Melting Down the Iceberg – The Communist International, Organizational Perspectives and Archival Issues: A Research Report

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The story of the Communist International (also known as the Third International, or as its acronym: Comintern) belongs to the history of the “short twentieth century”, a limitation in time suggested by historian Eric J. Hobsbawm in his account on the history of the twentieth century in Age of Extremes (London, 1994). With the eruption of the First World War in 1914, and ending with the breakdown of the communist system in the Soviet Union in 1991 the “short twentieth century” so to speak limits itself in time and space. A historian has to acknowledge the fact that the “short twentieth century” is a historical period with its own set of structure and contexts, or for that matter, lack of contexts according to Hobsbawm. This period signalled the fall of the established world order of Western civilisations which had been erected during the nineteenth century, it saw attempts to reshape the world structure and order after World War I with the League of Nations at its helm, it witnessed the fall of Tsarist Russia in 1918 and the emergence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the same country directed by Lenin and his Bolshevik Party which lead to the implementation of the communist system.¹ The period between the two world wars, the Inter-war era, has been considered as times of trouble and confusion, filled with internal and external conflicts. Hobsbawm labels it the era of “catastrophe”, while other has described the world as being cast into a “dark valley”, especially during the 1930s.²

This is a story of the phenomena Comintern, with its own set of structure(s) and contexts. The Comintern was established on the outset of an era characterised by political, social, economic, and cultural global bewilderment in March 1919, on initiative taken by Lenin and the Soviet government in the aftermath of the October Revolution/state coup in Russia 1917. The goals of the Comintern were both of a grandeur character, namely, the promotion of world revolution, but also of a more modest nature, to assist in the establishment of national sections of the Comintern in countries outside of the Soviet Russian border. These sections could take the form of a national communist party, a relief organization, a front

organization, or a newspaper. Becoming a “section of the Communist International”, meant in turn that the section took a political and spiritual vow to participate in and obey the decisions taken by the central Comintern “party” apparatus in Moscow. The Comintern was dissolved in 1943.3

This is also a story ranging from the Bandung Conference in Indonesia 1955 where a meeting between leaders from Asian and African states debated on the still existing system of colonialism after World War II had ended, concluding with the drawing up of a consensus stressing the fact to condemn the system of colonialism;4 to reminiscences on the character of the colonial liberation movement before World War II by Indonesian nationalist Mohammad Hatta in August 1945 where he wondered what had happened with all of his “old comrades”;5 about the German communist Willi Münzenberg (1889-1940) found dead and his body being in a disintegrating state, leaning next to a tree with a noose around his neck in the fall of 1940 in the outskirts of Lyon in France;6 about the era before terror operated as a self going machine in the Soviet Union;7 and before the Nazis finally seized ultimate power in Germany after the Reichstag Fire in Berlin on the 27th of February 1933. This is the story of a front organization, run and controlled by communists active in Berlin up until 1933. The name of the organization was the League against Imperialism and for National Independence (LAI), an organization established as the outcome of the First World Congress in support of the Oppressed Peoples in the Colonies and against Imperialism in Brussels, 10-15/2-1927. This is a story of the network between the LAI and its International Secretariat in Berlin during the years 1927-1933, Comintern headquarters in Moscow and the international anti-imperialist struggle.

The aim with this paper is not to go into great detail about chronological aspects and explanations on what the LAI represented, the aim of the organization, the degree of “success” on the international arena, or to unveil every aspect concerning each and every individual active in the network. Instead, what is of great importance, and which shall act as pillars in the paper are issues such as archival structure and content of the Comintern archive

5 Mohammad Hatta, “A personal message to my old comrades wherever they may be”, 30/8-1945 in Portrait of a Patriot, The Hague, 1972, 504.
in Moscow and general interpretation of the archive, how to incorporate certain documents found (two examples shall be given) and the use of source criticism on these documents. Another part argues on organisational and network perspectives in the realms of theoretical frames and methodology, and how these perspectives shall be operated in the thesis. However, focus shall be put on the organisational perspective, while a discussion on the basic functions of the network has been left out. These two components are though without doubt connected, and form a foundation in the interpretative structure of the thesis. Apart from these issues has a short guide to important research results on Comintern and a concise chronological timeline aiming for an introduction on the “skeleton” of the LAI been included.

**Output and Relevance – an Argumentation**

Academic output and relevance of the current research can be explained by using the metaphor “iceberg”. Why one might wonder? First, the entire composition of an iceberg can not be seen, only a minor part of it is visible for the eye, thus, a first examination of the structure and context of the iceberg results in rather half-baked conclusions. What is hidden beneath the surface is therefore of major interest, and what is hidden can assist in creating a holistic view. Secondly, the metaphor iceberg is not a new and exclusive approach in the interpretation on the activities and functions of the Comintern apparatus in the context of international communism. Apollon Davidson, Russian historian focusing on African communists active during the Inter-war era, claims that the Comintern may belong to a distant era. However:

> If communism as an ideology, as a political, economic and social system and as a factor in world politics is to be recognised as one of the most important phenomena of the twentieth century and as one of the central features of its history and legacy … then the Comintern was without doubt one of the most important global organisations ever to have existed. … the ideals and methods that it so vigorously spread around the world have already outlived several generations.

The Comintern had an open profile, holding seven international congresses during its lifetime and being linked up with legal communist parties in other countries, but this must be seen as “only the tip of the iceberg”. Davidson states that underneath the surface a “diversified and secret network of communications, invisible chains of command, information and espionage”

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existed, all instructed outwards from Moscow. The general understanding among researchers on the Comintern on what the organization accomplished on the international political arena is that it was a failure. Jane Degras argued already in 1965 that such a understanding was “an irrelevant question”, and the Comintern should instead be interpreted by looking on factors such as a “misreading of conditions” where the original aims of the Comintern was obliterated over time. What is of importance, according to Degras, is the epochal event which the Russian revolution was, and belonging to this is the history of the Comintern and it being inseparable from Soviet history. In 1998 Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe followed along Degras argumentation claiming that no “closure” on the debate about the Comintern and its influence could be seen. On the contrary, research has to:

Break from stereotypes and fixed models to broaden and deepen our understanding of the nature of the Comintern. It was not, … a perfectly operating machine, in which humans were merely cogs. But nor was it an irrelevance. There was, … space for human agency at all levels; but the very existence of the Comintern meant that this agency could never amount to total freedom of action. Rees and Thorpe states, along with acknowledged historian on the Comintern, Kevin McDermott, that research on issues such as Comintern’s anti-colonial struggle amongst others are still of obvious importance. Especially if one reflects upon the role of the individuals inside of the Comintern apparatus. The only specific research conducted on LAI has been accomplished by Mustafa Haikal in his article “Willi Münzenberg und die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit” (Tania Schlie [ed.], Willi Münzenberg (1889-1940), Frankfurt am Main, 1995). Haikal provided with a generalised picture, and did not focus on the tensions in the network between Berlin and Moscow. The same goes for John D. Hargreaves rather vague description on LAI, while describing potential research opportunities on the Comintern and anti-colonialism in 1993. In his defence it may be argued that Hargreaves only had a chance to work in the Comintern archive for a couple of days, quickly cross-checking the League files. However, there are thus only two observations made by scholars’ exclusive linking together the thematic thread: LAI, Comintern and anti-imperialism.

9 Davidson et al. 2003, 1.
One can not also disregard the fact that several prominent individuals and active in the freedom struggle for the colonial part of the world were active in LAI, at least in its first period, so to speak acting as a nursery for colonial freedom fighters.\textsuperscript{14} And even though many either left or were purged from the League, the organization in itself became in the long run thought of as the first attempt to unify the struggle against colonial oppression. Distinctively, research has not examined which role the LAI had both as an organization and as melting pot for the anti-imperialist struggle during the Interwar era yet, and ultimately, the degree of importance which an organization such as the LAI had for Moscow and the Comintern.

Another issue of academic relevance is the one connected to Soviet historiography and the issue of coming to grips with the past. Journalist Anne Applebaum claims in \textit{Gulag – A History} (London, 2003) that with some effort a lot is to be learned about the past in Russia, and I must add, about the Soviet period which lasted for 73 years. If the Soviet part in history is neglected, the risk is that historiography covering the “short twentieth century” on at least half of Europe turns out somewhat warped. Applebaum recalls in her argumentation of keeping the memory alive, that many Russians today prefer not to talk about memories of an unpleasant character, namely, the “blank spots” of their history.\textsuperscript{15} That is to equal 73 years of history as non-existent.

Skills needed in the reaching of a deeper understanding on the complexities that is hidden underneath the surface of the iceberg which Comintern more and more has come to represent in the scholarly world is of a varied nature. Raymond W. Leonard claims (London, 1999) in his study on the operations of Soviet military intelligence during the period 1918-1933, that in order to compose a useful history, as in his case on the GRU (\textit{Glavnoe razvedyvatelnoe upravlenie}, in English: \textit{Main Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army}), which also goes for any writing on Soviet history (and the Comintern), skills such as the biographer, intellectual historian, organizational historian are needed.\textsuperscript{16} The author would like to add knowledge in conflict and network theoretical perspectives in this cocktail of skills.

Some parts in this paper are to be incorporated in the thesis, while others have been exclusively written only to be included in this paper. As mentioned already, I do not intend

\textsuperscript{14} Individuals fitting in this category are for example Indian national reformist, and later India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indonesian nationalist and major contributor to the formation of Indonesia Mohammad Hatta.


here to explain the question why the League against Imperialism was established in 1927, and what happened with the organization during its existence up until 1935. One might think that the duration of the LAI, eight years in existence before being dissolved by the Comintern, of which six years are being the focus of the thesis (1927-1933), is a “short” period in history to investigate. Relating to the life and decline of Comintern, it is not a “short” period I must argue. The period 1927-1933 was filled with several changes within the Comintern apparatus, both ideological and organisational, but also in Comintern’s relation outwards with its sections and front organizations. The period also showed a process where the network between Comintern headquarters in Moscow with (as in this case) Berlin and the International Secretariat of the LAI underwent several stages of change and tension. Thus, focus is not fundamentally set on a chronological explanation. It is the thematic threads (political – organisational/network – individual) that are of greater interest while coming to grips with the network.

Now follows a concise guide to research results on the Comintern, to be concluded with a chronology on the LAI.

I

Concise Guide to Literature and Research Results on Comintern

This is not the appropriate forum to go into extensive detail regarding literature and previous research results on the Comintern. But the issue can not be totally left out, so a couple of key works on the topic has been selected and offered below. These works are to be included, discussed, and incorporated in the thesis.

In order to clarify the watershed which the fall of the communist system in the Soviet Union caused on the academic world and scholars specialised on international communism, a distinction between the Soviet era (1917-1991) and post-Soviet (1991 and on) research results has been created. None excluding the other though, and results from both periods are still viable to use I must argue, depending on intellectual output and interpretation on the Comintern, and especially the role of front organizations in the context of international communism. Note that this is only a selection of works produced on the Comintern; the

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17 The period 1917-1991 indicates the duration of the communist system in Soviet Russia. Results on Comintern during the Soviet era cover the years 1945-1991, since interpretations started to appear after World War II had ended, therefore has the period 1945-1991 been chosen to represent the Soviet era here.
selection has been adjusted after reflections made by the author himself, and articles in journals have been left out in this presentation.

*The Soviet Era (1945-1991):* Three intriguing works on the history of the Comintern, both from an organisational and individual perspective, was compiled in co-operation between scholars Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, acting as chief editors. Two of the books were jointly published in 1966, *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943* (Stanford University Press, 1966), and *The Comintern: Historical Highlights – Essays, Recollections, Documents* (Stanford University Press, 1966). The third contribution by the same authors was the attempt to put some flesh on some of the individuals’ active inside of the Comintern apparatus in the biographical work *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, 1986, Second Edition, First edition 1972). An extensive and chronological investigation on official statements and publications issued by the Comintern during its existence was conducted by Jane Degras during a period of 10 years, selecting and writing a narrative on the documents in *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents, Volume 1-3* (Oxford, 1956-1965). In line with Degras work fits John Riddel’s *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power. Documents: 1918-1919. Preparing the Founding Congress* (New York, 1986), and other publications by him. Historian Edward Hallet Carr has written an intriguing book on the Comintern covering the high level of the political milieu both in Moscow and other parts of the world, characterising the hardening process of Bolshevisation/Stalinization in the Comintern apparatus in *The Twilight of Comintern 1930-1935* (Oxford, 1982). Another work worth mentioning by Carr is the three volumes *Socialism in one country – Volume 1-3* (New York, 1958).

On the biographical and memoir front should books by authors such as Babette Gross (wife and widow of Willi Münzenberg), in *Willi Münzenberg – Eine politische Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1967), Margarete Buber-Neumann’s (Babette Gross sister) two books *Von Potsdam nach Moskau – Stationen Eines Irrweges* (Stuttgart, 1957) and *Kriegsschauplätze der Weltrevolution. Ein Bericht aus der Praxis der Komintern 1919-1943* (Stuttgart, 1967), Ruth von Mayenburg’s captivating *Hotel Lux. Das Absteigequartier der Weltrevolution* (München, 1991), Aino Kuusinen’s *Vi skola nästan alla dö. Kominternfunktionär och lägerfånge – Otto W. Kuusinens hustru om sitt liv i Sovjet 1918-1965* (Stockholm, 1972), to take a few examples from the stack of memoirs and biographical accounts on how it was to live and being active inside of the Comintern apparatus deserve inclusion.

In short, and as one can acknowledge by just scanning through the research results presented above, results of different character has been immense after 1991. But research into the activities of the front organizations still lacks a coherent understanding. More precise, research has just started to grasp on the surface, but due to different indicators, of which some will be discussed, the road to coming to grips with an organization such as the LAI has proven to be a path filled with different obstacles.

Before entering this proposed path, a timeline aims to illustrate the life and decline of LAI.

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¹⁸ William J. Chase’s book is one of the books published under the *Annals of Communism* series, published under the supervision of Yale University, a series that have caused a great deal of attention on parts of the scholarly world that pays attention on the historiography of the Soviet Union and communism.
Summarizing timeline – The Chronological Skeleton of LAI and Comintern 1919-1935

The complex nature of LAI, in its relation inwards with Comintern headquarters in Moscow and the individuals active in the organization and with other elements in Berlin, and its relation outwards with the national sections of LAI in different countries across the world during 1927-1933 are impossible the melt down here on one or two pages. You might wonder why the period 1927-1933 is considered as especially important, instead as the title of this section suggests, 1919-1935? The major reason is on the one hand that LAI was founded 1927. On the other hand, Berlin was the centre for the anti-imperialist struggle in Europe during 1927-1933, and in the same city was the International Secretariat of the LAI located.

The purpose with this part is to give a summarized picture on the chronology of LAI, where specific events of great importance connected with the life and decline of LAI have been included. Some dates considered as significant for Comintern history in general has also been included. The intention is not to give lengthy accounts on everything that went on inside of LAI; instead, topics of certain interest shall briefly be mentioned and concisely explained.\textsuperscript{19}

1919 – The Third International, or as it came to be popularly known as, the Communist International (Comintern) was founded in Moscow, 2-6/3-1919.

1920 – The Second International Comintern Congress was held in Petrograd and Moscow (19/7-7/8-1920). The “Twenty One Conditions” were presented, being the guidelines for parties, organizations, and individuals who were aspiring to join Comintern. During the congress, the colonial question, and how to deal with it was discussed among participants. The Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, organised by the Comintern, was held in September.

1921 – Willi Münzenberg, responsible for the propaganda machinery of the Comintern outside of the Soviet borders and the spider in the web, was instructed personally by Lenin to set up a famine relief action in support of Soviet Russia. The operation went under the name of Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH), and came into existence in August 1921. From the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of June to the 12\textsuperscript{th} of July was the Third International Comintern Congress carried out in Moscow.

1922 – The Fourth International Comintern Congress was held in Petrograd and Moscow (5/11-5/12-1922). The Comintern apparatus was entering a phase of shaping up its organization in an attempt to put the pieces more tightly together.

1923 – Communists in Germany attempted to seize control in a revolutionary coup in October. The whole operation failed totally, forcing the Comintern to re-evaluate its internal organisation and the political work. The event came to be popularly known as the “German October”. The Anti-Fascist League was set up under the administration of IAH and Münzenberg in Berlin during the fall.

1924 – The colonial question was up for debate at the Third International Congress of the Red International Labour Union (RILU, Profintern) in Moscow. Comintern

\textsuperscript{19} The author shall not put out any references in the summarizing timeline. The main motive is to keep it clean and simple, in an attempt to provide with a coherent picture, undisturbed by footnotes.
carried out its Fifth International Congress 7/6-8/7-1924. This year signalled an increased attention from the Comintern and Münzenberg’s point of view regarding the violent outbursts in colonies such as Syria, Morocco, and the Rif War.

1925 – Different fronts such as the Hands Off China campaign, Committee against the Cruelties in Syria, and League against Colonialism were established, all under Münzenberg’s patronage and sponsored by the Comintern.

1926 – League against Colonial Oppression (LACO) was established in Berlin, 10/2-1926. Measures in creating an anti-imperialist network, and the preparatory work for an international anti-imperialist congress consumed most of the time in 1926. Comintern underwent a major re-organisation, both in its administrative system and political work, of which all was decided at the VI Session of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International [ECCI] (17/2-15/3-1926) in Moscow. The session underlined the importance of supporting mass organizations such as Münzenberg’s IAH, and organizations established for a special purpose should preferably be increased in numbers.

1927 – After troubled discussions, between Münzenberg in Berlin and Moscow in the organising process of the coming anti-imperialist congress, it was decided that the Congress no longer could be postponed. After all, the Belgian authorities had said “yes” for the event to take place and provided with location, Palais Egmont in Brussels. The First International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism was held in Brussels, 10-15/2-1927. The most important decision was to form a “permanent fighting” organization, namely, the League against Imperialism and for National Independence, more known as League against Imperialism (LAI). Moscow evaluated to what degree the LAI could be considered as successful, concluding that the congress was an “impressive event”, and LAI’s area of focus should be to “mobilise the strength of the proletariat, and other layers of the population”, and first most to support the revolution in China. The Executive Committee of LAI held three meetings this year, and the General Council of the League met in Brussels 9-11/12-1927.

1928 – Organizational measures concerned with strengthening of the network took up most of the League’s time in 1928. Plans for different propaganda activities, and meetings of the Executive Committee took place for example in Brussels. Some of the participants (the Chinese Hansin Liau, and former Kuomintang representative in Europe) in the LAI started to show frustration against the organisational confusion and personal malpractice. The Sixth International Comintern Congress took place in Moscow (17/7-1/9-1928), marking a shift in attitude where the United Front policy was put in disfavour. Instead should the “class against class” policy be promoted and applied by Comintern sections throughout the world.

1929 – The Second International Anti-Imperialist Congress was held in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 20/7-31-/7-1929. The leading slogan for the congress was that the League had, from its foundation in 1927 gone from a “propaganda group” to becoming a “mass organization”. The Congress ended in great turmoil, due to fractional strives during the congress, pursued by the communist fraction that aimed aggressive rhetorical attacks against other participants. Other issues that caused controversy were a resolution, where LAI supported the Palestinians in their struggle against Zionism. This resolution included attacks against intellectuals residing in Europe, and their alleged links to the Zionist movement. The President of the League, the English socialist James Maxton, was also
severely verbally attacked and questioned at the sessions of the Congress. The outcome and results of the Congress caused the Comintern to decide that firmer control from Moscow had to be established. The relay station and control instrument of Comintern headquarters, the Western European Bureau (WEB), for the decision making body (the ECCI) of Comintern, was granted authority from Moscow to increase the control of the LAI and its activities. LAI entered in the second half of 1929 into a period of general organisational turmoil, lack of efficiency, and the development of various conflicts with members of the League.

1930 – General chaos, disillusionment, and “bloodletting/purification” of the organization. The ECCI Secretariat, in conjunction with decisions taken by the Political Secretariat in Moscow, decided that LAI, if it was to continue, had to be re-organized. The man in charge of collecting different opinions and information on LAI was the Czechoslovakian communist Bohumir Smeral. The peak of the investigation and re-organization process took place in Moscow on the 1st of September at Hotel Lux in Moscow, and ended a few months later when the new goals for the League were formulated. Thus, LAI had been transformed into a more overt propaganda tool for the communists and the Soviet Union, expressing the need for swift revolutionary changes in the colonial and semi-colonial world. The condition of the LAI, especially in Berlin, was still in chaos, speaking in terms of organisation, finances, and the physical health of the individuals.

1931 – The new and “improved” Executive Committee of LAI met in Berlin, 30/5-2/6-1931. The new agenda was decided upon by the EC, and main area of interest for LAI was to be the national minority movement in Europe, and the colonial and semi-colonial part of the world was now regarded as of being of second rate importance. At the International Secretariat of LAI in Berlin main focus was set on keeping themselves politically alive, since the budget was kept on a minimum level, and the Berlin police kept the offices of LAI under constant surveillance. On the 21st of December the LAI secretariat was raided by the police, causing a brief halt in the activities of the organization.

1932 – LAI was temporarily declared as “illegal” by Comintern headquarters in Moscow. The main reason was due to the increased pressure from the Berlin authorities. The major event for Willi Münzenberg was to organize the coming Anti-War Congress, an event that also included the LAI network. The Anti-War Congress took place in Amsterdam 28-30/8-1932. An event that bore many similarities to the two LAI congresses that took place both in 1927 and 1929, speaking of organisational techniques, scope and content. LAI held an “internal” conference during the congress, where only members of the League were allowed to participate.

1933 – Plans for a coming congress, focusing on “oppressed national minorities” in Europe were discussed between Comintern emissary Otto W. Kuusinen and the individuals in Berlin. LAI increased its attention on certain topics such as the Meerut Conspiracy Trial in India and the Scottsboro case in the beginning of the year. On the 27th of February, the Reichstag in Berlin was set on fire. This resulted in that communists either had to flee from Germany, or if caught by Nazi security forces, was put in prison. Moscow decided to redirect LAI activities to Paris and establish the International Secretariat there. After Münzenberg managed to escape out of Germany in the beginning of March, he headed for Paris, to continue with his line of business. On the 8th of June,
Münzenberg sends Edwin Magyar (Hungarian communist, seated in Moscow) a letter, in which he states that he could not be in charge of the LAI anymore. The main motive given was that the “energy is gone”, the financial situation was non-existent, and most important, the anti-imperialist network had been shredded. It would be best to transfer the International Secretariat to London instead, and put the English socialist and secretary of the British LAI section, Reginald Bridgeman, in charge of LAI from now on. In September, Bridgeman received directives from Moscow, authorising him to be the man in charge of LAI. Thus, this indicated that both the ideological and organisational dominance which the communists had had on the organization since its formation in 1927, now in the long run was over.

1934-1935 – LAI had in 1934 been transformed into a socialist organization, and any traces of communist influence and control were minor. The seventh and last International Comintern Congress was held in Moscow 25/7-21/8-1935. The ECCI Secretariat decided in October to close down the activities of Münzenberg’s IAH. The decision was not publicly announced.

The chronological skeleton has hopefully provided with a glimpse into the life and decline of LAI, but also on the complexities which are connected to the study of a communist front organization. Namely, what was out in the open, what was hidden, and what was intended to remain hidden? This question can partly be answered by starting with projecting the Comintern through an archival prism.

II

The Uncovering of the Iceberg – Coming to Grips with the Empirical Material

a. Introducing the Iceberg in an Archival Context

Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch stated in 1966 that the whole apparatus of Comintern mainly operated in secrecy, with only a tiny piece left out in the open “like a visible portion of an iceberg”. The same description fits for the archival holdings of the Comintern, thus it created a severe empirical problem for the historian. Namely, a thorough investigation of the sources was before the fall of the Soviet Union an impossible task to pursue for foreign researchers. The same desperate voice was raised again by the same authors 20 years later in 1986, as they concluded that the impossibility of consulting the sources was a decision taken from above. That is, the silence from the Kremlin only

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20 Milorad M. Drachkovitch & Branko Lazitch, "The Third International", in The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943, Milorad M. Drachkovitch (ed.), Stanford, 1966, 196-197. See also Apollon Davidson’s use of the metaphor “iceberg” in the introduction of this paper.
authorized publications by Soviet scholars on the history of the Bolshevik Party, which amounted to the publication of several dubious books each year. None of the books focused on the Comintern, and equally, none of the books written used any of the documents stored in the Comintern archive. Drachkovitch and Lazitch went so far arguing that the silence from the Kremlin seemed to aim for “a means to make the Communist International [Comintern] disappear as much as possible from history”.21

Where Drachkovitch and Lazitch concluded that it would be impossible to understand the Comintern apparatus in extenso by only relying on Comintern’s official statements and publications (which shall be presented and discussed later) thorough investigations conducted either by academic researchers or journalists suddenly became possible after the Comintern archive was opened up as an effect of the communist system breaking down 1991 in the Soviet Union. Or as the director of Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (in English: Russian State Archive for Social and Political History, acronym: RGASPI) Kirill Anderson in which the Comintern archive is stored, once put it; “August 1991 was a turning point for the Russian State, including its archival institutions. The openness of archival information was declared…”.22 Following Anderson’s joyful reaction that finally were the empirical holdings open for investigation and critical scrutiny, one has to pose the question: is there still a problem with coming to grips with the empirical holdings at RGASPI, and as in this case, the Comintern archive?23

Another issue worth touching on is the legacy of communism and its historical value, here represented by the sources stored in different archives in Russia, and how sources in some cases are used as a political weapon instead of being treated as “public resources”. This have caused that a number of secrets connected to the Soviet regime still remain secret, a claim Stephen Kotkin put forward in 1998 in The Journal of Modern History.24 Kotkin debated on how to use and approach the archives in Russia in his article. Until 1998 had only a limited group close to the Russian government been allowed to use the Presidential

21 Branko Lazitch & Milorad M. Drachkovitch, Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern, Stanford, 1986, viii-ix. Lazitch and Drachkovitch went so far in their argumentation, claiming that (full quote): “Such a frozen situation cannot last [1986] and should change to the benefit of open historical research … With the qualitative proliferation of able young historians everywhere, the future should belong to their unrestricted and innovative work” (p.ix). Little did the authors now that in five years, the openness they were wishing for, turned into reality.
23 From here on after shall I refer to the archive as the “Comintern archive”, and not use RGASPI, while referring to the archive in the running text, in the footnotes shall RGASPI be used.
archive (for example, Stalin’s personal papers, and minutes from the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Russian Communist Party are stored in this archive), and the KGB archive. The motive, according to Kotkin, was the “settling [of] political scores and helping Russia conduct post-Soviet diplomacy”, a scenario Kotkin labels as “political football”.

Fortunately has the Comintern archive not been the centre for any “political football”, but problems still exist.

Anderson, and others working with him in the archive such as Oleg Naumov claims that there are several problems still lingering in the Comintern archive, all of a different kind. First we have the linguistic problem. A problem worth debating on since the Comintern archive provides with the major bulk of source material on which the thesis rests on. Why the linguistic dilemma is chosen as the first problem to debate upon is that the question always arises while explaining that research is being conducted in Moscow. It must be emphasised that the Comintern from the very beginning was a multi-linguistic organization, with people from all over the world living and being active in Moscow, therefore it was required that directives and administrative orders were given in languages most of the individuals could understand. The major part of the sources is in German, and other languages are for example English, French, Spanish, and of course, Russian. On a professional level no such problems, based on linguistic dilemmas, has arisen during the archival work. Reasons why can be left out of this discussion, the major point is however, and as Anderson has pointed out, that in the beginning after the archive was made open for scholars all over the world the finding aids (catalogues) for the files were all in Russian (which is not a surprise in itself). Even though the finding aids are useful, they did not, and still do, provide with an opportunity to do a quick search. For the Director this caused a huge dilemma since the openness of the archive drew a lot of attention on an international scale. In order to solve this predicament the International Committee on the Project of Computerization of the Comintern Archive (INCOMKA) project was initiated by the Federal Archival Service of Russia (Rosarchiv) and the International Council on Archives (ICA) in 1996. Basically, this agreement aimed at a two-folded solution.

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25 Since Kotkin’s article, and after 1999, the gate to the Presidential archive was opened for researchers. I shall not go into practical problems connected with this archive, instead refer to books recently published that have used documents stored in the Presidential archive. For example Anne Applebaum’s widely successful work on the Gulag system the Soviet Union in Gulag – A History, London, 2003, Simon Sebag Montefiore’s sensational analysis on Stalin in Stalin – The Court of the Red Tsar, London, 2003, and finally J. Arch Getty & Oleg V. Naumov’s The Road to Terror – Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939, Yale University Press, 1999.

First, a computerization of the Comintern archive, and secondly, making a version available on the Internet. Only particular parts of the archive, documents selected by specialists on the topic, were scanned (and are still being scanned). Did the INCOMKA project solve the linguistic problem? In a sense, yes, it has provided the researcher with a title and contextual understanding on what is stored behind the doors of the Comintern archive. Thus, the Russian filing system of fond/opis/delo (in English: collection/inventory/file) gives the researcher a hint on where to look more deeply. The linguistic problem is of minor importance coming to the character of the sources, but of vital importance to understand before entering the archive. However, the major problem is of a more serious character.

Returning briefly to the INCOMKA project one might think that the accessibility factor now would have increased. Partly yes, and partly no I must argue. The fundamental problem is of a quantitative matter, namely the size of the empirical holdings are far too extensive to be computerized. The Open Society Archives provides with a clue as it states that the Comintern archive consists of 220,000 fondy (collections), with a total of between 20 and 25 million documents in its holdings. INCOMKA only aimed for a computerization of 1 million of these documents, and the Internet version should only provide with 25,000 pages out of these 1 million scanned documents. Thus, can a thorough investigation of a communist front organization such as the League against Imperialism be conducted on the premises set by the INCOMKA project? In the end, one must argue no. On the one hand, the selection process has been conducted by others, and on the other, the bulk of scanned documents can not be seen as representative because of the first suggestion here. Instead, it is only a window, allowing the researcher to take peep in, but not to enter.

b. Examination of the Iceberg

If we put aside the outline of the linguistic and quantitative problems, a return to the metaphor “iceberg” is at hand. Instead, we are on the first footsteps on the path leading to criticism and

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27 Andersson 2002, 158. For a more in-depth explanation on the purpose of INKOMKA see Anderson’s article. For the electronic inventory see either: http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/emneguide/rusland/untitled_14.xml, or information provided by the Open Society Archives, Electronic Archives of the Communist International on http://www.osa.ceu.hu/files/fa/381.htm. The information given on these two websites gives a coherent picture on what is stored in the Comintern archive, but only in the digital format and on the Internet. Another work worth mentioning is the empirical guide Sverige i ryska arkiv (Stockholm, 1999), composed by Swedish expert on the terror and everyday life in the Soviet Union, Helene Carlbäck, and Lars Björlin, specialised on Comintern and its contacts with communists in Scandinavia.

28 Quantitative data is presented on http://www.osa.ceu.hu/db/fa/381.htm. Kirill Anderson also mentions the figure 1 million in his article in Comma.
evaluation of primary sources, set in a context limited by the characteristics and substance of the material stored in the Comintern archive.

Historian Kevin McDermott claims that “historians … tend to find what they want to find”. The major reason for McDermott’s generalising judgement on the historian’s craftsmanship has a lot to do with the iceberg metaphor. Since the opening of the Comintern archive scholars literally rushed to Moscow, storming the archive in search of a new understanding on the topic “international communism”. But according to McDermott there are important methodological hazards to have in mind. First, can one be sure that the former Soviet archives really contain the “juicy information” the historian is searching for? Secondly, to what degree can one trust the accurateness of this iceberg, and are the sources authentic? These questions shall be more thoroughly discussed in this empirical and methodological exposé. The fundamental argument McDermott puts forward on how to use, but also on how to understand the sources stored in the Comintern archive in Moscow, is that it should be put in an international context:

How exactly were Comintern directives carried out by the national sections, often thousands of miles from Moscow? … The Comintern archive is thus an indispensable source, but in the final analysis it is one among many. It must be supplemented by other sources, including the voluminous secondary literature, much of which does not rely on Russian archival material.

Are the files stored in the Comintern archive, if we perceive it as an historical well in the understanding of the international communist movement, especially during the Inter-war era, being degraded by applying McDermott’s attitude onto its own analysis and methodological approach? No, on the contrary, it just strengthens the empirical outcome while coming to terms with some of the problems the material suffers with (not all though), namely, accuracy and the question of authenticity. What is of particular interest while using and interpreting the sources in the Comintern archive is to create a picture of the activities on what went on both in Moscow, and in the sections all over the world. The picture may not be complete, but it offers a chance to view the Comintern, perceived as an organization, from the inside, and in the end to draw conclusions that previously were impossible to draw before on the degree of significance that the Comintern actually played on both the political arena during the interwar era, but also how Comintern affected the individuals engaged and active within the Comintern. More explicit, the picture must be seen as it is enough to be “considered

29 McDermott 1998, 37. McDermott has not posed the exact questions as I have, he has only provided with guidelines in order for me to construct these two questions.
On McDermott’s suggestion to use other archival holdings, the author aims to return, where a discussion on holdings connected to the LAI has been found in disparate archives such as the National Archive in London/Kew (NA), and in Stockholm at Stockholm City Archive (SCA). Another archive (not visited yet) is the former East German Communist Party Archive in Berlin (SED). Nowadays it goes under the name Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), being a section of the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, Germany.

c. Three Categories – Categorisation of the Empirical Material

Before I go into detail on what types of documents that has been analysed and extracted from the Comintern archive it is relevant to present a concise framework on how the empirical material has been categorised so far. Categories that have assisted both in the methodological and analytical process have been divided in three groups:

- Political
- Organisation/Network
- Individual

Why have these three categories been chosen then? In the first stage it has assisted in sorting out the material, which in the second stage has produced a logical framework to be used in the analytical process. The main motive for these two stages was determined after reviewing the character of the sources in the Comintern archive, and the answer is to be found in how some of the documents in the files have been filed. Another motive was from the researcher’s point of view, that is, what kind of sources are we dealing with here, and do the documents embrace a specific character? So in co-operation with the two motives it was decided to categorise them in three different groups, and at the same time apply a high – middle – low perspective, thus creating a methodological model aiming to detect if any form of tension was present in the subject of interest. The model should be viewed upon as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational/Network</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 Davidson et al. 2003, 2.
32 In the next section shall a thorough explanation be given, using member of staff at RGASPI, Oleg Naumov’s view on the issue of filing.
Concisely, the empirical material from the Comintern consists of resolutions and drafts for
drafts for resolutions, protocols and minutes from meetings either in Moscow or in Berlin, reports on
either a monthly or quarterly basis sent mainly from the International Secretariat of LAI in
Berlin to Moscow, correspondence between individuals in Berlin and Moscow, unofficial
analysis’s on different sections of LAI and the International Secretariat, reports on certain
individuals sent to Moscow, letters of complaint, financial figures and budget propositions for
LAI, membership lists, list of participants at different conferences and congresses organised
by LAI, decisions taken by different institutional bodies at Comintern headquarters in
Moscow, organisational plans and propaganda directives sent either from Moscow or by Willi
Münzenberg in Berlin. The list can go on a bit further, but as one can see, some form of
categorisation had to be compiled.

Since the model above is partly assisting in the methodological part of the thesis, it is
also a theoretical framework that hopefully shall assist to draw conclusions on the topic.
Questions can be raised, for example; which component was of major dominance in the
organisational apparatus of LAI? Was it the individuals, or was it the political aspect that
dominated throughout the existence of the organization?

d. The Hierarchical Source Structure – Brief Presentation on the Nature of the
Comintern in Relation to the Sources in the Comintern Archive

The conclusion drawn, after examining and extracting sources from the Comintern archive in
Moscow, is that we are dealing with an organic archive. Thus, speaking in terms of that
everything is linked to each other somehow. Hypothetically speaking, if Comintern is to be
seen from an organisational perspective, it should be interpreted by using both horizontal and
vertical hierarchical frames. This hypothesis is strengthened with information given by Oleg
Naumov, member of staff at RGASPI. First, Naumov states that during the Communist era the
Comintern archive was obliged to fully meet the demands of the Central Committee of the
Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This largely could consist of preparing
inventories for transferring of original documents, or copies of originals, to other communist
parties’. Secondly, only a limited circle of historians were allowed to work with Comintern
sources, and they were never allowed to see the inventories of the archive, thus making it
possible to maintain the secrecy regarding the existence of certain archives, inventories and
sets of documents. Thirdly, some files were never bound (something deliberately done by the
archivist), making it possible to compile a “temporary” file for the researcher (this practice do
not fortunately exist these days), which made it possible to “design” a specific file responding to any request made by the researcher. Traces of this can still be seen on documents in the right-hand top of each document, indicating a number crossed-over and replaced with a new one.\footnote{Oleg Naumov, “The Present Condition of the Comintern Archives”, in Mikhail Narinsky & Jürgen Rojahn (eds.), Centre and Periphery – The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents, Amsterdam, 1996, 13-14.}

Naumov further added in 1996 that some fondy still not have been processed and declassified, for example, the files of the International Control Commission (fond 505, ICC), and complete personal files\footnote{The author has so far examined the personal files of Willi Münzenberg (495/205/7000), and Bohumir Smeral (495/272/3640).} were available only with permission from the closest relatives, certified by a notary public (a prerequisite that still exists at RGASPI). In his closing statement one can sense a feeling of somewhat desperation as Naumov enquires the research world to inform RGASPI on Comintern documents “kept in other archives” since the “restoration of the whole complex of the Comintern archives is our common task and will be good for all of us”.\footnote{Naumov 1996, 15-16.} Several of the problems outlined here have been corrected since 1996, but it is important to have this set of preconditions laid out before entering the archive, in order to construct a logical research process while working with the files I must argue. What do this “logical research process” consist of then, and is it methodologically viable to use?

LAI has a separate fond in the archives, entitled Antiimperialististitsheskaja liga in Russian, collection number 542, and consisting of 103 files, of which the author has examined a good two thirds of the whole content at this stage. The fact that LAI has a separate fond in the Comintern archive indicates that the organization in itself held a certain position within the Comintern apparatus. At first there was a slight hope that fond 542 would contain the “juicy information” needed in order to compile a coherent picture on the doings of the organization. Unfortunately, this hope blurred out as investigations dug deeper into the empirical structure of the archive. Leading to the conclusion that several other fondy had to be investigated (and in some cases still need to).

If we consider the vertical and horizontal hierarchical idea, we may start with putting LAI in the centre, and having in mind the geographical position (Berlin). Being almost on the same vertical level, slightly higher than LAI in a hierarchical position we place the ECCI in Moscow. Since the ECCI must be perceived as the official deciding body of the Comintern, material relating to the ECCI needs to be investigated. Fondy so far investigated, which has broadened the view on what went on especially in Moscow, while dealing exclusively with
LAI issues has been found in the files of the ECCI Presidium (495/2), the ECCI Political Secretariat (495/3), the ECCI Small Commission (495/6). In hierarchical terms ought the ECCI Presidium to be seen as being on the same level as the ECCI, but the Political Secretariat and the Small Commission are above and located on a higher horizontal level in the Comintern hierarchy in Moscow. Thus, documents found in these two fondy should be considered as particularly important since the Political Secretariat and the Small Commission held a stronger authoritative position above the ECCI, surrounded by secrecy and active on an unofficial basis. Belonging to these political and authoritative bodies are files of the Agitprop department of the ECCI (495/18).

Apart from these organisational bodies in the structure, but to be considered to be below the ECCI in the hierarchy, are fondy for Mezhdunarodnaia rabochiiia pomoshch/Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe (IAH, acronym: Meschrabpom, 538/2 and 538/3), Krasnyi internatsional professional’nykh soiuzov/Profintern (in English: Red Trade Union International, RILU, 534), Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi revoliutsioneram/MOPR (in English: International Red Aid, 539/2), Krestianskii Internatsional/Krestintern (in English: Peasants’ International, 535/1). In each of these fondy relevant material on LAI has been found, thus enabling a deeper understanding both in regards of LAI, but also on the organisational and hierarchical structure of the Comintern in general. I shall return to a slightly similar discussion in the section were the Western European Bureau (WEB), a Comintern relay station located in Berlin from 1928 to 1933, is presented.

Summarizing the total sum of files (delo) analysed so far in the Comintern archive, the author can conclude that 136 files has been investigated. Thus, part of the labyrinth has been mapped out, and unfamiliar “doors” to unknown “rooms” have been opened, thoroughly checked, facilitating a deeper knowledge on the network between LAI and Comintern headquarters in Moscow. But the legacy of the Comintern archives, taking Naumov’s thoughts into account once more, and how the filing system was operated during the Communist era, has left some blank spots on the chronology and theme of LAI. Sources needed to cover these blank spots have been found in Great Britain, thus, a larger context in the analytical process was developed.

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36 This fond has not been investigated, but ought to contain matters relating to LAI, since Münzenberg was the man in charge.
37 The archival work has been carried out in co-operation with the author’s supervisor, Professor Holger Weiss, colleague PhD Risto Marjomaa, and assisted by Tatjana Androsova.
e. The English Material – Filling in of the Blank Spots

One contributor in search of a larger context is material that has been extracted from the National Archive (NA) in Kew, Great Britain. Sources relating explicitly to both LAI, and individuals active in the LAI during its time of existence are filed in records that were a part of the British secret service. For example, the Home Office (HO) and Public Records Office (PRO), and the Colonial Office (CO) kept records on the activities of the LAI. The character of the specific documents on LAI is of an analytical character. More precisely, the British authorities and its secret service were concerned with what the LAI stood for, both in character since it was an international anti-imperialist organization, and equally, if it posed a potential threat for the nations possessing colonies. For example, as late as in August 1933, after German Communists either had escaped from Germany as a consequence of the Reichstag fire in Berlin on the 27th of February same year, or were put in prison. And LAI could be considered as a defunct organization at this stage, the British secret service still measured both the LAI and the individuals connected with the organization as dangerous since the International Secretariat of LAI was to be transferred to London in the fall of 1933. Instructions sent to Reginald Bridgeman, English Socialist and General Secretary of the British Section of the LAI, on the 15th of September from Moscow verifies the transference of the League and its International Secretariat to London. Although, the British secret service stated that:

Its presence in London could not fail not only to stimulate the workings of communist united front organisations such as the Workers International Relief, League against Imperialism and Seamen’s Minority Movement, but would also tend to the encouragement and improved organisation of the movement as a whole.

Other valuable material that has been found at NA is of a biographical nature. Material on different individuals such as thorough descriptions of Willi Münzenberg, Louis Gibarti.

38 RGASPI, 542/1/58/31-33, Confidential letter to Bridgeman from unknown author in Moscow [most probably the ECCI], 15/9-1933.
39 TNA/Kew PRO KV 2 1382, Note from Sir E.W.E. Holderness at the Home Office, 19/8-1933. The excerpted files from TNA/Kew have been done by Professor Holger Weiss.
40 Louis Gibarti was of one of the key persons in the setting up of LAI, and running it. No research has been done on the doings of Gibarti as a Comintern functionary and agent. Some have put him in the category of belonging to the “Magyar Mafia“, a group of individuals with origins in Hungary and were active in Comintern. But each individual worked independently from each other, and in most cases, certainly never knew of each other’s activities. See also Thomas Sakmyster, “A Hungarian in the Comintern: Jozsef Pogány/John Pepper”, in Agents of the Revolution, Kevin Morgan et al. (eds.), Bern, 2005, 58. For Gibarti especially, see the rather “sensationalist” writings of Stephen Koch, Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals, London, 1995 for a brief introduction on Gibarti.
(Hungarian Communist, and Münzenberg’s left hand in several operations concerning front organizations), Otto Katz⁴¹ (Czechoslovakian communist and liaison man working for Münzenberg, active in IAH), and Max Goldfarb, also known as A. J. Bennett, also known as David Petrovsky (Goldfarb was in charge of LAI business in Moscow 1927-1928, and active as Comintern emissary to the Communist Party of Great Britain, C.P.G.B).⁴²

As one can imagine there are different ways of approaching the sources stored at NA. What angle is chosen then in order to make the empirical material valuable? As already mentioned, the sources stored in the Comintern archive do not on every account provide with an full version, and following McDermott’s line of reasoning in using different sets of archival material, the LAI may be put in a different perspective. Thus, the main goal in using the NA sources is to fill in the blank spots in the genealogy of the LAI. That is, to increase the knowledge on what went on as the LAI progressed over time. One example to illustrate this is that when the preparations for the First World Congress in support of the oppressed nationalities was taking shape in 1926, the proposal from the Secretariat of the League against Colonial Oppression (LACO; see section “Documents of a different Type – Two Examples of Source Criticism” for further presentation of this front organization) was that the congress should take place in November same year. It did not, and was postponed to January next year. Why has not the author used documents stored in the Comintern archive in the gathering of this fact? The main reason is that it has not been found in Moscow. The second reason is that the document is a letter sent from one of the secretaries of LACO, a letter which the British secret service intercepted and was able to extract information from.⁴³

The bottom line is, this whole archival process of searching and scanning after documents partly follows McDermott’s line of reasoning on how to come to grips with international communism, in this case represented by the LAI, but I would also like to add that it has to do with accumulating as many observations as possible in order to verify the processes that are connected to the life and decline of an organization such as the LAI. The discussion of observations is present in the next section, as a presentation of sources bearing the mark of official statements and publications, made public by the communists themselves.

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⁴² Davidson 2003, p.xli. Davidson has, apart from the aliases mentioned above, been able to establish that Max Goldfarb used as many as seven aliases. For the situation of the CPGB, and how they coped with different emissaries that were sent from Moscow see Andrew Thorpe, “Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-43”, in The English Historical Review, ed. J. R. Maddicott, Vol. CXIII, No.452, June 1998, Oxford University Press, 637-662.
⁴³ TNA/Kew PRO CO 323 966 1, Intercepted letter by the British secret service, sent from the Provisional Committee of LACO in Berlin, composed by F. Danziger and L. Gibarti, 17/9-1926.

The intention is not to analyse the initial purpose on why the Comintern published several different publications in the form of journals and newspapers. That task can be handed over to media researchers. What is of primary interest once again is the number of observations one can find that either explicitly or implicitly have something in common with LAI. Sources that have been found in various official statements and publications shall therefore be treated and viewed upon as primary sources. To add the international empirical perspective and substantiate the value of the sources in the Comintern archive the communist press can be used both as a source of information, and to strengthen the “insight into the construction of communist lives”. The main motive is to see and analyse whether or not the participants expressed themselves in official print, and if, what was the message delivered, and finally, can the source be used in order to compare it with sources extracted from the Comintern archive and the NA in London. Thus, creating a tension between the version given in different publications, with the one depicting what “really” went on both in Berlin and Moscow.

The amassing and selective process in the gathering of official statements and publications has been carried out at Arbetarrörelsens arkiv & bibliotek (ARAB) in Stockholm, and at the Stockholm City Archive (SCA).

ARAB must be seen as one of the most well stored archives and libraries on topics such as the labour movement, socialist and social democratic ideology, syndicalism, and international and national (Swedish) communism to take a few examples and this on a European and international scale. A file directly related to LAI is also stored at SCA (Carl Lindhagens samling 820, volume 131: Ligue contre l’Imperialisme). Why? The reason is that the one time mayor of Stockholm, active humanist, and politician of an eclectic nature, Carl Lindhagen, had a brief flirtation with LAI during 1927-1929. Letters sent from Lindhagen to the International Secretariat of LAI in Berlin, found in Moscow, has revealed that he was


45 Witold S. Sworakowski published in 1965, being one of the first on this research field, an extensive book entitled The Communist International and its Front Organisations – a Research Guide and Checklist of Holdings In American and European Libraries (Stanford, 1965), in which Sworakowski states that the holdings at ARAB are immense and very useful for a scholar and researcher on the topics previously mentioned. The author must add that Sworakowski’s book still is quite useful. Others who have highlighted the holdings at ARAB are Weber & Herbst (Berlin, 2004).
interested in joining since LAI seemed to be carrying the same socio-political message which he also embraced, such as issues concerning pacifism and the liberation of the peoples in the Far East. Apart from Lindhagen’s contacts with LAI, he managed to collect different publications issued by the LAI Secretariat, covering a time span from 1928 to 1932. If we turn our attention to official statements and publications issued by LAI, we are mainly dealing with different types of newsletters. More specific, LAI issued a newsletter first under the title “Informations Bulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus” (1927-28), which in the later half of 1928 was changed into “Pressedienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus” (1928-30). In the beginning of 1931 the title of the newsletter was altered into “Informations- und Pressedienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus” (1931), and just one year after was the last version of the newsletter published, “Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus” (1932). Why all of these changes, and do the changes reflect any of the turbulence that went on within LAI? No, the answer is most probably not to be found in any internal circumstances of LAI. Two hypothetical explanations might be on the one hand the police surveillance in Berlin and on the other hand the confiscation of the newsletters as they were distributed abroad. For example, on the 21st of December the Berlin police raided the International Secretariat of the LAI, confiscating every document at the scene, arresting everyone present at the secretariat, and carefully interrogating every individual. This caused a sudden halt to the activities of the LAI for a brief moment, and made B [first given name unknown] Ferdy, Moscow’s contact man in Berlin regarding LAI, to act “phlegmatic” afterwards. One internal explanation may be that Comintern considered it to be of great importance to maintain a steady publication of various official statements and publications in order to maintain a steady flow of propaganda. The empirical material has shown that discussions and plans for publishing either journals or pamphlets were constantly present during the existence of LAI.

We must also briefly recall Willi Münzenberg’s interest in media as a great propaganda weapon. The author shall in the section, “Documents of a different Type…” give a concise presentation of Münzenberg’s pet organization Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH), but what is left out in that section is that Münzenberg also (amongst many other things) ran a publishing company called Neuer Deutscher Verlag in Berlin, a company that acted as a

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47 RGASPI, 542/1/56/2, Letter from Hans [Schulz] in Berlin to Chatto in Moscow, 21/1-1932. Ferdy had been the spokesman for the Turkish Communist Party at Comintern headquarters in the mid-1920s. Elected member of the ECCI at the Sixth International Comintern Congress 1928, disappeared in the ranks of the Comintern apparatus during the purging of the Comintern 1937-38 (Lazitch & Drachkovich, 1986, 113).

48 RGASPI, 542/1/39/26a, Letter from “York” in Berlin to unknown receiver in Moscow, 14/2-1930.
channel for journals such as *Der Rote Aufbau* (monthly journal of IAH) and *Arbeiter Illustrrierte Zeitung* (AIZ).\(^4^9\) I have come across issues of *Der Rote Aufbau*, covering the years 1929-1932, at ARAB. The journal AIZ has so far not been found, and is not stored at ARAB. In *Der Rote Aufbau* published individuals’ engaged in activities connected to the LAI several articles. For example, Indian nationalist, later communist, and one of the secretaries of LAI Virendranath Chattophadyaya, Czechoslovakian communist Bohumir Smeral, English communists such as Robin Page Arnot and Clemens Dutt, and Münzenberg himself. Another journal worth including is the *Labour Monthly*, published in London, Great Britain and with Rajani Palme Dutt\(^5^0\) (Clemens Dutt brother) acting as chief editor. This journal has also been found at ARAB. *The Labour Monthly* had just as the *Der Rote Aufbau* the trademark of an international journal, where articles and comments on the “progression” of the international communist movement were expressed. The final example on official publications that are going to be used is the main organ for the Comintern, the newspaper *International Press Correspondence* (acronym: Inprecorr). A newspaper that has been used by several scholars on the topic, and in several cases as primary source, for example in the in-depth analysis on the Comintern by Edward Hallet Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern 1930-1935* (London, 1982). The only troubling aspect concerning access to Inprecorr, and scope stored at ARAB, is that only issues covering the year 1926 has been gathered. Thus, a year before the LAI was founded, which makes it hard (so far) to check what was written in Inprecorr on this specific event, or for that matter, if anything was written at all. Nonetheless, the information that has been extracted from the 1926 issue has provided with good contextual information regarding the re-organizational process of the Comintern in 1926, the degree of importance Comintern headquarters in Moscow and the ECCI paid to the united front\(^5^1\) and the front organizations, and other organisational and political perspectives vital for the thesis.

\(^{4^9}\) I do not intend in this paper to go into detail regarding Münzenberg’s propaganda techniques, but that issue shall of course be dealt with in the thesis. A rather mediocre analysis on Münzenberg, IAH, and the construction of his communist propaganda machine/empire has been conducted by Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: a political biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s secret propaganda tsar in the West*, New Haven, 2003. McMeekin has not seemed to break out of the totalitarian paradigm in his analysis, and partly views Münzenberg’s operations as a total failure, partly McMeekin views Münzenberg as a potential and bloodthirsty dictator in Western Europe if such a situation would have arisen in Europe. The author pretty much considers McMeekin’s work as “non usable” in substantiating own views and research results. A view pretty much shared by Michael Scammel in “The Mystery of Willi Münzenberg”, article published in *New York Review of Books*, 3/11-2005, where Scammel harshly criticises McMeekin’s biography on Münzenberg.

\(^{5^0}\) For a well written biography on Rajani Palme Dutt see John Callaghan’s *Rajani Palme Dutt – A Study in British Stalinism*, London, 1993.

\(^{5^1}\) The era of the united front and policies connected to it has caused great discussions among scholars focused on the Comintern. Some argue that the era of the united front existed between 1924-28 (Kevin McDermott & Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern*, London, 1996, p.xxi), while others claim that the united front should be seen as one amongst several factors connected to the development of the Comintern during its existence from 1919 to it
The presentation of both the empirical sources collected in Moscow, London and Stockholm brings a closure to this empirical briefing. But how to deal with the sources, and can a single document reveal all that is need to be known in order to put the pieces together? The next part shall elaborate more on these questions, which often leads into different paths of the labyrinth.

The guidelines constructed are as follows; how to interpret the sources collected at the Comintern archive? And can some of them be used, and more important, can the information revealed in some of the documents be trusted? The next section shall analyse two examples of different problems in the process of interpreting the source material. In the end it all leads to search for a larger context.

III

Documents of a different Type – Two Examples of Source Criticism

Title of Document: Directives from the Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), 2/7-1926 [RGASPI, 542/1/3/15-17]

Before the context surrounding the document, “Directive from Secretariat…”, is presented one declaration has to be established by the author, namely, this document reveal the first evidence in the actual formation of a league against imperialism, aiming for international support of the oppressed peoples in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

On the 10th of February 1926 the League against Colonial Oppression (LACO) was formed in Berlin. The original intention with the LACO was to put a focus on the situation in the colonies, but now in the shape of a more organised body. Being dissolved 1943. Jürgen Rojahn (Centre and Periphery, Narinsky & Rojahn [eds.], Amsterdam, 1996, 40) claim that the period between 1924-1934 was one of Bolshevisation/Stalinization of the Comintern, a chronological framework viable to use, but still one must have in mind that newspapers such as the Inprecorr, for example in 1926, heavily promoted the idea of having a united front against a common enemy, for example against fascism, or anti-imperialism.

RGASPI, 542/1/4/2-4, Protocol for a meeting at the Berliner Rathauskeller, 10/2-1926.
Colonialism (1925). All of these committees and fronts, including the LACO, merged with the LAI in 1927, but that is not the question at stake here.

The initiator of the LACO was the IAH and its general secretary Willi Münzenberg. IAH was an organization that came into existence on the 12th of August 1921 after a discussion Lenin had with Münzenberg in Moscow. The initial purpose of IAH was to secure international financial and material support for the hunger stricken peoples in Soviet Russia, an effect caused by the civil war between the Red (Bolshevik) and White (Menshevik and allied forces) 1918-1920. More exact, the era of war communism in Soviet Russia.

IAH was later on developed into an “umbrella” organization, with interest in disparate areas such as famine relief (the original intention), strike support (financial), proletarian movie production (propaganda, issued under the label Meschrabpom-Film), international support against the war threat against the Soviet Union, the development of children’s home in different countries (for example the Soviet Union, Germany, and USA) to mention a few examples. The major reason for the IAH to turn into an umbrella organization was that its original intention, famine relief to Soviet Russia, no longer after 1923 was needed after the effects of the New Economic Policy (NEP) started to leave a mark in the Soviet society.

Thus, famine had decreased but the effects of international famine support operations that IAH had got underway showed that support amongst people outside of the borders of Soviet Russia, supporting the communists had increased. Münzenberg further accentuated the enrolment of supporters and its tactics in 1924 as he purportedly claimed that “we [the communists] must penetrate every conceivable milieu, get hold of artists and professors, make

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53 Material on the Anti-Fascist League has been found in the Comintern archive (RGASPI, 542/1/1). Correspondence between Münzenberg and Swedish socialist, and communist during the first half of the 1920s, Zeth Höglund stored at ARAB in Stockholm reveal that plans for a big campaign in the form of an Anti-Fascist League was about to happen in 1923. For the Hands Off China campaign see Willi Münzenberg, Fünf Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, Berlin, 1926. Sources on the League against Colonialism has not been found, only secondary descriptions mentions the existence of such a constellation (Babelle Gross, Willi Münzenberg, Stuttgart, 1967, 197 & Nirode K. Barooah, Chatto – The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe, Oxford, 2004, 247). These committees and fronts have also been discussed by the author in CoWoPa 5, Fredrik Petersson, “Varför en liga mot imperialism? Grundadet av League against Imperialism 1927”, Åbo Academy, 2005. Internet source: http://www.abo.fi/fak/hf/hist/komintern_workingpapers/cowopa5petersson.pdf.


56 Willi Münzenberg, Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, 1921-1931, Berlin, 1931, 522. On this page IAH is illustrated as an umbrella organization, were different areas of interest are revealed. The word Meschrabpom is Russian. On contemporary description of Meschrabpom-Film, see article by Francesco Misiano (IAH functionary and active in Moscow) in Der Rote Aufbau, II. Jahrgang, 1929, 44-48.

57 See Pipes (1997) on the effects of NEP.
use of theatres and cinemas, and spread abroad the doctrine that Russia is prepared to sacrifice everything to keep the world at peace.\textsuperscript{58} This line of reasoning clearly bore the characteristics that were propagated from the ECCI in May 1926 in Moscow when urging the need “to use everyone and everything” concerning the task of organising and extending mass influence of the Communist parties outside of their own circle.\textsuperscript{59} To further enlarge the contextual frame relating to the colonial and anti-imperialist issue, and here speaking from Moscow and Comintern’s point of view in 1926, it was made public that “various forms of mass organisations must be applied for special purposes”, where the sympathisers ought to be organised to an great extent as possible. The tool to use for this, according to the ECCI, was Münzenberg’s IAH.\textsuperscript{60} Thus, using the umbrella organization, or as the previously used metaphor, the “iceberg”.

After this contextual excursion it is time to turn our attention to the document sent from the Secretariat of the ECCI to Münzenberg, were the directives from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of July 1926 are given and to pose the three folded question; what does the document reveal, can it be used, and finally, can it be trusted? First, it reveals administrative and organisational directives, groups of sympathisers that are preferable to approach, and the general outline for how to keep the communist influence within the organization intact and of a dominant character. Secondly, the empirical validity must be considered high (if such a scale can be adopted), since the document provides with a date (2/7-1926) and is authorised (not by hand though) by the ECCI Secretariat. The document also informs that the Commission to guide the work of the coming Colonial Congress had received Münzenberg’s report, dated 24/6. I shall not dwell on specific details in the directives, but what is of major importance is the fact that a certain commission was at work in Moscow, preparing the organisational plans and directives for a future congress. This is of course of qualitative value, since it add to the interpretative process, but gives a hint to the empirical labyrinth which the Comintern archive in some cases represent. A concise conclusion one can draw from the July Directives is that the Commission reported on their work first to the ECCI and its Secretariat, which then analysed and discussed the work of the Commission. The second stage of the information delivery process was that the ECCI Secretariat then passed on the information to Münzenberg, now labelled as

\textsuperscript{58} Quote by Münzenberg is taken from “confidential Comintern documents first published in 1924 in German by the German Trade Union Federation (ADGB), under the title “The Third Column of Communist Policy – IAH (International Workers’ Aid)”. Quoted in English in Labour Magazine (December 1924). The quote is also used in Richard Shultz & Roy Godson, Dezinformatsia – Active Measures in Soviet Strategy, Washington, 1984, 112.

\textsuperscript{59} Inprecorr, “Immediate Problems of the International Communist Movement”, Vol. 6, No. 40, 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1926, pp.613-624. The quote appears on page 623, and was originally expressed by Lenin on issues concerning methods and forms of organising and extending mass influence.

\textsuperscript{60} Inprecorr 1926, 623 (for full reference, see previous footnote).
“Directives”. This puzzle of validating the existence of such a “Commission” at work in Moscow is strengthened since a commission; appropriately branded as the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” a year later, on the 15th of June 1927, sent decisions on other matters to the LAI Secretariat in Berlin. This specific document has not been filed in the particular fond of the League against Imperialism (fond 542); instead, the document was found in the files of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI (495/3/18). Adding here to the previous hierarchical discussion regarding the source structure, the dimension of the empirical quest is strengthened, namely, the organisational division of different institutions/bodies of the Comintern apparat. More distinctively, the ECCI was the most official authoritative organ of the Comintern, and simultaneously the ECCI co-operated with different institutions working either under, besides or above the ECCI in the organisational structure. Considering the cases of the Commission directing the Colonial Congress, and the Anti-Imperialist Commission, it can be argued that issues of political matter were solemnly dealt with at the Political Secretariat, and later delivered to the ECCI in order for the directives/decisions to be authorised, and in a second stage to be passed on either to the national sections [the Communist Parties] of the Comintern, or as in this case, Willi Münzenberg and the LAI.61

The next document offers a more difficult task as its challenges the historian on a number of criteria in the pursuit of authenticity, namely, that of provenance, time and place, and anonymity.

The Outline of the Western European Bureau (WEB) and the Purpose of Erecting One, February 1928 [RGASPI, 499/1/33/132]

A central actor in the thesis is the WEB, an essential part in the organism which the Comintern and LAI gradually and increasingly shall come to represent in the network tensions between the authorities in Moscow, and the active individuals in Berlin. Lazitch and Drachkovitch claimed in 1986 that the WEB can be perceived as a “transmitter” of Comintern directives.62 The author would like to take this claim a bit further, and interpret the WEB as a two-folded instrument which the ECCI in Moscow pursued its operations with. First, it was a

61 For a discussion on the organisational structure and administrative activities of the Comintern see Inessa Iazhborovskaia, “The Logic of the Development of the Organisational Structure and Mechanisms of Administration in the Comintern”, in Centre and Periphery, Narinsky & Rojahn (eds.), Amsterdam, 1996, pp.57-65. The author aims to return to the organisational aspect of the Comintern further ahead in the text.

relay station much in the same sense as Lazitch and Drachkovitch holds it as a “transmitter”. Secondly, it went beyond the role of a relay station, progressing from an active monitor into the workings of national communist parties and various front organizations in Western Europe, to acting as an aggressive control instrument of the ECCI, giving reprimands for inappropriate conduct if such behaviour was committed according to the WEB and the ECCI. One example of this is when the editors of Welt am Abend (German communist newspaper published in Berlin, run by Willi Münzenberg) wrongly translated the headline for an article originally published in the Soviet paper Izvestija, composed by Russian author Maxim Gorki. This minor event caused the WEB to seriously warn Münzenberg in which it was pointed out that Münzenberg had to follow the “correct line”, and such a minor mistake as the one committed by the editors of the Welt am Abend could have serious implications in the long run on both Münzenberg and the general political work according to the WEB.63 This, as analysis of the archival collection of WEB in Moscow has proved, was not an isolated event in the relation between Münzenberg and WEB.

What was the WEB then, what did the WEB represent, who were active in it, and what role did the WEB have for the LAI? These questions and other reflections act as guidelines as the document where the outline for erecting a WEB is analysed and put into its proper context.

The WEB was established on direct orders from the ECCI as a consequence of the discussions at the Ninth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI, a session taking place from the 9th to 25th of February 1928 in Moscow. The main purpose was to “establish closer contact between the ECCI and the West European sections of the Comintern” according to the short resolution on the establishment of WEB.64 This relay station was to be put in Berlin as its main operating centre. I shall return to this later on in this section when a more in-depth discussion of the document where the directives are presented. But was the idea of having a WEB a new idea in 1928? No, the organisational and administrative idea for using an operational tool on the field such as the WEB in Western Europe was created already in 1919. Thus, nine years

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63 RGASPI, 499/1/17/249-249a, Letter from WEB to Willi Münzenberg, 28/11-1930. The title that caused controversy in the eyes of the WEB read at first “Die Avantgarde der Arbeiter und Bauern, organisiert durch die Lehre von Marx und Engels...”, the original title according to WEB, and which should have been used in the Welt am Abend issue was “Marx und Lenin”. Fond 499 is where files and documents relating to WEB are stored in the Comintern archive.
64 Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents, Volume 2, 1923-1928, Oxford, 1960, 424. This fact corroborates with the archival evidence that Grant Adibekov and Eleonora Shakhnazarova lays forward in the article “Reconstructions of the Comintern Organisational Structure” (Centre and Periphery, Amsterdam, 1996) concerning the establishment of WEB. Adibekov and Shakhnazarova refer to RGASPI, 495/26/9/1, 18-19 for the decision taken by the Ninth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI.
before the decision to establish it once again. What had happened during the period 1919-1928 then? In short, and by using conclusions drawn by Russian historian and pioneer researcher in the labyrinths of the Comintern after the opening of the Comintern archive in 1991, Alexander Watlin provides with an interpretation on the origins of having a relay station put in the Western hemisphere of Europe.

Six months after the Comintern was founded in 1919, the ECCI in Moscow decided on the 8th of September to set up a conspiratorial branch in Berlin. The main reason was to prepare for the coming revolution, on the one hand in Berlin, and on the other in the rest of Western Europe. The branch was established under the name of the *Western European Secretariat* (WES). Note that WES is not to be confused with the WEB, and of equal importance, WES was disbanded in 1925 due to several reasons. One major reason was of financial character. The money poured into the WES could either be seen as a constant bleeding haemorrhage, or simply, a black hole since no one seemed to know in the end where the money ended up. For example, in 1921 brought the man in charge of WES in Berlin, “Comrade Thomas” (an alias, “Comrade Thomas” real name was Jakob Reich, born in Lemberg 1886), with him 25 Million German Marks alone from Moscow. Another 70 Million was added to this moneybag later that year, and according to Watlin, the WES alone received in 1921 around 122 Million Marks from Moscow. Compared with the contemporary situation in Soviet Russia at this time, where hunger and famine was roaming the country, this whole operation may these days be perceived as quite dubious. The main reason for infusing such huge amounts of money into the WES was to financially prepare and support for the coming revolution in Germany.  

As Watlin points out in his essay, this rush of money could not in the end be accounted for and was considered as “lost millions” by the Bolsheviks in Moscow. The man in charge, Thomas, gradually lost his position, and after different serious political incidents, in which the failed revolution attempt in Germany 1923 (the German October) can be considered as one of the gravest, Thomas found himself in a disfavoured position and was thus purged from the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) after a decision taken by the International Control Commission (ICC) of the Comintern in Moscow on the 12th of May 1925.  

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66 Watlin 1993, 36. On the life and fate of “Comrade Thomas” see Watlin. Jane Degras also mention “Thomas”, but she was not able to deduce that it was an alias since she could not use archival material in her narrative and documentary presentation of the Comintern (The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents Volume I, 1919-1922, Oxford, 1956, 7).
The author shall not dwell in great detail on what happened with WES, but, concisely speaking; it withered away in 1925 due to reasons mentioned above. Other reasons outside of the scope of WES were that the Comintern was after 1925 entering a phase of re-organisation.

Even though Thomas was the leader of WES, he was not all by himself. Other members from the beginning were German communists such as Willi Münzenberg, Paul Levi, August Thalheimer, Hermann Remmelle, and author Eduard Fuchs who held the role as cashier. Apart from the German segment, secret emissaries of the Comintern were also provisional members. 67 Why are these individuals mentioned in this context? The answer is that since WES represented a highly conspiratorial body, separated from other bodies in the Comintern network, members had to make their presence equally secret. Something the next version of the WES, the WEB, would follow very strict. Two distinctive components the WEB would apply in its work was first, the use of alias. Secondly, firm discipline, speaking both in decision-making processes and in executing the orders given by the WEB to sections in Europe.

We are now entering into the conundrum which the author faces concerning the specific document at stake here, and ever present during this section, namely, how to use a document if it lacks in a number of criteria that are connected to the basic traits of source criticism. Precisely speaking, the author found in one of the *fondy* for the WEB, being the last document in one certain file (RGASPI, 499/1/33/132), a blueprint on the outline for erecting the WEB. The document reveals “confidential” instructions from the ECCI to someone or something (an institution/body within the Comintern apparatus for example) that: “A West European Bureau and three members of the Presidium or the Political Secretariat with a seating in [no place given] to be created”. The first problem is that there is no receiver addressed on the document, which poses the question; who was the instructions intended for? This cannot be verified, only one part of the chain can be identified, namely that of the transmitter, which were the ECCI in Moscow. The second problem that has to be dealt with is when the document was produced since no date can be traced on the document. By examining surrounding events, for example the decision taken by the Ninth Enlarged Plenum in February 1928 to establish a WEB in Berlin one can deduce that the instructions has to be intertwined with this moment in time. But again, no certain date can be proved. Thirdly, the document was found in the Comintern archive, and filed in the collection were documents connected to the WEB are stored, and considering the time aspect, there are only documents covering the

period 1928-1933 in this collection. The WES does not have a separate fond such as the WEB in the archive. Lastly, and most important, is the document authentic? It is not authentic in the sense that it is only a copy, not an original. It must be considered authentic as it reveals information that seems unlikely to be considered as false. For example, the ECCI instructs “someone/something” that WEB in the:

Purpose of maximum facilitation for leading directives regarding the work of the communist brother parties … WEB [has] the right to … [a.] In cases of urgent importance on all questions to make decisions to later be acknowledged by the ECCI. [b.] To give written directives in the name of the Bureau. … [d.] Members of Central Parties to report to the WEB. [e.] To visit communist parties in their countries. … [i.] Through the communist fraction observe the progress of international non-party organizations [for example LAI, author’s own remark] … and to lead. …

The document further reveal that any Comintern emissary, sent from Moscow to any part of Western Europe must stop by WEB headquarters in Berlin and submit a report on their way to the final destination. The same procedure went as the emissary was heading back to Moscow. Finally, WEB were authorised by the ECCI to inform on decisions taken at Comintern headquarters in Moscow, to instruct on a regular basis sections of the Comintern in any West European countries, and give directives in person on place, thus, by sending a representative from the WEB to deliver face to face instructions. After examining documents that are both stored in fond 499, and other fondys were documents directly related to WEB has been found, the conclusion drawn is that the directives are of a valid nature since several other documents verify how the directives were applied on how the WEB functioned and operated in the Western hemisphere of Europe.

But the question is how to use this specific document in the thesis since it is hampered by its lack of source credibility? The author has acknowledged that there are a couple of serious problems in using the directives since it demands a great deal of explanation in order to make the document valid (which of course should not be perceived as negative). Or can it be used in a contextual sense, thus, used in order to clarify the picture of the WEB and its operational purpose in Western Europe in a general manner, and how it was related to the LAI, or more precisely, how LAI came to be entangled by the WEB.

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68 RGASPI, 499/1/33/132, Confidential document on the purpose of erecting a WEB, instructions from the ECCI, no date.
Before connecting the two links, the WEB with the LAI, it is in order to briefly return to the discussion concerning the use of aliases.69 I shall not here present a general picture on what role the use of alias had for Comintern functionaries and emissaries, instead, how high was the frequency in the use of alias for functionaries active in the WEB? The answer is that directives or letters sent from WEB only bear the signature of an alias, never with the real name. Alias that were frequently (that the author has come across so far) used was “Helmut”, “Neptun”, “Alarich”, and “Magnus”. How to come to terms with the individuals hiding behind these aliases? One helpful path in deciphering and connecting the alias with an actual identity has been to conduct a thorough scanning of previous research. What has been concluded by authors such as Lazitch and Drachkovitch in deciphering the real identity behind aliases is that, for example, amongst the individuals active in the WEB was the famous Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov and leader of the Comintern in its last period 1935-1943. Other who has mentioned Dimitrov in this context is historian Ivo Banac who have translated and published Dimitrov’s secret diary, a diary covering the years 1933-1949. Banac writes that the ECCI sent Dimitrov to Germany sometime in 1928 or 1929, where he acted as the political secretary of the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF). In April 1929 assumed Dimitrov the leading position of the WEB, using the alias “Helmut”.70 The linking together of Helmut’s secret character to Dimitrov’s official stature as being recognised by its contemporaries as a well known Bolshevik has ascertained a positive academic output for the general content of the thesis. In short, documents where “Helmut” has put his signature most often either bear an authoritative character, for example directives to different European sections, or the drawing up of future plans. One example of this is when “Helmut” sketched the “Arbeitplan” for the coming period of the WEB on the 2nd of January 1931, where he stated that the work to further the influence on sections in Europe to promote the idea that imperialist nations were planning a military campaign against the Soviet Union had to increase, and the work to “Bolshevise” different national communist parties had to continue.71

70 Ivo Banac (ed.), The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933-1949, Yale University Press, 2003, p.xxv. Other verified members of the WEB, either revealed in Banac or in the documents are: Vasil Tanev, Blagoi Popov [Banac], Fritz Heckert (as representative for the KPD), Gustav (identity unknown) [RGASPI, 499/1/34/5-6, Confidential plans and directives of the WEB, 2/1-1931, author “Helmut” [G. Dimitrov].
Now we finally turn our attention on the link between the WEB and LAI. Why is it considered to be of major importance to pay such a great deal of attention to the WEB in the network between LAI and Comintern headquarters in Moscow? Much of it has already been introduced and discussed, but the major motive is that LAI was not from the beginning, after the WEB was installed in Berlin in 1928, forced to report on a regular basis on its activities. Instead, it seems that there had to be a drastic turn of events in order for the WEB to gain mandate to assume a degree of control of the LAI. After LAI’s Second World Congress in Frankfurt am Main, held from the 20th to the 31st of July 1929, LAI was turning into very unstable organisation with a shattered structure due to the harsh atmosphere that was developed during the congress between participants, which mainly consisted of conflicts between communists and other groups (socialists, pacifists, Labourites, intellectuals for example) that attended the Congress. Comintern headquarters in Moscow took notice of the apparent failure of the Congress, and it was put on the shoulders of the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern in Moscow to compose a confidential “Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the League against Imperialism and its Direct Immediate Tasks”. The draft resolution was put forward and passed on the 27th of August 1929. Apart from every conclusion drawn by the Eastern Secretariat, it is in the last article where the definite link between the WEB and the LAI was constructed, a link that would cause a lot of organisational hitches for the individuals’ active in the LAI in the near future. It reads as follows:

In order to guarantee the fulfilment of the abovementioned tasks, it is essential to organise systematic continuous leadership on the part of the WEB in regard to the work of the League [author’s own remark]. The apparatus of the League must be re-organised…

This is why the link between the LAI and the WEB is of vital importance for the thesis. It proves that the control from Moscow gradually increased over a period of time, and that it did not appear over night as a sudden sensation for the individuals involved. It also puts the analysis on a different level, thus it provides with a glimpse on how the screws were being tighter and tighter pulled on the individuals active in a front organization such as the LAI. The independence they may have experienced before withered slowly away after the WEB entered the arena.

What are the future prospects in order to deepen the understanding of the WEB from an organisational and network perspective? Files stored in SAPMO, Bundesarchiv in

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Germany, and especially some personal files, have revealed that information on WEB is available. What I am referring to here is recollections from individuals that were active in Berlin at the actual time, and also active in operations that were directly intertwined with the WEB, Münzenberg’s different fronts and propaganda schemes. One individual of primary interest is German communist Richard Gyptner (3/4-1901-2/12-1972), and at SAPMO a personal file on him is to be found. From SAPMO’s catalogue it appears that WEB and the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov are mentioned. Further, Gyptner’s file is supposed to contain a personal account on what kind of instrumental function the WEB had for the Comintern. Since there is a general lack of analyses done by previous researchers on the topic, this is of major importance as it will affect the final outcome of the thesis. I have mentioned Watlin as one of the few examples, but he has only focused on the “first” version of the WEB and its function in the Western hemisphere in Europe, and with the economic aspect as its focal point. Others such as Banac briefly mention the WEB, basing it on biased sources (which so far can not be totally disregarded at this stage). The same goes for the recently published book, *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships – Stalin and the Eastern Bloc* (New York, 2004), by Balázs Apor, Jan C. Behrends, Polly Jones, and E. A. Rees (eds.) in which a chapter is devoted to Dimitrov as leader of both the Comintern (1935-1943) and the Bulgarian Communist Party after World War II (1945-1949).

Further discussions on the WEB shall at present moment (and in this paper) be put aside. As stated above, research at the SAPMO shall hopefully shed further light on the puzzle. But it goes not without saying that the WEB was an integral part of the organisational structure, a decisive factor that came to affect both the character of the network and individuals active in the network after 1929 and up until February 1933.

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73 SAPMO, Richard Gyptner, Bestellsignatur: SgY 30/0331. Internet resource: [http://www.bundesarchiv.de/FindbuchServer/web/xml/sgy30/druckansicht.htm](http://www.bundesarchiv.de/FindbuchServer/web/xml/sgy30/druckansicht.htm). A trip to the SAPMO archive in Berlin is planned for in the summer of 2006. A concise biography on Gyptner in Weber & Herbst (Berlin, 2004, 277-278) disclose that Gyptner held the position as Secretary at WEB from the fall of 1928 to February 1933.
Organization, Network, and the Individual – A Discussion on Theoretical Frames & Methodological Tools

…the fact that an organization is also an organism, with a life of its own, and a tendency to growth and decay … But this analogy, like others, must not be pressed too far; it may serve to suggest and to illuminate, but not to demonstrate.

Bertrand Russell, 1938

How to approach the subject then taking philosopher Bertrand Russell’s view in consideration? Should LAI instead be perceived as a static organization, guided by limitations formulated in Moscow at Comintern headquarters, and especially during discussions in the ECCI, the Political Secretariat, the Small Commission, or the Eastern Secretariat? If so, the risk is of creating a descriptive analysis, depicting a rather limited and lifeless organizational form, which exploited an anti-imperialist agenda that claimed to be in defence of the colonial peoples. A different interpretative approach would be to analyse the behavioural patterns of LAI during its existence. Further, too distinguish LAI’s interaction with others in the pursuit of its goals. The interactive process must therefore be represented in the contacts between Berlin and Moscow, but also of the contacts that were developed in Moscow and Berlin, where LAI was mentioned and debated upon. In this context it is in the later field also possible to distinguish how some individuals experienced their situation in the apparatus. Documents on such “experiences” have been extracted from the Comintern archive, and by adding an individual dimension one is given the opportunity to distinguish one or several faces behind the machine. Recent research has attempted to approach the Comintern in such a manner.

Extending the interpretative approach a bit further is also the search of causes and events, and their eventual effects on the LAI. The approach in the search of causes and events is based on the premise that it produced an affect that in turn set off unexpected results or new

74 Bertrand Russell, *Power: a new Social Analysis*, London (Sixth Impression), 1948, 162-163. Bertrand Russell must have had some practical experience with political organizations of all sorts, since he had been engaged in several committees and organizations that had been either run by communists, or had some form of links to communists. For example, Russell was engaged in the Anti-War Campaign 1932 [RGASPI, 495/100/875/38, Invitation letter to the World Anti-War Congress, 1932], and his position in the “world of bourgeois thought” [was] a peculiar one” according to an author by the name S. Mirsky in the English communist journal *Labour Monthly* (Volume 14, February 1932, Number 2, 113-119).


circumstances for the LAI. For example, the First Congress in Brussels 1927 was an event causing new circumstances and environments for the involved, since it also signalled the establishment of the League. Or the disastrous second congress in Frankfurt am Main in 1929, which resulted in a situation of increased control directed against the LAI, issued from Moscow. The life and decline of LAI was filled with causes and events that came to determine the surrounding circumstances on the organization itself, but also on the development on certain events connected to the League. This approach is primarily focused on distinguishing casual explanations, thus, to “describe a causal process or sequence of events by which a certain effect came about, each event affecting the probability of the outcome”.77

The Place of the Individual in Comintern Historiography:

During the Soviet era the Comintern was portrayed as “the most depersonalized phenomenon of our era, or perhaps any era, for the humans of flesh and blood who created and steered it have largely been relegated to the status of a band of Orwellian ´unpersons´.” Lazitch and Drachkovitch were able to identify 753 individuals that had been active in the Comintern.78 Research after 1991 has added to this figure of personnel employed and engaged in Comintern activities. Historian Peter Huber has specialised in research on Comintern bodies such as the Cadre Department, different secretariats within the Comintern (for example Georgi Dimitrov and Dmitri Manuilsky’s), and the OMS. The OMS body should be perceived as the most secret instrument of the Comintern. In short, the OMS stands for Department of International Liaison (in Russian: Otdel mezhdunarodnoi sviazi), and OMS agents were responsible for maintaining confidential contacts with the foreign sections, to supply political directives, financial aid, and other forms of assistance. The OMS has almost become a myth in Comintern historiography, the main reason being that no direct files or documents in the Comintern archive can be directly linked with the OMS. Records of OMS activities have been hidden, or blended into other activities pursued by the Comintern. One viable suggestion is that the activities of WEB were a part of the OMS apparat I must argue. A suggestion previous research not has touched upon at all.

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78 Lazitch & Drachkovitch 1986, xi.
Turning our attention on the individual spectra and on the research done by Huber, one stumble across a complex set of networks and individuals engaged in different lines of communication, in which Huber states that “the apparatus, workplace for several hundred communists, mostly of foreign extraction”, we find that the Comintern apparatus can not be perceived as a “depersonalized phenomena”. Huber’s research focuses though, in time, on the era of Stalinist repression of the Comintern apparatus (1936-1938), and left much of the previous period unanswered regarding the structure of the central apparatus of the Comintern.80

The major point for accentuating the role of individuals active in the Comintern is to try to understand how these individuals adapted themselves in relation to the structure of the Comintern apparatus. Thus, how did individuals’ active in the International Secretariat of the LAI in Berlin react to the directives that were transmitted from Moscow? Or was there no reaction? Can a shift in the reactions be distinguished over time? These questions are of great importance in the analytical process I must argue. Further, the questions aim to connect the individual dimension with the organizational/network perspective, as it shall show that tensions between these two parts sometime would develop into a state of conflict. The network between Comintern headquarters in Moscow and the LAI secretariat in Berlin was filled with conflicting needs and desires among the participants on both an organisational and individual level. In Philip Selznick’s study of Bolshevik strategy and tactics (Berkley, 1960), he put a stress on the need to make a distinction between externally and inherent tensions in an organization. Externally tensions are evident when an organization “faces a harsh environment, leading to inner stress and adaptive change of both the organization and its environment”. Inherent tensions are instead “generated by the very act of delegation, which creates new centres of interest and power … an indispensable phase of organizational experience”. Selznick concludes with that an analyst of organizations not necessarily is interested in every form of disturbance, but the primary target must be those disturbances derived from the “nature of the system itself”.81 What was the nature of the “system” of

81 Philip Selznick, The Organizational Weapon – A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics, (Second Edition) Berkeley, 1960, x-xi. Selznick’s study focuses on the “logic” of institutional analysis, and can be considered as one of the first studies on the Bolshevik system, using such a perspective. Among the first interpreters on the Comintern in the Western hemisphere, clearly inspired by the milieu brought on by the Cold War are the works by scholars such as Bernard S. Morris, “Communist International Front Organizations: Their Nature and
interest here then? A general conclusion is that the nature of the system underwent several changes from the beginning to the end. Changes that affected the participants in many ways, both in the political work and the administrative work with LAI, but also in their private life since the financial situation deteriorated over time, a boost in the workload on the members of staff at the secretariat in Berlin, and health problems increased as both the demands and control got bigger from Moscow. For example, in the first half of 1930, three individuals out of four active at LAI’s International Secretariat were strung out due to health problems.  

Even though Selznick held the academic position as sociologist, and where he claimed that sociological interpretation should be “viewed as the search for ‘models’ of ‘latent structures’”, the distinction between externally and inherent tensions are still viable to use as an interpretative tool. Relating to the subject of study a multitude of cases where externally and inherent tensions arouse can be found. For example, after the failure of the Second World Congress against Imperialism in Frankfurt am Main in 1929, the Small Commission of the ECCI appointed the well renowned Czechoslovakian communist and member of staff at the Organisational Bureau of the Comintern, Bohumir Smeral, as secretary at LAI’s International Secretariat in Berlin. The decision caused frustration and discontent among individuals at the International Secretariat in Berlin. Even though Virendranath Chattophadyaya, secretary at the secretariat, sent a letter of complaint, addressed to the Small Commission on the 14th of October, no one in Moscow paid any attention to his complaints against Smeral’s appointment. Smeral arrived in Berlin a month later. Another example was remarks against Münzenberg’s organisational capacity and of signs concerning “political deviation from the correct line” according to the Eastern Secretariat of the ECCI for example in April 1929. The list can be made longer concerning how Moscow frequently remarked specifically Münzenberg’s organisational and political work, a procedure that also increased over time, 


RGASPI, 542/1/39/85-87, Minute notes from a meeting with the Secretariat of the LAI in Berlin, 3/4-1930. See also Ben Fowkes, Communism in Germany Under the Weimar Republic, London, 1984, 177. Fowkes states that the immense burden of work put on the shoulders on the party workers forced the workers into a situation where they “burned themselves out very quickly”.

Selznick 1960, xi.

RGASPI, 542/1/30/104-106, Letter from V. Chattophadyaya to the Small Commission in Moscow, Berlin, 14/10-1929.

RGASPI, 542/1/39/5-11, Letter from Smeral in Berlin to unknown receiver in Moscow, 2/1-1930. This was Smeral’s first report on the current state of LAI back to Moscow.

RGASPI, 495/20/722/14-16, Protocol regarding the preparations for the Second World Congress, 17/4-1929.
but I chose to stop here. The aim with distinguishing externally and inherent tensions is again to strengthen the relationship between the individual dimension and organisational/network perspective.

**Understanding and Adapting the Organization/network Perspective:**

Speaking of how to interpret and adapt the organization/network let us first focus on a tentative definition of organization and its functions. First, an organization is not usually regarded as random and chaotic, on the contrary, it is perceived as organized. Secondly, an organization contains a system of rules and objectives, combined with an efficient administrative instrument that includes staff, and hierarchical structure. Thirdly, adding to an international perspective on the activities of an organization, that an international organization is a process, and thus mirrors aspects of a process of a given time.\(^{87}\) Applied on LAI, this would respond to the growing demand among individuals, originating from the colonies and residing in Western Europe during the 1920s, that had national independence as a glowing vision before their eyes for their home country.\(^{88}\) Further, organisational theorist Clive Archer has distinguished four different types of international organizations, namely; functional, instrumental, arena, and as an independent actor:

- *Functional* indicate the aims and activities and the response of the membership to their existence.
- The *instrumental* use aims to portray how an international organization is “being used by its members for particular ends”.
- *Arena* is where the organization acts as a forum which “action takes place … [where] organizations provide meeting places for members to come together to discuss, argue, co-operate or disagree”.
- The degree of independence an organization possesses also specifies its role as an actor. Archer concludes that there rarely exists an *independent* international organization that “can act on the world scene without being … affected by outside forces”.\(^{89}\)

These general definitions can of course be applied in the interpretation on the basic functions of the LAI, how the organization was used by its members, but most importantly, how the Comintern perceived and used LAI.

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\(^{89}\) Archer 1983, 128-141.
Taking it a bit further and putting the individual behaviour in front of the discussion concerning organizations, philosopher C. Behan McCullagh (London, 2004) claims that it is “difficult to assess the degree of pressure an organization places upon its members”, and organizations have a tendency to “constrain individual behaviour on the one hand, they facilitate it on the other”. In explaining changes within an organization historians’ tend to see where the changes originated from within the organization, that is, from above or from below. McCullagh argues that a historian explain changes from above by studying how these “rules were implemented, who came up with a plan for a change, who lobbied whom to support the proposal”. In analysing changes from below are “departures from regulations which become so regular as to constitute a new practice governing a section of the organization” studied. Can changes from below be traced regarding the LAI? My suggestion, and as the sources has implicitly shown, is that changes from above were more frequent than changes from below in the network. What we are searching for is a version of historiography that merges the story of a giant and entangled organization/network (LAI/Berlin – Comintern/Moscow – Anti-imperialism) with the “telling of little stories”. That is, stories which focus on the activities of individuals.

Is this possible? Yes, I must argue, but first one must detect some form of logic concerning the organisational structure and mechanisms of administration in the Comintern.

In the search of finding a logical pattern in the understanding of Comintern’s organisational structure and administration, historian Inessa Iazhborovskaia provided in 1996 with an interpretation, attempting to captivate the mechanisms at stake here. The term democratic centralism was at first the key concept in the organisational structure of the Comintern. Basically, this implied that the principles of Comintern were based on democracy in its relation with national parties and individuals, namely, all held equal position regardless origin, size of country, or number of Party members. And expressions of different views among participants were allowed during the first international Comintern congresses and sessions of the ECCI. Change would come, and already at the Third International Congress in 1921 a transformation on the principles of democratic centralism was evident. Instead, a system of relations following the principle of strengthened centralism and of strict hierarchy

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92 McCullagh 1998, 11. The theory of ”telling little stories” was formulated by Jean-Francois Lyotard, as Lyotard denunciated all use of grand theories in the explanation of historical change (1989). Historian Shelia Fitzpatrick is a good example on how to approach the writing of a story by using “little stories”. In her widely acclaimed book Everyday Stalinism – Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s, Oxford, 1999, Fitzpatrick explores the survival techniques of the Soviet citizen during the 1930s.
was beginning to appear within the Comintern. One effect of this was that many of the participants lost their right to vote. Another effect of these administrative mechanisms was aiming for a prevention of participants during congresses to express deviant views, or to disagree with decisions taken.\textsuperscript{93} Something that was hard to come to grips with among some of the individuals in Comintern, and for example, during the Sixth International Congress in 1928 an intense discussion on the colonial issue took place between two fractional groups.\textsuperscript{94}

The author does not intend to explain how the strengthened centralism increased over time, but it is of great importance to have this thematic thread in mind I must claim. And further, as Iazhborovskaia points out that:

> The entire formation and … development of the profile of the Comintern and the individual communist parties was to a considerable extent determined by the methods of its administration and the dynamic of its organisational structure, the place and role of cadres within it, but not so much by their activity and initiative, their political maturity and ability to analyse and generalise experience, as by their actual part in the working-out and implementation of the political line.\textsuperscript{95}

The basic idea was not to allow, from Moscow’s point of view, any free space for individuals within the organization. Instead, the main task for the individuals and parties/fronts was to strictly follow orders and implement the given directives from the organization in practice. Can certain features in this system of administration, by using some elements of Iazhborovskaia’s theory on organisation, be singled out as specific, and in the end be applied on the LAI?

1. First, the search of particular mechanisms that aimed for directing individuals’ into certain “channels” of activity, and are it possible to distinguish? The directives constructed by different commissions and the Political Secretariat, then transmitted from Moscow to the LAI secretariat in Berlin aimed to set off mechanisms such as reshaping the composition of the LAI secretariat, to re-evaluate the constitution of the current Executive Committee, to execute organisational and political directives from Moscow, arranging for certain individuals to be able to go on missions on different locations in the world, to organise propaganda campaigns, conferences and


\textsuperscript{94} Degras (Volume 2, Oxford, 1960), 453, 465. According to Degras indicated documents found in the Trotsky archives [stored at the Houghton Library at Harvard University, USA] that the thesis on the colonial question not had been formulated and put in print when the congress was about to begin.

\textsuperscript{95} Iazhborovskaia 1996, 59.
congresses, educating individual’s that were willing to participate in the LAI machinery in Berlin to mention a couple of examples.

2. To make a distinction if a “hierarchy of relations” between particular individuals and bodies in the organisational network existed. This includes to what degree a system of subordination and responsibility, alternate rights and duties, was constantly present. The hierarchical relation between different bodies in the Comintern has already been discussed, but if we focus on the individuals here, a hypothetical suggestion is that such a system existed in LAI. What is at stake here is what could be labelled as “hierarchical loyalty”. Loyalties in such a sense that the individuals, active in Berlin and at the LAI secretariat, held a loyal position toward the Comintern organisation, and in the long run, the message carried by Comintern. For example, individuals would on a frequent basis report on misdemeanours committed by others in the LAI network. One day after the first actual meeting of the LAI Executive Committee in Amsterdam (28-29/3-1927), secretary of the LAI Virendranath Chattophadyaya, sent a letter to Moscow in which he informed on views given by Dutch Socialist Edo Fimmen. Fimmen had according to Chattophadyaya stated that Münzenberg, being the main organiser of the League, in fact was no organiser. Instead, according to Fimmen, he just had a “nose for certain things”, further, the League secretariat should be located in Amsterdam and not in Berlin and run by Fimmen himself, and he did not care that the “Comintern had their eyes everywhere”. Another example is the critical report on the fragile state of the British Section of the League in 1928, composed by Comintern emissary Max Goldfarb, using the alias of A. J. Bennett. Both of these examples clearly show patterns of hierarchical loyalty to the Comintern organization as such, but not directed towards any specific individual. The hierarchical loyalty was on the contrary directed at what type of body within the structure loyalty was shown. For instance, directives from the Political Secretariat carried a lot more weight than decisions from the ECCI in the first period of LAI’s existence. That would change after the WEB was put in place in Berlin 1928.

3. By taking these two steps in the ladder into account, the existence of “contradictory and opposing tendencies” can more vividly be explored in the analysis. The main motive for detecting these tendencies is that by exposing them, an interpretation on

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96 Iazhborovskaia 1996, 57.
98 RGASPI, 495/100/545/2-7, Report on the chronological development of the British section of the LAI, A. J. Bennett, 20/4-1928.
what kind of character the tensions had in the network between the *axis* LAI/Berlin – Comintern/Moscow – Anti-imperialism is achievable. According to Iazhborovskaia underwent these “phenomena a very clear evolution in the Comintern”.

But still, the focus in the three step ladder proposed above is set on the Comintern organisational apparatus in Moscow. The question is, can it be viably used as an interpretative tool on the LAI in its relation with Moscow?

On the one hand interpretations such as Iazhborovskaia’s must be considered as valuable. The question is that Iazhborovskaia has focused on the *centre*, that is the Comintern apparatus in Moscow, paying very little attention on the national sections (foreign communist parties) and the front organizations (LAI for example), which here can be understood as the *periphery*. Hypothetically speaking, it can be suggested that in order to understand the organizational/network structure between the LAI secretariat in Berlin and Comintern headquarters, the outlook of the structure has to be reconstructed from the very beginning, thus suggesting a larger framework for the organizational/network in order to explain the patterns each section and front bore. In the end it all leads to the conclusion that all front organizations bore different characteristics in their line of communications with Comintern headquarters in Moscow. If so, one must treat the relationships between each network as unique, and therefore not draw generalising conclusions. For the benefit of the investigation, to apply Iazhborovskaia’s line of reasoning seems like a valid idea if one has in mind to add the search of uniqueness.

The intention is not to ridden, or burden for that matter, the thesis with an extensive theoretical machine. The idea is to show the wide field of interpretations, and the wide variety of angles to approach the subject of interest. By not allowing a singular theory to guide the final outcome, or to limit the scope of the thesis in both the analytical and interpretative process, theory is instead used as a “wall to bounce ideas on” so to speak. Further, by constructing questions that in some cases may be based on theoretical assumptions, the analysis is forced to look at the subject of interest from different angles. Not just by focusing on what went on in Berlin, who was active there, and whatever turmoil they may have experienced. Of equal importance is to interpret what went on in Moscow, and how the LAI was perceived in Moscow at Comintern headquarters and in its different bodies. The main weight is put on an interpretation of the empirical material, but some theoretical perspectives may provide with a set of “new eyes” in this analytical process.

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The Iceberg Uncovered and Examined – Concluding Remarks

There are equally chronological lines as there thematic threads involved in the process of interpreting LAI and its role and function as an organization promoting an anti-imperialist agenda, but also existing under the Comintern “umbrella”. There were contradictions in the formulated aims and interests from both Berlin and Moscow, a situation that over time became more suppressed and guided by the headquarters in Moscow.

The metaphor “iceberg” is a valid picture to use while coming to grips with the organization and its network I must argue. The administrative system and its inherent “logic” have proven to be more intricate than it started out from the beginning. As mentioned, for example the role of the WEB and its influence on the organisational work of the LAI, and the need of deciphering different alias. WEB, seen as an active actor, has to a large extent been neglected in previous research on international communism, but the claim has to be raised where it is argued that WEB did in fact played a decisive role in how national communist parties and front organizations reacted in being directed from Moscow. As I have tried to illustrate, discuss and debate on the functions of the WEB and its influence on LAI in this paper, that in giving a coherent interpretation on the LAI one also has to pay attention to a body such as the WEB, and it can not be left out in the final outcome of the thesis.

What I also have chosen to pay attention to is the organisational perspective. As acknowledged in the introductory section, that in order to interpret the Comintern/Soviet organisational paradigm it is essential to adapt such a dimension in the analytical process. The same goes for, and in fact even more important, individuals and their role in the network as it unveils an enlarged organisational dimension and thus contradicts the picture of the Comintern seen as an apparatus, consisting of an “unpersons” structure.

All of these components are parts of the iceberg, which the Comintern came to represent after its demise on the international political arena in 1943, but as Russian scholar Apollon Davidson has pointed out; many of the traditions (methods of propaganda and ideals) still resided in the international communist movement after 1943. The study of LAI belongs in this category. But it is also a part of Russian/Soviet historiography due to its ties to communism in general, and equally, LAI is a part of Inter-war history. Finally, LAI attempted to become an influential organization on an international scale, whether successful or not is

100 Davidson 2003, 2.
not of significance here, though; it had a short impact on the international political arena and a long lasting impact on individuals from the colonial part of the world.

In conclusion, when outlining the relationship between LAI and the Comintern one has to acknowledge the fact that we are talking about an organization within an organization. In the first stages of LAI’s existence on the international arena it worked as covert organization, where it origins were disguised, namely, the ties to the Comintern apparatus in Moscow were kept behind closed curtains. LAI was later on transformed into an overt propaganda tool, making the ties to Moscow more transparent and obvious for other actors to recognise. LAI never achieved an autonomous status within the ranks of the Comintern apparatus, but attempts to act independent in the organisational work were always present, as the empirical material has shown. To expose these attempts are of vital interest as it describes the ambitions of the individuals’ active in an organization within an organization.