The Hamburg Committee, Moscow and the Making of a Radical African Atlantic, 1930-1933, Part Three: The LAI and the ITUCNW

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5. Brothers in arms? The ITUCNW and the Münzenberg-network

The most intriguing, but at the same time confusing, relationship between the ITUCNW and the organizations within the Comintern-Apparatus evolved between the Hamburg Committee and the various units of the “Münzenberg-Konzern”, most notably the League Against Imperialism (LAI) and the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH, Workers International Relief). Like the ISH and the ITUCNW, officially the LAI had no direct links to the Comintern and to Moscow. All of the three organizations also had a global profile. In theory, the internal division of labour was clear-cut: the ISH focussed on harbour workers and seamen, the ITUCNW on workers in the African Atlantic and the LAI on radical individuals and organizations engaged in the anti-imperial and anti-colonial activities.

However, the question of colonial work soon became complicated and confusing between the LAI and the ITUCNW. The LAI, on the one hand, had made futile attempts to engage West African intellectuals in its activities in the late 1920s, but due to the constrained conditions of its activities after the 1929 Frankfurt Congress, there was no input by its leading members on re-establishing the connections to Africa or even to pursue in active anti-colonial work in the African Atlantic. The visit of Frank Macaulay and E.F. Small in Berlin in October 1930 opened an excellent opportunity for the LAI to directly engage West Africa.

The ITUCNW, on the other hand, did have contacts in the African Atlantic although, as the ECCI had decided, was not to be developed into a ‘Black International’ but merely to develop into an umbrella organization for radical Negro labour and peasant unions. The ITUCNW’s objective was also to serve as a relay station between the RILU, its national sections in the imperial metropolitan countries and the colonies with the end goal being the collective affiliation of the future radical labour unions to the RILU. In theory, there was a clear-cut division of labour between the LAI and the ITUCNW. Anti-colonial agitation was to be conducted by political, i.e., communist organizations and parties that were to be linked to the LAI, the
metropolitan parties and through them to the Comintern-Apparatus in Moscow. The ITUCNW was to promote the formation of labour unions among the working class and the peasantry in the African Atlantic. However, the crux of the matter was that while the LAI and its International Secretariat in Berlin were hardly capable of running their international network, let to speak of establishing operations in West or East Africa, the aspirations of James Ford, and especially those of George Padmore, were motivated as much by communist conviction as radical Pan-Africanist visions. At times, such conflicting conditions gave fuel to fierce debates that eventually led to an unofficial revision of work in the African Atlantic between the LAI and the ITUCNW by 1932. The result was that the LAI more or less retreated from that arena while the ITUCNW envisaged for itself to become the spearhead of anti-colonial agitation at least in Sub-Saharan Africa.

5.1. Wishful thinking: The LAI ‘Goes West Africa’?

The African orientation of the LAI reached its zenith in late 1930. At this time, the International Secretariat produced an outline for its future activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is likely that a first version of the memorandum had already been drafted in November when the West Africans visited Berlin. This is indicated in the German version of the text. Echoing perhaps the ideas of E.F. Small, the memorandum urged the LAI to support the formation of peasant cooperatives and unions: more than any other class were the organized African peasants believed to emerge as the spearheads of anti-imperialist activities.

As its main and most promising connections existed in the British and French colonies along the West African coast, it is not surprising that the LAI’s immediate main goal was to establish a lasting connection with the anti-colonial groups and organizations in the region. The program itself was a blueprint for political radicalism,
underlining the right of the West Africans for political freedom and supporting the call for self-representation and national independence. Had the political development been different, the program could have emerged as one of the early radical documents if it had been put into practice. European imperialism had robbed the people of West Africa of the liberty they formerly enjoyed, the document declared in its opening section, and continued by calling for the full independence of the colonies. Neither improvement nor any progress, be it political, social or economic one, were possible in West Africa, it argued, before the total destruction of the colonial order and imperialist exploitation. Interestingly, although the author(s) of the document most certainly had no background in the African Atlantic – the document had either been drafted in Berlin or in Moscow – some of the paragraphs echoed Pan-Africanist claims for the political unification of West Africa:

…it is absolutely necessary, for the successful overthrow of imperialist exploitation, to establish a united front of the masses in all the colonies of West Africa, with the ultimate object of establishing a strong West African Federation of Independent Negro States.3

However, in line with general emphasis on class rather than colour by the communists, the Pan-Africanist call was blended with class rhetoric and the mantra of the Colonial Question. The West African people’s political struggle was to be coordinated with the struggle of all oppressed peoples of the world. A successful outcome in this global struggle could only be achieved if all anti-colonial forces were drawn into a common anti-imperialist organization. Such an organization did not yet exist, apart from the LAI that was projected as the rallying force of anti-colonial agitation.4

The writers of the LAI’s West African program were highly idealistic about the organization’s potentials. In each colony, they projected the task of the LAI was not only to expose to the masses the real nature and the terrible results of colonial oppression and exploitation but also to formulate the political and economic aims of the oppressed masses; i.e., not only to agitate and propagate but also to organize the masses and to influence the political struggle in the colonies. The call of the

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3 The Anti-Imperialist Struggle of the West African People, dated 6.12.1930, RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 76; Draft of a program from the LAI, dated 13.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 2
4 The Anti-Imperialist Struggle of the West African People, dated 6.12.1930, RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 77; Draft of a program from the LAI, dated 13.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 4.
dissolution of the colonial armies and police forces came as no surprise – all Comintern Resolutions since the 1920s had made this call in conjunction with their attempt to protect the Soviet Union from an imperialist attack. A more genuine demand was the recovery of expropriated land and its transfer to elected organs of the people in addition to the fulfilment of other political, economic and cultural demands.\(^5\)

The novelty of the LAI program was, however, its focus on politicizing the workers and the peasantry. The League, the document stated, supported and encouraged the formation of trade unions. It even argued that the trade unions should take the lead in the struggle for the overthrow of imperialism. In a situation where there existed almost any of such organizations and those, which existed had previously been disregarded by the RILU as petty bourgeois and non-political. As utopian was the call for support to mobilize and politicize the peasantry and the formation of farmers’ cooperatives and peasant unions.\(^6\)

If the LAI was ever successful in implementing their programmatic outline for West Africa is highly doubtful. The program itself was, as noted above, an interesting blend of utopianism, blue-eyed internationalism and idealistic solidarity. It is highly questionable if the document was ever published or added to the guidelines of the LAI. Not surprisingly, neither West Africa nor the rest of sub-Saharan Africa remained on top of the International Secretariat of the LAI’s agenda. Only in 1931 were there a few moments of African activity at the LAI headquarters in Berlin: when the LAI supported the cocoa hold-up in the Gold Coast\(^7\) and in connection with the African Children Congress in Geneva in June 1931.

At first, the West African plans of the LAI prompted a positive reaction in Moscow. The Political Commission of the ECCI decided in late December 1930 to allocate additional funding for the LAI headquarters for the attachment of a Negro Comrade at the International Secretariat. It also agreed to the proposition to send a comrade to Africa whose task was to lay the foundations of local LAI activities there.\(^8\)

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\(^5\) The Anti-Imperialist Struggle of the West African People, dated 6.12.1930, RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 77; Draft of a program from the LAI, dated 13.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 4.

\(^6\) The Anti-Imperialist Struggle of the West African People, dated 6.12.1930, RGASPI 495/64/166, fol. 78; Draft of a program from the LAI, dated 13.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 5.

\(^7\) Proposals relative to activities of Anti-imperialist League in West Africa (typewritten report, no author, dated 15.2.1931), RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 10-11.

The idea of the LAI being active in Africa was still on the agenda in March 1931 when the ECCI discussed the forthcoming plenary session of the LAI Executive Committee. On both occasions the key person in Moscow was Ludwig Magyar alias Lajos Milgorf, a Hungarian communist who from 1928 was the Deputy Head of the Eastern Secretariat. Apart from being one of the top members of the Eastern Secretariat, he also was the contact of the LAI in Moscow and vice versa. His role at the ECCI meetings was a crucial one. At first, he was full of enthusiasm about the prospects for a West African direction of the LAI and had made the original suggestion to the ECCI to strengthen the LAI Secretariat with a Negro Comrade. However, as will be outlined below, a few months later he had changed his mind and did not see any potential for the direct engagement of the LAI in West Africa. Although he still underlined the need to establish sections in Africa, he suggested that the ECCI should not to make any final decisions on the matter and to leave it an open question. The ECCI, it seems, decided at this point to shelve the LAI proposition of establishing sections in West Africa.

The original LAI proposal for activities in West Africa was doomed as unrealistic already at an initial stage in a highly critical report written in February 1931. Although the author or the institutional affiliation of him/her is not known, the author in either Berlin (or Moscow?) had excellent information about the political conditions in West Africa and was well aware about the operational potentials of the LAI. The author had either been present when Macaulay, Small and Smeral had met at the LAI headquarters in Berlin in October 1931 or had received first-hand information about the outcomes of the discussions, as the report refers to them in its analysis of the bleak prospects for LAI work in West Africa:

[C]onversations of Anti-Imperialist League comrades with African delegates in Berlin showed existence of great reluctance on the part of the latter to agree to many of the points, their

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11 Information from Magyar, Eastern Secretariat, to ECCI Political Commission re. LAI, 6.3.1931, RGASPI 495/4/94, fol.42.
whole attitude showing that if programme on correct lines is sent, it is extremely likely that
they will refuse to publish or circulate it.\textsuperscript{13}

It is possible that the author of the petition was Ludwig Magyar. He was at the time
when both the LAI proposition and the negative petition were written in Berlin and, as
noted above, had presented the plans for the Political Commission of the ECCI. Such
a claim is strengthened by the fact that Magyar held a negative opinion about the
West African proposal of the LAI when he brought forward the issue to the ECCI.\textsuperscript{14}

The author (perhaps Magyar) also argued that the organizational basis for the
circulation of a LAI programme in any of the four British West African colonies did
not exist and if such a call was published there, it would only appear as an outside
intervention and would spoil the prospects for the LAI to engage in grass-roots
activities in West Africa. On the other hand, the author noted, an increasing bitterness
against British Imperialism was to be noted in especially the Gold Coast and Nigeria.
Here, the author was referring to the protest movements against the United Africa
Company, especially the cocoa hold-ups in the Gold Coast. These conditions, the
author underlined, should be utilized to introduce the LAI platform in West Africa
and proposed that the British Section of the LAI was to be charged to become the
spearhead of the West African campaigns.\textsuperscript{15}

The consequence of the ambivalent, if not negative response at the ECCI, the
African engagement was not discussed at the EC meeting of the LAI that commenced
in Berlin from 30 May 30 to 2 June 1931. James Ford, who participated at the
meeting,\textsuperscript{16} was re-elected to the EC.\textsuperscript{17} George Padmore and Albert Nzula, who were
not present in Berlin, were both nominated to the General Council (Generalrat).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{13} Proposals relative to [hand added: Activities of] Anti-Imperialist League of [corrected: in] West
Africa, filed as 1706/10. AS/EP. Dic., dated 15.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 10.
\textsuperscript{14} I am grateful to Fredrik Peterson for suggesting Ludwig Magyar as the author of the petition.
\textsuperscript{15} Proposals relative to [hand added: Activities of] Anti-Imperialist League of [corrected: in] West
\textsuperscript{16} The other participants were Reginald Bridgeman, Harry Pollitt, Saklatvala, Clemes Dutt, Herclet,
Gaillard, Georgi Dimitrov (referred to with his alias Helmut), Münzenberg, Vitcheff, Visher as well as
a Chinese and an Indonesian delegate, one representative each from the Russian Trade Union, the
RILU, the IRH, and the Eastern Secretariat. List of participants to be invited, included in Financial
report by the Communist traction of the LAI, 12.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/48, fol. 27; Russian text of the
same list available in RGASPI 542/1/47, fol. 12-14.
\textsuperscript{17} Handwritten notes from the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin, 1-2 June 1931, BArchB R 8051/82/8,
fol. 718-724. Ford had been elected to the EC at Frankfurt Congress in July 1929.
\textsuperscript{18} Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit
[Berlin, 30. Mai bis 2. Juni], RGASPI 539/2/432, fol. 15-17. Padmore was said to represent West India,
Nzula South Africa; both were at that time in Moscow.
Instead of focusing its activities on Africa, the EC only made a vague declaration in the form of a resolution about the “Growing Anti-Imperialist Revolt of the Colonial Masses.” While both of the resolution’s two earlier draft versions included paragraphs on Africa that notified of the beginning of armed struggles in Africa and the “terror campaigns” of the imperial powers retaliating anti-imperialist agitations in South Africa, Nigeria, French and Belgian Congo and Kenya as well as calling for the planting of grass-roots organization in “Negro Africa”, the resolution itself made no reference to LAI activities in Africa anymore. The consequences of the EC meeting in Berlin were drastic and resulted in a redirection of the anti-imperialistic work of the LAI. In effect, the Berlin meeting terminated the visions of an engagement of the LAI in the African Atlantic.

5.2. Who represents whom? Ford in the orbit of the Münzenberg platforms

Seen in retrospect, the personal affiliations of the African American and African Caribbean and African comrades must have been schizophrenic during the early 1930s. James Ford was in charge of the Hamburg Committee and officially represented the ITUCNW. At the same time, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the LAI as well as worked for the ISH. When George Padmore took over in Hamburg, he also became engaged in the ISH and the LAI. In similar ways was Garan Kouyaté associated, if not affiliated to the ITUCNW, the ISH and the LAI. Ford’s engagement in the LAI had been a long one. His first appearance in the organization was in January 1929 when he participated at the meeting of Executive

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19 Protokol rezoljutsii o polozenii v kolonijah i o zadachah Antinperialisticheskoj Ligi (A scetch of the solutions made in a meeting of the Anti-Imperial League concerning the situation in the colonies), n.d., RGASPI 542/1/49, fol. 60; Rezoljutsija Ispolnitelnogo Komiteta Ligi protiv imperializma i za nacionaljno-osvoboditeljnoe dvizienie ugnetjonnih narodov Evropi (Resolutions made by the committee of the League against Imperialism and for national liberation of oppressed European peoples), 4.1.1931, RGASPI 542/1/49, fol. 120. Both resolutions had been prepared by the Eastern Secretariat and had been sent for approval to the ECCI in May 1931, see Protokoll Nr. 142 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol. Sekr. des EKKI, 23.5.1931, RGASPI 495/4/109, fol. 1-5.


21 It is likely that a certain Genosse (Comrade) Leitner was one of Ford’s key contacts at the LAI International Secretariat. Leitner was a Hungarian emigrant and known to be “a good revolutionary”. Apart from being in charge of the LAI archive he was also an expert on the Colonial and the Negro question. Most importantly, however, was that he was fluent in both English and French. See letter from Ferdi to Eastern Secretariat, Berlin 8.7.1931, RGASPI 542/1/48, fol. 128. He was transferred to Moscow in late 1931.
Committee of the LAI in Cologne. Together with Kouyaté they had attended the Second Congress of the LAI in Frankfurt in July 1929, and Ford was nominated to the Executive Committee. Neither of them participated in any meetings in 1930 – the internal reshufflings that shattered the LAI during that period affected its international activities as much as Ford was away from Europe during much of the year. In early June 1931, however, Ford and Kouyaté were again present at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the LAI in Berlin. Kouyaté delivered a report on the anti-imperialist movement and its development in the French colonies, criticizing the inactivity and “scandalous actions” of the CPF in this field of work. Ford made a presentation about the situation of and potentials for work among Black workers in the African Atlantic. Similar to Kouyaté he drew attention to the need for concrete and active work to be carried out on the part of the LAI in the African Atlantic. Most importantly, in his view, was that “Negro work” was also to be included among the LAI’s core activities.

Shortly after his return to Hamburg, Ford received a special letter from the International Secretariat of the LAI where he was informed that he had been nominated to represent the LAI at the Save the Children International Union’s International Conference on African Children that occurred in Geneva from 22-25 June 1931. Already in March 1931, Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya had sent a letter to their “African contacts” to inquire about the possibility of the LAI to

22 Ferdi, Bericht des Bureaus der Fraktion der Exekutivsitzung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, 31.5.1931, RGASPI 542/1/49, fol. 281. The venue took place from May 31 to June 2, 1931. Ford was listed as a delegate from the USA (not the ITUCNW') and Kouyaté as a ‘Negro delegate’. Kouyaté was not a member of the Executive Committee but had been invited to attend the meeting. See further Financial report by the Communist Fraction of the LAI, II. Die Frage der Exekutive im April, dated 12.2.1931, RGASPI 542/1/48, fol. 27. However, Kouyaté was a member of the General Council (Generalrat) of the LAI, see “Präsidium und Generalrat der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit (1932)”, RGASPI 542/1/55. Padmore, in turn, had not participated at none of the LAI meetings and conferences. He was, on the other hand, together with Albert Nzula, nominated - both in absentio - into the General Council of the LAI at the meeting of the LAI Executive Committee in Berlin in May/June 1931, see Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit (30.5.-2.6.1931), mimeographed bulletin, Carl Lindhagens arkiv, volym 131, SSA.

23 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 81. What Ford did not mention to Padmore was that although he had been asked to shorten his presentation he had run out of time and had abruptly to end his speech. Protocol of the LAI Executive Meeting, Berlin 31.5.1931, RGASPI 542/1/48, fol. 204.

participate at the conference. Originally, the Ford’s decision to participate at the conference had been made by the WEB in Berlin where it was argued that it would be scandalous if the Negro, i.e., Hamburg Committee did not attend. At the LAI headquarters it was decided that Ford should represent the League and that it would bear half of the travel costs, the other half were to be covered by Hamburg Committee. Ford, who had received the letter two days before the opening of the conference hurried on the same day to Geneva. Typical for him, Ford gave a lengthy and highly critical presentation about the living conditions of children in the African colonies, condemning the conference for not addressing the issue of African children at all but being merely a praise of the colonial order. After his return to Hamburg, he issued a press release and short version of his presentation. Ford wanted to rework his presentation and publish it as a pamphlet since the press release had only been printed in a few hundred copies and the pamphlet could be used much more effectively for agitation and propaganda purposes. Much to his dismay, the LAI was at first hesitant to the idea claiming that it had no funds at its disposal for such a publication. Ford’s complaining to Padmore seemed to have been effective – his pamphlet, entitled *The Truth about the African Children*, was published by the LAI.

Ford received a new call by the International Secretariat at the end of July 1931. This time the LAI headquarters wanted him to prepare to go to Vienna as its representative to speak on the Colonial Question at a conference arranged by the Austrian branch of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU). Ford did not want to go since Padmore had already criticized him over his previous trip to Geneva that had taken him away from Hamburg and his work among the African seamen for too much time – but the LAI overruled his request. Ford’s trip to Austria ended in a total fiasco. At his first stop at Leoben, he participated in a meeting of the FSU on 31 July, delivering a report in the name of the International Secretariat of the Friends of the Soviet Union and the League Against Imperialism on the topic of the war preparations.

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26 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 82.
28 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668. fol. 82.
30 Padmore’s critical note and Ford’s communication with the LAI have yet been found. The events are summarized in Ford’s letter to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, dated 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 102.
against the USSR, the conditions in the colonies and the role of the Social Democracy. The next day he attended an anti-war demonstration at Graz. He had barely started his speech when the police arrested him. After being held in custody for two days, the Austrian authorities expelled him. Ford returned via Berlin to Hamburg.\(^{31}\)

A further appearance of Ford in the Münzenberg platform was projected during fall 1931 when Ford was invited to participate at the Conference of the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (IAH), which celebrated the organization’s tenth anniversary. The IAH Conference was planned to become an effectual manifestation of international solidarity and Ford’s participation, this time as Secretary of the Hamburg Committee, was of high propaganda value. Gibarti asked Ford to assist in the Congress’s preparations, especially in inviting a delegation from Sierra Leone and South Africa as well as Garan Kouyaté from Paris to attend the Congress.\(^{32}\) This time, however, Ford had to disappoint Münzenberg: when the IAH World Congress convened in Berlin from 9-16 October 1931, Ford had already left Germany. Due his departure to Moscow, there was no representation of the ITUCNW at the conference.\(^{33}\)

### 5.3. The Negro Number of the AIZ

Willi Münzenberg must have regarded James Ford as his special Negro emissary with whom he chose to cooperate in projects aimed to address the plight and exploitation of the toiling masses in the African Atlantic. Apart from being the authentic ‘Negro voice’ of the LAI at public gatherings in- and outside Germany, Ford’s cooperation was crucial in one particular project, namely to produce a special edition of the *Arbeiter Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ), which focussed on the life and struggle of the black race.\(^{34}\) This project materialized after the LAI meeting in Berlin in early June 1931. According to Ford, Münzenberg had received detailed instructions from “there” – indicating perhaps in his letter that the layout and content of the edition had been drafted and fixed in advance in Moscow, perhaps even engaging the members of the

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\(^{31}\) Letter from Ford letter to Padmore and the RILU Secretariat, dated 6.8.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 103-104.  
\(^{33}\) Letter from Padmore to Gibarti, (Hamburg) 14.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 105.  
\(^{34}\) *Arbeiter Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ), X: 26 (Sondernummer: Leben und Kampf der Schwarzen Rasse), 1931.
Negro Committee of the RILU? Ford, Münzenberg and Chattophadhyaya, who also participated at the meetings, regretted the typographical limitations that put a limit of the numbers of photographs and pictures depicting the struggles of the Negro toilers but at the end of the day, Ford was full of praise of the end result. “On whole however I think it came out all right,” he proudly informed Padmore. Münzenberg himself regarded this special issue to be one of the best he ever had produced, as he told Harry Pollitt:

I think that this number is from political and technical points of view one of the strongest edited by the A.I.Z. up today. After having collected material for longer than a year and having corresponded with different Negro Departments and bureaus it has been finally possible to edit this number in a direct contact with the big campaign against the [unreadable] execution of the 8 young Negroes.

The special edition of the AIZ was meant to be a powerful weapon not only in the propaganda war that Münzenberg was waging in Germany but also as a statement of solidarity among the working class irrespective of ones skin colour. Ford had written a lengthy programmatic article, “Die schwarze Rasse stösst zur roten Front!” (“The Black Race joins the Red Front”), where he highlighted the class-aspect of racism and segregation: the Negroes, he wrote, were not only suppressed and exploited because they were Black but also because they were toilers and peasants. Other articles dealt with the conditions in the USA and in Africa. The message was simple but effective: the workers in the African Atlantic were living in misery, under the yoke of segregation, racism, lynch justice and colonial exploitation. In his analysis of the photographic ‘texts’ and collages of the AIZ special edition, Henrick Stahr identifies two different messages: one negative and one positive. The negative message was produced by depicting human misery; such photographs and their collages composed the majority of the visual effects. The aim of the negative message was to awake the compassion of the spectators and readers. A minority of the photographs had a different message. Portraits of Negro leaders engaged in the fight for justice, such as William Patterson addressing as a Scottsboro rally or Lamine Senghor with a clenched fist at a rostrum (most likely at the 1927 Brussels Conference).
photographs’ effect was to be the contrast to the misery story, telling the reader about the awakening force of the Negroes and the demands for political rights.37

Initially, Ford’s idea was to have the AIZ special edition translated into English. He regarded the German edition as an important contribution to the enlightenment of German workers. Important as this objective was, the global propaganda impact of the publication was a restricted one as long as it was not translated:

I thought it was to come out in English also. It must be said however that such an issue was necessary to wake up some of our comrades [added: in Germany] with regards to the Negro question. As to its practical value among Negroes, we decided to send copies to our various connections, but of course the pictures will be the only use. But here in Hamburg I find that this has very good affect with the [added: Negro] seamen. It is possible that we could get the same issue out in English and French, since the comrades at Berlin have all the copy and materials, and I think at very little cost.38

Ford recommended to Padmore that he should seriously consider translating the special issue. The various pamphlets and brochures that the ITUCNW and its Hamburg Committee had so far produced were certainly not of an inferior quality, but they all lacked a professional and technically advanced layout. Ford knew what Münzenberg and his associates had applied and where the “Münzenberg-Konzern” was one of the forerunners in modern political and artistic representation: the combination of photographs and short texts was the essence in creating an effective propaganda tool. The best example was a photomontage by John Heartfield: two fists in the sky, one black, one white, with the slogan “Ob schwarz, ob weiss – im Kampf vereint gegen aller Rassen Feind: die Ausbeuterklasse!” (Black or white, it does not matter, united in the fight against the enemy of all races: the class of exploiters!).39

Heartfield’s symbolism of the raised fist as well as the message of photomontage and the slogan summarized the communist position in the Negro and Colonial question: class first, race second.

38 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 81.
Münzenberg, Heartfield and Ford had produced an impressive and professional publication but how to distribute it in the African Atlantic? The were two channels available, one by making use of Ford’s connections with the African seamen, the other via Reginald Bridgeman and the network of the British Section of the LAI. Ford, as noted above, tried to distribute it in Hamburg. Bridgeman, on the other hand, was more hesitant. Münzenberg wanted to send to him 800 copies but Bridgeman realistically replied that 100 copies were initially enough. Apart from the publication being in German, Bridgeman excused himself by notifying Münzenberg that the British Section of the LAI had no staff and very little money. The costs of distribution, he argued, were considerable and Münzenberg’s idea that the British Section should cover all expenses was impossible:

Do not overestimate our ability to assist you. We will do all we can, but as I have already said we have not got any staff or any resources, and can only therefore do one thing at a time. I regret this weak state of affairs, but the suggestions which you have made with regard to the distribution of the Review indicate that you have got an entirely incorrect idea as to our position.  

Not surprisingly, only a few issues of the Negro number of the AIZ ever found its way to the African Atlantic. Münzenberg’s interest in disseminating the publication seemed to have faded and with the reshufflings at the Hamburg Committee during autumn 1931, Ford’s proposal of translating the edition into English and French were buried for the time being.

However, about half a year later the special edition of the AIZ was again on the agenda. In February 1932 George Padmore sent an inquiry to Louis Gibarti at the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe about getting some copies of the Negro Number of the AIZ. Padmore reminded Gibarti that the Hamburg Committee had collaborated with the editors of the AIZ but claimed in the same vein that they had not sent the Committee any free copies of the magazine. In Padmore’s mind, the magazine could be quite useful in his colonial work despite the fact that the text was in German: “Although our comrades in the colonies don’t read German, the pictures will

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nevertheless have propaganda effect,”41 an argument that already Ford had made the previous year.

Padmore’s inquiry to Gibarti is somewhat dubious as Ford must have received some copies of the publication. On the other hand, it is possible that Ford had been able to distribute all copies among African seamen calling at Hamburg or that these copies had been confiscated by the German police during the various raids at the ISH and HC headquarters in Hamburg during fall 1931. Be as it may, Padmore seems to have planned to launch a new campaign of distributing the publication, perhaps even translating it into English and French. Curiously enough, he did not send his inquiry directly to the editor of the AIZ or, perhaps, this letter is missing in the archives. He did, on the other hand, send a similar inquiry directly to Münzenberg or, to be precise, Frieda Schiff, Padmore’s associate in Hamburg, approached her friend Babette Gross, Münzenbergs wife. Schiff informed Gross that Padmore asked to get as many copies as possible as he was able to distribute them to the colonies himself. At least one copy was immediately needed because Padmore wanted to use some of the pictures in a forthcoming edition of *The Negro Worker*.42 Padmore received three copies from Gross a few weeks later. If he ever was able to get any other copies is not known. A translation or re-edition of the Negro issue of the AIZ never materialized.

5.4. Towards a fruitful cooperation? Padmore, the “Münzenberg-Konzern” and the ISH

By autumn 1931 it had become evident that neither the ITUCNW nor the LAI had made much progress in establishing a radical African Atlantic network. Ford had made little progress in broadening the outreach of the ITUCNW in the African Atlantic and the vision of the LAI to get a footing in Africa had been turned down by the ECCI at its initial stage. Ford’s little success in reaching out to the African Atlantic was more distressing. Although the comrades in Moscow had some understanding that progress was to be slow at the beginning, they were at the same time determined to speed up the activities and outreach of the Hamburg Committee. Ford, it was argued in Moscow, had been distracted from concentrating on his core

41 Letter from Padmore to Gibarti, (Hamburg) 14.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 105.
42 Letter from Fridl (Frida Schiff) to Babette (Gross), (Hamburg) 18.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 121.
duties, partially due to the lack of support by those other radical organizations that had a global anti-colonial agenda, the LAI, the IRH and the IAH. The October 1931 Resolution on the Hamburg Committee’s work aimed to correct this situation by demanding a much closer cooperation between the three above mentioned organizations and the ITUCNW:

[…] The Hamburg Committee during the last period has attempted to establish relationships with the International Secretariat of the LAI and its national sections. It is necessary for the Hamburg Committee in view of the increasing strike struggles and clashes between the Negro workers and the armed forces of the imperialists, to establish closer relationship with the League as well as the International Red Aid as well as the Workers International Relief in order to help these organisations to rendering the greatest possible assistance to the Negro movements.43

The 1931 October Resolution was outlined to be the starting-point for intensified cooperation between the front organizations whose prime objective was anticolonial agitation and propaganda in the African Atlantic. The Resolution projected a hierarchical relationship between the Hamburg Committee as an auxiliary unit to the well-established dominating organizations: the LAI, the IRH and the IAH. The text of the Resolution can be interpreted as an attempt to direct the Hamburg Committee only to focus on mobilising workers and peasants in the colonies, whereas the three other organizations were to have a much broader scope of activities. Be as it may, this was only Moscow’s wishful thinking. In reality, apart from the Hamburg Committee none of the organizations had at that time any direct links to the African Atlantic, not to speak about any realistic potential for establishing them.

Notwithstanding, the arrival of Padmore in Germany in late October 1931 was a sign of Moscow’s commitment to restart colonial work. In line with the new objectives, Padmore had been able to normalize the relationship between the IRH and the Hamburg Committee and made an attempt for a closer cooperation with the two organizations of the ‘Münzenberg-Konzern’.

43 Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg Committee, filed as 265/N.A./4ex./N.C., dated 18.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 46.
Padmore’s contacts at the LAI headquarters at Friedrichstrasse 24 were Münzenberg and Hans Thørgersen. Münzenberg and Padmore had probably already communicated when Padmore was organizing the World Negro Conference in Hamburg in 1930 and again in spring 1931 when Münzenberg was preparing the Negro Number of the AIZ. Thørgersen, on the other hand, seems to have become Padmore’s contact at the LAI headquarters when he arrived on the scene in Germany. A third person at the LAI headquarters with whom Padmore communicated was a certain “Comrade B.” This person was perhaps a certain Bob who belonged to those of the LAI personnel who were arrested by the German police when it raided the premises on 21 December 1931. Padmore also communicated with Hans Jäger, Secretary of the German Section of the LAI, whose office was at Wilhelmstrasse 48 in the same building as the rest of the ‘Münzenberg-Konzern’, first and foremost the IAH. Such direct personal connections were crucial for successful future cooperation between the Hamburg Committee and the LAI as will be seen below.

At the IAH, on the other hand, Padmore’s key contact person was initially Louis Gibarti. Padmore had visited the IAH office in Berlin on his way to Hamburg in November 1931 and had discussed with Gibarti about the need to open new avenues for collaboration. However, not much had been heard from Berlin and in February 1932 he repeated his call for cooperation: “You must let us know concretely how we can render each other mutual aid. You should therefore send us copies of your organisational material, so that we would have an idea how to apply your...
organisational structure to the colonies.” In addition, Padmore asked Gibarti to send material outlining the tasks of the IAH that could be published in *The Negro Worker*. However, as he did not get any immediate response from Gibarti, he directed his call for cooperation directly to Babette Gross. His proposal was a simple one: if the IAH was interested in getting a footing among the workers in the African Atlantic, he was prepared to start propagating the issue. It is not known if Gross, Münzenberg or any others in the IAH ever responded to Padmore’s invitation. Whatever the case, in spite of Padmore’s positive approach and willingness to assist the IAH for broadening its global outreach, these aspirations were never utilized. This was, on the other hand, not surprising since in 1931 an IAH representative had admitted that financial assistance to the colonies constituted only a small fraction of its annual budget and that the organization’s presence in the colonies was negligible.

Padmore’s connections with the ‘Münzenberg-Konzern’ did not end with the aborted IAH plans for the African Atlantic. In mid-March 1932 Clemens Dutt, who at that time was one of the Secretaries at the LAI headquarters, sent a letter to Padmore, urging him to participate at the International Conference against Imperialist War that was planned to be held in Berlin from Saturday to Sunday, 19-20 March 1932. However, due to the political disturbances in Berlin and the ‘Notverordnung’ by the Berlin authorities banning all political rallies, the organizers had to postpone the conference. Dutt notified Padmore some days later.

The mastermind of, and driving force behind, the conference was once again Willi Münzenberg who was intent on calling for a world peace conference. He planned a similar propagandistic demonstration, an “internationaler Kampfkongress gegen den Krieg” or an international anti-war campaign, as the previous world conferences of the LAI had been. Münzenberg had started the preparations for the congress in February when his two organizations, the IAH and the LAI, had organized a joint antiwar event in Berlin, protesting against Japanese imperialism and the establishment of the Manchukuo Protectorate. Another antiwar rally took place in Berlin in early March, where he had also been able to invite foreign speakers. His
next step was to issue a call to all international revolutionary organizations for an international antiwar congress. On 20 March 1932, he published his invitation.\textsuperscript{56}

Münzenberg wanted to nominate an international committee of both communist and non-communist left-wing intellectuals and respected individuals in order to present the venue as a nonpartisan event. In this respect his ambition repeated the same outline as his earlier international campaigns and rallies. Not surprisingly, his list included the usual ‘fellow travellers’: Albert Einstein, Heinrich Mann, Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Upton Sinclair, Bernhard Shaw, among others. The LAI, the IAH and the IRH were to have its representatives as well as the Sportintern, the \textit{Internationaler Bund der Kriegsopfer},\textsuperscript{57} and the \textit{Bund der Freidenker}. The new date for the conference was set for 28 July; it was to be a one-day conference in Berlin and to coincide with another communist anti-militarist campaign, the Rote Rüstungswoche gegen den Krieg.\textsuperscript{58} At this stage, Padmore was also to be invited to collaborate and to assist in organizing the conference. Dutt informed Padmore that Hans Jäger was to travel to Hamburg for a meeting with Padmore.\textsuperscript{59} The outcome of Jäger’s visit to Hamburg is not known, only that he and Padmore had been in contact shortly before his arrival.\textsuperscript{60}

Padmore’s name is not included among the list of members of the organizing committee of the anti-war conference.\textsuperscript{61} Perhaps Münzenberg did not regard his name to be useful: Münzenberg wanted to get maximum publicity for the conference and therefore it was Gibarti, Barbusse and Rolland who officially represented the organizing committee. Neither was the ITUCNW or its Hamburg Secretariat listed as a participating organization. The conclusion is that Padmore had initially been asked to assist in his capacity as a member of the LAI and not as the Secretary of the Hamburg Committee. However, it is likely that Jäger and Padmore had reached an

\textsuperscript{56} Gross 1967, p. 236; Carr 1982, p. 387.
\textsuperscript{57} The Communist International Association of War Victims.
\textsuperscript{58} Willi Münzenberg, Proposals on how to organize the international congress against the war (in German), 30.3.1932, RGASPI 543/1/17, fol. 2-3. The Political Commission approved Münzenberg’s plan, see Polit-Commission, Moscow, in relation to Münzenberg's plan, no date [March/April], year: 1932, RGASPI 543/1/17, fol. 4-6. According to Carr (1982, p. 387), the Political Commission of the ECCI had instructed the WEB to organize in Berlin a conference of communist parties to plan a campaign against imperialist war.
\textsuperscript{59} Letter from Clemens Dutt to George Padmore, 21.3.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 175.
\textsuperscript{60} Letter from Hans Jäger (LAI) to Werter Genosse (Padmore), Berlin 26.3.32, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 192; note from Neumann to NN, no date, RGASPI 534/37745, fol. 195. The recipient of the note was someone who knew Hans Jäger as it contained detailed instructions about where and when Jäger was to meet Padmore.
agreement, perhaps allocating the role as intermediate and contact to draw participants for the venue from the African Atlantic for Padmore. This impression is strengthened by a letter from Padmore to a certain Hans – probably Hans Thorgersen – in May 1932. At this point, Padmore had been able to arrange for an African delegation to the conference. The letter itself was written in a harsh and very critical tone, accusing the LAI for once again failing to render assistance to the ITUCNW when it tried to get Africans to Germany: this had been the case in 1930, Padmore lamented, an now again.62

It is not known who the Africans were whom Padmore had contacted. Neither are the consequences or reactions in Berlin known to Padmore’s letter. Perhaps there was a rift between Padmore and Berlin for a while, although his censure did not result in a total break of communication. In early June, Padmore sent a note to Münzenberg and asked to be invited to the conference and proposed to arrange for a delegation of ex-servicemen from Africa in order to underline the call for the disbandment of the Imperial African armies at the congress.63 Padmore’s proposal came after he had read in the newspapers that the conference had been moved to Geneva.64 The organizers in Berlin were delighted with the prospect of having a delegation of African ex-servicemen at the conference and urged Padmore to do his utmost to get the Africans to Geneva.65 However, nothing came out of these plans either: the Swiss authorities did not give the permission to hold a congress near the League of Nations headquarters. Finally, the conference took place in Amsterdam in late August 1932: the World Congress against the Imperialist War. Padmore, eventually, did not participate at the congress.66

62 Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’, 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 70-71. The identification of the recipient of the letter as Hans Thorgersen is based on circumstantial evidence: whereas Padmore seemed to have communicated with Hans Jäger in German (through an intermediary), Thorgersen was fluent in English. As the letter was written in English and directed to ‘Hans’, in addition as Padmore referred in the letter to another person called Hans who also was part of the inner circle of the LAI, it is likely that the recipient was Thorgersen and the person mentioned in the letter was Hans Jäger.


64 In fact, the decision to relocate the conference had already been made in early May. See Secret instructions from the WEB, 10.6.1932, RGASPI 543/1/17, fol. 88b.

65 Letter from IAH Zentralkomitee to Padmore, 7.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 132.

Padmore’s main frustrations with the comrades in Berlin was caused by the chaotic, bureaucratic and pull stringing attitudes towards colonial work that persisted at the LAI headquarters. The main issue at stake had been the organization of a secret and top-secure network to enable the distribution of the anti-colonial agitation and propaganda material of the ITUCNW and the LAI. Much to Padmore’s dismay, the LAI was most of the time late in responding. Following the strategic decision to restrict the activities of the Hamburg Committee to trade union work in the African Atlantic, any other anti-colonial activities were to be at least officially monitored by the LAI. Consequently, when the Hamburg Committee was approached by a peasant organization in Sierra Leone in late 1931, he transferred the case to the LAI headquarters reminding “all work among the peasantry we are leaving to the League, so as not [to] conflict with your sphere of activities.” He directed the comrades in Berlin to prepare a little pamphlet for them, containing demands and directives on how to organize peasants’ committees. He himself could serve as the middleman between the LAI and Sierra Leone; he had Comrade Jones in place in West Africa. But of no avail, Berlin did not respond. “I have connections with a comrade who is prepared to build a section of the League. I told you so several weeks ago, but you don’t answer these specific questions, I have raised,” Padmore wondered in mid-December 1931.

In the same letter to Comrade B [Bob?] at the LAI, Padmore also addressed the issue of sending propaganda material to the Belgian Congo and asked the LAI to either prepare a short booklet in French (“for god’s sake don’t send me any big books”) or to print a pamphlet that had been prepared by the Belgian Communist Party. As with work in Sierra Leone, Padmore pushed Berlin to take colonial work more serious: “Here is a good chance for the League to help the comrades in the Congo.” However, there was not a sound of life from Berlin. This was not surprising since the LAI headquarters were raided a few days later and the situation remained chaotic for the next months.

Even in cases when the Hamburg Committee did receive material from Berlin, it was dependent on other organizations to disseminate agitation and propaganda. African Atlantic were Ada Wright, the mother of one of the Scottsboro Boys, and Arnold Ward, the leader of the Negro Welfare Association in London and one of Padmore’s associates (Pennybaker 2009, p. 75.)

67 Letter from Padmore to Comrade B., 17.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 136a. It is possible that ‘B’ was the mysterious Comrade Bob at the LAI Secretariat.
material. The key organization for the distribution of seditious, as it was termed by the colonial authorities, and thus clandestine material was the ISH. In October 1931, the WEB first consulted Richard Krebs about the matter and thereafter instructed the LAI about the prospects of future cooperation between the two organizations.  

In reality, however, the master plan did not function perfectly and at several times were the dispatches from Berlin either not sent at all or their dissemination in the colonies had been patchy. One of the LAI functionaries, a certain Rudy, had discussed the matter with Padmore in late April/early May 1932 and had asked him to get a comrade to be in charge of logistics in Hamburg. Padmore immediately engaged one of his contacts in Hamburg, but then matters got complicated again as this issue became connected with the African delegation to the antiwar congress – or at least Padmore held such an impression. Angrily he informed Comrade Hans (Thørgersen, presumably) that the people in Berlin were total messing up things:

> [My associate] came to our place and together we gathered up all the stuff. I could not fix his money, that’s why I wrote to get your reply. Every day [he] is here. Now you write back about, “our delegate and the congress”.

The message Padmore had received from Berlin seemed to have made him both perplexed and furious. Although the letter from the LAI has not been located, its content can be grasped from Padmore’s reply. The LAI, so Padmore interpreted the order, wanted to change the procedures once again or, alternatively, wanted to make

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69 Letter to the Communist Fraction of the LAI Secretariat from WEB, 16/10-1931, RGASPI 542/1/54, fol. 94.
70 The identification of ‘Rudy’ is a problematic issue. There are two potential candidates: either Otto Katz or Rudolf/Rodolfo Katz. According to British intelligence sources, Otto Katz was one of Münzenberg’s associates and been working at the LAI for some period in the late 1920s. One of his aliases, British intelligence claimed, was ‘Rudolf’/Rudolf Katz (see TNA KV2/1382). However, Otto Katz is said to have moved to Moscow in 1930, where he became the director of the Mezrabpom Filmunternehmen. In spring 1933, he turned up in Paris and was again part of Münzenberg’s inner circle (Weber & Herbst 2008, p. 437). It is therefore unlikely that he had been in contact with Padmore in 1932. On the other hand, not much is known about Rudolf Katz or Dr. Rodolfo Katz as he was known by the Scotland Yard. He claimed to be a journalist for an Argentine newspaper although he was suspected to be a member of the KPD (see TNA KV2/2178). According to Stephen Koch, “the Katz so often seen at Burgess’s Bentinck Street was Rudolph Katz, an agent who except in his allegiances was very unlike Otto” and that he was “a member of the Soviet apparatus.” (Steven Koch Double Lives. Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of Intellectuals, New York: Enigma Books 2004, pp. 359-360, fn 15.) There was also a third person whose name was Rudolf: Dr. Rudolf Hediger alias Giorgi Dimitrov, the head of the WEB. However, Padmore could not have been in contact with Dimitrov at this point: Dimitrov had spent the first six months of 1932 in Moscow.
71 Letter from Padmore to Hans (Thørgersen?), 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 71.
some changes in a certain dispatch. Padmore, who already had notified his contacts in the port cities about the forthcoming consignment, was furious:

> I wrote to the comrades in the ports taking up this question of sending the stuff. Now, do you mean that I must tell them to hold on? Comrades, I don’t work in this crazy fashion. I don’t make promises for the sake of raising my right hand, but when I promise to do something to advance our work.  

Perhaps Padmore was referring to the sudden decision to relocate the antiwar conference from Berlin to Geneva and therefore had to withhold the dispatch? Whatever the case, someone in Berlin must have reacted quickly as the LAI received new instructions about the organization of the transfer of printed material from Berlin to the colonies only a few days after Padmore’s rating. At a meeting with the ISH (it is not known if Padmore participated) it was decided to nominate special envoys in certain European port cities whose sole duty was to organize the transfer and shipment of published materials. These agents were to be nominated jointly by the LAI and the ISH and should whenever possible have a colonial background, i.e., Indians, Arabs or Africans, as their background was much more suitable to establish the needed contacts onboard the ships. The idea was to post agents in the following ports: Cardiff, Liverpool and London in England; Marseilles, Dunkirk and Bordeaux in France; Hamburg and Bremen in Germany; Amsterdam in Holland and Antwerp in Belgium. While the agents were to make use of the international network and connections of the ISH, the costs for the operation were to be covered by the various national sections of the LAI. If this system of port agents was ever fully established is not known. However, the above discussion is a good example of the close cooperation between the various units in the Comintern network – or at least an anticipated one.

### 5.5. Students from Africa

One of the key objectives of the Comintern’s colonial work had been to enlist African students for training at the KUTV and the Lenin School in Moscow. Although the task to select suitable candidates originally had been given to the organizers of the

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72 Letter from Padmore to Hans (Thørgersen?), 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 71.
73 RGASPI 542/1/55, fol. 27.
World Conference of Negro Workers, the tactics had been changed in autumn 1930. One outcome of the October meeting in Berlin between Macaulay, Small, Chattopadhyaya and Smeral had been that the LAI was to coordinate and monitor the transfer of African students. The role of the Hamburg Committee and the ITUCNW in this strategy had not been defined, neither was the Hamburg Committee projected to be involved in praxis at this point. Instead, Macaulay and Small promised to select prospective candidates and inform the LAI headquarters about their progress.

Not much seemed to have happened thereafter and Padmore – who at that time had been in charge of the business at the Negro Bureau of the RILU in Moscow – became anxious and inquired about the matter from Ford. Ford, who had been in contact with Macaulay, informed Padmore that he was not familiar with the question about sending students from Africa to Moscow. “As this question had been discussed at Berlin during their [Macaulay’s and Small’s] return from the 5th Congress I was not familiar with it and have communicated with Chatto at Berlin who was more familiar with it,” he informed Padmore in late January 1931, and added a few days later: “The question of the students. Of course I know nothing of the arrangements between Macaulay and Chatto at Berlin.” Ford’s attitude was not surprising – in fact, the January 1931 Resolution that had outlined the tasks of the Hamburg Committee did not include the task of acquiring African students for the KUTV or the Lenin School.

Another challenge arose with the African intermediaries, especially Frank Macaulay. They had promised to perform the work on the spot and to nominate the candidates, but at least Macaulay had not been in a hurry to return to West Africa. In fact, what Ford did not know was that the comrades at the LAI headquarters and Frank Macaulay had already been in contact with each other. At first, Hans Thørgersen had tried to be in contact with Macaulay and to interrogate from him about his plans. Macaulay, who was still in England in January 1931, tried to excuse himself but his response triggered an angry reply from Chattopadhyaya, criticizing him to labour “under a very serious misunderstanding with regard to the arrangements we made when you were here.” Chattopadhyaya remarked in a paternalistic-sarcastic tone that he had not written to him as he had only received a letter since he left Berlin and was under the impression that he was on his way to Nigeria. In his letter, Macaulay had

75 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 7.2.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 52.
written about the probable expenses in connection with each student, but Chattopadhyaya reminded him that the deal was that the transfer of money was only to be made after the students had been selected and their selection had been confirmed by the LAI:

It was no part of the arrangements that we were to send money to you just when you demanded it nor was it part of the arrangements that you should select the students in your own mind beforehand without having personally examined their fitness for study and without having communicated to us their names, their occupation, their age, their social status (i.e. whether worker, student, etc.).

Macaulay, for reasons not known, had also started to question the advisability of the whole arrangement of sending students to Moscow and, in Chattopadhyaya’s mind, must have shown clear signs of deviation from ‘the right path’. Chattopadhyaya’s reaction to Macaulay’s ambivalence was prompt and harsh:

I am very sorry that the tone of your letter does not produce the impression of seriousness such as would be expected from a revolutionary political worker. If you would be so good as to sit down quietly and think over the exact details of the arrangements we arrived at, you will find that your letter is an insult to us and that you cannot expect us to continue any serious dealings with you unless you are prepared to look upon the political work in Nigeria from a different point of view. In any case we shall do nothing whatsoever until you have arrived at Lagos and have sent us a reply – a detailed and reliable reply – on the basis of which we can decide what kind of action we should take regarding the testing of the selected students and the arrangements in connection with their studies.

Perhaps Chattopadhyaya realized that the tone of his letter easily could be misunderstood and therefore he tried to apply a softer tone in the rest of his letter, praising the potentials of Macaulay as the spearhead of the radical movement in Nigeria. The corrective message of the letter, Chattopadhyaya assured Macaulay, was only for the best of him:

We believe that you are in a position to do some work in your country otherwise we should have entered into no connection with you. But just because of that fact your duty is only the

76 (Copy) Letter from Chattopadhyaya to Frank Macaulay, Berlin 16.1.1931, filed in TNA KV2/1056. The earlier correspondence between Thørgersen and Macaulay is indicated in the letter.
greater to devote yourself to the task in spite of all the inconveniences and risks that may arise.78

Macaulay’s response to Chattopadhyaya’s criticism is not known. One would not be surprised if he – at least for a while – must have felt bitterness, but certainly not for too long: after his return to Nigeria, he was to become associated with Padmore and the Hamburg Committee.

However, echoes of the potential rift between Macaulay and the LAI perhaps even reached Moscow. Padmore informed Ford to be cautious and not to rush things:

On the question about the students it is not advisable to move too rapidly. We must display some caution until we know exactly where we stand with these people. After the Macaulays have replied to our correspondence and we know their attitude we can then raise the question of sending us students. In the meanwhile find out from Chatto what is the decision. I shall ask him a similar question.79

Padmore’s order to Ford in March 1931 reveals two things. First, although the question of African students at least officially was still to be coordinated by the LAI headquarters, Padmore had started to question the potentials of the LAI to handle the issue. Second, Padmore – or someone else at the Negro Committee of the RILU – wanted to establish direct contact with the African intermediaries, perhaps projecting a transfer of the task of coordinating the issue of African students from the LAI to the ITUCNW. Perhaps Padmore’s revision of tactics was prompted by an inquiry from a certain Keable ‘Mote from South Africa. He had sent Padmore a list of radicals anxious to get in touch with the ITUCNW. Keable ‘Mote himself asked Padmore if his organization could assist him financially to come to Europe to study trade union law and “other subjects connected with the revolutionary movements in Europe.”80

The letter and Padmore’s reply is highly interesting as it reveals the complicated structures that had been established regarding communication with Africans. Keable ‘Moto’s letter was addressed to George Padmore, Chairman of the Negro Bureau of the RILU, 24 Frederickstrasse, Berlin! Similarly, Padmore’s reply was “from the Negro Bureau of the RILU, in care of the League Against Imperialism,

79 Letter from Padmore to Ford, 17.3.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 60.
80 Copy of Letter from Keable ’Moto to Padmore, filed as 134./No.53./Cop.3. 17/III/’31, RGASPI 534/7/74, fol. 19.
24 Friedrichstrasse, Berlin” – as if both Padmore and the Negro Bureau were based in Germany! Padmore was certainly at that time residing in Moscow and the Negro Committee of the RILU was based there, too. Thus, the correspondence indicates that the LAI headquarters in Berlin were at this point still regarded to be the relay station for communications between Moscow and Africa in matters of prospective African students for training in Moscow. The Hamburg Committee, on the other hand, was at this point not part of the strategic outline in this particular issue.

5.5.1. A Liberian Comrade for Moscow

The question of African students was never to be a duty of Ford when he was in charge of the Hamburg Committee. Not least, this is evident from the official reports Ford had sent to Moscow outlining his activities: it was not an issue to be recorded. The non-involvement of the Hamburg Committee – but perhaps not the ITUCNW in Moscow – in this project is also confirmed by the decision of the RILU Secretariat of October 1, when it drafted a new agenda for the Hamburg Committee. Among the six points, none touched upon the question of recruiting African students. On the other hand, he could have been engaged in the matter as part of his commitments for the LAI but he never seemed to have received such instructions from Berlin. Therefore, the plan of acquiring students from Africa was never activated during much of 1931 due to the restricted potentials of the LAI in establishing direct contacts in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the issue of enlisting Africans for training in Moscow was confused as the ITUCNW and the Hamburg Committee had not been prohibited to engage in the question either. While Ford did not take an active role in raising the issue with his West African contacts, perhaps due to Padmore’s order of a cautious approach, he seemed to have pondered about the possibility to call on African seamen in Hamburg. Padmore seems to have raised a similar idea when he asked John A. Mahon about enlisting Negro (African) students, although the latter had replied that he had to discuss the matter with representatives of the British Section of the LAI and the

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81 Letter to T.W. Keable, Mote/Kroonstad/Orange Free State, 18.3.1931, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 9-10.
82 Minutes of a meeting of the RILU Secretariat (in German), 1.10.1931, RGASPI 534/3/614, fol. 74.
The idea, it seems, was to have them trained at the KUTV and the RILU so that they thereafter could be engaged by the ITUCNW as agents and intermediaries.

Ford’s ambitions had been to select some African seamen and send them for a visit to the Soviet Union. In his mind, such an undertaking was both reasonable and of propaganda value: “In my opinion to have brought workers, real workers from the ship even for a short stay in the USSR would be a thousand times more valuable than many of the delegations that come to the USSR, and especially for our African work.” However, the crux of the matter was that his plan fell upon deaf ears by the ISH leadership. In their mind, such an undertaking was nothing but to arrange a worthless pleasure trip for some Africans. Not surprisingly, the plan was rejected.84

Nevertheless, Ford eventually managed to convince the comrades in Hamburg to go ahead with his plan, although on a much more limited agenda. The chap to be selected was Nathan Warner Grey, alias Comrade Smith,85 a nineteen year-old Liberian who had been stranded in Hamburg in 1929 and since then had been doing odd jobs in an auto shop. Comrade Smith was a Vai and had received some training in an American school in Monrovia and had experienced life both in the countryside (his father was a farmer), on Firestone’s rubber plantation and of the seamen onboard the ships. In Ford’s mind he was “quite intelligent” and his background made him a perfect candidate for the KUTV. Ford had enlisted him as his personal assistant in Hamburg, won his confidence and the two of them had started to visit ship and held meetings on board together. Ford was very impressed by Smith, whom he had educated himself:

I have been training him in quite a personal way, private lessons at my home as well as at the Club, in the history and meaning of the labour movement as well as in the C[ommunist] movement as a whole. It has been remarkable how well he has taken on and the interest shown in the work. Therefore he has some little foundation in the theory of our movement.86

After one month of practical training, Ford regarded Smith to be capable of doing work onboard alone. Although Ford was somewhat reluctant to propose to Smith that

83 Letter of Mahon to Padmore, 9.7.1931, RGASPI 534/7/50, fol. 107.
84 Letter from Ford to Padmore, 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 81.
85 The identification of Nathan Warner Grey alias Smith has caused some confusion. In his earlier study on African and African American students in Moscow, McClellan (1993, p. 385) noted that he came from the Gold Coast, while in his later work he corrected this statement and claimed that Smith was a Liberian (McClellan 2007, p. 75).
86 Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 80.
he should go to Moscow, the idea of getting him fully trained and to become an agitator either in Africa or in Hamburg outweighed the loss of his assistant:

I recommend that this comrade be given special trade union training. The political and economic situation in Liberia and among Kru seamen, largely from Liberia is such that we should have as soon as possible a native comrade who can take on to the organizational work. It is also very possible that the comrade could be of very good use here in Hamburg. I therefore recommend that the comrade be given as much as possible practical work in the Inter-Club either at Leningrad or Odessa.\(^{87}\)

Comrade Smith had been anxious to leave for Moscow so Ford asked Padmore to speed up the practical arrangements for Smith’s transport from Hamburg to Leningrad. Berlin was to be involved (“it is necessary that you get the proper comrades in Berlin INSTRUCTED in time”), but Ford suggested that he himself could take care of the arrangements. All that was needed was to get him a passport and detailed instruction of how to proceed.\(^{88}\)

Shortly after his communication with Padmore, Ford was able to enlist another potential candidate, a seaman from the Gold Coast. However, as Ford had not received any instructions about how to handle the issue of sending students to the KUTV, the potential candidate decided to make another trip to Africa. Ford informed Moscow in August 1931 that he was expected to return to Hamburg by November. The Liberian, i.e. Comrade Smith, on the other hand was still with him, eagerly awaiting the decision of him being accepted for the KUTV.\(^{89}\)

Comrade Smith eventually made it to Moscow where he enrolled in the KUTV in autumn 1932. He soon was engaged with assignments other than studies. In October 1931 he was given the task of preparing a draft version of demands for the Liberian Trade Union organization that was to be established in the near future.\(^{90}\) Padmore was to become his key collaborator and he would evolve as the mastermind of the Liberian operation within the coming years.

5.5.2. Fishing Africans: Hamburg – Berlin – Moscow in the long run

\(^{87}\) Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 80.
\(^{88}\) Letter from Ford to Padmore, (Hamburg) 13.7.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 80.
\(^{90}\) Minutes of Negro Committee/RILU, 10.10.1931, RGASPI 534/8/668, fol. 14.
The question of students from Africa was to become one of Padmore’s main concerns when he moved from Moscow to Hamburg and was in charge of the Hamburg Committee. At his first meeting at the LAI Secretariat in late October 1931, he raised the issue of changing the policy and proposed a more active role of the Hamburg Committee in enlisting African students. The discussions had been fruitful, Padmore reported to Moscow, and the League agreed to his suggestions. From now on, Padmore was to have a central role and he envisaged acquiring the projected full quota of students from the various countries in a short time.\footnote{Report from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 120a.}

One of his first activities was to re-activate the dormant plan to engage local contacts as intermediaries for the purpose of selecting African students. A few days after his arrival in Hamburg, Padmore sent a letter to E.F. Small in the Gambia where he reminded the latter about Small’s promise to send him names of young men who would like to become students in Moscow. Padmore urged Small to pay close attention to the matter and promised himself to undertake the necessary arrangements to bring the prospective students over from Africa as soon as he received a message from Small.\footnote{Letter from Padmore to Comrade [E.F.] Small, 20.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 123.}

Padmore had to tackle the issue of African students very soon. About two weeks after his meeting in Berlin, Padmore received a message from Münzenberg who informed that two Africans, Comrades Robinson and Adabo, had turned up in Berlin. Garan Kouyaté, indicating that not only Ford but also Kouyaté had been active in this respect, had selected them. Unfortunately, the two Africans had run into troubles in Berlin as they only had Max Ziese’s address at the headquarters of the IRH in Berlin. Ziese, showing the similar bureaucratic attitude as he did in 1930, had little interest in helping them and turned them away as he claimed that it was not the duty of him or the IRH to assist the Africans. Luckily for them, they were picked up by Joseph Bilé and taken to the LAI. Münzenberg gave them money but notified Padmore that he did not believe that Robinson and Adabo really were the two comrades whose journey Kouyaté had organized. Therefore, he asked Padmore to refund the expenses of the two Africans “as those two comrades were obviously sent on the line of the RILU.”\footnote{Letter from Münzenberg to Padmore, 11.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 118.} Padmore, who reported about the incident in Berlin to Moscow, was furious and called Max Ziese a real chauvinist and demanded that...
Moscow take immediate steps and reprimand Ziese. Ziese, after having been notified of Padmore’s critique, criticized Padmore and the comrades at the RILU Negro Committee for not following well-known instructions:

Why do you make complaints just against me and have not regarded that the two friends were sented from P[aris] without provisions for the fare? This is one of the misunderstandings N[egro] Bureau with “Firework” belongs to the same rubric. It seems that it is not necessary for a chief of bureau of the head-office to know the most important instructions. It seems to be easier to threat “Firework” that to treat practical questions and to inform carefully the branches about the instructions. In the last affair it is indeed necessary to know the instructions.

Ziese emphasized – in the similar harsh tone – that as he had not received any instructions from Moscow to render any assistance to African students. Instead, he underlined that he acted, and always will, under strict order of the RILU headquarters only because “(t)he decision of the chief direction of the head-office means that the question of disciples concerns only this head-office and are not matter for our branch-office”, not to speak of Padmore and the Hamburg Committee.

The communication between Münzenberg and Padmore in November 1931 sheds some light about the division of labour in terms of African students. If the students had been selected through the ITUCNW with the intention of being engaged in labour union activities in the African Atlantic, it was to be an RILU affair. If, on the other hand, they had been selected for future anti-colonial agitation, it was to be a LAI affair. In the case of the two African seamen, Münzenberg noted that they had been picked by Kouyaté and therefore were “on the Profintern line”; consequently, as they were not Negro comrades from the French colonies, the LAI had to be reimbursed for its expenses. Be as it may, the two Africans arrived in Moscow in December 1931 and the LAI Secretariat, but not Padmore, was notified by the Eastern Secretariat – perhaps indicating that their transfer had been a LAI affaire.

Further light on the question of African students, in particular the case of the two Africans that Kouyaté had selected for training, is shed by the communication

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97 Münzenberg to Padmore, 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 122.
Padmore received from Otto Huiswoud in early January 1932. Huiswoud informed Padmore that the matter of students had not been discussed at all in Moscow. Referring to an earlier letter from Padmore about rumours of nationalist tendencies among foreign students at the Lenin School, Huiswoud argued that “W”, the person who had addressed the issue to Padmore, perhaps Willi Münzenberg or Albert Walter?, had misunderstood the affaire. There had been discussions about the struggle against white chauvinism and against tendencies of bourgeois nationalism, nothing else. With regards to the case of the two Africans whom Kouyaté had sent to Moscow, Huiswoud replied “there is no question regarding them at all.” The apprehensions of “W” of their supposed nationalist tendencies were not true, Huiswoud calmed Padmore, “W” only used the information he had received and had applied it to these students. On the other hand, Moscow took the Robinson and Adabo cases seriously as it indicated some severe organizational shortcomings:

While it is true that we only discussed the question of trips to A. And R., nevertheless, his [i.e., “W:s”] whole approach is a very mechanical one because we must consider the necessities of our work in a given spot, according to the necessity and cannot simply carry out decisions or suggestions in a mechanical way. I think we shall take up the whole question so as to get matter straightened out once and for all.99

Huiswoud’s letter clearly stated that the question of African students was regarded in Moscow to be a much more complicated one than to be left to Padmore’s or even Huiswoud’s decision, as the latter underlined:

Regarding the school question, I’ve send a special letter to the political commission dealing with the entire matter and I expect them to take action, so that we know where we stand. Until then I think it inadvisable to consider anyone to do anything in this respect, because it will simply mean more trouble for us and none of the results we expect.100

Much to Padmore’s dismay, the question of selecting African students turned out to be much more complicated than both he and Huiswoud initially had imagined. As it involved tactical, strategic and ideological considerations the matter was to be discussed throughout the year.

99 Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 6.1.1932 (stamp), RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 33.
100 Letter from Huiswoud to Padmore, 21.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 124.
Meanwhile one of the two Africans in Moscow, Comrade Robinson, fell ill and had to quit his training program at the KUTV. As it was feared that he would not survive the Russian winter, he was sent back to France. Someone in Moscow informed Padmore about the decision and he, in his turn, wrote a letter to Hans Thørgersen at the LAI, notifying him that the Hamburg Committee and the LAI headquarters were instructed to arrange for his transfer to Paris.\textsuperscript{101} While it was Padmore’s task to contact the friends in Paris about what is to be done, Thørgersen was to arrange for his transport from Berlin to Paris. Money was not an issue, Padmore assured Thørgersen, “(t)he amount envolved [sic] to get him from Berlin to Paris will be reimbursed by the friends in the East in the regular business way. Let us know the amount outlayed.”\textsuperscript{102} It is evident from Padmore’s letter that Robinson had travelled by ship from Russia directly to Hamburg, from there he was to go to Berlin; Padmore’s letter was in fact his letter of introduction to Thørgersen. Padmore was full of praise of Robinson and expected him to be of much use in future:

The bearer has a very high impression of the fatherland. His short stay has done much to raise his ideological level. It is regrettable that he could not stand the climate. His companion is doing well. He will explain details to you.\textsuperscript{103}

Most crucially, Padmore underlined that Comrade Max (Ziese) should be involved in the matter at all, “(f)or this is a C.I. question, as it involves the “Kutva”. ” In his mind the best solution was to instruct Joseph Bilé to handle the case.\textsuperscript{104} Eventually, Robinson’s transfer via Berlin to Paris was carried out. Padmore’s last contact with Robinson was in February when he sent him a short note wishing him ‘bon voyage’ on his way to Marseilles.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{101} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’ [Hans Thørgersen], no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 53. The letter is filed among Padmore’s correspondence during January 1932. Padmore had sent a previous letter to Hans [Thørgersen] on the 7\textsuperscript{th} of January 1932. The letter above was Padmore’s reply to a letter from Hans. In the first letter, Padmore was anxious to hear about the state of affairs at the LAI Headquarter after it had been raided, in his second letter he commends upon Hans’ answer about the situation in Berlin after the raid. It is thus likely that the letter was written during the latter half of January 1932. The identity of the recipient of Padmore’s letters as Hans Thørgersen at the LAI is based on the assumption that Padmore communicated with him in English, while he used an intermediary when he communicated with Hans Jäger in German.

\textsuperscript{102} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’ [Hans Thørgersen], no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 53.

\textsuperscript{103} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’ [Hans Thørgersen], no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 53.

\textsuperscript{104} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’ [Hans Thørgersen], no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 53.

\textsuperscript{105} Letter from Padmore to Robinson, 11.2.1932, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 102.
5.5.3. Comrade Joken or the long way of the transfer of East Africans to Moscow

Apart from settling the Robinson’s transfer, Padmore informed Thorgersen in early 1932 that he intended to make a trip to Berlin to discuss the question of the students.\textsuperscript{106} If and when the meeting occurred is not known. A few months later, however, the selection and transfer of Africans to Moscow definitively aroused on the surface. At this point, Padmore planned to send two “East Africans” who were residing at the time in England to Moscow. One of them was Johnstone Kamau or Jomo Kenyatta with whom Padmore already had collaborated and who had become his close associate. The other was Parmenas S. Mockerie (1900/1901-?). He was a young Kikuyu who had been trained as a teacher by Church of Scotland missionaries and had been head-teacher of a missionary school since 1925. He had chosen by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) as one of its two representatives to put his views before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament which was investigating East African affairs\textsuperscript{107}. The other delegate was Kenyatta who had returned to Kenya in September 1930.\textsuperscript{108} Both of them left East Africa for London in early May 1931.\textsuperscript{109}

Padmore had met the two Kikuyu delegates during his visit to England in April 1932 and at that time proposed to them to go to Moscow as is revealed in Padmore’s letter to Kenyatta, dated 6 May 1932 in a somewhat cryptic paragraph:

> Some where in favour and others not. As I told you some comrades are disappointed in the way in which you permitted yourself and more important still, your countrymen to be made asses of by Norman Leys and other Liberals. After explaining the full nature of my case, the comrades agreed to my proposal. So within a short time after hearing from you again I shall let you know the final arrangements and when you should come here.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{106} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’ [Hans Thørgersen], no date, RGASPI 534/3/754, fol. 53.

\textsuperscript{107} The 1931 Joint Parliamentary Committee Upon Closer Union in East Africa.

\textsuperscript{108} Angus Calder, “A Note on Parmenas Mockerie,” \textit{The Journal of Commonwealth Literature} 18, 1983, pp. 128-130. The ‘S’ in Mockerie’s name seems to be a miss-spelling in the Comintern files, his name was Parmenas Githendu Mukiri (originally Mockerie).


\textsuperscript{110} Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, (Hamburg) 6.5.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 72. The letter is a duplicate, the original letter being most likely typed on the stationery of the Hamburg Committee/ITUCNW. Norman Leys was a doctor in the Kenyan medical service before retirement in 1918. He thereafter belonged to the metropolitan left critics of colonialism and published in 1931 the book \textit{A Last Chance in Kenya} where he criticized the Kenyan settler state and its treatment of Africans. A critical evaluation of the Labour party’s advisory committee on imperial affairs, to which former colonial officials like Leys belonged, is presented by Berman and Lonsdale 1998, p. 26.
The *faux pas* Padmore referred to in his letter had occurred in early June 1932. Kenyatta had been invited to speak at a Parliamentary Commission investigating the land issue in Kenya, the so-called Morris Carter Kenya Land Commission, and had, according to the *Tanganyika Herald*, argued that the Kikuyu would be satisfied if the Commission included an impartial member. Kenyatta’s associates in London, Reginald Bridgeman of the LAI and Arnold Ward of the NWA, denounced his policy and Padmore criticized him for making a fool of himself:

> How the hell do you expect these white exploiters and oppressors of Africa to be impartial[?] Even the Indians who too are out to rob us know better than that, yet still you talk such foolishness… I was surprised to read that you made such a foolish proposal.\(^{111}\)

Even harsher was his criticism in a subsequent letter:

> As I told you in London in the presence of Mockerie in Cambridge Street, that you have made an ass and a laughing stock of yourself and your nation by fooling around with a bunch of Liberals who are as much imperialists as Condiff Leister. We Negro comrades cannot help but feeling ashamed of the way in which you are making these people make a fool out of you. Even the “TANGANYIKA HERALD”, the paper of a group of Indian business men who have come over to East Africa to enrich themselves out of the natives were forced to criticize you. Why don’t you fellows get some sense into your head? Don’t you realize that these white so-called friends of Africa are just a bunch of frauds who are out to make jack-asses out of you while the imperialists are enslaving your nation?\(^{112}\)

Mockerie, too, must have acted in a way or said something that was regarded as “stupid” as Padmore ordered Kenyatta to write to him and to advise him to “keep his mouth shot [sic].” Otherwise, Padmore warned, the British authorities would have an easy time in finding an excuse to deport them from England.\(^{113}\)

Foolish or not, Kenyatta and Mockerie were, in Padmore’s mind, still the most suitable candidates to be trained in Moscow. Consequently, he informed the LAI to proceed “along the line agreed upon” and notified them that he expected to hear from

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\(^{111}\) Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 17.5.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 73. The letter is a duplicate but the original letter was not typed on the stationery of the ITUCNW but perhaps of the LAI. If so, then Padmore could have written the letter from the LAI headquarters from Berlin.

\(^{112}\) Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 1.6.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 77.

\(^{113}\) Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 6.5.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 72.
However, his colleagues in Berlin were rather hesitant about the idea. Padmore answered with a stiff letter to Hans Thørgersen. Padmore accused the comrades in Berlin for their bureaucratic attitudes and for their having missed the whole point for why Africans were sent to Moscow. Instead of sending trustful and already revolutionary-minded candidates to Moscow, an opposite strategy was to be applied. “We are waiting for 100% Bolsheviks to come out of Central Africa. No comrades, it is our task to get hold of the raw people, and send them back 100% Bolsheviks,” Padmore blustered, and criticized everyone in Berlin for their ineffective and dilettante handling of the matter. In his mind, his connections with the two East Africans was a perfect opportunity to enlist two highly interesting candidates but it had to be flexible and not confine oneself to the prevailing bureaucratic attitudes: “These people are already in England. We don’t have to go to the trouble and expense of bringing them these men from Africa, and if we don’t hurry up, the people will have to go back, and our chance had gone.”

The response of Hans [Thørgersen] is not known, but apparently something happened. Perhaps Padmore received an excuse from the LAI headquarters or even an invitation to present a constructive solution to the problem? Be as it may, on May 16, the LAI headquarters obtained a proposal from Padmore, containing an outline for immediate actions, including a list of African students whom he proposed to be sent to Moscow. The list included the following Africans: Johnstone Kenyatta and Parmenas S. Mockerie, both from Kenya; Brown, a 22-years old person from the Gold Coast; two students from Nigeria, who were to be selected by the local trade union as well as two persons from Haiti. Padmore had already been in contact with three of them, Kenyatta, Mockerie and Brown. As a constructive solution to the deadlock, he proposed that while he would be in charge of the individual screening of the candidates, the LAI were to be authorized of sending them to Moscow.

It seems as if Padmore’s proposal was accepted as he informed Kenyatta about the positive decision the following day. However, the practical details of their transfer were to be discussed within the near future as Padmore was expecting the arrival of “somebody” who was to make the final decisions.

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114 Letter from Padmore to LAI, 5.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 119.
115 Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’, (Hamburg) 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 70-71. It is likely that the recipient was Hans Thørgersen.
116 Vorschläge über Neger-Studenten (Padmore), letter received 16.5.1932, RGASPI 542/1/55, fol 26.
117 Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 17.5.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 73.
The mysterious “somebody” turned out to be “the leader of our Negro work.” This mysterious person could be identified as Otto Huiswoud, but was it really Huiswoud who had arrived in Germany? Most likely the anticipated meeting was the one that took place in Hamburg after the ISH World Congress. Here, the key person was one Comrade Mason of the RILU. So far it cannot be established that Mason was an alias of Huiswoud but rather that we are dealing with two different persons. Perhaps Huiswoud had travelled to Hamburg – but why is there no reference to him in the minutes of the meeting? There is one indirect reference to Huiswoud in a subsequent letter of Padmore to the comrades at the LAI headquarters, stating that

Comrade H., the leader of our work at headquarters, made us to understand that the decision which was made at the time of the visit of Small and Macaulay still holds on.

However, from the context of that letter, it is likely that Padmore was referring to an earlier communication with Huiswoud about the policy and strategies to be applied rather than Huiswoud had travelled to Germany and confirmed the agreement of late 1930.

Be as it may, apart from Padmore and Mason, Garan Kouyaté and “the comrades in the League” participated in the negotiations. Once again Kenyatta was criticized for his injudicious behaviour; the opinion of the others present, but also of those with whom Padmore had discussed the matter in London, namely Bridgeman, Rathbone and Ward, about Kenyatta must have been cautious at best, as Padmore informed him: “Their opinion about you is that you have not acted as you should. You say one thing and you do another thing tomorrow.” Padmore had even been informed that Kenyatta had recently been unwilling to cooperate with Ward and that he even had made acquaintance with the Quakers! Once again Padmore warned Kenyatta about the consequences of such actions:

We want you to understand that if we decide to give you a scholarship, much will depend upon the advice of comrade Ward who is a sincere comrade and has our confidence. So when

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118 See further CoWoPa 20/2010.
120 No reference of any comrades of the League are found in the minutes of the meeting in Hamburg!
you play these little tricks on Ward and he advises us not to help you, than nobody else’s word will carry as much weight as his. 121

Still, for some strange reason, Padmore decided to put his faith in Kenyatta – or was it out of sheer desperation of once again loosing a prospective candidate? Mockerie, who was his other candidate, was even less reliable as it turned out that he hesitated about going to Moscow. In an attempt to settle all differences, Padmore suggested to Kenyatta that both of them were to come over to Berlin, indicating that the ultimate decision of the matter was in the hands of the LAI:

Whatever you fellows decide upon it will be necessary for you to first come to Berlin where we will discuss in full all about the organisation, what the League can do to help the comrades back in Kenya, especially in connection with arranging for a few more East Africans, young fellows like Mockerie to come over to Europe to study. 122

Kenyatta certainly must have felt unjustly beaten. He quickly replied to Padmore that his activities in London had been misunderstood by the comrades and that the accusations were unfounded: the views about the Land Commission expressed in the newspaper were not his but that of the Chairman, he did not put his faith in the cooperation with the Quakers (whom he claimed to be as bad as “the other exploiters and oppressors of our mother land”) and, last but not least, cooperation with Ward had been problematic as it was Ward who had not been in contact with him and informed him about what he wanted. Still, Kenyatta was not bitter about Padmore’s admonition but replied that he appreciated his frankness as it paved the way towards mutual understanding. 123 Consequently, he urged Padmore to settle the date for his departure to Berlin:

You said in your letter that whatever we decide it will be better to come first to Berlin and then we can talk things over, as far as I am concerned I am waiting your decision and I have no

121 Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 1.6.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 77. In Moscow, there is a handwritten small sheet of paper with the following text: “Kenyatta has played us false again promised the material for propaganda did not bring it but got all he can out of the end then run and give it to the Friends these blasted traitors(,)” – filed in RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 99. Such a document was highly compromising and could be used against Kenyatta. The author was most likely Arnold Ward; Padmore outlined the misunderstanding – as it later turned out to be - in his letter to Kenyatta but not in his communication with the LAI!

122 Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 1.6.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 78.

123 Letter from Kenyatta to Padmore, London 9.6.1932, RGASPI 534/7/74, fol. 64.
more to decide than what I have already explained to you. In this connection I wish to ask you to try and expedite the matter, because it means waste of time waiting over here, and as you know, the time wasted can never be gained. I hope you will understand my points.  

Kenyatta’s explanation about his actions convinced Padmore and he promptly sent a letter to him excusing for the unjust criticism. Padmore was relieved to hear that Kenyatta was still keen of going to Moscow. Mockerie, on the other hand, was not anymore a prospective candidate; Padmore had received a letter from him about his negative decision. Therefore, Padmore’s plan was now that only Kenyatta was to come to Berlin. However, he notified Kenyatta that he had to discuss the matter again with the comrades at the LAI headquarters and would confirm the arrangements when he received an answer from Berlin.

However, Kenyatta must have written to Padmore an earlier letter where he also had refuted the accusations against him. Padmore, who had received the letter on 11 May 1932, promptly reacted and notified the LAI headquarters that contrary to the earlier black-painting Kenyatta was still a sincere and trustful candidate. In the same vein, he blasted the LAI and especially its British Section for its inactivity, even a racist attitude towards Negro work and in their dealings with Africans. In particular, its assistance to comrades Jones and Kenyatta was a disappointment:

We cannot refrain from saying that the Negro comrades are still very distrustful about the attitude of the League towards them. The former regime and the Negroes were not very harmonious. As we pointed out, the League made many promises which were never fulfilled. If we intend to make any headway this must be dispelled and our Negro Committee is trying to remove the impression among our supporters that the League is an organisation that has no

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125 Instead, he decided to continue his studies at Ruskin College in Oxford. He also in contact with Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press; Leonard Woolf had from 1919 been the secretary of the Labour Party’s Advisory Committees on International and Imperial Affairs. In 1934, the Hogarth Press published Mockerie’s short book, An African Speaks for His People. At this time, however, Mockerie had already returned to Kenya – he had left England in 1933.
126 Letter from Padmore to Kenyatta, 17.6.1932, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 82fp+bp.
127 Unfortunately, the letter is not filed among the other letters in the RGASPI 534/7/74-folder that contains the correspondence of the ITUCNW. A reference to the letter is made in Padmore’s letter to the LAI, dated 12.6.1932, stating that he received a letter from him “yesterday”, i.e., 11 May 1932. In theory, this letter could have been the one Kenyatta wrote on 9 May 1932 – provided that it was immediately sent away by express mail to Hamburg.
interest in Africa. [...] It makes it very difficult for us to dispel their distrust and suspicion because we have no concrete facts to prove otherwise.128

Time was running out, Padmore warned, and demanded quick decisions from the LAI. The most pressing one was that he had no funds available to cover the expenses of prospective candidates – Kenyatta and a Caribbean that had been recommended by the Negro Welfare Association and was a member of the CPGB (perhaps Chris Braithewaite/Jones?) – as well as a stranded comrade (Foster Jones) and therefore asked the LAI to help him out with 16 Pounds.129

The response of the LAI to Padmore’s request is not known in verbatim, although it must have been a negative one as Padmore’s reply was an outburst of frustration and reprimand. So he had stepped on someone’s toes when he had claimed that colonial work had been handled in a dilatory fashion? Maybe not, but what about the Leagues attitude towards Negro work: nothing concrete to report about, Padmore blasted! What about the most recent discussions he and the other Negro comrade(s) had in Berlin130 about principles and mutual responsibilities, Padmore asked. Jones matter was a pressing one, Padmore reminded, Kenyatta’s not: “for Kenyatta and his comrade at least have some temporary adjustment.” Padmore proposed to take time-off in order to find a positive solution in the stalemate concerning Kenyatta’s going to Moscow “until the whole matter is cleared up by R.”131

Who was ‘R’? Was it Rudolf Katz of the LAI or even Rudolf Hediger alias Georgi Dimitrov? Whoever it was, the outcome of the crisis in June was that Kenyatta eventually was called to Berlin. On 12 August he signed his personnel card and thereafter he and Padmore travelled to Moscow where Kenyatta enrolled in the KUTV under the alias James Joken in September 1932.132 At this point the British Secret Service had become alarmed by Kenyatta’s activities. An intercepted telegram from

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128 Letter by NN to ‘Dear Comrades’, 12.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 145. Based on the content of the letter, it is likely that the author was George Padmore and the recipient someone at the LAI headquarters, most probably Hans Thørgersen as the letter was written in English.
130 Padmore’s reference to a recent conversation in Berlin between the Negro comrades and the comrades of the LAI is referring to an occasion after the meeting in Hamburg in late May. His use of the word ‘comrades’ indicates that there were at least two Negro comrades present, most probably he and Kouyaté.
131 Letter from [Padmore] to ‘Dear Comrades’ [LAI], 16.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 159-160. The identity of the author can be established as the letter has hand-written adds which are more or less identical with Padmore’s writing. The recipient can be established through a textual analysis.
132 Johnstone Kenyatta, personal file: political testimony and personal card, RGASPI 495/198/1211.
Kenyatta to Padmore, noting “letter received not money waiting anxiously,” was wrongly interpreted that the former was on the ITUCNW payroll. What they did not know was that Kenyatta was on his way to Moscow.

### 5.5.4. The incredible escape of Comrade Hamilton

Padmore and Kenyatta were not the only Negro comrades that travelled to Moscow in August 1932. On 4 August 1932, Padmore signed a letter of introduction for Comrade Samuel Padmore, a 28-year old stoker from Trinidad. This chap had been one of the Hamburg Committee’s trusted messengers, taking literature and carrying directives from Hamburg to the comrades in Africa and the Caribbean colonies. However, in July 1932 his activities on board the S/S Ethiopia were exposed and he was victimized. He managed to escape in Antwerp in order to avoid being arrested when the ship arrived in a British port. Technically a deserter and without a passport or any other belongings, he decided to walk from Belgium to Germany. The 17-days march proved to be a nightmare. The police arrested him twice, the first time in Antwerp, the second in Bremerhaven, before he finally reached Hamburg. On his arrival he was in great physical and material want and Padmore tried his best to help him. Samuel Padmore managed for some days to survive in Hamburg. The local office of the German Red Aid (Rote Hilfe Deutschland) gave him 60 Marks in order to buy a pair of shoes, a hat, suit and some underwear. He made daily visits to the harbour where he received food from other Negro comrades who sympathized with him. This continued for a few days until the police picked him up on the street for being without a ship, money or a passport. In order to avoid further difficulties, Padmore decided to get him out of Hamburg and to send him to Moscow. It was for this purpose he wrote the letter of introduction.

Padmore was full of praise of his compatriot. Although he was not a member of the Party – for the simple reason that there are no parties in the colonies in which he has lived from time to time, Padmore pointed out – he nevertheless was a wholehearted supporter of the revolutionary cause and was prepared to join the British

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133 Reference to telegram from Kenyatta to Padmore, 6.8.1932, TNA KV 2/1787.
Party at any time. Padmore assured that his fellow had all the credentials that were needed to become a loyal activist:

By his devotion to our cause, his remarkable political clearness on our programme of the national emancipatory struggle and social (class) movement, we have no reluctancy in fully recommending him as a good social element. Added to his background (seamen for about 10 years) – his opportunities of visiting nearly every important country and seeing for himself the social forces in operation, we feel certain that with some theoretical training our comrade will be a greater asset to our movement in the future.  

Padmore therefore suggested that Samuel Padmore was to enlist at the KUTV but only to participate in the short course as to get a limited but still necessary amount of training. Thereafter, he should be sent back to Hamburg. Padmore ended his letter with a plea: as his fellow countryman had not had a rest for almost three weeks and no other clothes at his disposal than those he had been able to buy in Hamburg, he wished that Samuel Padmore to have a weeks rest and to get some new outfits before he left for Moscow. If George Padmore’s desires were fulfilled or not is not known. Six days later, Samuel Padmore signed his personnel card in Berlin. A few weeks later, perhaps at the same time as Kenyatta, he was enrolled at the KUTV under the alias Hamilton (Hilton).

5.5.5 A new start: the plan of an active engagement by the ITUCNW

At the same time as Padmore had made his suggestion to the LAI in May 1932 about a new start to recruit African students, he envisioned a total revision of the strategy of handling the matter. At the meeting with Mason and Kouyaté concerning the tactics of the ITUCNW after the ISH Congress in Hamburg at the end of May 1932, Padmore put the questions of students at the top of the agenda. Mason was instructed to ask the Eastern Section, i.e., the Eastern Secretariat, for the right of the ITUCNW similar to the LAI to select and send students under the auspices and responsibility of the Hamburg Committee. The idea was to enlist students for special training, the majority only for about nine months, the most capable ones for longer periods. The students

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137 Samuel Padmore, personal data, signed Berlin, 10.8.1932, RGASPI 495/279/71.
139 Samuel Padmore, personal data, signed Berlin 10.8.1932, RGASPI 495/279/71.
140 Samuel Padmore, personal file: political testimony, RGASPI 495/279/71.
were to be trained for specific countries: they were to work at the RILU on concrete problems as to get first hand information about trade union activities, the organization of strikes and other subversive activities as to be able to concentrate on concrete problems in their home countries. Most importantly, the prospective students were to be sent immediately back to their countries and not to be kept hanging in London or Paris. Last, but not least, the meeting agreed upon to select ten students, two of each from Liberia, the Gold Coast, Haiti, British Guiana and East Africa.\(^{141}\)

The above strategic outline, if approved, would have opened a new chapter in the complicated issue of African students. However, it seems as if the apparatus in Moscow was at first not willing to reconsider its grand strategy. Nevertheless, something had happened during the following months as Padmore informed the WEB headquarters in Berlin in September 1932 about the new directives that had been agreed to in Moscow.\(^{142}\) While the Hamburg Committee and the LAI were both still involved in the process of selecting and sending African students to Moscow, the actual engagement followed the outline that Padmore had presented in May, i.e., while the Hamburg Committee was involved in the concrete selection of potential students on behalf of the Comintern, the LAI was only part of the process in agreeing to the principles and in deciding on financial matters:

1. You no doubt are already aware of the fact that the Negro Trade Union Committee has undertaken to secure a number of students from Africa on behalf of the Comintern. This arrangement has been discussed and settled in all its details. As for example, the colonies from which they are to come, the number, qualifications, etc.

2. On the basis of a recent conversation which I had with Comrade Ferdi I was instructed to negotiate for these students as quickly as possible. That is, as fast as the preliminary arrangements are completed and the students ready to leave, Comrade Ferdi would turn over the fares to me in order that I could get some from the colonies.\(^{143}\)


\(^{142}\) Letter from George Padmore concerning different actions, Berlin, 14.9.1932, RGASPI 542/1/54, fol. 92. The recipient of the letter must have been someone at the WEB as Padmore ended his letter by asking for a meeting with Comrade Magnus and informing his reader that he could be contacted through the LAI office. Magnus was the alias of Richard Gypnter who was the secretary of the WEB. On Magnus/Gypnter, see Maria N. Tscherwendinewa, Dontscho Daskalow, W.P. Grusdewa, Hans-Joachim Bernhard, Giorgi Dimitrov, Leipzig/Jena/Berlin: Urania-Verlag 1982, p. 28.

\(^{143}\) Letter from George Padmore concerning different actions, Berlin, 14.9.1932, RGASPI 542/1/54, fol. 92.
At this point, Padmore had at least been able to send Kenyatta to Moscow. Two other candidates, one from Haiti and one from Liberia, were ready to leave, Padmore informed the WEB headquarters, and asked the WEB (through the LAI?) to forward the needed amount of money to cover for their transport. The situation of the candidate from Liberia was a pressing matter as the Liberian authorities were trying to arrest him and therefore needed to be dealt with immediately.144

Padmore’s Liberian contact was Holle Seleh Tamba with whom he had been corresponding throughout the year. Tamba had been a thorn in the flesh of the Liberian authorities for some time: not only had he criticized the government but also published a sharp-tongued article on Liberian conditions in *The Negro Worker*. Padmore urged the LAI to react quickly; otherwise once again a prospective candidate was lost:

> As I have already stated the situation of the Liberian comrade is serious and if we fail to get him out at once it is possible that our whole movement there might suffer a great blow. Because of this I hope you will assist me to get the Comrade away by the opportunity now offers itself.145

This time, however, Berlin acted promptly and Holle Seleh Tamba managed to travel to Moscow.

Eventually, thirteen students from the African Atlantic were enrolled at the KUTV during fall 1932. All of them were given aliases. None of them had been picked up by the LAI; most of them had reached Moscow through the ITUCNW, either via Padmore or Kouyaté. Among the first Africans to arrive was Smith or Nathan Varne Gray who, as previous noted, had been sent to Moscow by James Ford in late summer 1931. In fall 1932 Padmore managed to send at least four students to Moscow: Charles Morris alias Joseph Bilé, James Joken alias Johnstone Kenyatta, Nelson alias Holle Seleh Tamba and Hamilton alias Samuel Padmore. Further, there was Thomas Odabor (“Thomas Sone”) from Nigeria and one “Robert” from the Gold Coast, two seamen who Kouyaté had picked up in Marseille.146

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144 Letter from George Padmore concerning different actions, Berlin, 14.9.1932, RGASPI 542/1/54, fol. 92.
145 Letter from George Padmore concerning different actions, Berlin, 14.9.1932, RGASPI 542/1/54, fol. 92.
146 See Thomas Sonny/Sonne’s personal file, RGASPI 495/279/62, and the personal file of “Robert”, RGASPI 495/279/44. “Robert” is identified by McClellan (1993) as a certain Pier Kalmek originating
(“Charlie Lafayette”) from Liberia had probably arrived to Moscow through the Hamburg Committee and its network. On the other hand, the two South Africans, Greenwood alias Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana (1899-1995) and Jack Hilton alias Nikin Sobia (1908-?) had not been sent through the ITUCNW or the LAI but rather by the CPSA. The identities of “Raymond”, “Henry” and “Roze” (Zou Mangone) have not yet been established. In late 1932, Padmore managed to add a further potential revolutionary on the list of the KUTV: I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, who was enrolled after the Second World Congress of the IRH. His connections to Padmore and his road to Moscow will be outlined in the next chapter.

The bleak performance of the LAI and the Hamburg Committee in their recruitment of African students became an issue for both the RILU and the Comintern in December 1932. Fourteen students after two years was a clear sign than the previous strategy was not working. Padmore indirectly, but politely, pointed in his December 1932 Report towards the failure of the LAI to establish contacts in the African Atlantic; instead, all African contacts had been organized through the Hamburg Committee:

(T)he AIL [i.e., LAI] has rendered much aid to the HC during this period in making possible the recruiting of Negro workers from the colonies for preparation of future cadres. This is the first time not only since the HC has started its activities, but generally speaking that such large number of Negroes have been brought from AFRICA.

The paragraph bluntly stated that the ITUCNW had the greatest initiative with regards to the question of African students, not the LAI. Therefore, if nothing else, it was time for Moscow to acknowledge this fact and to officially change the policy. In

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from the French African colonies. However, according to his autobiography, Robert was a British (African) subject, born in 1911 in the Gold Coast!

147 List of students in group 9 section A (Negro section), 20.11.1932, RGASPI 532/1/439, fol. 9; McCollan 1993, pp. 380, 380 fn. 37, 385.
148 LaRay Denzer, “Wallace-Johnson and the Sierra Leone Labor Crisis of 1939,” African Studies Review 25:2/3, 1982, p. 163. Wallace-Johnson’s name or his alias Wallace Daniels is not included in the KUTV November list of African students. However, he was one of signers of a public critique about the derogatory portrayal of Africans and Afro-Americans in the Soviet Union, resulting in a petition, “Resolution in Connection with Derogatory Portrayal of Negroes in the Cultural Institutions of the Soviet Union,” which was sent to the ECCI. Among the signatures were ‘James Joken’, i.e., Kenyatta, ‘Wallace Daniels’, i.e., Wallace-Johnson, and ‘Morris’, i.e., Joseph Bilé (McClellan 1993, pp. 389-390).

Padmore’s mind, the task of contacting and recruiting Africans was hitherto to be one of the prime duties of the Hamburg Committee:

The work of recruiting and training advanced colonial elements must be considered as one of the central questions standing before the HC, for in proportion as we have trained forces in the colonies, shall we be able to develop our work. 150

Consequently, Padmore proposed to the RILU Secretariat that instead of cooperating with the LAI in the recruitment of African cadres, the Hamburg Committee and the Negro Bureau of the RILU were to work out jointly all questions affecting the training and assignment of prospective students.151

Padmore’s report resulted in a prompt reaction both by the RILU and the ECCI. Immediately after hearing Padmore’s report, the RILU Secretariat drafted a new Resolution on the ITUCNW, most likely with the assistance of its Negro Bureau. The last paragraph of the resolution text concerned the recruitment of African cadres. Parts of Padmore’s proposition were included, others where changed, but the general outline confirmed the policy change. While the link to the LAI was skipped, the Hamburg Committee was not entrusted to act alone in the issue. Instead, the ITUCNW was ordered to cooperate with RILU organs and sections in Europe. In the rest of the African Atlantic, however, the Hamburg Committee was given full responsibility:

(T)he Hamburg Committee should call the attention of the national sections of the RILU to this question. The national sections should help the Committee to select advanced Negro workers in the metropoles and to train them. At the same time the Hamburg Committee should try to attract some of the best elements, with whom it is connected in the colonies, in order to train them for leading work in the TU movement.152

The RILU Secretariat therefore made a proposal to the ECCI to nominate the ITUCNW as the sole organization responsible for carrying out the task of recruiting students from the African Atlantic:

151 (Padmore,) ITUCNW Report 1931-1932, RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 129.
152 (Resolution) The International Negro Workers’ TU-Committee, filed as [...]10/124 […]6 Negro Sec. […]XII.32(10), RGASPI 534/3/753, fol. 156.
To further the recruitment of militant Negro workers from the colonies and metropolises for the future work in the colonies. The International TU Committee shall work out the various questions dealing with the training of these workers (combination of theory and practise) and their sending back to the colonies.153

The document was brought forward to the ECCI as is indicated by the existence of a copy of the draft among the files of the Negro Committee of the Eastern Secretariat.154 Most likely, the resolution was adopted (although I have not yet located the decision in the ECCI files). For Padmore and the ITUCNW, the decision meant that they had achieved what they had projected in late May 1932: full control in the question of recruiting African students. The December 1932 Resolution also meant that the ITUCNW and its Hamburg Committee emerged as the sole link of the Comintern to the African Atlantic. Padmore had established himself at the top of the radical African Atlantic. Hamburg, not Berlin or London, was to become the centre of the network and the key relay station between Moscow and the African Atlantic.

5.6. Comrade Bilé and the fate of the DSLVN

The Deutsche Sektion der Liga zur Verteidigung der Negerrasse (DSLVN) had been established in September 1929 as the German branch of the Ligue de la Defence de la Race Negre (LDRN).155 The lack of financial resources restricted the activities of the group to Berlin. The members of the group met on a monthly basis for general meetings. Public appearances of its members occurred mostly in conjunction with political rallies of the KPD and the German Section of the IRH. However, it seems that Joseph Bilé, the secretary of the association, had become an active agitator by 1929.156 He gained further political credentials in the eyes of the German communists

153 Draft Resolution on the Work of the Hamburg TU Committee Nov. 31-32, filed as 8.Sec.No2II2, 14/XII.32. SECR., RGASPI 534/3/734, fol. 70.
154 Draft resolutions on the work of the Hamburg TU Committee Nov. 31-32, dated 13.12.1932, RGASPI 495/155/100, fol. 29-31. The draft version is identical to the one filed among the papers of the RILU Secretariat, see RGASPI 534/3/734, fol. 68-70.
155 On the DSLVN, see also Aitken 2008.
156 Bilé’s political radicalism soon caught the eyes of the German authorities and by the end of 1929 they had already enough proof of to term him an agitator – Bilé had made a speech at a meeting of the Sozialistischer Schülerbund in Berlin on December 8, 1929. Letter from the Auswärtiges Amt to Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, 12.12.1929, Note from Dr. Mansfeld, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenenkunde, Berlin 16.12.1929, BA, Archiv R1001/4457/7, fol. 203-205.
when the police arrested him on the 6th of March 1930 during a political rally in Siemensstadt (Berlin).\textsuperscript{157}

Nevertheless, typically for the communist networks at the time, the relationship between the African organizations and the communist units in Berlin was an extremely hierarchical one and tensions soon unfolded and by the latter part of 1930 the Africans and the members of the LAI headquarters in Berlin were quarrelling. The inflamed conditions were articulated in the September 1930 Report, which openly criticised the LAI and its officials for the lack of support towards the association and the problems its members were facing.\textsuperscript{158}

In spite of the harsh criticism, some of the Africans still seemed to have had a good relationship with the LAI. Notably Joseph Bilé was to be regarded by Münzenberg as a reliable chap and was invited on several occasions to speak at meetings organized by the IAH and the LAI. His activities soon gained respect among German communists, such as Fritz Heckert, MP and representing the RILU in Berlin. Apart from participating in the 1930 Hamburg conference, Bilé represented the DSLVN at the Fifth Congress of the RILU in Moscow in August 1930. After consultations during the congress, Münzenberg presumably outlined a plan that Bilé should join the Berlin section of the KPD to receive further training and thereafter return to West Africa to make propaganda among fellow Africans.\textsuperscript{159} In November 1930, Bilé together with two other members of the DSLVN, Victor Bell and Hermann Ngange, were selected for propaganda training and attended Karl Wittfogel’s lecture series on the agrarian question at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik (DHfP, German Academy for Politics\textsuperscript{160}) and at evening courses at the Marxistische Arbeiter-Schule (MASCH, Marxist Workers’ School\textsuperscript{161}).\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{157} (DSLVN), Kurzer Tätigkeitsbericht 1930, RGASPI 495/155/87, fol. 404-408.

\textsuperscript{158} See CoWoPa 18/2010.

\textsuperscript{159} Letter from Münzenberg to Secretariat of the ZK/KPD in Berlin, 28.10.1930, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 121.

\textsuperscript{160} The DHfP was established as a private, non-governmental academy in 1920. After WWII, the DHfP was re-established, renamed in 1959 as Otto-Suhr-Institut and integrated in the Free University of Berlin.

\textsuperscript{161} The MASCH had been founded by members of the KPD in 1926. Its director was the Hungarian political scientist Laszlo Radvanyi between 1927 and 1933. Among others, courses in Agitprop theatre efforts were held, the leading teacher being Hanns Eisler. See further Margaret R. Jackson, Workers, unite! The Political Songs of Hanns Eisler, 1926-1932, PhD thesis, School of Music, Florida State University, 2003, p. 27. Also G. Gerhard-Sonnenberg, Marxistische Arbeiterbildung in der Weimarer Republik, Köln: Bund 1976.

\textsuperscript{162} (Report) Kurse für koloniale Studenten in Berlin, no date, BArchB R1501/20200, fol. 114, 115. An analysis of the document reveals that it must have been written before November 1929. According to Aitken (2008, p. 606), part of the purpose of this training was to prepare activists to participate at
\end{footnotesize}
Joseph Bilé eventually joined the KPD, backed by the recommendations of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern, Kouyaté and Münzenberg. At the beginning of 1931, he started to cooperate with Hans Thørgersen at the LAI headquarters, toured Germany and attended at anti-colonial manifestations that were organized by the German sections of the LAI and the IAH. Among others, he was one of the keynote speakers at the LAI Youth Congress held in Berlin at the end of May 1931. Bilé was also sent to speak at rallies in support of the Scottsboro Campaign in Germany. On this occasion, he also cooperated with James Ford. Otherwise, his connections with the Hamburg Committee and the ITUCNW were rather limited before October 1931.

Padmore’s arrival in Berlin was a turning point in the relationship between the DSLVNR and the LAI. He invited Bilé to participate at a meeting at the LAI headquarters in late October 1931, most likely to ventilate the grievances of the Africans and to re-establish mutual trust. Padmore criticized the LAI for its shortcomings with respect to the Africans, in particular that they had not even bothered to inform Bilé and the other Africans about the resolutions of the Frankfurt Congress. Knowledge about the new resolutions was a fundamental cornerstone for any activities as it had corrected the course of the LAI; Padmore therefore ordered the comrades at the LAI to correct the oversight immediately. On the other hand, Bilé’s association with the LAI Secretariat was to be deepened via regular meetings and to render him closer political assistance.

The other question on the agenda was the future relationship between the LAI and the French and German sections of the Ligue de la Defence de la Race Negre. This issue was even more pressing than the rifts in Berlin. Padmore confirmed the existing hierarchical relationship, namely that the LAI was to control the political line of both the French and the German branches of the LDRN. This also meant that the gatherings and rallies held by communist-sponsored organizations. In fact, the LAI and especially Chattopadhyaya had made plans for organising courses for colonial students in English in Berlin already during summer 1930. However, due to his problems in finding suitable teachers, the courses had to be postponed and did not start until autumn 1930.

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163 Short note from the KPD Secretariat, 31.10.1930, and letter from Münzenberg to Secretariat of the ZK/KPD in Berlin, 28.10.1930, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 119-121.
164 Letter from NN to Padmore, 9.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 117. The sender was most probably Thørgersen as the note was written in English.
165 ‘Berliner Antimperialistische Jugendkonferenz 30-31 Mai 1931’, RGASPI 542/1/51, fol. 81-82.
166 ‘Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade’, 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 120bp. This part of the letter is not included in the excerpt that was sent to the RILU Secretariat, 3.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 114-115.
Hamburg Committee did not have any connections with either organization; Kouyaté and Bilé were to have personal but not institutional links to the Hamburg Committee and Padmore. The superior position of the LAI with regards to the LDRN is particularly evident in the decision about the tactics Kouyaté was to apply in France. This question had already been discussed in Moscow, most likely at the Negro Bureau of the RILU, and was confirmed in Berlin:

As we decided before I left, comrade K’s method of struggling against the opportunists, Faure and others, took too much of a black versus mulatto affair and lacked real political contents. The League will examine the paper and write K. how to expose Faure. This, by the way has nothing to do with our work.¹⁶⁷

The meeting in Berlin is interesting for two reasons. First, it clearly outlined part of the African network of the Comintern. Decisions concerning the African Atlantic were prepared in Moscow at the Negro Bureau of the RILU rather than in the Eastern Secretariat and transferred to the African organizations via Berlin and the LAI. Padmore spoke at the meeting as both Moscow’s representative and as a LAI member. Second, the meeting resulted in an attempt to sort out the links between the LDRN, the ITUCNW and the LAI. Previously, Ford had made an attempt to monitor the political course of the LDRN and to influence Kouyaté. However, the relationship between them soon developed into one of mutual cooperation and Kouyaté’s attempt to establish subsections of the ITUCNW in France. These sections were outside the LDRN’s control and soon emerged as Kouyaté’s new political and organizational platform. As a consequence, therefore, matters concerning the LDRN, where Kouyaté was still active, were to be taken over by the LAI. Padmore left for Hamburg, certainly considering that he had laid the solid ground for a splendid future. One month later the African network in Berlin collapsed.

While Bilé oscillated between his engagement in the DSLVN and his activities with the German communists, fellow Africans started to distance themselves from him. It is not clear what actually caused the rift between Bilé and the others, but on 22 November 1931 the Berlin headquarters of the KPD received a letter where Bilé was denounced as a thief and charlatan: he had taken all the money that was in the treasury and had always been an enemy of the working class. On the top of everything

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Comrade’, 16.11.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 120bp.
else, he was denunciated as being the son of a slave trader. The letter was signed by Wilhelm Munumé, who acted as the spokesperson of a fraction of key DSLVN members, including Thomas Koo, Peter Makembe, Victor Bell, Louis Brody, and Thomas Manga Akwa [spelled Aqua in the letter, HW].

Although the letter was addressed to ‘Genosse Hirsch’ and ‘Genosse Tellman [Thälmann]’ at the headquarters of the Communist Party, it did not reach the KPD leadership. Instead, it was received by the secretariat of the RHD. The comrades at the RHD headquarters were at first puzzled, then started to investigate the matter. Letters were sent to the KPD headquarters, inquiring about the credibility of the allegations against Bilé, underlining that Bilé had until now been a very trustworthy comrade and functionary in contrast to Munumé, who does not seem to have gained a similar respect by the German communists. In fact, Munumé had also worked for the RHD for a while, but had been suspended after a short period due to his ‘unproletarian’ behaviour. The Central Committee of the KPD even declared him persona non grata and forbade any of its organizations to ever work with him.

The KPD immediately launched an investigation to deal with Munumé’s accusations. It confirmed Bilé’s positive representation – a good functionary and comrade – and the negative image of Munumé. The KPD contacted the LAI for further information about the two Africans. The message from the LAI must have confirmed to the Secretary of the KPD that Munumé’s allegations were false. Eventually, his attempt to smear Bilé backfired.

At some point somebody must have informed Padmore about the turn of events in Berlin. His letter to Comrade B at the LAI headquarters indicates that the Bilé-Munumé affaire already had been solved by mid-December 1931 in favour of Bilé. Padmore was not surprised as he considered Munumé to be a “scoundrel” and of a low social character. In his mind, the whole affair was due to personal animosities and envy. Bilé had been the most active of the Africans: he had the closest connections to the LAI and the other communist organizations and had entered the Party. Munumé and the others did not have these connections nor, it seems, the

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interest to engage with the communists. In Padmore’s mind, there was a clear
difference between them: Bilé was working hard, most of others not. Bilé had been to
Moscow and the others believed that he had returned with his pockets full of money
and was using them only for himself. Munumé was the real crook in the story in
Padmore’s mind:

(T)his man is a neurotic and criminal. This man has been convinced once or twice in Germany
for counterfeiting money. Bilé told him that such a character is unfit to be a member of our
party. Bilé told him that if this money would be made to help the revolutionary movement in
Africa, it would be one thing. But he made the money for his own use. This has caused
Momme to be very bitter against Bilé. 171

Padmore suggested that the LAI should issue a circular letter to those organizations in
which Munumé had made his accusations against Bilé and to brand him as a
scoundrel and rogue. He himself could not make such an announcement, as the
Hamburg Committee officially had not been involved in the affair. Besides, he
argued, to issue a public statement would not be of any use and only gain Munumé:
“Who the hell is he anyhow?” 172

Padmore’s conclusion was that the mess in Berlin was a clear sign of the
pitiful state of affairs in the DSLVNR and considered a drastic measure as the final
solution: the dissolution of the association. He pointed out that the membership was
and always will be small as there are only a few Africans permanently resident in
Berlin. Like other emigrant organizations, he declared, the association had
degenerated into warring factions. Due to the social character of its members,
Padmore declared, the DSLVNR had ceased to exist as “an auxiliary organization of
our movement.” Therefore, the organization should be liquidated since it no longer
served any useful purpose. 173

Bilé, on the other hand, was to be rescued by the party. Based on the negative
picture about Munumé and the praise of Bilé, it comes as no surprise that Bilé was to
play a role in German communist strategies again – even before Padmore’s

171 Letter from Secretary (Padmore) to Dear Comrade B., (Hamburg) 17.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668,
fol. 136.
172 Letter from Secretary (Padmore) to Dear Comrade B., (Hamburg) 17.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668,
fol. 137.
173 Letter from Secretary (Padmore) to Dear Comrade B., 17.12.1931, RGASPI 534/3/668, fol. 136-
137.
intervention. By early November, the LAI Secretariat had recommended him to the ECCI as a candidate for training in the Soviet Union. Bilé was found to be a trustworthy comrade but instead of sending him to Moscow, the original plan to send him back to Cameroon was taken up again in early December 1931. In a letter from an unspecified secretary – either one of the LAI secretaries as it seems to have been originally their idea to send Bilé on a propaganda tour to West Africa or someone at the KPD headquarters – the plan was brought forward for consideration. Be as it may, the plan was as follows: Bilé, who had worked among various KPD cells and sections as an Agitprop leader, was to travel to Cameroon, select competent ‘Negro comrades’ and return with them to Moscow where all of them would study at the KUTV or at the Lenin School. However, it appears that the LAI Secretariat had not enough funds to pay for Bilé’s propaganda trip, and therefore turned to other parties and asked for the financial assistance to cover the cost of sending Bilé to Africa.

Bilé never departed on his mission to Africa. At some point the decision was made to skip the whole plan. Some of the decision-making higher authorities or bodies – perhaps in Berlin or even in Moscow, although the archival sources at my disposal give no clue whatsoever – questioned the usefulness of sending Bilé to Africa. Travel expenses were said to be much too high. Even worse, the Bilé’s capability to successfully select Negro students for Moscow was felt to be questionable. Maybe the negative assumptions about Bilé’s suitability had been caused by a flush of Munumé’s insinuations. Or perhaps those who made the decision did not want to take the responsibility for sending someone to Africa who would turn out to be incapable of fulfilling his task. A final attempt was made by Wilhelm Florin (1894-1944), one of the leading members of the KPD Politbureau, in the beginning of June to reopen the question of Bilé’s transfer to Africa. The doubt about

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174 Letter from ‘Liga’ [LAI Secretariat] to ‘W.G.’, Berlin 2.11.1931, RGASPI 542/1/48, fol. 166. It is likely that the letter was sent to the ECCI in Moscow as the document is stamped ‘ARKIV IKKI’.

175 Letter from ‘Sekr.’ to NN, Berlin 10.12.1931, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 127. Copy in RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 15. Also short note from D.V. to NN, 28.12.1931, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 127-128 (copy in RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 13). It is evident from the second document that it is a reply to the first one. It is likely that those involved in the plan were the LAI and the KPD, although none of those involved can be identified. On the other hand, it is also possible that D.V. was someone at the German Secretariat in Moscow.

176 Letter from ‘Sekr.’ to NN, Berlin 10.12.1931, Letter from ‘Sekr.’ to ‘No’, 1.6.1932, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 127, 130. In fact, it was hinted in the December letter that according to the original plan, funds to pay for Bilé’s trip to Africa were to be forthcoming but had not yet been transferred.

177 The only reference is to a “beständige Stelle”, i.e., an authority with the capacity of making decisions about the recruitment of (African) students.

178 Note from D.V., 30.4.1932, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 131. Copy in RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 7.
Bilé’s capacity of making the right decision in the selections of students was refuted: Bilé was certainly capable, competent and qualified to make such decisions.179 At this point Bilé himself had even presented the idea that his relatives back home could make a communal collection and cover for the return ticket of both him and the students he had picked.180 This effort was in vain as Bilé was never sent to Africa, but actually in Moscow.

Bile’s transfer to Moscow was part of Padmore’s engagement in the recruitment of African students. Bilé had already before the Munumé-affaire been one of Ford’s and Padmore’s most trusted companions in Berlin. He was partly based at the LAI headquarters, partly working for the KPD and RHD. His position in Berlin was that of an intermediate: whenever there was an African passing the city, Padmore asked Bilé to take care of the person. At times, Padmore’s contacts with Bilé went through the LAI headquarters as is evident from the following note Padmore sent to Hans Thørgerson through Frieda Schiff: “Do you get the “Negro Worker”? We generally send 4 copies, one for yourself, one for Bilé, one for the office, and one in exchange for the review. – When you see Bilé tell him he must write me.”181

Whenever a political rally was organized and a Black or African representation was needed, such as during the Scottsboro Campaign, Bilé rather than Padmore was the first choice as he could address the audience in German and did not need an interpreter. As Aitkén underlines, Bilé was to develop a twofold message: as a former German colonial subject, he related his personal experience of colonial oppression; at the same time, as a Black political speaker, he condemned both racism and Jim Crowism in the USA as well as imperialism and colonial exploitation in Africa.182 His engagement and positive appearance was also hailed by his German comrades, who could only recommend him to the comrades in Moscow:

He was active in the various large factory cells and street cells. Everywhere he performed his role (agit-prop leader amongst other things) to the complete satisfaction of the comrades. In the 1½ years of his agitation in the KPD he has developed well and gained Organization and

179 Letter from Florin to OMS, 21.6.1932, RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 5; copy of the same letter but dated 1.6.1932 filed in RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 6. Also Letter from ‘Sekr.’ to ‘No’, 1.6.1932, BArchB RY 1/I 2/5/33, fol. 130.
181 Letter from Frida to “Hans” (Thørgersen) 7.3.32, RGASPI 534/6/23, fol. 65.
Therefore, Bilé’s transfer to Moscow came as no surprise. Of all prospective students, he must have been regarded as one of the most promising since was already a party member, has practical experience, and was of African origin. With Padmore’s and the KPD’s recommendations, he left Berlin sometimes after mid-September 1932.  

6. Race or class? Criticizing international solidarity as lip-service

Although the various national sections of the RILU were supposed to assist the Hamburg Committee in its attempt to establish a global network, in practice Ford and Padmore had to face continuous obstacles, if not outright neglect, on behalf of the national RILU sections, the CGTU, the TUUL, the NMM and the RGO, in their work. In spite of the appeals from the Secretariat in Moscow, the RILU sections had not rendered any real assistance to the Hamburg Committee, complained Padmore in December 1932. The French and the USA sections were even blamed for sabotaging and hindering the work of the ITUCNW. Although the CGTU was opposed to the establishment of a subcommittee of the ITUCNW in France, African workers initiated the formation of L’Union des Travailleurs Nègres (UTN) in Paris with branches in Rouen, Marseilles, Bordeaux and Le Havre in September 1932. Subsequently, this organization functioned as the French subsection of the ITUCNW. In the USA, on the other hand, the TUUL sabotaged the plans of the RILU Secretariat and the Hamburg Committee to establish a subcommittee in New York and the attempt ended in a complete failure.

Not much brighter was the situation in England and in Germany. The National Minority Movement at times published articles sent from Hamburg in its organ, The Weekly Worker, and supplied the Hamburg Committee with publications. Nevertheless, Padmore claimed that the NMM had been unable to render any concrete assistance or assist the work of the ITUCNW in England or in the British colonies.

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183 Quoted and translated in Aitken 2008, p. 612.
184 The exact date of Bilé’s transfer from Berlin to Moscow is not known. However, he was still in Berlin in early September 1932 as is reported in a letter (in French) from a certain Hans to Comrade Ferdi, dated 8.9.1932, RGASPI 495/266/38, fol. 5. Both persons were part of the LAI Secretariat; Hans is most likely Hans Thørgersen.
185 On the UTN, see further Derrick 2008, pp. 273-274.
Even worse was the case with the various ISH sections. Neither the Seamen’s Minority Movement nor the ISH sections in France and in the USA had done much to interact with the ITUCNW. This was a major problem as the ISH and its sections had been projected by Moscow to closely collaborate with the ITUCNW.  

Padmore’s criticism resulted in a prompt reaction by Moscow. The RILU Secretariat demanded once again in its December 1932 Resolution on the ITUCNW that all its American, English and French sections were to closely cooperate with the Hamburg Committee and to render the maximum of attention to the question of giving practical support to the ITUCNW and its sections. Especially harsh were the correctives directed at the TUUL, namely to render immediate and full assistance on the basis of the RILU directives: “The Hamburg Committee must without any further delay, correct the mistakes of the TUUL in the West Indies with the assistance of the Caribbean Committee.”

Frustratingly apathetic was the commitment of the LAI and the various national communist parties for engaging in the anti-colonial struggle in the African Atlantic. While Ford never aired his criticism, Padmore time and again fired fierce criticism of the lax attitude of the parties. In his mind, their engagement was either half-hearted or, even worse, impregnated by racist prejudices. Why did they not render him full assistance and why did they not put anti-colonial agitation in the forefront of their agenda? The discrepancies between the official ambitious declarations of the Comintern about national independence of the colonies and the anti-colonial rhetoric of the resolutions were in glaring contrast to the undertakings and attitudes of the comrades, be they high-ranking officials or mere party members. Padmore was perhaps not fully aware of the averseness and disinterest to Negro work in certain circles of the metropolitan parties and labour unions when he took over the secretariat in Hamburg, but six months later he definitively was distrustful. Being highly disappointed by the lack of engagement by the ISH and the LAI, he issued a sharp warning to Hans Thørgersen about their mishandling of colonial work, especially their (non-)engagement with Africans:

Finally, I want to give you comrades a word of advice, which I have learnt out of practical experience, and this is: In dealing with Africans, -- [missing; must be: do not, otherwise the

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rest of the letter makes no sense] make a promise that you do not intend to fulfil. They have a naïve belief in the seriousness of one’s words. Already we have had enough set-backs in our [word missing] through the ISH playing the same sort of hide and seek policy, of saying one day one thing to the African seaman and another thing tomorrow.\textsuperscript{189}

Though the most recent case had been the (mishandling of) the Jones-affaire of the ISH, Padmore was equally critical about the weak performance of the LAI and its incapability to render support to a ‘mass organisation among peasants’ in Sierra Leone: “unfortunately, the League is not the only organisation that has disappointed them. The ISH also promised to do the world for the seamen. But nothing came out of their promises.”\textsuperscript{190}

But was the Comintern at all interested in the anti-colonial struggle, not to speak about plight of the Africans? Padmore’s critique sounded in a moment when much of the global working class lived under the joke of the World Depression, a situation quite different to that when the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern had approved the Theses on the Colonial Question in 1928. While the global economy was still booming in 1928, a total different situation had emerged by 1932. Unemployment was rising in the USA, while in Britain and in Germany this correlated with political tension and labour unrest. All of the communist parties in the West put the domestic scene in the forefront of their struggle. In Russia, Stalin launched his plans of collectivization and industrialization, still fearing an impending ‘imperialist’ strike against the Soviet Union. Some researchers, such as Wilson, argue that the Comintern engagement with the African Atlantic was nothing but a covert plan by the Kremlin to challenge the ‘imperialist’ forces, Britain and France, in their colonial backyards.\textsuperscript{191} Others, such as Sherwood, argue that the metropolitan parties, especially the CPGB, had little, if any, time and devotion to engage in the African colonies.\textsuperscript{192} Sherwood even argued that the CPGB leader Harry Pollitt did not even care about colonial issues, but this all-negative argument is refuted by Callaghan: colonial issues and anti-imperialism did matter for the party when it concerned

\textsuperscript{189} Letter from Padmore to ‘Dear Hans’, (Hamburg) 11.5.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 71.
\textsuperscript{190} Letter from Padmore to the League Against Imperialism, Berlin, (Hamburg) 5.6.1932, RGASPI 534/3/755, fol. 119.
\textsuperscript{191} Wilson 1974.
\textsuperscript{192} Sherwood 1996.
India, but not Africa or the African Atlantic. The similar picture prevails for the CPUSA: by the early 1930s, the Negro Question turned from being a matter of implementing the ‘Black Belt Thesis’ to be a question of engaging the African American for the party. At no point did the CPUSA regard the African Atlantic to be of any importance.

One ends with a conflicting picture when the Comintern and the RILU’s grand strategy towards the African Atlantic are evaluated. Seen from Moscow and the various party headquarters, a ‘continental’ perspective was articulated. Such a perspective puts the political struggles of the parties in the centre of any considerations. This is clearly reflected in the hierarchical relationship between Moscow and the national parties as well as in the organizational outline of the Comintern and RILU headquarters itself. What mattered most was the connection to the existing ‘strongholds’ throughout the world, i.e., the parties and red labour unions. Seen from a ‘continental’ perspective, the Negro work was only a counterpart of the global aspirations of the Comintern: the engagement in the African Atlantic was needed for the establishment of the global underground communication network of the Comintern-Apparatus. From such a perspective it comes as no surprise that the Hamburg Secretariat was to work with the ISH, the LAI or the IRH: not to strengthen its own position but to enable others to get a foothold in the African Atlantic and subsequently to challenge the metropolitan ‘imperialist’ powers. In this respect, therefore, the ITUCNW was part and parcel of the ‘solar system’ of the Comintern.

However, a total different perspective emerges of the aims and ambitions of the ITUCNW if one shifts to the African American comrades. If Moscow – and for that sake Berlin, Paris or London – articulated a ‘continental’ position, the comrades in Hamburg stood for an ‘Atlantic’ perspective. By 1932 these two positions had collided, by 1934 the latter had almost collapsed.
