In Pursuit of Global Solidarity? The Workers’ International Relief, Willi Münzenberg and the Comintern, 1921–1935

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In 1931, the Workers’ International Relief (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, IAH) organised in Berlin a spectacular celebration of its ten-year long work for international solidarity. It offered a unique possibility to gather radicals, communists, socialists and sympathising intellectuals for a truly international conference on international proletarian solidarity. The whole world was represented on stage and among the participants in the congress were men and women of "all races and colours": European, Chinese, American, Australian, Indian, "Negros", Swedes, Indonesian, Russian, Egyptian, Greek and Japanese. The World Congress was not without reason characterised as an unprecedented opportunity for delegates from all around the world to meet and discuss the "necessary improvement of international unity." To further mark the international character of the event an international presidium was elected during the opening session of the World Congress that consisted of representatives from Russia, Germany, France, Ireland, India, England, West Africa, the USA, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Norway, Uruguay, Egypt, Australia, Indonesia, Spain, China and Holland. All together the IAH’s congresses in Berlin attracted a total of 230 foreign delegates.

The opening meeting of the World Congress took place in the same building as the first meeting of the IAH in September 1921. Then 15 persons had convened in a club room twice the size required. Ten years later the largest of the rooms in the Lehrervereinshaus on Alexanderplatz in Berlin was nearly too small to take in all the delegates. In 1921 Lenin had taken the initiative to launch an international solidarity campaign during the Russian famine.

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1 The article is based on the forthcoming dissertation in history at Åbo Akademi University: Kasper Braskén, *The Revival of International Solidarity: The Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, Willi Münzenberg and the Comintern in Weimar Germany, 1921–1933*. The research is based on extensive archival research in Moscow, Berlin and Amsterdam.


3 The presidium consisted (in the following order) of 1) Hans Abolin, Russia; 2) Hermann Remmele, Germany; 3) Clara Zetkin, Germany; 4) Henri Barbusse, France; 5) Willi Münzenberg, General secretary of the IAH (Germany); 6) Clemens Dutt, India; 7) Eleanor Despard, Ireland; 8) Tom Man, England; 9) Kujaté, West Africa; 10) Gerda Johansson, USA; 11) Bella Saltzberg, USA; 12) Prof. Nejedly, Czechoslovakia; 13) Francesco Misiano, Italy 14) Kettler, Austria; 15) Ivan Skorve, Norway; 16) Maria Fernandez, Uruguay; 17) Ismael Taher, Egypt; 18) Devoyon, France; 19) Georg Ledebour, Germany; 20) Prof. Alfons Goldschmidt, Germany; 21) Jean Devanny, Australia; 22) Todor Pawlow, Bulgaria [?]; 23) Abdul Medjid, Indonesia; 24) Louis Velasquer, Spain; 25) O. Tschang, China; 26) De Visser, Holland; and 27) Georg Dünninghaus, Secretary of the German IAH.

crisis that was headed by the German communist and propagandist Wilhelm "Willi" Münzenberg (1889–1940). The initial organisation was later officially named the IAH and developed under the auspices of the Communist International (Comintern) into a vast international organisation. The central headquarters of the IAH were never located in Moscow, but in Berlin (1921–1933) and Paris (1933–1935). From the capital of the Weimar Republic the IAH created a message of international solidarity that was never restricted to an European solidarity. Instead it specifically forwarded the idea of an international solidarity that was extended from West to East and from North to South. As this article will illustrate, the IAH’s network connected most parts of the world as IAH bureaus (legal or clandestine) were established all around the world. The IAH was thus in the very frontline of a globalising world in its efforts to create solidarity within the transnational workers’ community. Most significantly, the IAH was not only an organisation forwarding symbolical solidarity, but an organisation of practical solidarity work that often provided provisions during strikes and natural disasters.

The 1931 World Congress constituted the apogee of the IAH and its pursuit of global solidarity during the interwar era and it became the last major international congress on international solidarity organised on German soil before the Second World War. As a consequence of Hitler’s coming to power in 1933 the IAH was banned and forced to exile and the IAH’s international secretariat was relocated to Paris. The IAH could never however recover to its former strength and in 1935 it was liquidated on the initiative of the Comintern.

**An International Organisation for International Solidarity**

This article seeks to analyse the global agenda of the IAH and it will argue that the IAH constitutes a significant case study of an international organisation of the interwar era that had unparalleled prospects to develop new global networks and identifications. However, the IAH never forwarded ideas of universal solidarity that would include all people, but was conceptualised within the framework of international proletarian solidarity.

The global elements of the IAH are in the following divided into two distinct sections: Firstly, the structure and geographical expansion of the IAH and, secondly, the message of

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6 See footnote 8.
international solidarity that was spread through the organisation. How was the IAH developed into an international organisation that strived to establish a global network of radicals and progressive intellectuals subscribing to the idea of international proletarian solidarity? In what extent were national sections and bureaus of the IAH created all around the world? Of further interest are the national sections and their efforts to mobilise international solidarity campaigns in their respective countries. As the introductory example illustrates, a central aspect of the international organisation and formalisation of the network between the various national sections constituted of the IAH’s international congresses.⁷

Besides the quest to transform the IAH into a global international organisation, its global pursuit entailed the creation and realisation of a completely new global imaginary during the interwar era. One could argue that the global imaginary provided by the IAH invoked already during the 1920s European, American, Australian, South African and Chinese workers to start ‘thinking global’. As examples later on will show, the IAH managed to create during international solidarity campaign a vivid language, visualisation and practise of international solidarity. In most cases the IAH’s international solidarity campaigns were directed against atrocities, suppression and social misery caused by imperialism, international capitalism, and extraordinary natural calamities. Most significantly, the IAH’s activities encompassed the making of local, regional and national social conflicts, strikes and humanitarian crisis into global affairs.⁸

Manfred B. Steger argues in his study on the rise of the global imaginary that the aftermath of World War II signalled a rupture of ‘the global’ both within and onto the national framework. As images, people and materials circulated more freely across borders and countercultural "new social movements" based on "new ideologies" such as feminism, environmentalism, and postcolonialism, started to flourish, it destabilised identities based on

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national membership. However, in the seminal study by Akira Iriye on the role of international organisations in the forming of global community a most dramatic increase of international organisations is already noted during the interwar era. The number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) had almost tripled by 1930, compared to the numbers before the outbreak of the Great War (from 135 to 370). As Iriye rightly concludes, the INGOs of the time were making significant international interconnections in the fields of cultural and social internationalism as these involved questions and problem areas that stood beyond the national framework that required international solutions. Iriye notes further that both socialists and communists of the interwar era were avid international organisers, but fails to mention such international organisations as the IAH that were part of the Comintern. Thus Iriye omits one of the global alternative solutions for a global community that was not based on intrastate co-operation, but on international solidarity activated in the form of a new kind of social movement.

Previous research has highlighted that it was perhaps only the Comintern that managed to establish a truly international platform during the interwar era. The Comintern has hence been described as the first international organisation in modern history with global ends and the global means to pursue them on five continents. As the IAH was closely connected to the Comintern it benefited immensely of its global connections, but likewise it must be highlighted that the IAH rather functioned as a channel to expand the international network of the Comintern through its solidarity campaigns during the 1920s and early 1930s.

The international character of the IAH and its development of global ambitions fits badly into the traditional chronology and definitions of international organisations. A number of labels and typologies have been constructed since the 1920s in order to classify the IAH. During the interwar era it was defined as a subsidiary organisation of the communist movement [Nebenorganisation/Unterorganisation] or as a communist relief organisation [Hilfsorganisation]. The Nazi research on the communist movement classified the IAH as an

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The Comintern, on the other hand, classified the IAH as a part of the system of communist organisations that functioned as "sympathising mass organisation for special purposes." The special purpose of the IAH was to function as an international solidarity organisation and to spread the idea of international solidarity around the world. However, it was only in a few countries that the IAH could actively be developed into a so-called mass organisation, which leaves the definition somewhat wanting. The IAH itself used in its publications a number of definitions, including "relief organisation of the working class" [Hilfsorganisation der Arbeiterklasse], "world organisation of proletarian solidarity" [Weltorganisation der proletarischen Solidarität], or "non-party mass organisation" [überparteiliche Massenorganisation].

Later during the Cold War era and until recently the IAH has mainly been classified as a ‘communist front organisation’ due to the IAH’s origins and close connections to the Comintern. However, the front organisation perspective places the focal point on the conspiratorial and revolutionary agenda. The Cold War era front organisation perspective stands out as a one-sided analytical category not open for interpretation. It contains a preconceived understanding ‘from above’ or, if you like, ‘from Moscow’ that mainly portrays the IAH’s message of international solidarity as a weapon skilfully utilised by the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Nevertheless, international solidarity was not only a matter of Soviet state politics, but constituted within the various national contexts an alternative global culture and identification. Even though the IAH was a part of the communist movement it was not involved in instigating revolutions, but was concerned with creating, recreating and maintaining the basic idea of international solidarity within the international working class. Most certainly it forwarded ideas of revolutionary social change, the abandonment of capitalism and imperialism, and expressed great admiration towards the Soviet Union. These sentiments marked the organisation in the eyes of most state authorities and the police forces.


13 See the Labour Party booklet that describes all communist “sympathising mass organisations” that were classified as “organisations ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party.” The communist solar system. The Communist International (London: The Labour Party, Labour Publications Dept., 1933).
as a Bolshevik propaganda institution. But making revolutions was per se never its preoccupation. It was instead described as the supporting column of the working class, with the mission to keep it strong, vibrant, and able to struggle if and when the time of world war and social revolution came again upon them. The IAH’s main slogan "solidarity will free the world” symptomatically forwarded a belief in the historic mission of the working class to save the world from the perceived corrupt capitalist system of oppression.14

It could consequently be suggested that the IAH could be perceived as a predecessor to several post 1945 transnational solidarity organisations and INGOs. Research on international relations has traditionally focused on governmental diplomacy, whereas non-governmental and international organisations have in many cases been left to oblivion. Excluding the history of the Socialist Internationals, the history of international organisations or NGOs is generally traced back to 1945.15 Modern NGOs have often been described as the ‘conscience of the world’, constituting an important critical mass, disclosing injustices, providing assistance to the poor of the world and highlighting the destiny of political prisoners. The somewhat heroic aura of the NGOs is naturally to be taken critically as they always have functioned in close collaboration with various state institutions.16 The IAH was likewise in its time integrally connected to the Soviet Union through the Comintern and was thus strongly influenced by the shifting sands within the international communist movement.

In conclusion, due to the IAH’s close connections to the Soviet Union it could not exactly be perceived as an INGO, but on the other had it can not be defined as a governmental, or interstate organisation. The definition of the IAH endorsed here is thus “international organisation for international solidarity,” as it highlights the IAH’s

14 The IAH’s slogan was e.g. printed on the cover of the IAH’s German membership books: "Die Solidarität hilft die Welt befreien", SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/16, 127. On Cold War deliberations on "communist front organisations” see Witold S. Sworakowski, The Communist International and its front organizations. A research guide and checklist of holdings in American and European libraries, Hoover Institution bibliographical series (Stanford (CA): Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1965); Bernard S. Morris, "Communist international front organizations. Their nature and function," World Politics 9: 1 (1956); James David Atkinson, The politics of struggle. The communist front and political warfare (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1966).


international character and puts focus on its main mission defined by the Comintern: to spread the idea of international solidarity to all corners of the world.

**International Solidarity and Humanitarianism**

Before scrutinising the IAH’s international solidarity campaigns and global network, the relation of two central research themes to the history of the IAH requires clarification. Firstly, the idea of international solidarity as a mobilising idea and, secondly, the history and development of international organisations for humanitarian and philanthropic causes.

Most studies on solidarity have focused on the sociological and philosophical aspects of the idea, whereas very few have investigated the contextual language, visualisation and practices of solidarity. Major studies have focused on the labour movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and on the process when the majority of the labour movements’ organisations were founded and expanded to significant membership organisations. The very formation of labour organisations has in other words been understood as a display and process of solidarity. Trade union strikes have also been regarded as primary examples of labour solidarity.17 Recent efforts to write the history of labour internationalism and global labour history have been promising, but there are only a few empirical studies that explicitly focus on international solidarity with a historical perspective, and even fewer that focus on the interwar era.18

The concept of solidarity can be understood very broadly as ”political-social brotherhood”19. A modern definition of solidarity could be described as ”the willingness to share resources in order to support those in struggle or in need of aid”.20 The praxis of labour

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solidarity was established in Germany during the first two quarters of the nineteenth century, but it was first during the last decades of the 19th century that solidarity became one of the most central concepts of the German labour movement. Back then, solidarity foremost represented a Marxist collective solidarity of the working class that was aimed against their social and political opponents.

In order to understand how and why the IAH constructed its message of international solidarity as it did, the problematic question must be asked: Why are people attracted to the idea of solidarity and what kind of emotional and rational reasons make people sympathise with some specific groups of solidarity? It has been concluded that people primarily show solidarity towards those whose history, convictions, and interests they share, while others are seldom included. No human solidarity is simply based on the fact that a fellow human being, or a "brother" is in need. All solidarity is motivated by some human connection, and is strongest to the ones that are portrayed as "we" or are identified as a part of "us". What most studies on solidarity do not address is the question of how solidarity within groups comes about; how solidarity, so to say, is activated. How is solidarity created into a meaningful idea worth sacrifices and emotional commitment? How is "we" made relevant in the everyday lives of ordinary people, or how is a "they" effectively constructed, menacing enough to struggle against? Here it is suggested that for the creation of international groups of solidarity, international organisations have played a pivotal role through their campaign work.

The history of charity, philanthropy, almsgiving and missionary work spans over most of human history but, as Michael Barnett highlights, the development of modern humanitarianism is strongly connected to modernity, the Enlightenment and the belief in human progress. The forefather of modern humanitarianism, Henry Dunant, played a pivotal role through the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions during the 1860s. However, few advances were made in the field of humanitarianism until the outbreak of the Great War. Lastly, during and after the war a number of international organisations were created, including Save the Children, the Nansen Relief Organisation, the High Commission for Refugees and the International Relief Union. Other organisations working internationally included the American Relief Agency and the

21 Rainer Zoll, Was ist Solidarität heute? (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 17, 60–62.
22 Stjernø, Solidarity in Europe. The history of an idea, 165. The concept of solidarity was first employed by the German labour movement in the 1830s and 1840s, but it took until the 1860s before solidarity was embraced by the German Marxists. Stjernø, Solidarity in Europe. The history of an idea, 25–26.
Quakers. However, the global involvement of most INGOs is dated to the post World War II era in the context of decolonisation. As Barnett declares, it was only after World War II that "humanitarianism went global."

In the history of international humanitarianism it seems that movements for international solidarity such as the IAH or the International Red Aid (Internationale Rote Hilfe, MOPR) that were created already during the interwar era, have completely been left outside the analysis.25

Communism and the Challenge of International Solidarity

When the IAH was established in 1921 it was specifically created on the basis of international solidarity that was defined as all inclusive for the working class, labour parties, internationals and all sympathisers of the working class. However, as I will demonstrate, it was never an unproblematic or uncontested undertaking, as the question of international solidarity resided a significant number of political, practical and ideological controversies that continued to cause conflicts within the political left.

The global imaginaries of both the socialist and communist movement form a troublesome area within the previous research. Steger simply defines the “internationalist dreams” of Russian communism against the backdrop of the failed revolutions and insurrections in Europe after the Great War. Stalin’s redefinition of internationalism to building “socialism in one country” in the mid 1920s signals in Steger’s presentation the final “nationalisation of internationalism”, and the turn of communism towards totalitarian rule comparable to National Socialism.26 It has convincingly been argued that the policy of “socialism in one country” transformed the working class project to securing Soviet power, and changed international solidarity into swearing allegiance with the Soviet state.27 However, in a significant contribution to the history of interwar communism, Hermann Weber underlines that when world communism was created through the establishment of the Comintern in 1919 the movement was not yet monolithic or strictly organised. The majority

of the members and functionaries of the national communist parties were in fact standing in the traditions of socialism that emphasised the struggle for social justice and solidarity, and were not yet formed into stalinist cadres.\textsuperscript{28}

Until the Great War the social democratic organisations had been the major counter cultural movement in Europe, but through their ascent to power after 1918 the incentive to maintain countercultural activities radically diminished. At least in Germany Social democratic organisations were transformed into forces for national integration, instead of international working-class solidarity.\textsuperscript{29} According to Eric D. Weitz it was foremost the communists who upheld inherited ideas from the nineteenth century socialist movement that by tradition underlined the labour movements’ struggle against oppression in the name of working class solidarity.\textsuperscript{30}

The years that followed after the Great War were indeed ruinous for the international labour movement. The Comintern was founded on the belief that a new International had to follow the Second International as it 1914 had ‘betrayed’ the idea of international solidarity. The Comintern was however devised as an International merely accessible for the ‘conscious’ part of the working class, and did by no means attempt to include all parties of the left. It was an organisation with a very restricted membership and it can therefore not be argued that its establishment represented a significant return of the idea of international solidarity among the European workers.\textsuperscript{31} The deplorable state of international working class solidarity is emphasised by the fact that not even the previous flagship of international solidarity, the Second International, embraced solidarity when it was reestablished in 1920. Sensationally the institution that originally had been perceived as the primary forum for the workers of the world failed even to mention solidarity in its new statutes.\textsuperscript{32}

Communist parties, such as the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD), were founded on a national level in the wake of a strong internationalist sentiment. In the theoretical writings of Rosa Luxemburg, who undoubtedly was one of the


\textsuperscript{31} Stjernø highlight that during the Comintern’s Second World Congress in 1920 there were no references to solidarity or to synonymous concepts in neither the theses, the resolutions nor in the speeches of Lenin. Stjernø, Solidarity in Europe. The history of an idea, 266–267.

\textsuperscript{32} Noted in Stjernø, Solidarity in Europe. The history of an idea, 99.
most influential German communist theorists, the idea of internationalism and class solidarity implied a solidarity with all people who were oppressed by the rulers of society. Internationalism and a socialist world revolution was accordingly the only answer against imperialist capitalism.\textsuperscript{33} Despite the demise of Luxemburg in 1919, the idea of solidarity remained in the KPD’s program of 1922 that emphasised that the international revolution must supersede all national interests, and that the revolutionary class struggle must be based on international co-operation and solidarity.\textsuperscript{34} The idea of international solidarity was an integral part of the German communist movement during the Weimar years. However, this notion of internationalism could only be realised within the national framework: The KPD was a national party and hence foremost concerned with issues concerning Germany. So although the national communist parties embraced the idea of international solidarity and internationalism, it was not their business to interfere in affairs beyond their national context. The international agenda of communism constituted the jurisdiction of the Comintern, whereas the international organisation of international solidarity and the ability to act on the international and global stage was commissioned to international organisations such as the IAH and the MOPR.

\textbf{Activating–Articulating–Visualising}

How could alas a global imaginary be created already during the 1920s by the IAH? As noted above many of the characteristics of the “new social movements” of the post World War II era, such as utilising the media, developing expanded circuits of communication, and finding audiences beyond the local and national framework on the global arena, can in fact already be identified during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{35} As the IAH developed in the Weimar Republic one can argue that it was deeply engaged in creating a new culture of international solidarity.\textsuperscript{36} As Eric D. Weitz concludes, Germans of the Weimar era were experiencing “the greatest transformation of media culture

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{33} Forman, \textit{Nationalism and the international labour movement}, 83–85, 93.
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since Johannes Gutenberg. The IAH was taking advantage and mastering the new mediums of the mass media, including illustrated magazines, cinema and the extensive use of art and photomontage in its publications. The IAH distributed Russian proletarian films such as Sergei Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin to Germany and the West; it started its own film production company in Germany called Prometheus; it invented an impressive illustrated press, including the legendary Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ) featuring the photomontages of John Heartfield. Theses represented all innovative forms and means to spread the message of international solidarity to the masses of Germany and the world. Even Iosif Piatnitsky, one of the chief leaders of the Comintern, regarded the official communist press ”very boring” [sehr langweilig], who no one outside the party wished to purchase, whereas the publications of the IAH scored high popularity among the masses.

Münzenberg had embraced the potential of using images as a method to spread the message of solidarity already in 1922. Striking illustrations had much more potential and emotion than ”cold and unemotional” printed words, Münzenberg stated. Everyone knows how difficult it is to spread journals and brochures to ”indifferent and unorganised” workers, Münzenberg argued, but what if the journals directed to the masses instead were illustrated products? It was almost guaranteed that illustrations were viewed, Münzenberg believed, and thus that the message was effectively conveyed. Here Münzenberg, in effect, defined one of the cornerstones of the IAH’s methods and ability to spread and activate its message of international solidarity to the broad masses: the effective usage of pictures and illustrations. It was the beginning of an unprecedented evolution in illustrated products that would result in the publication of journals such as Sowjetrussland im Bild, Sichel und Hammer, AIZ, Eulenspiegel, and Mahnruf: Organ für Internationale Solidarität. The majority of the IAH’s publications were in German, but it also published illustrated brochures, journals and bulletins in Dutch, French, English, Spanish, Russian, Swedish, Norwegian, Romanian and Chinese.

40 On the German journals and publications by the IAH, see further: Rolf Surmann, Die Münzenberg-Legende. Zur Publizistik der revolutionären deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1921 – 1933 (Köln: Prometh Verlag, 1983).
Besides the world of media and film, the IAH was actively engaged in organising international solidarity events that formed a cornerstone of its international solidarity campaign work and its cultivation of the global imaginary. These solidarity events must be perceived as crucial for the IAH’s efforts to vitalise the idea of international solidarity among workers in various countries. The events were always organised in connection with current solidarity campaigns and included solidarity matinées, congresses, conferences, demonstrations, and performances by street theatre groups. The possibility to organise such events were naturally restricted by various circumstances within different countries. In some areas the IAH functioned more or less illegally, in others as a lively public organisations for international solidarity. It was however especially in Germany that the IAH developed into a notable membership organisation. It even developed separate sections for women and youth and it was engaged in organising summer camps and orphanages for workers’ children. The IAH was in fact involved in forming a whole solidarity experience that included all aspects of life. The IAH stood behind strike support and education during work time; it was involved in family affairs, sexual consultation, child nurture, and it engaged in women’s issues such as fighting against the notorious Paragraph 218 that criminalised abortion in the Weimar Republic; it organised activities during leisure and free time, such as producing proletarian literature through its own publishing house called the *Neue Deutsche Verlag* (NDV) and offered membership in its proletarian book club called the *Universum Bücherei*. The IAH also organised cinema-evenings, public meetings and seminars on the current state of the working class. From 1929 the IAH organised a yearly international Solidarity Day that offered the possibility to publicly celebrate international solidarity.  

As the German revolutionary Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), who functioned as the IAH’s chairperson, stated in her private correspondence, the IAH’s mission was to highlight to the workers, both men and women, that they irrespective of their occupation, nationality, race or religion were united by their international class solidarity: It was a unity of destiny, a community by fate that motivated an united struggle against their oppressors. Taking these remarks into account, the recent claim that “[o]nly Münzenberg’s tireless self-promotion lent

limited selection of the IAH’s international publications can be found in the RGASPI fonds 538/2 and 538/3. See also a list of titles in Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931*, 527.


42 Clara Zetkin, Bemerkungen zum Broschürentwurf von Trude Hölz [no date], RGASPI 528/1/1879, 1.
a semblance of coherence to these [the IAH’s] disparate activities” seems wide of the mark. Beyond any mistake, the IAH’s ventures were combined by a thick red line consisting of the idea and practice of international solidarity, and it is this specific aspect of the organisation that is at the heart of this study: The *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* and its efforts to head a revival of international solidarity in Europe and the world.

Below, a selection of the IAH’s international solidarity campaigns will be analysed, followed by an outline of the IAH’s global network. Due to the current state of research, where the IAH’s activities within the various national sections remains largely uncharted territory, the main framework for the analysis of the IAH’s campaigns for international solidarity will be set in the context of Berlin and Weimar Germany. As the examples will show, a global imaginary was activated among Germans through the IAH’s media and events apparatus during international solidarity campaigns organised for victims of natural calamities, major strikes, or oppression occurring in various parts of the world.

**Campaigns for international solidarity, 1921–1935**

During the last years prior to the Great War, when the risk of a war waged between the European workers was imminent, international solidarity was elevated to the principal idea of the labour movement. The primary transnational labour organisation of the time era, the Second International, repeatedly called out for international labour solidarity, but as it in the summer of 1914 was unable to hinder the mobilisation of the European armies the International virtually collapsed.

It was not until the early summer of 1921, when a devastating famine hit Soviet Russia, that a revival of international solidarity in Europe and the world was achieved through the International Trade Union Federation (IFTU, Amsterdam International) and the IAH. Whereas the IFTU gained the support of the social democrats and trade unionists, the IAH managed to gain besides the support of communists, the support of many prominent left leaning intellectuals, artists and "unorganised" workers. Among the earliest supporters of the

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IAH were such renown names as Albert Einstein, Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz, Anatole France, Henri Barbusse, Bernhard Shaw and Andersen Nexø.  

One of the most central building blocks of the IAH’s 1921/1922 solidarity campaign for Soviet Russia was the belief in the spontaneity among the world’s workers. The workers were accordingly not only spontaneous in their expressions of solidarity, but also spontaneous in their readiness to sacrifice their own livelihood in the name of international solidarity. According to the IAH, to engage in solidarity was the only way to save the lives of 20 Million Russian starving brothers, to overcome the hunger and to preserve Soviet Russia. These were accordingly the first priorities of the workers’ international solidarity in the autumn of 1921. In essence, the heart of the message was presented in a way that emphasised the reciprocity of solidarity: if you help Russia, it was the same as to help yourself.

Münzenberg later claimed that the IAH had despite the divisions in the international solidarity campaign collected goods, money and material assets for 2,5 Million US Dollars. All in all the IAH had according to Münzenberg transported 30.000 tons of provisions and aid materials to Russia. The relative success of the international solidarity campaign in 1921 was explained with the quality of solidarity. The feeling of solidarity was perceived as a dormant power among the workers [im proletariat schlummernde Solidaritätsgefühl] that only needed to be awakened by a true cry for solidarity. Solidarity was hence defined as a slumbering, ever present force, only waiting to be empowered, to be activated. But although spontaneity was honoured, Münzenberg underlined from the very beginning the importance of thorough organising. Only through the establishment of a solid international organisation was it possible to effectively empower the workers’ international solidarity, he argued.

During these early campaigns for Soviet Russia the global element of the IAH was established in the form of creating an international network and activating international solidarity for the starving in Russia in various parts of the world. When Münzenberg assessed the IAH’s Russian famine relief campaign in March 1922, he described it as nothing else as a powerful, “die ganze Erde umfassende internationale Aktion […]”.

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46 List of supporters printed in ‘Für die Hungernden in Rußland’, Bulletin 8 (29.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 45; See also report by Münzenberg presented at the Comintern’s Fourth World Congress in Moscow, 21.11.1922, RGASPI 491/1/151, 27–39.
48 Report by Münzenberg presented at the Comintern’s Fourth World Congress in Moscow, 21.11.1922, RGASPI 491/1/151, 37–38.
by the IAH it was claimed that the IAH in fact was setting new standards for international solidarity, the IAH boasted:

Schon ist fast ein Jahr vergangen, seit der erste Hilferuf der hungernden Arbeiter und Bauern Sowjetrußlands das Proletariat Europas und Amerikas erreichte. Während dieses Jahres wurde eine Kette proletarischer Solidarität geschmiedet, welche die ganze Welt von Europa bis Australien und von Südafrika bis Island umspannt. Nie vorher haben so große Massen an einer proletarischen Hilfsaktion teilgenommen.\textsuperscript{52}

The chain of international solidarity had been smithed around the globe, but it was not only the actual creation of the chain that empowered the IAH, but it was the fact that it had been accomplished despite the poor living conditions of the workers’ of the world. When analysing the IAH’s message of solidarity, one of the central pillars of the narrative was that solidarity was always fought heroically against all odds. Solidarity was about struggling to win the unwinnable, it was the community of the despaired who were connected through the idea and practice of solidarity. There was still, however, always a distinction between the ones in a desperate need and who were dependent of the solidarity of the others, and those who were the agents of this solidarity and who had the possibility to empower the rhetorics of solidarity into practical solidarity work.\textsuperscript{53}

The IAH’s first campaign that was organised for a non-European country was directed to the victims of the disastrous earthquake of 1 September 1923 that devastated the Tokyo area, resulting in over 100,000 casualties. However, due to the parallel deepening social crisis in Germany, the IAH’s solidarity campaign for Japan was suspended on 24 October. Hence the already available recourses were handed over to Japanese delegates in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{54} The IAH’s initial venture in Asia was thus practically pushed to the background already in its infancy.\textsuperscript{55}

In summer 1923, a nearing financial, political and social collapse in the Weimar Republic inspired the IAH to organise a major international solidarity campaign for Germany. The aim of the international solidarity of the transnational working class was hence not anymore directed towards Soviet Russia or Japan, but to the workers of Germany. The IAH

\textsuperscript{52} ‘An die Werktätigen aller Länder! Aufruf des III. Weltkongresses der IAH’, Bulletin 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/1, 279.
\textsuperscript{53} Bulletin 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/1, 279.
\textsuperscript{54} The decision to suspend the campaign for Japan was suggested by a representative of the Arbeiterhilfe’s office in Berlin. Letter from unknown sender at the Arbeiterhilfe’s central office in Berlin to Zinoviev, 24.10.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/1, 188–188a.
\textsuperscript{55} The grounds for the decision is clearly formulated in Willi Münzenberg, ‘Denkschrift über die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Überreicht am 30. Januar 1924 dem Chef der Heeresleitung’, Berlin, 30.1.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/1, 84. See also the version presented in Münzenberg, Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931, 235–238.
declared that it was time to elevate the honour of international solidarity and its principle of reciprocity. It was accordingly time for the Russian ‘brothers’, who by then had overcome the famine crisis, to show their solidarity in return to the German workers. As the development between 1921 and 1923 had constituted a radical turn in the language and practise of international solidarity as it had been directed towards Soviet Russia, the events of 1923 constituted in effect a return to a form of classic working class solidarity. It was classic in the sense that it was an international solidarity between ”workers in despair”, and not a solidarity shown by workers towards a state and its survival.\(^{56}\)

In 1924 and 1925, the IAH continued its international solidarity campaigns for Japan, and was involved in campaign work in such countries as Australia, Argentina, Mexico, Ireland, Morocco, India and China. In a sense these campaigns represented something completely new in Germany as they were neither directed towards the workers of Soviet Russia or Germany. Instead they were campaigns supported by German, European and American workers in order to assists the ”oppressed and exploited” peoples of the world, which embraced a rising global imaginary.\(^{57}\)

The most prominent of the international campaigns was the one organised for China. In September 1924 the IAH joined the Soviet anti-imperialist campaign ”Hands off China”. If the ”imperialist countries” were the given enemies of China, the Soviet Union and the communist movement were perceived as the natural allies and protectors of China and the peoples of Asia.\(^{58}\) It was not, however, only the IAH that was establishing contact with China. Chinese delegations were also taking contact with the IAH in Germany. For example, a Chinese delegation was present during the IAH’s congress organised on 26 October 1924 in Berlin. Apparently about 300 persons participated in the congress of whom 60 were delegates from various countries. According to newspaper reports a profound impression was made by


\(^{58}\) ‘Die IAH für die Opfer der Überschwemmung in China’, probably copy from *Not und Brot* 33 (30.9.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 179a.
the Chinese Yan Han Ling⁵⁹, who gave a speech on the political and financial state in China.⁶⁰ According to Ling it would be essential to form an IAH committee in China as the Red Cross was the only organisation in China that cared for the poor or for the victims of a recent devastating flood. Ling rhetorically concluded: How significant could it indeed become, if the idea of solidarity was established in the largest country of the world?⁶¹

On 1 December 1924, the IAH was provided by the Orgbüro of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) the mandate to organise solidarity campaigns in China, Japan and the colonial countries where the masses had not reached class consciousness, but were engaged in national liberation struggles against European and American imperialism. The IAH was authorised to organise campaigns to express solidarity for those hit by natural calamities and who were facing extreme mass deprivation. The goal of the IAH’s campaigns was to collect and send material assistance and commence campaigns that elaborated on the international solidarity between the workers of the world and the nationally oppressed peoples in the colonial countries.⁶²

The IAH’s mission was to convince the masses in the colonial countries that the workers in Europe and America did not support their ”imperialist” masters. It was according to the directives by the Comintern of outmost importance to show that bonds of solidarity did not exist between Europeans or Americans in general, but that the Western working class and the oppressed peoples in the colonial countries were ”natural allies” [natürliche Bundesgenossen].⁶³

In May 1925 a significant event in a Shanghai quarter brought to life a movement that within weeks would have German and American workers marching and demonstrating in the name of international solidarity, expressing their solidarity to the workers, students and peasants of China. The event that made this perhaps unlikely bridge of international solidarity possible occurred on 30 May 1925 when a demonstration of students was fired upon on orders by a British officer, resulting in over ten casualties. The demonstration had taken place in front of a police station in the international settlement of Shanghai in protest to an earlier

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⁵⁹ He is also referred to as Yan Han Lun in Not und Brot 36 (15.11.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 106.
⁶² Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH (Angenommen in der Sitzung des Sekretariats vom 1.12.1924), RGASPI 495/18/253, 4–5.
⁶³ Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH (Angenommen in der Sitzung des Sekretariats vom 1.12.1924), RGASPI 495/18/253, 5.

The IAH commenced its first actual international solidarity campaign for China on 19 June 1925. The first issue of the IAH’s new Bulletin named \textit{Für China / for China / pour la Chine} was published on that day and signalled the launch of the IAH’s China campaign that called to assist the starving and striking workers of China. The IAH assigned the workers of the world with a grand mission: to hinder the imperialist powers to suppress the Chinese striking workers. These were not some far away incidents, it was argued, but were events highly relevant for the workers of Germany, Europe and the rest of the world. The venture encompassed nothing less but to assist 450 million Chinese workers and peasants because their destiny was perceived as entangled with the destiny of the workers of the West. The IAH’s appeal was directed to all revolutionary workers, all friends of the struggling proletariat, and to all philanthropists [Menschenfreunde] who together could aid the very ”existence, human worth and national freedom” of the struggling workers, peasants and intellectuals of China.\footnote{‘Helft den Hungernden und streikenden Arbeitern Chinas’, \textit{Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China} 1 (19.6.1925), BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59. The appeal was signed by the executive committee of the IAH.}

The day after the first Bulletin was published Münzenberg sent a telegram to the Chinese government that confirmed that the IAH had initiated a relief campaign based on ”heißeste Sympathie” and practical solidarity. Another telegram had been sent to a strike committee in Shanghai stating that fund-raising of money, cloths and provisions had commenced. "Hold out, brotherly aid is underway”, the IAH’s telegram promised.\footnote{‘Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe an die Regierung in Pekin’; and ‘Die IAH an das Streikkomitee in Shanghai’, both signed by the central committee of the Arbeiterhilfe and Münzenberg. \textit{Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China} 2 (23.6.1925), BArch, R 1507/1096f, 62.}

Münzenberg could be very satisfied with the achievements of the IAH’s China campaign. Apparently, over 1000 meetings with Chinese delegates had been organised in
Germany, Europe, and the USA.\textsuperscript{67} The apogee of the China campaign constituted of the "Hands off China" congress organised on 16 August 1925 in Berlin.\textsuperscript{68} According to Münzenberg’s assessment, about five million persons had attended the IAH’s China meetings and demonstrations across Europe by mid August 1925.\textsuperscript{69}

The colonial question continued hereafter to be of central interest for the IAH. In August 1925 the AIZ presented thorough reports on the development in China and on the IAH’s China campaign. The IAH’s China Bulletin and the AIZ also reprinted the IAH’s first appeal that had been published in Chinese in Beijing. The appeal was signed by Henri Barbusse, Bernhard Shaw, Upton Sinclair, Clara Zetkin, Olga Kameneva, Albert A. Purcell, Professor Auguste Forel, Edo Fimmen and Willi Münzenberg.\textsuperscript{70}

In retrospect the China campaign heralded the beginning of Münzenberg’s engagement in the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle, peaking in 1927 as the League against Imperialism (LAI) was established. Although the LAI was created by the Comintern in order to head the anti-imperialist struggle, anti-imperialism continued to be a central part of the IAH’s message of international solidarity.\textsuperscript{71}

After 1925, the IAH continued its international engagement foremost in the form of strike support. Münzenberg characterised the mass strikes and lockouts that took place after the mid 1920s as completely different, compared to those of the early twentieth century. These new strikes were defined by Münzenberg as struggles that involved workers in entire countries, and occasionally even the entire international working class. Workers in Europe and especially Germany were in fact for the first time in history actively engaged in strikes and social conflicts around the globe through the IAH’s message of international solidarity.\textsuperscript{72}

One of the most significant strikes that the IAH supported was the English miners’ strike and general strike of 1926. By 1926 the IAH had mastered its international organisation to respond very efficiently when news of significant struggles or disasters surfaced. As the general strike broke out one minute to midnight on 3 May 1926, the IAH was fully prepared

\textsuperscript{67} Letter from Münzenberg to Sinowiev, 18.8.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 108.
\textsuperscript{68} "Einladung zu dem Kongress "Hände weg von China", Berlin, 1.8.1925. The invitation was signed by Münzenberg and Georg Ledebour, RGASPI 495/30/165, 72.
\textsuperscript{69} Minutes to the congress "Hände weg von China!" in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 49.
\textsuperscript{70} ‘Die erste IAH-Aufruf chinesisch’, Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China 6, 15.7.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 76a; ‘Hilfsaktion der IAH für die Streikenden in China’, AIZ (August 1925), 15.
\textsuperscript{71} See further the history of the LAI and its networks in Fredrik Petersson, “We are no visionaries of utopian dreamers” The network of the League Against Imperialism, Comintern and the anti-imperialist movement, 1925–1933” (Åbo Akademi University, 2013 (forthcoming)).
to launch an international solidarity campaign. According to a report by Münzenberg to the ECCI the IAH was notified of the coming general strike already on 2 May. Instructions were immediately sent by telegraph to the national IAH-sections to declare support to the general strike, to start fundraising, and announced public rallies for 6 May. Apparently when the news of the general strike had reached the IAH in Berlin it had without even consulting the KPD commenced its solidarity campaign. As Münzenberg explained to the KPD, already during an earlier extended ECCI meeting it had been decided between the British CP, the secretariat of the Comintern and the IAH that if a conflict broke loose, the IAH would immediately launch a solidarity campaign.\(^{73}\)

In accordance with the IAH’s message of international solidarity it declared in Germany that the struggle of the English workers was likewise a struggle of the international class. The defeat of the English workers was regarded as a defeat of the international working class, just as its victory would be a victory of the international proletariat.\(^{74}\)

The AIZ published also two illustrated reports on the British miners strike that highlighted the deplorable consequences for the workers of the world, if the strike failed. The second report was simply published under the headline ”international solidarity.”\(^{75}\)

In Germany the campaign for the miners’ strike was eventually organised in cooperation between the IAH and the KPD, although it was only the IAH that had the right to organise fundraising.\(^{76}\) As the campaign had commenced Münzenberg made immediate efforts to make the development in Britain a global affair. In a telegram sent on 9 May he could note that fundraising by the IAH had also started in Czechoslovakia, the USA (Chicago), and Australia.\(^{77}\) The IAH even telegraphed on 7 May the General Council of the Trade Union Committee (TUC) that the IAH was in the position to ”offer TUC the feeding of important parts of striking working-classes in Great Britain.”\(^{78}\) Apparently the TUC refused or was unable to accept the assistance offered by the IAH and the Russian trade unions, but this did not hinder the continuation of the IAH’s campaign.\(^{79}\) Instead the IAH forwarded the idea to hinder shipments of coal to Great Britain, and to spread the strike to the British

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\(^{74}\) Circular 25 from ”Bund der Freunde der IAH”, Reichssekretariat, Dünninghaus, to ”alle Landesausschüsse und selbständigen Unterbezirke”, Berlin, 7.5.1926, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/16, 24.

\(^{75}\) ’Der kampf der englischen Bergarbeiter, AIZ 8 (1926); ‘Internationale Solidarität’, AIZ 9 (1926).

\(^{76}\) Letter from Zentralkomitee der KPD, Sekretariat, to die deutsche Vertretung beim EKKI, 7.5.1926, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/1 2/5/33b, 265.

\(^{77}\) Telegramm from Willi [Münzenberg] to Misiano at the Meschrabpom in Moscow, 8.5.1926, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/6, 185; see also: Pressedienst der IAH zum englischen Bergarbeiterstreik, Berlin, 12.5.1926, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/15, 327.

\(^{78}\) Telegram from the IAH to the General Council of the TUC, 7.5.1926, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/15, 318.

\(^{79}\) ”Verschärfung der Lage in England”, [undated, early May 1926], SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/1 6/7/15, 19.
colonies in order to weaken the British empire. Hopes for solidarity strikes among the dockers in the West- and East Indies, among the miners in Australia and "mutinies in Chinese waters" were for example expressed by the IAH. After the twelve day general strike, Münzenberg concluded to the presidium of the ECCI that the IAH’s international campaign for the British miners had been severely circumscribed by reluctant and resisting national communist parties that did not want to support the IAH. Thus the campaign was according to Münzenberg successfully realised only in Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium, and Austria. In many other countries the fundraising had been complicated by a parallel campaign by the International Red Aid that collected funds for the imprisoned British strikers. Clearly the organisation of such a competing campaign was of more harm than use, Münzenberg concluded. In fact it constituted a typical example of competing and parallel international solidarity campaigns organised by the IAH and the International Red Aid that caused significant conflicts within the Comintern and the national communist parties.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s the IAH launched campaigns for such causes as the textile workers’ strike in Gastonia (North and South Carolina, USA); a English textile workers’ in strike in 1930; and a textile workers’ trike in northern France, 1931. The macon campaign of 1931 was however the ten-year celebration of the IAH that culminated in the "World Congress of International Solidarity", organised in Berlin, October 1931. Further, Münzenberg and the IAH were involved in organising the Amsterdam anti-war congress of 1932 and several anti-fascist campaigns. During the early 1930s the IAH highlighted especially the escalating situation in China and the consequences of imperialism and the general fear for a new world war.

After 1933, the IAH and Münzenberg were mainly involved in international solidarity campaigns for the victims of fascist oppression; for the liberation of communist leaders imprisoned in Germany, including Georgi Dimitrof and Ernst Thälman. Further the IAH

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81 Letter from Münzenberg to das Präsidium der Exekutive der Kommunistischen Internationale, 2.7.1926, RGASPI, 495/2/89, 11–12ob.
84 ‘Der Streik der französischen Textilarbeiter. Solidaritäts-Kundgebung der IAH’, Die Welt am Abend 122 (29.5.1931);
was involved in early solidarity campaigns against fascism in Spain.\textsuperscript{87} One of the last international campaigns of the IAH consisted of organising the 7th international Solidarity Day on 23 June 1935 in ”all capitalist countries” and the Soviet Union. It was the very last opportunity to ”demonstrate the power of international proletarian solidarity” before the IAH’s liquidation.\textsuperscript{88}

\textbf{A global network?}

The IAH nurtured a global imaginary through its international solidarity campaigns, but in order to actually work on the global scene, it required the establishment of a global network and perhaps even a global organisation in order to mobilise solidarity in various parts of the world. The former constituted a more lucid and informal connection, whereas the latter required an institutionalised structure. As an example of the IAH’s expansion as an organisation Münzenberg officially claimed in 1931 that the IAH had expanded into a significant international organisation with over 200.000 individual and 18 million collective members all around the world.\textsuperscript{89} The international expansion of the IAH was not however stalled after 1931. Instead, it was envisioned after the IAH’s World Congress that the IAH would develop in the colonial and semi-colonial countries into a full fledged mass organisation.\textsuperscript{90} It was envisioned that especially in India, China, Egypt, Cyprus and other suppressed countries the duty of the IAH was to expand its current national committees into vast organisations for the workers, peasants, students and intellectuals.\textsuperscript{91}

Following the international character of the IAH the organisation was naturally only known as the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH) within the German speaking world. In Great Britain, Australia, and China it was called the ”Workers’ International Relief” (WIR); in the USA and Canada, the IAH functioned first under the name of ”Friends of Soviet Russia” before being renamed the WIR; in Spain it was called the ”Socorro Obrero Internacional”; in the Netherlands it was named ”Internationale Arbeiders Hulp”; in Rumania the ”Ajutorului

\textsuperscript{87} Internal report: Hilfsaktion der spanischen IAH für die Kinder der asturischen Revolutionäre, 3.1.1935, RGASPI 539/2/740, 73.
\textsuperscript{89} Protocol: Weltkongress–Eröffnungsitzung, 10.10.1931, RGASPI 538/1/8, 1–2.
\textsuperscript{91} Willi Münzenberg, ‘Der Kampfkongreß der proletarischen Solidarität’, \textit{Die Rote Fahne} 184 (18.10.1931).
Municitoresc International”, in the French speaking world it was called the "Secours Ouvrier International" (SOI), in Sweden it was known as "Internationella Arbetarhjälpen”, while in Russia it was known as the "Mezhrabpom." ⁹²

In the following, a preliminary outline will be provided of the IAH’s international network and organisation between 1921 and 1933. The following list of countries includes 1) countries where the IAH had an official address ⁹³; 2) countries that were represented by delegates during the IAH’s World Congress organised October 1931 in Berlin; 3) countries that were the targets of an international solidarity campaign; 4) countries that are only included in the IAH’s official ten-year anniversary book *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (1931). ⁹⁴ If all countries mentioned in all categories were to be accepted as a part of the IAH’s network, a total of 53 countries are included. If one accepts only the countries where the IAH had official bureaus, 35 countries are included. The problem with these results is that it is difficult to establish whether these national sections actually existed at the same time. The total numbers are accurate for the time period of 1921–1935, but do not confirm the geographical width of the IAH during a specific year. Thus, the only data that provides results that are valid for a specific time, constitutes of the IAH’s World Congress that was organised in Berlin in October 1931. The congress was attended by delegates from 40 countries. ⁹⁵

In the first case, an official address had been printed on IAH-letterheads which suggested that an actual bureau had been established in that particular country. In the second case, the connection was not necessarily institutionalised, but constituted a network established between the IAH and a representative of a particular country. Whether this representative was actually resident in that country or functioned only as a liaison person remains at times uncertain. In the third case the countries involved were brought to light during a particular solidarity campaign (Syria, Morocco, Algeria), although it remains highly uncertain if actual contact or a network to the country in question was ever established. The

⁹² See the various names on the national committees on the IAH letterheads mentioned below, and in Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931*. ⁹³ The addresses of the national sections were printed on the IAH’s letterheads. All addresses were never printed on the same letter, but varied through the years. The ones included here are assembled from letters sent on 2.8.1923 (SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7, 178); 18.9.1923 (RGASPI 495/19/684, 113); 24.10.1923 (SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7, 188); 9.5.1924 (SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3, 225, 46); 19.5.1925 (RGASPI 538/2/27, 56); 26.1.1928 (RGASPI 538/2/46, 16); 22.6.1933 (SAPMO–BArch, NY 4005/19, ); ⁹⁴ The book includes separate presentations of the IAH’s activities in each country. Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931*, 350–492. ⁹⁵ ‘40 Delegationen berichten’, *Die Welt am Abend* 239 (13.10.1931); Before the conference it was estimated that 42 countries be represented: ‘42 Länder-Delegation sind auf dem Weltkongress der IAH im Oktober in Berlin vertreten, die internationale proletarische Solidarität lebt!’, *Nationale Selbsthilfe oder proletarische Solidarität* (1931), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/12, 37.
last case constitutes a highly problematic area, as these countries were only mentioned in the official history of the IAH but have not been noted in other sources. It is possible that contacts were established at some point, although it remains a very uncertain and weak link.

In the table below the following markings indicate the nature of the network:

- \textit{Italics} = country in question had an official IAH address.
- \textunderline{Underlined} = country only represented at the IAH’s World Congress in Berlin (1931).
- \textasterisk = country only the object of a solidarity campaign.
- \textplus{} = country only mentioned in \textit{Solidarität}, the official history of the IAH (1931).

1) Europe and Russia

\begin{tabular}{lllll}
\textbf{Germany} & \textbf{Great Britain} & \textbf{Ireland} & \textbf{Austria} \\
\textbf{Czechoslovakia} & \textbf{Holland} & \textbf{Spain} & \textbf{Russia} \\
\textbf{France} & \textbf{Sweden} & \textbf{Switzerland} & \textbf{Denmark} \\
\textbf{Iceland} & \textbf{Belgium} & \textbf{Norway} & \textbf{Bulgaria} \\
\textbf{Rumania} & \textbf{Yugoslavia} & \textbf{Luxembourg} & \textbf{Finland} \\
\textbf{Poland} & \textbf{Portugal} & \textbf{Italy} & \textbf{Hungary} \\
\textbf{Greece} & \textbf{Cyprus} & & \\
\end{tabular}

2) Asia and the Middle East

\begin{tabular}{llll}
\textbf{China} & \textbf{Japan} & \textbf{India} & \textbf{Indonesia} \\
\textbf{Syria} & \textbf{Indochina} & \textbf{Palestine} & \textbf{Korea} \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{96} According to a press report a national section of the IAH called the "Soziale Solidarität" was founded in November 1932 in Greece. An official address has not however been established. See: 'Die “Soziale Solidarität” in Griechenland', \textit{Internationale Arbeiterhilfe: Internationale Korrespondenz des Zentralkomitees der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe} 2 (May 1933). Copy from BArch, R 1501/20687, 215a.

\textsuperscript{97} According to the travel budget for the congress a delegate from Cyprus was supposed to attend the IAH’s congress in Berlin. No other source has confirmed the statement. See "Gesamt-Budget: Fahrkosten der 226 Delegierten", RGASPI 538/1/10, 173–175.

\textsuperscript{98} In December 1930 the IAH claimed that the first IAH-committees had been founded in India. No other source has confirmed the statement. See: ‘Rüstet zum internationalen Kongreß der IAH. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe’, \textit{Die Welt am Abend} 287, 9.12.1930. Copy from BArch, R 1501/20197, 38.

\textsuperscript{99} A delegate from Syria was supposed to attend the IAH’s congress in Berlin according to the travel budget for the congress. No other source has confirmed the statement. See "Gesamt-Budget: Fahrkosten der 226 Delegierten", RGASPI 538/1/10, 173–175.

\textsuperscript{100} A delegate from Indochina was supposed to attend the IAH’s congress in Berlin according to the travel budget for the congress. No other source has confirmed the statement. See "Gesamt-Budget: Fahrkosten der 226 Delegierten", RGASPI 538/1/10, 173–175.

\textsuperscript{101} A delegate from Palestine was supposed to attend the IAH’s congress in Berlin according to the travel budget for the congress. No other source has confirmed the statement. See "Gesamt-Budget: Fahrkosten der 226 Delegierten", RGASPI 538/1/10, 173–175.
3) North and South America

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4) Africa

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5) Australia

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The table above seems to confirm the IAH’s global ambitions. As it can be noted, the IAH was predominately organised in Europe, but official addresses were established at least in Russia, China, Japan, USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, South Africa, and Egypt. Networks were apparently also established in 1931 to representatives from Tunisia, Algeria, Cameroon, Greece, Indonesia, India, Peru and New Zealand.

The tentative outline has produced a picture of the IAH’s global network, but it remains at this point very difficult to investigate further the character of the international organisation and networks: how intense were the contacts? how were they actually utilised? who were the bearers of these networks? what kind of ideas and notions of international solidarity were transmitted and did there evolve a debate on the character of international solidarity between the representatives of the world? How was the IAH perceived from the periphery, if Berlin constituted the centre? Lastly it must be asked: Did these networks have a historical significance for the the spread of international solidarity, anti-imperialism, and anti-fascism on a global scale during the 1920s and early 1930s?

What seems beyond any doubt is that the IAH managed thanks to its global network and international organisation to cultivate a powerful global imaginary in at least Germany that was based on the idea of international proletarian solidarity. Without fundamental contacts between the IAH’s central headquarters in Berlin and the 53 or 40 or 35 countries represented in the table above, the IAH’s global imaginary would have been much weaker and less convincing in its time.

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102 In December 1930 the IAH claimed that the first IAH-committees had been founded in Bolivia. No other source has confirmed the statement. See: ‘Rüstet zum internationalen Kongreß der IAH. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe’, Die Welt am Abend 287, 9.12.1930. Copy from BArch, R 1501/20197, 38.

103 A delegate from New Zealand was supposed to attend the IAH’s congress in Berlin according to the travel budget for the congress. No other source has confirmed the statement. See "Gesamt-Budget: Fahrkosten der 226 Delegierten", RGASPI 538/1/10, 173–175.
Conclusions

This article has established that the IAH on significant levels was in pursuit of global solidarity during the interwar era. It managed to create a global network with the assistance of the Comintern to all six continents where, according to the table above, at least two countries on each continent resided official IAH-bureaus. The IAH organised major international congresses, with especial reference to the 1931 World Congress in Berlin that brought together an unprecedented number of delegates from all around the world.

If the first condition for forwarding the idea of global solidarity was the actual establishment of a global network, the second stage was to utilise the network in order to produce a global imaginary based on international solidarity. The IAH was successful in organising international solidarity campaigns in most parts of the world that always were perceived as relevant beyond the local and national context on the global scene. Throughout its existence the IAH embraced the idea of uniting the workers of the world, and to activate them for the oppressed peoples, for workers in major strikes, and for working class victims during natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes. The actual material assistance that the IAH provided to those suffering from devastation or oppression, remains uncertain, as most numbers are based on the IAH’s own reports and assessments. What the IAH managed well was the launching of international solidarity campaigns in especially Germany, Europe and America where workers in those countries were encouraged to ‘think global’ and to realise that just as major strikes in neighbouring countries were deeply entwined with their own future prospects, so were far away struggles in the colonies.

Although the IAH has not been highlighted in the previous research on neither global history, the history of international organisations, nor the history of international solidarity, it seems that the IAH constitutes a significant case study as it was one of the first international organisations for global (albeit not universal) solidarity. At least the IAH was confident of its place in history when it in 1931 celebrated its decade of international solidarity work. With satisfaction it was proclaimed: The IAH and its General Secretary Münzenberg were in the pursuit of ”realising the greatest idea in human history – the global solidarity of the working class” [der weltumspannende Solidarität der Arbeiterklasse].

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