soviet Union culminated in the Moscow trial in August 1936. Foreign communists were also affected.[179] Concerns spread among maritime transport workers: why, what was going on? Socialists and social democrats raised critical questions, the communists were at loss.[180]

The ISH never launched a campaign to support of the Spanish government or to recruit volunteers for the International Brigades. It simply did not have the authorisation to do so as agitation and propaganda work among the maritime transport workers had been transferred to the communist parties and their sea cells. However, due to the ban on the recruitment of volunteers, this had to be conducted as a covert mission. Key centres for mobilising volunteers were the Interclubs where information and recruitment actions could be carried out outside the authorities' supervision and control. Although the ISH did not any longer control the few remaining Interclubs, the ISH Illegal Secretariat initially tried to coordinate their activities in tandem with those of the local sea cells and communist parties.[181]

The clandestine recruitment campaign on the waterfront must have benefitted from anti-Nazi demonstrations in July. Called by the ISH Secretariat to protest against the death sentence of Etkar André by the Hamburg court, demonstrations were organised by the communists in Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.[182]

The radicalisation and the increased critical global awareness among maritime transport workers can be exemplified by two texts published in the Swedish journal *Hamn- och sjöproletären* in 1936. In the first, the author lamented that violence and destruction had triumphed in Ethiopia. Fascism meant nothing but war, and Fascist Italy had violated the rules of the war when using poison

178 Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International*, 218; Bertel Lundvik, *Solidaritet och partitaktik. Den svenska arbetarrörelsen och spanska inbördeskriget 1936–39* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1980): 47–50, 104–105.

179 William J. Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). See further the discussion on the "topography of terror" in Karl Schlögel, *Terror und Traum: Moskau 1937* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2008).

180 "Varför?," *Sjömannen* 9 (1936): 265–268.

181 "Spanish Civil War and the Seafarers and Dockers," https://scwharbour3639.wordpress.com/over/, checked 2.3.2018.

182 "Edgar André zum Tode verurteilt!" *Informations- und Pressedienst der ISH* Nr 70, 16. juli 1936, filed in 539/3/560, 217–218, RGASPI.

gases in its warfare. The lesson of the defeat in Ethiopia was that the fight against fascism required a united front and unified action.[183] Just as fascism seemed to celebrate its greatest triumph, the second text was published – the strike of the Spanish seamen had ended in total victory for the workers! None of the previous strikes had succeeded in forcing the shipowners and capitalists to capitulate and agree to revolutionary improvements for the seamen: 8-hour workday for all occupational groups in the Spanish merchant fleet and general increase of salaries. In addition, the crew was given the right to control the use of food allowances. Hiring agencies were regulated and uniform mustering expeditions would be set up in each port. Overtime work would be paid, paid holidays were introduced. Sensational was the clause that shipowners who laid up ships were obliged to hire security guards on a daily basis for surveillance and other work on the laid up vessels. These security guards would consist of mariners who were over 45 years old.[184] If Ethiopia emerged as the antithesis in the fight against fascism, the Spanish Second Republic materialised as the mariners' Promised Land. The nationalist coup d'état in July 1936 was therefore nothing but a combined fascist-capitalist attack on the working class.

The maritime transport workers and their unions supported Republican Spain at an early stage. So did the ISH Secretariat, which assigned itself the role as a channel for disseminating news about Spain. Already at the end of August 1936, the ISH Secretariat published a plea for solidarity with the Spanish people.[185] News and information about anti-fascist actions conducted by the Interclubs in support of Republican Spain followed during autumn although the role of the ISH Secretariat as instigator of the activities is unclear.[186]

4.3 *The Last Mustering: Paris, January 1937*

Representatives of the Interclubs gathered in Paris in January 1937 to discuss the campaign in support for Republican Spain, the illegal recruitment of volunteers to the International Brigades, and the future work of the Interclubs.

183 "Första etappen i Mussolinis erövringskrig," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 6, no. 5 (1936): 7.

184 "Stor seger för spanska sjöfolket," *Hamn- och sjöproletären* 6, no. 6 (1936): 8.

185 "Solidarité avec le peuple Espagnol!," *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.* No. 76, 29.8.1936, 534/5/246, 14–17, RGASPI.

186 Only a few issues of the autumn 1936 ISH Bulletin are archived, all of them containing information of actions in support of Republican Spain: *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.*, No. 77, 3.9.1936, 534/5/246, 21–23; *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.*, No. 81, 8.10.1936, 534/5/246, 26–28; *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.*, No. 82, 15.10.1936, 534/5/246, 29–32; *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.*, No. 90, 18.11.1936, 534/5/246, 33–35; *Service d'information et de Presse de l'I.M.D.*, No. 93, 3.12.1936, 534/5/246, 60–62, RGASPI.

Present were comrades from Belgium, England, France, Spain and Sweden. Whereas the recruitment of volunteers had been a success, the coordination of boycotting ships bound to Spain had hitherto failed. The main challenge was the lack of information about the cargo and destination of a vessel: Was it loaded with war material destined for the rebels? Adolf Deter and Luigi Polano (the latter one seems to have arrived from Moscow for the conference) emphasised the importance of continuously providing the ISH Secretariat with information on various actions so that it could present them in its bulletin as ways of combatting fascism in practice. If the destination of a ship was unclear, the ISH Secretariat was to be immediately notified as it claimed to have the capacity to determine its route. Besides, Deter urged the comrades to ensure that the actions of the Interclubs were strictly legal and were sanctioned by the national unions.[187]

The second item on the agenda was the transformation of the Interclubs into 'centres for the cultural and political education of maritime transport workers. Assessing the operational basis of the few remaining units, Deter and Polano realised that their existence was doomed. Outright Interclubs had ceased to exist in England, France and Norway. Work in Dunkirk, Marseille, Rouen and Liverpool was conducted by the communist fractions and members within the unions, activities in the Norwegian ports had collapsed, as there were only a few members left. Apart from Antwerp, Dunkirk and Marseille, work among foreign seamen was negligible, and the network of liaison persons on board the ships had more or less collapsed.[188] The Interclub in Rotterdam had been transformed into a "cultural club" (Klub voor culurele Ontwikkeeling en Outspanning voor Transportarbeiders), that in San Francisco into a "Union Recreation Centre", and the club in Vancouver was the "Bureau of the Seafarers' Industrial Union."[189] In Greece, the quasi-fascist Métaxas government had crushed the communist fraction within the Greek Seamen's Union. Polano had tried to launch an international campaign to support the extra-territorial radical groups of Greek seamen in Antwerp, Buenos Aires, Cardiff, Marseille and Rosario but its outcome has left few (documented) traces.[190] The Interclub

187 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 5–11, 13, 20, 25, RGASPI.

188 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 10–13, 23, RGASPI.

189 Service d'inormation et de Presse de l'I.M.D. No. 81, 8.10.1936, 534/5/246, 26–28, RGASPI.

190 Lotti[?] to Henry, 4.11.1936; Ménégos, Secretaire, Union des Marins due Grève (N.E.E.) to Secrétariat de l'IMD, Piraeus, 10.11.1936; and Henri [Luigi Polano] to NN, 23.11.1936, 534/5/

in Marseille, the previous main agitation centre for work among Greek and Italian seamen, had shrunk into a club for French communist mariners.[191] On the other hand, the German "Aktivgruppe" (action group) in Antwerp claimed to be in contact with 150 out of 1,000 German vessels.[192]

The only really good news was the establishment of a new Interclub in Barcelona. The victorious strike of the Spanish seamen in 1936 had been led by a 'unity committee'. It had set up the Interclub immediately after the strike and started its operations in a new building on New Year's Day 1937. Large signs and billboards in the harbour area directed the seamen to the club. The premises must have been impressive and resembled those in Hamburg and Leningrad. The club had at its disposal nine rooms on the ground and first floor of the building, including a library, a reading room, a meeting hall, a bar with twelve tables, a leisure room with a billiard table, an assembly hall, and a gym. The club was run by a collective leadership, most of whom were communists.[193]

Commenting the fate of the remaining Interclubs, comrade Webster, the secretary of the seamen's and dockers' group in Liverpool, supported their transformation into "cultural centres" and proposed that the ISH should send an instructor to supervise this process. The new centres, he suggested, were to be called 'Centres of Maritime Transport Workers' as the existing name, International Seamen's Clubs, had negative connotations among non-communist maritime workers. His proposal was met with general acclamation. Comrade Nilsson from Sweden informed that the clubs in Gothenburg and Stockholm were already in the process of reorganisation, comrades Maurice from Le Havre and Ali from Rouen noted that the local groups planned to set up cultural centres at the local premises of the seamen's union. Webster also urged to focus on engaging women – interestingly, for the first time ever was this topic on the agenda of a meeting. "We have hitherto not realised the

246, 50–51, 55–57, RGASPI. It is likely that Ménègos' letter – or a copy of it – was forwarded to Polano in Moscow; the recipient of Polano's letter was probably someone in Marseille.

191 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 10–13, RGASPI.

192 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 31, RGASPI. On the German Aktivgruppe in Antwerp, see further Nelles, *Widerstand und internationale Solidarität,* and Knüfken, *Von Kiel bis Leningrad.*

193 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 27–29, RGASPI.

important role women have conducted in the Interclubs and in our work on the waterfront," Webster noted.[194]

The ISH Illegal Secretariat decided to transform the Interclubs into cultural centres as an outcome of the discussions at the January 1937 conference. A few of them, such as the Copenhagen Interclub was to be liquidated and to be replaced by a reading hall run by the Danish maritime unions. The club in Gothenburg was to be transformed into a unity club for all maritime transport workers; the club in Stockholm was to be fused with the social democratic seamen's club.[195]

4.4 *Maritime Transport Workers and Militant Anti-fascism*

Joining the International Brigades was an expression of militant anti-fascism. A substantial number of the recruits were maritime transport worker, among others 800 of the 3,000 US American volunteers were seamen,[196] 120 out of 659 Swedes,[197] 82 out of 152 Norwegians and one-third of the Danish and Finnish volunteers.[198] Communist mariners constituted a large, if not the largest, segment among the volunteers.

Richard Jensen in Denmark engaged in a different form of militant anti-fascism. Auguste Dumay together with Émile Sellon organised the France-Navigation freight company in April 1937 as a cover for the illegal transport of war materials to the Republican government.[199] On behalf of the Comintern technical bureau in Paris, Jensen officially chartered or bought nine steamers, officially in the name of the Spanish government, and staffed them with reliable comrades who had been members of the Danish RFO to smuggle in

194 Konferenz am 18. und 19. Januar 1937. Diskussion zum Referat Henry: Spanien und Berichte aus den einzelnen Häfen bezw. Ländern, no date [ca. January 1937], 534/5/247, 24–25, 33–34, 36–37, RGASPI.

195 Die Klubs in Skandinavien, no date [ca. late January 1937], 534/5/247, 82–84, RGASPI. The author of the report was probably Adolf Deter; it must have been written before 1.2.1937 as the author refers to the liquidation of the Copenhagen Interclub "to take place on 1.2." (wird am 1.2. liquidiert).

196 Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront*, 30; Albert Vetere Lannon, *Second String Red: The Life of Al Lannon, American Communist* (Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxfords: Lexington Books, 1999), 71.

197 Lundvik, *Solidaritet och partitaktik*, 122–123, 137–138, 142.

198 See further Morten Møller, *De glemtes hær – danske frivillige i den spanske borgerkrig* (København: Gyldendal, 2017). Arve Kvaløy, Norske frivillige i den spanske borgerkrig – norsk humanitær og militær hjelp til republikken 1936–39, MA thesis, Oslo University, 1996; Jyrki Juusela, *Suomalaiset Espanjan sisällissodassa* (Jyväskylä: Atena Kustannus OY, 2003).

199 See further Dominique Grisoni & Gilles Hertzog, *Les brigades de la mer* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle, [1979] 2012).

weapons and military supplies to Republicans. Officially banned by the international non-intervention agreement of August 1936, the Soviet Union and the national communist parties were not to be linked to these clandestine operations. The consignments to the Spanish government were therefore to be kept secret and arranged under cover of some type of legal activity.[200] Jensen's company, which came to be known as the Jensen Shipping Company, was officially owned by the Spanish state and handled the transportation of weapons purchased in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Mexico.[201] British intelligence uncovered his operations in August 1937 when his camouflage freight company Franaviga Shipping Company bought the SS *Tusker*. Under the name *Lola*, the steamer was registered in Panama and went from Copenhagen to Constanza in Romania where it was scheduled to pick up a load of Polish weapons officially destined to Greece. However, the Romanian authorities doubted the freight order and when it became clear that the cargo was on its way to Spain, the permit was revoked.[202]

Jensen's operations had no links to the ISH. His shipping organisation does not figure in the Gestapo material that painted the ISH as a sabotage organisation or in their reports on the Wollweber League. Neither are there any references on him or his shipping organisation in the few remaining reports from the ISH (Illegal) Secretariat in the autumn of 1936 and the winter of 1937. Tellingly, there was no representative from Denmark at the January 1937 meeting in Paris.

5 Liquidation

The last chapter of the ISH was written in Moscow. The U-turn of the Comintern, the transition to and implementation of the 'Popular Front'-tactics had made the RILU and its organisations redundant. The disbandment of the RILU started in 1936.[203] In early 1937, the leadership of the Comintern started to discuss the fate of the ISH. Polano was ordered to comply a report on the activities and outreach of the ISH. Noting that all legal sections of the ISH had merged with parallel organisations in the various countries, the ISH at present

200 Nørgaard, *Krigen før krigen*, 17–20; Nørgaard, *Richard Jensen*, 80. Nørgaard claims that Jensen was closely cooperating with Ernst Wollweber but this is doubted by Borgersrud, *Die Wollweber-Organisation*, 86–87.

201 Borgersrud, *Die Wollweber-Organisation*, 86; Tortzen, *En sømand han maa lide*, 264.

202 Minutes, 30.8.1937, Richard Jensen personal file, KV 2/2158, TNA.

203 Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions*, 693–700.

TABLE 18 Liaison centres and units of the ISH, early 1937

Country	Port
Algeria	Oran
Canada	Vancouver
Chile	Valparaiso
Denmark	Copenhagen
France	Bordeaux, Le Havre, Marseille, Rouen, Dunkirk
Netherlands	Rotterdam
Norway	Haugesund
Spain	Barcelona, Gijon, Santander
South Africa	Cape Town
Sweden	Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Stockholm
United Kingdom	Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool
USA	Baltimore, New Orleans, New York, Norfolk, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Pedro

SOURCE: L'I.M.D. ET L'UNITÉ SYNDICALE (NO DATE, STAMP:13.IV.1937), 534/5/247, 172–180, RGASPI

did not have any real organisation. What remained was its (illegal) secretariat in Paris and a network of liaison offices, Interclubs and 'cultural centres' in 25 ports, see Table 18.

Only three Interclubs were monitored by the ISH, namely those in Dunkirk, Gothenburg and Stockholm. Three of the units were controlled by the unions or local 'unity' groups ("Clubs syndicaux:" Barcelona, Copenhagen, Le Havre, and San Francisco), while those in Glasgow and Liverpool as well as the Scandinavian Seamen's Clubs in the USA were autonomous clubs. The units in Antwerp and Rotterdam as well as the Greek Seamen's Club in New York were reading halls monitored by the ISH, those in Haugesund, Helsingborg and Rouen were reading halls controlled by the unions, whereas the unit in Marseille constituted of the communist seamen's cell.[204]

Following Polano's assessment, the ECCI charged RILU General Secretary Lozovsky to prepare a memorandum on the future activities of the ISH.[205] In

204 [Polano,] L'I.M.D. et l'Unité Syndicale, no date [stamp: 13.4.1937], 534/5/247, 145–180, RGASPI.

205 Protokoll Nr 5 der Sitzung der Gewerkschaftsdreierkommission des Sekretariats des EKKI am 21.3.1937, 495/18/499, 29, RGASPI.

line with earlier considerations of the ISH Illegal Secretariat, Lozovsky suggested to quietly liquidate the ISH and replace it with a new unit called 'Bureau for the Support of the Culture and Educational Activities of Among Marine Workers'. The Bureau was to be under direct control of the ECCI and was projected to support the work of the parties and communist trade union fractions in the Interclubs and the ITF-affiliated unions. Its main task was to help the mobilisation of maritime transport workers for the struggle against fascism and war, for support to the Spanish Republic and the Spanish people, for the defence of the Soviet Union, and for achieving unity within the ranks of the ITF. Globally, the Bureau was to extend its network of International Seamen's Clubs "in the ports which are of big importance for the point of view of the foreign seamen who come there (Oran, Algiers, Alexandria, Vera Cruz, Sydney, Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Rosario, etc.)." The Bureau was to come out openly as an editorial office of the weekly bulletin termed "Information Bulletin for Seamen and Port Workers," to be published in English, French, German and Spanish.[206]

The projected Bureau was never established. The ECCI rejected Lozovsky's plan on 23 June.[207] Two days later, Comintern Secretaries Florin, Gottwald, Marty and Pieck voted to liquidate the ISH,[208] the ECCI confirmed the decision on 27 June 1937.[209] No official announcement, no public declarations, the shutdown of the ISH was a quiet affaire.

Polano's assessment directly affected Adolf Deter's position. He certainly had backed the transformation of the ISH into an information bureau, perhaps even pushed for it as is indicated in his and Polano's reports from 1936. However, Polano's report to the Comintern as well as the instructions of the ECCI for Losvosky seemed to have propelled a new audit of the accounts of the ISH. What followed is unclear. Boris Ginzburger claimed that Deter approached him on 1 April 1937 and asked him to return the hidden box containing the invoices of the ISH. Ginzburger refused to do, stating that he would only do so

206 Protokoll Nr 6 der Sitzung der Gewerkschaftsdreierkommission des Sekretariats des EKKI am 15.5.1937, 495/18/499, 1, RGASPI; Internal memorandum by the ECCI Secretariat on work among the seamen, 23.6.1937, 495/18/1206, 10–14, RGASPI; Secretariat des EKKI, Protokol Nr. 155, 27.6.1937, 495/20/857, RGASPI.

207 Internal memorandum by the ECCI Secretariat on work among the seamen, 23.6.1937, 495/18/1206, 10–11, RGASPI.

208 Fliegende Abstimmung, 25.6.1937, Beschlussentwurf betr. Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter, 495/18/1206, 18, RGASPI.

209 Protokoll (A) Nr 155 des Sekretariats des EKKI am 27.6.1937, 495/18/1206, 1; EKKI 23.6.1937, entgültiger Text vom EKKI am 27.6.1937 bestätigt, 495/20/857, 3–5, RGASPI.

if orders came directly from the RILU headquarters. Deter was furious; perhaps an indication that he had been accused for cooking the books?[210]

If Deter was part of a new internal investigation of the ISH in spring 1937 is not known. His personal file at the Comintern Archives does not contain any information for him misusing or embezzling funds. Any accusations are lacking in his autobiographies although this is not surprising as he wrote them in 1949 and 1951 and he might have deliberately omitted such information. However, his correspondence to Moscow in 1937 reveals that he had not been informed about the liquidation of the ISH. Instead, he seems to have been confident of the acceptance of the plan of transforming the ISH into a special information bureau for directing the activities of the former Interclubs. In April 1937, he asked Polano to prepare a series of brochures to be sent to the former Interclubs on the Bolshevik revolution as well as on the danger of fascism.[211] In May, he informed Polano about the plan to set up a Scandinavian seamen's club in Shanghai, what he needed was contact information of the Chinese seamen's and docker's unions to be forwarded to the Scandinavian comrades. However, his letter of May 1937 signalled anxiety about what to do: "I have not received from you any news for the last 8 months. […] Please, write me soon so that I can send you further information about our movement in England."[212] A few weeks later, he forwarded copies of letters he had received from the USA.[213] Moscow remained silent, no news from Polano. In June, Deter's anxiety turned into distress: "Dear brother Henry, we have written to you several times in recent times …" (Lieber Bruder Henry, ich habe dir in der lezten Zeit wiederholt geschrieben …) Deter's letter was coded and personal, similar to the others he sent to Moscow during the latter half of 1937, some of them addressed to "Henriette" and "Maria" as if he was writing to a girl friend or female relative. Deter had expected Polano to return to Paris "to spend your holiday with us,"[214] i.e., to continue his work at the ISH Illegal Secretariat; he himself was not in a good shape and had been ill but now recovered (perhaps an indication of the internal investigation during spring 1937?) yet faced a new personal setback as he was unemployed. "I previously wrote to you about the

210 Letter by Boris Ginzburger, Paris 29.3.1937, 495/221/425, 82–83, RGASPI. Interestingly, the dating of Ginzburger's letter and his claim that Deter approached him on 1 April are confusing, perhaps this paragraph was a postscript?

211 André to Henry, 25.4.1937, 534/5/247, 181, RGASPI.

212 Ich weiss wirklich nicht, was ich machen soll, da ich von dir seit 8 Wochen ohne jede nachricht bin; André to "W.G." [Werte Genossen], add: An Alexander fuer Henri, 10.5.1937, 534/5/247, 204, RGASPI.

213 André to Henry, 24.5.1937, 534/5/247, 224, RGASPI.

214 […] dass du mich auch in diesem Jahr zu deinem Urlaub wieder besuchen wirst.

pitiful state of affairs of our company [i.e., the ISH]. The situation turned worse during the last weeks. Work was at first down-scaled to a minimum to keep the personnel, then salaries were cut and now we have all been sacked."[215] Deter worried about how to take care of his family as money was short for paying rent and social securities, buying food for the children and paying school fees. "I virtually have any Sous left." Was it a personal crisis or did he describe the impending collapse of the remaining activities of the ISH? "Please write to our uncle and ask him to help us." Was the "uncle" Solomon (Alexander) Lozovsky, were the "children" the (former) Interclubs?[216]

Polano did not come to Paris to spend his "holidays" with Deter. In September, Deter was desperate. Still no news from "Henriette", Deter was extremely worried (grosse Sorgen) about the fate of the "family" and the "company". The "company" was almost defunct, as its "turnover" had declined drastically during the last months. Deter had been without "salary" for four months and was unable to pay his "bills". The "children" were with their "grandparents", Deter had not been able to give them anything. "My uncle had not been in contact for years although I have written to him several times."[217]

News from Moscow finally reached Deter in early in October 1937. Probably contacted by Polano, Deter was finally informed about the liquidation of the ISH. "This was not a very positive news," Deter replied to "Maria", and complained that he did not know what to do next. Neither the "uncle" nor the "first mate" (Steuermann) had replied to his letters and Deter begged "Maria" to inquire from them about his fate. Deter had tried to keep the "company" running all the time by borrowing money to pay for the expenses but now, as the "company" was to be dissolved, he would face a grave financial crisis. Was the "first mate" Polano who, Deter claimed, knew him very well and certainly would understand his situation?[218] A few months later, Deter received a letter from Polano who confirmed the liquidation of the ISH and informed Deter about his task to wind up the "company." Similar instructions had been sent to "Gaston" by the "uncle" (Lozovsky?). Deter immediately commenced with closing the office and disposing its furniture to cover at least part of his expenses.[219] Deter was then transferred to coordinate the illegal trade union

215 Ich hatte dir ja schon einmal geschrieben dass es bei unserer Firma sehr schlecht aussieht mit der Arbeit. In den lezten Wochen ging es immer mehr bergab. Erst wurde die Arbeit eingeschränkt um Entlassungen zu vermeiden, dann wurde das Gehalt gekürzt und nun sind wir alle entlassen worden.

216 André to "Lieber Bruder Henry," 21.6.1937, 534/5/247, 231, RGASPI.

217 André to "Liebe Henriette," 9.9.1937, 534/5/247, 231, RGASPI.

218 André to "Liebe Maria," 5.10.1937, 534/5/247, 239, RGASPI.

219 André to "Liebe Henriette," 6.12.1937, 243, RGASPI.

operations in Germany.[220] In March 1938, Comintern Secretary General Georgi Dimitrov sent Bohumir Smeral to switch off the lights at the ISH office in Paris and finalise its liquidation.[221]

220 Lebenslauf Gustav Adolf Deter, Abschrift 27.9.1950, 495/205/188, 64, RGASPI.
221 [Dimitrov,] Anweisung für Gen. Smeral, 20.3.1938, 495/73/76, 6, RGASPI.

Postscript

Was everything in vain? Was the quest of the communists to radicalise maritime transport workers a project that was doomed to fail from the beginning? The organisation of maritime transport workers through trade unions and the politicisation of the struggle for better wages and working conditions is a complex story that forms the red thread in every presentation of the history of the national maritime transport workers and their unions. As a rule, the narrative is presented as the advances and adversities of a trade union. Global changes such as the transition from sailing to steamships or political and military conflicts that hamper or prevent commercial shipping form the framework for the history of national shipping and maritime professions.

The national narrative of maritime transport workers is part of the global history of the twentieth century. However, the narrative of the political struggle within the maritime transport workers and the radicalisation of the maritime transport workers during the interwar period is (mostly) absent in the public presentation of the national maritime museums and usually only forms a footnote in the self-representation of the national unions. Rather than addressing the complexity of the interwar period, the presentations and self-representations tend to highlight the unity of the rank-and-file workers against the onslaughts of the shipowners and capitalists.

The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) had set up the International of Seamen and the Harbour Workers (ISH) as a radical counterpart to the International Transport Workers' Federation. It was launched after the Comintern had initiated its ultra-left turn in the late 1920s, expressed through the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine. This doctrine would permeate both the tactics of the communist parties in relation to social democrats and left-wing socialists and the communist opposition within the various trade unions and in the national organisations. The doctrine imposed an uncompromising position vis-à-vis 'the other left' and branded social democracy as 'social fascism'. The social democratic leadership was accused of capitulating to and of cooperating with the bourgeois parties and capitalist employers. According to the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine, this was a betrayal of the working class and, by extension, prepared the way for a fascist takeover of power. The communists, therefore, had to cease all cooperation with the 'social fascists'. The RILU followed suit, demanding that the communist-controlled revolutionary trade union oppositions were to attack the social democratic and/or socialist leadership of the unions with ultimate aims of taking control of the unions.

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The fragmentation of the labour movement during the First World War had deeply affected the rhetoric of the communists. The divide widened to a rift in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in November 1917 and the failed revolutions in Finland, Germany and Hungary in 1918 and 1919 as well as the post-war crisis that affected Britain, France and the United States in 1919. For representatives of the radical left, the moderate left emerged as the great traitor, symbolised by the German Socialist Defence Minister Gustav Noske's 'betrayal' when he called the German Reichswehr to quell the Spartakist uprising in 1919.

The beginning of the 1920s was a time when the communists sought direction – cooperation with the radical left in some countries, parliamentary work where the party was legal. With the establishment of the Red International of Labour Unions and the launching of the International Propaganda Committees in 1921, the activities of the communists and the radical/revolutionary opposition within the trade unions would be coordinated. There was no rigorous organisational hierarchy; the International Propaganda Committees were essentially political information platforms with a limited number of functionaries rather than a structured organisation with affiliated member organisations. The basic idea was that the communists would work within the unions and gather and lead the opposition; the International Propaganda Committees were to provide the means for the opposition to publicise their position as most of them lacked their own propaganda tools.

The establishment of the ISH in October 1930 was the culmination of a process that started in the early 1920s. Initially being a syndicalist idea to set up a Seamen's International, leading actors in Moscow rejected the plan and instead amalgamated the radical seamen with the other revolutionary transport workers under the direction of the International Propaganda Committee of Transport Workers or IPC-TW. As a result of the self-criticism for having failed to expanded the revolutionary opposition within the unions, focus was on 'action' rather than mere 'propaganda' as was indicated by the adaption of its new name, the International Propaganda and Action Committee of Transport Workers or IPAC-TW, in April 1928.

The 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine affected and framed the activities the RILU, the International Propaganda (and Action) Committees, including the IPAC-TW, and the revolutionary opposition groups within the trade unions. The result was a split of the labour movement, fuelled by the worldwide economic depression that governments and employers sought to counteract, usually through wage cuts, rationalisation of the production process and the closure of production facilities. The trade unions and the labour parties stood between two evil choices – either to seek compromises to reduce the sufferings of their

members or to enter into a confrontation with employers and the capitalists. As a rule, they chose the former path and thus gave way to the uncompromising stance of the communists towards the 'reformists' or moderate labour movement and parties.

Communist criticism of social democracy and the moderate labour movement generated a global response during the 1920s. Soviet Russia was presented as a state that had realised the ideals of equality, brotherhood and freedom regardless of colour or race; in the eyes of activists and radicals, the Bolshevik revolution paved the way for a global movement against the prevailing colonial, racist and chauvinist world order. The Comintern and Soviet Russia, from 1922 the Soviet Union, appeared to be the only actors who uncompromisingly heralded to 'proletarian international solidarity'. This was true both in the fight against colonial exploitation and for self-determination of colonial and 'semi-colonial' nations as well as in the question of membership of trade unions and the exclusion of 'the other'. The communists and the representatives of the moderate labour movement stood on each side of the gap that divided the trade unions. The former ones demanded that unions be open to everyone regardless of ones' colour and rallied behind the slogan 'equal pay for equal work regardless of colour or race' while the latter ones emerged as the protectors of the interests of its (fee-paying) members. Not surprisingly, as the global economic depression deepening during the early 1930s, the communists presented themselves as the champions for all unemployed, non-unionised and oppressed.

Interwar communists portrayed the Soviet state as the ideal society. This was an image that was effectively nurtured and disseminated by both the Comintern and the ISH. It was a kind of positive propaganda: In the course of ten years, the 'fatherland of the workers' had developed into a modern booming industrialised state and whereas the capitalist countries recorded a drastic economic decline after 1929. What the propaganda never revealed were the costs and sufferings of Soviet industrialisation – the collectivisation campaign and the eradication of the kulaks in the late 1920s and the famine in Ukraine in 1932. Neither did the Comintern or RILU ever admit being subjugated to the orders of the Kremlin nor being limited by Soviet realpolitik. This was especially evident after 1933, when Soviet foreign policy was not necessarily anti-fascist, anti-Nazi, anti-colonial or anti-racist.

However, the discrepancies between Soviet realpolitik and the call for international proletarian solidarity of the Comintern and RILU were obvious as early as 1932, if not earlier. The first – in retrospect – sign that Stalin put the interests of the Soviet Union ahead of the Comintern and proletarian international solidarity occurred during the Manchurian crisis in 1932 when, unlike

the Comintern, the Soviet Union did not protest against Japanese imperialism. The following year, the Soviet Union refused to participate in the boycott of the Swastika flag and announced via the Comintern that a trade boycott against Nazi Germany – proposed by the Labour and Socialist International – was not on the agenda. The Soviet Union did not protest against the persecutions of the German communists, nor did Moscow cut its diplomatic relations with Berlin. Instead, the Soviet Union renewed its trade agreement with Germany. During the Ethiopian crisis, as Stalin wanted to maintain relations with France and Italy, no boycott of Italian vessels or prohibition of export of food and raw materials from the Soviet Union to Italy was ever declared. During the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union officially stood on the side of the Republic and provided the Republican army with weapons but at the same time took care of the gold reserves of the Spanish Central Bank.

Some communists became frustrated and disillusioned with the 'wait-and-see'-politics of Moscow in 1933. George Padmore, fugitive secretary of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers in Paris, already in the fall of 1933 wanted to start cooperation with non-communists in the global anti-colonial struggle; he was excluded from the Comintern and the CPUSA in April 1934, citing that he had violated the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine. Padmore himself stated that he broke with the communists when it became clear to him that Stalin intended to sacrifice the anti-colonial struggle in favour of stabilising the Soviet Union's relations with France and the United Kingdom. Another who already re-evaluated his position in 1933 was Albert Walter, Secretary of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, who accused the hardliners within the KPD of having betrayed the cause of the working class.

However, it is unclear how Albert Walter's accusation should be interpreted. Was it the betrayal of the revolutionary trade union opposition and of his stance on the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers? Walter had been involved from the start in the formation of militant and radical maritime transport workers as opposition groups within the existing trade unions, and was one of the leading players among the radical mariners in post-war Germany. As many other radical mariners, he had started as a syndicalist but subsequently joined the communist party and emerged as the leading figure of the communist opposition within the seamen's section of the German Transport Workers' Federation. He was also one of the leading figures in the International Propaganda Committee for Transport Workers during the 1920s. When the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers was founded in October 1930, Walter was elected secretary of the organisation and emerged as its leader in 1932 until the Nazis imprisoned him in March 1933. Walter and his organisation,

including all affiliated member organisations, the red trade unions and revolutionary trade union oppositions, wholeheartedly embraced the 'confrontation'-tactic of the RILU. Walter never made a call for cooperation with the social democrats, neither did the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers made call for a common front against the Nazis before early March 1933. Was the betrayal in Walter's opinion that neither the RILU nor the Soviet Union went out and condemned Nazi Germany?

The 'confrontation'-tactic officially went into the grave in the fall of 1935. This decision also meant that the various communist organisations founded by the RILU after 1928 became obsolete, among them the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. However, the decision also meant the end for the RILU. The Popular Front-tactic was equal to the united front and this meant that trade union organisations and independent opposition would merge with the social democratic/socialist organisations and trade unions. What was never stated was that the radicalisation process and 'confrontation'-tactics had been a mistake.

The balance sheet of the communist trade union politics during the interwar period is complex. Despite numerous calls for a 'united front' before 1928 or the calls for a 'united front from below' after 1928, the communists never gained a substantial influence in maritime trade unions in Europe and North America. In fact, the communist-led revolutionary trade union opposition remained weak and was further split by the implementation of the 'Class-Against-Class'-doctrine. Some local strikes and blockades initiated and led by the communists were won but none of the national strikes of maritime transport workers. The internationalisation of national strikes by the IPAC-TW and ISH by calling for coordinated transnational boycotts and refusal to enlist on striking vessels proved (in many cases) impossible to implement as long as the national unions refused to adhere to the call of the communists.

A different picture emerges if one focuses on the global outreach of the International Propaganda (and Action) Committee of Transport Workers and the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. Already Bob Reinalda and Reiner Tosstorff have highlighted that the RILU, in contrast to the Labour and Socialist International, emerged during the 1920s as a global player as it attracted trade unions from the Global South. The zenith was perhaps as early as 1925 when Chinese as well as the Indonesian trade unions affiliated with the RILU and the IPC-TW envisioned a Pacific outreach. Two years later, this outreach was but history due to the smashing of the communist-controlled trade unions by the 'imperialists' (the Dutch colonial state) and the 'nationalists' (the Guomindang government). The 'Third period', in contemporary communist rhetoric a phase of capitalism starting in 1928, together with the

focus on 'action' marked the beginning of a new push of the RILU and IPAC-TW towards the Global South. Perhaps it was the intervention of James W. Ford at the RILU World Congress in 1928 who brought the question of organising black ("coloured") seamen for the first time into the forefront. By late 1928, the organisation of 'colonial', i.e., Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Japanese, seamen was broadened to include the mobilisation of black seamen and the call for opening the unions for them. Latin America, too, gained interest in Moscow after 1928 and resulted into the establishment of formal structures for directing and monitoring trade union activism on the continent.

The ambition of the ISH was to emerge as a global player. Building on the organisational structures and political rhetoric of the IPAC-TW, the ISH portrayed itself as the champion of all maritime transport workers irrespective one's creed, nationality or race. The affiliated national revolutionary trade union oppositions and red maritime unions were instructed to apply anti-discrimination and anti-racism among among their members, to demand for the same principles to be applied by the national unions, and to combat all sort of white chauvinism. The ideal proved difficult to implement in practice.

The Nazi takeover in 1933 shattered the global ambitions and outreach of the ISH. Anti-fascism was put in the forefront, the decision in Moscow in late 1933 to downplay the 'confrontation'-tactics and focus on strengthening the opposition within the national unions affiliated to the ITF was in retrospect the deathblow of the ISH. The ISH dropped its ambition to reach out to colonial and black seamen. Instead, this was to become the objective of the communist-led opposition groups within the national unions, which after 1934 were not controlled or monitored by the ISH but by the national communist parties and their sea cells. The ISH, in turn, shrunk into a North Atlantic and European player who tried to coordinate and influence the activities of its few remaining affiliated groups and organisations. However, this backfired as the grand strategy in Moscow envisioned the amalgamation of the ISH with the ITF. By 1935, communist global trade union strategies and tactics – propaganda and action directed and led by a central unit – had ended in a *cul-de-sack*. The final dissolution and liquidation of the ISH was a quiet affaire.

Appendix 1

Timeline

1919	March	Establishment of the Comintern	Moscow
1920	July	Establishment of the ITUC	
	September	Congress of the Peoples of the East	Baku
	December	Conference of syndicalist organisations	Berlin
1921	July	– Establishment of the RILU – Establishment of the IPC-TW	Moscow
	August	Inclusion of seamen in IPC-TW	Moscow
1922	January	Congress of the Toilers of the East	Petrograd
	November	2nd RILU World Congress	Moscow
1923			
1924	July	3rd RILU World Congress	Moscow
	August	4th IPC-TW Conference	Hamburg
1925	June	Conference of the Transport Workers of the Orient (Canton Conference)	Guangzhou
1926	March	– 2nd Continental Conference of Marine Workers – Comite Continental de Obreros Maritimos y Portuarios	Montevideo
	November	Communist uprising in Indonesia	Batavia
1927	April	Guomindang attack on communists	Shanghai
	May	– Pan-Pacific trade union conference – Establishment of the PPTUS	Hankou
	December	Guomindang attack on communists	Guangzhou
1928	April	– 4th RILU World Congress – 5th IPC-TW Conference + IPC-TW → IPAC-TW	Moscow
	July	establishment of the ITUCNW-RILU	Moscow
1929	January	International conference on strike strategy	Strassburg
	May	– Conference of maritime transport workers – Comité Marítimo y Portuario Latino Americana	Montevideo
	August	– 2nd Conference of the Transport Workers of the Pacific – Pan-Pacific Secretariat of Transport Workers (TOST)	Vladivostok

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1930	July	– (First) World Negro Conference – establishment of the ITUCNW	Hamburg
	August	5th RILU World Congress	Moscow
	October	– Conference of maritime transport workers – establishment of the ISH – 1st Plenum of the ISH Executive Committee	Hamburg
	November	– ISH Secretariat (Albert Walter) – ITUCNW Secretariat (James W. Ford)	Hamburg
1931	April	ISH Illegal Secretariat (Adolf Shelley)	Hamburg
	September	2nd Plenum of the ISH Executive Committee	Hamburg
	November	ITUCNW Secretariat (George Padmore)	Hamburg
1932	June	ISH World Congress	Altona
	August	Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee	Amsterdam
1933	January	Scandinavian Conference	Copenhagen
	March	ITUCNW Secretariat Hbg => Paris	Paris
		– ISH Illegal Secretariat Hbg => Copenhagen (Pechmann + Shelley) – ISH Secretariat Hbg => IK Copenhagen (Richard Jensen)	Copenhagen
	June	Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee	Paris
	August	– ISH Secretariat (Wollweber) – ISH Illegal Secretariat (Deter + Pechmann + Shelley)	Copenhagen
	December	ECCI Commission on seamen's work	Moscow
1934	April	– ISH Illegal Secretariat Cph => Antwerp (Deter + Shelley) – ITUCNW Secretariat Paris => Antwerp (Otto Huiswoud)	Antwerp
	June	– Meeting of Copenhagen Initiative Committee	Copenhagen
		– Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee – Plan: ISH Secretariat (Jensen + Schaap + Tillon)	Antwerp
	October	ITUCNW Secretariat (Huiswoud) Antwerp => Amsterdam	Amsterdam
	November	ISH Secretariat (Tillon)	Rouen
1935	March	ISH Illegal Secretariat (Deter + Polano + Shelley) Antwerp => Paris	Paris
	June	Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee	Paris
	December	ISH Illegal Secretariat (Deter + Polano)	Paris

1936	January	ITUCNW Secretariat (Huiswoud) Amsterdam => Paris	Paris
	March	Meeting of the ISH Executive Committee	Paris (?)
	Fall	ISH Illegal Secretariat (Deter)	Paris
1937	Spring/ Summer	ISH Illegal Secretariat (Deter)	Paris
	January	Meeting of Interclub representatives	Paris
	March	Polano's report on the ISH	Moscow
	May	Lozovsky's plan for 'Bureau for the Support of the Culture and Educational Activities of Among Marine Workers'	Moscow
	June	– ECCI: Liquidation of the ISH – ECCI: Liquidation of the ITUCNW	Moscow
	December	ECCI: Dissolution of the RILU	Moscow
1938	March	Finalisation of ISH and ITUCNW liquidation	Paris

Appendix 2

Identification of Senders and Recipients in Letters Sent from/to the ISH Secretariat 1933–1937, Filed in the Comintern Archives

	RGASPI	Place and date	Sender	Recipient	Remarks
1[a]	534/5/236, 79	Kopenhagen, 15.7.1933	Ad.; Schmidt Ruid? [Rudoplh?]	NN	Stamp: 3AUG.1933
2	534/5/236, 80	[?], 15.7.1933	Schmidt	NN	Stamp: 3AUG.1933
3[b]	534/5/236	[Moscow], [27.10.1933]	Henri	Shelley [corrected: Schmidt]	69/No.4/3Ex. 27.X.33
4[c]	534/5/241, 6 – 7	[?], no date	Stolarski	Sekretariat der RGI	37/69/No.51/Sekr./2Ex. 2.I.34
5[d]	534/5/241, 74 – 88	[?], no date	NN	NN	37/69/No.20/See/3Ex. 20.I.34
6[e]	534/5/241, 110	[Antwerp?], 16.5.1934	André	Lieber Freund	
7[f]	534/5/241, 230 – 231	[?], 23.8.1934	Ad.; Henry	André	Handwritten add: "an Rudolph"; Reference to the recent trip of Ad. to Sweden
8[g]	534/5/241, 232 – 236	[?], 3.9.1934	Henri	Ge. Alexander	Reference to Ad., André, Sch.
9	534/5/241, 237	[?], 10.11.1934	Ad.	Sowbüro der ISH	
10[h]	534/5/241, 253 – 266	[?], 26.10.1934	Adolf; André	Komfraktion des Vollzugsbüro der RGI	Remarks on "André Rudolph", "Henry"/ "Henry Maurice"; Wollweber,

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(*cont.*)

	RGASPI	Place and date	Sender	Recipient	Remarks
11[i]	534/5/241, 296 – 297	[Antwerp?], 12.12.1934	Rudolf; Georges; Leo; René	Komfraktion des Vollzugsbureaus	Reference to Polano
12[j]	534/5/241, 298	[?], 12.12.1934	René; Leo; Georges; André	Komfraktion des Vollzugsbureaus	
13[k]	534/5/241, 299	[?], 12.12.1934	Leo; Ulrich; René; Rudolf; Georges	Komfraktion des Vollzugsbureaus	
14[l]	534/5/241, 306 – 307	[?], no date	George	Dear friends	Stamp: 10.Dez.1934
15[m]	534/5/242, 4–6	Paris, 21.1.1935	Georges; André	Komfraktion der RGI	Handwritten add: "Gen Heckert"; References to Jusefovich, Wollweber, Polano
16[n]	534/5/242, 47–48	[Paris], 19.2.1935	Georges; André	Komfraktion der RGI	
17[o]	534/5/242, 94fp – 95bp	[Paris], 3.1935	Georges	Komfraktion der RGI	References to Leo, Ad., Polano
18[p]	534/5/242, 103	[?], no date	Georges	Alexander	Handwritten add: Adolf; Handwritten add: "erledigt 23.III.35 Heckert"
19[q]	534/5/242, 114–116	[?], no date	NN	Sekretariat der ISH	Stamp: 7.APR.1935

(*cont.*)

	RGASPI	Place and date	Sender	Recipient	Remarks
20	534/5/242, 117	[Paris], 11.4.1935	Georges; André	Komfraktion der RGI	References to Jusefovich, Polano, Wollweber; References to members of RILU European bureau: René, Monmousseau, Gitton
21[r]	534/5/242, 118	[Paris], 11.4.1935	Georges; André	Komfraktion und BK der RGI	References to Jusefovich, Polano, Wollweber; References to members of RILU European bureau: René, Monmousseau, Gitton
22	534/5/242, 120	[Paris], 24.4.1935	Georges; André	Komfraktion der RGI	References to Wollweber and Polano
23[s]	534/5/242	[Paris], 12.4.1935	André; Georges	Komfraktion der RGI	Reference to comrade ("Genosse") Edward
24[t]	534/5/242, 188 – 194	[Paris], 15.6.1935	Henry	Komfraktion der RGI	Reference to Adolf, André, Henry
25[u]	534/5/242, 201 – 228	[Paris], 26.6.1935	Ad.; And.; Hen.	Alexander	
26[v]	534/5/243, 15 – 17	[Paris], 3.7.1935	NN	W.G.	References to Ad. and Henry
27[w]	534/5/243, 68 – 70	[?], no date [13.8.1935]	NN	Werte Genossen	Reference: 51/Nr. 604/ 3Ex/Sekr.A 13.8.1935
28[x]	534/5/243, 112 – 114	[Paris], 5.10.1935	NN	Liebe Freunde	Reference to "our letter dated 3 July"

(*cont.*)

	RGASPI	Place and date	Sender	Recipient	Remarks
29[y]	534/5/243, 5.10.1935	[Paris], 5.10.1935	Adolf	Herr Alexander	Reference to Henry, André, Ja[c]k, Tillon
30[z]	534/5/243, 123	[Paris], 24.10.1935	Adolf; Henri; André	Komfraktion der RGI	filed: 8234–1 26/XI 1935
31[aa]	534/5/243, 125 – 126	[Paris], 24.10.1935	Ad.; Henri; André	NN	filed: 8235–1 26/XI 1935
32	534/5/243, 138 – 141	[Paris], 29.10.1935	Ad.; Henri; André	Komfraktion der RGI	
33	534/5/243, 149 – 151	[Paris], 6.11.1935	Adolf; Henri; André	Komfraktion der RGI	
34[bb]	534/5/245, 60 – 61	[?], no date	NN	NN	Handwritten add: "Für Adolf–letztesExemplar!"; stamp: 13.März1936
35	534/5/245, 62	[Paris], 26.3.1936	André; Henri	Komfraktion der RGI	Reference to comrade "J" in the Danish Stokers' Union = Jensen
36[cc]	534/5/245, 66 – 80	[Parsi], [30.3.1936]	Henri; André	Cher camarade	
37[dd]	534/5/245, 107 – 117	[?], no date	NN	NN	[?]/93/Nr. 101/5 Ex./ S. Abt. [?].3.1936
38[ee]	534/5/246, 24 – 25	New York, 21.9.1936	Angelos	Henry	
39[ff]	534/5/246, 52 – 54	[?], 10.11.1936	Jack	Henry	
40[gg]	534/5/246	[Paris], 7.12.1936	Henri	Alexander	

(*cont.*)

	RGASPI	Place and date	Sender	Recipient	Remarks
41	534/5/247, 76	[Paris], 15.3.1937	André	Henry	
42	534/5/247, 85	[Paris], 27.3.1937	André	Henry	
43	534/5/247, 181	[Paris], 25.4.1937	André	Henry	
44	534/5/247, 204	[Paris], 10.5.1937	André	Alexander	Add: "für Henri"
45	534/5/247, 224	[Paris], 24.5.1937	André	Henry	
46[hh]	534/5/ 247,231	[Paris], 9.9.1937	André	Henriette	
47[ii]	534/5/247, 239	[Paris], 5.10.1937	André	Maria	
48[ij]	534/57247, 243	[Paris], 6.12.1937	André	Henriette	

[a] Type-written letter with hand-written signatures. Ad. = Adolf Shelley; Schmidt = Wollweber; Ruid? = unidentified. Concerns activities against the Nazi-flag and criticism of ITF about Russian harbour workers.

[b] Type-written letter with handwritten signature; from Polano ("Henri") to Wollweber ("Schmidt").

[c] Copy of type-written letter; Stolarski = Alfred Shelley who resided at this point in Moscow.

[d] Copy of type-written document, Material über die ISH und über die Arbeit unter den Seeleuten und Hafenarbeiter (Material on the ISH and on work among seamen and dockers); probably written by Adolf Shelley in Moscow.

[e] Concerns Albert Walter; sent to someone who is asked to further this information as soon as possible "nach drüben" (to the other side), i.e., Paris?

[f] Copy of type-written letter in German, type-written signatures. The author of the letter can be identified as Ad[olf Shelley]. Henry = Polano: Shelley uses "Henry" when referring to Polano. The letter indicates that André [Adolf Deter] was in Copenhagen as he just was about to leave for Sweden. The remark "an Rudolph" is likely to have been added in Moscow when the document was either received or filed.

[g] Type-written report in German singed by "Henri" = Polano, indicating that the document is a translation into German probably made in Moscow. The report is addressed to Alexander Lozovsky, and states that Polano had travelled to England and France and was running the ISH Secretariat while Andé (Adolf Deter) and Adolf (Shelley) were absent. "Sch." is probably Shelley.

[h] Type-written letter on organisational reorganisation of illegal and legal secretariat. Reference to "Henry"/ "Henry Maurice" = Polano who at this point resided in Moscow.

(*cont.*)

[i] Copy of type-written letter with typed signatures, original either in German or translation into German. Seems to be joint letter by the ISH Secretariat (Rudolf and Georges) and RILU European Secretariat (Leo and René), provided that Rudolf = Adolf Deter, Georges = Adolf Shelley (for possible identification, see letter no 18). Reference to Polano (proposal to send him as instructor to Spain) indicates that the latter resided in Moscow.

[j] Copy of type-written letter with typed signatures. Statement in text "wollen wir (ES und ISH)" identifies text as joint report by the ISH Secretariat and RILU European Bureau on the Copenhagen movement.

[k] Copy of type-written letter with typed signatures, report on joint meeting between ISH (Rudolf and Georges), RILU European Bureau (Leo and René) and "Weltkomitee" (World Committee against War and Fascism; Ulrich).

[l] Copy of type-written letter with typed signature. Most likely sent to someone in England, probably a leading member of the Minority Movement as it concerns work among seamen, dockers and railway workers. Main part of the letter deals with the Copenhagen movement, indicating that the author could have been Shelley?

[m] Type-written letter in German; indicates that Wollweber and Polano were in Moscow; proposal to send Polano to Latin America.

[n] Concerns differences with in CP Sweden.

[o] Probably same type-writer as used in letter (15); Leo = Leo Pechmann, Ad. = Adolf Schelley; renewed proposal to send Polano to Latin America

[p] Handwritten letter in German, signed by Georges, the add: "Adolf" could indicate that "Georges" was Adolf Shelley's pseudonym while running the ISH Illegal Secretariat in Paris? "Alexander" was most likely Alexander Lozovsky.

[q] The author is probably Heckert.

[r] Type-written letter in German, same content as letter no. 6 but with remarks on budget needed for ISH EC plenum.

[s] Concerns the relocation of "Edward" = Otto Huiswoud and the secretariat of the ITUCNW to Paris.

[t] Report on the ISH plenum in Paris, 29–31.5.1935. German translation of the report, signature "Henry" = Polano.

[u] Report by Ad[olf Shelley], And[ré = Deter] and Hen[ri = Polano] to Alexander [Lozovsky] on the ISH.

[v] Sender probably André/Adolf Deter as the author of the letter refers to Ad. = Adolf Schelley. Reference to "Henry" and his planned travel to Latin America indicates that Henry = Polano as the ISH intended to send Polano to Latin America and author uses "Henry" instead of "Henri" for the latter.

[w] Type-written draft letter, concerns situation in Denmark; probably written in Moscow.

[x] Probably same type-writer as letter no. 9, could indicate that sender/author was rather André/Adolf Deter than Georges/Adolf Schelley?

[y] Type-written letter but not the same type-writer as no 11. Reference to the imminent departure of "Henry" to Latin America indicates that Adolf = Adolf Schelley used "Henry" as Polano's pseudonym instead of "Henri".

[z] Original signatures; "Henri" = Polano.

[aa] Concerns situation in Sweden, must be attachment to letter no. 15.

[bb] Type-written encrypted letter concerning probably Hermann Knüfken's ["Nr. 1] activities in Antwerp. The handwritten add "für Adolf" indicated that Adolf Schelley resided in Moscow at this point. Code filed in 534/5/245, 11.

(*cont.*)

[cc] Report on the ISH, signed by André = Deter and "Henri" = Polano, was enclosed in Henri/Polano's letter, dated 30.6.1936 (534/5/245, 65); same report as document, dated January 1936 and signed by Henri, André and Ad.[olf Shelley], filed in 534/5/245, 12–34.

[dd] Draft version of report on work of the Interclubs, Bericht über die Internationalen Seeleuteklubs und einige vorschläge zu ihrer weiteren Tätigkeit, written in Moscow. It is likely that the author of the report was Adolf Shelley.

[ee] Report on Greek Seamen's Club in New York sent to Henry/Polano.

[ff] Information about activities of Pacific Bureau to Henry/Polano.

[gg] German translation (?) of letter from Henri/Polano to Alexander [Lozovsky].

[hh] Encrypted letter from André/Deter to Henrietta = Polano.

[ii] Encrypted letter from André/Deter to "Maria" = unidentified.

[jj] Encrypted letter from André/Deter to Henrietta = Polano.

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