As every front organization of the Comintern, the ITUCNW had a Janus face. Officially and in public, the organization presented itself as an independent, although radical, organization working for the benefit of the ‘Negro toilers’. According to its public statement, the Hamburg Committee “…is not a race, but a class organization, organizing and leading the fight in the interests of Negro workers in Africa, the West Indies and other colonies.”\(^2\) In a subsequent pamphlet, which was a slightly revised and expanded version of the statement, the Hamburg Committee was portrayed as an organization that had evolved out of the July 1930 Hamburg Conference and had been established to “…develop a spirit of international solidarity among the black workers in their common struggle with the workers of other races and countries against world imperialism.”\(^3\) ‘A Committee of Negro workers in America’ issued the call for the conference. It had gathered representatives of the Negro workers in Africa, America and the Caribbean who, as it seems, by their own agency had created a revolutionary platform that sought to unify Black workers throughout the African Atlantic.

James Ford emphasized the ITUCNW’s independent position whenever the German authorities led inquiries. When the police asked about aims of the Hamburg Committee, he replied that “our committee was quite an open committee having been organized here” and that he held the position as Honorary Secretary. His main duty, he argued, was to serve as newspaper reporter of *The Liberator* and as representative of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights to take care “of the work of the committee, editing its journal and carrying out such other of its work.” He further declared that *The Liberator* paid his salary.\(^4\) This latter claim was certainly not true – the Red International Labour Union (RILU) funded the Hamburg Committee’s employees, as will be outlined further below.

Although both the statement and the pamphlet underlined the need for the Negro
workers to organize themselves into revolutionary trade unions and called for the Negro workers to support and to defend the Soviet Union, the ITUCNW never declared that its Hamburg Secretariat was an integrated part of the RILU network. In fact, the links between Moscow and Hamburg, the Negro Committee of the RILU and the ITUCNW, were hardly visible. For a moment, one could even believe that the Negro Committee had ceased to exist and its activities had moved to Hamburg.

However, neither the Negro Committee of the RILU nor the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern had been abolished. Instead, the RILU had created just another front organization with the formation of the ITUCNW. Right from the beginning of Ford’s activities in Hamburg in November 1930, the ITUCNW was part and parcel of a larger network that included the newly formed International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) in Hamburg, the League Against Imperialism (LAI) in Berlin, the Negro Committee of the RILU as well as other units of the Comintern Apparatus in both Moscow and Berlin, such as the International Red Aid, the West European Bureau (WEB) and the Caribbean Bureau of the ECCI. The ITUCNW was an integral part of the ‘solar system’ of the Comintern but was at the same time actively engaged in forming its own hierarchical network. That network included organizations and individuals in all parts of the African Atlantic.

1. Visions about a ‘Black International’

The position of the ITUCNW or the Hamburg Committee, as it also was usually referred to in the internal communications, was outlined in a resolution concerning the organisation and functions of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers.\(^5\) This resolution was passed in January 1931 and was the first of several subsequent resolutions on the ITUCNW’s activities. The Resolution stressed the close link between the Hamburg Committee and the various organs of the RILU in Hamburg as well as the European Secretariat of the RILU in Berlin and the League against Imperialism. The main tasks of the ITUCNW were twofold. First and foremost, its aim was to popularize the programme of the RILU and the decisions of the Hamburg Conference in the African Atlantic. Secondly, whenever possible, the Hamburg Committee was to initiate the organisation of trade unions in Africa, in the Caribbean “and such other countries where no sections of the RILU exist.” In addition, the ITUCNW was envisioned to serve as a vanguard force for rallying anti-colonial

and critical workers organisations under its officially non-communist but openly radical umbrella. Therefore, the Hamburg Committee was not to be presented as an integral part of the RILU-Apparatus in public but neither should it present itself as being the spearhead of radical political Pan-Africanism as declared in the January 1931 Resolution on the ITUCNW:

No initiation or affiliation fees shall be collected by the Committee from the different organisations that will come into relations with it as this might create the impression that the ITUC of NW is a Black International conducted on racial lines and not based on the class struggle.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, right from the beginning there were conflicting views in Moscow about the tasks of the ITUCNW. The January 1931 Resolution had been prepared by the Negro Committee of the Eastern Secretariat. In their vision, the ITUCNW was to become the rallying force of all parts of the African Atlantic, including the USA and South Africa. Thus, the Negro Question and the struggle against Garveyism and Jim Crowism, the exposure of the ‘social fascists’, the Amsterdamists and the Black reformists in the USA and South Africa was part and parcel of their projection about the duties of the ITUCNW. It further demanded that the Hamburg Committee expose the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) as tools of the imperialist powers and to mobilise the Negro workers in support of the revolutionary struggle in the imperialist countries and the national liberations movements. Last, but not least, the ITUCNW was to be a vehicle for Soviet foreign policy (“for the struggle against the war danger and for the Defense of the USSR”) and a tool for the popularisation of the social and economic policy of the USSR.\(^7\)

The practical work of the ITUCNW, the January 1931 Resolution outlined, was limited in the publication of its journal, *The Negro Worker*, and to develop it into a popular mass organ. In addition, the Hamburg Committee was to publish a series of books, pamphlets and leaflets on problems pertaining to Negro working class life.\(^8\) Whatever publication and whenever published, the idea of a radical African Atlantic if not ‘Black International’ was to be reproduced in the form of a unified graphical message: a block showing the Negro worker breaking chains unifying the African and American continents. The idea was simple but effective, Padmore assured Ford: “This will help to establish a certain familiarity among the workers for our literature and at the same time convey the idea that only the workers

\(^6\) ITUCNW January 1931 Resolution, RGASPI 495/155/96, fol. 10-11.
\(^7\) ITUCNW January 1931 Resolution, RGASPI 495/155/96, fol. 11-12.
\(^8\) ITUCNW January 1931 Resolution, RGASPI 495/155/96, fol. 13.
themselves can break their chains.”

1.1. A truncated radical African Atlantic?

In contrast to the broad perspective of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern about the global duties of the ITUCNW, the RILU Secretariat envisioned a much more limited role and character of the organization. First, the Hamburg Committee was to work in much closer cooperation with the various RILU sections than the Eastern Secretariat had projected. Second, and more important, the range of activities and duties were to be much more limited, focussing only on Africa and the Caribbean as will be outlined in the subsequent chapters. Therefore, two perspectives collided in Moscow, that of the ‘Negro Question’ and that of the ‘Colonial Question’. Such an unclear situation hampered Ford’s work in Hamburg – was the ITUCNW to comment on the conditions in the USA or not? How much energy was to be put on opening links to Africa and the Caribbean? Or, as the RILU was to demand, was his main objective to work among Negro seamen and build up a global communication network?

The first division of Negro work of the various committees of the Comintern was already outlined at the end of April 1931. An extended meeting of the Political Commission of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI decided that the Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat was not to consider matters of Negro work in the United States. Instead, the activities in the USA, including those of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), were to be prepared by a new commission consisting of the Comintern Representative of the CPUSA and the Director or Assistant Director of the Anglo-American Secretariat as well as Comrade Safarov as the representative of the Eastern Secretariat, Otto Ville Kuusinen, and a ‘Negro’ Comrade. Interestingly, both George Padmore and Otto Huiswoud participated in the discussion and seemingly did not object to the decision. Matters concerning South Africa were still to be dealt with by the Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat as is evident from a meeting of the ECCI Political Commission in September 1931. However, the division of work, the strategic obligations and the political tasks of the various Negro units of the Comintern and RILU proved unsuitable in practice and resulted in several calls for a revision of the organisational outlines in 1931.

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9 Letter from Padmore to Ford, 25.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 58.
The RILU Secretariat’s critique about the vision of a Black International was formulated in two memoranda, the first in June 1931 and the second in late September 1931. Both declarations noted that the Hamburg Committee’s concrete work in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean in Hamburg had been slow to commence and that few, if any, links had been established to potential groups and organizations. Indirectly, the statements criticised the original outline of tasks of the ITUCNW as too broad and that the Hamburg Committee should restrict its activities to work among the Negroes in the colonies only.\footnote{Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, filed as 52/52.129.5.WWC, dated 10.6.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 25-27; Secretariat of the RILU, Negro Workers’ TU Committee of the RILU, Concrete Proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, filed as 52/52.141.sec.3, dated 30.9.1931, RGASPI 534/3/615, fol. 123-124.}

Both texts also underlined the hierarchical relationship between Hamburg and Moscow. Whereas the Hamburg Committee was to gather information on the actual living and working conditions of the “Negro toiling masses” in the colonies, the Negro Committee of the RILU was to work out the concrete directives for those sections with which the Hamburg Committee has relationships.\footnote{Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, filed as 52/52.129.5.WWC, dated 10.6.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 25; Secretariat of the RILU, Negro Workers’ TU Committee of the RILU, Concrete Proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, filed as 52/52.141.sec.3, dated 30.9.1931, RGASPI 534/3/615, fol. 123.} This perspective, too, proposed a narrower vision about the global tasks of the ITUCNW, i.e., one that excluded work in the USA and in South Africa.

However, compared to the June document, the late September report also underlined the fact that the Hamburg Committee was not a Comintern but a RILU organization:

As the result of the persistent confusion which still prevails on the statue of the Hamburg Committee it is necessary to note once more that the Hamburg Committee is an organ of the RILU, while outwardly reserving an independent form in its dealing with the broad masses of Negro toilers in different parts of the world. The Hamburg Committee works under the leadership of the Negro Workers’ TU Committee of the RILU and the direct supervision of the European Secretariat. Whenever questions arise which require immediate action, the same must be discussed and decided by Comrade Ford together with the comrades of the ISH Executive.\footnote{Secretariat of the RILU, Negro Workers’ TU Committee of the RILU, Concrete Proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee, filed as 52/52.141.sec.3, dated 30.9.1931, RGASPI 534/3/615, fol. 123.}

The September Memorandum thus clearly stated that the Hamburg Committee was an organization that first and foremost belonged to the labour union sphere of activities of Moscow, not that of parties or other organizations. Neither was it to be developed into an
independent body but the activities in Hamburg were to be controlled by the ISH and the 
‘European Secretariat’. This last organization could either refer to the European Secretariat 
of the RILU or the West European Bureau, both of which had their headquarters in Berlin.

The various suggestions for reorganisation of work prompted the ECCI to revise the 
organisational structures of the Eastern Secretariat and to change the political character of the 
ITUCNW. On the 7 October 1931, the Political Commission (PolCom) decided to overhaul 
the setup of the Eastern Secretariat. A troika consisting of Comrades Miff, Magyar and 
Safarov was to head the Secretariat. While Miff was to be in charge of the daily operations of 
the unit, Magyar was to direct the operation in the Near East and the Arab countries and 
Safarov those in Sub-Saharan Africa (“Negerländer Afrikas”) and the “Mittelorient” (Middle 
East, i.e., Iran and neighbouring countries). The PolCom’s decision, however, is somewhat 
unclear as a draft version of the paragraph outlined that Safarov’s duties included ‘Negro 
Questions’ (Negerfragen) which would have included the monitoring of the activities in South 
Africa as well.¹⁵

One day later, on 8 October 1931, the RILU Secretariat in its turn decided that any 
association, group or labour union of Negro workers in Africa or the Caribbean that was not a 
member of either the Amsterdam International or the RILU were invited to join the Hamburg 
Committee as full members. The idea was to pave the way for the development of radical 
workers organisations in the African Atlantic and, consequently, turning the ITUCNW into a 
Black International. Safarov and the leading members of the Eastern Secretariat attacked the 
RILU Secretariat’s decision for being a dangerous deviation of the official ‘class-against-

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¹⁵ Protokoll Nr. 186 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 7.10.1931, RGASPI 
495/4/144, fol. 2, 5.

¹⁶ Letter (German translation) from G. Safarov to the Political Commission, 11.10.1931, RGASPI 495/4/145, fol. 
30.
1.2. The end of the Black International

On 13 October 1931, the PolCom made the final decision about the character and objectives of the ITUCNW. The PolCom intervened in the debate between the Eastern Secretariat and the RILU about the necessity to develop the ITUCNW into an international Negro organization and rejected the project. Instead, the ITUCNW was to concentrate on activating Negro workers in the African colonies. Local Negro organizations, the PolCom stated, were to link up with the European Secretariat of the RILU, the LAI, the Latin American Trade Union Federation, and the Pacific Secretariat. Only those Negro organizations that could not establish contacts with the units listed above were to be connected with the Hamburg Committee. However, each affiliation of a particular Negro organization with the ITUCNW was to be decided by the Executive Committee of the RILU.\(^\text{17}\)

The PolCom ruling definitively changed the outlines of the ITUCNW. Although the ITUCNW, to some extent, had tried to establish itself as the focal point of the radical African Atlantic during its first year of existence, its outreach became limited to Africa and the Caribbean by the end of 1931. For the rest of its existence, the ITUCNW was to focus on the Colonial Question and as a consequence excluded direct political activities in the USA and in South Africa.

The decision by the PolCom also meant that Ford’s idea for organising a second world conference of the Negro toilers was buried for the time being. This project had been part of the original outlines for the ITUCNW but had been shelved by the RILU Negro Committee already during spring 1931. Instead, the First World Congress of the ISH in Altona (Hamburg) in May 1932 as well as the World Congress of the International Red Aid (Internationale Rote Hilfe, IRH) in Moscow in November 1932 was projected as substitutes for Negro conferences.\(^\text{18}\)

1.3. November 1931: Exit Ford, enter Padmore

The change in the functions and tasks of the ITUCNW was also reflected by a change of the personnel in both Hamburg and Moscow. In Hamburg, George Padmore replaced James Ford

\(^{17}\) Protokoll Nr 187 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr am 13.10.1931, §3 Meinungsverschiedenheiten zwischen dem Ost-LS des EKKI und der Profintern betr. den Charakter des Hamburger Komites der Negerarbeiter, RGASPI 495/4/145, fol. 1-2. None of the Black Comrades, Huiswoud, Padmore or Ford, were present at the meeting.

\(^{18}\) See further CoWoPa 20/2009 (updated October 2011).
as secretary of the Hamburg Committee in November 1931. Back in Moscow, Otto Huiswoud was put in charge of the RILU Negro Committee where he was joined by Albert Nzula (1905-1934) who had arrived in Moscow in August 1931 and used the alias (Tom or M.) Jackson. Ford, on the other hand, who visited Moscow in September 1931, remained there and worked at the RILU headquarters for its Negro Committee before he eventually returned to the USA in 1932.

The reshuffling of persons in autumn 1931 has led to a great variation in explanations for what had happened. Some researchers have interpreted Ford’s disappearance from Hamburg as a sign of him falling in disgrace in Moscow and that he was dismissed from his post, others that he was assigned back to the USA. The critical interpretations seem in part to rest on Richard Krebs’s negative portrait of Ford’s activities in Hamburg. According to Krebs, the British authorities had demanded the German government close down the Hamburg Bureau of the ITUCNW, resulting in a police raid against the ISH headquarters. Fearing arrest, Ford panicked and rushed out of the building, jumped on a bicycle, and attempted to speed away to safety. Krebs, who most likely witnessed the 1931 raid, sarcastically declared:

The attempt was futile and ridiculous. In a North German town like Hamburg, no negro could make himself more conspicuous than by racing off on a bicycle with policemen in pursuit. In Comintern service, to become conspicuous means to become useless for conspirative work. Ford was summarily relieved of his international functions.

The documentation about the definite decision to replace Ford with Padmore is patchy and I have so far not located anything about it in the Comintern Archives. However, the reshuffle in Hamburg was commented by Padmore at a meeting in Paris in August 1933, see Reunion pour la discussion sur le comité International des Negres, 23.8.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 100-101.

Nzula, a leading member of the CPSA, had travelled to the Soviet Union for enrolment at the International Lenin School. From 1932 he was acting chairman of the ITUCNW and a member of the Central Council of the RILU. He died of lobar pneumonia in Moscow. (Davidson et al. 2003, p. xxix.)

Ford was in Moscow at least since September 28, when he and Padmore participated at the meeting of the ECCI PolCom where the conditions in South Africa and a resolution on the CPSA was discussed. See Protokoll Nr. 118 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats EKKI, 28.9.1931, RGASPI 495/3/271, fol. 1. Extracts of the resolution are published in Davidson et alii, Vol II, 2003, p. 18.

For example, van Enckevort 2000, p. 105.

Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2005, 195. Harry Haywood even argued in his autobiography (1978, p. 380) that Ford was called back to the USA.

Jan Valtin, *Out of the Night*, New York: Alliance Book Corporation 1941, p. 309. Jan Valtin was the pseudonym of Richard Krebs. However, there are some problems with Krebs’ recollections. He himself had not been in charge of the Inter-Club in Hamburg before September 1931, in fact, he was not even living in the town but had been in charge of the Inter-Club in Bremen before his departure to Murmansk and Leningrad in July 1931. The harbour scene was in full turmoil when he returned as the ISH planned to launch a nation-wide strike. Waldenfels does not report about any police raids against the ISH premises in September. On the other had, the military unit of the Social Democratic party, the *Reichsbanner*, attacked the ISH headquarters on the 13th of
Krebs further claimed that Ford had not been capable of building up an international network. In his mind, Ford was more of an intellectual than a revolutionary activist, and painted him as “a careerist, of no great courage and even less industry, but possessing an uncanny knack of wheedling close to those in charge of budgets.” Others in Hamburg, Krebs recalled, even argued that Ford was nothing more than the RILU’s parade-horse, although an expensive one. Even worse was that Ford’s relationship with Albert Walter, the leader of the ISH in Hamburg, which was lukewarm at the best and constrained at several times. Walter even claimed that Ford was “a fraud” and asked Lozovsky, the Secretary General of the RILU, to have him recalled to Moscow and to replace him with somebody else. Finally, as he had run into troubles with the German police during a raid against the headquarters of the ISH and the Hamburg Committee, he was – in Krebs words – summarily relieved from his international functions, recalled to Moscow and after some months in “exile” returned to the USA.

On the other hand, Ford managed to survive in Hamburg for quite a time, perhaps partly due to him performing his duties “in a quiet diplomatic manner, displaying considerable ability for unobtrusive political intrigue,” as Krebs recalled. Mark Solomon provides a somewhat similar description of Ford’s capabilities – although referring to his activities in the United States during the 1930s – who described Ford as “unfailingly courteous, natty, imposing, efficient, and often aloof.”

Krebs’s accusations were serious as he was at that time a leading member of the ISH inner circle. However, how much did Krebs know about the discussions in Moscow at that time? According to Maria van Enckevort, who refers to documents in Moscow, Ford was dismissed in September 1931. She claims that the German police raided Hamburg Committee headquarters in 1931 and together with his troubles with the Austrian police in August 1931 led to the decision in Moscow to have him dismissed. However, there are several flaws with this argument. First, the headquarters of the Hamburg Committee were

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September. Perhaps Ford’s escape occurred at that event? Whatever the case, Krebs could have known Ford in person only for a few weeks as Ford had left Hamburg by mid-September. See further Ernst von Waldenfels, *Der Spion der aus Deutschland kam. Das geheime Leben des Seemanns Richard Krebs*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag 2002, pp. 100-109.

25 Valtin 1941, p. 308.
26 Valtin 1941, p. 309.
27 Valtin 1941, p. 308.
29 van Enckevort, p. 105. Joyce Moore Turner has consulted the same files as van Enckevort (and myself) in the Comintern Archives, but gives no reference for her statement that Ford was assigned back to the USA in September 1931.
raided in December 1931 at a time when Ford already was in Moscow and Padmore was in charge in Hamburg. Second, in Ford’s letter to Moscow about his trip to Austria that ended with his arrest in Graz in early August 1931, there is no indication about him being harassed by the German police after his return from Austria. On the other hand, Padmore informed Cyril Briggs in early September that correspondence to him was to be sent to Hamburg and not anymore to Moscow “as I will be there by the time you received this letter.” Perhaps the comrades at the RILU headquarters at this point already had decided to replace Ford with Padmore? Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any documents about the discussions in Moscow.

Be as it may, the following sequences are known. Ford left Hamburg and traveled via Berlin to Dünamünde (Daugavgriva), the port of Riga, where he arrived at the 16th of September 1931. From there, he continued to Moscow. Ford wrote a lengthy report about his activities in Hamburg, outlining the spread of *The Negro Worker* and the establishment of a network among Negro seamen, in early October 1931. It is not known, if he wrote the report before he left Hamburg or after his arrival in Moscow. He did not participate at the RILU Negro Committee meeting on the 10th of October of which the minutes have been filed. Ford’s report, on the other hand, was discussed by the RILU Secretariat sometime during the middle of October as is indicated in the text of a resolution dated 18 October 1931: “After hearing the report of Comrade Ford on the work of the International Trade Union Committee the Secretariat notes [...].” Together with the PolCom decision about the Hamburg Committee a few days earlier, the discussion that occurred in Moscow at this time resulted in a reorientation of the work of the ITUCNW as will be outlined in the next chapter. The resolution text itself, however, does not contain any hints about the reshuffle in Hamburg.

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30 Report by Nachrichtenstelle im Reichsministerium des Inneren zu Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Office), Berlin, 18.2.1932, BAhrB R1501/20441 Reichsministerium des Inneren. KPD – Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsbewegung, Jan. 1932 – Mai 1932, fol. 182. Interestingly, the report claimed that James William Ford was the chairman of the ITUCNW, i.e., the Hamburg Committee, and that he currently was staying in Moscow. The police raid against the office of the Hamburg Committee was also reported in the local communist newspaper *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, 28.12.1931 and the communist journal *Die Rote Fahne*, 30.12.1931.

31 Letter from Ford to RILU Secretariat and George Padmore, dated 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 102-104. An internal examination of the letter reveals that it was written in Hamburg shortly after his return from Austria via Berlin. On the other hand, in some earlier reports from Hamburg, Ford did refer to police harassment.

32 (Copy) Letter from NN to ’Comrade Briggs’, 5.9.1931, RGASPI 534/6/140, fol. 38. A critical analysis of the letter reveals that it was written by Padmore while he still was in charge of the RILU Negro Bureau in Moscow.


35 Minutes of the Negro Committee/RILU, 10.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 13-14.

36 Resolution on the work of the Hamburg Committee, filed as 265/N.A./4ex./N.C., dated 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 44.

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Ford must have met Padmore in Moscow in October, as is indicated in Padmore’s first letter from Germany:

I have made a complete search and inquiry from all of the comrades here for the files of comrade F.[ord] so as to become acquainted with the correspondence conducted by the Committee. But up to now I have not been able to discover anything. Perhaps he has them at his house. If he is still in your way, kindly ask him how I can find them, although he told me that they were all in his desk [italics HW], which is not so.

Padmore’s inquiry clearly indicates that he had discussed the conditions in Hamburg with Ford before he had left Moscow. On his way to his destination, Padmore visited Berlin, where he arrived on 27 October 1931. Here he held consultations with the members of at the International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism as well as the European Secretariat of the International Red Aid. A few days later, he arrived in Hamburg in the middle of a strike arranged by the ISH among German seamen and harbour workers. Conditions at the ISH and the Hamburg Committee headquarters in Roothesoodstrasse were chaotic as the police daily raided the premises. Only after the strike was over was Padmore able to go to the office and he found it in a total mess.

Padmore’s description of the chaotic situation in Hamburg at the office has led some researchers to draw the conclusion that this was much because of Ford’s failure to get things properly done – and would have been one of the reasons for his dismissal. However, a close analysis of Padmore’s letter reveals the contrary. Padmore did find the office “in a perfect mess”, but this was mainly a result of the daily police raids. To his big surprise, however, he discovered that Ford had not distributed the September issue of *The Negro Worker* and that there were come 2,000 copies of the *Open Letter to Guiana* and 2,500 copies of the proceedings of the 1930 Hamburg Conference that were lying around. Further, he found none of the French editions of *The Negro Worker* had been sent away, in addition to all kind of copies of pamphlets that were buried away in the shelves in the office. Padmore’s description of the conditions in the office is more of a surprise of the actual state of affairs than an accusation of Ford’s inability or shortcomings:

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37 Ford’s visit to Moscow in either October or early November is confirmed by Padmore’s statement in 1933. See Reunion pour la discussion sur le Comite International des Negres, 23.8.1933, RGASPI 5343/3/895, fol. 100.


I was more than surprised to find all of this material still lying around, for having heard comrade F.’s report, one would think that all of this had been distributed. However, I am getting rid of the material in the colonies, and we will turn over a new page in our work.  

On the other hand, in his first letters to E.F. Small, one of the West African contacts of the Hamburg Committee, Padmore explained that Ford had been sent back to the USA to strengthen work among the African American working class. Although this might have been the original intention of Moscow, Padmore’s statement was not quite correct: Ford was still in Moscow in November 1931.

Negro work of the CPUSA had at this time once again reached its nadir. Ford had been commissioned to establish the Negro Department of the TUUL in late 1929 but since his departure to Europe in spring 1930, there had been little progress in attracting African Americans to the Party or the radical trade unions. A new start was taken in April 1931 when the NEC of the TUUL adopted a program for work among African Americans. Ford had either been involved in drafting the paper or had been informed about the NEC’s decision. Harry Haywood, who had been appointed as head of the newly formed Negro Department of the TUUL, notified Padmore about the pathetic conditions for Negro work in the USA and the shortcomings of the TUUL after Ford’s departure:

I suppose you are acquainted with the position of the TUUL work. Suffice it is to say that our work is still very weak, although some progress was registered at the last Board meeting. I think that we are beginning to make the turn in the direction of the 5th RILU Congress. Since Ford left the Negro work has been sadly neglected. No Negro Department was functioning. Now we have to begin almost from the start.

The comrades at the RILU Negro Bureau must not have been pleased with Haywood’s account and Huiswoud asked him to prepare a statement about the conditions for Negro work in the USA. But nothing was heard from Haywood and in July Moscow was informed that he had gone on a tour to the US South and had not even started to draft it!
From the above discussion, the assumption that Ford had been dismissed or recalled to Moscow due to his shortcomings in Hamburg is dubious. Be as it may, Ford remained in Moscow until early February 1932. Thereafter he returned via Germany to the USA. Back in the USA, he was put in charge of the Negro Department of the TUUL – at least indirectly indicating that the malfunctioning of the TUUL Negro Department was perhaps one reason for his return to the United States. It is likely that Ford’s return to the USA had been orchestrated by the RILU and the Comintern, perhaps it was thought that Ford was the person best suited to re-establish the Negro Department of the TUUL and was therefore more needed in the USA than in Hamburg. In May 1932 he was nominated as a candidate for vice president in the upcoming presidential election in the USA, running together with William Z. Foster on the CPUSA’s presidential ticket. This event, at least officially, brought Ford back into the spotlight of the radical African Atlantic.

1.4. Frieda Schiff – more than Padmore’s secretary?

Neither Ford nor Padmore spoke any German and therefore needed the assistance of somebody in the daily work in Hamburg, especially in their correspondence with members of the German Party and the key persons in Berlin, such as Willi Münzenberg, who did not communicate in English. It is not certain if Ford’s secretary was his mistress, who incidentally was a member of the GPU as Richard Krebs hinted, or if this person was Frau Kati Kunze whose mailbox he used. As for the identity of Padmore’s secretary, some intriguing pieces of information have been revealed in the Comintern Archives.

Although the identity of Padmore’s assistant cannot be definitively proven, it is most likely that it was Frieda Schiff. Padmore used her address while living in Hamburg: Dr. Frieda Schiff, Paulstrasse 1, Altona (Hamburg). It is unclear if Padmore used the premises only as a safe meeting point; this was the case at least at the end of March 1932 when he had

during the summer of 1931. Haywood had been sent to Pittsburgh as a strike organizer. He returned to New York in September 1931. See Haywood 1978, 364, 374.
46 Ford travelled via Hamburg to the USA as is indicated in a communication from the ISH headquarters, dated 17.2.1932, RGASPI 534/8/210, fol. 49. According to the note, Ford had received 200 Mark from the ISH to pay off his debts before leaving the continent.
47 Ford (signed), Life and activities, 20.4.1932, RGASPI 495/261/6747, fol. 71.
48 Valtin 1941, p. 308.
a meeting with Comrade Hans Jäger who had come from the LAI Headquarters in Berlin for a meeting with Padmore in Hamburg.50

Some further traces about the identity of Padmore’s secretary are found in his correspondence. Padmore ended some of his letters by including greetings from F or Frida, for example when sending best New Year wishes to Hans [Thorgersen?] and someone called Elly or when he greeted Comrade Robinson, an African student returning from Moscow: “Frida joins me in sending her best regards to you.”51 Frida was presumably the person who conducted all of Padmore’s correspondence written in German. Interestingly, she seems to have known Babette Gross in person, which two letters from her, one of them signed Fridl, indicates.52 Padmore, therefore, had perfect links to the ‘Godfather’ of many communist front organizations, namely Willi Münzenberg: Babette Gross was his wife.

But who was Frieda Schiff and what was her relationship to Padmore? Padmore’s biographer James Hooker is silent about his relationship to women during his years within the Comintern-Apparat. He had been married to Julia Semper but had left her in the USA when he moved to the Soviet Union in late 1929. After his break with the Comintern and his relocation to London in 1935 he lived together with Dorothy Pizer, an Englishwoman who became known as his wife although he never divorced from Julia Semper.53

It was in Moscow that Padmore met Frieda. Born in Vienna in 1899 of ‘petty-bourgeois’ parents, her father was titled “k.u.k. Hofrat,”54 she had joined the KPD in 1919. At some stage she had moved to Moscow (reason’s not known),55 perhaps due to her capability in mastering both English and French. In April 1926 she was registered as living at Room 55

50 Letter from Hans Jäger to ‘Genosse Padmore’, Berlin 26.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 192; Note from Neumann, Hamburg (about where Jäger could find Padmore), no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 193. Hans Jäger was one of Willi Münzenberg’s close aides at the LAI.
51 Letter from Padmore to Hans, (Hamburg) 7.1.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 25; Letter from Padmore to Comrade Robinson, (Hamburg) 11.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 102. The fate of Comrade Robinson will be discussed in Chapter VIII.3.) The identity of ‘Hans’ is unclear as there were persons at the LAI called Hans: Hans Schulze (1904-1988), who was Münzenberg’s private secretary, Hans Jäger (1899-1975), who was one of the organizers of the Second Congress of the LAI in Frankfurt 1929 and one of the leading members of the LAI, and Hans P. Thørgersen, who worked at the LAI International Secretariat between 1928 and early 1932. While the two first-mentioned were Germans, Thørgersen was half-Danish, half-Chinese and was fluent in English and had been in charge of ‘Negro affairs’ at the LAI headquarters at least in 1931. It is therefore likely that Padmore had cooperated with Thørgersen and that he was the recipient of his letter. The communication with Jäger, with whom Padmore also corresponded, was usually conducted in German whereas there are no indications about any connections between Hans Schulz and Padmore.
52 Letters from Fridl (Frieda Schiff) to ‘Liebe Babette’ [Gross], (Hamburg) 18.2.1932 and 3.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 121 and 155.
55 In a report written in 1937 the author claimed that she had been working for the Russian for about 15 years, i.e., perhaps indicating that she had arrived in Moscow in about 1922. Report by Jorge, 3.23.1937, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 4.
in the notorious Hotel Lux together with a five month old baby.\textsuperscript{56} The father of the child was perhaps the Scottish Communist John Leckie who was Frieda’s partner at that time.\textsuperscript{57}

It is not known when Padmore and Frieda had started to be engaged with each other. His relationship to Frieda was commonly known by members of the RILU Negro Bureau, such as A. Z. Zusmanovich,\textsuperscript{58} the African American community in Moscow,\textsuperscript{59} and some of his African fellows, such as Garan Kouyaté.\textsuperscript{60} But how close were they? According to a report written in 1937, she had worked in Moscow for some years (“eine Jahre”), in another written in 1940 that she had lived for a long time (“lange Jahre”) in the Soviet Union. According to the first report, she had lived together with a Negro for six years, according to the other that she even had been married to him. In both reports the Negro is said to have turned his back to the Soviet Union, had moved to France, became a Trotskyist and belonged to the archenemies of the Stalinist Regime.\textsuperscript{61} Last, but not least, Margerethe Buber-Neumann, who knew Frieda Schiff, claimed that Padmore had been John Leckie’s successor as Frieda’s lover and partner. According to Buber-Neumann, Frieda had a modern and emancipated attitude towards men and sexual relations – a relationship between two persons had nothing to do with conservative marital traditions but was to be based on mutual consent and freedom to choose and change ones partner.\textsuperscript{62}

Following Buber-Neumann, Padmore was never officially Frieda’s husband. He could not since he was not divorced from his former wife and the Communist comrades in Moscow certainly did not want to be accused of supporting bigamy. On the other hand, the Negro who had turned Trotskyist was most certainly Padmore. Two short notes in Frieda Schiff’s personal file in the Comintern Archive confirm my proposition. In the first, a certain “S” remarked to “Brig” – perhaps Reginald Bridgeman (?) – in a letter from early January 1937 that “a woman called Friedl (the wife of Padmore) is now in Paris.”\textsuperscript{63} The second piece of evidence is some odd handwritten notes on a sheet of paper: “Berlin [twice underlined]/Came

\begin{itemize}
\item Questionnaire: Frieda (Rudolf) Schiff, dated 19.4.1926, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 39-40. According to a report written in 1937, Frieda Schiff’s child was at that point in being raised in England. See Report by Jorge, 3.2.1937, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 4
\item Buber-Neumann 1957, p. 74.
\item “Special compliments to F.”, in letter from Mansy [Zusmanovich] to Padmore, 21.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 178.
\item Haywood had sent greetings to Frieda in a letter to Padmore, dated 8.5.1931, RGASPI 534/7/496, fol. 124, indicating that he had known about their relationship already before he had left Moscow in late 1930. Otto Huiswoud, too, knew about the relationship, sending his “warmest regards to Frida and yourself” when he was in Moscow, see letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 5.9.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 85.
\item Greetings from Kouyaté to Frida, in letter from Kouyaté to Padmore, 14.4.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 37.
\item Frieda Schiff, personal file, report by Gustav, 26.2.1940, and report by Jorge 3.2.1937, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 1, 3, 4.
\item Buber-Neumann 1957, p. 74.
\item Letter from S. To ”Dear Brig”, 16.1.1937, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 8.
\end{itemize}
from Labour Party/CC member [underlined]/Renegade/ was here in 1930/ Padmore – was in Hamburg with Padmore/London.”  

While the first reference leaves no doubt about the relationship between Frieda Schiff and Padmore, the cryptic second note clearly refers to her activities and movements. While some of the words are difficult to decipher, the reference to Padmore leaves no doubt about her living with him during his sojourn in Hamburg.  

A final clue to Frieda’s and Padmore’s relationship comes from assessment conducted by Otto Huiswoud in August 1933. According to his evaluation, “all the technical work of the Committee and the journal [i.e., the Negro Worker, HW] has heretofore been done by the wife of comrade P[admore].”  

However, one could argue that his notion of Frieda being Padmore’s wife was figurative not legally as was his own relationship to his wife Hermine.  

At a certain point Frieda Schiff had a rift with Moscow, most certainly after Padmore had been deported from Germany in February 1933 and the activities of the Hamburg Committee had to be closed down. But when and why – and what happened to her when the police stormed the ISH-building? Padmore had moved from London to Paris in 1933: did she join him? I do not know: neither Padmore’s correspondence nor Frieda Schiff’s personal file give any clues to this question. It is most likely that they separated. She did, on the other hand, manage to get out of Germany and at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain she lived in Paris. At this point, she tried to join the Spanish Communist Party, perhaps in 1936.  

However, the Party screened her background and found out that she did not have her old party’s recommendation. In addition, there were several other troublesome spots in her vita, most notably the activities of her former ‘husband’ who at that time had become notoriously critical of the Stalinist system and the betrayals of Soviet foreign policy. Frieda, too, was accused to have articulated anti-Stalinist opinions and to have claimed that the Soviet Union was not interested in the fate of the Spanish people but only in making money. Not surprisingly, such claims made it easy for the Party to reject her application. She was even put in jail for a while – perhaps in 1936 – and aired even more vehemently her criticism of the

64 Handwritten notes, undated, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 10.  
65 Hooker quotes the reminiscences of the Y. Berger who argues that he had met Padmore in Vienna in May 1930. Padmore was said to have lived there together with an Austrian comrade and her two children (Hooker 1967, p. 20). While it is impossible that Padmore lived in the Austrian capital at this time (he travelled in West Africa), the reference to the Austrian comrade could be to Frieda Schiff as she was born in Vienna. However, according to information in Schiff’s personal file in the Comintern Archive, she had only one child. Neither did she live in 1930 in Vienna.  
67 Buber-Neumann 1957, pp. 74-75.
Soviet Union after her release. But how critical was she and was she herself a Trotskyist? Early in 1937 she worked in Paris for the Russian Trade Delegation, which in the eyes of the unknown ‘S,’ was rather surprising. At this point she tried to appease “the Party” again and had tried to be enlisted for work in the party. It is not known what happened to her, the 1940 report refers to Frieda Schiff as a Trotskyist element but the reporter stated that he did not know what happened to her after her sojourn in Spain.

Padmore was not the only Black comrade who married or cohabited with a white female comrade while working in the Comintern-Apparatus or studying in Moscow. Both Harry Haywood and William L. Patterson wrote about their Russian marriages in their autobiographies: Haywood had married Ekaterina (Ina) in 1927, Patterson married Vera Gorohovskaya in 1929. While Patterson had two daughters, Haywood’s marriage was childless. Patterson claimed he ended his marriage when he returned to the USA while Haywood initially planned that Ina was to follow him to America. Haywood’s plans eventually failed: the authorities at the US embassy in Riga refused to grant Ina a visa when Haywood tried to bring her to the States in 1932. In both cases divorce was regarded as the only realistic alternative: being a Soviet citizen married to an African American in the USA was regarded as more or less impossible or at least to cause immediate troubles with the American authorities. Patterson’s recollections about his marriage in Russia have but one flaw – in his autobiographical sketch of 1932 he presented a total different story! According to the document, Patterson had married Aurora Wilson in 1930 and no children were born in the marriage. (“I have no children to my knowledge.”) However, he also stated that he had divorced his first wife – no name given – because of political views and “general incompatability [sic].” Was his first wife Vera Gorohovskaya? Or did he refer to a person back in the USA whom he had divorced? What happened to Aurora Wilson is not known. Perhaps Patterson lived with her while he resided in Moscow during his first sojourn in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s and early 1930s, perhaps being still married to her when he wrote his autobiography in 1932? Could it be that Vera Gorohovskaya was married to

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68 Information about Frieda Schiff, report by Jorge, 3.2.1937, and by Gustav 26.2.1940, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 1, 4.
70 Report by Jorge, 3.2.1937, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 4.
71 Report by Gustav, 26.2.1940, RGASPI 495/205/6018, fol. 1.
73 William Lorenzo Patterson, (Autobiography) 16.4.1932, RGASPI 495/261/3072-I, fol. 100. Aurora Wilson was born 1898 in the Baltic states of English and German parentage. Though of petty bourgeois origin and not a party member, she had worked for several party members in Moscow and had a job at the Agrarian Institute when Patterson finalized his report.
Patterson while he worked at the headquarters of International Red Aid in Moscow during the mid 1930s? Whatever the case, neither of the two Russian ladies returned with him to the USA in 1937; in 1938 he married Louise Thompson (1901-1999).\textsuperscript{74}

However, Padmore’s and Patterson’s relationships with female comrades in Moscow are even more complex than the above sketch indicates. In Padmore’s case, there was also Vera. Almost nothing is known about their relationship apart from one letter addressed to “Georgie, my darling” from “Vera”. The letter had been sent by Vera on the 6th of February 1933 and is the only intimate letter of a private, intimate correspondence that had nothing to do with tactical or strategic considerations. Curiously, the letter has been archived in a file that contains material about the fate of the Hamburg Secretariat after the Nazi takeover and the end of the operations in Germany in 1933. At first, I believed that the letter was a decrypted message to Padmore from the headquarters in Moscow about the transfer of operations from Germany to other countries, but a careful analysis of its content reveals that it deals with private matters. Alas, it is the content of the letter that sheds further light on Padmore’s private life in the early 1930s. What is revealed in the letter is something like a triangular drama and Vera was its tragic third member. Her relationship with Padmore seems to have been intimate – they had a baby, a boy who Vera informed Padmore that only waits for his father but had been sent away to the grandmother “and will live there as a little idol.” It is likely that the boy never had met his father, perhaps he was born only after Padmore had left for Germany? Whatever the case, Vera was desperate to get some news from Padmore, perhaps even some recognition about their relationship as she declared: “I am young and strong enough and I want to suffer with you the bad and the good, the defeat and the victory, and not to stay here as a fragile creature and cry because her husband is fighting in some other country.” She called Padmore her “husband”, but is this claim fiction or fact? She knew that Padmore lived with Frieda Schiff and it is even likely that the three of them knew each other back from Moscow as is demonstrated in the following declaration:

Darling, I care you very much and real[l]ly I begun to envy F[rieda] because she is with you. Tell her that I am and shall be her good friend, and that I am so sorry that I cannot make a better a[c]quaintance with her.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{74} William L. Patterson, The Man who Cried Genocide, New York: International Publishers 1971, pp. 139-140. Patterson omitted his assignment at the headquarters of the International Red Aid in Moscow during the 1930s in his autobiography. The documents consulted in his personal file in Moscow indicate that he resided in Moscow at least in 1936 and 1937.

\textsuperscript{75} Letter from ‘Vera’ to ‘Georgie’, 6.2.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 123 fp.
But who was Vera and where did she live? It is evident from the letter that she was fluent in Russian, lived in the Soviet Union and had been involved with Padmore for some time. This can be established from her inquiry to Padmore about translating his book-pamphlet *The Life and Struggle of the Negro Toilers* into Russian and, as she proposed, also into Ukrainian. In the letter, Vera asks Padmore to authorize her to make the agreements with the editor for publication. The letter ended “with love and kisses” but, surprisingly also with “my best regards to F.”

Nothing more can be established with any certainty about Vera and her identity. Last, but not least, one can only speculate about the possibility that she perhaps was Vera Gorohovskaya? If this was the case, then Patterson’s claim of having been married to her in 1929 is even further weakened.

If these two African American comrades were relatively outspoken about their relationships and engagement with a white woman, Ford and Padmore were not. Padmore’s biographer missed Frieda Schiff and Vera. Ford, on the other hand, presented his personal life in a report he wrote in 1932 – but this document was shelved in the Comintern Archives and he never published an autobiography. Like Padmore, Ford had been married before he left for Moscow in the 1920s and had three children. The marriage was dissolved in 1929 – Ford’s wife did not agree with his communist activism and accused him for having deserted her when he moved to Moscow. Ford married a second time in 1930, this time a Russian woman who later on worked in the Expedition Department of the newsletter *Prawda*. Her name and the fate of their marriage are not known but they seemed to have been still married at the time of writing his report.

The only African American comrade whose marriage was not affected by the sojourn in Moscow was Otto Huiswoud. He had married Hermina ("Hermie") Dumont (1905-1998) in 1926. Born in British Guyana, she had migrated to the USA in 1919 and became Otto Huiswoud close associate for the rest of his life. Like Frieda Schiff, Hermina Dumont-Huiswoud was first active in the party and later engaged in international communist activities – among others the RILU Negro Bureau and, in the 1930s, the ITUCNW. Her nom de guerre was Helen Davis.

The marriages of the four African American comrades opens a rare window of the ‘colour-free’ utopianism that still seemed to have filled the air in Moscow the turn of the

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77 James William Ford, *Life and Activities*, 20.4.1932, RGASPI 495/261/6747, fol. 64.
78 Turner 2005.
1920s. Although all of the four comrades were outspoken critics of racism and segregation, they did not in their personal life follow the other extreme of totally rejecting any deeper engagement with white persons. In this respect they all were faithful adherents of the official ‘gospel’ of the Comintern: It was class rather than race that mattered. Second, and tied to the first observation, their “black-and-white” marriages underlined their position as equals to any other comrade within the movement. What counted was one’s commitment to the common goal and ideals, not the colour of one’s skin. On the other hand, whatever utopian ideal may have existed in Moscow was soon to be replaced by the racist reality both in Germany and in the African Atlantic.

2. The Hamburg Secretariat within the RILU-apparatus

The RILU never projected the ITUCNW to emerge as an independent actor. Instead, the Hamburg Committee was to discuss and outline work with the European Secretariat of the RILU in accordance with instructions that were prepared by the RILU Secretariat, the RILU Negro Bureau or the ECCI. In addition, the Hamburg Committee was to cooperate with the Secretariat of the ISH, the Hamburg Bureaus of the German Communist Party (KPD) and of the RGO, the Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition,79 as well as the Party Headquarters of the KPD in Berlin.80 This structure was further confirmed in a report written by someone at the Negro Committee of the RILU – possibly Padmore or Huiswoud (?) – in Moscow on 30 September 1931:

…the Hamburg Committee is an organ of the RILU, while outwardly reserving an independent form in its dealing with the broad masses of Negro toilers in different parts of the world. The Hamburg Committee works under the leadership of the Negro Workers’ TU Committee of the RILU and the direct supervision of the European Secretariat. Whenever questions arise which require immediate action, the same must be discussed and decided up by Comrade Ford together with the comrades of the ISH Executive.81

The ITUCNW thus emerged as a typical front organization: in public independent but de facto carrying out activities that had been planned and projected in Moscow. This is especially

79 The RGO had been established as an organization devoted ostensibly to trade union problems and the fight against the Socialist Free Trade Union Federation.
80 “Plan of Work and Immediate Tasks of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers at Hamburg,” undated and no author, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 6-7. The document is stamped 28.II.1931 and was most probably prepared by George Padmore.
81 RGASPI 534/3/615, fol. 123-124
evident during the period up to October 1931 when James W. Ford was in charge of the secretariat in Hamburg and George Padmore was Chairman of the Negro Bureau of the RILU in Moscow. Although Ford had a longer record of RILU engagement than Padmore, it was Padmore who was giving orders and instructions to Ford.

2.1. The RILU Negro Bureau

The Negro Committee or Negro Bureau of the RILU was reorganized after the Fifth RILU Congress and started its work in the beginning of October 1930. Its main task for the rest of the year was the popularization of the decisions and resolutions of the RILU Congress and the Hamburg Conference. Therefore, already in October two special numbers of *The Negro Worker* were to be issued containing material from both events. Popular articles and other special materials were to be written and distributed to the radical/communist African American press in the USA as well as to the Caribbean and West African colonies. Having the Black International in mind, Slavin, Padmore and Hernandez each were to write investigative reports for the Social-Economic Department of the RILU on the social and economic conditions of the Negro toilers in the USA, South Africa, West Africa, Latin America and the West Indies. Also, a plan for training and securing cadres was to be drawn jointly with the KUTV as well as the draft for a Second Conference of the ITUCNW was to be presented by December to the RILU Secretariat.\(^2\) At this point, clearly, the focus of the RILU Negro Committee thus included all parts of the African Atlantic.\(^3\)

Padmore further outlined the idea of a Black International in the general tasks of the Negro Committee, namely “to direct the organisation of Negro workers in Africa, North and Latin America and the West Indies.” In addition, the RILU Negro Committee was “to closely cooperate with and give advice to the American, English, French, Belgian, Latin-American and South American sections of the RILU” so that the workers in the African and Caribbean colonies could organize themselves. Padmore’s Bureau wanted to prepare plans for work in different countries: an agricultural programme for the US South for the TUUL; a letter of

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\(^2\) Padmore: Plan of work of the Negro Bureau of the RILU for the first quarter beginning October 1 to December 31, 1930, RGASPI 534/1/164, fol. 4.

\(^3\) At least Padmore and William L. Patterson (Wilson) also participated in the activities of the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat in fall 1930. According to the calendar of the Negro Section, Padmore was to report on Nigeria and the Gambia and Patterson to present a memorandum on “work among Negro Troops in French Colonies” on November 27. On December 27, Padmore was to present a report on “Carrying out of decisions of V World Congress [of the RILU] on Negro work.” See Calendar Plan of Work Negro Section ECCI, RGASPI 495/18/810, fol. 146.
instructions to the Non-European Federation of Trade Unions in South Africa as well as an agricultural program of action for South Africa; a comprehensive programme of action for Nigeria and the Gambia as well as other countries of West Africa; a programme of action for Jamaica and Trinidad, a systematic study of Central and East Africa.  

However, as previously noted, the idea of a Black International backfired in 1931 and the anticipated work in the USA and South Africa was almost immediately criticized for being both unnecessary and an interference with the work of the existing Party and radical trade unions. Nevertheless, Padmore made several attempts to influence, if not direct, Negro work of the TUUL. In June 1931, he ordered the TUUL to send a questionnaire to all of its member organisations to obtain information about Negro work in the USA. His aim was, he frankly explained to the TUUL, to formulate a plan of work for the TUUL among the Negro workers – thus indirectly accusing the unions for not doing anything. The union representatives certainly must have felt annoyed by Padmore’s plans and not surprisingly did not send him any reply. In September 1931, he criticized the ‘TUUL Program of work among Negroes’, especially is lack of colonial work, and suggested that the RILU Negro Committee together with the ITUCNW were to assist the TUUL to overcome the lacunae.

Padmore’s Bureau in Moscow was at first made up of a handful of comrades. Padmore himself was chairman and charged with directing the Bureau and, in cooperation with the secretary, the editing of the bulletin. Comrade Hernandez was Vice-Chairman and referent and reporter on Latin America and the French-speaking West Indies. A secretary was to be nominated, the person was to be the reporter on the Negro question in the USA and the English-speaking West Indies including British Honduras and British Guiana. Comrade Slavin seems to have been transferred to the Eastern Colonial Department of the RILU although he had been previously the referent for Africa. Further, the Negro Committee included the following other members: Comrade Schechter from the RILU Anglo-American Section, Comrade Cermanetto from the RILU Latin-European Section, Comrades Huang Chin-Chin and Adis from the RILU Eastern Colonial Department, Comrade Farkash from the RILU Social-Economic Department, Comrade Lynch from the RILU Youth Section, Comrade Poyntz from the RILU Womens’ Department, and Comrade Diament from the

84 Padmore: Plan of work of the Negro Bureau of the RILU for the first quarter beginning October 1 to December 31, 1930, RGASPI 534/1/164, fol. 4-5.
87 (Copy) Letter from Padmore to TUUL Negro Department, [Moscow] 14.9.1931, RGASPI 534/6/140, fol. 41.
RILU Agit-Prop Department. In addition, the Negro Section of the Comintern was to nominate one member and two practicants, Comrades Lewis and Jones, were to be assigned for work at Padmore’s Bureau from the Lenin School.  

Much to Padmore’s dismay, the staff members of the Negro Committee of the RILU were always extremely limited. Early in 1931, an attempt had been made to transfer Comrade Hernandez from the Latin American Section to the Negro Committee, but shortly after the change was made, Hernandez was sent to the Lenin School and was not replaced by another member of the Latin American section. As a consequence, the Negro Committee found it difficult to establish any effective channels to African Caribbean individuals or radical groups as such work had to be coordinated through the Latin American Section. Of a similar short duration of engagement was that of Comrade Edius who had hardly started to do the work as Political Secretary of the Committee before he was transferred to another post. The biggest blow to Padmore was the decision to remove Comrade Slavin from the Negro Committee against which he sent a critical memorandum to the RILU Secretariat in early April 1931:

> It is absolutely impossible for me to keep with the movement in Africa, the United States, Latin America, and the West Indies without the assistance of a comrade who is already acquainted with the general situation in these countries. The idea of training a new worker is entirely out of the question for it would take several months for a comrade unfamiliar with the Negro problems to render any effective assistance to the Committee.  

After various re-compositions of the Negro Committee in 1931, its core members were Padmore and Otto Huiswoud in addition to Alexander Zusmanovich, Comrade Aronstam and Comrade Jones. Zusmanovich was one of the few experts on Africa in Moscow and, among others, was teaching at the KUTV. Comrade Aronstam was the representative of the MOPR, whereas Comrade Jones was the representative of the Comintern. Others, whose

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88 Padmore: Plan of work of the Negro Bureau of the RILU for the first quarter beginning October 1 to December 31, 1930, RGASPI 534/1/164, fol. 5.
89 Letter from Padmore to the RILU Secretariat, 2.4.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 64. This indicates that Padmore was more or less alone in charge of the daily operations of the Negro Committee and that Huiswoud had not yet been assigned to work for it.
90 Alexander Zakharovich Zusmanovich (1902-1965) was from 1929 an official of the Executive Committee of the RILU and Deputy Chairman of the ITUCNW. In 1932 he became an official of the Comintern and was from 1934 Head of the African Section of the KUTV and of the African Laboratory of the Academic Research Association for National and Colonial Problems (NIANKP). In 1935 he was accused of Trotskyism and expelled from all his duties. He returned as a researcher at the Department of Africa of the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1956. (Davidson et al. 2003, p. xxxix.) Zusmanovich collaborated with I.I. Potekhin and Albert Nzula in publishing in 1933 [in Russian] the study Forced Labor and the Trade Union Movement in Negro Africa.
91 Aronstam’s affiliation is somewhat problematic to identify as the acronym MOPR was used both for the Russian section of the International Red Aid as well as the International Red Aid itself.
name was listed on some of the minutes of meetings of the Negro Committee, were Comrades Apletin (Agit-Prop Department), Harvey, Hernandez (Latin American Section), Mann, Drayton, Weinstone, Overgaard, Robovsky (CCTU), Smith, and Kennedy. The overwhelming majority of the comrades were Whites; the only African member was Comrade Smith alias Nathan Warner Grey, who was a Liberian student at the KUTV who had arrived in Moscow during the latter half of 1931.

2.2. The February and March 1931 RILU-Instructions to Ford

The relationship between the Secretariat in Hamburg and the RILU Negro Committee in Moscow was extremely hierarchical. While the latter included at times up to eight members, only Padmore, and to as lesser extent Huiswoud, communicated directly with Ford. Communication between Moscow and Hamburg bears witness of the hierarchical relationship between the two centres of activity – Moscow ordered and outlined, Hamburg replied and inquired. Padmore informed Ford in early February 1931 that new forms of work had been introduced for the Comintern Apparatus. Ford was to prepare a report on the Secretariat’s work as well as a plan showing what he intends to do during the next six months. This plan was thereafter to be accepted by the ECCI. According to Padmore, the purpose of new method of working was to enable systematic work but also to “check up upon what had been done and what has been left undone.”

Padmore sent further instructions to Ford in a subsequent letter. This letter, dated 13 February 1931, is a detailed instruction about the prime tasks of the Hamburg Committee. Ford was not to pay attention to the USA and Latin America as there already were organizations and structures that the Negro Committee could make use of and through whom it could carry out its programme. Instead, the challenge was to reach out to regions and individuals that had hitherto had not been linked to the orbit of the Comintern. Therefore, Padmore instructed Ford that

your prime function is to a) to work among the Negro seamen who arrived in Hamburg trying to build up cadres among them so that they can be used by us in establishing direct contacts with the colonies,

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92 William Weinstone (“Randolph”), CPUSA (McClellan 2007, p. 74).
93 Minutes of Negro Committee/RILU, 21.5.1931, 25.5.1931 and 10.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 8-9, 10-12, 13-14. The first two meetings had the Scottsboro case on their agenda, the third one the situation in Liberia.
94 Minutes of Negro Committee/RILU, 10.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 13-14. Smith is identified as Nathan Warner Grey from Liberia in McClellan 2007, p. 75.
95 Letter from G. Padmore to James W. Ford, 8.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 55-56.
and b) making indirect connections with all working class organisations as well as individuals in those parts of Africa and the West Indies where we have no sections or adherents of the RILU at the present time.\footnote{Letter from Padmore to Ford, 13.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 57.}

Ford received further directives about his tasks in March 1931. Padmore notified Ford that the chief tasks of the Hamburg Committee were, first, to popularize the decisions of the Fifth World Congress of the RILU and the Hamburg Conference and, second, to make contacts in countries where the Negro Bureau and the RILU had not yet been able to get a footing. For both purposes, the Hamburg Committee was instructed to set up sub-committees on different locations. However, there were two special cases. In South Africa, Padmore informed Ford, Comrade Nzula had promised to organize a subcommittee of the ITUCNW but this group was not to concentrate on South African issues but to carry on activities in surrounding countries such as Rhodesia, Bechuanaland and the East African colonies. The function of the sub-committee in New York, on the other hand, was not to carry on trade union activities among the African Americans but to focus on developing the work in the British Caribbean. The reasons for restricting the activities of the ITUCNW and its sub-committees in South Africa, the USA and in the Caribbean were due to practical and political considerations. In South Africa and in the USA, the activities of the ITUCNW would bring it easily into conflict with those of the African Federation of Trade Unions\footnote{Before 1931, the African Federation of Trade Unions (AFTU) was known as the Native Federation of Trade Unions (NFETU). This organization had been created by the CPSA in March 1928.} and the TUUL, whose task it was to organise and lead the economic struggle in their respectively countries. The Latin American Committee of the RILU, on the other hand, was projected to take care of Haiti, Cuba and the Latin American countries were there were Negroes. Further, Padmore directed Ford to set up a sub-committee in Paris under the leadership of Garan Kouyaté to direct the work in the French African colonies.\footnote{Letter from Padmore to Ford, 17.3.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 59-61.}

Padmore notified Ford in the same letter about the lack of contacts with the Belgian Congo and the Portuguese colonies in Africa. His plan was to contact “our comrades” in Antwerp as to find out a solution on how to establish a link to the Congo. With regards to Angola and the other Portuguese colonies, there was no quick solution as Padmore had no connections to anyone in Portugal but he informed Ford that he was making inquiries about whom to contact.\footnote{Letter from Padmore to Ford, 17.3.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 61.} Despite his efforts, the Belgian and Portuguese problem was never solved.
2.3. The June 1931 Reminder alias the 1931 July Resolution

Work in Hamburg was frustratingly slow and the first half-year report of work indicated that there was little progress and few promising contacts had been established with Africa and the Caribbean. Not surprisingly, the RILU Secretariat grew impatient and sent a reminder to Ford in early June 1931 about the ITUCNW’s tasks and underlined the need of Ford to make a more profound study of the movement in the countries, to set up systematic connections and to get materials and reports.\textsuperscript{100} In addition to the earlier instructions that focused on Africa and the Caribbean and the necessity to publish popular pamphlets and to develop \textit{The Negro Worker} into a popular mass journal, the Hamburg Committee was given a new special task: to develop the Scottsboro campaign into a mass mobilization of Negro workers.\textsuperscript{101}

The June 1931 Memorandum included a list of the Hamburg Committee’s immediate organizational tasks as well as the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and other RILU organizations. First, an ITUCNW subcommittee was to be established in Marseilles. The success of this manoeuvre was dependent upon whether or not Ford was able to link up with Garan Kouyaté and the LDRN in Paris. Second, the RILU Secretariat charged its Caribbean sub-committee in New York into closer cooperate with the Hamburg Committee – clearly indicating that such cooperation had so far not been forthcoming. Third, similar to the Caribbean case there had been few connections between Hamburg and Negro organizations in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the RILU Secretariat charged the National Minority Movement to acquaint itself with the work of the Negro Workers’ Welfare Association and to set up better connections with the Hamburg Committee.\textsuperscript{102}

Whether or not the RILU reminder of June 1931 had any immediate impact is not known. As noted earlier, the Negro Committee and the RILU Secretariat reorganized the Hamburg Committee in October 1931 by Padmore replacing Ford. The former’s arrival in Hamburg changed the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and the RILU Negro Committee. Compared to Ford, Padmore took a much more independent role as Secretary of

\textsuperscript{100} The reminder is also referred to as the Resolution of July 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1931. It is possible that the reminder never circulated outside Moscow but was a draft version of a text that eventually was made public as the Resolution of July 1931. Reference to the said resolution is given in the text of the October 1931 Resolution on the Hamburg Committee. Also, Padmore had sent Albert Walter a version of the 1931 July Resolution, see letter from Padmore to Walter, 21.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 96.

\textsuperscript{101} ‘Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee’, report filed as 52/52.129.5WWC, no author, dated 10.6.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 25-26. A critical reading of the document can establish the RILU Secretariat as its commissioner.

\textsuperscript{102} ‘Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee’, report filed as 52/52.129.5WWC, no author, dated 10.6.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 27.
the ITUCNW. On the other hand, the principal hierarchy between Hamburg and Moscow remained and had not been altered: Padmore reported to Huiswoud, not vice versa. The established links with the various RILU and Comintern organizations remained intact – in fact, on his way to Hamburg, Padmore stopped over in Berlin where he discussed the new outline of the ITUCNW with representatives of the LAI and the International Red Aid, and in Hamburg one of his first meetings was with the leadership of the ISH.  

2.4. A new beginning: The October 1931 Resolution

Padmore and the RILU Negro Committee prepared a new resolution on the work of the Hamburg Committee after having heard Ford’s assessment about its work. Already by the end of September they had drafted a two-page memorandum about the reorganization of the Hamburg Committee’s work, and during subsequent meetings of the RILU Secretariat, the new resolution was adopted in November 1931. At the same time the Political Commission of the Comintern had clarified the position of the Hamburg Committee which decision was to be the guidelines for the activities of the ITUCNW:

In those countries, where no section of the R.I.L.U. exists, and groups or organisations of adherants [sic] of the Hamburg Committee are established, they may be affiliated to the Hamburg Committee. Before affiliation takes place each case should be referred to the R.I.L.U. Secretariat for approval.

In contrast to the previous resolutions and outlines of activities, the October 1931 Resolution on the ITUCNW gave detailed instructions about trade union activism, work among seamen and dockers, unemployment, where subcommittees are to be established as well as agitation and propaganda. It also gave instructions about the relationship with other mass organizations, including the LAI, the International Red Aid and the International Workers Relief, and about the need to develop cadres. Most crucially, the intimate links to the RILU

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105 The first draft version of this resolution is dated 18.10.1931; a corrected version is dated 2.11.1931. References to the text in subsequent letters and reports, however, refer to it as the October Resolution. The texts of the October Resolutions are filed in RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 44-46 and 47-49.

106 Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg Committee, draft, 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 45. Some of the handwritten adds to the text are similar to Huiswoud’s handwriting.
were repeatedly underlined – both the Hamburg Committee itself and its projected subcommittees in Marseilles, Cape Town, New York and Liverpool were to be in close contact with the RILU Secretariat in Moscow or with the national sections of the RILU.\textsuperscript{107}

The principal task of the Hamburg Committee was the development of trade unions in Africa and the Caribbean. In colonies where no trade unions existed,\textsuperscript{108} the ITUCNW was to establish contacts with potential allies and through these persons form radical platforms. The Hamburg Committee was instructed to render them ideological and organisational assistance. In countries where “ideologically and organisationally” weak trade unions but no RILU sections existed,\textsuperscript{109} the Hamburg Committee was to establish contacts with these organisations and to direct them “along the path of the revolutionary class struggle.” Finally, in countries where mass organizations existed under reformist leadership,\textsuperscript{110} the plan was to establish oppositional groups inside these unions. Further, special attention was to be given to the problem of the Indian and other immigrant workers in the Caribbean, especially in Trinidad and in British Guyana.\textsuperscript{111}

Interestingly, the countries referred to in the text had in one way or another been part and parcel of the projected radical African Atlantic of the African American comrades. Thus, the Nigerian connection through Frank Macaulay had at this point not yet resulted in the formation of a local radical trade union although Padmore was to learn about the formation of the Nigerian Workers’ Union by the end of the year. The other West African connections, listed as ideologically weak, were presumably those which had been represented at the July 1930 Hamburg Conference, namely Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. The Caribbean connection, on the other hand, had been established through Huiswoud.

If, however, the engagement in Africa and the Caribbean was crucial, then even more important was the work among Negro seamen. “(I)t is necessary that the H.C. give its main attention [add: at present] to work among the Negro seamen,” the Resolution declared. The seamen and harbour workers were identified as the vanguard group for the establishment of a global revolutionary network. Negro seamen were to be approached mainly from the viewpoint of their work in their homeports where their task was to mobilize the harbour workers. This work was to be carried out in conjunction with the ISH: “It is necessary to state

\textsuperscript{107} Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg Committee, draft, 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 45–46.
\textsuperscript{108} The Resolution text refers in this part to Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Barbados and British Honduras.
\textsuperscript{109} Such as in Sierra Leone, Gambia, the Gold Coast, Jamaica, British Guiana and Haiti.
\textsuperscript{110} Here, the Resolution singled out the Trinidad Workingmen’s Association.
\textsuperscript{111} Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg Committee, draft, 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 44.
that the Hamburg Committee must in no way attempt to isolate the Negro seamen and dockers from the revolutionary organisations of the ISH,” the Resolution ordered.  

Apart from organizing workers, seamen and harbour workers, the Hamburg Committee was to pay its closest attention to the anticipated struggles of the unemployed in Africa and the Caribbean. The Resolution recognized that little, if any, attention had been directed towards the issue of unemployment and projected the ITUCNW to emerge as the organizer of a “spontaneous” mass movement of the unemployed workers in the African Atlantic.

2.4. Further corrections: The December 1932 Resolution

The programme projected in the October 1931 Resolution was slightly reversed in December 1932. A new resolution on the ITUCNW underlined that the Hamburg Committee’s chief attention was to work among Negro seamen. The reason for this was obvious – at least from the perspective in Moscow:

“In view of the large number of Negro seamen employed in the marine transport, and also in view of the fact that through the mediation of these workers the Hamburg Committee will best of all be able to make an approach to the Negro masses of various countries.”

Once again the Resolution stressed the need of close cooperation between the ITUCNW and the ISH. The two bodies were to produce joint appeals and publications. Of strategic importance was the integration of the Negro seamen into the ISH network: “The Negro seamen should be directly organised in section, ship and port committees of the ISH.” Neither should the Hamburg Committee isolate the Negro seamen from the RILU sections or the ISH. In this respect, the Resolution almost projected the ITUCNW to become the Negro

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113 Padmore had sent a report of activities of the Hamburg Committee covering the period November 1931 to November 1932 to the RILU in December 1932 (filed in RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 123-129). This prompted the RILU Secretariat to issue a new resolution on the ITUCNW, a draft version of which (dated 11.12.1932) is filed in RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 145-156 (see below). A shorter version of the resolution text was sent to the Negro Section of the ECCI, see Draft resolutions on the work of the Hamburg TU Committee Nov. 31-32, dated 13.12.1932, filed in RGASPI 495/155/100, fol. 29-31; another version of it, dated 14.12.1932, is filed in RGASPI 534/3/734, 68-70.
section of the ISH. In fact, the shorter version of the Resolution discussed by the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat of the ECCI almost articulated such a proposition:

The RILU Secretariat confirms its decision that all the work connected with the organisation of the Negro seamen on the metropolises and colonies shall be lead by the ISH. The task of the Hamburg Committee being to render a systematic assistance to the ISH in the drawing in of seamen Negro masses.117

Also the relationship between the various national RILU sections and the ITUCNW were clarified. The ITUCNW was to focus on work in the colonies, not in the metropolitan centres: “The Hamburg Committee should by no means undertake the functions of the national sections of the RILU, which are responsible for the organisation of both Negro and white workers in revolutionary trade unions,” the Resolution text declared. Neither were the national sections of the RILU allowed to transfer their Negro work to the Hamburg Committee; instead the Resolution urged the national sections to start to organize and mobilize the Negro toilers in the metropolitan centres in Europe and in the USA within the revolutionary trade unions.118

2.6. Who pays who: The transfer of money from Moscow via Berlin to Hamburg

The RILU never planned the ITUCNW to become an independent unit or a Black International. Instead, the Hamburg Committee was to discuss and outline work with the European Secretariat of the RILU, which was based in Berlin and headed by Max Ziese. The latter’s position was fundamental as the transfer of money went through his office and any financial transaction had be approved by him. In addition, funds were never directly sent to Padmore but went via the ISH headquarters and had to be clarified by Albert Walter and his deputy, a person referred to as “Paul”.119 In their turn, Ziese and “Paul” had to wait for instructions from Moscow and if he had not received any, he would not act. More than once,

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118 The International Negro Workers’ TU-Committee (draft), no author, (Moscow) 11.12.1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 156.
119 It is possible that Max Ziese used the alias Paul when he communicated with the RILU Secretariat in Moscow, addressing his letters and inquiries to ”Pol”. The identification of Paul as Ziese is based on a letter from him to Padmore filed in RGASPI 534/4/355, fol. 172. However, according to British Intelligence sources, “Paul” was claimed to be Albert Walter’s deputy, see Report on Albert Walter, 25.1.1933, TNA KV 2/1799. It possible that “Paul” and Ziese were different persons although at least the author of the referred letter signed by Paul to Padmore can certainly be identified as have been Ziese.
these procedures caused frustrations for Ford and Padmore as it underlined the restricted room to manoeuvre of the Hamburg Committee.

The RILU Secretariat allocated a monthly sum for the running of the ITUCNW office in Hamburg and had notified “Paul” [Ziese?] through an instruction dated 12 November 1930. At this point, the expenses of the Hamburg Committee were not part of the total sum of money that was allocated on a monthly basis to the headquarters of the ISH in Hamburg. However, Ford’s budget was insufficient for covering any other costs than his salary; any other expenses had to be funded through ad hoc arrangements, probably via the ISH budget. Soon this arrangement proved problematic. By early May 1931 “Paul” had received new instructions from Moscow concerning the allotment of the funds from Moscow. These instructions, however, did not earmark any sums for Ford and as a consequence “Paul” sent an inquiry to Moscow and asked if he was to continue to allocate money to the Hamburg Committee or not. He informed Moscow that until further notice he would continue to send the money to Ford. At the same time, it seems, he must have ordered Ford to produce a detailed budget outlining the expenses of the Hamburg Committee. Asked to do so, Ford had sent a new budget proposal to the RILU Budget Commission on the 19th of April 1931. Ford calculated that he needed some 1,015 Reichsmark each month to cover for the printing and postage of The Negro Worker and various pamphlets, apart from covering the expenses for other letter postage and stationery. In addition, the Hamburg Committee needed some 430 Reichsmark (about 100 USD) per month for wages, i.e., Ford’s salary. “Paul” [Ziese?] was also notified by a certain Comrade W, perhaps Albert Walter (?), that Ford’s expenses had not been and were not to be part of the ISH budget. It is likely that Walter and Ziese regarded Ford’s budget proposition as being quite unrealistic. A comparison of the ISH’s budget and Ford’s proposal gives that while Ford applied for a total of 1,445 Reichsmark the ISH headquarters received a total of 5,750 Reichsmark. These funds were to cover the wages of two Secretaries, two Instructors and two Technical Assistants in addition to all other running costs.

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120 I have not been able to locate the instruction, but “Paul”/Ziese? made a reference to it in a letter dated 18.5.1931.
121 Note from Paul [Max Ziese?] to Pol, 18.5.1931, RGASPI 534/4/345, fol. 190.
122 The exchange rate for the US dollar to the Reichsmark was at that time 1 USD = 4.20 RM.
124 Note from Paul [Max Ziese?] to Pol, 22.5.1931, RGASPI 534/4/354, fol. 195.
125 Table of monthly budget of the ISH, RGASPI 534/8/156, fol. 131. Apart from funds for running its business in Hamburg, the ISH headquarters received every month a lump sum of USD 1,950 to be allocated to its national sections.
The final decision about the financial assistance to the Hamburg Committee was reached on 17 May 1931. The Budget Commission decided to increase Ford salary to the amount of 450 Reichsmark per month but that all other costs where to be covered through RILU means, i.e., only after approval in Moscow. In addition, Ziese was instructed to pay the bills due to the printing of the *Negro Worker* and to buy a typing machine for Ford! However, it was also decided that in the future the ISH was to give Ford technical assistance.\(^{126}\)

When Padmore took over the affairs in Hamburg he received the same salary as Ford. In addition, Padmore had received an advance of 25 USD, which he was to be repaid in instalments of 5 USD each month.\(^ {127}\) In early November 1931 the Budget Commission confirmed the budget of the Hamburg Committee and informed Ziese that the decision from May 1931 was still in force. Consequently, the ISH was to render Padmore technical assistance and that whatever material the Hamburg Committee planned to publish had to be accepted by a special commission consisting of Padmore, Comrade Adolf (Bem/Schelley) and Comrade Berten. As before, the printing costs were to be covered by the RILU.\(^ {128}\) The amount of money that was transferred from Moscow via Ziese to the Hamburg Committee remained relatively stable for the first seven months of 1932 (see table VII.2.5.) However, for reasons not known, the July transfer decreased to 75 USD while it was increased to 183 USD in August 1931. From November 1932, the allowances were increased to 238 USD per month and remained so for the first three months in 1933. However, in reality Padmore never received his salary in March 1933, maybe perhaps not even that of February 1933, as the activities of the Hamburg Committee had come to a standstill with Padmore’s imprisonment and expulsion from Germany in February 1933.\(^ {129}\)


\(^ {127}\) Instructions from NN [Max Ziese] to “Herr Doktor”, 25.10.1931, RGASPI 534/8/178, fol. 124. Ziese had received a telegram about the instructions on 29.10.1931 which he confirmed in a letter to Pol on 3.11.1931 (RGASPI 534/4/355, fol. 144.)

\(^ {128}\) Instructions from NN [Max Ziese] to “Doktor”, 5.11.1931, RGASPI 534/8/178, fol. 142. The instructions were confirmed by one Alexander.

\(^ {129}\) See monthly instructions for January 1931 to March 1932, filed in RGASPI 534/8/216.
Table VII.2.5. Monthly allowances from Moscow for the Hamburg Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1931</td>
<td>450 RM</td>
<td>534/8/177, fol. 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1931</td>
<td>430 RM</td>
<td>534/8/178, fol. 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1931</td>
<td>430 RM + 400 RM</td>
<td>534/8/178, fol. 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1931</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1932</td>
<td>100 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1932</td>
<td>100 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1932</td>
<td>100 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1932</td>
<td>100 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1932</td>
<td>75 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1932</td>
<td>183 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1932</td>
<td>238 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1932</td>
<td>238 USD</td>
<td>534/8/193, fol. 162; 534/8/216, fol. 306-307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1932</td>
<td>238 USD</td>
<td>534/8/193, fol. 162; 534/8/216, fol. 306-307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1933</td>
<td>232 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1933</td>
<td>238 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1933</td>
<td>238 USD</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All extra expenses, such as publication and postage costs, had to be covered by ad hoc assignments from Moscow. Here, Ford and Padmore had little if any influence about the bureaucratic process in both Berlin and Moscow. For example, Ford wanted to invite two Africans as delegates to the First of May celebrations in Hamburg and asked Ziese to take care of their expenses. He informed the ISH about the plan, who turned to Ziese and asked for its approval. But Ziese was not impressed and outright rejected the idea. Moscow had not been informed about the plan and thus he could not make any decisions. If an African would turn up in Hamburg, they should tell him to return from where he came…¹³⁰ Not surprisingly, Ford was furious about the way his proposition had been handled.¹³¹ Half a year later, Ziese notified the RILU Budget Commission in December 1931 that the Hamburg Committee had used 288.50 Reichsmark in November and 445 Reichsmark in December for their activities. As he had paid these sums from the funds of the RILU European Bureau, he asked Moscow

¹³⁰ Letter from NN [Max Ziese] to ‘Lieber Freund’, 29.4.1931, RGASPI 534/4/354, fol. 175. A critical examination of its content reveals that it must have been sent to someone at the ISH headquarters.
¹³¹ Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 81.
to reimburse him for his expenses. Most likely, the bills had already been paid by the ISH, which thereafter communicated with Ziese about handling the matter.

Padmore, too, had several fights with Ziese and the comrades at the ISH headquarters concerning funds. Even at one point a quarrel occurred between Walter and Padmore when the former accused the latter for embezzling funds. Max Barek, one of the ISH officials, claimed that while Padmore had received a salary of RM 400 in addition to RM 1,450 for postage and printing of literature, he had used other receipts amounting to some RM 500 for his personal use. While the issue seems to have been settled, it must have added to Padmore’s frustrations.

By restricting the Hamburg Committee’s budget to merely covering the salaries of Ford and Padmore, the RILU was able to control all of their activities. This was a deliberate policy by Moscow but at the same time resulted in complex bureaucratic procedures. Therefore, whenever the Hamburg Committee wanted to publish its journal or a pamphlet, they had to negotiate not only with the comrades in Hamburg but also with Ziese in Berlin and the RILU headquarters in Moscow.

2.7. Controlling propaganda

Right from the start of the Hamburg Secretariat, Ford was ordered to send to Moscow copies of pamphlets and other publications he intended to publish. The RILU Negro Committee would then consider their content and make corrections to the texts and outlines. Back in Hamburg, Ford was to engage the local KPD Bureau and its printer in the publishing process. Soon these arrangements proved insufficient and Padmore proposed to involve the British RILU connections. Although this idea resulted in a lengthy exchange of letters between London, Berlin and Moscow, the whole enterprise backfired in the end.

Ford’s first task in Hamburg in late 1930 was to edit the protocols of the Hamburg Conference and to publish them as a pamphlet as well as to re-launch *The Negro Worker*. The idea was to use the pamphlet as the principal means of popularizing the Conference.

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133 For example, in February 1932 Ziese outlined that while the RILU headquarters backed the publication of a certain pamphlet of the ITUCNW, the ISH was to remind Padmore that he had not received permission to immediately order a second edition of the pamphlet. Instead, he was to write an application to the Agitprop Department of the RILU about his plans. The application was to be sent to Ziese who thereafter would hand it over to Moscow. Letter from NN [most likely Ziese] to ‘Lieber Freund’, 2.2.1932, RGASPI 534/8/210, fol. 21. A critical examination of its content reveals that it must have been sent to someone at the ISH headquarters.
134 Extract from British Intelligence report, dated 23.2.1933, TNA KV 2/1799. The report refers to an incident that occurred in 1932.
However, the pamphlet’s production was met with several difficulties. The KPD printing house had been closed after a police raid in late December 1930 and after it reopened in January 1931, the Social-Democratic employees of the printing establishment were hampering its work. Despite these drawbacks, the Proceedings of the Hamburg Conference was published in mid-January and the first issue of The Negro Worker followed one week later; 1,000 copies each. In addition, Ford had 2,000 copies of a leaflet printed – probably containing the two declarations of the ITUCNW, What is the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers? and What we fight for.135

Padmore’s own involvement in Ford’s editorial work seemed to have started in February 1931 when he commented on the draft version of a pamphlet on Liberia that was due to be published. Padmore made some critical statements about the content and design of the publication to Ford:

In our opinion the form of production is too primitive and should not be used. It is quite true that contents and not appearance should be the chief aim of our literature, but at the same time you must not lose sight of the fact that the success of our work to a large extent will be reflected in the way in which we present our propaganda to the masses. Mimeographed pamphlets might be alright for shop papers and local agitational work, but since our materials must seek the widest circulation they should always be printed in attractive forms.136

He further ordered Ford to always using the block showing the Negro worker breaking chains on the cover of all literature. “This will help to establish a certain familiarity among the workers for our literature,” Padmore stressed to Ford, “and at the same time convey the idea that only the workers themselves can break the chain.”137

Perhaps due to the earlier problems with the KPD printers in Hamburg, Padmore also urged Ford to contact the Agit-Prop Department of the CPGB or the National Minority Movement (NMM) about matters regarding printing the various publications of the ITUCNW. According to Padmore, the British communist printers had a good reputation and their products had a high standard. Padmore signalled that the Negro Committee of the RILU was prepared to cover the cost of printing the pamphlets in England rather than to have them published in Germany.138 In his next letter, dated 17 March 1931, Padmore repeated the need

137 Letter from Padmore to Ford, 25.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 58.
138 Letter from Padmore to Ford, 25.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 58.
to publish the pamphlets in England and also indicated that apart from the pamphlet on Liberia, three further publications were projected: one by the Agit-Prop Department entitled *What the Russian Revolution means to the Negro Worker*, another by Comrade Foster on *Why you must fight against White Chauvinism*, and a third by the RILU General Secretary Alexander Lozovskiy called *An A B C of Trade Unionism for Negro Workers*. In addition to these publications, Ford was preparing a pamphlet entitled *Negro Workers Fight for Freedom* and Padmore was engaged in writing on a manuscript that eventually was more of a monograph than a mere pamphlet, namely his *The Life and Struggles of Negro Workers*.

### 2.7.1. The pros and cons of publishing in England

Padmore’s idea of having the ITUCNW publications printed in England proved to be a difficult matter. Ford had already edited the pamphlet that Padmore had written on Liberia and, as he had not been able to get in contact with the CPGB about publishing costs in England and was in a hurry to get the pamphlet in circulation, he had decided to have it printed in Hamburg. The printing of Padmore’s pamphlet-monograph *The Life and Struggles of Negro Workers*, however, was a different matter. Padmore had sent his manuscript to England in the beginning of April 1931 in the belief that the comrades at the National Minority Movement were to handle the business. The only matter that still needed to be resolved was one of pure financial practicalities, Padmore assured NMM Secretary George Allison: “As soon as the Budget Committee meets within a few days, Comrade Apletin will send you definite instructions re financial phase of the question.” He further sent a detailed suggestion about the graphical design of the cover and the typographical outline. At this point, the RILU Secretariat was in favour of Padmore’s proposal and sent an inquiry to John A. Mahon for an estimation of the printing costs in England. Mahon replied that 4,000 copies of the pamphlet with paper cover and 1,000 copies with cloth cover were to cost 650 USD. However, as he expected that sales of the pamphlet could amount to 720 USD, he concluded that the whole

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139 Letter from Padmore to Ford, (Moscow) 17.3.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 59.
140 Letter from ‘The Negro Committee, RILU’ to ‘The Secretariat’/Dear Comrades, (Moscow) 11.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 98. In fact, both Ford and Padmore had been commissioned to write the pamphlets at a meeting of ‘the Secretariat’ on the 20th of October 1930. Unfortunately, I have not been able to disclose or identify the recipient of the letter. However, on the basis of a critical examination of its content it is most likely that the ‘Secretariat’ referred to in the letter was the RILU Secretariat in Moscow.
141 Letter from Padmore to Ford, (Hamburg) 25.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 97.
142 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 1.4.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 62.
143 Note from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’ [Allison/NMM?], 1.4.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 63.
enterprise should be profitable and was therefore positive about its success: “If you agree with these prices, let us immediately know.”

For reasons not known, the RILU Secretariat did not approve Padmore’s and Mahon’s plans. Instead, a decision was made in Moscow in July 1931 that the printing of the various pamphlets should be undertaken in Germany as, it was argued, the English comrades were not capable of handing over the manuscripts to a printer. The comrades at the Negro Committee were furious and issued an official complaint to the RILU Secretariat:

We want to register our protest against any attempt to have the printing done outside of England. It is logical that English printers will be better qualified to print an English pamphlet than Germans. The only reason that we see that should influence our decision otherwise would be financial considerations. This is not the question involved, for the rates quoted by the London publishers are cheaper than we could obtain in Germany.

Padmore, the possible author of the protest, concluded the letter by making a general analysis of the conditions for work of the Negro Committee. Airing his frustrations, he ended lamenting about the wasteful attitudes of some of the comrades in Moscow:

On the basis of the foregoing the Negro Committee is desirious of finding out why is it necessary to mobilise comrades for specific tasks such as the preparation of agitational material within a given period of time, to spend hundreds of roubles paying them for work and then have it pigeon-holed for months. This is a very unsatisfactory way of doing business, especially when nothing has ever yet been printed by the Profintern in the way of raising the problem of the Negro workers before the revolutionary movement. We feel that we are not exaggerating the situation when we say that the Negro Committee is the weakest section of the RILU in regard to the publication of literature.

At this point, however, RILU-Head Losovsky interfered and sent a telegram to Mahon, urging the latter to immediately publish Padmore’s pamphlet. Padmore, who was pleased with Losovsky’s decision, also notified Mahon about the decision. Mahon replied to Padmore that he now felt confident that the project could now proceed and he would immediately get in

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144 Letter from Mahon to RILU Secretariat, dated London 27.5.1931, RGASPI 534/8/156, fol. 230-231. Mahon’s estimate is also outlined in the note sent by the RILU Negro Bureau to the RILU Secretariat, dated 11.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 99.
146 Letter from "The Negro Committee, RILU’ to ‘The Secretariat’/Dear Comrades, (Moscow) 11.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 98.
147 Telegram from Losovsky to Mahon, 18.7.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 117.
148 Letter from Padmore to Mahon, 18.7.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 119.
touch with the printers. However, notwithstanding Losovsky’s intervention and Mahon’s wishful thinking, the matter was further complicated when it came to the actual implementation of the order. Mahon ran immediately into troubles with the printers who refused to proceed with Padmore’s manuscript without any written guarantees – which Mahon could not give to them as the NMM did not have sufficient financial resources at its disposal. Ziese, who had been notified by the RILU Secretariat of the decision to print Padmore’s manuscript, wanted to handle the matter with utmost care. His dilemma was that the instructions he had received on 20 July 1931 were rather puzzling. Accordingly, he was ordered to acquire the following ‘brochures’: 4,000 copies of Padmore’s *Life and Struggle of the Negro Worker* in English, costs 480 Reichsmark, account Lfd. 16 (i.e., Britain), and 4,000 copies of Padmore’s manuscript in French, costs 430 Reichsmark, account Lfd.08 (i.e. France). In addition, he was to commission 5,000 copies each in English and French of the pamphlet *The Negro Worker and the Anti-Soviet War*, each order amounted to the sum of 75 Reichsmark.

Ziese was confused by the instructions he received from Moscow: did they refer to already published brochures or to manuscripts that were to be sent to a publisher? On the 23rd of July 1931, he sent an inquiry to “W” informing that he had been ordered to fix the payment of printing 4,000 English and 4,000 French copies of Padmore’s *The Life and Struggle of the Negro Worker*. Ziese inquired from W which brochures already had been published and if they already had received Padmore’s manuscript. To his big surprise Ziese did read in the reply from W that they had not yet received the manuscript and neither had the manuscript been sent to Berlin. In his bureaucratic manner did Ziese decide to stop the whole process until he had received any further instructions from Moscow! What Ziese did not know was that Padmore’s manuscript was still at the printers’ in Britain. Mahon, who had been asked by the “Agit-Prop” to immediately return the manuscript, was dubious about the order and did nothing about it. At this point, the comrades in both Berlin and Moscow must have been perplexed.

Nevertheless, the RILU headquarters were committed to go ahead with its plan. On 1 August 1931 new instructions were sent to the comrades in England charging them to publish

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149 Letter from Mahon to Padmore, 23.7.1931, RGASPI 534/7/50, fol. 112.
150 Telegram from Mahon to Losovsky, 23.7.1931, RGASPI 534/7/50, fol. 128.
151 RILU Accounts, 20.7.1931, RGASPI 5343/8/178, fol. 5.
152 Inquiry from NN to ‘Lieber Freund’, 23.7.1931, RGASPI 534/8/168, fol. 39. The author of the inquiry, i.e., Ziese, can be established through cross-checking this document with Ziese’s reply to Moscow, see next footnote.
154 Letter from Mahon to Padmore, 30.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 100.
Padmore’s manuscript in addition the other ITUCNW pamphlet, *The Negro Worker and the Anti-Soviet War.*\(^{155}\) Directives for other ITUCNW-brochures to be published in England followed during the autumn. These included the Open Letter-type pamphlet *What the Workers of British Guiana should do* as well as the *Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers* and the brochure *What is the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers,* all of them being produced by the Negro Committee of the RILU in Moscow.

However, the instructions could not sidestep Ziese’s interference in the process. Whoever sent the directives to England seemed to have forgotten to inform Ziese about the procedures. More than once had Ziese inquired from Moscow about who had authorized the transactions of funds for the printing costs and who would pay the bills. Thus, in late September 1931 he had received a bill for printing the *Open Letter to British Guiana* and in early November he had received an invoice for the publishing of the pamphlet *The Negro Worker and the Anti-Soviet War.* He notified both the Hamburg Committee and the comrades Moscow that without proper authorization he would not pay.\(^{156}\) It is likely that Ziese received the authorization for paying the bills at some point. At this time he had also received the manuscripts for the two other pamphlets, had forwarded them to Padmore in Hamburg and had directed him to provide an estimate for the printing costs. This time he inquired in advance from the RILU Secretariat about who was to cover the printing costs.\(^{157}\) Back in Moscow it was decided to assign the needed amount of money for the publications and both Mahon and Ziese were informed about the decision.\(^{158}\) Still, the process of settling all bills for the brochure *What is the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers?* dragged on until early 1932. Although the RILU headquarters commissioned Ziese to cover the costs of printing 5,000 copies, it decided to halt the printing another 5,000 copies until the Agitprop Department had decided in favour of it.\(^{159}\)

While most of the pamphlets of the ITUCNW were eventually published, the fate of Padmore’s *Life and Struggle of the Negro Worker* was still unresolved and Padmore had no idea about what was the state of affairs of the printing process.\(^{160}\) What he did not know was that the English printers had lost their confidence in the bureaucratic procedures in Berlin and

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\(^{155}\) Note from NN to ‘Dear Colleagues’, 1.8.1931, RGASPI 534/8/171, fol. 76.

\(^{156}\) Inquiry from Paul [Max Ziese], 24.9.1931, RGASPI 534/8/157, fol. 145; note from Ziese to Pol, 3.11.1931, RGASPI 534/4/355, fol. 144.

\(^{157}\) Note from Ziese to Pol, 30.11.1931, RGASPI 534/4/355, fol. 170

\(^{158}\) Note from NN to Mahon, 23.11.1931, RGASPI 534/8/171, fol. 87; Note to ‘Lieber Doktor [i.e., Max Ziese], 23.11.1931, RGASPI 534/8/178, fol. 177.

\(^{159}\) Inquiry of Paul [Max Ziese], 2.1.1932, RGASPI 534/4/406; Instructions to ‘Lieber Doktor’ [Ziese], no date, RGASPI 534/8/216, fol. 17.

\(^{160}\) Letter from Padmore to Adolf [Schelley], 10.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 133.
Moscow. Padmore’s manuscript was still not typeset as the printing company firmly and categorically refused in December 1931 to advance any further until they were to receive an instalment of the money that covered the printing costs. The whole process in publishing his *Life and Struggle of the Negro Worker* in England came to nothing and by the end of the year Padmore sent a bitter critique to the NMM about its failure to publish his manuscript. It is not known when and by whom Padmore’s manuscript was published, the last reference I have found in Moscow about it is from Otto Huiswoud who informed Padmore in February 1932 that “regarding your book I’ve been informed, that everything is taken care of and that it will be dispatched very soon.” Therefore, the published version of Padmore’s manuscript, which eventually was published in 1932, is another curious example of misinforming later researchers: according to the printed text it was published in London in 1931 by the R.I.L.U. Magazine for the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers!

2.7.2. The untouchable man: Max Ziese

Padmore had been working in the RILU-Apparatus for two years when he took over the affairs of the Hamburg Committee in November 1931. It is obvious that at this point he must have been well acquainted with its hierarchical structure and its bureaucratic formalities. On the other hand, he had been something of a ‘rising star’ in Moscow in 1931. His favourable position was reflected in his nomination to the Moscow Soviet in spring 1931. He knew in person most of the influential comrades in the Comintern and he, rather than Ford, had at that time projected the activities of the ITUCNW. Nevertheless, he was also painfully aware of the limited influence and impact he and the RILU Negro Committee had on transferring ideas into concrete actions. Most problematic was the restricted independence of the Hamburg Committee – whenever anything had to be undertaken that involved a financial decision, an

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164 It is unclear if the book was printed in England or Germany. On the other hand, there is little doubt that Padmore’s manuscript was published sometimes during the early months of 1932 – he himself notified his West African contacts about the new book only in the correspondence he conducted during spring 1932 and not earlier. Another indication for the delayed publication of the book is that is was reviewed in the *Labour Monthly* in the April 1932 (H.R., “A Study of the World’s Negro Toilers,” *Labour Monthly* 14:4, 1932, pp. 249-251).
165 Ford immediately wanted to make use of Padmore’s nomination for propaganda purposes and asked for a photograph and a short description which were to be published in *The Negro Worker*. See Ford to Padmore, 23.5.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668 fol. 61. Padmore’s nomination was also noted in *The Crisis* and inspired the African American Homer Smith to approach Padmore and inquire from him about the possibility to come over and study in Moscow. See Homer Smith to Padmore, Minneapolis 1.7.1931, RGASPI 534/7/496, fol. 146.
approval was needed from both Berlin and Moscow. Most frustrating was the role of the central ‘gate keeper’ of the RILU, namely that of Max Ziese.

Padmore had run into troubles with Ziese already in connection with the Hamburg Conference in July 1930. When Padmore arrived in Berlin with the delegation from West Africa on his way to the Conference, Ziese had denied them any assistance. However, not much could be done besides blasting Ziese for bureaucratic and of racial attitudes as his position within the Comintern was high above Padmore’s. In fact, Ziese, whose real name was Solomon Vladimirovich Mikhelson-Manuilov, was not only running the RILU Berlin Bureau but was the head of the OMS Office in Berlin between 1929 and 1932. Also known as ‘Uncle Max’ or ‘Berlin Uncle’, he handled transactions between Moscow and Party functionaries and other Comintern agents and organizers working overseas.\footnote{Josephine Fowler, \textit{Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists: Organizing in American and International Communist Movements, 1919-1933}, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press 2007, p. 88.}

Ziese’s bureaucratic attitude of handling the transfer of funds and payment of bills in 1931 must have further increased Padmore’s animosity towards him. The final blow in their already constrained relationship came in November 1931 when Ziese – once again – turned a deaf ear towards assisting two Africans who had been stranded in Berlin. Padmore, who learnt about the incident when he just had settled in Hamburg, was furious and sent a critical letter to the Negro Bureau about Ziese’s chauvinistic and racist attitudes to Moscow.\footnote{Report from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, added: “für Otto Huswood”, 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 120a.}

If Padmore had hoped that Moscow was to send a stiff reminder to Ziese, he was wrong. Certainly Huiswoud tried to act promptly, notified the RILU Secretariat about Ziese’s behaviour and demanded that Ziese was to correct both his manners and his attitudes. What Padmore and Huiswoud did not know was that Ziese was out-of-reach of any criticism from their part. Ziese made this painstakingly clear to Padmore in a harsh reprimand from the 18th of December 1931.

Ziese’s letter to Padmore comes close to a reprimand about the relationship between a subordinated minor and a dominating major. Padmore was totally misinformed about his and the Hamburg Committee’s position: under no circumstances could they give any orders to him. Ziese, in his turn, would only take orders from Moscow. Therefore, when he rejected to give any assistance to the Africans, this acts, he underlined,

resulted from a strict order of the head-office and that I will in future treat such affairs by no means in other way… Strictly it is forbidden to me to make payments in such affairs […] With this letter I which to clear similar affairs also for the future and to inform You that You make You complaints in a wrong
direction. You must address this complaints to the head-office. From there I get the instructions which I
must obey. I will consequently carry out this instructions without notice nor for You unauthorised
complaints nor for “Firework” of the N[egro] Bureau.\textsuperscript{168}

Ziese had made his point to Padmore. His message was as short as it was clear: do not
interfere with my affairs as you have no authorization to deal with my business. In fact, it
must have been one of the first reprimands Padmore had received from someone within the
organization. At the same time it must have been an eye-opener to him about the darker side
of the apparatus: one that put formalities ahead of revolutionary fervour.

\textbf{2.7.3. Controlling the periphery: the RILU Negro Bureau and the Hamburg Secretariat}

Agitation and propaganda work remained in the foreground also after Padmore’s transfer to
Hamburg. The Resolution of October 1931 declared that the Hamburg Committee was to
work out a programme of action giving concrete demands, slogans and organisational
directives for the various trade unions and groups in those countries where there were no
sections of the RILU. “All such documents must be worked out jointly with the RILU,” the
Resolution text underlined. The Hamburg Committee was to be assisted in its Agit-Prop work
by the RILU and its national sections. The journal of the ITUCNW, \textit{The Negro Worker}, was
to be developed into a popular mass journal and to become the global link of the ITUCNW.\textsuperscript{169}

Last, but not least, the October 1931 Resolution highlighted the necessity for the
Hamburg Committee, in conjunction with the national RILU sections, to develop cadres for
carrying on its organisational tasks. “Advanced” Negro workers in the metropolitan countries
as well as “the best elements” with whom the Hamburg Committee had connections in the
colonies were to be selected for training in Moscow. In addition, correspondence courses
issued by the Agit-Prop Department of the RILU were to be distributed among trade union
activists in the colonies.\textsuperscript{170} The issue of selecting students for Moscow was a new task for the
ITUCNW and will be discussed further below.

The dominance of Moscow over the activities of the Hamburg Committee is further
demonstrated in an internal memorandum outlining the work of the RILU Negro Committee
during the first half of 1932. Although the document refers to the Negro TU Committee, i.e.,
the ITUCNW, and therefore at the first glance seems to outline the activities of the Hamburg

44-46.
\textsuperscript{170} Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg Committee, draft version, dated 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol.
46.
Committee, a critical examination of the document reveals that it is a summary of actions planned, prepared and activated in Moscow. The document itself is dated 3 May 1932; therefore it both sums up previous engagements and lists forthcoming events until July the same year.\(^{171}\)

The central argument for the document to be a description of the activities by the RILU Negro Committee is the broad field of engagement that are listed. Not only were issues concerning various parts in the African Atlantic dealt with but also the relationship between the centre (Moscow) and the periphery (Hamburg): in February 1932 the execution of decisions of the RILU on the work of the Hamburg Committee were evaluated, two months later a report on the activities of the Hamburg Committee was prepared. Most of the tasks fulfilled or planned dealt with organisational matters and political strategies; several of them concerned South Africa\(^{172}\) or the USA\(^{173}\) on which the Hamburg Committee itself had no mandate to monitor. Organizational and open letters were drafted by the Committee to be sent in the name of the ITUCNW, i.e., the Hamburg Committee, to Haiti and Guadeloupe; other official letters were sent to the radical trade unions in Europe – Holland and Belgium – about the necessity of expanding their agitation and propaganda to the colonies: towards the Dutch West Indies and the Belgian Congo.\(^{174}\)

The RILU Negro Committee rather than the Hamburg Committee presented itself as the mastermind of the radical African Atlantic: it sent a letter on the work of Garan Kouyaté’s newspaper *Le Cri de Negre* and others on the work of the ITUCNW sub-committees in Marseilles and Liverpool; it issued directives on the penetration into the West Indian countries and colonies, about work in West and East Africa, about the organization of a revolutionary trade union groups in Jamaica and Puerto Rico, about work among Negro

\(^{171}\) Plan of work of the Negro TU Committee for February-July, 1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 8-9.

\(^{172}\) According to the Plan of work, the Committee evaluated the results of the 1931 Dingaan’s Day in South Africa in February 1932. In the next month, it prepared directives on the relationship between the AFTU and the White reformist trade unions, a study of the strike movement in South Africa and a report on the AFTU to the RILU Executive. In May, a directive letter was to be sent to South Africa on the basis of the previous analytical evaluations and in July further proposals were to be sent to South Africa concerning work among the miners. Also, a programme of demand of the AFTU and the Agricultural Workers’ Union in South Africa were to be drafted in July 1932.

\(^{173}\) A report on the Scottsboro Campaign and the results of the mobilization of the Negro masses in the USA was prepared in February 1932, an analysis of the role of Negro workers in the strike struggles in the USA in May 1932.

\(^{174}\) Plan of work of the Negro TU Committee for February-July, 1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 8-9. My claim that the document refers to the activities of the RILU Negro Bureau is further backed by a reference in a letter from Ford to Padmore when the former was residing in Moscow. In it, Ford informed Padmore that the Negro Bureau had been currently busy with various resolutions and articles dealing with the South African situation, e.g., “we’ll send you something about the miners [in South Africa] in the near future and maybe a review of Dingaan’s Day,” see letter from Ford to Padmore, Moscow 5.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 86.
workers in Brazil jointly with the Latin American Section of the Comintern, and about the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and a peasant organization in Basutoland. Last, but not least, it was Moscow and not Hamburg that outlined the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH as well as the LAI.\textsuperscript{175}

The above document at least indicates the will of the comrades in Moscow to exercise full control of the activities in the radical African Atlantic. The document itself is one of the few remaining entries to the complex hierarchy and hidden structure of the ITUCNW. Officially, the public appearance of the ITUCNW was the Hamburg Committee and through the voices and actions of Ford and Padmore. What the recipients in the African Atlantic were not told, and by all means should not know, was that few, if any, of the official declarations had been drafted in Hamburg or by ‘independent’ bodies. Instead, it was the duty of the Hamburg Committee to send any available material on the Caribbean and Africa to Moscow. On the basis of this information, the comrades in Moscow drafted their instructions and directives that were sent to Hamburg and to be published in the name of the ‘independent’ ITUCNW.\textsuperscript{176} Consequently, the ITUCNW was part and parcel of the ‘solar system’ of the RILU and the Comintern and Ford and Padmore were positioned as their henchmen for the African Atlantic.

\textsuperscript{175} Plan of work of the Negro TU Committee for February-July, 1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 8-9. Huiswoud notified Padmore that the directives for Guadeloupe had been drafted in February and were on its way to Hamburg. In addition, he had started to work on a proposal for Haiti. See letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124.

\textsuperscript{176} For example, Huiswoud notified Padmore that he had received material from Haiti, Liberia and Nigeria. In his mind, the Liberian material was of little value “because we can’t use these people.” On the other hand, the material from the two other countries was more promising..., see letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124.