
The Collapse and Rebirth of the ITUCNW, 1933-1938. Part One. From Hamburg via Paris to Antwerp and Amsterdam (1933-1935)

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The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), also known as the “Negersekretariat” (Negro Secretariat), Hamburg Committee or Hamburg Secretariat, was part of the transnational apparatus of the Communist International or Comintern. Being a trade union, the ITUCNW was a sub-section of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU or Profintern), the trade union-wing of the Comintern. The aim of the ITUCNW was to serve as a global or transnational platform to activate and coordinate agitation and propaganda among ‘Negro workers’ throughout the world. In effect, its focus was to establish links to and support African, African Caribbean and African American radical trade union activists. The activities and outreach of the ITUCNW during its existence in Hamburg from 1931 to 1932/33 has been presented in my previous working papers. The next three working papers deal with the operations of the ITUCNW between 1933 and 1938. In the first working paper, I will discuss the chaotic relocation of the headquarters to Paris in March 1933, the end of Padmore’s engagement with the Comintern in 1933/1934 and Otto Huiswoud’s ambitions to establish a new operational basis for the ITUCNW in Antwerp (1934) and in Amsterdam (1935). The second working paper outlines Huiswoud’s attempt to re-establish a radical African Atlantic network. The last (third) working paper presents the final decline, dissolution and liquidation of the ITUCNW.

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Padmore’s sojourn in Moscow in late 1932 marked the climax of the Hamburg Committee’s activities. For a few weeks, all of his most trusted fellows were gathered in the Soviet capital. Like him, most of them were attending the Second World Congress of the International Red Aid, while others were enrolled at the KUTV. While in Moscow, he participated at the meetings of the RILU Negro Bureau and was engaged in the preparations of new guidelines for the operations of the Hamburg Committee, the 1932 December Resolution. The future

looked promising - in a few months, perhaps half a year the first batch of Moscow-trained African cadres would return to their home countries and prepare the ground for communist and anti-colonial agitation. Confident about the ITUCNW’s future success to enlarge and strengthen its activities in the African Atlantic, he returned to Germany sometime in early 1933\(^2\).

However, Padmore had either been overoptimistic about his possibility to continue work in Hamburg or then he belittled, if not neglected, the fact that his bureau in Hamburg did not exist in a political vacuum. In autumn 1932 dark clouds were hanging over Hamburg and when he returned, both the national and the local political scene in Germany was chaotic and unstable. The Nazi landslide victory in the parliamentary elections in July 1932 shattered the already unstable political configurations in Germany. All parties backing the Weimar democratic system, the middle-class parties of the Centre, the Liberals and the Conservatives as well as the moderate left, the SPD, lost votes either to the extreme right, the NSDAP, or the extreme left, the KPD. Work in the German Reichstag became paralyzed and dysfunctional, merely reflecting the increasing political chaos in German society at large. Clara Zetkin, who opened the Reichstag as president of seniority on 30 August 1932, declared that she hoped to witness the rise of Soviet Germany! In Hamburg, Berlin and elsewhere, the supporters of the Nazis and the communists continued to wage street battles.

Amidst the political chaos of late 1932, President Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag and new elections were held in November 1932. Following a bitter and brutal campaign, the NSDAP remained the largest party, though loosing both votes and seats, while the KPD gained in votes and seats what the SPD lost. From the perspective of the KPD-hardliners, the ‘Class Against Class’-thesis was more valid than ever and would prove to be right. Although Fascism and Nazism were the enemies on the right, the archenemies of the communists were the ‘Social fascists’. Thus, the strategy of the KPD, it seems, was to wait and see: once the working class would rally behind the KPD in toto, the final battle against the Nazis could be pursued. However, this battle never came in Germany. Taken by surprise of the cabinet politics of Hindenburg, Hitler and the conservatives at the end of the year 1932, which resulted in the nomination of Hitler as Reichskanzler (Chancellor) on 22 January 1933, the KPD hesitated to react.

\(^2\) I have not been able to establish the exact date of Padmore’s return to Germany. A letter from him to Arnold Ward, dated 16.1.1933, indicates that he was residing in Hamburg at least from mid-January 1933. See cross-reference to the letter from Padmore to Ward, TNA KV 2/1787.
The final act of legal communist activities in Germany took place in February 1933. Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag on 1 February and new elections were called for 5 March 1933. Although the KPD had not (yet) been declared illegal, the police, now under the command of the Nazis, started to prepare its assault against the party. Several leading party members were jailed and others went underground. The party headquarters in Berlin, the Karl-Liebknecht-Haus, as well as other party buildings were attacked. Notably, the police occupied the party headquarters on 23 February. The political chaos escalated after the fire of the Reichstag on 27 February 1933, the day after Hitler declared a ‘state of emergency’. The outcome of the March elections did not matter much. Although the KPD gained 81 seats, the communists were blocked from participating in the opening of the Parliament and all votes were discarded. By late February, all communist activity was illegal in Germany and the German police, aided by the SA and the SS, which had been given status as auxiliary police forces, started their battue against the communist leadership in order to destroy the organizational structure of the KPD. Some key members of the communist leadership, like Ernst Thälmann and Georgi Dimitrov, were imprisoned, while others had disappeared: most of them were hiding somewhere in Germany, some escaped to nearby foreign countries. Münzenberg, for example, ended up in Paris, where he tried to rebuild his organizations. In the meantime, other German communists had escaped to Prague and Copenhagen.

1. The end of activities in Germany

The political turmoil in Germany in February and March 1933 were to have grave consequences for international communist activities orchestrated from Hamburg and Berlin. On 23 February 1933, the police launched a combined raid against communist bureaus in Berlin, including those of the WEB, the LAI and the RILU European Bureau. A few weeks later, on 5 March 1933, the SA stormed the communist bastion at Roothesoodstrasse in Hamburg and about two weeks later on 16 March, the local police authorities closed the Interclub and the ISH office. The Comintern’s global communication network was seriously damaged as all operations via Germany had come to a standstill. But were structures so seriously damaged that the network collapsed?

3 On 28 February 1933, President Hindenburg signed the “Decree for the Protection of the People and the State”. This emergency decree suspends the civil liberties granted by the Weimar Constitution. It also allows the Nazis to put their political opponents in prison and establish concentration camps.

In fact, emergency plans for the relocation of the WEB (including the OMS bureau in Berlin) and the ISH to Copenhagen in case of a Nazi take-over in Germany had been already prepared in 1932. At closed meetings during the First Conference of the ISH at Altona in May 1932, the decision was made to transfer the archives and the operations of the ISH from Hamburg to Copenhagen if the activities of the organization were blocked in Germany. As noted above, Padmore participated in the conference and it is likely that he knew of the plans. Similar plans were made for the transfer of the WEB in case of an emergency. The two key figures in outlining the plan were Richard Jensen and Ernst Wollweber. In December 1932, Wollweber visited Jensen in Copenhagen to further outline the emergency plan. Similar plans existed for the transfer and/or underground activities of the LAI, IRH and RILU bureaus.

Anticipating future difficulties, a group of 600 leading German Communists were ordered to prepare for illegality. All of them were provided with false passports and new fictitious addresses. However, for the time being they continued to live at their usual homes. When the German police stormed the Berlin offices of the Communist organizations, all of them were empty. Anticipating the Nazi clearout, the activities had already moved across the German border to Paris, Prague, Saarbrücken and Copenhagen.

1.1. Escape and Reorganization: From Berlin and Hamburg to Copenhagen and Paris

The transfer of both the ISH and the WEB to Copenhagen in February and March 1933 was accomplished amidst the witch-hunt against communists. In mid-February, Ernst Wollweber judged the political situation in Berlin to have reached the point when at least the WEB office had to be relocated before it was too late to consider any actions anymore. The question was only, to where? Paris and Prague were possible, but not ideal destinations as both the French and the Czechoslovakian government had little sympathies for hosting clandestine Comintern headquarters. Reliable and functioning communications from these localities to Moscow were also difficult to maintain. A more promising destination was Copenhagen. Here the communists had more room to manoeuvre, as the Communist Party had not been declared

6 On the LAI, see Fredrik Petersson, The Network Axis of the League against Imperialism, the Comintern, and the Anti-Imperialist Movement in Europe, 1925-1933 forthcoming PhD thesis, Åbo Akademi University; on the IRH, see Nikolaus Brauns, Schafft Rote Hilfe! Geschichte und Aktivitäten der proletarischen Hilfsorganisation für politische Gefangene in Deutschland (1919-1938), Bonn: Pahl-Rugenstein 2003, p. 277. The RILU preparations are not known, but seem likely as its Berlin bureau was successfully relocated.
illegal. In addition, there already existed a well functioning local apparatus, namely the local branch of the ISH under the direction of Richard Jensen.

Wollweber packed the WEB archive in twenty trunks and hid them at secure locations in Berlin. He himself went underground. A few days after the raid of 27 February he organized the transfer of the WEB out of Germany. The logistical challenge was to get the trunks to the Danish border. About twenty reliable couriers took them via train to the Interclub in Flensburg. From there, they used a rowing boat and in a nightly action landed near Sønderborg in Denmark, where Jensen met them and organized the transfer of the archives to Copenhagen. Here Jensen was in charge of putting the WEB apparatus in place: disguised as a law-service office at 32, Vimmelskaftet. Wollweber decided to remain in Germany for a while in order to reorganize the underground activities of the party. In early summer of 1933, he travelled via Paris and Moscow to Copenhagen.\(^8\)

Not less dramatic was the transfer of the ISH from Hamburg to Copenhagen. A few days before 27 February, it was decided to relocate the ISH archives and Albert Walter’s catalogue of ship cells and contact persons from Rothesoodstrasse to a secure hiding place. After the SA-raid, the next steps in moving the ISH were taken. Apart from Wollweber, the key figures in the operation were Adolf Schelley, Richard Krebs, Hermann Knüffken and Max Barek. Organized by Jensen – Albert Walter had been jailed already on 28 February – the archive was shipped to Copenhagen hidden on Danish and Swedish ships in late March and early April 1933. Max Barek had even been able to rescue the money transfer from Moscow to the ISH – 10,000 Reichsmark, which had been paid to the ISH from the Soviet Marine Union as part of their monthly support to the ISH. The ISH headquarters were re-established in the office building Vesterport at Vesterbrogade, camouflaged as the office of the engineering company A. Selvo & Co.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Jan Valtin, *Out of the Night*, New York: Alliance Book Corporation 1941, pp. 321-322, 395-397; Nørgaard 1975, pp. 107-108, 125-129. A few blocks away from the WEB office at Vimmelskaftet 42 A was the mailbox of another undercover communist unit, the “Antifa-Pressedienst” and the Organisationsbüro zur Einberufung des Antifaschistischen Arbeiterkongresses Europas. See cover of the news bulletin *Antifaschistische Front*. The Anti-Fascist Workers Congress (Antifaschistischer Arbeiterkongress Europas) was projected to convene in Copenhagen but due to the negative response from the Danish authorities, the congress was shifted to Prague where it was planned to be held in April 1933 (*Internationale Gewerkschafts-Pressekorrespondenz* No 18/19, 27.3.1933). In fact, the congress was held in Paris in early June 1933, also known as the Pleyel Congress. The office of the *Internationale Gewerkschafts-Pressekorrespondenz*, too, was located in Copenhagen. See BArchB R1507/2085 (alt.: Reichskomm. F.d. Überwachung d. öffentl. Ordnung u. Nachrichtensammelstelle im RMI).

\(^9\) Valtin 1941, pp. 434-435; Richard Jensen, *En omstumlet tilvaerelse*, Copenhagen: Fremad 1957, p. 104; letter from Hermann Knüffken and Kurt Lehmann to Edo Fimmern, Antwerpen 24.4.1936, reproduced in Hermann Knüffken, *Von Kiel bis Leningrad – Stationen eines deutschen revolutionären Matrosen 1917-1930*, Berlin 2003, pp. 329-330. Officially, at least in the beginning, the ISH claimed to be located at Toldbodgade 16. This was at least the address given in its first appeal from Copenhagen, dated 26 March 1933. A copy of the appeal is
After the evacuation of the various RILU units from Germany, the operations of the RILU European Bureau had been divided into two new units, the Latin-European Bureau with its headquarters in Paris and the Central-European Bureau based in Copenhagen. Other headquarter units, such as those of the various InterComs (miners, textile workers, steel workers, etc.) were transferred to Saarbrücken and Prague. The leading person in Copenhagen was Comrade Pechman while a certain Willi was to head the Latin-European Bureau. A few months later, the key person in Paris was a certain René; his position in Paris was similar to Max Ziese’s in Berlin. Incidentally, Willi was one of René’s aliases – or vice versa – as can be established through the original correspondence in the Comintern Archives: Willi’s and René’s original reports of 1933 were written Polish and in the same handwriting. He monitored all monthly transfer of money from Moscow to any of the organizations based in Paris, including the ITUCNW (“Negerkommittee”) and the LAI.

1.2. The yellow trunk

George Padmore did not escape to Copenhagen. When Wollweber started to prepare his rescue operations in mid-February, Padmore was no longer part of the political scene in Hamburg. He had been arrested by the police authorities in Hamburg around 8 February and was thereafter held in detention for about two weeks. It is possible that the German authorities had not planned Padmore’s arrest. According to the British Intelligence, he was lodging at that time together with Richard Krebs on whom there was an order to arrest. When

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10 Report in German concerning the reorganization of the RILU-apparat in 1933, no date, no author, RGASPI 524/4/459, fol.10-11.
11 According to information collected by the GESTAPO, René was in charge of the RILU bureau in Paris. He was said to be of Polish origin and had been the RILU representative at the WEB before 1933 (BArchB R 58/3833a, fol.19; fol. 58 + 63). The fate of Ziese is not known.
12 See correspondence in RGASPI 534/4/460.
13 The exact date of Padmore’s arrest and the length of his detention has for long been a matter of controversy and speculation. While some accounts have argued that he was jailed as early as December 1932 (Turner 2005, 197) or just after the Nazi takeover (Susan D. Pennybaker, From Scottsboro to Munich. Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain, Pincenton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2009, p. 77) and that he was held in custody from three to six months (James R. Hooker, James R., Black Revolutionary. George Padmore’s Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism, New York: Praeger 1967, p. 30), Maria van Enckevort and Joyce Moore Turner on the basis of documentary material located in Moscow and England have been able to establish that Padmore was only held in detention for two weeks and was deported at the end of February 1933. The date of his detention, i.e., the 8th of February, is mentioned in Padmore’s letter to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 130 bp. In a British Intelligence report, on the other hand, Padmore is claimed to have been arrested on February 13, 1933 and deported to England on February 22 (Extract from Gold Coast police report re the West African National Secretariat, 13.2.1947, TNA KV 2/1840). While the date of his deportation is correct, the date of his arrest is in conflict with Padmore’s own information.
the police raided the house in late January, Krebs had already flown.\textsuperscript{14} Perhaps Padmore was arrested during a subsequent police operation? On February 21, the British Consulate General informed the Foreign Office that the police authorities in Altona were about to deport a person named Malcolm Ivan Nurse, “a Black British subject, born in Trinidad on June 28, 1903, the holder of a British passport No. 39946, issued in New York on November 26, 1929.” The Consulate was well aware of Nurse and pictured him as a potential trouble maker: “I am informed that this man, who appears to have been operating in Berlin, has had in his employ as lady secretary an attractive person by name Dr. Schiff, of Vienna, and who is understood to be married to a person employed as a communistic journalist.”\textsuperscript{15}

Padmore was playing a cat-and-mouse-play with the German and British authorities. Not unusual for any of the Comintern agents in the West, Padmore used a double identity. For the authorities, he was Nurse; in the Radical Atlantic, he was Padmore. By 1930 he had successfully made use of his double identity when travelling in West Africa, and his identity as a British subject saved him (again) in 1933.\textsuperscript{16} The German authorities informed the British that they wanted to deport an unwanted British colonial subject and the British believed Nurse could give them information about the notorious revolutionary Padmore. Padmore’s double identity perhaps also saved Frieda Schiff for a while – she had no connections to Nurse apart from being his secretary.

Nevertheless, Padmore’s detention opens a range of questions that cannot be answered definitively. What were the motives for his arrest and why was he arrested in early February? The date of his arrest does not correspond with any major attack by the Hamburg police authorities against the ISH premises. Also, it was the police authorities in Altona, not Hamburg, who informed the British authorities about Padmore. Thus, was Padmore actually arrested in Hamburg at a (presumed) raid against the headquarters of the Hamburg Committee or did it happen near his home in Altona, perhaps part of some other police actions against the communists?

The comrades at the RILU Negro Bureau in Moscow had no clue about what was going on in Hamburg in February. They were of the belief that in spite of the political chaos in Germany, the Hamburg Committee was still operating and had even sent the monthly

\textsuperscript{14} British Intelligence note re Richard Krebs, extract of correspondence dated 26.1.1933, TNA KV 2/1103.
\textsuperscript{15} Joseph Pyke, British Consulate General, Hamburg, to His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, 21.2.1933, TNA FO 372/2910 T 2236.
\textsuperscript{16} In fact, British Intelligence had already in 1931 identified Padmore as Ivan Nurse. It seems, however, that this information had not yet been distributed to the police authorities. The establishment of Nurse alias Padmore is referred to in a note by the Scotland Yard on Hans Thøgersen, dated 31.1.1931, TNA KV 2/1056.
allowances for January, February and March to Berlin.\footnote{List of monthly remittances of funds for RILU activities, RGASPI 534/8/216, fol. 375-376. In January, code number 04, i.e., the Hamburg Committee, was allocated USD 232, in February and March the funding was increased to USD 238.} Although Padmore himself never gave a full report to Moscow about what had happened, a letter by Alexander Zusmanovich to Padmore gives a possible clue for what might have happened. “It is important to stress here the absolute necessity for collective work and not individualist business relationships,” Zusmanovich underlined and further noted, “…it is the general opinion that you are not entirely blameless in regard to the incidents in the other place [i.e., Hamburg].”\footnote{Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7 fp.} The “incident” and “individualist business relationships” of Padmore are not known but Zusmanovich’s reprimand could indicate that Padmore’s arrest had nothing to do with the activities of the Hamburg Committee. This assumption is strengthen by Padmore’s excuse that he was penniless when he arrived in England as “the fascists took away all the money they found in the house”\footnote{(Handwritten letter) Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 124 bp.} – indicating that he had been arrested at home.

A further piece of information is added by a critical evaluation of the events immediately before Padmore’s deportation. The British Consulate informed the Foreign Office that the Altona Police told them that Padmore’s luggage included five trunks. Two of them were of particular interest. The first one was a large old yellow trunk stated to be full of Nurse’s correspondence with the Comintern and other revolutionary organisations as well as a large quantity of addresses, which were considered to interest the British authorities. The other trunk was said to contain literature and issues of the *Negro Worker*.\footnote{Pyke to FO, 21.2.1933, TNA FO 372/2910 T 2236.} Was Padmore really carrying with him the archives of the Hamburg Committee as the British authorities were to believe?

Either the German or the British authorities were misinformed about the content of yellow trunk. Perhaps Padmore’s arrest triggered Wollweber’s call to start to prepare for an evacuation of the activities in Berlin and Hamburg? Whatever the case, when Padmore was deported from Germany he did possess the yellow trunk and when the Hamburg police raided the ISH premises at Rothesoodstrasse, the place was empty. In fact, someone, perhaps even Padmore himself, had cleaned up the place. Much to the dismay of the British consular authorities, Padmore’s friends and his lawyer – most certainly someone from the local branch of the German IRH – had tried to convince the police authorities to deport him to any other country than the United Kingdom. Although they failed in their agitation, they were able to postpone his expulsion with one day. At this point, the British officials still believed that the
German police had confiscated the earlier referred “political documents”, i.e., Nurse’s/Padmore’s correspondence. However, much to their dismay, the German police were not inclined to hand the documents to the British authorities.\footnote{Pyke to FO, 22.2.1933, TNA FO 372/2910 T 2237.}

Padmore never travelled with the yellow trunk. Did it ever exist? Padmore’s own account is in conflict with the information received by the British Consulate. Either he himself or someone else had been able to destroy much of the archives of the Hamburg Committee; other materials had been safely stored. “It was not possible to get rid of all our literature in time for we had stocks of accumulated odds + r[ecor]ds [?],” Padmore notified his friends in Moscow but assured that “(t)he list of addresses – rather 4 boxes were safely deposited somewhere.” The rest of the material had been destroyed: “All letters, resolutions + such material were burned, so on the day they came the “deck” was cleared [sic] for action.” Most important, however, was that Padmore had undertaken these measures before he had been jailed: “It was well that I adopted these precautionary measures, for when I was let out of prison, they put me on a British ship...”\footnote{(Handwritten letter) Padmore to “Dear Comrades,” 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 124 bp.}

In fact, the British authorities never made a big catch. The consulate officials in Hamburg tried in vain to have his expulsion delayed by a few days. The German police intended to deport Padmore on the S.S. Bury but when it was learned that some fifteen Soviet seamen were also onboard, the British consulate tried to postpone his departure and to get him on another boat. However, the manoeuvre backfired and Padmore was placed on the S.S. Bury and sailed – without the yellow trunk – on 22 February to Grimsby.\footnote{Pyke to FO, 21.2.1933 and 22.2.1933, TNA FO 372/2910 T 2236 and T 2237.} The British catch was eventually a meagre one. They only obtained a list of names the consulate officials had been able to copy from Padmore’s notebook. Some of the names listed were rather curious, such as Bishop Milborn Montgomery Brown (USA) or Otto Harrassowitz (Leipzig, Germany). Others were Padmore’s close contacts in Moscow (Otto Huiswood [sic]), London (Jons Steodley – most likely referring to Jas Headley – and Arnold Ward), Cardiff (H.E. O’Connell) and in the United States (Isaak Hawkins, Louis Engthal [Engdahl, who at that time already was dead], Joney Morton and Cecil S. Hope. In addition, the list included a few names and addresses in Liberia and in South Africa - Jamba, who most likely was Holle Seleh Tamba, Mossaquoi and J.G.R. Faulkner in Monrovia as well as James Gomede [Gumede],
Shuba and John Gomos in a place called Cape Horn which the British – rightly – identified as Cape Town.  

1.3. The International Committee for Mutual Aid to Negro Workers

Padmore stayed only for one day after his arrival in England. He was penniless and shadowed by two officials of the Criminal Investigation Division. In London he was able borrow some money from Arnold Ward and left the same night for France. Here he headed towards Paris and with Garan Kouyaté’s help established a new basis for the Hamburg Committee.

Padmore’s first reports from Paris were written in a positive tenor. Although he was handicapped for lack of a typewriter, stationery and stamps, he immediately engaged in rebuilding his Atlantic network. At first, he was given a desk in the office of the Union des Travailleurs Nègres (UTN) and used the premises as his new headquarters. Kouyaté and his fraction of the LDRN launched this organization in September 1932. Officially branded as a mutual benefit organization, in effect it was the Sub-Committee of the ITUCNW and was affiliated with the CGTU. Le Cri des Nègres became the organ of the UTN.

Officially, Padmore was Mr. George Kouyate, living at 33 Rue de la Grange-aux-Belles. His first task was to inform all his contact persons to stop sending letters to Hamburg and warned them that the German police were confiscating everything sent there. Instead, all communication and letters were to go via the “Vienna address”, including those from the African Atlantic as well as those from Moscow. He had written to Sierra Leone via Daniels (Wallace-Johnson). He also informed Moscow and South Africa. Further, he directed Moscow, “tell Nelson [Holle Seleh Tamba] not to send anymore letters to Liberia via Hamburg. All such letters should go via Vienna – one at a time, please note!” The Vienna connection is not known – was it perhaps Frieda Schiff who had managed to escape to Austria? If so, Frieda Schiff could only have been a temporary connection as she later was reunited with Padmore in Paris.

Even more pressing was the need to find a printer for the Negro Worker but Padmore assured the comrades in Moscow that the matter could be handled easily through Kouyaté. He projected to use the same printer for the Negro Worker that Kouyaté used for issuing the Le

24 Addresses copied from a Blue Notebook, enclosed in Pyke to FO, 21.2.1933, TNA FO 372/2910 T 2236.
27 It is not known for how long they lived together in Paris. At least in July 1934, Padmore gave his address as Schiff, Chambre 24, 54 Route de Chatillon, Malakoff, Seine. TNA KV 2/1787.
Cri des Nègres. Printing costs, he assured, would more or less amount to the same as in Hamburg. Nevertheless, it would take a few weeks for him to get things “properly re-organized” and sketched a plan how he and Kouyaté were to lure the French authorities: “Our plans will be to have everything officially translated in the name of the French Negros, especially K. so as to guarantee legality. There is no difficulty in printing the N.W. here as the French know that “their” blacks don’t read English + they have no particular love for the English.” Publishing the *Negro Worker* in England made no sense, he calculated, as the British authorities immediately would confiscate the journal. Hamburg was out of question. A new distribution network had therefore to be established and Padmore’s projected to make use of connections in Marseilles, Rouen, Cardiff, London and New York. Padmore was confident: “This will guarantee the continued success of our work.”

Lack of funds, however, continued to be his main problem. His dilemma was that he did not have any clues of what had happened with his contacts at the Berlin Bureau of the IRH: “Not being able to get news from him or from Max, my position here is one like a rat just rescued from drowning awaiting the sun[…]. I have no possibility of reaching Max or W. from here.” Max was probably Max Ziese, but who was W? Perhaps he was referring to Albert Walter whose fate he was not aware about – Padmore had been deported from Germany before Walter had been arrested. Or was it Willi alias René who had been working at the RILU European Bureau in Berlin and was on his way to Paris? Be as it may, for the time being he planned to have a semi-illegal profile in Paris. Zusmanovich was urged to use “his special line” to the CGTU for “business” with him; he himself would be in contact with them through Kouyaté. All other correspondences were to be sent via the Vienna address, while literature, papers and journals were to be sent to his address in Paris. After all, Padmore was confident that the ITUCNW was soon to be back in full operation: “Well comrades, in reviewing the general situation we think that despite temporary set-backs we will be able to quickly re-adjust ourselves and continue to carry out the general plan of our work.”

If Padmore’s first letter from 6 March permeated a positive evaluation of his condition, his next letter, dated 9 March, contained a critical undertone. Assuring that the general outline for the operations of the ITUCNW would remain the same according to the December 1932 Resolution, he anticipated that he had to adopt new forms and methods of

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30 (Handwritten letter) Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 130 bp.
work. These were to be outlined in a future detailed report he intended to submit “at an early date.” (In fact, he never did as will be noted further below.) He had not received any news from Moscow and anxiously reminded Zusmanovich of using the “special line” to the CGTU. He needed copies of the addresses of the Hamburg Committee – those the British consul in Hamburg believed to be in the yellow trunk. Padmore’s instructions to Moscow reveal what had happened and why the British never made a big catch. Well in advance, he had stored his catalogue at a secure place in Hamburg but since his deportation had not been able to get in contact with anyone at the ISH – or even knew about its whereabouts. However, a copy of the mailing list existed at the RILU Negro Bureau and Padmore asked the comrades to send a copy of the catalogue to him. Other names and addresses, he informed, were listed on “the coloured sheets of paper”, these were to be copied too and sent to him. But not by post, he underlined.  

Padmore’s main trouble was Kouyaté’s “unsatisfactory” situation. He did not receive any remuneration for his engagement with the UTN and Padmore feared that he soon had to quit his job. “The consequences for our work will be serious,” Padmore warned and urged the comrades in Moscow to take some action in the matter. Equally concerning was his general livelihood. Without any funds and wage, he was unable to do anything: “This puts me in a hell of a fix as I have no possibility to live much less to work. I need postage so as to inform our connections not to write to H[amburg] anymore, but no money to send out the letters.” He urged J, i.e., Jackson alias Nzula, to put some pressure on the comrades in Moscow, otherwise his work in Paris would be “sabotaged” by the comrades themselves.  

Although Padmore directed an open criticism of the lethargy and lack of interest in Negro work in Moscow – “it is painful, but only too true” – he was still confident about the right course of his activities. “We are marching forward and all the devils in hell will stop us. When once a Negro’s eyes are opened they refuse to shut again.”

But Moscow did not respond. Padmore, seemingly, was not aware of the chaotic conditions of the RILU-apparatus after its relocation from Germany. Not surprisingly, the reorganization of the Hamburg Committee was not the top priority at the Moscow headquarters but the establishment for structures for illegal work in Germany. Former units that had been based in Germany and run by German communists had to be integrated with the Party and communist trade union structures in the host countries. The comrades at the RILU

headquarters had few opportunities to influence the ad hoc solutions the comrades on the spot had to take in solving practical matters. The leadership of the former units was scattered all over Western and Central Europe, and a central body such as the European Bureau no longer existed. Only on 13 March, Moscow received a note from Stockholm outlining the future activities of the Hamburg Committee. The plan suggested the relocation the International Negro Committee to Paris – as if the unidentified author was not aware of Padmore’s arrival in the city or perhaps considering Paris a better alternative than Copenhagen – and to rename the Committee as the “Internale [sic] Hilfs-Komitee der Negerarbeiter“. Padmore was still to be in charge of the operations. His main obligation was to be the publication oft he Negro Worker. Its first issue was to include an article stating that the Hamburg Committee had been closed and that all duties had been transferred to the new Committee.34

Finally, the silence broke in early April when Padmore received a letter from Zusmanovich containing instructions for him.35 The comrades at the RILU Negro Bureau had been totally unaware about Padmore’s fate and until early March, it seems, did not even know that the offices at Rothesoodstrasse been closed down and were not anymore operating. This is evident from the instructions that Zusmanovich had sent to the RILU Secretariat in early March regarding activities in the West Indies – to employ a comrade for the West Indian work and to strengthen “notre platform” in Hamburg, i.e., the ITUCNW.36

It is not clear if Zusmanovich had received Padmore’s anticipated report for the future activities of the ITUCNW. Nevertheless, realizing that any operations from Hamburg were impossible, the RILU Negro Bureau decided to launch a new strategy. Zusmanovich declared to Padmore that it was an absolute necessity that the connections between his office in Paris and the headquarters in Moscow were to be rebuilt in a secure and effective way. Already operating illegally in Germany, this condition was to continue in Paris. Therefore, it was decided to change the name of the ITUCNW and from now on operate under the name ‘International Committee for Mutual Aid to Negro Workers’. The journal was to continue to appear under its name; the directives and instructions for the new committee were the same as for the Hamburg Committee.37

35 (Copy of) Letter from Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7-8?. The letter is also stamped 000255 3.APR.1933. The letter was sent to Padmore on the 4th of April, see order to send letter 255 to Padmore (in German) filed in RGASPI 534/8/247, fol. 68.
37 Letter from Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7.
Padmore’s task was to cooperate with the comrades at the CGTU and the PCF, Zusmanovich underlined. “You should not allow yourself to be depressed by certain of the French comrades but make the fullest use of them.” This was a critical reminder to Padmore about his position within the Comintern Apparatus. Earlier criticism of the unwillingness of the metropolitan parties to develop a genuine interest in Negro work was to be put aside. Zusmanovich seems to indicate that Kouyaté’s troubles were not to be of his concern. Instead, a new structural relationship between Padmore’s committee, the party and trade union headquarters in Paris and Moscow was to be immediately established. As in Hamburg, Padmore was not allowed to establish an independent basis but was to be a subordinated player whose task was to cooperate with other units. “You should create such conditions for these comrades so that they will be able not only to help you but also to consolidate what work already exists.” Further, foreseeing that Paris was not an ideal nodal point for work in the Anglophone African Atlantic, Zusmanovich suggested that the Negro Welfare Association in London was to be developed into the main body for work in the British colonies.38

2. Exit Padmore, enter Huiswoud

It is not known how Padmore received Zusmanovich orders from late March 1933. In fact, little is known of his activities from March to August 1933 apart from his engagement with Nancy Cunard’s book project on contemporary Negro literature and art.39 He certainly collaborated with Kouyaté. On the other hand, his communication with Moscow was rare or, as Zusmanovich complained, not even forthcoming.40

On the other hand, Padmore was still Moscow’s key link to the African Atlantic and was to be financially supported. Probably in late April, the RILU Financial Commission issued directives to direct 200 US dollars to Paris to cover Padmore’s wage and expenses and asked him to forward a budget proposal.41 The monthly transfer of funds for Padmore continued until at least June 1933 (see table X.1). As in Hamburg, Padmore did not receive the money directly but via Comrade René.

Table X.1. Monthly financial assistance to the ”Negerkommittee”/Padmore 1933

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38 Letter from Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 8?.
41 Directives (no date), RGASPI 534/8/247, fol. 76.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>USD 232</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>USD 238</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>USD 238</td>
<td>534/8/216, fol. 375-376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>USD 200</td>
<td>534/8/247, fol. 76, 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>USD 200 ???</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>USD 150</td>
<td>534/8/247, fol. 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>USD ---</td>
<td>534/8/247, fol. 133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1. Still existing: The *Negro Worker*

Padmore had completed the February 1933 issue of the *Negro Worker* when he was arrested and had at his arrival no clue about if it had ever been distributed. This was a delicate issue as it had been a special number on the IRH World Congress and the IRH had promised to cover the printing costs. If he was to receive the money, Padmore declared, he could cover the printing costs for the next number of the *Negro Worker*, “but will not give the manuscript to the local printers until payment can be guaranteed, for I want to avoid debts.”

Publishing the *Negro Worker* turned out to be a delicate undertaking and has puzzled researchers. The journal appeared five times in 1933. The January issue was printed in Hamburg while the four other double issues were, according to information on the back of the cover sheet, published in Copenhagen. Padmore, on the other hand, was living in Paris and at least planned to use the same printer as *Le Cri des Nègres*. Was this a strange, if not contradictory coincidence?

The IRH special issue was published as number 2-3 sometimes in March or perhaps as late as April 1933. It is to be assumed that either it had been published in Hamburg and had been shipped out before the closure of activities there or, more likely, the copies had been shipped out from Hamburg to Copenhagen through the rescue operation of relocating the ISH headquarters to Copenhagen. Be it as it may, the official post box – but certainly nothing more – of the *Negro Worker* was in Copenhagen, most likely in conjunction with the undercover office of the ISH. Letters to the editors of the *Negro Worker* were thus sent to Copenhagen and from there via various clandestine communications networks rerouted to Paris. This could

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42 (Handwritten letter) Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 128bp.
44 *The Negro Worker* III:2-3, 1933. The issue included Padmore’s and Nzula’s speeches at the IRH World Congress in addition to excerpts of W. Taylor’s and Vivian E. Henry’s speeches as well as an article by Nzula on the ILD and the Negro Peoples and an outline of the ILD’s objectives by Edgar Owens. Nzula’s articles were signed T. Jackson.
certainly have been arranged easily as the two cities had, together with Prague, assumed the role of nodes for the Comintern’s operations in Europe.

Padmore edited the remaining issues of the *Negro Worker* in Paris and most likely had them printed in Paris.\(^{45}\) The journal’s distribution in the African Atlantic should have posed little problems once he could establish reliable connections onboard outgoing ships in the French harbours. However, in comparison to previous volumes, the three double issues of the *Negro Worker* contain very few passages and letters from Africa and the Caribbean – one letter from Jamaica, a few reports on and from South Africa and an unnamed letter from Nigeria\(^{46}\). Padmore had written most of the articles. The June-July issue contained an appeal by the ITUCNW in favour for forming a united front against fascism – most likely authored in Moscow, although Padmore himself had written two articles bashing Nazi rule in Germany and therefore could also have drafted it.\(^{47}\)

The August-September issue included an Open letter-type pamphlet directed ‘To Our Brothers in Kenya’. The RILU Negro Bureau prepared the statement in 1932, but for reasons not known it had not yet been published. Padmore certainly knew that the comrades at the Negro Bureau, perhaps even engaging Kenyatta, were drafting the declaration in early March as he reminded them to send him the document\(^{48}\). Similarly, he asked Arnold Ward to forward him more information about the situation in Kenya, especially “this new organization” – perhaps the Kikuyu Central Association?\(^{49}\) In early June the statement was ready and was published in the name of the General Secretariat of the Kikuyu Central Association.\(^{50}\) The double issue of August-September 1933 turned out to be Padmore’s last engagement as editor of the *Negro Worker*. Perhaps he had most of the issue already edited when he wrote the article “Au revoir” where he declared that the journal had run out of funds and was bankrupt.\(^{51}\) What had happened?

### 2.2. The critique

\(^{45}\) Pennybacker 2009, p. 77.


\(^{48}\) (Handwritten letter) Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 129 fp.

\(^{49}\) British Intelligence, cross-reference to intercepted letter from Padmore to Ward, 5.3.1933, TNA KV 2/1787.

\(^{50}\) Open Letter to Kenya, 5.6.1933, copies only in French and German, RGASPI 534/3/863, fol. 11-17 (German version).

Many researchers have interpreted Padmore’s farewell article as the first step in his resignation and subsequent expulsion from the Comintern. Most researchers refer to Wilson Record’s and J. R. Hooker’s version that Padmore broke with Moscow because the Kremlin wanted to establish links with Great Britain and France, the two colonial powers that had been denounced by the Comintern as the arch exploiters of the oppressed colonial masses. Anti-colonial policies and anti-imperialist agitation were to be softened. Those comrades who protested against the shift in priorities in 1933-1934, such as Garan Kouyaté, were expelled from the Comintern and denounced as ‘provocateurs’. As Padmore, who was at that time living in Kouyaté’s apartment, did not renounce his friendship with Kouyaté, he was expelled by the ECCI from the Communist Party in February 1934.  

Recent scholarship has put the above story in question. Some authors, such as Susan D. Pennybacker, emphasize Padmore’s frustration with the Comintern’s orthodox inflexibility in fully acknowledging the racial issue and argue that Padmore’s break with the Comintern was due to him opting for an openly Pan African position. Other, such as Joyce Moore Turner, highlight Padmore’s refusal to break his ties with Garan Kouyaté. Jonathan Derrick’s interpretation is the most elaborate one, pinpointing both on Moscow’s criticism about “reformist” African agitators, Padmore’s Pan-Africanist opposition towards imperialism, his close ties to Kouyaté and that he was accused for driving a hidden agenda, namely working for bourgeois organizations on behalf of Liberia, in 1933 by Moscow.

All of the above-mentioned three authors open up interesting new interpretations of Padmore’s expulsion. However, the key document to understand what might have happened is Zusmanovich’s letter to Padmore sent in late March 1933. The letter contained both instructions for how Padmore was to organize his work in Paris, as mentioned earlier. However, more than that, the letter was an official reminder from Moscow to Padmore. Zusmanovich not only gave Padmore “comradely criticism” for his general shortcomings but listed several grave strategic and tactical mistakes Padmore had made when he was running the Hamburg Committee. There were three critical points: he had been careless in his

53 Pennybacker 2009, p. 79-81.
56 The letter is fully quoted in Turner 2005, p. 199. However, she does not analyse its content nor is she aware of the context the letter is referring to.
activities and had forgotten that work in Hamburg was to be conducted on an illegal basis; he had been careless in the selection of African students; and he had made decisions without receiving the backing from Moscow. In summary, Moscow criticized Padmore for being too individualistic and sent a clear reminder to him – either to stick to the rules or to bear the consequences.

Zusmanovich accusations were grave ones as they directly questioned Padmore’s main work in Hamburg. He had vehemently argued in favour for the right of the Hamburg Committee to select the African students in 1932. Zusmanovich openly criticized Padmore for having made the wrong selections: “It is intolerable for you to send people that you don’t know. And we find ourselves in a difficult position in regard to your last choice. It is not only this case but as a rule you have no right to send people whom you have not thoroughly invested from every aspect.” These words must have felt like a slap in the face to Padmore. Hadn’t he been able to send promising African students to Moscow all of whom he had identified as prospective agitators and agents? What he was not aware of and seemed to have no clue about was the turn of events that had taken place in Moscow during the first months of 1933. In January 1933, all of the African and African American students at the KUTV had sent a petition to Dimitri Manuilsky, who was at that time one of the leading Soviet members in the Comintern. The students protested against the cancellation of the Meschadpom film project Black and White, criticized the racist attitude they had met in some location in Soviet Russia as well as the poor conditions at the KUTV. The teachers were criticized for poor English and the textbooks were all in Russian. The monthly stipend a student was insufficient to cover the high costs of living in Moscow. The students lacked adequate clothing for the Russian winter, the dormitory was cold and lacked warm running water, laundry services were poor and slow, the food was badly prepared (although sufficient). Among the signatures of the petition were all of Padmore’s students: Johnstone Kenyatta (Joken), Joseph Bilé (Morris), I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson (Wallace Daniels), Holle Seleh Tamba (Nelson), among others.

The shortcomings of the teaching staff at the KUTV was also put on the table at a meeting of Group “9”, i.e., the Negro [African] section at the KUTV in late January 1933. At

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57 Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7.
58 Open letter to the Comintern as well as Resolution in Connection with Derogatory Portrayal of Negroes in the Cultural institutions of the Soviet Union, RGASPI 532/1/441. For an analysis and discussion, see Woodford McClellan, “Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934,” International Journal of African Historical Studies 26:2, 1993, pp. 378, 381-387. Contrary to McClellan’s claim that the Soviet authorities did take complaints of mistreatment and discrimination seriously, Zusmanovich’s note to Padmore reveals that such criticism also provoked a negative reaction and branded some of the Africans as troublemakers.
this meeting, Comrades Hamilton (Samuel Padmore) and Smith (Nathan Varne Grey) – the first was the African seamen that Padmore had sent to Moscow – urged the Russian teachers to devote more energy to study the English language. If this criticism reached the leading members in the Comintern is not known, although it is likely as Ivan Potekhin participated in the meeting.  

The students’ protest was never discussed at the RILU but on a much higher lever – Manuilsky was the Secretary of the ECCI. It was never brought back to either the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat or the RILU Negro Bureau indicating that it either was dealt with on a much higher level or was regarded as an unimportant issue. Zusmanovich letter to Padmore indicates that the Soviet leadership regarded the critique as a grave negative incident. Especially the African intellectuals, notably Kenyatta and Wallace-Johnson, which Padmore had singled out, were branded as potential troublemakers. Kenyatta, especially, had lost favour. He was regarded as being a “petty-bourgeois” and arrogant person who had little interest in the KUTV teachings. In the KUTV dossier about him he was discredited as a “reformist” and with such a person the Communist was have nothing to do, not to say sympathy, with him. It therefore comes as no surprise that in the Open letter to Kenya, the Kikuyu Reform Association – the organization that Kenyatta represented – was denounced as a reformist body. This accusation was repeated a few months later when Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich published their book on forced labour in Africa.

Wallace-Johnson was a different case. In contrast to Kenyatta, who stayed in Moscow for about nine months, Wallace-Johnson left Soviet Russia only after a few months stay in mid-January 1933. Officially, he excused his resignation from the KUTV by referring to poor health. At least in 1933, Wallace-Johnson was at least partially stigmatized in the eyes of Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich as he, too, was claimed to be a “reformist” in their book.

In 1933, Kenyatta was not aware of having lost his credentials in Moscow. His return to the political scene in London in late August/early September caused turmoil not only among the British authorities – who by May 1933 were well aware of the fact that Kenyatta was studying in Moscow – but also among the Black radicals. Arnold Ward was especially suspicious of Kenyatta’s claims to be authorised by Moscow. More or less without any funds,

59 Protocol of meeting of Group “9”, 30.1.1933, RGASPI 532/1/442, fol. 3. Apart from Hamilton, Smith and Potekhin, the following comrades participated at the meeting: Greenwood (Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana), Hilton (Sobia Nikin), Charlie (Samuel Freeman) and Nelson.


61 Letter from Daniels (Wallace-Johnson) to KUTV, 10.1.1933, RGASPI 495/279/66, fol. 2.

Kenyatta turned to Ward and asked him to contact Padmore who was supposed to assist him. While he never received any funds from Padmore – who by that time must have run out of money in Paris – he continued to portray himself as an emissary from Moscow instructed to get the various coloured organizations under one control as late as in December 1933. In fact, at this point British intelligence believed that Kenyatta was “in the running to take the place of George Padmore as a comrade of International Status” as they noted that Padmore by that time was in disfavour with the PCF, CPUSA and the CPGB and was rumoured to be expelled. As late as January 1934, a warning was issued about Kenyatta who was believed to be succeeding Padmore as the “principal Soviet propaganda agent” for the British colonies similar to Garan Kouyaté, who was at that point still to be in charge for the dissemination of propaganda to the French colonies. However, the British authorities overestimated Kenyatta’s position and made the wrong assessment. He must certainly have been aware of the rift between Padmore and the communists and by January 1934, if not earlier, he closed ranks with Padmore. Years later, Kenyatta even claimed that he had symbolically cut his ties with Moscow while he still was studying at the KUTV and regarded his stay at the KUTV as a mistake.

Apart from being unaware about the turbulence in Moscow in early spring 1933, Padmore’s main supporter at the RILU headquarters was for the moment travelling abroad on a secret mission. Otto Huiswoud, who might have chosen another approach in reprimanding Padmore than Zusmanovich, had been sent to South Africa in late 1932 as special RILU emissary. He was away when both the incident in Moscow, Padmore’s deportation from Hamburg and the relocation of the ITUCNW to Paris occurred. He returned to Moscow sometime in mid 1933, which was too late to correct any of the misunderstandings that Zusmanovich’s letter might have caused.

The second clause of Zusmanovich’s “comradely criticism” was an even more serious corrective than the slap about the students. Padmore had in his March letter to the RILU Negro Bureau reported that he had sent “Comrade H” to Trinidad and asked the comrades to

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63 Extract from intercepted letter from Ward to Padmore, 13.9.1933, TNA KV 2/1787.
64 British Intelligence information, dated 6.12.1933, TNA KV 2/1787.
65 British Intelligence report, 16.12.1933, TNA 2/1787.
66 Secret note, dated January 1934, TNA KV 2/1787.
67 On January 18, 1934, Padmore had via Nancy Cunard informed Kenyatta that he was to be expelled from the Communist Party on account of his Trotskyist tendencies. TNA KV 2/1787.
send him 50 dollars per month so that he (Padmore) could invest the money for work in the West Indies, (paying Comrade H’s salary). Padmore’s strategy was to open a new direct engagement of the ITUCNW in the Caribbean “as the Americans are not interested in this work.” He further planned to broaden his activities in the Caribbean by concentrating upon Jamaica and to rebuild “our organization” in Haiti.\textsuperscript{70} The only crux of the matter was that someone in Moscow totally disliked Padmore’s actions.\textsuperscript{71} An official inquiry was to be sent to both Padmore and the French comrades to investigate the matter. The RILU Negro Bureau, too, was taken by surprise. “We are rather astonished at your information that you have sent somebody to the W[est] I[ndies] on your own account,” Zusmanovich replied and corrected Padmore: “We would like to know what reason you had to send this person on your own initiative. Whose advice did you act on? It is true the American comrades have been passive in this respect but it is wrong to send somebody whom we don’t know and whom you probably don’t know well, on such responsible work. We have some American guests here now and we shall take up this question more fully and correctly with them.”\textsuperscript{72}

If the matter of selecting the wrong persons for training in Moscow was a minor strategic blunder, exceeding one’s power was a major mistake in the Comintern Apparatus. Padmore should have known this. Nothing had changed in the hierarchical structures of the Comintern and RILU. The ITUCNW and its secretary were not to engage in personal politics and pursue personal agendas and objectives, but were to only to engage in areas of their competence. Sending emissaries and agents had been Padmore’s business – but only after someone above him had approved to the mission. Padmore himself had never been granted such power.

The third of Zusmanovich’s accusations referred to Padmore’s unorthodox relationship with public activities. In Moscow’s mind, Padmore had forgotten that his activities were to be “a skilful combination of legal, semi-legal and illegal methods of work.” Zusmanovich compelled Padmore not to leave any traces of him but to agitate in the background; not to speak out loudly in mass meetings as to attract the interest of the bystanders to ones person instead to the common cause one was supposed to address. Padmore was advised to create an “active” [circle/cell] through which he was to work in Paris and in other places. He himself was always to remain in the background. “You must radically change your methods of work” and “it is […] the absolute necessity for collective work and

\textsuperscript{70} Padmore to ‘Dear Comrades’, 6.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 129 bp.
\textsuperscript{71} Directives, (no date), paragraph 8, RGASPI 534/8/247, fol. 78.
\textsuperscript{72} Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7.
not individualist business relationships” – this was the “comradely advice” from Moscow. In fact, it was an order – and yet another slap to Padmore’s face. He had sidestepped his orders in Hamburg, at least in the mind of Moscow: “[…] there is much of to be required of you in the way of quitting some of your inclinations in this direction. You have a good opportunity for collective work now. Make use of it. On the same basis of comradely criticism we must draw your attention to the fact that it is the general opinion that you are not entirely blameless in regard the incidents in the other place. We advise you comradely to treat our proposals in this letter seriously and avoid further complication on this head in your future work.” Finally, Zusmanovich ordered Padmore not to send letters to private addresses or to mention anything concerning his work “as it may have serious consequences both for yourself and us.” Did he perhaps refer to Padmore’s communication with Vera? Her letter to him is the only letter of a private nature that is filed in the RILU-files. Was he indirectly instructed to cut his relationship with her?  

Padmore’s reactions to Moscow’s official criticism are not known. He certainly must have felt annoyed about the reminder but did he regard the attack as unjustified (probably) or had the comrades in Moscow, in his view, totally misunderstood the different ways of establishing a radical African Atlantic? Had he, in fact, already been drifting away from the orthodox stance of limiting the ITUCNW to the role of a mere intermediary between anti-colonial grassroots movements in the colonies and the Comintern?

While Padmore was silent for the next months, the comrades at the RILU Negro Bureau had received disturbing news from Paris about Padmore’s and Kouyaté’s activities. In early May, the RILU headquarters received a lengthy report from Willi (René) about the conditions in Paris. While there had been some progress in reorganizing work in Paris, the prospects for Negro work were bleak. His main troubles were with Kouyaté and Padmore. While the former distanced himself from the PCF and seemed to disobey orders from the Party’s Colonial Section, no direct contacts to Padmore could be established as he was under constant police surveillance. This was the reason why he (René) had not been able to forward Padmore any money for some weeks. Although this problem had been solved, René was still highly critical about Kouyaté’s and Padmore’s activities and notified Moscow to continue to be watchful, especially as there was a need to cleansing (“Säuberung”) of the ‘organisation’.

René’s reference to the need of cleansing an organization must be interpreted in the light of Kouyaté’s and the PCF’s conflict over how to run the UTN. Kouyaté had increasingly

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73 Zusmanovich to Padmore, 22.3.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 7.
74 Report by Willi, 2.5.1933, RGASPI 534/4/460, fol. 113.
quarrelled with André Ferrat, the head of the Colonial Section of the PCF, and Eva Neumann alias Henriette Carlier, the Secretary of the PCF’s Colonial Section, whose objective was to enforce the PCF’s control over black militants. The final rift between Kouyaté and the PCF occurred in summer 1933 when the PCF tried to oust Kouyaté from the editorial board of the *Le Cri des Nègres* and accused him of embezzling funds he had received from the Party. On June 26, 1933, Kouyaté and Julien Racamond, National Secretary of the CGTU and a member of the Central Commission of the PCF, held a meeting to sort out their difficulties but without much success. On July 3, 1933, Kouyaté was suspended from all his responsibilities in the UTN.

Kouyaté had been Padmore’s trusted ally and friend in France. Not surprisingly, he sided with Kouyaté during the quarrel in summer 1933. He had been a participant to the weekly meetings of the UTN since his arrival in early March and when he had started to receive his monthly funding from Moscow, he had started to support Kouyaté and the publication of the *Le Cri des Nègres*. In his mind, it was not Moscow’s business to tell him with whom to associate or not. In fact, wasn’t the UTN the Sub-Committee of the ITUCNW and Kouyaté the leading figure for establishing a communication network with the francophone radical African Atlantic?

2.3. The August 1933 meeting in Paris

By August 1933 it had become evident for everyone that the strained relations between Kouyaté and the Party were heading towards a catastrophic end if nothing was done. At this point Moscow decided to send a special envoy to Paris to launch an investigation about the affair. As the quarrel also had affected the ITUCNW’s operations, especially the publication of the *Negro Worker*, and due to Padmore’s involvement in the UTN, his activities were therefore also to be investigated. Moscow’s emissary was their chief architect for Negro work – Otto Huiswoud.

According to Joyce Moore Turner, Huiswoud had been dispatched to Paris to warn Padmore of the danger presented by Kouyaté’s association. Her interpretation is that Padmore

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75 Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris*, University of Nebraska Press 2010, p. 112.
77 Reunion pour les travailleurs Negres, 26.6.1933, RGASPI 495/270/5182, fol. 12.
78 Van Enckevort 2000, p. 111.
80 Turner 2005, p. 213.
did not receive the warning kindly and when Huiswoud asked Padmore to travel to Moscow to discuss the problem, he refused to do so. 81 Jonathan Derrick, referring to DeWitte’s account, on the other hand claims that the Comintern via Ferrat had summoned Padmore to go to Moscow and that Kouyaté had advised him to refuse. 82 However, there exists also a third version of why Padmore refused to go to Moscow. According Paul Trewhela, Padmore had told Charlie van Gelderen in 1935 that while making preparations to go, he received a cable from Albert Nzula warning him not to come. 83 Others, such as Hooker, Wilson and Schwarz, stick to C.L. James version that Padmore’s refusal to go to Moscow was tied to his condemnation of the change in Soviet foreign policy and his resignation from the Comintern after the disbandment of the ITUCNW. 84 In their view, Padmore regarded the invitation to be a potentially dangerous one and was afraid that he would have been held back in the Soviet Union, perhaps even anticipating to be purged by the Stalinist machine. 85

However, there are several flaws with the interpretations for Padmore’s refusal. As Derrick convincingly has argued, the pro-French and British change in Soviet foreign policy did not happen in 1933. Also, the claim of Nzula having smuggled a cable to Padmore is interesting but problematic and only relies on Padmore’s post factum testimony. Last, but not least, was Huiswoud’s meeting with Padmore really dealing with the latter’s too close association with Kouyaté? A critical examination of the minutes of the August 1933 meeting in Paris as well as Huiswoud’s recommendations reveals a different picture.

The meeting took place on 24 August 1933. 86 Ten persons participated of which the identity of six can be established, namely Racamond, Henri, Georges, René, Henriette [Carlier alias Eva Neumann] and Rosso. 87 Stéphane Rosso was a West Indian and a member of the Party and the UTN, 88 Georges was George Padmore. Henri was the alias Huiswoud used at the meeting. In his communications with the RILU and Moscow, he used his other alias,

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86 According to the dates of entry and exit in Huiswoud’s Dutch passport, he left Soviet Russia on August 6, and travelled by train and boat via Turku in Finland (7.8.), Stockholm (8.8.) and Copenhagen. Interrogation report of Otto Huiswoud, 11.9.1934, Belgian State Archive (BSA; Algemeen Rijksarchief en Rijksarchief in de Provinciën) Antwerp PK 2001/1348.
87 Tuner 2005, p. 211.
88 Derrick 2008, p. 141.
The aim of the meeting, Huiswoud declared in the beginning of the meeting, was to discuss the conditions for work of the ITUCNW as well as for publishing the *Negro Worker*. Thereafter, a heated debate followed between Racamond and Padmore about the lack of collaboration between the ITUCNW and the CGTU. Padmore also tried to raise the accusations against Kouyaté and vehemently defended his friend. The main issue, however, was the unsatisfactory general conditions for publishing an English journal in Paris and to transmit it to the Anglophone African Atlantic.

Although Padmore was highly critical about the nonchalant, even racist, and orthodox attitudes of the French comrades and the inflexibility and apathy of the RILU headquarters towards his and Kouyaté’s work, he did not resign at or immediately after the meeting. In fact, this issue was not touched upon at all. Neither, however, was the liquidation of the ITUCNW and the *Negro Worker* suggested. Instead, the meeting ended with the decision to send a communiqué to Moscow about the discussions held in Paris and asked Padmore to prepare a detailed report about his activities. This report was to be discussed at a later stage in a smaller group. Padmore never wrote the report – or at least it never reached the RILU Negro Bureau. Huiswoud, on the other hand, claimed in his statement that he had held a number of discussions with the leading comrades in Paris but only one meeting with the Colonial Commission of the CGTU. It seems, therefore, that Padmore’s report was never discussed at a second meeting (if he wrote one) or that Huiswoud at a certain point had decided to go ahead without awaiting the text. Interestingly, Huiswoud did not refer to Padmore in his statement with a single word but neither did he criticize his actions!

Huiswoud’s own recommendations were rather positive about the continuation of the ITUCNW and the *Negro Worker*. However, the crux of the matter was that the CGTU was not in the position to render any assistance to the ITUCNW. Also, there was no one in Paris who was fluent enough in English to read the proofs of the *Negro Worker* and to correct the mistakes made by the printers. Curiously, Padmore’s tasks were never referred to in the

89 Huiswoud’s two aliases at that time can be established by a cross reading of the two documents of the August 1933 meeting. Both documents, the minutes of the meeting in French and the conclusions in English, are stamped 001208 19-Sep.1933. The conclusion signed by Edward refers to an enclosed stenographic report, i.e., the minutes in French. Huiswoud’s alias Edward can be established via a questionnaire in his personal file, see Fragebogen, dat. 8/VII-36, RGASPI 495/261/6668, fol. 23.
92 Summary and statement of Edward’s [Huiswoud] report regarding the work of the ITUCNW, no date, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 120.
outline. Was Huiswoud suggesting that Padmore was to receive assistance by someone else or was nobody anymore taking care of the business of the ITUCNW and the *Negro Worker*? He summarized the discussions in Paris as “it is necessary to state that it will be absolutely impossible to continue the work of the Committee unless a special person is assigned to take charge of the work.” With or without Padmore? It is likely that Huiswoud was discussing extra work force in addition to Padmore. There was no suitable person available here who had the political and technical qualifications to assume the tasks of the Committee, the French comrades explained to Huiswoud. Not even a typist was to be found due to the language barrier. However, the main problem was the French organizations’ lack of money: “Even in the case that they were able to secure someone, this person would have to be a regularly paid functionary.” Finally, Huiswoud also raised the question of moving the headquarters of the ITUCNW. Paris, he claimed, was not an ideal location. A port with connections to the African continent was to be preferred. The French comrades suggested Bordeaux. Others, Huiswoud recalled, had proposed to move the office to Amsterdam, Rotterdam or Antwerp. “This whole question will have to be examined from the point of view of the above mentioned [sic] conditions and a report will be submitted on same,” he concluded.  

Did Padmore know about these propositions?

### 2.4. “Au revoir”

The meeting to clarify the conditions for Negro work in Paris in August 1933 was not successful. Either Padmore misinterpreted the discussion or had already decided to go his own way when he wrote his famous farewell article in the *Negro Worker*. His own position within the organization was unclear. Was he still in charge of the operations or was he to be replaced by someone else? The latter interpretation seems to have been Padmore’s when he urged the readership of the *Negro Worker* to “help the new editor to overcome the present financial difficulties and to carry on the militant traditions of the Negro Worker.”

Padmore would later recall that his farewell address was written as a protest but seen in the light of Huiswoud’s report and the minutes of the August meeting, it should rather be read as part of a jointly planned reorganization of the work in Paris.

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93 Summary and statement of Edward’s [Huiswoud] report regarding the work of the ITUCNW, no date, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 120.

It is not known whose plan it was to replace Padmore or when and where it was formulated. There is reason to believe that Padmore at least initially participated in the discussions and that he also had been informed about the final decision. Similar to Ford’s removal in 1931, Padmore’s removal in 1933 was perhaps projected as part of a larger structural reorganization, although I have so far not been able to locate any documents that could shed some lights about the tactical and strategic discussion in the RILU Negro Bureau or the RILU Secretariat during fall 1933. Be as it may, there is ample evidence that suggests that Padmore was drifting further away from the orbit of the Comintern and the ITUCNW during fall 1933. By December 1933, British Intelligence believed Padmore’s position to be desperate and claimed that Padmore was in disfavour with the Communists both in France and in Britain.95

One reason for Padmore’s troubles was his refusal to break his ties with Garan Kouyaté. The “l’affaire Kouyaté” had reached its climax during autumn 1933. In September, members of the communist faction of the UTN started to plan Kouyaté’s removal from the organization. Kouyaté was to be accused of sabotage and to be forced to resign.96 On 31 October, the L’Humanité announced Kouyaté’s expulsion, declaring that he had deceived the Party, tried to disrupt the UTN, maintained contact with expelled members and refused to reply when summoned to explain his activities. A few days later on 4 November, he was officially expelled from the UTN, accused of embezzlement.97

Padmore was perhaps not present when the final clampdown on Kouyaté occurred.98 He was at this time residing in London where he was engaged in an international project to raise funds for economic aid and investment in Liberia. Much to the surprise of his black comrades, African American leaders launched, Padmore backed the plan wholeheartedly. Arnold Ward, especially, was confused and feared that his old mate was making a serious error. “Do you know what has become of G. Padmore,” he apprehensively inquired from William L. Patterson,

He was here a couple of months ago and talk to me about a scheme. He had on foot for buying out Firestone in Liberia. I did not agree with him and after that he disappears and I have not heard anything more of him. This scheme is well talk about here the raising of a loan of five million dollars and the

98 Neither was Huiswoud – he had left France on October 30, 1933, and was on his way back to Moscow via Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, see list of entries and exists in his Dutch passport, BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1348.
same talk that Marcus Garvey said no different, but this Negro is gone over to our opponents. He says the CI has let down the Negroes and curses everything that is white capitalist, socialist, communist, everyone is no good only Negroes is good. This is G. Padmore for you and he has collected a large number of so called Negro intellectuals and middle class around him and they declare that America is going Fascist and Britain as well so they are going to develop Liberia and migrate us all back there this is there scheme what a lark know I wants to learn from you if you know anything about it.\(^99\)

Had Padmore lost his mind? In Ward’s opinion, one could say, Padmore had already become close to a traitor and a disbeliever. Ward’s description depicts Padmore as someone who had joined the Negro bourgeois leaders and had started to repeat their message of race before class. “George Padmore has made everything bad and leaves things in a very bad muddle,” he informed in another letter to the comrades in Moscow.\(^100\)

Perhaps Padmore’s engagement with Negro bourgeois leaders was not a breach with the established policy, but his interpretation of the confusing signals the Comintern had sent in 1933. On 18 March 1933, the ECCI had introduced a resolution that vaguely proposed united front actions with social-democratic elements and non-revolutionary trade unions for purposes of stopping “reaction and fascism.” It asked the Communist parties and labour unions to stop the destruction of the cooperatives, and to ward off the attacks on trade unions. This policy, however, was to be implemented if Hitler remained in power. In the meantime, one should wait and see – if fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan would collapse or be overthrown then there was no need for joint actions.\(^101\) The ITUCNW soon followed with its own antifascist and United Front-declaration,\(^102\) and Padmore had written several articles in the *Negro Worker* where he denounced the Nazi regime and depicted it as a racist terror regime.\(^103\)

In the United States, the resolution created confusion. The CPUSA was not certain whether it should continue its established revolutionary opposition politics or to establish a “limited united front” with socialist organizations.\(^104\) At the same time, the Comintern criticized the CPUSA for its low party membership and its failure to discredit socialist leaders. The most disorganized section was the Harlem Communist Party. Articles published in the May and June 1933 issues of *The Communist* attacked the Party’s role in the Harlem

\(^99\) Ward to Patterson, 14.11.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 136.
\(^100\) Ward to Dear Comrades, 14.11.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 138.
\(^101\) Record 1951, pp. 121-123.
\(^102\) ITUCNW, “United Front Against Fascism,” *The Negro Worker* III:6-7, 1933.
\(^103\) “Fascist Terror Against Negroes in Germany,” and “Mob Rule in Germany,” *The Negro Worker* III:4-5, 1933; “Terror Over Germany,” *The Negro Worker* III:6-7, 1933.
\(^104\) Record 1951, p. 121.
Scottsboro movement as an “opportunist distortion,” criticized the Black Communists for accepting a united front with the NAACP and for taking a too tolerant attitude toward African American platforms. At the Extraordinary Party conference in June 1933, the CPUSA decided to focus on the Harlem Party, singled it out as the symbol of deviation and nominated James Ford as special Harlem organizer. Ford’s task was to strengthen Party discipline, restore the authority of the Central Committee, increase party recruitment, develop a strategy of trade union organization in the Harlem area, and to wage a struggle within the Party against nationalist tendencies. At the same time had William Patterson started a propaganda attack against the NAACP’s involvement in the Scottsboro campaign that ended the modus vivendi hitherto achieved with the NAACP.105

A similar ‘orthodox’ interpretation of the ECCI March 1933 Resolution also seems to have been applied among the members of the RILU Negro Bureau with regards to cooperation with the reformist and other left-wing or bourgeois nationalists. The statement of Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich that “the reformists are not concerned with the exploitation of the people by the imperialists” and that “it is their own lack of rights which concerns them” comes close to the ‘class-against-class’ perspective and harsh critique of the bourgeois nationalist-reformist intelligentsia and their societies in both West and East Africa. In their mind, time has come “to create revolutionary opposition groups within the Kikuyu Central Association,” a call that echoes the established RILU policy of the establishment of revolutionary trade union opposition either within or outside the established unions. One looks in vain for a ‘limited united front’ argument in their text, but rather sees the call for communists and revolutionary-minded workers “to systematically and daily expose the treacherous activity of these organizations.”106 The ‘limited united front’-call, one could therefore argue, had been rejected both by the leading African American communists and the central unit in Moscow that was supposed to monitor the radical African Atlantic.

In August 1933, James Ford arrived in Harlem and started to reorganize the section. The two pioneer Black Communists, Richard Moore and Cyril Briggs, soon criticized Ford’s actions and found themselves in the “left-opposition” in the Harlem Party against Ford. Ford’s tactic was to neutralize their influence by appointing Moore as national secretary for the LSNR and removing Briggs as editor for the Harlem Liberator and have him appointed as full-time reporter for the Daily Worker. In public, however, the loggerheads were still anxious

106 Nzula, Potekhin, Zusmanovich 1979, pp. 173, 175.
to maintain a façade of Party unity during autumn 1933 and unified their efforts in protest campaigns against a series of lynching and the November trial in the Scottsboro case.\footnote{Naison 2005, pp. 98-103.}

It is likely that Padmore was not unaware of the situation in the United States. He was still a member of the CPUSA although he had not visited the United States after he moved to Moscow in late 1929. Since then he had concentrated his ambitions and objectives on the African Atlantic and had evaded from direct engagement in the American Negro Question. On the other hand, like Ford he was still regarded as one of the most capable Black agitators and propagandist of the Party and the Comintern. As in Ford’s case in 1931, he was called back to the United States when the Party launched its reorganization of the Harlem section. Both Padmore and the comrades at the CGTU were informed about the plan and it is likely that Huiswoud knew about the reshuffle already in August 1933.\footnote{The plan to send Padmore back to work in the USA is outlined in the report A. Ferrat sent to Moscow after his discussions with Padmore in March 1933, dated 21.4.1933, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5.}

But Padmore refused to take orders from Moscow. Was he aware of the ‘orthodox’ line at the RILU Negro Bureau? Was his rejection due to him being critical about the negative attitude to cooperate with nationalist-reformist colonial individuals and movements? Afterwards, he accused the August meeting for having liquidated the Negro Committee and he held the RILU responsible for betraying the Negro toilers.\footnote{Padmore’s accusation are referred in Ferrat’s report, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5} However, his activities during fall 1933 and early 1934 point towards the possibility that Padmore had interpreted the “limited united front tactics” similar to some of the Harlem Black Communists when they had started to cooperate with reformist or bourgeois Black leaders and movements. Apart from his engagement in the Liberian campaign and his refusal to cut his ties with Kouyaté, he had made contacts with the West African Students’ Union (WASU) and its leader Lapido Solanke (ca. 1884–1958) in London,\footnote{Hakim Adi, West Africans in Britain 1900-1960. Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism, London: Lawrence and Wishart 1998, p. 77.} and perhaps with the Council for Promoting Equality and Civil Rights between White and Coloured People which had been inaugurated in late 1933 and listed Padmore’s associates Jomo Kenyatta and Reginald Bridgeman among its members.\footnote{Barbara Bush, Imperialism, Race and Resistance. Africa and Britain 1919-1945, London and New York: Routledge 1999, p. 240.} Back in the United States, he had been in contact with W.E.B. DuBois.\footnote{Edwards 2003, p. 274. Edwards refers to a letter Padmore wrote to DuBois on February 17, 1934, i.e., before his final rift with the Comintern.} At this point, however, the hardliner of the Harlem Party already started to clampdown on what was termed as deviations from the official Party line and Padmore’s name was mentioned in increasingly
critical tones. In early February, after having received a letter from the United States that Hermine Huiswoud Dumont was spreading rumours that he might be excluded from the Party, he decided to cut off his relationship with the Communist International and wrote a letter of resignation to the CPUSA.

The comrades in Moscow must have anticipated that the Padmore Affair could only have a catastrophic ending. On 16 February they received an utmost critical assessment of his activities in Paris by Julien Racamond. It was a long list of his refractory position. First, in spite of several warnings, he continued to cooperate with the “provocateur” Kouyaté. Second, he disregarded any advice on how to organize his work in Paris. Third, Padmore planned to develop the ITUCNW into a Black International against the direct orders of the Comintern. Fourth, Padmore openly accused the ECCI and the RILU for downplaying and disregarding the cause of the Black toilers in their strategic planning and accused Moscow for cutting his funding for Negro work. Fifth, Padmore’s obstinate standpoint gained momentum when he heard that he was to be sent to the United States. According to Racamond, Padmore objected the idea when he realized that his ‘wife’ – possibly Frieda Schiff – was not allowed to join him. He tried to postpone his departure by claiming that he did not have a visa and lacked fund; evaded the comrades in Paris and ignored any of the decisions made at the August 1933 meeting. Last, but not least, Racamond came to the conclusion that Padmore was a similar bluff as Kouyaté had been. Upon his arrival in Paris, he claimed to have worldwide connections that would support him, but at a closer look they turned out to be nonexistent. Had Padmore constructed a chimera in his articles and reports on the ITUCNW, Racamond asked and called for a close investigation of Padmore’s activities.

Four days later, on 20 February, Padmore’s fate was sealed when Alexander Zusmanovich sent a letter to the International Control Commission (ICC) asking it to start an investigation about his activities. Zusmanovich’s letter left no room for speculation. In

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113 Padmore refers to the letter in his second meeting with Ferrat, see RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5
114 I have not yet located Padmore’s letter of resignation in the Comintern Archive. It is likely that a copy of the letter is filed among the correspondence between Padmore and Henry Le Moon. According to the inventory list of the George Padmore Collection at Princeton University Library Manuscript Division, Padmore wrote an essay to Moon on 13 February 1934 titled “Why I Left the Communist International – Padmore Refutes Lies and Slanders by Communists” which included a copy of Padmore’s letter to the Communist Party. If Padmore’s essay was published in Moon’s newspaper The [New York] Amsterdam News is not known.
115 In fact, Padmore and Kouyaté planned at this point to call for a World Negro Conference. At least Kenyatta had been informed about the plan to push ahead with something new to enhance the “Negro Question in general.” Extract from intercepted letter from Kenyatta to Nancy Cunard, 3.1.1934, TNA KV 2/1787.
116 Letter from A. Rasumov concerning Padmore’s activities, dated 16.2.1934, RGASPI 495/261/1380, fol. 7-8. The document is a Russian translation, the original letter has not been found. I assume that the author was Racamond, transliterated in the translation into Rasumov, as the letter contains first-hand information about Padmore’s activities in Paris. Racamond was one of the persons who was engaged with Padmore at this time.
summarizing Racamond’s accusation, he concluded that Padmore had turned into a ‘provocateur’ and had neglected all of his duties. He had refused to hand over all of his material in July 1933 and during his first five months in Paris had done nothing but edit the *Negro Worker* “which was known for its bad quality.” In his letters to the RILU headquarters, he constantly accused the comrades for not understanding the mind of the Negroes and for having a racist attitude towards the Black people.\footnote{Zusmanovich seems to refer to letter from Padmore to Harry Pollitt which Racamond had attached to his report, i.e., Russian translation of letter from Padmore to Ratbom [Harry Pollitt], 9.1.1934, RGASPI 495/261/1380, fol. 9-13bp.} Zusmanovich further accused Padmore for not having any political guidelines apart from believing that he himself is the ideological leader of the Negro world – when being reminded to read Lenin’s and Stalin’s works, he countered that the Negroes should read his book *The Life and Struggle of the Negro Toilers*. Another error of Padmore was that he had constantly disregarded orders. In Hamburg he did not want to cooperate with the ISH, in Paris he disregarded the advice of the PCF. Instead, he joined hands with Kouyaté and drifted further away from Moscow’s orbit. Echoing his March letter, Zusmanovich finally argued that Padmore’s shortcomings were more than evident in his selection for students to be sent to the KUTV – all of them were nationalists and reformists rather than workers engaged in the anti-colonial struggle.\footnote{Secret dispatch from A. Zusmanovich to the ICC (in Russian), received 20.2.1934, RGASPI 495/261/1380, fol. 5.}

As soon as his obstructions were known in Moscow, the ECCI started the process to investigate his activities. At a meeting on 23 February 1934, the ICC decided to expel Padmore from the CPUSA and the ITUCNW\footnote{See outlines of Padmore’s activities (in Russian, RGASPI 495/261/1380, fol. 1-2 (dated 29.3.1960), and RGASPI 495/261/4718, fol. 1 (dated 1947).}. The list of accusations included his contacts with the “exposed provocateur Kouyaté,” his contacts with bourgeois organisations on the question of Liberia, for an incorrect attitude to the national question and for not handing over the affairs of the committee on which he had worked. His deviation from the official line and betrayal of the class-before-race position was a grave mistake:

> Padmore carried on work which undermined the class unity of the toiling Negro masses, and under the pretence of advocating the necessity for the unity of all Negroes on a racial basis, he tried to lay the path for unity with the Negro bourgeois exploiters and with their agents, the national-reformists, which could not help leading […] the interests of the Negro toiling masses becoming subordinated to […] exploiters.

He was equally condemned for his negotiation and cooperation with (Black/African American) “national reformists” and “national bourgeois organisations” on the question of
“saving Liberia.” His betrayal was that through these actions he had openly sided with the Liberian government “instead of mobilising the masses for the struggle for the genuine independence of Liberia.”

Although the ICC had formulated its statement of Padmore’s expulsion at the end of February 1934, it took several months before the ICC condemnation and decision was made public. It first appeared in the L’Humanité in early June, and thereafter in the June issue of the Negro Worker and almost at the same time in the Inprecorr. The lag of time between the decision and its publication is strange. Why wasn’t it made public at once? At what point was Padmore aware that he had been ostracized? Based on the available documentation, the following scenario seems plausible. In early 1934, Padmore’s relationship with the RILU Negro Bureau and the Comintern had reached a low point. Officially, he was still in charge of running the ITUCNW and must have been informed about the plans to send a new person to Paris to take over the operations there. Perhaps he even knew that it was Huiswoud who had been selected to replace him. On the other hand, he had no intention to break with Kouyaté, which left him in a problematic situation after Kouyaté’s expulsion from the UTN. Last, but not least, he refused to obey orders and return to the United States. Eventually, he would have to choose sides – race or class first?

Huiswoud’s and Padmore’s activities in early March shed some further light on the complex situation behind Padmore’s expulsion. At this point a full investigation about Padmore’s activities had started and Comrade Ferrat asked to meet him. Padmore responded positively, although he was somewhat perplexed: “I never thought that an insignificant person like me was worthy of such attention.” He also told Ferrat that he was at the moment busy with his new book, entitled “Races and classes”. Not a hint, on the other hand, that either Ferrat had mentioned anything about the ICC process or that Padmore in one way or the other had already definitively cut his ties with the communists.

A few days later Huiswoud arrived and together with Ferrat tried to convince Padmore about the seriousness of the ICC accusations. They met twice with Padmore, on 7 March

120 Statement of the International Control Commission [typewritten copy, dated 20.3.34.], RGASPI 495/261/4718, fol. 3. See also Turner 2005, 215. Turner’s account is based on the Russian version of the ICC statement, filed in RGASPI 495/64/132, fol. 13.
121 « Décision de la commission internationale de contrôle – Le nommé Padmore est exclu du Parti communiste...,” L’Humanité, 6.6.1934.
124 Huiswoud had travelled to France via Finland, probably by boat as there are no customs stamps in his Dutch passport after he left Turku on January 30, 1934 (List of entries and exits in Huiswoud’s passport, BSA
and again on 10 March. Padmore did not back nor did he move towards any compromise. He stated that it made no sense for him to return to the United States since he was a British citizen. He argued that he had been virtually banned from entering the country and that he had been deported several times by the American authorities. Besides, he had spent all the money he had received from the French Party for the purpose. On the other hand, he assured Ferrat and Huiswoud that his intention had never been and would never be to break with the Comintern. He still agreed with its program and he still considered himself a party member. Nevertheless, he fiercely attacked the RILU leadership, accusing it of liquidated the ITUCNW and complained of the methods used against him and against all Blacks in general by the RILU red-tapists.\footnote{125}{Report by A. Ferrat (in French), dated Paris 21.4.1934, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5-7.}

It was at the first meeting where Padmore refused to hand over the list of addresses and material of the Hamburg Committee. Or did he? According to him, there had been two boxes containing the mailing list of the *Negro Worker*, each of them included a catalogue of 4,000 addresses, which he had sent away before he had been deported from Germany. One of the boxes, he believed, had been lost in Berlin, the other, he claimed, had been sent to the RILU headquarters in Moscow and had ended up in Paris. Nevertheless, when he was informed about the committee’s liquidation he decided not to hand over the catalogue to Comrade René as he had been ordered to do. But Padmore’s answer was confusing: a few minutes later he claimed that he was not in possession of any addresses and that he had not received any letters from Copenhagen since the liquidation of the committee, apart from a few newspapers. Ferrat asked Padmore to reconsider his position once more and sort out the question of the missing materials. They agreed to meet three days later.\footnote{126}{Report by A. Ferrat (in French), dated Paris 21.4.1934, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5.}

The second meeting ended in a total cul-de-sac. Huiswoud and Ferrat realized that Padmore had discussed his situation with Kouyaté and his backers. Padmore was uncompromising. He repeated his accusations against the RILU for having liquidated its Negro Committee and sarcastically commented on the new efforts to rebuild its Negro work. He had been informed that rumours were spread about his expulsion from the Party in the United States, but Ferrat vehemently rejected this claim. Instead, he inquired from Padmore if he would come to Moscow if summoned to explain his activities. Padmore replied that he could but only if the liquidation of the Negro Committee; the chauvinism at the RILU and

\footnotesize{Antwerp PA 2001 C/1348). However, he could have switched passport and used his US passport instead when heading towards France. His account on expenditures in February and March 1934 indicates that he travelled from Stockholm to Paris, see BSA Antwerp PA 2001 C/1323.}

\footnotesize{125 Report by A. Ferrat (in French), dated Paris 21.4.1934, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5-7.}

\footnotesize{126 Report by A. Ferrat (in French), dated Paris 21.4.1934, RGASPI 495/270/7981, fol. 5.}
Kouyaté’s expulsion was discussed. After a long discussion, Padmore eventually backed down, but instead insisted that he would only go with people who represented the Negro working class: “Marx” of South Africa and “Hope” in New York.\(^{127}\)

Ferrat was sceptical about Padmore’s sincerity in accommodating Moscow’s demands. He criticized Padmore in his report for constantly seeking to evade giving precise answers to the questions. In Ferrat’s mind, Padmore was trying to play a game with him and Huiswoud. The meetings had not achieved anything. Ferrat asked Padmore to write a report about what had happened to the catalogue and the materials of the ITUCNW. “He agreed to forward it to me very quickly, but today, the 21st of April, he had not yet passed it.”\(^{128}\) It was time for the ECCI to take the final step and to finalize the expulsion order of Padmore. The final act of Padmore’s expulsion took place in Moscow in mid March, a few days after his meeting with Ferrat and Huiswoud. News about his resistance must have travelled quickly to the leading circles in the Comintern as the Political Commission of the ECCI already on 15 March 1934 confirmed the ICC Protocol and ordered Safarov, Angaretis and Losowsky to formulate the political motivations for the exclusion of Padmore from the CPUSA.\(^{129}\) The unsuccessful negotiations in Paris as well as the subsequent decision by the Political Commission of the ECCI explain why the announcement of Padmore’s expulsion dragged on until April 1934 and had not been made public earlier.

### 3. The rebirth of the ITUCNW

Thus ended George Padmore’s life as a fulltime Black Bolshevik. He was ostracised as a renegade and provocateur and the Apparatus turn its back against him. In his own mind, the Comintern and the Soviet Union had turned their back against the cause of the downtrodden Negro race. According to C.L.R. James’, Padmore had bitterly remarked on his expulsion when they met in 1934 in London. James was surprised – hadn’t his old friend been the leading character in the Comintern’s ambition to forge a radical African Atlantic? He was dumped, Padmore lamented, when he rejected to follow the new political directions and tactics on foreign diplomacy:


\(^{129}\) Protokoll zur Sitzung der Politischen Kommission, 15.3.1934, RGASPI 495/4/281, fol. 12. The final statement was dated 20 March 1934, see RGASPI 495/261/4718, fol. 3.
They are changing the line and now they tell me that in future we are going to be soft and not attack strongly the democratic imperialists that are Britain, France and the United States. That the main attack is to be directed upon the Fascist imperialists, Italy, Germany and Japan. And George, we would like you to do this in the propaganda that you are doing and in the articles that you are writing and the paper you are publishing, to follow that line.\footnote{Padmore 1973.}

Padmore sincerely believed that the Kremlin had deliberately liquidated the ITUCNW and had forced the activities of the office in Paris to come to a standstill in 1933. In Padmore’s mind, the Comintern had become politically bankrupt and accused it for having sacrificed its anti-imperialist agenda “simply in order not to offend the British Foreign Office which has been bringing pressure to bear on Soviet diplomacy.”\footnote{Padmore, “An Open Letter to Earl Browder,” no date, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 123. The letter was published in the October 1935 issue of The Crisis. Similar accusation by Padmore in the ILP journals Controversy, July 1937, and The New Leader, January 9, 1946, see Hooker 1967, 31 and Edwards 2003a, 268. In his reply to Padmore’s Open letter, Earl Browder asked the publisher why Padmore’s letter had been held for 18 months (“Earl Browder Replies,” The Crisis, December 1935, 372). If Browder’s accusations were right, then Padmore had written the letter already around April 1934, about the same time when Ferrat was waiting for Padmore’s report. In this case the copy of Padmore’s Open letter filed in the Comintern Archive was perhaps made by Browder and sent to Moscow in 1934?}

But what if Padmore – for reasons not known – either misunderstood or misinterpreted Moscow’s intentions? As noted above, the conclusion of the August 1933 meeting was not to liquidate the ITUCNW. Instead, it is evident from Huiswoud’s recommendation that both the Negro Committee and the Negro Worker were to be continued. In his attached memorandum on the stenographic report on the August 1933 meeting, he positively considered the relocation of the Committee to a port town, preferably Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Rotterdam or Antwerp, and recommended to reduce the number of copies of the journal from 3,000 to 2,000 “for the present.” In addition, he proposed a monthly budget for the work of the Committee, including funding for wages of a secretary and a typist, rent, postage and printing of the Negro Worker. “It is also necessary to call attention here to the fact that the funds […] must be remitted regularly on time and on full amount,” Huiswoud underlined and indirectly sided with Padmore in his assessment of the difficulties on working in Paris: “Because of the irregularity and insufficiency of funds, the journal has been appearing in the recent months as bi-monthly.” He therefore proposed to increase the monthly funding to a total of 6,000 Francs. About one-third of the sum was to be reserved for the printing of the Negro Worker.\footnote{Report/Memorandum by Edwards [Huiswoud], stamped 001208 19.Sept.1933, filed 20.IX.1933, RGASPI 534/3/895, fol. 120-121. The document has a handwritten add – Alexander – which most likely refers to Zusmanovich.}
Padmore, on the other hand, was right that his name was either omitted or deliberately dropped in Huiswoud’s proposal. However, the plan to move – or transfer, depending on whose interpretation one prefers – Padmore back to the United States had perhaps already been made when Huiswoud submitted his outline to the RILU Secretariat. Yet Padmore’s replacement was not known at this point or at least no name in mentioned in Huiswoud’s report.

3.1. The Reorganization of Negro Work: New structures and old tactics

The only unit in Moscow that did not deal with the Padmore Affair was the RILU Negro Bureau. It could not as it did not anymore exist. At the time of the Kouyaté and Padmore Affairs, the Comintern and RILU Apparatus itself was undergoing a thorough reorganization. The ECCI’s core unit was to be the regional office or Ländere Sekretariat and all work was to be concentrated there. In September 1933, the Agit-Prop Department of the ECCI was liquidated and the duty of carrying on all campaigns in the various countries and the day-to-day agitprop was handed over entirely to the various Ländere sekretariats. The Org Department was reorganized into the Department of Party Structure. Each Ländere sekretariat was to consist of a head of the unit, one or two assistant heads as well as one Referent for each country and a certain amount of helpers for various branches of Party construction. In addition, permanent staffs of responsible travelling instructors of the ECCI were to be established in every Ländere sekretariat.133

Even more drastic was the reorganization of the apparatus of the RILU. By July 1933, a plan had been launched to totally revise the RILU’s organization. Its central bureaucratic unit, the Sekretariat der Interkoms (Secretariat of the International Commissions), was to be abolished and most of its units were to be subordinated to the Ländere sekretariats of the RILU. Only a responsible secretary and a limited number of Referents were to remain in the Interkoms. The Org Department was to be liquidated and its task was transferred to the Ländere sekretariats. Similar to the ECCI, each of the Ländere sekretariats was to include

referents that were responsible of designing the work in a certain country. In addition, the category of special responsible instructor was to be established at the RILU.\textsuperscript{134}

The plan also proposed the liquidation of the RILU Negro Bureau and its merger with the Negro Commission of the Eastern Secretariat. While the parallel functions of the ECCI and RILU Ländersekretariats were not criticized in general, the ‘Eastern’ work, i.e., anti-colonial and anti-imperial agitation and activities in Asia and Africa, was targeted as unwieldy and in need of a total reframing. In short, the RILU and the ECCI Eastern Secretariats were to be merged. In practice, this meant that the Referents of the RILU Eastern Secretariats were to be transferred to the ECCI and only the Head of the Section would remain under the RILU. This new outline was also to affect the structural affiliation of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers that was to be placed under the ECCI Eastern Secretariat.

The constitutions, i.e., the guidelines, of the ITUCNW remained unchanged but its organization in Moscow was to be slimmed down to a head and a secretary. Nevertheless, the ITUCNW was not to be abolished, on the contrary.

The amalgamation of the two Negro Bureaus was carried out step by step during fall 1933. Zusmanovich was transferred to the Eastern Secretariat on 3 November,\textsuperscript{136} and on 15 November the Political Commission of the ECCI gave its final approval to the merger of the two bureaus. The Eastern Secretariat was also asked to provide an agenda for the work of the (new) Negro Bureau.\textsuperscript{137} The ECCI discussed and approved the outlines two weeks later on 5 January 1934. At the same meeting, Otto Huiswoud was appointed as the new editor of the

\textsuperscript{136} Protokoll (A) Nr. 342 der Sitzung der Politikommission des Politekretariats des EKKI, 3.11.1933, RGASPI 495/4/268, fol. 2.
\textsuperscript{137} Protokoll (A) Nr. 347 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr EKKI, 15.11.1933, RGASPI 495/4/261, fol. 2.
Negro Worker. On 9 January 1934 Zusmanovich started as Referent for Africa and Deputy Chair of the new ECCI Negro Bureau.

The objective of the ECCI Negro Bureau was first and foremost to focus on South Africa. Instructions to the CPSA and about radical trade union activities, directives for the forthcoming Party Congress and a call for a United Front were to be drafted within the next six months by the Negro Bureau. Its other obligation was to render assistance to anti-imperial movements in the rest of Sub-Saharan (“Black”) Africa. The Negro Bureau would not cover work in the Caribbean and the USA. The unit was to form the top of the anti-colonial network in Africa with branches in South Africa, Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, the Gold Coast and the Belgian Congo. The Hamburg Commission, i.e., the ITUCNW, was to remain its position in the African Atlantic and was envisaged to strengthen its connections with the ISH, the NWA and the UTN.

In effect, the January 1934 outline of the structural reorganization of work in Africa meant that the strategic and tactical planning for and surveillance of operations in Sub-Saharan Africa were transferred from the Hamburg Commission to the Negro Bureau. However, none apart from the links to South Africa existed. Although the January 1934 outline did not refer to any specific persons, it is clear that the authors – most likely Zusmanovich and Safarov – were planning to activate African students as their key agent provocateurs and organizers of local cells. Instructions and guidelines were to be written for trade union activities in Nigeria. Certainly they had the African Workers’ Union (AWU) of Wallace-Johnson in mind. In Cameroon, on the other hand, the idea was to concentrate work in conjuncture with the League Against Imperialism. The only potential connection was Joseph Bilé who at that point still resided in Moscow. A different strategy was to be applied in Liberia and in the Gold Coast. The existing trade unions were to be radicalized via calls and directives while anti-imperialist platforms were to be established in the two countries. This was to be the task of comrades Nelson (Holle Seleh Tamba) and “Robert”, two other West African students at the KUTV. Work in the Belgian Congo was to be handled via the Belgian Communist Party as Huiswoud had no direct contacts to the colony. Last, but not

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138 Protokoll (A) Nr. 352 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr EKKI, 3.1.1934, RGASPI 495/4/275, fol. 5. The merger of the two Negro Commissions/Bureaus explains why Huiswoud’s correspondence with Zusmanovich in 1934 and 1935 is not filed in the 534/3-unit of the RILU archive but in the 495/155-unit of the Comintern.


140 Arbeitsprogramm des Negerbüros. Zusammengestellt vom Sekretariat des EKKI für 6 Monate, no author and date, Appendix to Protokoll (A) Nr. 352 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr EKKI, 3.1.1934, RGASPI 495/4/275, fol. 243-244.
least, from all the above-mentioned countries and colonies new students should be sent to Moscow.\textsuperscript{141}

Albert Nzula’s position was never affected by the organizational changes. The plan was to place him as a special “Neger-Vertreter” or ‘Negro Representative’ at the RILU for trade union activities in Africa although this never materialized. His health deteriorated during fall 1933 and had been sent to a sanatorium in October.\textsuperscript{142} On January 14, 1934, Albert Nzula had died of pneumonia.\textsuperscript{143} The few Africans still living in Moscow at this time, notably Holle Seleh Tamba, seems to have worked as extra staff members with little, if any, influence in strategic decision making or tactical planning. On the other hand, the Comintern had sent its most capable emissary to revive the operational activities of the ITUCNW when it nominated Otto Huiswoud for the task. Not only had he the longest record of international communist engagement of any Black comrade but was also one of the few comrades who had first hand experiences of all parts of the African Atlantic. Most importantly, however, one could also speculate about his personal credentials, which made him the perfect choice for Padmore’s replacement. If Padmore had shown little interest in ‘low-profile’ operations, Huiswoud was his total contrast. Huiswoud therefore matched Moscow’s call for a new person to run the radical African Atlantic network. Anti-colonial agitation and tactics were not to be changed, only transferred into more capable hands.

If Moscow had sent Huiswoud away to revive, but not change the operations of the Hamburg Committee, i.e., the ITUCNW, the political situation in Western Europe soon nullified such an approach. The guidelines of the ITUCNW were still the 1932 December Resolution, which followed the official ‘Class-Against-Class’-position of the Comintern. While Padmore’s engagement with bourgeois interests in his futile Liberian operation during fall 1933 were condemned as sectarian activities, the political events in France in 1934 opened the way for a re-evaluation of Comintern strategies. The Depression had started to hit France and politics became polarized as elsewhere in Europe. A violent demonstration by the radical right on 6 February forced the resignation of the government. Six days later, the trade unions, socialists and Communist joined hands in a unified antifascist demonstration and

\textsuperscript{141} Arbeitsprogramm des Negerbüros. Zusammengestellt vom Sekretariat des EKKI für 6 Monate, no author and date, Appendix to Protokoll (A) Nr. 352 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 3.1.1934, RGASPI 495/4/275, fol. 243-244.

\textsuperscript{142} Protokoll (A) Nr. 337 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 3.10.1933, RGASPI 495/4/264, fol. 4.

declared a general strike to avert an alleged coup d’etat of the far right in February 1934. The united action impressed Giorgi Dimitrov and the Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, two of the by then leading figures in the Comintern, who were able to convince Stalin to introduce a new political line. Consequently, the Comintern decided to abandon its refusal to join forces with the “Social Fascists” and the PCF Secretary General Maurice Thorez made a call for the formation of a “Popular Front” which by July led to a political alliance between the communists and the socialists, which the radicals joined by the autumn. The RILU followed the turn during the summer and it also dropped its revolutionary trade union opposition-tactics. Officially, at least, cooperation between socialist and communist trade unions and parties was to mark the future.

In the United States, on the other hand, the old policy was to remain as the official guidelines throughout 1934. The denunciation of the nationalist tendencies within the Harlem section of the CPUSA reached its climax during the Eight National Convention in April 1934. In his keynote speech, Harry Haywood, the head of the CPUSA Negro Department, defined the struggle against Black Nationalism as a major priority and condemned any rapprochement with Negro reformists. His most furious attack was on the “neo-Garveyist” movements, among others the Liberian-American Plan, which Padmore had supported. In Haywood’s mind, Padmore had been its foremost theoretician who had “cloaked [the plan] in pseudo-revolutionary terms designed to appeal to the poverty-stricken Blacks,” but the plan had been exposed by the Communists as a mere plan “of the aspirant Black bourgeoisie to participate in a comprador role in the colonial exploitation of Liberia.” If not earlier then Haywood’s official condemnation of the schemes where Padmore had been engaged in marked the end of his affiliation with the Communist Party. Padmore had been campaigning for the scheme in the Black Press and against the rigorous “Class-Against-Class” position in the USA. The Party would now strike back.

Was Padmore’s hesitation to deliver his report to Ferrat and Huiswoud in March 1934 due to a different interpretation of the ‘sign of the hours’ in early 1934? Padmore lived in Paris during the hectic days when the Communists and Socialists joined forces against the fascist mob, perhaps even participating himself in the anti-fascist demonstrations? On 15 February, Nancy Cunard’s monumental collection *Negro: An Anthology* was published in

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London. Padmore had closely collaborated with her in the project; he was still listed in the book as Secretary of the ITUCNW. Padmore must have regarded the political turn in France as a clear sign that the ‘limited united front’-tactics were to be the official line and that his critique of the Comintern came from within and not outside the movement. Since late autumn 1933, he and Kouyaté had been planning to call for a Negro World Unity Congress (Congrés Mondial Nègre) which was scheduled for 1935 and it is likely that Padmore certainly regarded the project as his version of the ‘united front’ approach. Their call was for a universal organization “destined to direct the future of the Negro movement in all countries,” i.e., a Black International. However, what he had not anticipated was the condemnation of his activities by the comrades in the RILU Negro Bureau/ECCI Negro Commission and in the Comintern Apparatus, including the leading African American comrades of the CPUSA. Was it Padmore’s letter to Du Bois asking for assistance in mid-February 1934 or was it the call for racial unity which was later condemned by the ICC as an effort to undermine “the class unity of the toiling Negro masses,” condemning, as Haywood did in April, the attempts to cooperate with nationalist and reformist African Americans and Africans: “he tried to lay the path for unity with the Negro bourgeois exploiters and with their agents, the national-reformists.” In Moscow, at least, the old ‘class-against-class’-line was to be applied in the Negro and Colonial Questions by the members of the ECCI Negro Commission, not the ‘limited united front’-approach.

3.2. The Crusader News Office in Antwerp

Huiswoud must have arrived in Paris during the aftermath of the general strike of February 1934, although not much is known about his activities for the next months. His negotiations with Padmore eventually yielded nothing. His hopes for a smooth transfer of materials and list of contacts backfired and he had to leave the French capital empty handed. According to his plan, the ITUCNW office was to be relocated from Paris to a logistically more suitable place. He ended up in Antwerp where he had established himself by April 1934. In June, his wife

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149 Edwards 2003, pp. 269, 275, 277. The conference was planned to be held in July 1935 in Paris, London or Geneva. For an analysis of Kouyaté’s and Padmore’s versions of the Manifesto for the conference they wrote in December 1933, see Edwards 2003, pp. 276-282. What is striking – and not elaborated by Edwards – is Padmore’s usage of phrases and expressions he used during his ‘Bolshevik’ period.
150 Statement of the International Control Commission, 20.3.1934, RGASPI 495/261/4718, fol. 3.
Hermine arrived and also who joined the staff of the ITUCNW. An eight months period of inactivity of the ITUCNW had ended.

The ITUCNW operated illegally in Belgium. Its headquarters was disguised as the Crusader News Office at St. Jakobsmarkt (Marche St. Jacques) 9 in Antwerp. Otto Huiswoud carried at least an American Passport issued for his nom-de-guerre Eduard Mason as well as a Dutch passport. Hermine entered either as Helen Davis or by a passport issued with her real name. As editor of the Negro Worker and author of signed pamphlets and brochures of the ITUCNW, he used the alias Charles Woodson. Officially, they worked as journalists and the office was not to be connected with the ITUCNW or the Negro Worker. All illegal and secret contacts to him, therefore, had to be arranged via the local Interclub office in the harbour. He instructed Moscow that if it was necessary to get in touch with him, one was to make inquiries about the Negro Worker at the Interclub in the harbour with the responsible person in charge of the Club.

In contrast to the earlier guidelines for the work of the Hamburg Committee, Huiswoud's instructions for work in Antwerp projected a limited operational task for the ITUCNW. Sometime in May, he made a projection about his immediate tasks and how to reorganize the work of the ITUCNW. His idea was to infuse the Negro work throughout the African Atlantic with new objectives. In England the NWA was to receive a working program so that the association could function as a sub-committee of the ITUCNW. The focus should also be on planning the activities among Negro marine workers in Cardiff, Liverpool and London. Similar activities were projected in France, such as to continue the reorganization of the UTN and to work among Negro seamen in Marseille, Bordeaux and Rouen in addition to expanding the activities to the French colonies. In Holland and in the Dutch Caribbean colonies, Huiswoud wanted to organize and engage Negro seamen. In South Africa and in West Africa, the marine workers were to be a special target group. He wanted to strengthen the marine unions in Cape Town, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Lüderitz Bay as

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151 According to the Belgian police authorities, Otto Huiswoud arrived in Antwerp in late March/early April 1934 while Hermine had travelled to the USA where she renewed her passport and joined him in June. Otto claimed to be a journalist and correspondent for the Crusader News Agency but had also worked as a sales agent and therefore had been resident for the last two years in Hamburg and Amsterdam. See Otto and Hermine Huiswoud's dossiers, BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1348; BSA Brussels File A 132.127.
153 The US passport is referred to in RGASPI 495/261/6668, fol. 29; the Dutch in BSA Brussels File A 132.127.
154 The identification of Woodson alias Huiswoud can be definitively established through a letter from Earl Browder to Dimitrov in 1938 where Browder writes: "While in Paris I conferred with Com. Woodson (Otto Huiswoud) who is conducting the work of the Negro Committee there." Confidential Memorandum to Comrade Dimitrov, signed Earl Browder, dated Moscow 19.1.1938, RGASPI 495/261/557, fol. 1.
well as to build an Interclub in Freetown and to organize a seamen union in Liberia. There was also to be a special focus on Nigeria and the Gold Coast. In East Africa, where he had very few contacts, his ambition was to extend his connections as well as to increase the local distribution of the *Negro Worker*. Last, but not least, labour union as well as marine union work was to be the prime obligation in the Caribbean where he was confident that he could build upon his connections with the British Guiana Labour Union as well as the trade union movement in Trinidad.¹⁵⁶

Huiswoud’s ambitious plan never materialized. The general outline of the ITUCNW remained unchanged. The Committee was disallowed from being a membership organisation and it could not have any affiliated unions or associations in the colonies or elsewhere. However, Padmore’s and Huiswoud’s ambitions to establish sub-committees in Paris, London, New York and Cape Town were scrapped. While Padmore regarded the LNDR and its successor, the UTN, or the NWA as the sub-committees of the Hamburg Committee, both organizations were hereafter perceived as independent units. The concrete work of the ITUCNW was to be restricted to three areas:

1. Giving directives or suggestions to the unions, organizations, groups and individual militants with whom Huiswoud and the ITUCNW had established “fraternal relations” as to the methods of organization and “development of the struggle against the exploiters.”
2. Conducting active campaigns for the organization of trade unions and for the unification of separate unions in the colonies; the establishment of peasant committees and unemployed organizations as well as to develop the unity and solidarity of action between the black and white workers.
3. Initiating and stimulating activities through the *Negro Worker* as well as waging a campaign for the development of a broad mass anti-imperialist movement.¹⁵⁷

Huiswoud’s ambitions to re-establish the communication network of the ITUCNW were an uphill battle. Lacking Padmore’s address list and receiving no technical assistance from the Belgian Party, work was proceeding at a frustratingly slow pace. In the beginning, he

¹⁵⁶ Outline of programme of action, no author, no date, filed as Appendix 7 in Police report to Attorney General, 18.9.1934, BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1348. The document was produced sometimes between the first (May) and second issue (June) of the *Negro Worker* of 1934 as the second edition of the journal is referred to in the plan. That the Dutch connection is highlighted could indicate that Huiswoud was the author of the plan.

was only able to contact those persons he personally knew. Part of the former network could be revived but he needed addresses and materials as soon as possible, he urged the comrades at the ECCI Negro Bureau. “Up to date I have not received all the addresses and material which are supposed to be forwarded to me,” he reminded Moscow in late May/early June, “I’ve handed in all the things that I need and which are to be send [sic] to me such as addresses, booklets and brochures which are really necessary. I hope they will [be] forwarded immediately.”\textsuperscript{158}

However, communications with Moscow was both slow and sparse. If it was due to the ECCI Negro Bureau’s lethargy or the difficulties of operating a secure line between Antwerp and Moscow is unclear, but by July, Huiswoud had not received any response from his colleagues and was concerned: “We are astonished that us [sic] to date in not receiving any communication from you up to date. […] This makes us feel that there is not the necessary cooperation which was promised. There were several things left with N. [Nelson] in the place to be forwarded to me. This material is very necessary and I hope that some action will be taken to get it to me.”\textsuperscript{159} He finally received the long awaited batch of material at the end of August – together with the first letter from the comrades in Moscow.\textsuperscript{160}

Although direct communication with Moscow had only been intermittent, the funding of his operations in Antwerp had taken place. In April he received 4,000 Franc to cover the costs of publishing the \textit{Negro Worker} and another 1,600 Franc to cover his salary.\textsuperscript{161} Although no other bills of transfer have been located in the Comintern Archive, Huiswoud’s silence in his correspondence about financial matters indicates that he continued to receive a monthly disbursement; his contact person in Paris was Comrade René. Incidentally, the papers that were confiscated by the Belgian police authorities in September 1934 reveal the remaining data on the money transfer from Moscow to Huiswoud (see Table X.3.1.)

**Table X.3.1. Financial assistance to the ITUCNW, February to August 1934**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3/1934</td>
<td>FF 11,770</td>
<td>BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1934</td>
<td>FF 5600</td>
<td>BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1934</td>
<td>BF 7840</td>
<td>BSA Antwerp PK 2001 C/1323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{159} Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, 26.7.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 3.
\textsuperscript{161} Budget outline, no date but based on circumstantial evidence it can be dated to cover the transfer of funds in April 1934, RGASPI 534/8/285, fol. 7.
Huiswoud’s information and his accounting is highly confusing as he did not keep any proper bookkeeping. He also had troubles in calculating the difference between the French and Belgian franc with the result that he was never quite accurate concerning his account’s actual balance. On the other hand, the ITUCNW did not have any large expenses apart from covering the printing and posting its journal. Together with the office’s rent, the Huiswoud’s salary and expenses for travel fares abroad, Otto Huiswoud’s expenses were every month about 1-2,000 Belgian franc less than he received from Moscow. However, the monthly overhead also meant that Huiswoud and the ITUCNW had few activities and projects to invest in other than the journal.

Huiswoud had to start from scratch in his attempt to rebuild the network of the ITUCNW (see Figure 3). Padmore had to realize that the conditions for establishing a radical African Atlantic network had totally changed with the Nazi takeover in Germany and the dissolution of the established links with the various Communist front organizations. While the connections with the ISH and the LAI could be maintained, the clampdown on the IRH Bureau in Berlin ended the cooperation between the ITUCNW and the IRH. The European Bureau of the IRH had been transferred to Paris and continued to operate in an office in the headquarters of the Secours Rouge, the colonial aspirations of the IRH were dropped and the organization increasingly focussed on Antifascist operations, including the rescue and support of political refugees from Germany. The projected operations of the IRH in Africa were never followed up or implemented – neither Padmore nor Huiswoud were able to direct any attention to this matter. Although the Scottsboro campaign continued to engage a broad spectrum of activists, the ITUCNW was unable to engage in rallies and demonstrations due to its illegal character.

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162 Brauns 2003, p. 282.
163 On Scottsboro demonstrations in Britain, see Pennymaker 2009, p. 54.
later in the defence of Ernst Thälmann,\textsuperscript{165} Angelo Herndon,\textsuperscript{166} Mathias Rakosi,\textsuperscript{167} the ITUCNW via the \textit{Negro Worker} continued to participate in the global campaigns of the ILD and IRH. Indirectly, at least in the mind of Huiswoud, the ITUCNW was still participating in the Scottsboro Campaign. Wallace-Johnson had on his return to Lagos established a local Scottsboro committee,\textsuperscript{168} and V.E. Henry and Hubert Critchlow, the delegates from Trinidad respectively British Guiana at the Second World Congress of the IRH, had on their return formed local sections of the IRH in their home countries.\textsuperscript{169}

Padmore had already been able to rebuild the connections with the ISH, thereby securing the \textit{Negro Worker’s} global circulation. The official letter box of the ITUCNW and its journal was at the ISH headquarters in Copenhagen and Huiswoud continued with the arrangement although the solution was not an ideal one. Although communications had been received fairly regularly from many countries, Huiswoud pointed out that “under such circumstances it is extremely difficult to develop any real mass activities to attract organisations to us and to carry on the necessary work of maintaining real live contacts with the various unions and groups of workers.”\textsuperscript{170}

The LAI headquarters, too, had at first been relocated to Paris but when Münzenberg resigned as Secretary General, the office was moved to London at the end of 1933. Although the International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism had issued a call to focus on Africa in June 1933,\textsuperscript{171} i.e. while it still was located in Paris and perhaps even anticipated to cooperate with Padmore and the ITUCNW, not much had happened since that moment. In May 1934, the ECCI received a pessimistic report by Shapurji Saklatvala about the LAI’s dysfunctional operation. “The League Against Imperialism is not functioning [and] is inoperative,” he lamented and criticized the communist front organizations for their biased activities in 1934. While there was a massive support displayed for the workers of Germany and Austria, against the Reichstag trials and for the defence of the Soviet Union, not a meeting was held when nine Indian revolutionaries were sentenced to death, not a demonstration was held when the Gold Coast Sedition Bill was passed and no public famine relief was organized for the families of the Cuban revolt. Saklatvala further accused the

\textsuperscript{165} “Gravest Danger for Thaelman’s Life,” \textit{The Negro Worker} IV:2, 1934.
\textsuperscript{167} Helen Davis, “Rakosi Stands Before His Judges,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:4, 1935.
\textsuperscript{168} Pennybaker 2009, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{169} (Huiswoud,) ITUCNW Report 1934-1935, RGASPI 534/3/1055, fol. 7.
\textsuperscript{171} See Material concerning the liquidation of the LAI secretariat in Berlin and its reorganization in Paris (June 1933), RGASPI 542/1/60, fol. 40-47.
Communist rhetoric for being biased: “All attacks on Japan is concentrated over Manchukuo policy, but nothing is heard of Japan’s permanent terror in Corea [sic]. Similarly atrocities in Congo, Indo-China and Syria just pass by unnoticed.”

Still, he believed the League and its work could and should be reactivated and proposed to the ECCI a plan to finance the operations of the LAI international headquarters in London. The crux of the matter was that the activities of the LAI International Secretariat were tied to the LAI British Section and as the latter had any source of established incomes, the former had neither. Saklatvala notified the ECCI that as long as the financial issue had not been solved, the activities of the LAI had remained “technical”. Funds were not only needed to run a bureau but also to re-establish the international links of the LAI.

Saklatvala’s propositions were backed in Moscow and soon thereafter Reginald Bridgeman, the new International Secretary of the LAI, was able to reconstitute the League’s work. One of his first tasks was to get in touch with some of the key activists and representatives of cooperating organizations and to discuss the outlooks for anti-imperialist activities and campaigns. Therefore Bridgeman travelled to Amsterdam and Brussels in late June 1934. On 1 July 1934, he had a long meeting with “Comrade Woodson”, i.e., Huiswoud, about the necessity and fruitfulness of future cooperation. The most important decision was that Bridgeman announced to prepare a scheme for assisting the sale of the Negro Worker. He also provided Huiswoud with a reliable address in England whenever he planned to go there, furnished him with addresses of bookshops in Australia, Canada and India to which the Negro Worker could be sent and promised to secure the services of the Daily Worker for him. In addition, he promised to obtain for him the recently issued White Paper on Liberia and well as to send him all addresses of the LAI in Haiti. In return, Huiswoud informed him about what work was being done by the ISH in the Belgian and Dutch ports.

Another organization that cooperated closely with the ITUCNW was the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) and its secretary Arnold Ward. Bridgeman was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the NWA. The intimate triangular connection between the three organizations was also highlighted in the NWA statutes. It was affiliated with the British

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172 Shapurji Saklatvala, “Memorandum on League Against Imperialism,” 5.5.1934, Appendix to Protokoll N.r 375 der ausserordentlichen Sitzung der Politikommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 11.5.1934, RGASPI 495/4/289, fol. 11-12.


Section of the LAI as well as “connected” with the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers. Not surprisingly, therefore, Huiswoud’s first trip abroad from Brussels was to London. Officially, he went there to attend the conference ‘The Negro in the World Today,’ which was organized by the League of Coloured Peoples at the Albert hall on 14-15 July 1934. In the shadow of the conference, Huiswoud was able to meet Bridgeman and Ward in person and discussed plans and activities as well as formulated a program of action for both the NWA and the ITUCNW. Their main effort was to be directed towards Negro seamen both for the sake of strengthening the membership of the NWA – to Huiswoud’s disappointment he learnt that it had only 30 members – and to establish better connections with the British colonies.

Otto Huiswoud’s efforts to contact Negro seamen and dockers in the European ports slowly paid off. In the United Kingdom, he concentrated his efforts towards engaging colonial seamen in London and in Cardiff. The situation in the Cardiff looked particularly promising at the end of August 1934: “In Cardiff, we have about 200 colonial seamen in the unemployed movement. Contacts are now being made with the working colonial seamen in order to more firmly establish our connections with the colonies direct.” Some progress was also registered in Rotterdam and in Amsterdam but much to his dismay, his colonial contact persons had little training in agitation and propaganda work and not much had been achieved. Even less promising was the situation in France. Although Huiswoud had laid out a plan with the French comrades, he had little information about what was going on and if any of the proposals had been put into effect. “The language differences is an added difficulty in keeping the proper connections,” Huiswoud had to admit.

On the other hand, the positive news came from his activities in Belgium. His first discussions about the connection with and the situation in the Belgian Congo with Party members gave a meagre result. Only a few contacts existed, but the Party itself had no direct contacts either with those who were living in Africa or to Africans living in Belgium. Worst of all was that the Party did not pay any attention to the Colonial Question and had not even formed a functioning Colonial Commission. To remedy this, Huiswoud quickly worked out a short programme of activities and wrote a small brochure for distribution in the Congo.

175 (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 27-28.
177 The League of Coloured Peoples (LCP) was founded in 1931 by Dr. Harold Moody, a conservative and anti-communist Jamaican. The LCP favoured moderate, liberal integrationist strategies (Bush 1999, p. 220).
Huiswoud’s engagement paid off and a few months later he positively commented about his achievements:

Our contacts with the natives of Belgian Congo have increased considerably. This is the first time that anything has been done among this group of workers. We have managed to hold a number of interviews with these workers from different ships and through these meetings were able to establish some of the actual facts regarding their working and different conditions. On the basis of these facts, we are now preparing a bulletin to be devoted to the interests of these workers. We are also working out a plan for regular meetings with them and to give them some form of training.\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 23.8.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 8.}

Nevertheless, Huiswoud’s main handicap was his initial lack of any personal contacts in Africa and the Caribbean. He wanted to distribute the Open Letter to the Liberian workers he that was about to publish as a small brochure in May, but due to the lack of contacts in the country he had to postpone the plan and urged the ECCI Negro Committee to ask Holle Seleh Tamba to forward him names and addresses.\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, stamped 000584 – 9 JUN.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 1. Eventually, it was published as “Open letter to the Workers and Peasants of Liberia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} IV:1, 1934, pp. 10-16.} About two months later the situation had improved. Two of the African students at the KUTV, R. and N., had arrived in Antwerp on their way back to Africa. N., who can be identified as Nelson or Holle Seleh Tamba, became Huiswoud’s chief agent provocateur and informant in Liberia. R., on the other hand, was “Robert”, one of the seamen from the Gold Coast who had studied at the KUTV. In the same letter, Huiswoud was informed that he had been able to establish contacts with the Gold Coast but did not specify with whom apart from stating that “it is likely that within the near future, we will have at least two guests to come over.”\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, 26.7.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 3.} One month later, Trinidad was added to the colonies where Huiswoud had live contacts. Still, there were drawbacks - the South African connection was down despite his efforts to establish contacts with the comrades there.\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 23.8.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 8.}

Just when Huiswoud believed that he had almost been able to re-establish the former outreach of the ITUCNW, his and Hermine’s activities came to an abrupt end in Antwerp. On 11 September 1934, at half past six in the afternoon the Belgian Police arrested both of them.\footnote{Belgian Ministry of Justice decision to imprison Otto Huiswoud and Hermine Huiswoud, 11.9.1934, BSA Brussels, File A 132.127.} It is likely that the Belgian State Security Service had checked their activities for
Huiswoud’s visits to ships and his activities in the harbour area must certainly have been suspicious in the eyes of the authorities – although Huiswoud claimed their arrest was a combination of British pressure and betrayal of “a certain individual.” Whatever the case, communist material was found in their apartment as well as mailing lists and correspondence with communist organizations in England, the British colonies, the United States and Africa, the Belgian authorities closed Huiswoud’s office and confiscated all material they found. The Belgian Judicial Police was not able to expose the covers of the Huiswouds – Otto Huiswoud was carrying his Dutch passport and Hermine, her American passport. Otto Huiswoud declared that he had been a salesman of tropical products working for various big firms in Europe (which explained his travels to several European towns such as Hamburg, Vienna and Paris) and had for the past two years been a free-lance journalist and correspondent for Cyril Brigg’s Crusader News Agency (CNA). In April, he stated that he and his wife had moved to Antwerp and he became a full-time employed and paid journalist of the CAN as well as an editor for the *Negro Worker*. The articles for the journal, he declared, had arrived from the United States through Charles Woodson, “a Black American of very high standing.” While the Belgian authorities were unable to link the CAN to the ITUCNW, they concluded that it served “as a cover for a communist organization, charged with spreading agitation among people of colour throughout the world and particularly among Negroes.” They also concluded that Huiswoud was “responsible for all revolutionary action in Europe, specifically among sailors and dockworkers,” for which he was expelled from the country.

After having spent about a week in prison where, they were deported from Belgium on 18 September escorted to the Dutch border. Once again the operations of the ITUCNW had to be relocated but only in mid October was Huiswoud able to cable Moscow what had happened: “Dear Friends, This is to request that you **discontinue** sending the Moscow Daily

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185 According to information received from the Belgian State Archives, the pre-war files of the State Security Service were destroyed during the German invasion of Belgium in May 1940. E-mail from Filip Strubbe, Attaché aan het Algemeen Rijksarchief, Afdeling 5: Archieven Hedendaagse Periode, 24.9.2010.


187 Van Enckevort 2000, p. 120. She uses a report on the Huiswouds’ arrest that is deposited in the French Archives in Aix-en-Provenvce, SLOTFOM, III, 111. As Huiswoud claimed that the Crusader News Agency had a branch in Paris, the Belgian authorities sent their interrogation material and other documents on Huiswoud to the French Police authorities who transferred the matter to the French Ministry of Colonial Affairs. Van Eckevort, who also has checked the French material, informs that while the French authorities correctly linked the *Negro Worker* to the ITUCNW, Padmore and Huiswoud, they too failed to connect Huiswoud with Charles Woodson (van Enckevort 2000, pp. 121-122).

188 Questionnaire of the Police authorities in Antwerp, Otto Huiswoud and Hermina Dumont, 11.9.1934, BSP Brussels, File A 132.127.

189 Van Enckeveort 2000, pp. 120-121.

3.3. Yet another new beginning: semi-legal existence in Amsterdam

The Huiswouds arrived in the Netherlands without contacts of funds. For the third time within a year, the activities of the ITUCNW had collapsed and had to be rebuilt from scratch. A new setback followed when Huiswoud fell ill. For the rest of the year he was incapable of running the business, but informed Zusmanovich in January 1935 that he had taken up work again. As the authorities had not discovered his cover, he was Edward in his contacts with Moscow, Charles Woodson as editor of the *Negro Worker* and Otto Huiswoud living in Amsterdam.

Despite his relocation, the financial assistance from Moscow for running the office of the ITUCNW and publishing the journal was quickly rerouted and in December 1934 Huiswoud received his first monthly allowance (see table X.3.2.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1935</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/1935</td>
<td>5600 Franc</td>
<td>534/8/317, fol. 65</td>
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</tbody>
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191 Note to the Moscow Daily News, 14.10.1934, RGASPI 534/8/289.
192 Huiswoud’s letter has not been located but it is referred to in a reply by NN to ‘Otto’, dated 21.2.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 2. Based on a reference to “the letter from Zus dated 22 January” in a letter from Edward, i.e., Huiswoud, to ‘Dear Comrades’, dated 11.4.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 4, it is evident that Zusmanovich was the sender and ‘Otto’ was Huiswoud.
While the structures for financial transactions remained more or less unchanged in 1935, Comrade René was no longer in charge of the Bureau in Paris but had been replaced by a certain Bari. The monthly sum that Huiswoud had at his disposal did not increase since he started his position as Secretary in April 1934.

Huiswoud received a long awaited letter of instructions from Zusmanovich on 23 March. Secure communications between Amsterdam and Moscow were slow but could be made faster if it was to be sent through “the same route as I send to you,” Huiswoud reminded the comrades. Zusmanovich letter was meant to be encouraging and written in an optimistic tone: “I am very glad that your work is taking the same direction as ours, especially in respect to the magazine.” He assured and outlined a grand scheme for the ITUCNW and the journal - students were to be sent to Moscow, the journal was to have thematic issues. The signs from Moscow were promising. “Our plans are big ones and the basic task in carrying them out depends on you. This will be the best present you can send us. Everything necessary will be sent to you.” Zusmanovich message read as if Moscow had decided to initiate a totally new emphasis on Africa: “We have finished a meeting on African problems, where there were many people present and a great deal that was interesting took place. In the near future we will write an article on this matter. We are carrying on big work, and of course, we subordinate it to your interests.”

But communication between Moscow and Amsterdam did not improve. In fact, nothing was heard from the ECCI Negro Bureau until 22 June. Meanwhile, Huiswoud had done his best to reactivate and expand his African Atlantic network. Connections had been established with Liberia, where Nelson and Charlie were in charge, with the Gold Coast through Daniels and Robert as well as with “our friends” in the United States, in England and in France. He even received a letter from the Cape but carried the depressing news that “the situation there is not a healthy one” and that little had been achieved. Even with British Guiana indirect contacts were established. While the situation in South Africa showed little improvement over the next months, the news from British Guiana was positive: “While greatly confused, they are doing good work and to a good extent following our line.”

Moscow’s reply was rather unsatisfactory in Huiswoud’s mind. “We are astonished, for one thing, that your letter does not answer any of the specific and concrete issues which

196 Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Comrades’, 11.4.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 4-5.
we raised and discussed in our messages,” he complained. The most pressing one was his “contract” had expired since October 1934 and he wanted “to come over there to renew it” he already notified in a communication in early April. In addition, he wanted to discuss the outline of his work. He underlined the need for him to come over “to discuss timely questions of present and future activities” as well as reminded that “my Contract with Ludwig has expired quite some time ago and must be renewed in his next letter, the tone had changed in his June-letter and he urged the comrades to answer to his request: “We hope that this matter will be arranged immediately.”

What were Huiswoud’s pressing needs to go to Moscow? The renewal of contract could refer to his US passport issued for Edward Mason that had expired on 18 October 1934. As it was a forged document, it could only be renewed in Moscow. Without the passport, on the other hand, he could not travel outside the Netherlands on clandestine missions. If he used his original passport, the police intelligence could easily discover his illegal activities. But what about the other organizational matters he wanted to address in Moscow? Perhaps he wanted to discuss the objectives and organization of the ITUCNW? As he later pointed out, the ITUCNW executive committee was non-functioning and its activities had come to a standstill. It listed no affiliated organizations, groups or individuals. Ties with the political organs of the Comintern and the RILU were “seriously limited” and had restricted its activities. Relations between the colonies and the metropolitan countries were extremely loose, and were mainly carried through irregular correspondence and through the *Negro Worker*.

Instead, the two letters from Moscow concentrated on two main issues. The first one concerned matters about publishing the *Negro Worker*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The second topic was the plan of sending students to study at the KUTV. Moscow had tried in vain to activate their British and French connections about the issue. As nothing had been forthcoming, Zusmanovich ordered Huiswoud to contact Arnold Ward and Regional Bridgeman and to discuss with them the realization of the project:

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199 Letter from Edward to Moscow, 3.4.1935, RGASPI 534/8/317, fol. 126
202 Confidential. Proposals on the Work of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (typewritten, no author, no date; marked: 10396/S/BT/29/10/35), RGASPI 495/155/101, fol. 28-31. The memorandum was based on Huiswoud’s report on the activities of the ITUCNW which he presented in Moscow in October 1935.
From the Negro Welfare Association we want to get five or six people from the African colonies. We also want to get from the French comrades five or six people from the French African colonies. From this point of view we are bombarding our friends all the time, but evidently without your interference nothing will come of it. By agreement with our chiefs, we have decided that you should go to Bridgeman and Ward, and select the necessary people on the spot. It is not absolutely essential that the latter be party members, but it is important for them to be anti-imperialist fighters and to have contacts with the colonies so that they can be sent back.²⁰³

Huiswoud tried to persuade his British and French colleagues, but with little success. News from England was disappointing, as he had to admit:

But I have insisted that they go outside of London where there are greater possibilities to find the necessary people. I think it will be necessary to send a very strong message to HP [Harry Pollitt] about this matter otherwise nothing will be done.²⁰⁴

In addition, Huiswoud underlined the need to be careful in the selection of the students:

We might be clear on one point right now. We are not ready to pick up people from the streets and send. The tragic results of this method are still fresh in our memory.²⁰⁵

Nevertheless, through the French friends – probably via the UTN – he had been able to get in contact with a young student from Sierra Leone whom Huiswoud regarded as both intelligent and willing “to devote his attentions and abilities to the working class movement.” Huiswoud was impressed by him and asked Moscow to inform him if he should be sent to the KUTV.²⁰⁶ But Moscow sent no reply. A similar disappointing experience was the failure of his African and Caribbean contact persons to select students: Nelson tried to secure three students from Liberia, Daniels two from Nigeria, likewise a couple of students were said to be on their way from British Guiana. But nothing came out of these plans. On the top of it, Moscow had not even informed the comrades in Paris – presumably Bari at the RILU office – about the plan or issued instructions of how to finance the recruitment of students. Similar to Ziese in Berlin, Bari would not distribute any money without authorization. Huiswoud already called on Moscow to act immediately in April and in his June letter once again inquired: “Have you made arrangements so that in case the need arises we shall be able to carry through the

necessary negotiations?" But Moscow remained silent and the plan to secure new students from the African Atlantic came to nothing.

3.4. Copenhagen – Harlem: The *Negro Worker* disguised

Otto and Hermine Huiswoud’s main task was to edit and publish the *Negro Worker* as well as to organize the journals distribution. Here, their record is rather impressive if one measures the success of their endeavours only in terms of the dissemination of a radical anticolonial journal in the African Atlantic. Officially, the journal listed a long range of assistant and associated editors, including several West Africans such as Wallace Daniels (I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson) and Martin Nelson (Holle Seleh Tamba). In reality, however, the Huiswoud’s and the comrades in Moscow ran the journal.

Otto Huiswoud’s first decision was to reduce the journal to 2,000 copies per issue as an attempt to cut down costs. In May 1934, he had received the list of addresses Padmore refused to hand over and which he had sent for from Moscow. After a careful cleanup of the list, the amount to be distributed more or less matched the printing. Almost all were distributed via the various legal and clandestine communication networks Otto Huiswoud had been able to establish. The journal reached all corners of the African Atlantic; almost one quarter of it was sent to West Africa and one third to the United States (see Table X.3.3.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West Africa</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>West Indies</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Europe (incl. East Africa)</th>
<th>Others</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>210</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By boat</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Most of the issues that were sent to various addresses in Europe and USA were reshipped to the colonies. However, as none of the colonial authorities in the British Empire as elsewhere

throughout the colonial world regarded the journal as a mere nuisance and barking of insignificant social and political outcasts, the journal’s legal distribution via the Mail Service was in most places out of question as Padmore had came to realize when he was in charge. In the Gold Coast, for example, the governor decided to introduce a Sedition Bill to prevent the circulation of journals like the *Negro Worker*. Huiswoud made a sarcastic comment when he followed the discussion in the British Press: “This shows that despite the restrictions, the *Negro Worker* is making headway,” although he had to admit that due to the tight ban in the African colonies, he had not been able to enlarge the numbers of connections, as the journal was mainly distributed via the post and the transportation of it by individuals was at times very poor.209

Nevertheless, in spite of government restrictions and colonial censorship, it was no match for Otto Huiswoud to organize a fairly functioning distribution network. Padmore already made use of the clandestine communication network of the ISH and Huiswoud continued to do so. In principle, the system operated via the various Communist cells and contact persons of the ISH onboard the freighters. By 1935, when most of the British colonial authorities had totally banned the circulation of the *Negro Worker* in Africa, Huiswoud could easily bypass any restrictions:

> In so far as W.A. [West Africa] is concerned, sending by post, except to a few individuals is out of the question, because they are immediately confiscated. However, through another way, we are sending, regularly, every month, no less than 300. Undoubtedly this is a small number, but until we can develop further contacts with seamen, which we are pursuing now, it is not possible to send much more.210

Thus, while this resulted in indirect and individual transportation of the journal, sometimes in small packages, it had definitively paid off and by September 1935 Huiswoud noted that the functioning distribution network of the journal had served to increase its distribution considerably.211

> In some locations and colonies the *Negro Worker* was totally banned and even its illegal distribution was difficult. Huiswoud’s remedy to this cul-de-sac was to issue “special editions” of the journal. “Beginning with June [1934],” he informed Zusmanovich, “I expect

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to put out a ‘special’ issue for those places where the journal is forbidden.” The special issue were the ‘Crosses’, i.e., issues with the cover of a missionary magazine called The Missionary Voice, Mouthpiece of the A.M.E. Missionary Society, London, England. The other strategy was to claim that the journal was published in Copenhagen or in Harlem, USA. Both addresses were mere letterboxes for incoming correspondence of readers’ letters and to serve as cover-up locations for the ITUCNW. Neither the journal nor its official editor-in-chief, Charles Woodson alias Otto Huiswoud, was ever present in those locations. Instead, as will be pointed out below, the journal rather operated all the time along the axis Antwerp/Amsterdam and Moscow.

The relocation of operations to Amsterdam after the deportation of the Huiswouds from Belgium did not result in any break of the publication of the journal or the ‘Crosses’. Hermine Huiswoud was able to hide the copies of the September issue of the journal she just had completed and was able to carry them to the Netherlands where the journal was published. The Huiswouds thus managed to continuously publish and disseminate the Negro Worker throughout 1934 and 1935.

Huiswoud’s strategy of using the clandestine communication network as well as the “special issues” definitively paid off. With the improvement of connections to South Africa its distribution covered all major centres in the country and Huiswoud’s next plan was to make arrangements for the establishment of an apparatus for the distribution of the journal within and outside South Africa. West Africa was no match, either, although there were still some bottlenecks to be overcome:

Through a round about way, we have managed to communicate with some of our contacts in other parts and we are now awaiting replies to our letters. Through this same way, we have managed to send a few hundred copies of NW. to the places where it is prohibited. Thus we are gradually breaking down the barriers and extending the circulation of the journal.

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212 Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, stamped 000584 – 9 JUN.1934, RGASPI 534/3/986, fol. 1. Huiswoud’s note definitively refutes Zusmanovich claim that Padmore and he had invented the idea of the special issues.
The communications with American comrades as well as those in the Soviet Union was the cause of continuous headaches for Huiswoud. When he took over as editor for the *Negro Worker* he had been promised close assistance from both the Black Comrades in the USA as well as the comrades at the ECCI Negro Bureau. Much to his dismay, however, the American network proved to be almost non-existent. “Our friends there are too ‘busy’ to answer our numerous letters,” he informed Zusmanovich and uttered a hard criticism about their inactivity:

> Although constantly requesting them to inform us whether they receive [the Negro Worker], how the distribution is developed and suggestions from us as to how they could increase the circulation and build up a group around the journal in and outside the US, not one word from them for a year.\(^\text{218}\)

Even worse, Huiswoud continually invited African American comrades to contribute articles for the journal, not a single line of text was written. “NOT A SINGLE ANSWER! That they have received the letters we know.” Only Ford had sent him a speech to be published\(^\text{219}\). On top of it, he did not even receive the Communist newspapers in Amsterdam, such as the *Harlem Liberator* or the *Daily Worker*, and was therefore not informed about what was going on in the United States.\(^\text{220}\)

Cooperation between Huiswoud and the ECCI Negro Bureau had not developed in the manner envisaged. The original plan was that the Bureau members and the African students at the KUTV would draft articles for the journal.\(^\text{221}\) At a meeting of the Negro Section of the KUTV in November 1933 it had been decided that the students’ training program should include the writing of articles and correspondence for various Communist newspapers and magazines, including the *Negro Worker*.\(^\text{222}\) However, the first contributions from Moscow were meagre and the only article Huiswoud received had to be rewritten prior to published.\(^\text{223}\)

Huiswoud started to receive material from the ECCI Negro Bureau after the initial problems in communicating with Moscow had been solved. While it is difficult to identify


\(^{219}\) Ford’s article was an extract of his speech held in March 7, 1935, on a demonstration in New York, published as “For Defence of Ethiopia,” *The Negro Worker* V:5, 1935.


\(^{222}\) Minutes of Meeting of the National Bureau, 19.9.1933, RGASPI 532/1/442.

\(^{223}\) The article dealt with Liberia; it is likely that it was published as “The Struggle for the Independence of Liberia,” *The Negro Worker* IV:2, 1934, pp. 9-13.
which articles had been written in Moscow in 1934, the contributions for 1935 can to some extent be reconstructed. Dispatches containing articles or draft versions were sent from Moscow via Comrade Bari in Paris on a regular basis and included contributions in the February-March double issues, the May and June issues, the July-August double issue and the October issue of 1935.\footnote{Articles for the Negro Worker attached to Zusmanovich dispatches to Comrade Bari in Paris, located in RGASPI 534/8/327.} Zusmanovich also directed Huiswoud to concentrate on certain themes in each issue: the March 1935 issue on trade union movements in various colonies; April: West Africa; May: East Africa.\footnote{Letter from NN [Zusmanovich] to Otto, 21.2.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 2.} On the other hand, Huiswoud made suggestions to Moscow concerning the type of material he needed. In June 1935, he planned to launch a special issue on the United States and asked Moscow to prepare the material: “You have enough people there to be able to prepare the necessary articles,” he reminded Zusmanovich and added: “These should be short, popularly written, and covering a wide range. This can be done if it is properly arranged.”\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, 24.6.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 9a.}

There were still two main shortcomings of journals. One was the insignificant contribution of Africans; the other concerned the quality of the articles written in Moscow. In a (so far) missing letter written by Huiswood in early 1935, he criticized the articles in the journal for being too abstract, and suggested to Zusmanovich that they were to be shorter and written in a simpler language. This was approved by Moscow.\footnote{Letter from NN [Zusmanovich] to Otto, 21.2.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 2.} The articles’ style improved by the end of the year: “While still too restrictive, [they] show a marked change towards more diversified, lighter and popularly written material.” However, there was still much to be improved, not least the lack of continuous and systematic educational feature articles.\footnote{(Huiswoud,) ITUCNW Report 1934-1935, RGASPI 534/3/1055, fol. 11.}

The main weakness of the journal, however, was that only a few articles dealt with the actual conditions in Africa and that Africans had written few articles:

We realize that one of the main weaknesses in the journal lies in the fact that most of the articles do not come direct from the spot and that we have not yet been able to build up real workers correspondence.\footnote{Letter from Edward to ‘Dear Friends’, 24.6.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 8.}

In fact, the only articles Huiswoud had received from Africa or had an African author in 1934 and 1935 where the contributions by M. Nelson alias Holle Selah Tamba and W. Daniels alias I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson. In Tamba’s case one can even argue that his only article published in...
1934 had been written while he still was at the KUTV in Moscow, although his 1935 contributions were sent from Liberia. Wallace-Johnson, on the other hand, had certainly sent his articles from the Gold Coast where he had relocated in late 1933. Curiously, in the September 1934 issue, two of his contributions were published. The author of the first was Daniels, the second by Wallace-Johnson. If nothing else, it must have been an attempt to give the impression that several persons were commenting on the state of affairs in the Gold Coast. The 1934 issues of the *Negro Worker* included two articles by a certain Nandi Noliwe, whose identity is unknown. As the contribution dealt with Togo it is possible that Huiswoud received an original contribution through someone at the UTN. The ITUCNW itself did not have any direct links to French West Africa. Equally intriguing is Jomo Kenyatta’s article in the October-November 1934 issue of the *Negro Worker*. It was his speech at “The Negro in the World Today” conference held in London in July 1934, which Huiswoud had also attended. Perhaps Huiswoud received a copy of the text via Arnold Ward (who had an article published in the same issue)? As Kenyatta had already sided with Padmore in his rivalry with Huiswoud and the hardliner Communists, it is unlikely that he would have contributed to the *Negro Worker* (and never did thereafter).

All other contributions listed under African authors, such as Kofi Kwessi, Akim, Soukt, Watt Nolan or “An E. African” where fabricated names were used and the articles had been written in Moscow. This also applied to William L. Patterson’s articles in the June 1935 issue. At this point, he was working at the IRH headquarters in Moscow and his contribution, as well as those of the above mentioned authors were sent by Zusmanovich via the RILU contact person in Paris, Bari, to Huiswoud. The identification of the non-African and Moscow-written articles is listed in Table IX.3.4.

### Table IX.3.4. Identified Moscow-written contributions for the *Negro Worker* in 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NW 1935 issue</th>
<th>Author and article in NW</th>
<th>Corresponding original version sent by Zusmanovich to Huiswoud</th>
<th>Source (RGASPI)</th>
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<tr>
<td>V:2-3</td>
<td>D.I., South Africa, “What the A.C.C. Means”</td>
<td>What the ACC means</td>
<td>534/8/327,</td>
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| V:2-3 | Akim, “The Handicrafts Men of Africa Belonging in the Fighting Front of the Workers” | Handicrafts men of Africa belong in the fighting front of workers | 534/8/327, fol. 1 |
| V:2-3 | Our Letter Box: Gold Coast – Why Farmers Get So Little for Their Cocoa | Why farmers get so little for their cocoa | 534/8/327, fol. 25 |
| V:5 | “Letter from Tom Mann to the South African Trade Unions and to all Working Men and Women in South Africa” | Letter by Tom Mann to the South African Trade unions… and all working men and women in South Africa | 534/8/327, fol. 25 |
| V:5 | A.Z., “Is There a Class of Native Capitalists in South Africa” [A.Z. = Zusmanovich] | Is there a class of native capitalists in South Africa | 534/8/327, fol. 25 |
| V:6 | ITUCNW, “To the Gold Coast Unions” | The Gold Coast Trade Unions | 534/8/327, fol. 48 |
| V:6 | Kofi Kwessi, “Struggle of Workers of Sierra Leone and Gambia” | Struggle of workers in Sierra Leone and Gambia | 534/8/327, fol. 48 |
| V:6 | Soukt, “The Gold Coast Delegation and the Anti-Imperialist Movement” | The Gold Coast delegation and the anti-imperialist movement | 534/8/327, fol. 48 |
| V:6 | William L. Patterson, “The Abyssinian Situation and the Negro world” | The Abyssinian situation and the Negro world | 534/8/327, fol. 48 |
| V:6 | “The Ashanti Confederacy” | The Ashanti Confederacy | 534/8/327, fol. 48 |
| V:7-8 | “Antifascist Struggle in Northern Rhodesia” | Imperialist oppression and the anti-imperialist struggle in Northern Rhodesia | 534/8/327, fol. 75, sent 9-10.5.1935 |
| V:7-8 | “The Rhodesian Mine Strike” | The strike in Northern Rhodesia | 534/8/327, fol. 81 |
| V:7-8 | Watt Nolan, “preparing New Land Expropriations in Kenya” | The imperialists are again preparing [sic] land expropriations in Kenya | 534/8/327, fol. 75 |
| V:7-8 | William L. Patterson, “Negro Harlem Awakes” | Negro Harlem Awakes | 534/8/327, fol. 63 |
| V:7-8 | “I am Among My Own People in My Own Land” | “I am among my own people, in my own country” | 534/8/327, fol. 63 |
| V:9 | Lorenzo Gault, “An End to Empire-Building” | An end to empire building | 534/8/327, fol. 81 |
| V:9 | “Nationalities in the Soviet Union” | Nationalities in the Soviet Unions | 534/8/327, fol. 75, sent 9-10.5.1935 |
| V:10 | “The Struggle Against Fascism in South Africa” | The letter of Tom Mann and the Struggle against fascism | 534/8/327, fol. 81 |
| V:10 | “German Imperialism Seeks Colonies in East Africa” | German imperialism seeks colonies in East Africa | 534/8/327, fol. 75 |
| V:10 | An E. African, “Gold in East Africa” | Gold in East Africa | 534/8/327, fol. 75 |
| V:10 | “Loin Cloth” | “Loin Cloth” | 534/8/327, fol. 81 |
The lack of African involvement was, according to Huiswood, due to the state of affairs of the ITUCNW. Being forced to an underground existence, all links that existed were indirect. The American mailing address referred to on the cover of the journal was illegitimate:

And it is well to state just here that one of the greatest hindrances to this, and one of the major weaknesses in the work of the Committee itself, is the fact that up to now, we have been unable to establish an official address, despite all efforts to do so. This inability to work openly restricts the growth of the Committee and the journal to a considerable extent. This prevents direct contacts – practically all communication is being carried on indirectly. It is true that we have assumed an address in the US, but this is of no practical value.234

Huiswoud proposed to relocate the ITUCNW office to a place where it could act legally. This would also enable the journal to have a legal and official letterbox and would not have to rely on the impractical arrangement of cover-up locations in Harlem and Copenhagen. His preference was to move the operations back to Paris and wanted to discuss the matter with Moscow.

4. Momentum lost? Renegades, radicals and the Abyssinian campaign

The task of reorganizing the ITUCNW and launching the Negro Worker was achieved without facing any bigger obstacles once certain “bottlenecks” had been removed. This proved to be a miscalculation of the strategists in Moscow. Although the Comintern had expelled George Padmore, it had not been able to silence him. Even more worrisome in Huiswoud’s and the other comrades mind was that Padmore’s name had a very positive resonance in the African Atlantic. Huiswoud’s task, therefore, was to neutralize if not break his influence as much as possible. Consequently and inevitably, the former two comrades ended up in 1934 and 1935 in a fierce clash about whom and whose organization was to spearhead the radical African Atlantic.

Padmore already tried to publish his version of the events in August 1933 and his reasons for breaking with the Communist International before his official deposition in April 1934 but it is likely that these attempts failed. After the publication of his expulsion in the June 1934 issue of the Negro Worker, he renewed his attempt to get his version published in the African American press and was successful. The main rhetorical battle took place in the

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Amsterdam News which proved to be the major forum for Padmore’s and others criticism. The result was a negative campaign on both sides. The Amsterdam News gave front-page coverage to Padmore’s accusations and when Black Communists tried to discredit Padmore, it published a number of indignant letters questioning the integrity of the Party spokesmen. Padmore accused his former comrades James Ford, Harry Haywood, William Patterson and Otto Huiswoud for being ‘Little Red Uncle Toms’, he disparaged the Comintern for having sold out the toilers in the African Atlantic and condemned the Soviet Union for betraying the cause of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Consequently, the Comintern had become “politically bankrupt” and regarded the campaign against him to be “nothing else but political blackmail.”

Padmore’s attack provoked a large-scale reaction by several African American communists, including James Ford, Harry Haywood and Cyril Briggs. Huiswoud termed Padmore’s attack as “a campaign of slander against us” but reassured the comrades in Moscow that “he has been effectively answered” in the radical African American and American Communist press by charging him for being an Imperialist Agent.

The campaign against ‘Renegade Padmore’ was also carried out in the Negro Worker. The June 1934 issue included a segment of the official declaration of Padmore’s expulsion by the ICC and the ITUCNW and in the July issue an unsigned article unmasked Padmore for being an agent and a petty bourgeois nationalist. In the next number, Helen Huiswoud criticized Padmore for having totally misunderstood his duty as a revolutionary fighter – instead of working for the freedom of colonial workers he had started to articulate a Pan-African vision of the freedom of the colonies.

The objective of Huiswoud’s campaign against Padmore was to finish his influence in the African Atlantic. His aim was twofold. The first was to block Padmore from rebuilding his network; the second was to strengthen the ITUCNW’s influence. He seems to have been fairly successful in the first task. Padmore had few connections left apart from his friendship with Kouyaté and Kenyatta and his collaboration with Nancy Cunard and seems to have had little

236 Padmore, “Open letter to Earl Browder,” no date, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 123-125. As I have argued earlier, there are reasons to believe that the letter was already drafted in 1934 although it was published in The Crisis in 1935. At least in his correspondence with Henry Lee Moon in 1934, he refers to the dispute and asked Moon several times to publish the letter, see George Padmore Collection, 1933-1945, Princeton University Library, Manuscripts Division.
239 Helen Davis [Hermine Huiswoud Dumont], “The Rise and Fall of George Padmore as a Revolutionary Fighter,” The Negro Worker IV:4, 1934. See also Hooker 1967, pp. 34-35.
room to manoeuvre in France during 1934. Huiswoud and the comrades at the PCF and the UTN were closely watching the activities of the renegades. Comrades who did not cut their ties with Padmore were viewed with suspicion, if not outright categorized as renegades themselves. One who was caught in the middle of the crossfire in Paris was Joseph Bilé, who had returned to France in March or April 1934. He had been Padmore’s protégé back in Germany and had on his recommendation been sent to study at the KUTV in fall 1932. However, he was also a member of the KPD and both the Party officials in Germany and the Comintern officials in Moscow held him in high esteem. Having finished his studies in Moscow in early 1934, his aspiration was to be sent back to Cameroon. As his return to Germany was out of question, he was sent to Paris. At this point he was still regarded by the Comintern officials as a trustworthy candidate and Fritz Heckert, the German representative at the ECCI, recommended to the Romaine Secretariat (Romanisches Länderkominternsekretariat) his nomination to the French Party.\footnote{Letter from Heckert to Romanisches Länderkominternsekretariat, 8.3.1934, RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 3.} This was approved and the PCF was duly informed about the decision although Aitken claims that he was never taken on the French Communist Party.\footnote{Notification in French, 14.3.1934, RGASPI 495/205/1802, fol. 1.}

Be as it may, Bilé continued for some months to interact with the UTN and the PCF but gradually lost his faith in the Communists. It is not known but seems possible that he had maintained contact with two of his former mentors, Padmore and Kouyaté. Whatever the case, by late 1934 he was disappointed and frustrated. Aitken’s assertion that it was due to the constant lack of funds to help him back to Africa seems plausible.\footnote{Robbie Aitken, “From Cameroon to Germany and Back via Moscow and Paris: The Political Career of Joseph Bilé (1892-1959), Performer, “Negerarbeiter” and Comintern Activist,” Journal of Contemporary History 43:4, 2008, p. 614.} Huiswoud must have been informed about Bilé’s decision to cut his ties with the Communists and duly informed Moscow about his fate. Zusmanovich was not surprised and called Bilé “an agent of Padmore” whom the French comrades should be warned about: “His physiognomy is becoming clear to us. He is an adventurer with whom we should cut off all relations.” The typical procedure to tarnish a former comrade’s reputation was to be launched - to use the available material and publish “a stringing article” about him.\footnote{NN [Zusmanovich] to ‘Dear Otto’, 21.2.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 2. Huiswoud’s information on Bilé is cited in the letter.} The article, it seems, was never written. In the end, Bilé was able to get enough funds and the French authorities allowed him to return to Cameroon sometimes in 1935.\footnote{Aitken 2008, p. 615; Derrick 2008, p. 303.}
At the time of Bilé’s troubles in Paris, Padmore was no longer living in France. Kouyaté had fallen seriously ill and was hospitalized during autumn 1934. Padmore, who was never fluent in French, must have felt that he had few opportunities left in France and decided to move to London where he arrived in early 1935. He must have been virtually penniless and was looking for an opportunity to continue his work. But with which of his former associates could he interact? Until September 1934, Huiswoud rather than Padmore had been successful in securing one’s influence among the radical Black and anti-imperialist organizations in the UK, the NWA and the LAI. Only a few reformist ‘free-movers’ such as Johnstone Kenyatta or his old friend C.L.R. James had not been responding to Huiswoud’s call or believed in his smearing by the Comintern. Not surprisingly, it was Kenyatta and James that Padmore cooperated with after he settled in Britain.

Huiswoud’s two partners in the UK turned out to be problematic. Neither the LAI nor the NWA were effective organizations and ideal partners as the African connections of the LAI and the influence of the NWA among the Black communities in Britain was limited and superficial. Admittedly, at least the LAI had become fairly active in African issues in 1934 although its main focus was on India. Bridgeman had been able to establish contact with African students in London and the LAI had supported the West African Students’ Union in their boycott of Aggrey House, the student hostel established by the Colonial Office in London. Bridgeman had even been appointed in the African Hostel Defence Committee to support the WASU’s campaign in defence of its own hostel.245

The League’s direct engagement in ‘African problems’ had been restricted in 1934 to ‘watching and protesting’. Its central activity was to serve as a kind of information office and to provide news clips and other material to African newspapers. Bridgeman was pleased to announce to Moscow that the League had been able to establish “the closest contacts in Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Liberia” but apart from stating that “the West African Press is generally willing to publish letters from the League as well as statements issued by the League” never specified or outlined his West African contacts. While he presented an impressive list of African newspapers and magazines in his report’s appendix,246 the direct connections of the LAI were limited to the Gold Coast. The only West


246 The list includes newspapers and magazines from the following African colonies and countries: Madagascar (2), Algeria (7), Morocco (8), Tunisia (6), Kenya (3), Uganda (1), Tanganyika (1), Zanzibar (1), Nyasaland (1), South Africa (21), Nigeria (5), the Gold Coast (4), Sierra Leone (3), the Gambia (1), Dahomey (2), Togo (1). Appendix to (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 34-35.
African newspapers, which the office of the LAI received, were from the Gold Coast, the *Provincial Pioneer* and the Gold Coast Spectator.\(^{247}\)

The LAI’s Gold Coast engagement had been established through its work in the campaign against the Gold Coast Criminal Code Amendment Bill and the Water Works Bill. The Colonial government introduced two bills in February 1934. The first, commonly called Sedition Bill, included severe restrictions on the press and had been introduced to deal with anti-colonial dissidence. The second introduced water rates and was seen as a new way of bringing direct taxation. Not surprisingly, the two bills resulted in protests from the Gold Coast intelligentsia, both the nationalist-minded one and the radicals. One of the latter was I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, who had arrived in the Gold Coast in late 1933 and together with Bankole Awooner Renner and B.E.A. Tamakloe had started to organize an agitation campaign against the two bills. The protest movement against the bills soon split into two camps when the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society refused to join a committee representing more conservative activists and nationalists. The main strategy was to send a delegation to London, although due to the split two delegations were sent. One was the Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation headed by Nana Ofori Atta, the other was the ARPS delegation by Samuel R. Woods and George E. Moore (see further Chapter Ten).\(^{248}\)

The LAI became engaged in the campaign when it received a request for assistance from the Gold Coast. Without hesitation, the LAI backed the campaign and took an effort to get the question raised in the British Parliament.\(^{249}\) Most likely it was Wallace-Johnson who had invited Bridgeman to join the campaign and probably this or a similar letter was sent to Huiswoud who published it as an article in the *Negro Worker*.\(^{250}\) Wallace-Johnson further asked Bridgeman to help the ARPS delegates in London,\(^{251}\) and although Bridgeman ended up assisting both delegations, he clearly favoured the ARPS delegation: “This delegation is more representative of the people of the Colony.”\(^{252}\) Much to the dismay of both the delegations and Bridgeman, the campaign did not achieve much and the Colonial Office rejected all petitions.

Apart from the Gold Coast campaign and the connections with Wallace-Johnson, the League had few other direct contacts with West Africa although the potentialities of future

\(^{247}\) In addition, the LAI office received the *Umsebenzi* and the *Forward* from South Africa. List of Newspapers & Journals at the Office of the International Secretariat for Reference, Appendix to (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 42.


\(^{249}\) (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 13.


\(^{251}\) Derrick 2008, p. 308.

\(^{252}\) (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 14.
connections in Gambia and Liberia looked promising at the end of 1934. The 1934 LAI Report refers to these two openings only vaguely, claiming that “persons in the Gambia” had approached the League in November 1934. The Liberian connection was even more obscure: “contacts has [sic] been established and it is hoped to be able to develop this in the necessary direction.”

Contact with whom? Was it perhaps one of the former KUTV students who had been sent back to Liberia?

While the League reported some success in its African activities, the general outlooks for work in Africa and communications with Africans had become troublesome in 1934. The authorities had become increasingly suspicious of the League and it had been declared illegal by the authorities in many British colonies:

> It has been noticeable that since the establishment of the International Secretariat of the League in London the censorship everywhere has been considerably strengthened. In many colonial countries the League itself has been declared illegal or unlawful, so that all its publications are liable to confiscation, and it must be plainly stated that the possibility of open correspondence and propaganda in reference to the anti-imperialist movement conducted through the postal channel is now out of the question.

Methods employed for carrying on an anti-imperialist campaign have therefore to be different from what they were in the early days of the League.

Whatever anti-imperialist strategy Moscow had planned to pursue in Africa, it had to take into consideration the curtailed potentials of the LAI’s African connections.

Huiswoud’s connections with Africa or the Caribbean, on the other hand, were upheld through the LAI or the NWA. Both organizations were legal bodies in the UK while the ITUCNW was both illegal and officially did not exist at all in Belgium. Direct communication with Africa or the Caribbean remained difficult and time consuming for Huiswoud as he either had to rely on Bridgeman and Ward or wait for incoming correspondence to be delivered through Copenhagen or Paris. Still, as long as he was able to operate under cover of the Crusader News Agency in Antwerp, he was able to communicate with his contact persons in the African Atlantic. The relocation of the headquarters to Amsterdam and his illness in late 1934 resulted in a new break in the communication network and Huiswoud was cut from any direct contacts with the African Atlantic.

Huiswoud’s absence from the political scene in late 1934 was fatal. Years of accumulated tension and between Italy and Abyssinia resulted in a border clash at Walwal in

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253 (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 14.
254 (Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 1 (Underlining in original text.)
the Ogaden in early December 1934. The Italian aggression and overt expansionist rhetoric caused an outcry throughout Africa, Europe and America. At a crucial moment in the political organization of the radical African Atlantic was Huiswoud unable to direct the events himself. This lack of influence proved fatal for Huiswoud and the ITUCNW in 1935: neither Ward and the NWA nor Bridgeman and the LAI emerged as the catalysts for a radical African Atlantic movement.

The Italian aggression against Ethiopia marked a break in political mobilisation throughout the African Atlantic. In retrospect it can be claimed that the Ethiopian crisis was not only the watershed in African as well as Black history but as much in the African work of the Comintern. The tension along the Ethiopian border increased after the December 1934 incident and Mussolini mobilized two Italian divisions and sent them to Eritrea in February 1935. Huiswoud quickly responded and the \textit{Negro Worker} carried in all issues articles and proclamations condemning the Italian aggression.\footnote{“Italian Imperialism Attacks Abyssinia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} IV:8, 1934; “Italian Imperialists Grab at Abyssinia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:1, 1935; Charles Woodson [Huiswoud], “Italy’s Grab for Africa,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:2-3, 1935; Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party and Young Communist League, “Hands Off Abyssinia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:2-3, 1935; Charles Woodson, “Italian Troops Pour into Africa,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:4, 1935; J.W. Ford, “For Defence of Ethiopia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:5, 1935; W.L. Patterson, “The Abyssinian Situation and the Negro World,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:6, 1935; ITUCNW, “Hands Off Abyssinia,” \textit{The Negro Worker} V:7-8, 1935.} So did Bridgeman and the LAI.\footnote{(Bridgeman,) LAI Report 1934, RGASPI 542/1/61, fol. 15; R. Bridgeman, Statement by the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence for the Defence of the Independence and Territorial Integrity of Ethiopia, 8.10.1935, RGASPI 542/1/62, fol. 62-63.}

However, to the big surprise of Huiswoud, the Comintern was passive in the Ethiopian crisis and restrained for months to comment on the issue at all. The silence in Moscow was due to the complicated diplomatic conditions that prevailed in late 1934 and during 1935. Soviet foreign policy’s main priority was to safeguard the agreements between the Soviet Union and France as well as Czechoslovakia that had been negotiated in 1934 as the two new pillars of the new Soviet security arrangements after the demise of the Rapallo treaty. Italy played a crucial role in the new policy. The Soviet Union needed the cooperation with Fascist Italy to contain Nazi German expansionism. Mussolini’s Ethiopian ambitions therefore posed an acute dilemma for the Soviet Government: how to block Italian aggression and at the same time safeguard the Soviet European security system? The situation became even more complicated after the French Prime Minister Pierre Laval’s negotiations with Mussolini in early January 1935, when it looked as if Mussolini had obtained carte blanche with respect of his handling of the Ethiopian question. It was not in the interest Soviet foreign policy to support the British standpoint of putting the Ethiopian issue on the agenda of the Council of
the League of Nations. An open clash between Britain and Italy would have paralysed the formation of a united front against Germany, the prime objective of Soviet foreign policy. Therefore, the strategy was to handle the Ethiopian crisis in negotiations outside the League and behind closed doors. Least of all, the Kremlin and the Soviet Foreign Ministry was interested in a high-profile Abyssinian campaign orchestrated by the Comintern.\footnote{Jonathan Haslam, \textit{The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-39}, New York: St. Martin’s Press 1984, pp. 60-63.}

Officially, the Comintern restrained from commenting about the Ethiopian crisis. On the other hand, the Political Commission ordered Bela Kun to provide an analysis of the crisis in February 1935. At this point, the ECCI’s main interest was to connect the Ethiopian crisis with Japanese imperialism, as it was believed that Japan was trying to establish close military, economic and political relationships with the Ethiopian Emperor.\footnote{"Die japanischen Impierialisten in Abessinien,” no author, report dated ”25” 01987/10 ku 22.2.[19]35, RGASPI 495/4/459, fol. 1-4. It seems as if the last page(s) of the report are missing in the file. The report had been either commissioned or written by Bela Kun.} The first guidelines for political agitation outlined a popular campaign that was to highlight the defence of the national integrity of Ethiopia though not to support the Ethiopian Emperor’s regime. The campaign in mind was never projected as a defence of the political independence of bourgeois and imperialist Empire of Abyssinia as such. While the various Communist Parties and trade unions were to be mobilized in the campaign against Italian aggression under the slogan “Hands Off Abyssinia”, its leitmotiv was the old unified anti-imperialist struggle of the Black and White workers.\footnote{See ‘Leitsätze für den Kampf gegen den Krieg in Abessinien, no author, memorandum dated ”25”/2194/10 27.II.[19]35, RGASPI 495/11/2, fol. 4-9. The last page(s) of the memorandum are missing.} It is likely that the guidelines were never authorized or circulated in public. One month later, in March 1935, the analysis and guidelines were updated. This time the report was written by Ferdi and contained a lengthy discussion on the history of Italian aggression in the Horn of Africa.\footnote{Ferdi, Ethiopie, sous la menace d'invasion impérialiste. Le fascisme italien se lance à une guerre de rapide en Afrique Orientale, 20.3.1935, RGASPI 495/11/2, fol. 10-27.} A new circular letter to the British, French, Swiss, Spanish and US American Communist Parties was sent in April although it merely repeated the March theses on the Abyssinian crisis. Anti-Italian campaigns were to be launched in every country but, as it was highlighted,

\begin{quote}
When carrying out this campaign, it should always be kept in mind that the threatening war in Abyssinia, which is caused to a great extent by imperialist antagonisms in this part of East Africa, is in danger of becoming a war between the imperialist powers, and thus, a world war.\footnote{(Copy) Letter from Peter [Kerrigan] to Harry Pollitt, [Moscow] no date, handwritten add: 3/VI/35, RGASPI 495/20/44, fol. 46. Similar circular letter in German in RGASPI 495/20/609, fol. 10-12.}
\end{quote}
Although Moscow launched one investigation after the other, neither the ECCI nor the Kremlin had made any official statements or had made official proclamations to the Communist Parties how to proceed on the Ethiopian crisis. Moscow’s official silence provoked criticism – not only from the non-communist camp but also from within. Harry Pollit, for example, anxiously inquired in September about an official statement by the Comintern:

We appreciate very well that the Parties have the duty to say something on Abyssinia, but there is a situation about which every worker in the world is talking. What has the C.I. to say? The Second International speaks, the Amsterdam International speaks, and the Communist Parties speak, but nothing from the International… We know that the line must vary from country to country, but the but the general call in defence of Abyssinia should come from the C.I.  

On the other hand, ‘independent’ front organizations, such as the LAI or the League Against War and Fascism, could certainly launch a campaign against the Italian aggression as long as it was clear that they did speak in the name of the Comintern or the Soviet Union. It is also possible that Huiswoud had received instructions from the Negro Bureau to engage the ITUCNW in the campaign. Although I have not been able to locate any communications from Moscow to Huiswoud about the issue, there are reasons to believe that the Negro Bureau devoted time and energy in assisting Huiswoud in his activities for the Ethiopian cause.

Huiswoud’s plan was to initiate a global campaign against the Italian aggression. Calls for a united front of Black and White workers against the ‘fascist aggression’ were made in the name of the ITUCNW and already in December 1934 he issued his first appeal for an active campaign of protest and action. The appeal was reprinted in the press of the Gold Coast, South Africa, British Guiana as well as in the Communist press. At least the British Guiana Labour Union raised the call for Ethiopia at its May Day demonstration. Other meetings were held later on a number of islands in the Caribbean, Huiswoud noted. A second appeal was issued in June calling for the establishment of ‘Hands Off Abyssinia’ Committees. According to Huiswoud, this call received even wider press publicity than the first one and the first response was a “big ‘Hands Off Abyssinia’ demonstration” in Johannesburg on July 17 and a few weeks later a “united front meeting” adopted protest resolutions and created a

262 Extract from Harry Pollitt’s letter to Peter Kerrigan, 21.9.1935, RGASPI 495/20/44, fol. 72.
Hands Off Abyssinia Committee in South Africa. Elsewhere in the African Atlantic protest movements and relief committees were formed:

In Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana protest meetings and demonstrations have been held and relief committees to aid Abyssinia have been established. In the Gold Coast the Youth League adopted protest resolutions and organised a relief committee. The Liberian toilers have organised a committee of action in defence of Abyssinia. The Negro workers in London, Cardiff, North Shields, etc. have held a series of protest meetings while Negro seamen aboard British vessels resolved to pledge their support to the Abyssinian people.263

A third appeal was published by the ITUCNW in September calling for the intensification of activities.264

But did the ITUCNW orchestrate the Abyssinian campaigns in 1935 at all as Huiswoud’s report seems to claim? His or the ITUCNW’s name is never mentioned in the accounts of the various activities.265 Instead, local agencies in Africa, the Caribbean or the United States are recalled. In the British Caribbean Colonies, the leading force claimed to be the Garveyites, the local labour unions and parties and independent organizations such as the International Friends of Ethiopia.266 In Nigeria the Nigerian Daily Telegraph carried a call for protests and the formation of ‘Hands Off Abyssinia Committees’ already in July 1935 and during the autumn local committees were formed throughout British West Africa. In the Gold Coast, Wallace-Johnson and Tamakloe had already signed an appeal in March 1935. In the United States, the Ethiopia Research Council had already been established in December 1934, followed by the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia in February 1935, and in July 1935 the Friends of Ethiopia was inaugurated. None of these organizations had any ties to the communists.267 Demonstrations organized by the League against War and Fascism

267 Other organizations campaigning in the USA for the Ethiopian cause were the Pan-African Reconstruction Association, the International African Progressive Association, the Detroit Committee for the Aid of Ethiopia and the Association for Ethiopian Independence. There was further the Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, established in September 1935. In November the Ethiopian Research Council was transformed into the Ethiopian Emergency Medical Aid (Cedric J. Robinson, “The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis,” Race and Class 27:2, 1985, pp. 61-62). Officially, the USA took a policy of noninvolvement in the crisis and as a result, the Abyssinian Campaign remained to a large extent an African American issue (Sharon Gramby-
together with the NAACP in New York in August and September found Du Bois and Ford on
the same platform. The most outstanding activist in the Ethiopian campaign in France was
Garan Kouyaté who had sent a letter of support to Haile Selassie in February 1935. While the
PCF remained silent, the UTN and the LDRN as well as a variety of groups ranging from the
radical to the moderate spectrum joined hands in the French support of Ethiopia. In
London, C.L.R. James founded the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) in
possibly July 1935, an organization which assembled left-wing but not Communist Black
radicals and nationalist: Padmore, Kenyatta, Peter Milliard (from British Guiana), T. Albert
Marryshaw (from Grenada), Amy Ashwood Garwey (Marcus Garvey’s divorced wife). On 28
July 1935 the IAFA issued a manifesto and an appeal demanding actions by the League of
Nations and Great Britain. A few months later, Padmore and Kouyaté formed the “Pan-
African Brotherhood” and they issued a joint manifesto on Ethiopia.

Padmore was back on the agitation trail as before, but this time he was not relying on
Moscow. He had published an article in the NAACP magazine *The Crisis* in May 1935,
criticizing the West for its inactivity and calling for the support for Ethiopia. The article
placed him immediately in the forefront of the international Abyssinian campaign. “George
had made up his mind,” recalled James later, “[…] that under no circumstances would he ever
again join any European or worldwide organisation in which black or colonial peoples did not
have the dominant and controlling role.” What he had learned in Moscow and in Hamburg
in organizing campaigns and rallies he put into use in 1935. In contrast to Huiswoud, Padmore
was in the middle of the action in 1935 and met people face-to-face. In July he visited Paris
and met Kouyaté who was frustrated about the PCF’s disengagement in the Ethiopian
campaign and criticized the Party’s Popular Front policy for demonstrating a hollow anti-
imperialist standpoint. Instead, the various radical grass-roots movements took the lead in
Ethiopian campaign in France. On 22 August 1935, an international conference to coordinate
the Ethiopian campaign took place in Paris, sponsored by Messali Hadj’s Etoile Nord-
Africaine and the LDRN. Kouyaté participated at the meeting. It is also likely that Padmore
attended the conference – he was reported to sojourn in the French capital in September and

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James Ford, on his way back to the United States after his participation at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, anxiously reported “Padmore is here. Understand active. Can get little information.”

Kouyaté’s and Padmore’s efforts paid off – the French movement to defend Ethiopia gathered momentum, culminating in the formation of the Comité de Coordination des Associations Noires et Arabes in January 1936.

The Comintern’s first official comments on the Ethiopian crisis came at the time of the international conference on Ethiopia in Paris. The first response was a vague and half-hearted one by Palmiro Togliatti, who presented a report on ‘the preparation of a new world war by the imperialists and the tasks of the Communist International’ at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern on 10-11 August 1935. According to him, Japanese imperialism and German fascism were the main advocates of war. Great Britain was denounced not only as the ‘champion of colonial oppression’ but also for encouraging Nazism and seeking to channel Japanese and German aggression into an anti-Soviet front. He defended Soviet ‘peace policy’, on the other hand, especially the mutual aid pacts with France and Czechoslovakia, underlining total identity of interests between the international communist movement and the Soviet Union.

He also attacked Italian imperialism, shortly touched upon the threat of an Italian invasion of Ethiopia and made a passionate declaration of solidarity with the Ethiopian people. In the discussions on his report, André Marty defended the Franco-Soviet pact though criticized the government of Laval for its agreement with Mussolini on Ethiopia. Finally, the resolution on the report concluded that Mussolini’s impending invasion of Ethiopia was creating a new tension in relations between the imperialist Powers – echoing the position of Soviet foreign policy rather than articulating a clear-cut condemnation of Italy and a call to rally behind the cause of Ethiopia. Following Jonathan Haslam, at this point – if not earlier – a kind of tactical division of labour in the engagement of the Comintern and the Communist Parties had been outlined. While the Italian Communist Party, which had protested against Fascist aggression under the banner of the “Hands off Abyssinia” campaign in February 1935, was to agitate on Abyssinia, the French Party was to mobilise the leading European Socialist Parties into a unified solidarity platform. The Comintern, however, would not be officially engaged. A conference was organized in Paris in early September, a

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274 Genova 2001, p. 188.
276 Carr 1982, pp. 413-416.
resolution was passed calling on the League of Nations to take energetic measures in defence of Ethiopian independence.277

The Paris Conference was mainly a gathering of representatives of the Communist Parties and organizations. It is likely that Huiswoud attended the conference although his October Report is unclear about whether he attended the August or September Conference on Ethiopia in Paris. If he did, he could have received the third call for action that he published in the Negro Worker while attending the conference278. Perhaps he even received a copy of the “Declaration of Support for Abyssinia” the Eastern Secretariat had prepared in late August 1935, although a handwritten add of the draft version states that it was to be commented by the representatives (in Moscow) of the Communist Parties of Italy, France, America, Great Britain, South Africa, Cuba, Brazil, Panama and Portugal.279 While Pravda hailed the conference as an important opening – someone from the British Labour Party attended the conference – it was an overstatement: the Second International turned its back to the call and was not interested in unified activities.280 Still, by September 1935 it was evident that Paris had emerged as the key centre for the pro-Ethiopian movement in Europe.

However, behind the curtains, the Comintern headquarters had started to work on the Ethiopian crisis. Palmiro Togliatti’s Secretariat was ordered to prepare a report on the issue after the Seventh Congress. The ECCI Presidium discussed Togliatti’s report on 26 September 1935.281 A few days earlier, the ECCI Secretariat had published a call of Dimitrov to form a united front with the Second International to prevent the escalation of the conflict into a new world war.282 The Comintern’s move was a direct consequence of the change in the Soviet position in the Ethiopian crisis. Up to mid-September, the grand strategy was based on getting France and Britain behind a combined action that was both directed against the Italian aggression and the containment of Germany. The crux of the matter was still that while the first strategy included the threat of economic sanctions against Italy, the second was based on Italian participation. When the Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov heard of secret Anglo-French negotiations aimed at appeasing Italy, the tactics had to be changed and the

277 Haslam 1984, pp. 64-65.
279 Handwritten add: ”Declaration of Support for Abyssinia,” marked ”7”, dated 28.8.1935, RGASPI 495/14/60, fol. 22-25. The mark ”7” stands for author/sender = Eastern Secretariat. The handwritten adds and corrections to the text are similar to William L. Patterson’s writing.
280 Haslam 1987, p. 65.
Soviet Union had to take a more forthright position in the Ethiopian crisis. But the leaders of the Second International did not respond to Dimitrov’s invitation. A second call was sent to Amsterdam a few days after the Italian attack on Ethiopia in early October. Unfortunately, the Second International was not interested in a unified campaign instigated by the Communists.

In the mean time, Huiswoud could not move to Britain to personally coordinate the ITUCNW campaigns. (In France, he could operate via the UTN and rely on the assistance of the PCF.) Instead, he was depending on Arnold Ward’s cooperation and to make use the NWA. This strategy, however, backfired. It turned out that the Negro Welfare Association, in Huiswoud’s view, revealed almost a complete lack of attention paid to colonial work on part of the highest circles. “Despite repeated efforts to aid in the form of concrete directives, the NWA merely flounders around,” Huiswoud bitterly remarked in his June-letter to the ECCI Negro Bureau. Interestingly, there exists one letter by Arnold Ward to an unidentified receiver (presumably Huiswoud), dated 26 June 1935. Perhaps the letter was written as an ‘official’ explanation from Ward on why so little had been accomplished. He pointed out that conditions in England were problematic and claimed that he himself was not anymore certain about his position:

> As I pointed out in my last letter to you that things here are very topsy for the moment. I personally don’t know where I stand, and I don’t think I can continue in the position I am in.

The problematic situation in Britain Ward referred to was most certainly the political activities in connection with the Italian aggression against Abyssinia and the various campaigns by the various anti-colonial and anti-imperialist organizations such as the IAFA and the WASU. Ward put the main blame on the CPGB’s disinterest and George Padmore’s resumed activities:

> G.P.’s [George Padmore’s articles] on Abyssinia in the Crisis is well read here among Negroes and you can well judge for yourself of has done us the N.W.A. a lot of harm. The inactivity of the A.W.M., the

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283 Haslam 1984, p. 68.
286 Letter from W., dated 26.6.1935, RGASPI 495/155/102, fol. 15. Based on internal evidence, it is almost certain that W. is the abbreviation for Arnold Ward. The content of the letter indicates that it was written in reply to someone who knew him well and with whom Ward earlier had been in correspondence, i.e., most probably Huiswoud.
L.A.I. and the C.P. on the Abyssinian question brings G.P. and Marcus Garvey right in the limelight. Sak and I are bound to be pessimistic. At the last D.P. Congress a resolution on the Colonial question was brought forward at the last moment and was disposed of in two minutes. The delegates walked out when it was discussed and came back and sung the International.287

Huiswoud, on the other hand, blamed Ward and the NWA for inactivity despite his continuous efforts to assist them with practical advice. “The failure to accomplish anything up to now there is in our opinion,” he assured, “due to a complete misconception of what to do and how to do it. The attached draft copy of the Aims and Objects of the NWA which they have just sent us shows quite clearly the confusion which exists” and asked the comrades in Moscow to make corrections and suggestions to the document which was enclosed in his correspondence.288

If little assistance was forthcoming from the NWA, not much more was to be expected by Bridgeman and the LAI. Huiswoud noted that there had been a certain amount of cooperation between him and Bridgeman, but criticized the LAI for having a very passive approach to the ‘problems’ and had failed to develop any mass actions around burning issues:

Repeatedly, we have proposed certain definite action to them – the question of discrimination in Eng[land], the Protectorates, Abyssinia, the colonial seamen’s plight, etc., but they offer all sorts of reasons why mass action cannot be developed.289

Huiswoud must have felt that the ITUCNW was losing its momentum. Although the organization had been among the spearheads in the Abyssinian Campaign it had, in his mind, totally backfired, as the campaign had not resulted in a broader and deepened local anti-colonial radicalism. By October 1935, he was pessimistic in his outlook and declared that the Abyssinian Campaign of the ITUCNW had failed to “sufficiently link up the struggle for Abyssinian independence with the struggle for the local demands of the workers in the specific countries.”290 Even worse, he felt isolated in Amsterdam and the illegal status of the organization had effectively blocked any cooperation with the Comintern’s various organs. “Because of this,” he farsightedly pointed out, “there is the tendency of lagging behind the rapidly developing mass struggles and movements of the Negro toilers and a too slow
orientation to the swiftly changing situation.” What was needed was a thorough revision of the strategies and objectives of his work. If not, the radical African workers movements that he was supposed to give birth to would be stillborn. But any changes had to be done and approved by the ECCI Negro Bureau and he therefore urgently needed to travel to Moscow to discuss the future of the ITUCNW.

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