The Hamburg Committee, Moscow and the Making of a Radical African Atlantic, 1930-1933, Part Two: The ISH, the IRH and the ITUCNW

Holger Weiss, Åbo Akademi University

3. Black Agitators and Red Seamen

The key partner of the ITUCNW in Hamburg was the ISH. This acronym stood for *Internationale der Seeleute und Hafenarbeiter* (International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, *L’Internationale des marins et des dockers*), which was established at a meeting in Moscow on the 2nd of March 1930. Typically for the Comintern, the official proclamation of the foundation of the ISH was made at a conference of marine workers in Hamburg in early October 1930, although German police sources claim that while the proclamation of the foundation of an international organization for harbour workers and seamen occurred in October 1930, its final establishment was effective by January 1931. The ISH had branches in 22 countries and in 19 colonies; it employed 15 'Political Instructors’, one of them being Richard Krebs (1905-1951), and operated 47 International Seamen Clubs, so-called *Interklubs* (Inter-Clubs), in various ports. In reality, the ISH was a masked continuation of the Comintern’s Maritime Section, the International Propaganda and Action Committee of Transport Workers (IPAC-Transport), and was receiving subsidies from Moscow. Every month, Richard Krebs claims, the ISH headquarters received a subsidy of USD 52,000 for international waterfront activities. The source of this money was the *Sovtorgflot*, the Soviet Shipping Trust, which, according to Krebs, was a cover for the WEB. Recent research has proved Krebs’ statement to be correct.

---

2 Rainer Tosstorff, *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920-1937*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2004, p. 675 fn 6. According to an article in the *Die Rote Fahne* No 201, Oktober 1930, the ISH had been established on the 2nd of October 1930 whereas it was announced in the *Inprekorr* 86, 14.10.1930, that the event had taken place one day later.
3 Preussische Minister des Inneren an den Oberpräsidenten in Kiel, Berlin 5.3.1931, and Der Preuss. Polizei-Präsident Altona-Wandsbek in Altona, Altona, 15.4.1931, both documents filed in Landesarchiv Schleswig (LAS), Abt. 301 Nr. 4532
4 Known as International Seamens Club, Internationales Hafenbureau für Seeleute or Club International des Marins. (Valtin 1941, p. 306-307). Jan Valtin was the pseudonym of Richard Krebs who had been in charge of the Inter-Club in Bremen and Hamburg. See also Ernst von Waldenfels, *Der Spion der aus Deutschland kam. Das geheime Leben des Seemanns Richard Krebs*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag 2002. According to him, the ISH operated only 42 Inter-Clubs.
5 See further von Waldenfels 2002, pp. 93, 118-119. Waldenfels attempt to neutralize Krebs’ activities after he was jailed by the GESTAPO in 1933 has been criticized in Dieter Nelles, ‘*Die Rehabilitation eines Gestapo-
Like all front organizations, the ISH was designated to appear as a sovereign, self-governing organization. ISH headquarters were not in Moscow but in Hamburg. Here, the ISH had established its secretariat at 8 Roothesoodstrasse, which soon developed to be the international centre of the organization. In reality, Moscow closely monitored the activities of the ISH. Moscow’s man in Hamburg was Alfred Bem alias Adolf Schelley (1900-1936). Although the ISH presented itself as a radical labour union, its main objective was to serve as the Comintern’s underground communication network. From the 1920s, the IAPC-Transport and especially the various Port Bureaus and Inter-Clubs served as the relay stations of the network. By the early 1930s, this clandestine web covered all the Seven Seas and enabled the Comintern-Apparatus to communicate with its various units beyond the reach of any hostile authorities.

Officially, George Hardy (1884-1966) was in charge of the ISH. However, it was the ISH Secretary Albert Walter (1885-1980) who was in charge of the activities in Hamburg. Other notorious members of the ISH were Richard Jensen (1894-1974), who was the chairman of the Danish Stokers Union and a leading member of the CP Denmark, and Ernst Wollweber (1898-1967). In 1932, Wollweber became the leader (Reichsleiter) of the German section of the ISH, the Einheitsverband der Seeleute, Hafenarbeiter und Binnenschiffer (EVSHB), and was a member of the Executive Committee of the ISH. Occasionally, Ford would have meetings with Hardy and both he as well as Padmore had also contact with Fred Thompson of the Seamen’s Minority Movement (SMM), the British Section of the ISH. However, one of their most important partners in Hamburg was Max Barek (1899-?). He was...
a former stoker who had deserted a German freighter in Boston in 1929, joined the CPUSA but was deported from the USA on 31 March 1931. On his return to Hamburg he was at first in charge of the Anglo-American Section of the ISH and thereafter, from November 1931, worked as an ISH Functionary.\textsuperscript{12}

3.1. Two Black Comrades in Hamburg

The intimate structural connections between the ISH and the Hamburg Committee were part and parcel of the grand strategy designed in Moscow. In terms of planning for activities concerning the African Atlantic, the ISH, the Hamburg Committee and the RILU Negro Committee were to cooperate or, as Padmore underlined to Albert Walter in July 1931: “Under our collective leadership the work of the Negro Committee will be carried out with the fullest results.”\textsuperscript{13} In practice, however, the realization and fulfilment of the planned cooperation proved much more difficult.

3.1.1. Ford: From enthusiasm to bitterness

Immediately after his arrival in Hamburg on 16 November 1930, James Ford held a meeting ("conference") with Albert Walter. The discussion concerned Ford’s tasks and the expected cooperation between the ITUCNW and the ISH that, according to Ford, was to be of a ’technical’ character. A few days later, Ford held a joint conference with the Hamburg Party organization and the bureau of the RGO. Present at the meeting were the Secretary of the Organization Department of the Party and the Secretary of the RGO.\textsuperscript{14}

Right from the beginning, the office of the Hamburg Committee was located in the building of the ISH headquarters and the Hamburg International Club. Here Ford held special conferences with Negro seamen about potential activities in Africa and edited the various publications that his secretariat was to publish. The room also served as the library and archive of the ITUCNW. Ford’s daily routine included morning meetings at the Club with its

\textsuperscript{12} Max Barek: Lebenslauf, dated 1932, RGASPI 534/8/223, fol. 73. von Waldenfels (2002, p. 134) claims that Barek also served as a special envoy of the Comintern who shuttled between Hamburg and Berlin, among others delivering the monthly financial subsidies from Moscow.

\textsuperscript{13} Letter from Padmore to Walter, 21.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 96.

\textsuperscript{14} Ford, January 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 93.
leadership. On the agenda were special political tasks, outlining the daily work and going over work of the previous day.\(^\text{15}\)

Upon his arrival in Hamburg, Albert Walter asked Ford to organize the colonial work of the ISH. Ford divided the colonial section into three subsections, a Chinese, an Indian and a Negro one. Each subsection was in charge of organizing and agitating among the seamen of its group. Their central activity was to visit the ships and to invite them for meetings in the Inter-Club. Whenever possible, the subsections were to arrange excursions to visit Soviet ships. In addition, they were to organize the seamen according to the instructions of the ISH, to discuss with the seamen the general situation in their respective countries as well as their every day troubles onboard the ships. Last, but not least, the Chinese and Indian subsections were asked to begin the publication of their own respective bulletins.\(^\text{16}\)

The members of the various sections made daily visits to the ships and worked in the Club. Apart from being in charge of the Negro subsection, Ford was at times engaged in the work Anglo-American Section.\(^\text{17}\) He organized a weekly course on the colonial question in the Club. During alternate weeks, special focus was given to the Chinese and Negro Questions as well as to daily political and organizational tasks among seamen from these regions. While the colonial course gathered up to 50 participants, the course on the Negro question collected only a handful of listeners – Ford notified Padmore in August that he had had only 6 Negro seamen at one time in the course. The challenge for the courses’ organizers was the difficulties in obtaining regular attendance as the seamen were usually coming and leaving on a short notice.\(^\text{18}\)

Much to the dismay of Ford and Padmore, cooperation with Walter and the ISH in Hamburg turned out to be rather lukewarm and was not always forthcoming. Already in his first report of activities in Hamburg, Ford made some critical remarks about “subjective factors” that hampered his work in Hamburg. Some members of the ISH were not too exited about having a suspicious Black organization based in Hamburg, as they feared it would give

\(^\text{15}\) Letter from Ford to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, (Hamburg) 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 109.

\(^\text{16}\) Ford, Work among Negro Seamen, report sent to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, (Hamburg) 30.4.1931, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 145. Hereafter: Ford, April 1931 Report. Ford did not mention if the Negro subsection was charged to launch an own bulletin. This, one could argue, was unnecessary as the Hamburg Committee already was publishing The Negro Worker.

\(^\text{17}\) Apart from the three colonial subsections, the ISH in Hamburg included an Anglo-American, a Latin American, a German and a Nordic (Scandinavian) Section. (Arbeitsbericht der ISH, no date [ca. 1931], RGASPI 534/5/222, fol. 64-74. The head of the last mentioned section was another notorious German communist, namely Hermann Knüfen (1893-1976).

\(^\text{18}\) Letter from Ford to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, (Hamburg) 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 108. The plans for the colonial courses were already outlined in his April report, see Ford, April 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 145. In this report, he also stated that he and his group had started to outline plans of colonial work for the English, French and Dutch sections of the ISH.
an excuse for the local police authorities to raid and to shut down all activities at Roothesoodstrasse. Further ammunition to critical voices was given in December 1930 when a local (bourgeois) newspaper commented on an article in the French press that a Negro Committee had been established in Hamburg to stir up trouble in the colonies. Ford felt that some comrades in Hamburg even argued behind his back that it would be better for the Hamburg Committee to be declared illegal by the RILU before the police would do so. Also the promised technical assistance by the Secretariat of the ISH and the RGO was not forthcoming – Ford had to handwrite his letters as he had no access to a typing machine and the secretaries of the ISH were always ‘busy’. Ford felt he was an outsider and was treated as such by the comrades:

(A)lthough I don’t know the complete facts but there seems to be differences between comrade Walter and the Party organization, because I don’t know the whole facts and the situation it is made difficult for me trying to get something done. But despite my limited knowledge of the facts it is clear that [the] situation is not only bad for my work, but it is apparent that the whole international work here at Hamburg can be affected by this situation and even the development of seamen’s union of German workers will be hampered.19

Despite Ford’s criticism, the conditions for his work in Hamburg did not improve. In April 1931, Ford complained about the negative attitude of Comrade Krause who was in charge of the Inter-Club in Hamburg. In Ford’s opinion, Krause did not render him any assistance in colonial and Negro work. “He does not give any political leadership in the nucleus on the colonial question (and this is very important in view of the fact that a large number of the party comrades here are new in the party and know nothing about the question),” Ford notified Padmore and the RILU Secretariat. The atmosphere at the Club seemed to have improved after Ford aired his grievances at a joint meeting with the ISH and Party leadership where it was decided to replace Krause with another comrade. Still, the attitude of Albert Walter remained problematic: “I must say that it is necessary for comrade Walters himself to take a different attitude to the colonial work. I demand that the comrade Walters give me the support in my work that my responsibility to the Executive of the RILU demands.”20

At this time, the relationship between Ford and Albert Walter had reached a low point. A meeting with Walter and Comrade Hardy was called to discuss the colonial work of the ISH and Ford urged Padmore to participate in it. Ford had the impression that while Hardy

was in favour of colonial and Negro work Walter was not. In Ford’s opinion, Walter did not give any assistance to his work but was negative about any of Ford’s initiatives. Between the lines, Ford even hinted that Walter had a racist attitude towards him:

He has always said that you cannot get colonial workers to come to the Club, but my work here during the last month has clearly and disagreeably disproved this statement. Of course the excuse is that I am a Negro and have a better approach, this is true to a certain extent, but I contend that if the leadership of the Club would take the proper interest and give the proper support we can get white comrades to help in this work.21

Consequently, in Ford’s mind Walter was nothing but an opportunist. Ford claimed that Walter was afraid that if too many colonial seamen were drawn to the Inter-Club the police would close it. Even worse, Ford realized that much of the material that the ITUCNW had produced during the last year had never been distributed but was stored at the Club.22

Ford’s critical statements finally resulted in an official reply from Moscow. At the headquarters of the RILU a decision was made to issue a resolution about the tasks of the ITUCNW and its relationship with the ISH in July 1931.23 The sixth paragraph of the list of immediate organisational tasks concerned the relationship between the ITUCNW and the ISH:

6) In view of the insufficient attention paid by the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers to the every-day activities of the Hamburg Committee, likewise the unwillingness of individual leaders of the International Seamen’s Club to assist in carrying out mass work, to charge the ISH to ensure systematic assistance in all practical work of the Hamburg Committee. To propose to the leadership of the ISH that they give assistance to the Committee in editing the “Negro Worker”.24

Padmore wrote thereafter a letter to Walter, informing him about the RILU statement and highlighting the duties of the ISH to cooperate with and to render systematic assistance to Ford and the Hamburg Committee. He further stressed that Paragraph Six of the Resolution underlined that although the ITUCNW works under the leadership of the RILU and its European Bureau, Walter and the other comrades of the ISH Executive were expected,

21 Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) handwritten date: April 30 (1931), RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 72. The letter is dated the same day as Ford’s official report (filed in RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 145-148) on his work in Hamburg to which he refers in the letter. Whereas the report is directed both to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, the letter was only addressed to Padmore.
22 Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) handwritten date: April 30 (1931), RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 72.
23 This resolution is referred to as the July 1931 Resolution. However, as with the earlier resolutions, draft version of the resolution text had circulated already in June.
24 ‘Concrete proposals on Report of Work of Hamburg Committee’, document filed as 52/52.129.5.WWC (no author), dated 10.6.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 27.
together with Ford, to discuss and decide upon questions that required immediate action. Last, but not least, Padmore ensured that “under your collective leadership the work of the Negro Committee will be carried out with the fullest results.”

Moscow’s sincere warning to the ISH leadership in Hamburg left no traces. Work among the colonial seamen, or actually the lack of engagement in it, was discussed at a plenary meeting of the Executive Committee of the ISH in Hamburg in September 1931. Typically for communist activities during this period, the debate ended in harsh self-criticism by the ISH leadership.

3.1.2. Padmore: From frustration to cooperation

If Alfred Walter’s attitude towards James Ford and the issue of work among Negro seamen had been problematic throughout much of the year 1931, Padmore’s arrival in Hamburg was combined with a big question mark, as to what direction his and Walter’s relationship was to develop. Incidentally, when Ford remarked to Walter that Padmore would replace him if he were expelled from Germany, Walter was not pleased at all. “He [Walter] went all up in the air and said never Padmore,” Ford notified Padmore in one of his letters. Thus, the expectations for fruitful cooperation between the two of them were rather bleak even before Padmore’s transfer.

Hamburg was chaotic when Padmore arrived in early November 1931. The German section of the ISH, the Einheitsverband, had launched a strike against the German shippers in early October and the German police raided the Inter-Club daily. After the strike had been blown off – it had ended in a failure, but the communists did not interpret the outcome as such – Padmore was able to hold a meeting with the ISH leadership. The methods of work as well as the question of technical assistance for the Hamburg Committee were discussed. Padmore was pleased with the outcome: he was to receive the services of a stenographer for three days per week. “This is evidence of their sincerity,” he commented to Huiswoud.

Soon, however, Padmore found himself in trouble with the ISH leadership. He had asked the ISH to assist the Sierra Leonean Foster Jones who had been stranded in Liverpool.

---

26 It is not known if a representative of the ITUCNW was present at the meeting.
28 Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) handwritten date: April 30 (1931), RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 72.
30 Letter from Padmore to Huiswoud, Hamburg 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 121. In addition, it was agreed that the ISH continued to give stamps and to cover the printing costs of The Negro Worker. (Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade Adolf’ [Shelley], Hamburg, 10.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 132.)
Padmore had planned to make use of Comrade Jones to establish a section of the ISH in Freetown in West Africa, but the African fellow had run into troubles in England. The ISH turned his request down which led to a harsh reprimand by Padmore to Adolf Schelley about the behaviour of the ISH leadership. Eventually, the Jones affaire was solved and Padmore was able to concentrate his energy on other matters. However, as will be discussed in detail below, the Jones affaire was more than that of a seaman in trouble in England: he was one of Padmore’s agent provocateurs and a key person in his attempt to establish a link to Sierra Leone and Nigeria in 1931.  

Disillusioned nor not, Padmore and the ITUCNW could not cut off their intimate connections to the ISH and its global network. Neither from the perspective of Moscow or that of Padmore and the Hamburg Committee was a total break advisable or even wanted. This was totally clear to Padmore who in the above communication to Shelley informed him about the arrival of a courier from Moscow who was on his way to America. The courier wanted to discuss with Schelley matters about ISH activities in Latin America, Padmore informed, and asked Schelley if he could participate in the meeting as he wanted to utilise the services of the courier in connection with the Caribbean work of the ITUCNW. Padmore invited Schelley to come to his home at 6 o’clock in the evening or, if inconvenient, to propose another place and time the same day. However, “it must be before 8 o’clock as the comrade leaves at 9 o’clock to night.” If the meeting took place is not known. Be as it may, Padmore’s communication with Shelley stands as a good example of the interdependence between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH. It also shows that both were part and parcel of the same secret global communication network that the Comintern had established.

However, the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH and its national sections remained strained during much of the year 1932. In December 1932 Padmore critically remarked about the lack of cooperation in his report to the RILU Secretariat:

It is necessary for the RILU as well as ISH clubs to correct their present attitude and to give more attention to the question of colonial work. For it is to be noted that every manifestation of neglect on the part of the advanced sections of the proletariat in Europe, America, makes it more difficult for the Hamburg Committee to penetrate into the colonies.

---

31 An outline of Comrade Jones activities as Padmore’s messenger to West Africa is provided in Chapter VII.3.4.
32 Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade Adolf’ [Shelley], Hamburg, 10.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 133.
Notwithstanding the disagreements between the leading persons in the ISH and the Hamburg Committee, both organizations were crucial for the establishment of a secret global communication network of the Comintern and the making of a radical African Atlantic network. Padmore and Walter could have different opinions about the kind of collaboration that their organizations were to establish but neither of them questioned the basic political strategies that had been decided in Moscow. The question was the position of the Hamburg Committee within the Comintern Apparatus: was it an independent organ or only a subsidiary of the ISH? Both organizations had been established by the RILU as seemingly independent bodies that just happened to be situated in the same premises in Hamburg. However, Ford and Padmore knew that this was a mere smokescreen on behalf of Moscow: the purpose for the Hamburg Committee was to establish links with and to create revolutionary platforms in the African and Caribbean colonies so that the Comintern and the RILU via the courier system of the ISH could be in touch with the radical political parties and labour unions that were hoped to be established there in future. From such a perspective, the Hamburg Committee was nothing but a tool. On the other hand, as will be argued in Chapter VIII, Padmore was more than a tool – he extended his mission by placing himself in the centre of the network of the Hamburg Committee.

3.2. Working locally, acting globally

The weak colonial links of the Comintern was a major lacuna at the time of the establishment of the ISH. Therefore, in terms of establishing an effective global outreach of its communication network, the question of enlisting colonial seamen became a major task of the ISH. The central thesis for the colonial work of the ISH was to be presented in a resolution. A first version by Comrade Hardy had been prepared in early 1931, but it was found to be full of flaws and shortcomings so it was decided to have it rewritten and corrected. Ford and Liao (a Chinese mate who was working for the Chinese sub-section) were given the task of drafting a new text. The Executive Commission of the ISH approved the new resolution at its plenary session in September 1931. However, Ford’s and Liao’s version was in turn criticized by Comrade Adolf (i.e., Alfred Schelley/Bem) for still being inadequate as it did not specify the concrete task of the various national sections of the ISH. He therefore decided to write a new text and sent it to Moscow in late November 1931. Being aware of his own shortcomings, he
asked the RILU Secretariat to consider rewriting the draft version before it was to be presented at the ISH World Congress.\textsuperscript{34}

The ISH directives for conducting work among colonial seamen and dockers remained thus vague throughout the muck of 1931. Nevertheless, there were some general guidelines, both of the ISH and the RILU, which lay down the general references of work in Hamburg. Last, but not least, the German comrades had at that time already developed a highly effective method in establishing contacts on board the ships that called in Hamburg and other German ports.

### 3.2.1. Contacting people, establishing cells

One of Ford’s main tasks in Hamburg was to enlist Negro seamen into the network of the Hamburg Committee. As noted above, this activity was part and parcel of the African subsection of the ISH and one could even claim that the Hamburg Committee was identical with this subsection. Ford even publicly stated in an article in *The Negro Worker* that the Negro seamen first and foremost were to join the ISH rather than the ITUCNW:

Negro seamen in their travels and experiences must establish contact and connection with the international revolutionary workers’ movement, and in the first place, join and help build the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, fight to better their own conditions and in the same timer to bring the principles of the international revolutionary workers’ movement to their brothers in Africa.\textsuperscript{35}

This position was further underlined in an English Bulletin of the ISH that Ford had helped to edit, entitled *Concrete Work Among Negro Seamen During the Last Period*.\textsuperscript{36}

The work among African seamen in the harbour of Hamburg followed the practise that Albert Walter had already established during the 1920s. The key idea of the so-called Hamburg method was that a small group of ISH functionaries and harbour activists went onboard a ship to distribute leaflets and pamphlets among the crew. After contacts had been established, a close interaction between the ISH headquarters and the crew was then projected

\textsuperscript{34}Letter from Adolf to “Werte Genossen”, Hamburg 24.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 86. It is likely that Schelley’s version is filed as “Resolution on the Colonial Work of the Sections of the I.S.H. in the Imperialist Countries,” RGASPI 534/5/222, fol. 140-144.


\textsuperscript{36}Letter from Ford to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, (Hamburg) 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 109.
to win at least some of the crew for the cause of radical agitation. Richard Krebs, who participated in these activities already during the 1920s, recalled that

our immediate aim was to arouse discontent among the seamen, discontent against rations, wages and ship’s discipline. Wherever a crew was receptive to our agitation, we went on to form an action committee on the ship to prepare them for coming strikes, or to build up the Party unit among the men, or to pick particularly able individuals for courier service and other confidential work.  

Most importantly, a report was written after every visit, listing reliable contacts and identifying potential partners for future cooperation. The names of individuals, cells and ships were thereafter collected in a catalogue. This database, which already by the late 1920s included hundreds of persons and ships, was the core of Albert Walter’s communication network and was to expand after the establishment of the ISH.

The aims and methods had changed very little during the early 1930s. Ford would usually enter a ship at lunch together with the Chinese comrade Leo (Liao) and, occasionally, a German comrade. During the discussions onboard he and the other ISH representatives talked about the Negro Committee, the RILU, the ISH and the conditions in Africa. Afterwards, the African seamen were invited to the Club, where smaller “conferences” were held, both with groups and with individual seamen. In Ford’s mind, these conferences were extremely important, as there was usually a great deal of suspicion among the different African groups of seamen against each other. At times, they would not talk in public. During the private conversations they would be more open and even promise him to assist “in our work” as much as possible.

Whenever possible, Ford and the ISH arranged excursions to Soviet ships for the colonial seamen. One of such an event occurred on 19 April when Ford took a group of African seamen onboard the ship Kalinin. In his mind, the trip was a total success: Comrade Hardy, who had joined them, spoke about the ISH, the Africans played music and they had dinner with the Russian captain and crew. Ford knew that the German police was watching

---

37 Valtín 1941, p. 39.
38 Eiber 2000, p. 186.
39 In his report of April 1931 Ford stated that there was no comrade in charge of the Indian subsection. He had inquired from the LAI Secretary Chattopadhyaya about helping him solving the problem and Chatto had proposed to send a young Indian student from Frankfurt to Hamburg. At the time of writing his report the issue had not been settled. See Ford, April 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 145.
them but could not enter the ship, “they only saw from the windows that there was dinner and eating for the men.”

Ford, however, was quite realistic about the immediate impact of his work. Although he had been able to organize groups on some of the ships, most of his contacts were irregular. However, he was optimistic as “you cannot talk with African seamen without at once raising the question of Africa and it is in this way that we are able to connect up the whole anti-imperialistic struggle with their ship demands,” he assured the comrades in Moscow. On the other hand, where contacts and cells that had been established, the Africans engaged in Ford’s network had promised to spread the propaganda and literature of the ITUCNW and the ISH and to keep in touch with the Hamburg Committee.

Nevertheless, Hamburg was never a hub for African seamen. On average only about four to six ships that had an African crew called at the port each week. In general, the crew counted between half a dozen and a dozen Africans and they would stay in Hamburg only for a few days. The ships they were found on were German, English, Dutch and American vessels, most of them going to and from Hamburg to Africa. The African seamen themselves either had their domicile in Africa or in England; none of the African seamen had residency in Germany. Especially onboard the English and Dutch ships, there were no revolutionary groups, i.e., cells of the ISH. In spite of these constraints, Ford had made quite an impact during his ten months sojourn in Hamburg. By mid-September 1931, he had managed to form cells or at least enlist some individuals onboard of twelve British ships: the S/S Thomas Holt, the S/S William Wilberforce, the S/S Dalcross, the S/S Deido, the S/S Daru, the S/S Ethiopian, the S/S Henry Stanley, the Daunkwa, the Dagomba, the S/S Jonathan C. Holt, the Dixcove and the Thornlia.

Padmore, it seems, continued Ford’s activities in the port although he never made any detailed report about the cells he had been able to establish. In December 1932, he summarized his achievements by stating that

[…] regular contacts were established with some ships calling from time to time to the port. The Negroes were drawn into the work of the HC as individual adherents and used chiefly for the purpose of maintaining connection between Hamburg and the colonies and for the propaganda purposes.

---

41 Ford, April 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 146-147.
42 Ford, April 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 147.
43 Ford, April 1931 Report, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 146.
Padmore’s general phrasing reflects a different agenda to that of Ford: while the latter was deeply connected with the ISH, the former was to distance the Hamburg Committee from the ISH and to develop room for independent activities.

### 3.2.2. The Africa Bar and the International Club in Hamburg

Another way of Ford for ‘fishing’ African seamen was by visiting the Africa Bar in Hamburg. This establishment was a saloon-café in the harbour area near the ISH headquarters and the Inter-Club. When Ford arrived in Hamburg he noticed that the Africa Bar was very popular among the African seamen. Its location was known by them and was the first place they went to when they arrived at Hamburg. It was also a spot where local women congregated to make friends with them and have the Africans to buy beer for them. Ford noted that the African seamen were the only source of income for the bar management, and usually they spent much of their money there through the influence of the women who in his mind were kept there for this purpose. On the other hand, the success of the Africa Bar seemed to be that the management made the Africans feel perfectly at home and Ford claimed that they were quite at ease at the place. Ford realized that it was for this reason mainly that they crowded there in spite of the fact that there were many other pubs in the vicinity, such as the “Indian Bar”, which was frequented by the Indian seamen and occasionally also by some of the African seamen.  

Ford decided to extend his propaganda tours and started to pay frequent visits to the Africa Bar as to make contacts with the African seamen. This, however, could not be made openly as Ford was afraid of the bar management reacting negatively as they might fear that Ford was snatching their customers away. Ultimately, he reasoned, the pub management would take steps to prevent him from going there.

Ford’s decision to visit the Africa Bar was a strategic one: previous to his arrival none of the African seamen had ever visited the Inter-Club. His idea was to popularize the Inter-Club while having private discussions at the Africa Bar, underlying the social difference between the Bar and the Club: at the former you would only get drunk and lose your money, at the latter you would meet an ear for your grievances. In Ford’s mind, his conversations had

---

an effect and some of the African seamen started to gather at the Inter-Club rather than at the Africa Bar.\textsuperscript{48}

However, if Ford had a hard time to convince the African seamen to come to the Inter-Club, his comrades at the Club did not make his job easy either. Ford had to carry on “quite a big campaign” among the comrades in the Club in order to get them to see the importance of getting the African seamen to the Club:

At first I was not so drastic with the comrades. But after a while I found definite expressions of unfriendliness on the part of some of the comrades to the Negro seamen who came to the Club and tendencies that were not only driving the Negroes but as well as not wanting them at the Club. To this attitude I immediately became very sharp with some of the comrades, especially leading comrades in the Club. I must say that this criticism was very sharp and resulted in some personal feelings being expressed. Things began to make a turn.\textsuperscript{49}

Having thus solved one of his problems, a new one appeared in August 1931. The local street cell of the Communist Youth League had decided to make the Africa Bar their meeting place as to make propaganda among African seamen. Ford was definitively against the idea and made an appeal to the RILU Secretariat to stop the plan. In his mind, there was a great danger of transferring the Africa Bar into a “Negro Communist Center”. Ford was afraid of that such an event would, first, preclude the necessity of the African seamen from coming to the Club, second, lead to the African seamen starting to think that the “Center” was good enough and that they did not need to go to the Club, and, third, result into that some African seamen interpreted the “Center” as a scheme to keep them away from the Club.\textsuperscript{50} Most likely, Ford was able to convince Moscow to react and to communicate with the local party officials in Hamburg to have the attempt shelved – at least he did not discuss the matter any further.

At the Inter-Club, on the other hand, the management had created so-called Colonial Corners. One of them was the ‘Negro Corner’. The outline of the Negro Corner was similar to that of the other Colonial Corners. The central spot was a map, Ford explained, showing the extent of the “developing struggles of the Negroes in Africa.” Further, there was a huge notice board with pictures and cuts from newspapers and magazines about the life and struggles of the African working class terror, life of Negro workers, “from time to time we enlarge this.”\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
Apart from his bureau behind the Club, the Negro Corner was the centre of Ford’s propaganda machinery.

3.2.3. A potential connection? The Kroomen’s Seamen Club in Sierra Leone

One of Ford’s principal tasks in Hamburg was to visit ships in the city’s harbour and get in touch with African seamen. One of these meetings occurred in mid-April 1930. At this occasion, he was to hear about the existence of a potential radical organization in West Africa, the Kroomen’s Seamen Club in Sierra Leone. Although the club was not a trade union, Ford notified Padmore, it had put forth demands for better wages, shorter hours, better working conditions and pay for overtime as well as better food onboard. The club had been established in 1923 but due to internal rifts and “tribal differences”, it had not been able to coordinate its work and had been prevented from unity and concerted action. Two years later they were able to bring about some unity between the two main ethnic groups in the club. They achieved some of their demands and started to put pressure on the Elder Dempster Shipping Company to be recognized as the representative of the West African seamen. So far, Elder Dempster had refused to acknowledge them and told them that they were first to establish contacts with some trade unions in Europe before they could be recognized as a partner in the negotiations.52 The Africans, on the other hand were reluctant to comply with this demand as they regarded the British National Union of Seamen (NUS) of having few sympathies to their cause.53

The person whom Ford had met onboard introduced himself as a member of the Executive Committee of the Club, living at the time in Liverpool.54 Ford became even more interested in the group when the African seaman disclosed to him that the Club had plans to become affiliated with a militant seamen’s union. Ford therefore arranged for representatives of the Club to meet with Comrade Hardy of the ISH, who outlined the programme of the ISH for the Africans. At another meeting with the Africans, Ford had a long talk with them about


53 Sherwood 1997, p. 266.

54 Hakim Adi suggests that the Sierra Leonean living in Liverpool who met Ford in mid-April 1931 was Foster Jones. According to Adi’s information, before becoming a seaman, Foster Jones had been employed as a policeman in Sierra Leone and was one of the leaders of the Kroomen’s Seamen’s Club. See further Hakim Adi, "The Comintern and Black Workers in Britain and France 1919–37,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 28:2/3, 2010, p. 234. On Padmore’s attempts to enlist him as his envoy for West Africa, see below, Chapter 3.3.4.
the objectives of the ITUCNW, the RILU and the ISH. When Ford wrote his report to Padmore about the Club, the question of affiliating the Kroome’s Seamen Club to the ISH and the ITUCNW was still open – neither Ford nor the Secretariat of the ISH for the time being ready to accept the affiliation of the group as not much was known about the group in Hamburg. Ford regarded the group to be a sort of social club that was typical in West Africa but with the potential to become one of the radical spearheads in West Africa.55

Much to Ford’s dismay, his plans were never realized. What the Sierra Leonean fellow did not know was that at the time of his negotiations in Hamburg, the Kroome’s Seamen Club no longer exist by that name. Due to intertribal feuds, the Club had split into two rivaling sections and the ship owners used this situation to play one group against the other. Later in 1930 a truce between the two groups had again emerged, which had led to the formation of a new organization, the United Seamen’s Club.56 This new situation was interpreted by the ISH as a positive sign for a prospective development in Sierra Leone. For a while, therefore, the United Seamen’s Club, located at 3 Krootown Road, Freetown, was even included on the official list of the global network of Interclubs.57 However, by the end of the year it seemed it must have been evident for the comrades in Hamburg that the United Seamen’s Club was never to develop into a revolutionary hub and its name was omitted from the official list of Interclubs.58 On the other hand, the plan of establishing a spearhead of the ISH in Freetown or somewhere else in West Africa was to resurface time and again.

3.2.4. The establishment of ISH-subcommittees in the African Atlantic

In early autumn 1931, the ISH could report some progress in their attempt of establishing a bridgehead in West Africa. Although its pace had not been extraordinary – as the most idealistic revolutionaries had been expecting – the ISH, or rather James Ford through the Hamburg Committee, had been able to establish connections with harbour workers in Sierra Leone and in the Gold Coast.59 Although these connections ended in a cul-de-sac, other attempts by Ford, Kouyaté and Padmore to enlist African seamen and dockers in the ISH-

56 Foster Jones, "Situation of Native Workers in Sierra Leone," The Negro Worker I: 4-5, April-May 1931, pp. 3-5.
58 The United Seamen’s Club was not even mentioned in the joint ITUCNW/ISH pamphlet ‘Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 175-183.
network were more successful. Due to their engagement, Negro subsections or sub-committees of the ISH had been established in France, England, Senegal, South Africa and inroads had been made in other parts of Africa as well as in the Caribbean by the end of 1932.

France had a rather substantial population of immigrant workers and dockers from the African colonies. As elsewhere, the idea was not to form independent African branches of the revolutionary trade unions but to integrate the African sections as part of the existing organizations. The kick off was Kouyaté’s visit to Hamburg in June 1931 when he and Ford had a ‘conference’ with the leading members of the ISH. It was decided to send Kouyaté to Marseilles to jointly work for the ISH and the Hamburg committee. Already in 1930, the LDRN had tried to work among African seamen in Marseilles and initially had succeeded in organising some 50 Africans who had joined the French Unitary Docker’s Union. However, due to differences between the Negro Secretary at the local Interclub and Comrade Remin, who was in charge of the ISH in Marseilles, work had come to a standstill and collapsed when the French authorities dissolved the Negro group on the grounds that it was a “dangerous communist nest.” The Negro organiser went to sea and disappeared. Similar drawbacks had also occurred in St. Nazaire, Le Havre, Rouen and Dunkirk. Kouyaté’s two-weeks visit to Hamburg, where he joined Ford on his daily tours to the harbour and made up a detailed plan for future activities, signalled a new start for work in France.  

Kouyaté’s relocation from Paris to Marseilles paid off. Due to his strong commitment, the ITUCNW was able to establish a sub-committee in Paris. This subcommittee was Kouyaté’s Union des Travailleurs Nègres (UTN) but, as Padmore noted, “this organisation bases itself upon the program of the HC and functions as a sub-section in France.” In 1932, its branches were operating in the major French seaports, Marseilles, Rouen, Dunkirk and Bordeaux, working jointly with the French section of the ISH. By that time some 200 Africans had been organised, chiefly in Marseilles and Bordeaux.  

Although the situation in England was seemingly even more prospective for radical agitation among the local African population, it proved to be much more challenging. The mobilization of Africans into associations was a slow process and few of them had been

---

61 This was also positively remarked by Adolf Schelley in his report to the RILU Secretariat, dated 24.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 95.
64 (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931-1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 124. See also Adi 2010, p. 239, although he, in my mind, downplays the role of the ISH and misses the complexity of the Comintern-Apparat.
politically active or were union members. On the other hand, there already existed a nucleus of radical organizations that aimed to mobilize African harbour workers and seamen. For a while there had existed only the Colonial Committee of the NMM, which had been founded in April 1930. The situation was to change in November 1931 when Fred Thompson called for a meeting of Negro seamen at the Interclub in London. Although only seven of them eventually turned up, a Negro Committee of the SMM was established and Jas (Jim) Headley was elected secretary. Thereafter, the organisational work among the African seamen in England was concentrated to the SMM. Huiswoud informed Padmore in January 1932 that the Anglo-American Section of the RILU had decided to nominate Jas Headley, whom he labelled “a Negro comrade in England,” to be responsible for the work and that he should head a Special Committee to coordinate work in England.

However, although Moscow had signalled its commitment to support the agitation and propaganda work among African and Caribbean seamen in Britain, neither the SMM nor the NMM devoted much energy to the question. Nevertheless, despite the lukewarm interest of the SMM, the Hamburg Committee was able to get a footing in Cardiff, Liverpool and London via its local affiliated associations. The activities did pay off: some 600 Negroes, i.e., Africans and African Caribbeans, were reported to have been recruited to the SMM by 1932. As in France, the Hamburg Committee was initially working through local organizations and contact persons: Jas (Jim) Headley and Chris Jones as well as Arnold Ward

---

65 See also Adi 2010, pp. 233-237, although he puts too much emphasis on the potentials of the ITUCNW, i.e., Ford and Padmore, to direct work in the UK.
67 Letter from Thompson to Padmore, 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 46-47. Jim Headley was a seaman from Trinidad (Adi 2010, p. 235). Other members of the SMM Negro Committee were D. Benson, A. Semon, R. Kirkland and C. Jones, see Report of third Negro committee meeting, SMM, 7.12.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 104. The Barbadian Chris Braithwaite (c.1885-1944), better known under his pseudonym Chris Jones, had been the organizer of Caribbean seamen in London and led the Colonial Seamen’s Association. He had come to Britain at the end of the war and had been an organizer for the National Union of Seamen (NUS) in the 1920s. Although he is said to have had some links with the CPGB during the early 1930s, his closest links were with the non-Communist Left, especially the Independent Labour Party activists. A detailed account on Chris Braithwaite/Jones and his political engagements is Christian Høgsbjerg, “Mariner, renegade and castaway: Chris Braithwaite, seamen’s organizer and Pan-Africanist,” Race & Class 53:2, 2011, pp. 36-57.
68 Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 6.1.1932 (stam), RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 34. Sherwood (1996, 154) mistakenly claims that the letter was written by Otto Hall.

While Arnold Ward became the key contact person for the Hamburg Committee, the relationship with Harry O’Connell and Chris Jones became strained in 1932. The background for the crisis had nothing to do with the activities of the ITUCNW but was caused by the fights within the SMM between Hardy and Thompson fractions. After the Altona Conference (see next chapter) the ISH decided to interfere and to send Richard Krebs as instructor on a special mission to reorganize work of the British harbour front in July 1932. Apart from forcing Hardy to resign, Krebs also tried to find a solution to the pathetic state of affairs in Cardiff and London. O’Connell, at this time belonged to the Hardy fractions, was criticized for blocking his followers to join the reorganized SMM section in Cardiff. A total break was avoided as Krebs threatened O’Connell at a meeting “either to stop his tricks or be kicked out” and the latter “promised to stop his tricks and work together with the rest.” One day later a conference was held in Cardiff where O’Connell was given the task of organizing colonial committees in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Barry as well as to organize groups of Negroes visiting ships. In addition, he was asked to make preparations for a district meeting of colonial seamen.

Chris Jones, on the other hand, was less fortunate. Krebs informed Albert Walter in early September that he had expelled Jones from the SMM and also asked for his expulsion from the CPGB. Krebs accused Jones for working as a police informant or at least on commission for the N.U.S. and for lending out money “at fabulous interest” to seamen. Jones, in an interview with Krebs, acknowledged on the other hand that he had received “certain instructions” from “a Negro comrade from Hamburg” and frankly refused to tell Krebs anything more. Jones was removed but whether the Hamburg connection led to any investigations by the ISH is not known as Krebs was arrested the same day (3.9.1932) he

---

70 The Negro Welfare Association had been formed by Chris Jones and Arnold Ward in 1931 (Høgsbjerg 2011, p. 44). Arnold Ward, born 1886 in Barbados, was the NWA secretary and one of Ford’s and Padmore’s key contact persons in England.


72 See further the various references in Richard Kreb’s personal file, including copies of intercepted letters and evaluation reports by the British police authorities, in TNA KV 2/1102. According to British intelligence – and obvious from the documentation – Krebs used the alias James Anderson while working in the United Kingdom.

73 Intercepted letter from Anderson [Krebs] to ‘Dear Friend’ [probably Albert Walter as the original letter was written in German], 23.8.1932, TNA KV 2/1102.

74 Intercepted letter from And[erson] to 'Dear Comrade’, 27.8.1932, TNA KV 2/1102. According to another intercepted letter, 20 Negro seamen participated in the Cardiff conference (of a total 200 participants).

75 Intercepted letter from And[erson] to Albert Walter [English translation], 3.9.1932, TNA KV 2/1102.
informed Albert Walter about the turn of events in England and was deported from the country.

The attempt to organize Black seamen and harbour workers under the SMM in England never materialized. Padmore was aware of the problems and suggested a merger between the Negro Committee of the SMM and the NWA. In this way, he envisioned, the NWA could be developed into a strong organization and as the British section of the ITUCNW. However, such hopes were futile. Headley returned to Trinidad in 1932 resulting in the collapse of activities of the SMM local branch in London. The SMM in Liverpool was paralyzed by the fights between the two fractions. Neither was Ward capable to develop the NWA into an effective organization.\(^{76}\)

Other projected centres of activities in Europe were Rotterdam and Antwerp. These ports were crucial for the connections with the Dutch Caribbean and the Belgian Congo. They were also major hubs and, not surprisingly, there existed an Interclub in both harbours. Instructions were given to their members to start to work among African seamen. In none of these locations, however, was there even the smallest ambition to engage with Africans. The Rotterdam-connection proved difficult to establish, even during Ford’s time,\(^ {77}\) while Padmore had no better success in engaging the Belgian Communist Party for establishing connections to the Congo and for engaging them in the work among African seamen.\(^ {78}\) Consequently, no organized African or African Caribbean connections existed by 1932.

More promising was the situation in Africa and the Caribbean. In Dakar a subcommittee of the ITUCNW (or rather, of Kouyaté’s UTN) had been established during the early part of 1932 and a local harbour workers’ unions with a membership of 210 had been inaugurated. In South Africa, at the same time, a Seamen’s and Harbour Worker’s Union had been created in Cape Town with the assistance of the local trade union. In Georgetown (British Guiana), the local Stevedores Union had even connected itself with the ITUCNW had had accepted its leadership.\(^ {79}\)

However, in spite of these promising starts, Padmore was rather critical about the cooperation with the ISH and its national sections. In his mind, all talks about mutual assistance were only lip service:

\(^{76}\) Adi 2010, p. 235.
\(^ {77}\) (Ford), ITUCNW Report 1930-1931, RGASPI 534/3/669, fol. 232.
\(^ {78}\) (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931-1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 124.
The ISH sections, in England SMM, in France and USA, have done little or nothing to facilitate the carrying on of our work thru their organisation. We have made repeated appeals to them during 1932 to help us to distribute our literature thru their clubs.\textsuperscript{80}

Padmore notified the RILU Secretariat that the only section in the USA that had made any attempt to render some practical assistance to the Hamburg Committee was the Seamen’s Club in New Orleans. On the other hand, through the Interclub there, connections had been established with Caribbean seamen. An embryo for a future Caribbean connection, therefore, seemed to be evolving.\textsuperscript{81}

Notwithstanding Padmore’s criticism of the weak cooperation between the ISH and the Hamburg Committee, any changes in the grand policy of the RILU about the strategic relationship between the ISH and the ITUCNW were ruled out. In a draft outline of guidelines for the ITUCNW in December 1932, any deviation from the ‘untied front from below’-tactics were ruled out and any or Padmore’s aspirations to distance the Hamburg Committee’s work among African and African Caribbean seamen from the ISH was ruled out:

The already established contacts and those which will be extended to the Negro seamen should be considered chiefly from the view point of the work of the latter in their native ports. On the basis of an agreement with the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers, they should be given concrete directives on the organisation of Marine transport workers and on conducting the mobilisation of the workers for the struggle for their day to day demand.\textsuperscript{82}

Especially the next paragraph can be read as Moscow’s criticism about the state of affairs – the ISH for being inactive, Padmore for trying to disengage the Negro seamen from the ISH and to develop a parallel network of his own:

In order to successfully conduct this work [i.e., the mobilisation of the Negro seamen, HW] it is necessary to establish closest relations between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH with its sections. The Negro Committee jointly with the ISH should write special appeals and leaflets, dealing with the

\textsuperscript{80} (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931-1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 127.
\textsuperscript{81} (Padmore), ITUCNW Report 1931-1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 127. In fact, according to a report by Comrade Dumay, the liaison person of the ISH in France, connection to the harbour workers in Dakar and Saint Louis in Senegal had already been established through Lamine Senghor. However, Senghor’s death in late 1927 caused the contacts to be broken and had been re-established by Kouyaté. See Rapport du camarade Dumay (des marins) sur la question coloniale, Moscou, 13.9.1930, RGASPI 534/5/217, fol. 49-55.
\textsuperscript{82} The International Negro Workers’ TU-Committee, dated [.].XII.32, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 155. The document seems to have been written in Moscow after Padmore had delivered his annual report for 1932 while he was in Moscow in November/December that year. It is likely that it was commissioned by the RILU secretariat.
problem of the Negro seamen, these leaflets should be widely distributed through the port clubs. The Negro seamen should be directly organised in sections, ship and port committees of the ISH. It must be noted that the Hamburg Committee should by no means try to isolate the Negro seamen and dockers from the revolutionary organisations and the ISH.\textsuperscript{83}

Consequently, the December 1932 statement once again underlined the decision of the Political Commission of the Comintern that the ITUCNW was not to be developed into a ‘Negro International’. Padmore, it seems, had started to deviate from the official line and was reminded about who made the decisions and who was to implement them.

3.3. The 1932 World Conference of the ISH in Altona

The ISH had been established by Moscow as an international organization. The October 1930 conference of marine workers in Hamburg was the first step for the ISH to establish itself as a transnational radical umbrella organization for the trade unions of maritime transport workers. Its subsequent conference, however, was one to call for a world congress that was to cement the position of the organization as a global player. The date for the congress was set to the latter half of May 1932 and it was to convene in Copenhagen.\textsuperscript{84} Officially, the congress was to be a “united front” affair, aiming to represent both communist and other leftwing and radical waterfront unions to underline the “independent” and nonpartisan character of the ISH. The congress delegates, therefore, were to reflect the complete equality that the ISH proclaimed, irrespective of race, colour or political creed. What the non-communist participants should not know – but at least the social democratic one rightly suspected – was that the congress had been carefully orchestrated and planned months in advance in the RILU headquarters in Moscow.\textsuperscript{85}

The planning for the ISH World Congress had started sometimes during late autumn 1931. At this time Ford was not anymore in Germany but had been replaced by Padmore who was to become a member of the preparing committee in Hamburg. Back in Moscow the RILU Budget Commission prepared an outline for the congress. Funds were needed to cover for 250 delegates to be invited for 5 days, and an additional 100 participants for 8 days. In total about 20,000 USD were budgeted to cover for the expenses of a total of 296 delegates. Less than a

\textsuperscript{83} The International Negro Workers’ TU-Committee, dated [.] XII.32, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 155.

\textsuperscript{84} Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, Vertraulich, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 33-35.

\textsuperscript{85} Valtin 1941, p. 313.
tenth were to be invited from Africa – the Commission proposed that a total of 10 delegates were to be invited from Africa; the travel costs of 540 USD for two delegates, one from Oran, the other from Sierra Leone, were to be covered by the ISH.\textsuperscript{86} Huiswoud informed Padmore about the decisions taken in Moscow for the preparations of the congress in the beginning of January 1932. He had participated in the meeting of a high-ranking steering committee in Moscow where the tasks of the Hamburg Committee and Padmore in relation to the ISH World Congress had been discussed. A proposal – perhaps by Padmore – about bringing only African seamen to the Congress and to establish Interclubs in Freetown and in Cape Town had been considered, but Huiswoud proposed that seamen and dockers from the Caribbean were to be invited as well and that an Interclub should be started in Curacao and another in Jamaica. Both proposals had been accepted. In addition, Huiswoud underlined that each of the delegations from England, France, Belgium and Holland should also include Negro members. Huiswoud further informed Padmore that Garan Kouyaté had been commissioned to present a report on the colonial question at the congress.\textsuperscript{87}

Although Huiswoud had not explicitly asked Padmore to make sure that the decision to include Negro delegates was implemented by the various national sections, it is reasonable to argue that Padmore must have felt this to be one of his central duties in the organizing committee of the congress. Perhaps Huiswoud remembered the harsh criticism about the amateurish and chaotic preparations of the July 1930 Hamburg Conference when he concluded his letter by underlining the importance of close cooperation not only between him and Padmore but also between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH:

\begin{quote}
Therefore it will be of utmost importance that we immediately begin to work out a programme of activities for this Congress. I suggest that you work out something jointly with the comrades of the I.S.H. and give us an idea of it.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

Part of the preparations for the upcoming ISH Congress was to sensitize African and Caribbean seamen and dockers about their plights and the need for them to cooperate under the umbrella of a radical platform. Already in the December 1931 issue of \textit{The Negro Worker} had Kouyaté published an article about organizing African seamen in France and where he outlined his dockside campaign among African sailors in Marseilles.\textsuperscript{89} The March 1932 issue

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Kostenvorschlag zum 1. Weltkongress der ISH, RGASPI 534/8/157, fol. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, (Moscow) 6.1.1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, (Moscow) 6.1.1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{89} G(aran) Kouyaté, "Black and White Seamen Organize for Struggle," \textit{The Negro Worker} I:12, 1931, pp. 19-20.
\end{itemize}
of *The Negro Worker* contained both another article by Kouyaté about his activities among the African seamen and the Interclub in Marseilles as well as an announcement of the forthcoming ISH World Congress.  

Finally, an appeal to Negro Seamen and Dockers was published in the April 1932 issue of *The Negro Worker*.  

The appeal had perhaps been drafted by Padmore but certainly circulated via the RILU Secretariat – another example of the close collaboration between the ITUCNW and the ISH.  

Meanwhile in Moscow, the RILU Negro Committee had started its arrangements for the ISH Congress. On 21 March, Alexander Zusmanovich wrote to Padmore about the preparations of the ISH Congress and informed him about the plans to convene a special meeting of Negro seamen during the congress. Zusmanovich asked him to prepare a special proposal regarding work among Negro seamen for the conference. Padmore was to send the draft version to Moscow for approval. In the same letter Zusmanovich also notified Padmore that the RILU Secretariat had accepted a resolution regarding the activities of the ISH among Negro Seamen.  

During the next month, the Bureau started to draft the resolution texts on the work among African seamen.  

Apart from the preparation of appeals, reports and proposals for the Congress, Padmore was engaged in the selection of Negro delegations. In late March he wrote a letter to the comrades at the ISH headquarters, informing them about his plans to travel to England. His aim was twofold: first, he wanted to clarify some organisational problems that existed there; second, to prepare a Negro delegation to attend the ISH Congress. His problem, however, was that he did not have any funding for the trip and requested financial assistance from the ISH.  

Padmore certainly travelled to England in April. He visited Liverpool and is said to have made an appearance at Poplar Town Hall in London’s Docklands.  

---  

92 Wilson (1974, pp. 224-225) notes the efforts of the ISH to recruit African followers but does not establish the close collaboration between the ISH and the Hamburg Committee.  
93 This is indicated by Otto Huiswoud’s inquiry to Padmore whether he had received a copy of the appeal and if he had it printed. Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124.  
94 Letter from Mansy to “my dear friend”, 21.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 178. Mansy was a pseudonym of Zusmanovich. The content of the letter indicates that Padmore was the recipient of it.  
96 It is likely that Padmore was referring to the fighting between Hardy and Thompson which had led to a standstill in the operations of the SMM, the Interclubs and had made the work of the Negro Committee of the SMM almost impossible. See further Sherwood 1996, 153-154.  
98 The only reference to Padmore’s visit to England (Liverpool) I have come over is in his letter to the LAI Secretariat, dated 16.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 160.
latest, he must have been back in Hamburg for two reasons. First, on 7 May 1932, Ada Wright, the mother of one of the Scottsboro Boys, and Louis Engdahl, the general secretary of the International Labor Defence, disembarked at Hamburg. This was their first stop on their European speaking tour that was part of the international campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys. Both of them were invited to speak at the forthcoming ISH Congress.¹⁰⁰

Second, in contrast to the original plan, on short notice the congress had to be relocated to Hamburg. Not surprisingly, the Danish authorities had not approved to the application of the ISH to convene its congress in Copenhagen. The organizers then had to find a replacement and in the end managed to convince the local authorities in Altona, one of Hamburg’s suburbs but administratively part of Prussia¹⁰¹, to give their backing for the venue.¹⁰² As a consequence, Padmore had to be present in Hamburg when the various delegations arrived for the congress. According to Krebs, some delegates even arrived three weeks before the event, arriving by train, by airplane, by passenger liner or, in the most likely case that one had not a valid passport or visa, as stowaways. Nevertheless, compared to the ITUCNW Conference in July 1930, the ISH Congress was a well-organized event. A reception committee received the delegates who were then supplied with private quarters, food, money and entertainment. The Congress itself was a typical masquerade by the Comintern: although the overwhelming majority of the delegates were non-communist, the


¹⁰⁰ James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybaker, and Eve Rosenhaft, “Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934,” *The American Historical Review* 106:2, 2001, p. 23. According to Miller, Pennybaker and Rosenhaft, Ada Wright addressed the ISH Congress. However, as they also note, there is no remark about her presence at the congress in the local police correspondence and reports. On the other hand, Richard Krebs recalled that Louis Engdahl spoke on ”International Solidarity” at the Congress – although, according to Krebs, his speech had been written by Willi Münzenberg! (Valtin 1941, p. 314). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Ada Wright and Louis Engdahl participated at the congress – both are listed as participants of the American delegation (Der Polizeipräsident Altona-Wandsbek an Herrn Oberpräsidenten der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein, 1.7.1932. Betrifft: Kongress der „International of Sea men and Harbour Workers“ vom 21. – 24.5.1932, 1.Teilnehmerliste, LAS Abt. 301 Nr. 4533). According to the ISH Congress Report, Ada Wright was elected to the Presidency of the Congress. In addition, the publication also contains a photo of her, sitting amidst the Negro Delegation. See (ISH), *De internationale Søtransportarbejderes Verdens-Enhedskongres og dens Beslutninger!*, Copenhagen, s.a. (ca. 1930), pp. 4, 6.

¹⁰¹ The local authorities in Hamburg, too, were against the idea of hosting the congress in the town. ”Internationaler Kampfkongress gegen Krieg.” *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* XI:24, 1932, p. 568.

¹⁰² Kongress der ISH, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 75-76. The RILU Secretariat had calculated with the possibility of a negative reply from the Danish authorities and had urged the organizers to prepare an alternative plan if Copenhagen turned out to be impossible. Most important, the Secretariat underlined, was the legality of the congress: an illegal event was under no circumstances to be preferred. See §19, Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 35.
communists “fraction” or minority held a tight control over every meeting. In public, the congress downplayed the revolutionary aim of the ISH and the organizers were strictly ordered to make sure that the vocabulary of the proclamations and presentations did not arouse the suspicion of the police:

Auf keinen Fall soll in den Referaten und Resolutionen die konspirative Arbeit erwähnt werden, die es durch die Hafenbüros und durch die revolutionären Verbände der Wassertransportarbeiter zu führen gilt. Die Resolutionen müssen vom polizeilichen Standpunkte aus unanfechtbar sein. Politische Fragen, die in den einzelnen Resolutionen bezw. In speziellen Resolutionen (Kampf gegen Krieg) zu erörtern sind, sollen ebenfalls in gewerkschaftlicher Terminologie gehalten sein.

The above instructions were directed both to the local organizers as those in Moscow who had been commissioned to produce the various resolutions to be presented at the congress.

Despite police harassment and all sorts of difficulties, some 173 delegates from 30 nations finally made it to Altona where the Congress convened from 21-24 May 1932. While Krebs in his over-critical autobiography presented the Congress as a big fake, Richard Jensen regarded it as the peak of the revolutionary waterfront. Nevertheless, an immediate internal report was highly critical about the outcome of the Congress, not least about the limited participation from the colonies. It is not known how many Negro delegates eventually participated at the ISH World Congress, one photograph depicts at least eight Black persons but none of them can be identified. Apart from Padmore and Kouyaté there was at least O’Connell who was the leader of an international West Indian association centred in Cardiff and who was for a short period identified as a potential ally for the ISH. Kouyaté, who was one of the three keynote speakers at the conference, presented a report on the organization of the colonial marine transport workers’ fight for economic justice.

103 Valtin 1941, pp. 313-314.
104 §14, Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 35.
105 (ISH), De internationale Søtransportarbejderes Verdens-Enhedskongres og dens Beslutninger!, p. 1.
106 Valtin 1941, pp. 314-316.
107 Richard Jensen, En omtumlet tilvaerelse, Copenhagen: Fremad 1957; Nørgaard 1975, pp. 94-95.
108 Kongress der ISH, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 75-76. The American, English and Spanish delegations, in particular, were criticized for their weak performance at the Congress whereas the German organizers were blamed for the belated preparations of the venue.
109 (ISH), De internationale Søtransportarbejderes Verdens-Enhedskongres og dens Beslutninger!, 4.
110 Valtin 1941, 329. According to Krebs, one of the participants at the ISH congress was a Negro from Trinidad, whom Peter Martin identifies as the Sierra Leonean Foster Jones (Martin 2004, 192). While it is possible that Foster Jones participated at the congress, it is more likely that the person Krebs referred to was O’Connell.
111 (ISH), De internationale Søtransportarbejderes Verdens-Enhedskongres og dens Beslutninger!, p. 4; Protokoll des 1. Welt-Einheits-Kongresses der revolutionären Wassertransportarbeiter, Hamburg-Altona, 21-24. Mai 1932, LAS Abt. 301 Nr. 4533. Kouyaté held his speech was on the third day of the conference.
Thereafter, Padmore greeted the Congress in the name of the ITUCNW and stressed the importance of the mutual cooperation between the two organizations: “The ISH is in our opinion the only organization that can unify the Black and White toiling masses in their struggle against their oppressors and the imperialists!”

The Congress itself proceeded on two levels. On the one hand, large plenary sessions were held where a wide range of themes were discussed, such as living conditions onboard and demands for seven-hour working days, unjust working conditions and demands for a just salary. Another theme was the right to form unions and the right to strike onboard on ships, their techniques and under what circumstances one was to pursue a certain tactic. A third general theme was what positions were the seamen to take in a future conflict or even war; a fourth theme was the potential of the radicals for gaining more influence in unions that were controlled by the Social Democrats. On the other hand, far away from the public, meetings and conferences of various commissions were held behind the scenes where only the inner circle of the communists and trusted activists participated.

Among the commissions that were formed during the ISH Conference was the Colonial Commission. This commission discussed global issues and conditions, such as those in China, Japan, Korea, Dutch India, Latin America, and among the Negro workers. It also discussed a draft version of a resolution on the colonial work of the ISH. Typically for a communist congress, the draft version had been prepared in Moscow months before the congress commenced. As noted above, Padmore had received the text already in March. Pinpointing the slavery-like working conditions of the marine workers from colonial countries, the Resolution declared that as much as the ISH had to fight for the improvement of their working lot, equal payment and social benefits it had to participate in the fight against

---


114 The representatives on the Colonial Commission were Padmore (ITUCNW), Mason (RILU), Kouyaté (CGTU), Chang (China), O’Connell (England), Freeman (East India), Baye (Dakar), Nassam (Arab), Pansears (Belgium), Dias Juan (Portugal), Fuoco (Italy) and Kuni (Japan).


116 Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 34.
imperialism and in the struggle for national independence of the colonies. According to plan, the Congress unanimously adopted the Resolution.\footnote{ISH}, De internationale Søtransportarbejderes Verdens-Enhedskongres og dens Beslutninger!, p. 19.

According to Moscow’s instructions and officially under the instructions of the presidium of the Conference, the Negro delegation held a conference of their own under the auspices of the ITUCNW.\footnote{§15, Instruktionen für die Kommission zur Leitung des Internationalen Kongresses der ISH, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/5/232, fol. 35.} Apart from Padmore and Kouyaté, the other leading participants were Comrade Mason from the RILU, Comrade O’Connell from England and Comrade Nelson. In addition, the list of participants included one delegate from the USA (no name given) and perhaps a delegate from Dakar and one Arab – the latter two, however, were marked on the list with a question mark.\footnote{The question-marked delegates were Baye from Dakar and Nassam, referred to as Arab. Both of them had participated in the Colonial Commission.} The main purpose of the Negro conference was to discuss the work of the ITUCNW and the prospects for Negro work in France, England and in the colonies. In addition, the conference discussed the plan of sending a Negro delegation from the colonies to the next World Congress of the International Red Aid and the fifteenth anniversary of the USSR, both to be summoned in Moscow later in autumn 1932.\footnote{Programme for the Negro Workers Conference, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 114.}

Shortly after the Altona Conference, Padmore, Kouyaté and Mason had a four-day meeting about the practical organization of future work of the ITUCNW. On the agenda were the question of students, finance, publication and the forthcoming congress of the International Red Aid. With regards to the issue of sending students to Moscow, Padmore and Kouyaté asked Mason to demand from the Eastern Secretariat the permission for the ITUCNW to select and send students to Moscow. The comrades also proposed that most of the student were to be enlisted for short-term courses, i.e., for nine months. Only a few capable ones were to be selected for longer training. An important part of their training was to be practical and concrete: participating in the work of the RILU, gaining knowledge of trade union organisation and strike tactics. It was suggested that a batch of ten students should be selected for the first round, two each from Liberia, the Gold Coast, Haiti, British Guiana and East Africa. One of the potential students was even identified, namely Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta: “It is agreed upon that, since other students from East Africa are not available at present, Kenyatta and his companion be selected, so as to get at least a start for an inroad into E.Afr.”\footnote{Practical Decisions on the Discussions of the Int. Tr. Un. Comm., 23.-26.5.32 (no author), RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 111. The other prospective student from Kenya was Parmenas S. Mockerie, those from the Gold}
The next item on the agenda was the question of finance. Padmore argued that as the ITUCNW had been given the task to move from the stage of propaganda work to the stage of organisational work, the Hamburg Committee needed to have its own budget rather than relying on the approval from the RILU-Apparatus for all expenditures. It is not quite clear from the minutes if Padmore and Kouyaté envisaged a more independent position of the ITUCNW vis-à-vis the ISH or if the proposal was to strengthen the work of the Hamburg Committee in congruence with the ISH. Anyway, the meeting concluded that funds were needed for hiring a little office, for stamps and stationary, and for printing pamphlets, leaflets and membership cards. In addition, monthly subsidies were needed to cover for the salaries of an organiser until the Hamburg Committee became self-supporting as well as to cover for the travel expenses of those comrades coming to Hamburg and Paris and those who were travelling to and within the various colonies.122

Padmore’s and Kouyaté’s collaboration was further outlined when a decision was made to suspend the publication of the L’Ouvrier Nègre, the French version of the Negro Worker. Instead, Padmore was to supply Kouyaté articles and pictures from the Negro Worker that were to be translated into French and published in the Cri des Nègres, the journal of the LDRN.123

The final issue on the agenda was the forthcoming Congress of the International Red Aid. Padmore urged Mason to inform Moscow that the technical details for the colonial delegation had to be fixed by September. Delegates from the colonies could hardly be sent directly to Moscow but had to travel via Europe and stay there for a while. The plan was to invite 25 delegates from the following countries: Liberia, Nigeria, Gold Coast, South Africa, East Africa, Jamaica, Trinidad, British Guiana, Haiti, Panama Zone, Senegal, French Guiana, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Gabon, Dahomey, the Comoro Islands, Madagascar, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Belgian Congo. The listed colonies included all of Padmore’s and Kouyaté’s connections in the African Atlantic. If successful, Padmore proposed that a plenum of the Negro delegates under the auspices of the ITUCNW was to be held in Moscow after the Congress of the International Red Aid.124
3.4. Comrade Jones: An agent provocateur of the ITUCNW - and the ISH?

At best, the relationship between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH was one of mutual interdependence and close cooperation. The two institutions had similar aims and tasks: to spread Moscow’s propaganda among the seamen, to create radical cells and to establish a global communication network that enabled both Moscow and Hamburg to be in touch with the rest of the world irrespectively the watchful eyes of any government. However, the ideal goal proved difficult to realize in practice. Albert Walter and his organizations, the IPAC-Transport and its successor, the ISH, had already established a global network of cells and couriers, although none in the African Atlantic. Ford, and later also Padmore, were to fill this gap through their network among African and Caribbean seamen and workers. The crucial question, however, was who controlled the African Atlantic network? Where the African seamen who organized cells and served as courier part and parcel of the ISH or the ITUCNW network? Who gave orders to them and for whom did they work – Walter or Padmore? These underlying rifts between the Hamburg Committee and the ISH can at least to some extent explain the affray between Padmore and Walter in the Jones-affaire that was to cause some turmoil in Hamburg and Moscow in 1932. In the long run, the Jones-affaire also sheds new light on the reasons why Padmore distanced himself from the Comintern- and RILU-Apparatus and eventually resulted to his break with Moscow in 1933/34.

As noted above, Padmore had asked the ISH headquarters in late 1931, most likely in early December, to support Comrade Jones who was an African seaman stranded in Liverpool. The comrades at the ISH, however, had rejected Padmore’s request. What followed was a bitter letter by Padmore to Adolf Schelley as well as to Huiswoud. Why did Padmore react so vehemently? The answer is that Comrade Jones was not just an ordinary seaman from Africa but was at that time one of Padmore’s key currier and served as his agent provocateur in West Africa.

Almost nothing is known about Comrade Jones. According to Padmore, Jones was his oldest contact.\(^{125}\) The exact date for when Padmore and Jones had established their relationship is unclear. However, he must have been one of the most longstanding contacts of the Hamburg Committee as he was listed among cell of African seamen Ford had been able to establish onboard the S/S Jonathan C. Holt. E.F. Jones was listed by Ford as living at 95 Parliament Street, Liverpool, and was the contact person of the Hamburg Committee in

---

\(^{125}\) Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear comrades’, 16.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 160. Based on the contents of the letter, the recipient was most probably someone at the LAI headquarters in Berlin.
Among his first traces is an article in the April 1931 issue of *The Negro Worker* signed by “Foster Jones, a seaman, Freetown,” on working conditions in Sierra Leone. Another indirect comment on Jones is found in a letter by Arnold Ward, the leader of the Negro Welfare Association in London. In a cryptic correspondence written in May 1931, Ward notified Padmore that he had received a letter from Foster Jones in Liverpool making inquiries of a certain Nancy Cunard.

The traces that Foster Jones left of his activities in Africa and Europe during the latter part of 1931 and in 1932 seem to indicate that he was something else than an ordinary African seaman from Sierra Leone. It is even likely that it was Jones who had informed Ford about the existence and troubles of the Kroomen Seamen’s Club in Freetown. After Ford had notified Padmore about the potential for cooperating with the Kroomen Seamen’s Club, he had tried to get in touch with the leader of the opposition group of the organization – most probably being the same person who had contacted Ford, namely Foster Jones. Either Padmore or someone else at the RILU Negro Committee must have considered Foster Jones to be a trustworthy person, one that could be used for more demanding – clandestine – missions. At some point, Padmore contacted him, either directly or, more likely, through Ford: “After winning the confidence of this fellow, I gave him certain tasks to carry out, which he performed quite satisfactorily,” Padmore assured the LAI Secretariat in an account written in early May 1932.

Consequently, at least Padmore regarded Jones to be a very important and influential person,

one of the most active leaders on the West [African] coast. A fellow with a following. Our attitude towards him is being watched by the masses and will go a long way to influence them in their future attitude towards us.

The second sentence in Padmore’s letter referred to the ongoing troubles he had with the ISH in assisting Jones in his activities. Padmore issued a warning: if ‘we’, i.e., the ITUCNW and the LAI, were not able to render him full assistance, Padmore’s own influence in Africa was at stake:

---

128 Letter from Arnold Ward to George Padmore, 15.6.1931, RGASPI 534/7/50, fol. 93fp+bp.
We have spoken to quite a number of African comrades. They are in sympathy with us. But, - for a number of reasons, which we cannot go into at present moment, they seem not be very sure about our sincerity. And it is just because of this, that our work becomes so difficult. To disappoint one fellow, especially when he has mass contact may put a barrier in our way for a long time. Were we not so isolated from the mass movement, because of the distance, and the necessity of working through people like Jones, we would never have written you so pressingly on this matter.

The letter continues with a long paragraph about how Jones’ troubles had started. Padmore’s account, in addition to his correspondence with Fred Thompson in England, gives a clue about Foster Jones activities in 1931 and 1932.

Jones had been Padmore’s *agent provocateur* in West Africa in September 1931. Here he had tried to engage in propaganda activities in Sierra Leone, among other locales. On Padmore’s orders he had tried to organize a couple of mass meetings among the peasants in Sierra Leone in either late September or early October 1931. Not surprisingly, he soon run into troubles with the local colonial authorities and had to abort his mission. Most likely, he had also been commissioned by the ISH to assess the situation in Freetown about the possibilities to establish an Interclub in connection with the Kroomen Seamen’s Club.

Foster Jones returned to England in late October 1931. At this point he contacted Fred Thompson, the Secretary of the Seamen National Minority (SMM) in London, who sent him to Hamburg and ordered him to contact James Ford at the Interclub. Thompson’s notification to Ford about Jones’ arrival is a clear indication that at least the former had not been informed about the reshuffle at the Hamburg Secretariat. In Hamburg, he had run into Padmore, who must have just arrived in the city. The two of them consulted about the prospective for future ISH-work in Sierra Leone and armed with propaganda material Jones made his way back to England. However, he never made it back to West Africa as he run into troubles in Liverpool. News about his aborted mission and problems with the local authorities reached Padmore by the middle of November.

At first, Padmore tried to handle the matter by his own. In his first report from Hamburg to Otto Huiswoud, written on 16 November 1931, Padmore made an indirect reference to Jones and his troubles:

---

133 Letter from Thompson to Ford, London 31.10.1931, RGASPI 534/7/50, fol. 162.
134 Foster Jones’ visit to Hamburg in November 1931 is documented by a photograph published in the October-November 1931 issue of *The Negro Worker*, titled “Comrade Foster Jones greeting a meeting of German workers in Hamburg.” As the journal was edited in Hamburg but usually went quite late to the publisher, the photograph could have been taken at that time.
Our connections with West Africa are gradually improving. The most reliable contact [i.e., presumably Jones, HW] was here 2 weeks ago and received instructions and material for these parts. Yesterday we received a letter from him to the effect that he had been discovered and victimised. I have relied on him and sent instructions to Thompson of the S.M.M. to help him. He is a very good fellow whom we cannot afford to lose. He agreed to become our official organizer on the Coast.\(^{135}\)

The “good fellow” was Foster Jones as is evident from Padmore’s letter to Adolf Schelley:

> Two weeks after my arrival here [in Hamburg] the Negro seaman Jones came to us and made certain suggestions to help in building up the organisation in West Africa. We were not in a position to undertake this work at the time. On his way back to Africa, the comrade was victimised in Liverpool.\(^{136}\)

Naturally, Padmore also informed Thompson about Jones’ constrained situation.\(^{137}\) Thompson had at this point already corresponded with Jones who had presented him the plan for future activities of the ISH in Sierra Leone:

> In Com Jones’ communication to me from Liverpool, he speaks of finance in connection with the project in Freetown and I have asked him to give a more explicit proposal than the one he advances. When this is to hand, I will again take the matter up with yourself and Comrade Walter.\(^{138}\)

Most likely, the project in Freetown must have concerned the Kroomen Seamen’s Club and Thompson was eager to find a ship that could transport him back to Sierra Leone as soon as possible in order to realize his plan. Meanwhile, Thompson informed Padmore that he asked Jones to establish a secure connection for the transfer of subversive materials from Liverpool to Georgetown in South Africa.\(^{139}\) Padmore immediately sent a positive reply to Thompson and informed him that the financial matters regarding the Sierra Leone project were to be dealt with by the comrades in Hamburg. In addition, Jones had been invited to visit him in Hamburg to discuss the proposition in greater details. However, Jones had no money at his disposal to cover for his maintenance in Liverpool and therefore Padmore asked Thompson to

---

\(^{135}\) Letter from Padmore to Huiswoud, Hamburg 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 121.


\(^{137}\) Letter from Padmore to Thompson, Hamburg 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 157-158.

\(^{138}\) Letter from Thompson to George Padmore, 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 46.

\(^{139}\) Letter from Thompson to George Padmore, 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 47.
back him up: “you should send him what money you have on hand on our account, in order to enable him to keep the wolf from the door.”

At this point Padmore must have raised the question about Jones and the planned mission to West Africa with the leadership of the ISH. Padmore raised the idea that Jones should be commissioned and paid by the ISH for their attempt to establish an Interclub and an ISH section in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Adolf Schelley, at least, seems to have backed the idea and proposed to the RILU Secretariat that Jones should be nominated as ISH Instructor for West Africa. Jones was to be transferred to Hamburg for a three to four weeks training course at the ISH headquarters and the Interclub before departing on his mission.

Much to Padmore’s dismay, the ISH leadership rejected his plan and Schelley’s application. With no financial resources at his disposal Jones was having a rough time in Liverpool and could not find a way to sneak over to Hamburg. Only in early December had Thompson been able to send him some financial assistance - £1. Padmore, too, had sent him some money (£3) to help him to find a job but this transfer never reached Jones. A few days later, on the 11th of December, Thompson informed Padmore about a new turn of events – Jones had left Liverpool and was on his way to London:

I have just had a letter from Comrade Jones, stating that it is not possible for him to get to Hamburg from Liverpool, so he is leaving Liverpool for London on Saturday (to-morrow) morning. It will be difficult to ship him from here without fare, but of course we shall do our best in this direction, but I should be glad if you could send the cash necessary to get him over, as the work involved in the attack on the dockers here has left us completely broke and well in debt. However, you can rest assured that we will try and get him away and if not successful in this, we will see that he is alright until you can send the cash or I can raise.

However, neither Padmore nor Thompson was ever able to find a solution for the Sierra Leonean fellow’s transport to Hamburg. On the same day Thompson wrote his letter had Padmore received the shocking news that the ISH turned the proposal down. Padmore was furious:

---

140 Letter from Padmore to Thompson, 23.11.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 163.
142 Letter from Adolf to “Werte Genossen,” Hamburg, 24.11.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 84-98. The recipient of the letter was most likely the RILU Secretariat.
144 Letter from Padmore to Thompson, 11.12.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 175; letter from Thompson to Padmore, 28.12.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 122.
It is unfortunate that we had to disappoint him. The ISH had instructed me to inform him that they had planned to bring him to Hamburg in order to discuss plans for the work in West Africa. But the ISH has not lived up to its promise.\(^{146}\)

Padmore aired his disapproval with the ISH leadership in a harsh letter to Adolf Schelley. In his mind, the ISH had totally misunderstood his intentions and misjudged the possibility to open an avenue to West Africa. The issue, Padmore notified Schelley, was not a question of asking for a general support for the ITUCNW but a specific request of assistance in a particular case:

I want to say right now that you comrades have misunderstood either accidentally or intentionally the propositions which I brought before the ISH. The Negro Committee never ask the I.S.H. for finances for work of a general character. [...] (Comrade Jones) wrote stating he was prepared to devote all of his time to build a section of the I.S.H. – not the Negro Committee. [...] I state all of these facts clearly because your letter to me conveys the impression that the Negro Committee is asking the I.S.H. for money to do the Negro Committee’s work, which is not the question. [...] It will therefore be necessary for me to put this matter straight before the comrades in M[oscow], for your letter to me creates the impression that matters have been misrepresented over there.[---]\(^{147}\)

Padmore suggested to Shelley – and perhaps also to the comrades in Moscow – that if the ISH had no use for Comrade Jones, the Hamburg Committee itself eagerly wanted to use him for its work in West Africa.\(^{148}\) It is likely that Padmore sent a copy of the letter to Huiswoud as the latter a few months later inquired from Padmore if the report to the ISH had resulted in any actions at all. “I want to raise a number of these questions here but would rather my proposals on actions taken on your side.”\(^{149}\) If such actions were ever taken is not known.

The Jones-affaire did not end with the negative response from the ISH. What happened next is somewhat unclear. Padmore reported to Thompson that he had urged Jones to try and get hired on a ship. In the meantime, he assured Jones that the question of his taking up the work allotted to him had been settled by the time he returned to England.\(^{150}\) Thompson, on the other hand, recalled that it had been his idea to send Jones away:

---

\(^{146}\) Letter from Padmore to Thompson, 11.12.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 175.
\(^{147}\) Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade Adolf’ [Shelley], Hamburg, 10.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 132.
\(^{148}\) Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade Adolf’ [Shelley], Hamburg, 10.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 133.
\(^{149}\) Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, (Moscow) 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124.
\(^{150}\) Letter from Padmore to Thompson, 11.12.1931, RGASPI 534/6/18, fol. 175.
It was certainly on my advice that Com Jones took the ship, for I should have found extreme difficulty in keeping him over an extended period. As you are aware, I got in touch with him as soon as he got to Liverpool and sent him £1 there, in order that he could carry on until he heard definitively from you, but to my surprise, he came straight on to London. [...] In these circumstances, and realising from your former letter that some time must elapse before final preparations could be made to get him into action, I asked one of the Comrades here to get him a ship for a short voyage and this was done. This course was determined mainly by considerations of economy.\footnote{Letter from Thompson to Padmore, 28.12.1931, RGASPI 534/5/223, fol. 122.}

Whether or not Padmore had directed Jones to get out of England, he was capable of staying in touch with him for the next few months. He used him as his special envoy to Nigeria at least two times, first in January or early February 1932, the second time in late March or early April 1932.\footnote{Reference to Jones in letter from J. Galba-Bright to Padmore, 6.2.1932, and from I.T.A. Wallace-Johns on to Padmore, 7.4.1932, both in RGASPI 534/7/74, fol. 47-48 and fol. 54-59.} For a while Padmore believed he had lost contact with Jones or at least feared that he had disappeared from the scene, as he pointed out in a letter to J. Galba-Bright in Nigeria. His disappearance, Padmore supposed, might be due to his clandestine activities and the harassment by the colonial authorities: “There is an old saying which runs, “once burnt, always shy”.”\footnote{Letter from Padmore to J. Galba-Bright, 3.4.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 71.}

However, Jones had not disappeared but had moved on to the Belgian Congo. He contacted Padmore and informed him about the urgency of managing “some organisational work” there and asked Padmore to assist him. Padmore, on the other hand, reasoned that enthusiasm was not enough and was convinced that Jones needed some political training. He therefore suggested to Jones that if he got an opportunity of getting a ship to drop him at a European port, he would try to make it possible for him to get this training within 9 months or a year and then to turn back to Africa. To Padmore’s big surprise, Jones wrote him a few months later from Liverpool, telling him that he was back in England but being (again) without any money to continue his journey to Hamburg – not to speak about the needed funds and to proceed to Moscow. At this stage, Padmore turned to the comrades at the LAI Secretariat in Berlin and asked them to assist the fellow and to make sure that he could proceed to Moscow.\footnote{Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear comrades’, 16.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 160.}

Padmore’s correspondence with the LAI Secretariat in May 1932 in connection with the Jones affaire was due to a decision in November 1930 that matters concerning the selection and transfer of African students were to be handled only by the LAI. In Padmore’s
mind, he had a perfect candidate to be sent to Moscow. The crux of the matter was – once
again – that the rest of the Comintern Apparatus was incapable of handling a matter of
urgency. This at least is the impression one is left with after reading Padmore’s letters. While
he was still rather confident in the LAI’s capability of handling the matter in his first letter,
dated 5 May, he had already become anxious about Berlin’s silence one week later: “The
fellow has already written us 3 letters begging us to help him to beat it as soon as possible.
And yet still you comrades are dragging the matter out.” Although he received a few days
later a reply from Berlin, he insisted to underline both the urgency and the complicity of the
case:

We are glad to note that you have realised that the matter of Jones is an emergency situation. […] As
we have related to you, we don’t have a penny for this work. For when we demand our own
independent budget for the student matter, we are being told that the League has been charged with this
and all we have to do is to refer to you. This is why we brought this matter to your attention. Otherwise
we would have never.

At the time of writing his letter, Padmore was certainly right in claiming that the issue of
sending African students for training to Moscow was still the task of the LAI. This policy,
however, was soon to change, as will be discussed below in Chapter VII.5. On the other hand,
it is not known what happened to Jones. His last message to Padmore was that he wanted to
get out of Liverpool before the authorities picked him up. Where and when he left and what
happened to him is not known only that he most probably did not make it to Moscow. The last
reference to him is in a letter from I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson who told Padmore that Jones
should be sent to Nigeria but at the same time warned him about some weak spots of his
fellow:

I would like to advise that should Comrade Foster-Jones be coming to Nigeria – Lagos in particular, at
any time he be warned against certain folks that he associates himself with. I have received confidential
information to the effect that several gins have been set for him in Lagos and that the powers that
be[w]are utilising those so-called friends of his to foil him. […] Should he be visiting Lagos at any

---

Unfortunately, Jones correspondence with Padmore is not archived in the files I have so far been able to check in
the Comintern Archives.
time, kindly direct him to the above address when I shall be able to give him such informations that would be of assistance to him and to your Executive.\textsuperscript{159}

Padmore, it seems, had informed Wallace-Johnson about Foster Jones in a letter written on 15 June, i.e., about the same time when he wrote his last letter concerning Jones to the LAI. Sadly, however, of Comrade Jones there are no further traces.

4. Black assistance to Red Aid

Apart from organizations attached to the RILU-network, the ITUCNW was to collaborate with the International Red Aid, also known by its Russian acronym MOPR (\textit{Mezdunarodnoye Obshchestvo Pomoshchchi Revolucioneram}) or its German abbreviation IRH (\textit{Internationale Rote Hilfe}). Initially established as the International Society for Relief of Revolutionaries at the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern in 1922, the IRH\textsuperscript{160} emerged during the 1920s as an international “political Red Cross” organization. Its main goal was to render juridical and legal assistance to imprisoned Communists, to conduct campaigns for the support of communist and other political prisoners and to gather material and humanitarian support in specific situations, especially for families of persecuted communists.\textsuperscript{161}

The IRH had its forerunners in various national organizations for the assistance of imprisoned or killed communists and other radicals that had been established in the aftermath of the failed post-war revolutions in Germany and Hungary in 1919. Most, but not all of these Red Aid organizations were attached to the national communist parties; in the USA, for example, the forerunners of the International Labor Defence (ILD) were the National Defence

\textsuperscript{159} Letter from Wallace-Johnson to Padmore, 3.8.1932, RGASPI 534/3/756, fol. 59.

\textsuperscript{160} The use of the acronyms is confusing as both the Russian section of the IRA as well as the IRA itself were known in Russian by the acronym MOPR. The abbreviation IRA, on the other hand, is problematic, too, as it connotes with that of the Irish Republican Army. Therefore, I will use the German abbreviation IRH when referring to the organization in the text.

Committee and the Workers Defence Council both of which had been founded by pacifist rather than communist activists.\footnote{Brauns 2003, p. 29.}

In July 1924, when the IRH held its first world congress in Moscow, the organization had already 19 affiliated sections and claimed to have contacts in 19 other countries. At the Second World Congress of the IRH, held in Moscow in November 1932, the organization could boast of a impressive global outreach: 70 national sections and almost 14 million members.\footnote{IRH, Weltkongress der Internationalen Roten Hilfe, Moskau November 1932: Entschliessungen, Paris: Verlag der IRH 1932, p. 4; Brauns 2003, p. 29; Schilde 2003a, p. 60-61.} Most of the national sections were rather small and ineffective or had difficulties in operating at home, as was the case of the British International Class War Prisoners Aid, the Bulgarian Organization for Support to the Victims of the Capitalist Dictatorship or the Finnish Suomen Punainen Apu (Red Aid of Finland). Others were rather big and effective, such as the German Rote Hilfe Deutschland (RHD), the French Secours Rouge International or the ILD in the USA. However, although all national sections claimed to be “überparteilich”, i.e., not tied to a national communist party, or nonpartisan – the RHD, for example, stated that only some 40 percent of its members were members of the KPD – most of them continuously received financial assistance from the biggest and largest section of the IRH, the MOPR.\footnote{Schilde 2003a, pp. 62-63. In 1932, the MOPR had some 5.5 millions members, followed in size by the German and Chinese sections of the IRH.}

The IRH was a highly hierarchical organization. Its headquarters was in Moscow, headed by a Central Bureau and a Central Commission. The first President of the Central Commission was Julian Marchlewski who due to his illness was replaced in 1925 by Clara Zetkin. Her closest aid was Elena Stasova (1873-1966) who since 1927 was the head of the MOPR and the acting president of the IRH. For longer periods, Stasova was effectively in charge of the IRH headquarters in Moscow and replaced Zetkin at the top of the IRH in 1933. Other influential members of the Central Commission of the IRH were Wilhelm Pieck, the head of the RHD,\footnote{Pieck replaced Stasova as President of the IRH in 1937 and remained in charge until the final collapse of the IRH in 1941.} and Willi Budich.\footnote{Brauns 2003, p. 29; Schilde 2003a, p. 60. Stasova was a very important and influential Bolshevik who was very familiar with the societal conditions in Central Europe during the 1920s. Born in Russia, leading member of the Bolsheviks and one of the organizers of the Congress of the Toilers of the East in Baku in 1920. Thereafter, she was sent to Germany where she lived in Berlin, pro forma married to the German Ernst Wilhelm. She was nominated as the German representative at the Comintern in 1921 and had been a leading member of the RHD, whose representative she was at the IRH in Moscow. See further Elena Resch, “Genossin Absolut” – Biographische Skizze Jelena Stassowas,” in: Die Rote Hilfe. Die Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen “Wohlfahrtsorganisation” und ihrer sozialen Aktivitäten in Deutschland (1921-1941), eds. Sabine Hering & Kurt Schilde, Oplanden: Leske + Budrich 2003, pp. 185-199.} The latter was the Secretary of the German Section at the IRH (since 1923/24) and was one of Stasova’s close aides and, after his return to
Germany in 1929, a central figure at the IRH and IRD bureaus in Berlin during the early 1930s. Another important member was J. Louis Engdahl (1884-1932), who had been appointed by the CPUSA as National Secretary of the ILD in 1929 and became a member of the Presidium of the IRH. After his death in 1932, William Patterson took over Engdahl’s positions in the ILD and the IRH. Patterson was also a member of the Executive Committee of the IRH. This unit also consisted of members representing associated organizations, one of them being George Padmore as the representative of ‘Negro Organizations’, i.e., the ITUCNW.

The collaboration between the IRH and the ITUCNW was essential in two particular cases, the Congresses of the International Red Aid and the Scottsboro campaign. Apart from that, the IRH had already been involved in the activities of the ITUCNW in 1930 when its representative, Willi Budich, participated in the Hamburg Conference. While it seems that the relationship between James Ford and the IRH remained lukewarm due to Budich’s harsh criticism of the amateurish execution of the Hamburg Conference, a closer collaboration between the Hamburg Committee and the IRH commenced when Padmore took over in Hamburg. Padmore had been in touch with Stasova when he was working in Moscow and the two of them had communicated about developing cooperation between the two organizations. After his arrival in Germany in November 1931, he had a meeting with

---

167 Engdahl died of pneumonia while visiting Moscow in November 1932.

168 Other associated organizations that were represented on the Executive Committee (EC) of the IRH were, among others, the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, the LAI, the RILU, the Sportintern, and the ISH. I have not yet been able to establish the exact date for Padmore’s membership of the EC of the IRH, but it is likely that it was not later than 1932. He certainly must have left his position when he was expelled from the CPUSA and the ITUCNW in 1934. Padmore’s position at the EC of the IAH is revealed in a protocol by Pieck from March 1938 where the reorganization and exclusion of former members of the Presidium and EC of the IRH was discussed. A photocopy of the protocol is available in Brauns 2003, p. 306-307.

169 RGASPI 534/3/614, fol. 74, Vertraulich 37. Ek.Nr.i57. 2 Ex.Sekr. I.X.31 (copy, typewritten). This is a note by Padmore where he stressed the need of collaboration between the LAI, the International Red Aid and the ITUCNW.

170 I have so far found one example of Padmore’s engagement with the IRH while he was in Moscow. In January 1931, the LAI headquarters in Berlin had received a letter from M. De Leon, who was a functionary of the Jamaican trade union and had participated at the July 1930 Hamburg Conference, asking them for assistance in a case where two local African Caribbean activists of the Jamaican Committee for the Protection of the Natives ("Komitee zur Verteidigung der Eingeborenen"), Watson and Bethume, had been arrested. The LAI Secretary Chattophadhyaya thereafter turned to Moscow and asked for instructions from the IRH Secretariat. In Moscow, Stasova asked Padmore to investigate both the case and the objectives of the Jamaican association. In his report, Padmore argued that the Jamaican Committee was not a revolutionary organization but only defending the interests of the local petty-bourgeoisie but recommended that further information was needed about the group before a final decision could be made as to support them or not. In a second letter from the LAI Secretary Smeral to Stasova, he confirmed that it was a petty-bourgeois group and therefore not qualified for IRH support. On the other hand, Smeral argued that the IRH still should assist the two imprisoned persons. (Letter from NN to Genosse Smeral, 28.2.1931 and Smeral’s answer, filed 22.3.1931, RGASPI 539/2/432, fol. 1-4.) Padmore’s role in the case was that of an expert: his unit, the Negro Committee of the RILU, was regarded as the central intelligence unit for Africa and the Caribbean.
Budich resulting in a normalization of the relationship between the two organizations.\(^{171}\) Thereafter, at least in theory, the comrades in Moscow expected a fruitful cooperation in the future and at least Padmore regarded the IRH Bureau in Berlin to be the first address where to call in times of troubles. The IRH, on the other hand, realized that the Hamburg Committee was a useful tool for its international operations, especially in its attempt to establish cells in the radical African Atlantic.

4.1. Connecting people: enlisting participants for IRH congresses

The IRH’s aspiration to engage the ITUCNW in the preparations of its international congresses was articulated both in 1931 and in 1932. In October 1931, the IRH planned to organize a congress or meeting in Berlin. It is likely that the IRH European Bureau in Berlin had contacted Ford and asked for his assistance in enlisting participants from West and South Africa to the congress. Ford contacted the Negro Committee of the RILU in Moscow about the matter. He himself had already been communicating with “the comrades in West Africa” about to possibility of sending a delegate to the congress, which they accepted and informed Otto Huiswoud about the plan.\(^{172}\) In Moscow, Huiswoud contacted the headquarters of the IRH, informing them about Ford’s activities but notified that it was impossible to get a delegate from South Africa due to the authorities’ travel restrictions. However, Huiswoud informed the IRH that there was a South African comrade in Moscow – most likely referring to Albert Nzula – who could be sent as a delegate to the congress. In addition, Huiswoud suggested that the invitation was also to be sent to the trade unions in British Guyana and in Jamaica. Huiswoud was not sure if they were to accept the invitation as he had little contact with these organizations.\(^{173}\) Attached to his note was an outline of an invitation letter to the congress of the Red Aid written by him.\(^{174}\) If Nzula ever participated in the congress is not known. Ford certainly did not as he had already left Germany.

One year later the IRH was planning to organize its second international congress in Moscow in November 1932. Once again the Hamburg Committee was asked to participate in the preparation of the congress by selecting a delegation from Africa. Elena Stasova informed

\(^{171}\) Original letter from NN to ‘Hertha’, dated Berlin 1.11.1931, RGASPI 539/2/425, fol. 1. Hertha was one the aliases of Elena Stasova who was also known as Comrade Absolut.

\(^{172}\) This letter has not yet been located but the content of the letter is summarized in Huiswoud’s letter to the International Red Aid, dated 13.9.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 110.


\(^{174}\) (Outline of Letter), RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 111. The outline is not signed but the handwritten corrections on the document are in similar hand writing as Huiswoud’s.
Padmore about the plans and asked for his cooperation in February 1932. The aim of the IRH was to establish “a solid base in Black Africa” by making use of Padmore’s and the ITUCNW’s connections there. Interestingly, the IRH Secretariat in Moscow was even planning to write a special report on work among the ‘Negro masses’ and asked Padmore to “send us some information material you may have on this subject and also your opinions in the shortcomings and tasks of the IRH among the Negro toilers.” Further, Padmore was urged to send to the Agit-Prop Department of the IRH about “white terror in Black Africa.” Last, but not least, Stasova asked Padmore to write a fifteen-page pamphlet “What is the Red Aid?” for special distribution in Africa.\footnote{Letter from Stassova to Padmore, (Moscow) February 1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 122.} Three months later the Executive Committee of the IRH officially asked the ITUCNW to participate in the Congress and commissioned Padmore to write an article on ‘The Persecution against the Negro masses and the World Congress of the IRA’.\footnote{Letter from Internationale Rote Hilfe, Exekutiv Komitee, to Padmore, Moskau 23.5.32, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 92.}

Padmore tried his best to gather a delegation from Africa to the IRA World Congress. Although he failed to attract Kobina Sekyi, one of the leading members of the Gold Coast Aboriginal Right’s Protection Society, to come to Moscow,\footnote{On Padmore’s and Sekyi’s correspondence, see Rhodie 1965, p. 396. Sekyi, known as one of the leading nationalists in the Gold Coast, had already been in contact with another front organization, the LAI, in 1927, see Part One.} he managed to enlist several of his African contacts, among others Jomo Kenyatta, I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and Joseph Bilé.\footnote{See further Chapter VII.5.} The gathering of a delegation from the African Atlantic was once again part and parcel of the political programme of the Comintern to organize a Negro sub-conference in conjunction with world congresses. In comparison to the special session at ISH World Congress at Altona, the Negro summit at IRH World Congress in Moscow could have marked a turning point in Padmore’s and the ITUCNW’s global activities as so many of his trusted allies had turned up. However, any of the future projections that were outlined in Moscow in November 1932 became obsolete a few months later with the collapse of activities in Hamburg due to the political changes in Germany.

4.2. Visions about IRH Sections in Africa

Similar to the Comintern and the RILU, the IRH had started to focus on the Colonial Question in the late 1920s. The Executive Committee of the IRH at its Second International Conference
in 1927 projected that work should start among the colonies and ‘half colonies,’ such as China and India. In a resolution, the IRH demanded the abolishment of all kinds of special conditions and states of emergency that prohibited political and anticolonial activities and underlined the need to render assistance to political prisoners in the colonies and half-colonies. At its Third Plenum in April 1931, the EC of the IRH issued another resolution, highlighting the need for concrete activities in the colonies and urging the metropolitan sections to combine their activities at home with those in the colonies. 

While there had been some progress concerning IRH activities in the colonies, the Second World Congress of the IRH in 1932 provided a rather bleak picture of the IRH’s effectiveness in South Africa, Madagascar, China, Syria, the Philippines, and some locales in Latin America. As a result, the Congress issued a new resolution. According to the 1932 Resolution, the colonial work of the IRH was to be conducted on three levels. On the top level, i.e., the EC of the IRH in Moscow, the Colonial Secretariat was to be strengthened and to establish close cooperation with the other revolutionary organizations that have a special focus on the colonial question, namely the LAI, the RILU, the ITUCNW and the IAH. In addition, a close cooperation with the ISH was needed so that the connections between the IRH centre and its colonial affiliations could be established.

The second level of the colonial work was to be conducted in the colonial metropolis. Each of the metropolitan sections of the IRH, namely the British, French, American, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Canadian, were either to establish colonial sections or strengthen their work. The resolution more or less repeated the list of duties that had already been established in 1931, namely 1) to organize anticolonial and anti-imperialistic campaigns, 2) to establish contacts with the colonies, 3) to send agitators and instructors to the colonies, and 4) to disseminate propaganda in the form of pamphlets, brochures and bulletins. Special attention was also to be given to work among colonial seamen and colonial workers residing in the metropolitan countries and their organizations – as to underline that this still had not been forthcoming on a general level. Another task, which was special to the IRH, was

181 IRH 1932, p. 4; Brauns 2003, p. 48-49.
183 Resolution über die Arbeit der IRH in den kolonialen und halb-kolonialen Ländern (1932), 50. Interestingly, the 1931 Resolution mentioned only the LAI as a partner organization.
that the metropolitan sections were to enlist lawyers to be used in law cases against ‘imperial terror’. 184

The third level of operation was the colonial one. The Resolution criticized the existing IRH cells and groups in the colonies for being too small, ineffective and, most of all, for not being mass-organizations adhering to the IRH statutes. Most of the groups, it was noted, comprised of only a few members, and were urged to enlarge their basis to include workers, peasants and students. All of the existing groups, after having emerged into true mass-organizations, where to be affiliated to the IRH as collective members. The goal, the Resolution underlined, was to launch mass-actions against ‘imperial terror’ in the colonies; this goal could only be achieved through mass-agitation, not though the activities of a few individuals. Indirectly, it seems, the Resolution outlined the formation of several new sections: a Chinese, an Indo-Chinese, an Indian, an Arabic/North African, an African and a Latin American one. Some of these already existed; others were in the formative process. The African work of the IRH, the Resolution finally declared, was to be directed through the special Resolution on Work among the Negro Toilers, which had also been approved by the Congress. 185

Of key importance was the work among the toilers in the African Atlantic. Here, the key document was the instructions that the IRH Secretariat had issued in November 1930. The key objective of the IRH, the resolution stated, was to render its assistance to the fight for freedom of the Black workers on the basis of international solidarity and inter-racial cooperation. 186 Interestingly, the November 1930 Resolution of the IRH was approved shortly after the visit of the African delegation at the Fifth World Congress of the RILU in Moscow.

The 1930 November Resolution of the IRH echoed the then existing global approach to the ‘Negro/Colonial Question’, namely to portray the African Atlantic as a single entity. Segregation, racism, lynching, ‘white terror’, imperial slavery or colonial exploitation marked the daily life of African Americans, African Caribbeans and Africans throughout the Atlantic world. Interestingly, by addressing the conditions in the USA, the West Indies, South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the 1930 November Resolution made an effort to interpret the Negro and Colonial Question from a racial rather than a class perspective – perhaps not intentionally as it highlighted the African/Negro aspect as a common nominating

184 Resolution über die Arbeit der IRH in den kolonialen und halb-kolonialen Ländern (1932), pp. 54-56.
factor. On the other hand, such a perspective was in line with the IRH call for international solidarity “among all toilers in the work irrespectively colour”.  

Further, similar to other organizations in the Comintern-Apparatus, the Resolution underlined that Negro work was to be conducted both by IRH-sections in the various colonies as well as by the metropolitan sections of the IRH. In 1930, such activities were noted among the ILD, the SRI, the South African section and in some Caribbean and Latin American countries and colonies.

At this point, however, the major parts of the connections to be established were either weak or non-existent. For example, the November 1930 Resolution claimed of existing links to workers organizations in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Such ‘links’ clearly existed as representatives from these three countries either had visited Moscow during the previous month, i.e., E.F. Small and Frank Macaulay, or had participated at the ITUCNW Conference in Hamburg in July 1930, but is questionable if any of these persons were aware of the fact that their engagement with the ITUCNW had also resulted in them being the West African connections of the IRH. Another interesting point of the resolution text is the discussion about the need to organize the Negro workers in Brazil as to develop the national Red Aid into an interracial organization – no other Comintern organization had ever issued even considered the Black population of Brazil in their observations!  

The November 1930 Resolution of the IRH on work among Negroes was in its essence a parallel attempt with the ITUCNW to organize the workers under the banner of international solidarity, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in the African Atlantic. The mutual cooperation between the two organizations was officially underlined via declarations of support of the others activities and actions: the ITUCNW had signalled its link to the IRH via its resolution on the IRH in July 1930, the IRH through the November 1930 Resolution. Not surprisingly, however, both resolutions had been prepared in Moscow.

The task of activating and organising the Negro toilers in the African Atlantic for the Red Aid was given to the various national and metropolitan sections. Consequently, the sections in the various European colonial metropolises were to focus both on work among the Negro population at home as well as in their colonies. The ILD, on the other hand, was to

---

engage both with the Negro question in the ‘Black Belt’ as well as to support the work of the Red Aid in the Caribbean and Latin American countries.\textsuperscript{190}

National sections in those metropolitan countries that had no colonies were not exempt from the call of focusing on the Colonial Question. This was especially the case of the RHD in Germany and its section in Hamburg, which was urged to support the fight of the Negro toilers in the African Atlantic. Apart from supporting the work of the ITUCNW, the local sections of the RHD were asked to establish contact with Black sailors, workers and students, not least through the cooperation of the German section of the \textit{Ligue de la Defence de la Race Negre}, the \textit{Deutsche Sektion der Liga zur Verteidigung der Negerrasse} (DSLVN) in Berlin. If, however, the anticipated affiliation of the DSLVN to the RHD in 1931 was ever finalized remains unclear.\textsuperscript{191}

The cooperation between the RHD, the DSLVN and the ITUCNW started in 1931 when James Ford from the ITUCNW and Wilhelm Mumuné and Joseph Bilé from the DSLVN were engaged in the campaign against terrorizing and lynching African Americans, above all in the international Scottsboro Campaign (see below). Although some activities were reported in 1931, the relationship between the RHD and the Hamburg Committee was lukewarm and cordial at best. After Padmore’s arrival in Hamburg in late 1931, the situation changed and close cooperation between the two organizations took off. A further step was taken in June 1932 when the Executive Committee of the IRH decided to organise a Negro Department. The French Sub-committee of the ITUCNW and the \textit{Secours Rouge International} (SRI), the French section of the IRH, had started to cooperate and had established contacts between the SRI and some French colonies in Africa. As a consequence, the IRH asked Padmore to help the English and Belgian sections of the IRH in their attempts to establish contacts in their respective colonies in order to create Red Aid Committees and Sections there.\textsuperscript{192}

The positive development of the IRH’s focus on the African Atlantic was praised in the \textit{Resolution on Work among the Negro Toilers} that was adopted by the Second World Congress of the IRH in November 1932.\textsuperscript{193} Most positively, a Negro Department had been set up under the EC of the IRH. In addition, the Resolution instructed the IRH to continue the cooperation with other organizations engaged in Negro work: the RILU Negro Committee,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{190} Resolution des Sekretariats der IRH über die IRH-Arbeit unter den Negern (3.11.1930), pp. 197-198.
\bibitem{191} Brauns 2003, p. 240.
\bibitem{192} Letter from Executive Committee of the International Red Aid to Padmore, Moscow 9.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 139.
\end{thebibliography}
the ITUCNW, the ISH and the LAI. Not surprisingly, the list was identical with those communist front organizations that in one or the other way had been in the foreground of forming the radical African Atlantic. IRH-sections had been established in South Africa and on Madagascar and IRH-committees in Senegal, Cameroon, the French Congo, the Ivory Coast, and in Kenya (see also Table x.4.2.). However, a close reading reveals that none of these groups were, by definition, sections of the IRH, not to speak of having taken the shape of mass organizations on a national level.\footnote{Senegal, Cameroon, French Congo, Togo, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Dakar (!).} Although the list of establishments in Africa seems to be impressive, the existence of groups in many of the African colonies is dubious. First, the existence of two different groups in the same colony, namely Senegal and Dakar, is curious, at least. Second, the list of countries corresponds with those regions where there existed individuals or groups with whom either Garan Kouyaté or George Padmore had been in contact with (the latter in the name of the ITUCNW) or where there existed sub-sections of the LDRN!\footnote{Resolution über die Arbeit unter den werktätigen Negern (1932), pp. 62, 65.}

Table x.4.2. Membership of IRH groups and organizations in Africa and the Caribbean 1930-1932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1.1.1930</th>
<th>1.1.1931</th>
<th>1.1.1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Domingo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, as was typical for such public statements of the Comintern-Apparatus, the positive aspects were contrasted with harsh self-criticism about severe shortcomings of the IRH cells in South Africa and on Madagascar. The criticism of the resolution text about the shortcomings of the South African section (limited contacts with Moscow, non-existing links
to East, West and Central Africa) can be interpreted, as apart from the section in South Africa, the IRH had not made any inroads into sub-Saharan Africa by the end of 1932. The activities in Madagascar, on the other hand, were dubious from the perspective of Moscow: the cells lacked a proletarian leadership and were too closely mixed with other organizations (i.e., losing their ‘radical’ outlook). Consequently, the resolution called for the two sections to adhere to the IRH guidelines and to strive to evolve as ‘true’ mass organizations for the proletariat and the poor farmers (“arme Bauern”) with a native, i.e., African, leadership.\textsuperscript{196}

Similar to earlier official documents, the 1932 Resolution once again criticized the metropolitan sections for the lukewarm, if not negative, attitude towards Negro work. However, the resolution noted that the International Scottsboro Campaign (see below) had been a breaking point. As a consequence of their campaign, for the first time the conditions of the downtrodden Negro toilers in the African Atlantic had been recognized in the imperial mother countries. The resolution called the metropolitan sections to activate them in the anticolonial work, to establish sections in their African Atlantic colonies and to support IRH initiatives and agitation in the colonies. Eventually, the vision of the resolution was that the IRH communication network was to crisscross the African Atlantic: from Moscow to the metropolitan countries and the USA, from the metropolitan countries to the colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, from the USA and via the Caribbean Secretariat of the IRH to the Caribbean and Latin America. Finally, in Moscow, a Negro comrade was to be added to the Negro Department (i.e., indicating that the Department so far had not included a Negro member) and that the EC was charged to put a special emphasis on the establishment of establishing a “mass organization” (i.e., a national section) in Liberia.\textsuperscript{197}

The reference to Liberia is curious, if not intriguing. The resolutions and guidelines of the previous years had regarded Liberia as a special duty of the US American section, now it was to be that of the EC in Moscow. Did Padmore have anything to do with this reorientation in the strategic outline? Padmore, the Hamburg Committee and the Negro Committee of the RILU had by this time started to comment on the conditions in Liberia and especially Padmore regarded the conditions ripe for special actions in that country (see Chapter IX).\textsuperscript{198}

The attempt by the IRH to expand its activities to the African colonies follows the general attempt by the Comintern and its affiliates to build up an interracial anti-imperialist and anticolonial global front. The League against Imperialism articulated similar aspirations

\textsuperscript{196} Resolution über die Arbeit unter den werktätigen Negern (1932), pp. 63, 65.
\textsuperscript{197} Resolution über die Arbeit unter den werktätigen Negern (1932), pp. 64-66.
\textsuperscript{198} Resolution über die Arbeit unter den werktätigen Negern (1932), p. 65.
in 1931. Such activities were in line with the guidelines of ‘class before race’. As the ITUCNW was not to be developed into a Black International, the duty to engage in the making of a radical African Atlantic was to become part and parcel of the whole Comintern-Apparatus. Anticolonialism was not regarded as a race issue in Moscow but a rallying force of international and interracial solidarity. More than the ITUCNW, the IRH through its planned activities in the African Atlantic presented itself as the forthcoming defender of the Negro proletariat and peasants in Africa, the USA, throughout the Caribbean as well as in those Latin American states where there was a Negro population: Panama, Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil. If, however, the IRH was ever to be established in the African colonies – at least outside South Africa – or to engage in Negro work in Latin America, remains doubtful.199

4.3. The International Scottsboro Campaign

Apart from enlisting participants for IRH congresses, the most intensive cooperation between the ITUCNW and the IRH occurred in conjunction with the international Scottsboro campaign. The ‘Scottsboro Boys’ were nine young African Americans who had been charged with the rape of two white girls in Scottsboro, Alabama in March 1931. The evidence was dubious and was challenged both by the bourgeois as well as the left-wing press. When the local court sentenced them to death in April 1931, a nationwide wave of protest against the lynch justice in the US South where the African American members of the CPUSA, including William L. Patterson, Harry Haywood and James W. Ford, and the International Labor Defence were to play a leading role.200

The campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys had started as an activity of the International Labor Defence in the USA but was made a global affair by the IRH.201 The campaign itself was a combined effort that involved several other organizations apart from the

---

199 In 1931 the *Ikaka la Basebenzi* (Shield of Workers), the Red Aid South Africa, was established. It had branches in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Brakpan, Cradock, Tarkastad, Krugersdorp, Randfontein and Pretoria but it never developed into a mass organization and its membership was about 500 in 1935. See further Document 56, Report of M. Kotane to Anglo-American Secretariat, 31 December 1935 (re Red Aid South Africa), in: Davidson et alii, II, 2003, pp. 156-157.


IRH. 202 The RILU Negro Committee, too, participated by preparing reports about the campaign’s worldwide activities. 203 In Germany, for example, the campaign was a combined effort of the LAI, 204 the RHD, the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe and the Hamburg Committee. Ford and other Negroes who were enlisted for the campaign through the Hamburg Committee were useful partners for the RHD, who was in charge of organizing protest meetings in Germany, as they would represent the authentic – Negro – voice of the oppressed. In Hamburg, for example, five mass meetings were held in July 1931, gathering some 20,000 participants. At the Inter-Club too, a combined protest meeting of the ISH, the RHD and the Hamburg Committee was held in early July. The Negro Worker included several articles and appeals to further globalize the ‘Black’ voices of protest in the Scottsboro campaign. 205 Ford’s actions were noted by Louis Engdahl, who especially praised the July edition of the Negro Worker but also urged Ford to expand the ITUCNW campaign so that the Scottsboro case should be made part and parcel of the struggle of “Negro workers in different countries especially in Africa.” What he had in mind was an article by Ford about combining the Scottsboro Campaign with the global task of the ITUCNW. 206 However, Ford was never to write such an article. On the other hand, Padmore assured Engdahl that the campaign had already had a “tremendous effect” in Africa and the Caribbean and promised to continue to do his utmost to rescue the boys as he had taken over the apparatus in Hamburg. 207

Padmore’s letter to Engdahl also contained a highly sensitive invitation. Although the idea of transforming the ITUCNW into a Black International had officially been scrapped at the time of Padmore’s transfer to Hamburg, he proposed to Engdahl that the Hamburg Committee and the Negro Department of the ILD were to establish closer relationships. While he did not directly suggest that the ITUCNW should monitor the ILD’s Negro work, he indirectly hinted that he was the key person in opening the doors for the Red Aid in Africa and other “Negro colonies.” He presented himself as the active partner – after discussions

---

202 The international campaign began in Berlin and was to span over the globe with demonstrations in front of US Embassies and Consulates in several European, Caribbean, and Latin American countries as well as in South Africa, New Zealand and Japan. Solomon 1998, p. 197.
203 Information in letter from B.D. Amis, Negro Department of the CPUSA, to Padmore, 24.7.1931, RGASPI 534/7/496, fol. 154.
204 The Executive Committee of LAI issued a resolution and an appeal on the freedom of the Scottsboro Boys at its meeting in June 1931, see RGASPI 542/1/51, fol. 101 and fol. 102. The campaign of the LAI was mainly orchestrated through its youth section, see Anti-Imperialist Youth Bulletin 3 – Scottsboro Special, September 1931, RGASPI 542/1/53, fol. 132-139.
205 A report on the Scottsboro campaigns and protest meetings in Hamburg was published in The Negro Worker, 1:7, 1931. Other articles on the Scottsboro case appeared in the June and in the September 1931 issues of The Negro Worker.
207 (Copy) Letter from Padmore to Louis Engdahl, Hamburg 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/6/140, fol. 83.
with Comrade Stasova, he had decided to help in creating Red Aid organizations in the African Atlantic.\textsuperscript{208} Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate the rest of Padmore’s and Engdahl’s correspondence. While Padmore was certainly active in supporting the establishment of Red Aid groups in Africa in 1932, the anticipated collaboration with the Negro Department of the ILD seems never to have been realized.

The campaign continued during the following year. On 8 January 1932, Padmore informed the Headquarters of the RHD in Berlin about his participation in the campaign.\textsuperscript{209} Back in Moscow, the RILU Negro Bureau made an evaluation of the Scottsboro Campaign and its impact on the mobilization of the Negro masses in February 1932.\textsuperscript{210} At the end of February Padmore received a note from Huiswoud about the decision of the Supreme Court of Alabama to send the Scottsboro Boys to the electric chair on 6 April. The news resulted in Moscow in a decision to launch a new international campaign that was to be organized through the IRH. The IRH headquarters set 18 March as a day of demonstration and the first week of April as ‘Scottsboro week’. Huiswoud wanted Padmore to produce a special ‘Scottsboro edition’ of \emph{The Negro Worker} in addition to “stimulate some activities in this case in your section.”\textsuperscript{211} Also, in accordance with a decision of the PolCom of the ECCI on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of April 1932 the Scottsboro campaign was hereafter to be organized through the IRH-organizations only. This, however, did not imply that the ITUCNW was not be engaged.\textsuperscript{212}

Padmore promptly acted on Huiswoud’s note. A joint meeting by the Hamburg Committee, i.e., Padmore, and the ISH was scheduled for 24 March but was postponed until 4 April due to police actions. In the meantime Padmore issued a leaflet in German and English giving the story of the Scottsboro case. 100 copies of the English edition of the leaflet were sent to the Negro Welfare Association in London that was organising a campaign on 1 April. Others were sent to the Negro press in Africa and the West Indies.\textsuperscript{213} As part of the Scottsboro Campaign in the African Atlantic, James Ford published an essay, “Scottsboro Boys Before the World,” in the \textit{Labor Defender} in April 1932.\textsuperscript{214}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{208} (Copy) Letter from Padmore to Louis Engdahl, Hamburg 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/6/140, fol. 83. \\
\textsuperscript{209} Letter from Padmore to Rote Hilfe/Berlin, Hamburg, 8.1.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 40. \\
\textsuperscript{210} The Plan of Work of the Negro TU Committee for February–July, 1932, filed as 140/No.763 Sec. (10) 3/5/32., RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 8. \\
\textsuperscript{211} Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, (Moscow) 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124. \\
\textsuperscript{212} Protokoll der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI am 3.IV.1932, RGASPI 495/4/181. Interestingly, Otto Huiswoud participated in the PolCom meeting when the paragraph that dealt with the Scottsboro campaign was discussed. \\
\textsuperscript{213} Letter from Padmore to the Bureau of the ISH/Hamburg, (Hamburg) 24.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 186. \\
\end{flushleft}
Padmore also wanted to invite Joseph Bilé as the main speaker at the Scottsboro meeting in Hamburg. Bilé, who had participated in previous meetings in throughout Germany organized by the RHD, spoke German and was therefore the best possible orator for such an event:

I think that Comrade Bile’s presence at the meeting in Hamburg would be more effective than my speaking in view of the fact that he speaks German and this would have a better effect upon a mass meeting than a speaker in English.  

Padmore himself travelled to England where he spoke at a meeting in Poplar, London, in April shortly before Ada Wright’s and Louis Engdahl’s arrival in Europe. Wright and Engdahl had been sent by the ILD and IRH on a Europe-wide tour to boost the international Scottsboro campaign. They arrived in Germany in early May 1932 and toured for the next seven months throughout several European countries, ending in Moscow where they participated at the Second World Congress of the IRH.  

Padmore claimed that the Scottsboro campaign formed the most successful mass activity of the Hamburg Committee in 1932. He and other “Negro adherents of the HC” had spoken at Scottsboro protest meetings in Hamburg and Berlin. In France, the sub-committee of the ITUCNW under the leadership of Garan Kouyaté organized several meetings in Paris and in the port cities. Resolutions were adopted and delegations were sent to the American Embassies. Similar activities occurred in England where the Negro Workers’ Association, another subcommittee of the ITUCNW, was participating in the campaign. In addition, The Negro Worker continued to publish appeals as well as articles and resolutions in every number.  

According to Padmore, the most important result of the Scottsboro campaign was that the Hamburg Committee was able to spread the campaign throughout the African Atlantic:

The H[amburg] C[ommittee] was also able to carry the campaign into the black colonies. Wide publicity was given in the colonial petty-bourgeois press and, as a result, several resolutions and letters of protest were sent to the [US] government. This Scottsboro campaign has won a number of sympathisers for the HC.  

---

215 Letter from Padmore to the Bureau of the ISH/Hamburg, (Hamburg) 24.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 186.  
216 Miller, Pennybacker, Rosenhaft 2001. Wright’s and Engdahl’s tour included Germany, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Sweden.  
Padmore’s enthusiastic account for the 1932 Scottsboro campaign in Germany was echoed in a report by the RHD about its activities during that year. Starting from June, some 117 articles and notices about the Scottsboro Boys and Ada Wright’s tour had been published. Rallies and demonstrations had been organized throughout Germany, peaking on the ‘Scottsboro Day’ on 10 October.219 However, due to the Nazi takeover in Germany in January 1933, the communist-led Scottsboro campaign in Germany collapsed. Although the Nazis appropriated some of the imagery of Scottsboro and of lynching in their counterattacks against American protests about Nazi anti-Semitism, it was only in Britain that the Scottsboro campaign was to continue for another year. With the collapse of the British ILD in 1934, however, it also abated there.220 Thereafter the activities to free the Scottsboro Boys were centred in the USA. The change in the Comintern policy in 1935 to pursue a united front strategy also affected the Scottsboro Campaign. The communists and the ILD lost its leading role in the campaign, which was first to be coordinated by the American Scottsboro Committee, and after its dissolution in December 1935, by the broadly based and liberal lead Scottsboro Defence Committee.221

220 Miller, Pennybacker and Rosenhaft 2001; Pennybacker 2009.