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“We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers”.

Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism,
and the Comintern, 1925 – 1933

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TO EMMA, LINNÉA, AND WILHELM

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Commendatory Foreword

Robert JC Young

Silver Professor; Professor of English, Comparative Literature

While conducting research on the anti-colonial movements between the two world wars, I repeatedly encountered mentions in passing of the *League against Imperialism* (henceforth LAI) and the eminent activists from Willi Münzenberg to Jawaharlal Nehru to Albert Einstein who were involved in its organisation or the remarkable Congress against Imperialism that took place in Brussels in February, 1927. Substantive information about the LAI and associated organisations, however, was remarkably scarce. A whole chapter of radical history was effectively off the historical radar. While this was not altogether unusual with respect to the often shadowy and deliberately poorly documented organisations that straddled Europe and the colonial world in this period, the lacuna surrounding the LAI, the first international anti-colonial organisation, was perhaps the most serious gap for anyone carrying out research in this period. It was therefore with considerable interest and excitement that I first encountered the work of Fredrik Petersson and the discovery that he had been carrying out extensive research to fill this much-needed lacuna. His description of his archival sources in Moscow made clear the reasons why there had been such a scarcity of knowledge up to this point: it was only when the archives were fully opened after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 that the history of transnational revolutionary communist organisations in Europe in the twentieth century could be uncovered and recovered.

What is most remarkable about Petersson's research in fact is the amount of detail that he has been able to document and to reveal: where there had been scarcity there is now abundance. This book represents the product of a very substantial amount of original research which transforms our understanding of the history of the *League against Imperialism*. Until Petersson availed himself of the opportunities afforded by the opening of the Russian archives comparatively little was known about the LAI, its organisation, its relations with the Comintern, or the role of its principal players, particularly that of Willi Münzenberg. Petersson has transformed that situation, and tracked the complex history of the development of the LAI as a result of his extensive research in the archives of RGASPI (Moscow), SAPMO-BA ZPA (Berlin), IISG (Amsterdam), together with a number of other minor sources. What is most remarkable, however, is Petersson's ability to put together a historical narrative about a somewhat shadowy and secretive organisation from such a complex

range of sources concerned with activities which were deliberately designed to make their operation opaque to any outsider.

The book presents its material chronologically, beginning with the relations to the Comintern, and the evolution of a series of anti-colonial organisations, including the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* and *League against Colonial Oppression*, that eventually were transformed into the better known *League against Imperialism*. We are shown how a number of specific international movements, such as 'Hands Off China' and 'Against the Cruelties in Syria' campaigns of 1925, also provided the constituency from which the LAI was established. The narrative that is presented could be described as the progress upwards towards the Brussels Congress of February 1927 (Part I), the high point of the congress itself and the confusion of its aftermath (Part II), followed by the decline of the movement, encapsulated in its enforced relocation to Paris and London in 1933 (Part III). Petersson shows how the course of the LAI as an organisation was determined by a series of difficulties: the tense relations that often obtained between the Comintern and the LAI, the attempts towards control and autonomy among the parties involved, the changing situation in the Soviet Union particularly after Lenin's death in January 1924 and the rise of Stalin and the consequential changes in Comintern policy, and the rise of fascism in Germany which made it impossible for the LAI to continue in Berlin after 1933. The broad frame of this narrative is charted in extraordinary and fascinating detail, with the author managing to keep us in touch with the overall trajectory of the story whilst painstakingly picking out the often complex and convoluted relations between the main actors involved, ending in Münzenberg's own tragic and ignominious death in June 1940.

While the history of the anti-colonial movements has been told in terms of individual movements, and from a broader perspective in terms of the global resistance to imperialism that developed into the decolonization movements after the Second World War, this is the first time that we have been given a history of the operation of anti-colonial movements within Europe itself. In providing this, Petersson has provided a new way of understanding the history of colonialism and its opponents in the twentieth century.

New York University

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Wir sind keine Phantasten und utopischen Träumer, wir kennen sehr wohl die Grenzen unserer Kräfte und Leistungsmöglichkeiten.

The “First Congress against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression”, Willi Münzenberg, Brussels, 13/2-1927¹

This study began with an inquiry and has taken me around the world both literally and in the mind. On my first visit to the Comintern Archive (RGASPI) in Moscow 2004, formerly known as the Institute for Marxism-Leninism and the Central Party Archive during the Soviet Union, I found myself astonished by the impression of the house and some of its interiors. Under the stairs, leading to the first floor, I saw busts of prominent characters and theoreticians which symbolize the ideological construction of socialism and communism. However, the busts of Marx, Engels, and Lenin were not placed there for public display, but rather, they were hidden. A couple of years later during one of my frequent visits to the archive, they were covered by grey cloths, and in 2012, no longer there. The gradual disappearance of the busts in the archive also resembles one of the primary aims of this dissertation: the recovery, or to be more precise, the re-discovery and understanding of “lost” history.

Opportunities to present my research to scrutiny and for discussions have been invaluable for the development and intellectual refinement of ideas, structuring of the narrative, and to reach an understanding on the “visionaries and utopian dreamers”. I thank the organisers, panellists, and audiences of numerous forums: the research seminar at Åbo Akademi University; the Swedish Historical Association for organising “Historikerdagarna” at Uppsala University in 2005; the International History Department at Columbia University, New York, for putting together the “Solidarities Through History” conference in 2007; the Tvärminne doctoral seminars in 2005 and 2007; the members of the “InterSol” panel (Holger Weiss, Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Kasper Braskén, Gleb J. Albert, and Aldo Agosti) at the European Social Science History Conference in Glasgow 2012; and the pioneering effort of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (Berlin) to organise the “Europäische Willi-Münzenberg-Arbeitstagung” in Berlin, October 2012, together with the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam, Åbo Akademi University, and Instituts für Soziale Bewegungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

The research presented in the following study would not have been possible without the exceptional assistance provided by research assistant and Ph.D. Tatiana Androsova, Institute of

¹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) 542/1/69, 37-49, Transcript of Willi Münzenberg's speech at the Brussels Congress, 13/2-1927.

Universal History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, during my periods visiting and working in the Comintern Archive. The same goes to the archival staff in the reading rooms on the 4th and 5th floor at RGASPI for allowing me to work in the archive even though it was “officially” closed. Additional archives that deserve credit (and of equal importance for my research) are the Bundesarchiv in Lichterfelde, Berlin; the helpful service from the staff at the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG) in Amsterdam; Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek (Labour Movement Archives and Library) in Stockholm for allowing me to borrow almost every book on international communism, colonialism, and imperialism; Riksarkivet in Stockholm; the fortune of stumbling across a vast collection of documents in the Stockholm City Archive; and finally, thanks to the service from the librarians at Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm, and Åbo Akademi University.

Since this has been a project in the making over the years, which, in comparison to a continuous process, it has been an undertaking secured by research grants and funding from different sources. I wish to extend the greatest of gratitude for the scholarships provided from the Åbo Akademi University Research Foundation for the one-year scholarship and travel funding; the Research and Education Board at Åbo Akademi University; Finlands Akademi for its funding of the research project “Comintern and African Nationalism, 1921 – 1935”; the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO), Helsinki; Kommerserådet Otto A. Malms donationsfond, Helsinki, and finally, the “Scholarship for Higher Education” from Stiftelsen Markussens studiefond in 2012 was a very valuable source to get me across the finishing line. My doctoral studies have also been one of work in other academic fields and scholarly sites. I wish to thank CHESS and its staff at Stockholm University; Pia Molander, Jerker Widén and Lars Ericson Wolke at Försvarshögskolan, Stockholm; the students and members of the teaching staff at Åbo Akademi University during my year as a university teacher in General History; and Tamara, Marina, and the students at Svenska centret at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) in Moscow for giving me the opportunity to expand my ideas on history. To the doctoral students at Åbo Akademi University and at other scholarly institutions that either have passed through the eye of the needle, or struggle to achieve the above, I thank for the comments, advice, and collegial context: Kasper Braskén for being a colleague and friend, Gleb J. Albert’s enthusiasm and expertise, Stefan Norrgård for explaining the benefit of using graphs, Anna Sundelin, Hanna Lindberg, Johanna Wassholm, Matias Kaihovirta, Anders Gustafson, Carl-Johan Svensson, and everyone else not mentioned (you know who you are).

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To the linguistic expertise of Sarah Hale, I have nothing but admiration and respect, especially for her momentous work in correcting my "linguistic turns", editing the text, and to critically question some of my arguments. Finally, the profoundest of gratitude I give to my supervisor, Professor of General History, Holger Weiss, at Åbo Akademi University, whose vision to explore the activities and networks of African nationalists in the context of international communism during the interwar years, introduced me to the wonders and enigma of a global history generally neglected and forgotten. On a more personal note to Weiss, I treasure our discussions on ideas and the deciphering of particular documents, for providing me with accommodation, and for journeying beyond the borders of our common interest in history (*on the rooftop in Berlin, and the Moscow experiences*). Thanks also to the Weiss family for sharing and caring.

I am entirely responsible for the analytical results, views and conclusions presented in this book. The freedom I had, while approaching, analysing and understanding the history of the

League against Imperialism is that there existed no given framework, thus, I had to create one. This work would not have been, however, completed without the warm and tolerant support from my family. First, to my parents, Saga and Hans, and my mother-in-law, Ingela Johnsson, for helping out in co-ordinating the routines of everyday life, and second, to my two wonderful children, Linnéa and Wilhelm, and Emma for putting up with my journey into the past during my frequent travels away from home, and the occasional mental absences at home.

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List of Abbreviations

The readability of a history of an organisation often suffers from the frequent use of acronyms in sentences and phrases, e.g. “the indifferent attitude of the communist parties, especially the PCF, the CPGB, and the KPD” or “as members of the CEQCCB. Granted a term of ten working days to complete a report, the ECCI Secretariat expected the commission to examine the available documents on the LACO at Comintern headquarters and to present a report. The ‘Resolution of the CEQCCB’ was given in person by Roy to the ECCI Secretariat”, are almost like a cipher for the reader. I have made an effort not to use acronyms for organisations mentioned here and there in the text. However, there has been no getting around the fact that this is a history of an organisation (the *League against Imperialism*; LAI), intimately linked to another organisation (the *Communist International*; Comintern) which itself had affiliations and links to other organisations, associations and committees, the majority of which occur so frequently that it has been impossible to completely avoid the use of abbreviations. However, this does not represent a major problem in the following study, or as Geerth van Goethem observed, “it takes only a small effort to memorise the most frequently used acronyms”.²

AAAIL	All American Anti-Imperialist League
Agitprop	Agitation and Propaganda
A-I-Z	Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung
AITUC	All India Trade Union Committee
ANC	African National Congress
ANLC	American Negro Labour Congress
ARAB	Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek (Labour Movement Archives and Library)
AUCCSLU	All Union Central Council of Soviet Labour Unions (Allunionistischen Zentralrats der Sowjetgewerkschaften)
CEQCCB	Commission for the Examination of the Question of a Colonial Congress in Brussels
CGWCC	Commission to Guide the Work of the Colonial Congress
CIB	Colonial Information Bureau
CNA	Chinese National Agency
CO	Colonial Office
Comintern	Communist International; Third International
CPCh	Communist Party of China
CPCz	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPH	Communist Party of Holland
CPSU (B)	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)
CPUSA	Communist Party of the USA
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
FESAIL	Far Eastern Secretariat of the Anti-Imperialist League

² Geert van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International. The world of the International Federation of Trade Union (IFTU), 1913-1945*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, pp.8-9.

FWA	Furniture Workers' Association
HO	Head Office
IAH	Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (Workers' International Relief; Mezhdunarodnaia rabochiia pomoshch, MPR)
ICC	International Control Commission
ICB	International Colonial Bureau
ICBu	International Colonial Bureau of the Comintern (1924)
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions; Amsterdam International
IISG	Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History)
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ILS	International Lenin School
INC	Indian National Congress
Inprecorr	International Press Correspondence
IRH	Internationale Rote Hilfe (Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoschchi revoliutsioneram; International Red Aid; MOPR)
ITUC	Indian Trade Union Council
ITUCNW	International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU
KIM	Kommunisticheskii Internatsional Molodezhi (Communist Youth International; CYI)
KMT	Kuomintang
KOSTUFRA	Kommunistische Studenten Fraktion (Communist Student Fraction)
Krestintern	Peasants' International (Krestianskii Internatsional)
KUTV	Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhhsia Vostoka (Communist University for Eastern Workers)
LACO	League against Colonial Oppression (Liga gegen Koloniale Unterdrückung)
LAI	League against Imperialism and for National Independence (Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit)
LAICNI	League against Imperialism and Colonial Rule and for National Independence
LDRN	Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre (League for the Defence of the Negro Race)
LHR	League for Human Rights' (Liga für Menschenrechte)
LRD	Labour and Research Department
LSI	Labour and Socialist International; the Second International
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschland (Communist Party of Germany)
MdI	Ministerium des Innern (Prussian Ministry of the Interior)
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain
NA	National Archive, Stockholm (Riksarkivet)
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
NAFTA	National Amalgamated Furniture Trades Association
NAFTU	Native Federation of Trade Unions
NEP	New Economic Policy
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (the Nazi Party)
OMS	Department for International Liaison (Otdel mezhdunarodnoi sviazi)
PCF	Partei Communiste Francais (Communist Party of France)
PI	Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Association)
PKI	Communist Party of Indonesia
Profintern	Red Trade Union International (Krasnyi internatsional professional'nykh soiuзов; RILU)

RGASPI	Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Arkhiv Social'no-Politicheskij Istorii Russian State Archive for Social and Political History), Moscow
RK	Reichskommissar (Reich Commissar)
RKÜöO	Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung (Reich Commissar for the Supervision of Public Order)
RMdI	Reichministerium des Innern (Reich Ministry of the Interior)
SA	Sturmabteilung (Storm Troopers of the Nazi Party)
SAPMO- BA ZPA	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, Zentrales Parteiarchiv, Lichterfelde, Berlin
SATUC	South African Trade Union Congress
SCA	Stockholm City Archive (Stockholms stadsarkiv)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London
TUC	Trade Union Council
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
WAFU	West African Farmers' Union
WASU	West African Students' Union
WEB	West European Bureau
WES	West European Secretariat
WPA	Workers' Party of America
WZSPS	see AUCCSLU
ZK KPD	Zentralkomitee des Kommunistische Partei Deutschland (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany)

*

“We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers”.
Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern,
1925 – 1933

The chronological sorting of memories is an interesting business.

Donna Tartt, *The Secret History* (1992)

Introduction

[T]o act as a neutral intermediary between the Communist International and nationalist movements in the colonies.

Manabendra Nath Roy, Moscow, to
Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/5-1926

The organisation for a special purpose (*Zweckverband*) is a peculiarly discreet sociological formation; its members are in psychological respects anonymous; and, in order to form the combination, they need to know of each other only that they form it.

Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies", in *American Journal of Sociology*, Nr.11, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1906, p.449

Achmed Sukarno, the President of Indonesia, stated in his opening speech at the *Afro – Asian Conference* in Bandung, Indonesia, 17 – 24 April 1955: "I recognise that we are gathered here today as a result of sacrifices. Sacrifices made by our forefathers and by the people of our own and younger generations. [...] It is a new departure in the history of the world that leaders of Asian and African peoples can meet together in their own countries to discuss and deliberate upon matters of common concern. Only a few decades ago it was frequently necessary to travel to other countries and even other continents before the spokesmen of our peoples could confer. I recall in this connection the Conference of the 'League Against Imperialism and Colonialism' which was held in Brussels almost thirty years ago. At that Conference, many distinguished delegates who are present here today met each other and found new strength in their fight for independence. But that was a meeting place thousands of miles away, amidst foreign people, in a foreign country, in a foreign continent. It was not assembled there by choice, but by necessity".¹ This was a historical bond highly treasured by Sukarno, but what did this bond represent? Whilst the Bandung Conference was the scene of conviction and determination amongst the leaders from twenty-nine

¹ George McTurnan Kahin (ed.), *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1956, p.40. Parts of the quote above are found in Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations. A People's History of the Third World*, The New Press, New York, p.30. For an introduction on the *Afro – Asian Conference* in Bandung, see Christopher J. Lee, "Introduction", in *Making a World after Empire. The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*, Christopher J. Lee (ed.), Ohio University Press, Athens, 2010, pp.1-32. In commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Bandung conference, the Indonesian Ambassador in Tunis, S. A. M. Alaydroes, wrote that the conference was the "beginning of a movement in world politics", which had created "a flame, a spirit of solidarity and of determination that kindled the hearts of men and women" on a transcontinental level – Africa – Asia – Latin America, see S. A. M. Alaydroes (Ambassador of Indonesia, Tunis), *Thirty Years Asian African Conference*, Ambassade de la Republique D'Indonesie, Tunis, 1985, p.1.

African and Asian countries, who had gathered to solve the potential future direction of the post-colonial world, the “First Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism” in Brussels on 10-14 February 1927 was the scene of euphoria. Representing the place and occasion to celebrate the inauguration of the *League against Imperialism and for National Independence* (LAI), the congress was guided by the spiritual motto “National Freedom – Social Equality”. On 13 February, Willi Münzenberg (1889 – 1940), the German communist and General Secretary of the communist mass organisation *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (Workers’ International Relief; IAH; 1921 – 1935) which had been set up by the *Communist International* (the Third International; Comintern; 1919 – 1943), addressed delegates of anti-colonial movements, leaders of the European left-wing movement and European intellectuals on the “establishment of a permanent worldwide organisation linking up all forces against imperialism and colonial oppression”. Münzenberg concluded his speech by stating “this time the optimists, believers, have been proven right [...]. From this day, the story of the League against Imperialism begins”.² A story referred to, after the Second World War, in nostalgic terms and which assumed mythological proportions, having the LAI symbolise the spiritual bond between the colonial liberation movements of the inter-war era with the ones emerging during the post-war period. Thus, the idea and understanding of the LAI reached its crescendo at the 1955 Bandung Conference with Sukarno’s reference that “[I]t was not assembled there by choice, but by necessity”. The Brussels Congress and, later, the establishment of the LAI, had in fact been the results of meticulous planning and construction rather than “by necessity”, in a cleverly-disguised interplay between Münzenberg, the IAH and the Comintern, an important focus of the following study.

Münzenberg’s role in the history of the LAI is pivotal. Tied to the Comintern and to the German communist movement, he experienced a fairly independent organisational and political position within the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschland* (KPD). Described by his contemporaries, as well as in biographies and scholarly works, as the entrepreneurial genius of communist propaganda and organisational manoeuvres in Europe during the inter-war era, the mythology of his *persona* in the historiography of national and international communism is not only obscured, it is characterised by misconceived narratives. Münzenberg, one of Lenin’s friends, experienced a thriving and turbulent career within the European communist movement. After having been forced into exile in Paris once the *Nazi Party* (Nationalsozialistische Partei; NSDAP) seized power in

² Louis Gibarti (ed.), *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin, 1927; IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/5, Agenda of the Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, Brussels, 10/2-1927; RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Manuscript of Willi Münzenberg’s speech, Brussels, 13/2-1927. The LAI was alternatively referred to by its contemporaries and in scholarly works as the *Anti-Imperialist League*, *League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression*, *League against Imperialism and Colonialism*. However, throughout this study, the abbreviation LAI shall be retained as the point of reference.

Germany 1933, his relations to the KPD and the Comintern were cut short in 1938 after, first, being expelled, and then recognised and described as a *persona non grata*. Along with other German communist émigrés, Münzenberg was incarcerated in the Chambaran internment camp on the direct orders of French authorities after the German invasion of France on 10 May, 1940. In June the same year, the decision was taken to evacuate the camp, thus, every prisoner was left to his own devices. What followed is still, to this day, a mystery. On 17 October 1940, two hunters found Münzenberg's decomposed body with a noose around his neck, in the forest outside the French town Montaigne. Saint Marcellin authorities categorised the cause of death as suicide, although the circumstances leading to Münzenberg's demise have, in retrospect, produced a series of interpretations, which suggests that he was murdered either by the German SS or by Soviet NKVD agents, rather than having committed suicide. The crux of the matter is that the murder claim is not supported by any empirical evidence. Hence, the conspiratorial perspective has filled the gap to interpret and explain the reasons behind Münzenberg's death, although it had also foreshadowed his life and career within the socialist, pacifist and communist movements.³

Acting as the leader and General Secretary of the IAH, formed on Lenin's instructions in August 1921, Münzenberg was the architect behind the invisible web of loosely-knit committees, propaganda campaigns and relief activities outside Soviet Russia. Münzenberg's fundamental aim, initially, was to use the committees and campaigns as instruments in procuring material and moral support for the war-stricken Soviet Russian society, which had suffered famine and destruction after the Great War and the Russian Civil War in 1918-1921. By adopting the theme of proletarian solidarity, Münzenberg hoped to illuminate and unite the political struggle of the working class. It was an operation and objective which grew and manifested itself over time as a self-perpetuating propaganda machine but which, first and foremost, abided by the rules and rationale of the Comintern and the international communist movement during the 1920s.⁴ The LAI was a part of

³ Research and writings on Münzenberg's life, career and *persona* are scattered and elusive and still require a definitive assessment, in particular his involvement in the Comintern while being active in the service to spread communism. Babette Gross's political biography, *Willi Münzenberg. Eine politische Biographie*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart (1967), is a canonical work, which offers an insight into the life and career of Münzenberg. In contrast to Gross' book is the biased and ill-conceived interpretation in Sean McMeekin's *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003), a work complemented by Stephen Koch's attempt to understand Münzenberg's activities as disclosed in *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (Harper Collins, London, 1995). A more thorough account of the last years of Münzenberg's life is given in Harald Wessel, *Münzenbergs Ende. Ein deutscher Kommunist im Widerstand gegen Hitler und Stalin. Die Jahre 1933 bis 1940*, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1991, and, the short biography provided in Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Kommunisten – Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, Karl Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 2004, pp.521-524.

⁴ Interpretations of the IAH and Münzenberg are found in the works mentioned above. See further in the dated, but valid accounts in Helmut Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire 1921-1933", in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 38, No. 3, University of Chicago (Sep., 1966), pp.278-297, and, Robert Nigel Carew Hunt, "Willi Münzenberg", in *International Communism*, St Antony's Papers Number 9, David Footman (ed.), Chatto & Windus, London, 1960, pp.72-87. PhD student Kasper Braskén's forthcoming thesis on the conceptual framing and

this process. However, the organisation was also the result of the IAH's ambition to assist the Comintern in spreading communism around the world. In Brussels, in February 1927, Münzenberg wanted everyone to observe that the congress was "tremendous and historically significant" due to the fact that it had managed to link together "liberal thinkers" with workers' representatives, as well as political and trade union organisations in Europe and the USA. Bringing the congress to a euphoric finale, Münzenberg provided the crowd with a feeling of relief and collective joy which aimed to embrace, wrap up, and shed light on the spiritual message that a movement against colonialism and imperialism had finally been created: "[W]e have come together, we have got to know and feel that we belong together and must stay together. [...] We know very well that a conference only offers a limited opportunity, the effect and the work must be carried out outside on the real battlefields".⁵

This study is based on primary archival sources; documents which throw new light on the mythological proportions the LAI and the Brussels Congress have, over time, acquired. Whilst post-colonial or subaltern studies work within their own contextual settings, chronological divisions and separations of time, I shall be interpreting the LAI as a source of concerted inspiration for the liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries after the Second World War, which set ablaze the process of decolonisation.⁶ However, is the history of the LAI a precursor to the history of decolonisation and post-colonialism? The issue is far more complex and intricate than this. For example, it is connected to different sets of chronologies, e.g. the decolonisation process and post-colonialism. However, the LAI is also unquestionably linked to the political developments of the inter-war years (1918 – 1939) and, above all, to the chronology and study of international communism and the Comintern.

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practical usage of solidarity as a political delineator in the context of the IAH and Münzenberg shall contribute with an in-depth understanding of the ramifications of the IAH as a part of the German communist movement in the inter-war years.

⁵ RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Manuscript of Willi Münzenberg's speech, Brussels, 13/2-1927. Euphoria as a concept and its implications is discussed in Richard Stites intriguing study of utopia and experimentalism in the Soviet Union; see Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams. Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p.39.

⁶ See Prashad (2007); Lee (2010); Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2001; Dohra Ahmad, *Landscapes of Hope. Anti-Colonial Utopianism in America*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Nationalstaats. Studien zu Beziehungsgeschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2001; David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance. European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture", in Lee (ed.) 2010, pp.45-68; Marc Ferro, *Colonization. A Global History*, World Heritage Press, Quebec, 1997.

The Mosaic of the Research

The European continent was shattered after the ending of the Great War in November 1918. Characterised by the loss of millions of lives, an indescribable devastation on all societal levels, a number of former, major European empires had either collapsed or were confronted by revolution: tsarist rule in Russia and the Romanovs, the Austro-Hungarian Empire under the Habsburgs, the Ottoman Empire and the rule of the Hohenzollerns in Germany. It was the dawning of a new era for mankind, as the end of the war set in motion “new ideas and movements” which, during the inter-war years (1918 – 1939) challenged former systems of international relations and called into question the existing structures of global order, sending vibrations throughout Europe and beyond. It was within the context of the aftermath of a great ordeal which, according to historian Zara Steiner’s study on the reconstruction of Europe after the war, the 1920s has to be understood as a “post-war and not a pre-war decade” to the 1930s. Hence, the global society witnessed the co-existence of old and new structures, which in turn determined the character of international relations after the war. The principles required to secure world peace and restore global order were outlined in the renowned Fourteen Points, formulated and presented by the President of the USA, Woodrow Wilson, in spirit and flesh at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which celebrated the establishment of the guarantor of world peace, the *League of Nations*. These peace negotiations were epochal in the history of international relations, providing the emotional and ideological impetus to increase the demand for national self-determination for all peoples. This was a message which set ablaze the hopes of nationalists from the colonial and semi-colonial world who had arrived in Paris to pursue the struggle for national independence and liberation for their countries. The representatives of anti-colonial movements hoped to be a part of and to influence the “Wilsonian moment”. Thus, for a brief moment, Wilson assumed the icon-like status of the guarantor of a righteous and better world. This was, however, a vision which faded rather quickly as, according to Erez Manela, it left in its trail “bitter dissolution”. Instead, the peace conference provided an arena for the victorious Entente: USA, Great Britain, France and, to a lesser degree, Italy. The conference celebrated in ritualistic terms a new global divide. For Germany, the peace negotiations were particularly humiliating, as the Entente held on to their colonial possessions, whilst the victorious nations distributed former German colonies amongst themselves, re-designated as mandates. The political and social classes in Germany experienced the Versailles Peace Treaty as degrading, particularly the vast war reparation demands. This defined the picture of the newly-born republic – the Weimar Republic – as having been “born in defeat”. Confronted not only by the hostility of foreign nations, German society faced a revolutionary attempt by the communists during the “November Revolution” in 1918, which culminated in the transformation

of the *Spartacist Group*, under Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's leadership, into the KPD in December the same year.⁷ For the anti-colonial representatives present in Paris at the peace conference, it was a question of positioning themselves within the new world order, which was either characterised by nationalism and the principle of self-determination, or the Bolshevik conception of internationalism. With the removal of the tsarist regime after the February revolution in Russian in 1917, and the ensuing Bolshevik coup in Petrograd in October the same year, the international political scene included a radical and new actor which attracted attention from the anti-colonial movement. The anti-colonial movements criticised the civilising mission of European empires in the colonial and semi-colonial countries; a practice put into effect during the height of colonialism in the nineteenth century. Thus, representatives for these movements focused solemnly on one particular object of interest, that of achieving national liberation based on the principles of self-determination. This was a process and a frame of mind which, according to Vijay Prashad's observation, inspired the "anti-colonial nationalist movement" to produce "a series of gatherings and a language of anti-colonialism which elicited an emotional loyalty among its circle and beyond".⁸

The "Wilsonian moment" had evaporated by the end of 1919, whereupon the agenda and language of the anti-colonial movements turned towards the internationalism and solidarity embraced by the socialist movement. In some cases, the radicalism of communism and the display of popular utopia that the Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia espoused – justice, community and rebellion – enabled the anti-colonial movement to be perceived as the answer to creating a foundation for the struggle against colonialism and imperialism.⁹ This became evident with the establishment of the Comintern in Petrograd on 3-7 March 1919, which aimed to function as a political response to the so-called failure of the international labour movement, particularly the *Second International* (the Labour and Socialist International; LSI), to protest against the "imperialist war". However, the Comintern aspired to "creating not just a Communist world, but also a world of communism".¹⁰ In

⁷ Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed. European International History 1919-1933*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp.1-5, 602-603; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, pp.3-7; Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990. From Popular Protests to Socialist State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, pp.83-95; Kevin McDermott & Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin*, Macmillan Press, Houndmills, 1996, p.11; András Siklós, *Revolution in Hungary and the Dissolution of the Multinational State 1918*, Budapest, 1988. The "Spartacist Uprising" was thwarted in January 1919 by the paramilitary *Freikorps*, culminating in the brutal murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in Berlin.

⁸ Prashad 2007, p.13. For a discussion on "civilizing mission", see further in Michael Adas, "Contested Hegemony. The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission", in Lee (ed.) 2010, pp.69-106.

⁹ Manela 2007, p.7; Carsten Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003, p.69; Joachim Schröder, *Internationalismus nach dem Krieg. Die Beziehungen zwischen deutschen und französischen Kommunisten 1918-1923*, Klartext Verlag, Essen, 2008; Stites 1989, p.14.

¹⁰ Alexander Vatlin, *Die Komintern. Gründung, Programmatik, Akteure*, Karl Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 2009, pp.34-39;

this “world of communism”, anti-colonialism and the colonial question proved, however, to be a daunting challenge for the Comintern. In principle, the question focused on justifying arguments to provide an ideological and organisational base for the anti-colonial movement in the heart of world revolution, i.e. Bolshevism, the Comintern and international communism, although communism, as defined as the societal phenomenon in Russian history which existed as an ideology and a state system for 73 years (1917 – 1991), is a topic usually interpreted and understood in terms of its rigid monolithic structure, repression and terror. However, from an ideological perspective, communism is a movement and political tradition which belongs to the radical social labour movement where, as noted by Hermann Weber, communism builds upon the utopian vision to create “a better world”.¹¹

Berlin was the capital of the Weimar Republic, a mosaic and hefty brew of political, cultural and social expressions as well as home to about four million residents during the inter-war years. To walk around the city, as suggested in Eric D. Weitz’ study of Weimar Germany, was to “experience voyeuristically” the components of German society during the inter-war years. Most importantly, Berlin provided a political space, determined by the heritage of the Great War and the humiliating Versailles Peace Treaty, characterised by hope and despair, political struggles in public and informal spheres but also by intensity and expectations, cultural relations unified in connections linked together in networks.¹² The history of the LAI is firmly rooted in Berlin as much as Berlin was firmly rooted in the LAI. The heart of the LAI was the International Secretariat, the pivotal link in establishing and sustaining communist as well as anti-colonial networks. Located at 24 Friedrichstraße, in the hub of the government and entertainment districts, the International Secretariat was within walking distance of the IAH headquarters at 48 Wilhelmstraße. However, in order to bring to mind the topography of where the International Secretariat was once located (its actual position having been physically obliterated at the end of the Second World War), one must stand at the “Checkpoint Charlie” intersection, the symbol of the Cold War. During the 1920s,

Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe, “Introduction”, in *International communism and the Communist International 1919-43*, Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe (eds.), Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, p.10. Vatlin suggests that the “Germanocentrist” paradigm explains why the KPD holds a dominant role in the historiography of the international communist movement and the Comintern. However, other elements need to be included in the equation, Vatlin argues, e.g. Lenin’s position and the ensuing effects of his death in 1924; the political development(s) in the Soviet Union; and, the isolation of the European communist movement in Europe, see Aleksandr Vatlin, “The Theory and Practice of World Revolution in the Perception of Inter-war Europe. An Attempt at a Historical Generalisation”, in *Politics and Society under the Bolsheviks*, McDermott & Morison (eds.), Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1999, pp.245-249.

¹¹ For the distinction on rigid systems and the historical tradition of communism as a radical labour movement, see Hermann Weber, “The Stalinization of the KPD”, in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern. Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, LaPorte, Morgan, & Worley (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008, pp.27-28; Ahmad 2009, p.8.

¹² Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany. Promise and Tragedy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2007, pp.41-79. According to Weitz, “Weimar was Berlin, Berlin Weimar”.

however, the neon-lit pavement and goings-on on Friedrichstraße symbolised modern Berlin, a city shaped by liberalism and radicalism, which offered pleasurable entertainments of all sorts.¹³

Berlin was the administrative hub for the international communist movement in Europe. Described as the Comintern's "global village", the city provided the communists with a scene for its activities and, most importantly, an impetus rooted in the people's deep resentment towards the Versailles Peace Treaty, which kept feeding the radicalism on the extreme Left and Right. According to Karl Schlögel's topographic analysis of the Weimar capital, "Red Berlin" represented a place that reproduced and physically distributed the social and political image of Bolshevism and the Soviet Union. As the "Org-Welt" of the Comintern, the communist movement used Berlin to administrate and co-ordinate its activities across the world. Hence, the city, covered by networks linking together the activities of the Comintern, was a haven for the KPD and the communist "planetary system" of mass and sympathising organisations as well as for foreign residents. For the KPD, Berlin resembled a hotbed in which to organise and continue the struggle to represent itself as the safeguard for the German proletariat against social democracy and fascism, an undertaking which reached a bitter end after the NSDAP seized power on 30 January, 1933.¹⁴

The radicalism and explicit political *milieu* of Berlin corresponded to the desires and expectations among individuals who belonged to the colonial émigré community. Either living in the capital as students, journalists or as sojourners in a continent which had instigated the modern system of colonialism during the nineteenth century, the anti-colonial movement found a haven in Berlin. According to the demands of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany had to renounce its colonial possessions to the victorious powers, which produced a confused relationship to and understanding of colonialism and imperialism in Germany during the 1920s. In turn, this gave impetus to the activities of the anti-colonial movement in the country.¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India in 1947, attended the Brussels Congress and, as an elected member of the LAI Executive Committee Berlin, visited Berlin in 1927 after the congress. In the city, Nehru realised that a majority of the activities carried out by the 5,000 colonial residents in the "colonial metropolis", had links to either radical or communist movements. The political discussions

¹³ Karl Schlögel, *Berlin Ostbahnhof Europas. Russen und Deutsche in ihrem Jahrhundert*, Siedler Verlag, Berlin, 1998, pp.163-165; Brendon 2002, pp.125-126. The LAI International Secretariat was located at the headquarters of IAH at 48 Wilhelmstraße in 1927. From 1928 to 1931, the International Secretariat had a bureau at 24 Friedrichstraße and, in 1932-33, 13 Hedemannstraße functioned as a refuge for its activities.

¹⁴ Schlögel's informative account of "Red Berlin", the "global village" of the Comintern, includes the notation that Münzenberg was one of the most important Comintern representatives in Berlin. Yet there is no mention of any of the functions and activities of the LAI or the anti-colonial movement, see Schlögel 1998, pp.136-158; Weitz 1997, p.280.

¹⁵ Gross 1967, p.197; Mary E. Townsend, "The Contemporary Colonial Movement in Germany", in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.43, No.1 (Mar., 1928), The Academy of Science, pp.64-75; Jared Poley, *Decolonization in Germany. Weimar Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation*, Peter Lang, Oxford (2005).

amongst Indian nationalists focused on expressing anti-colonial ideas, which aimed to create some kind of action or movement in support of “the oppressed nations”.¹⁶

The following study refers to *place* as a decisive prerequisite determining the LAI's opportunities in both carrying out political activism and its results. Eric D. Weitz writes that German communists “did not operate” in an environment “of their own choosing”, an observation which can also be applied to the colonial people who were living in Berlin during the inter-war years. The political space in which the LAI and the International Secretariat existed, defined itself by both the potential and limitations of place. For example, the organisation and carrying out of public rallies, demonstrations, the scheduling and preparation of curricular activity, the openness and restrictiveness of city plazas and markets; and how national and local security services administrated its surveillance, solely in order to monitor the activities and relations between the German communist movement and colonial individuals. All of the above represent arenas which housed “realms of political engagement and conflict”.¹⁷ Place represents a particular symbolic role in this study; but why? The political backdrop in Berlin contributed to the shaping of the political identity amongst the individuals engaged in the LAI. As a common meeting ground, the physical location of the International Secretariat functioned as an intersection of “particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and inter-relations, of influences and movements”, which in turn the LAI and the Comintern supported feverishly.¹⁸ The International Secretariat wanted to pose as the location and hub for the anti-imperialist movement in Europe and beyond; however, its relations with its ideological and material supporter, the Comintern headquarters in Moscow, was the determining factor behind this.

A majority of the ideas introduced by the LAI never came to fruition, however. The history of the Comintern is a significant part of the LAI narrative. This “world party” was dissolved on the direct orders of Stalin in 1943, during the turbulence of Second World War, and was interpreted as having been a failed political actor of grandiose proportions. However, by interpreting the world of communism(s) as a failure is a rash mistake. Such a postulation reproduces and strengthens the misconception of the history of communism, while at the same time neglecting the activities and

¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography with musings on recent events in India* (first edition: 1936), The Bodley Head, London, 1953, p.161. The term “colonial metropolis” is further discussed in Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis. The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (University of Nebraska, 2010); Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Shadow of Shadows”, in *Positions II:I*, Duke University Press, 2003, pp.11-49.

¹⁷ Weitz 1997, p.6.

¹⁸ The discussion on “place” is taken from human geography research, see, for example, Doreen Massey, “The conceptualization of place”, in *A Place in the World?*, Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp.58-59. Historian Josephine Fowler’s study on Japanese and Chinese immigrant activists during the inter-war years includes a theoretical discussion on *place* as a conceptual framework and uniting concept to create as well as sustain influence in political movements. Further, Fowler bases her discussion on Massey’s definition of “place”, see Josephine Fowler, *Japanese and Chinese Immigrant Activists. Organizing in American and International Communist Movements, 1919-1933*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2007, p.5.

undertakings of the communist parties and its mass and sympathising organisations. Above all, such a perspective reduces the value and history of the individuals, the majority of which devoted their entire lives as visionaries and believers to creating “a world of communism”. The following study aims, therefore, to fill in the gaps, silences and histories which remain in the shadows; hence, it is a recovery of “lost” history.¹⁹ This is a perspective that concerns a historiographical distinction of “good and bad histories”,²⁰ which depends on placing the history of the LAI within its proper context. What is the aim of this approach? This narrative strives to look behind the one-dimensional contention that communism, as an ideology, was the only motive endorsing the LAI and its activities. The fundamental quest is, firstly, to achieve an understanding as to the structure and ideology which united the LAI, Comintern and the anti-imperialist movement. This requires an examination of the inner dynamics and structures linking the network together, e.g. ideology, institutions and individuals. Secondly, this analysis aims to discern how loyalties and obligations evolved over time, space and place by evaluating and discussing the history of the LAI in order to reach an understanding of the organisation's achievements and its historical legacy. Intertwined with all of the historical twists and turns outlined above, this analysis strives to place itself within the LAI by looking outwards from the inside. Its purpose and aim is to investigate the networks and structural dynamics of the system which emerged and gained momentum once the IAH and the Comintern had decided to establish and support the LAI. The following study is an in-depth study of how and why the euphoria of the Brussels Congress evaporated, only to be replaced by despair.

The comprehensive aim of this thesis is to analyse and interpret the inner structure and functions of the LAI. My first point of departure will be the causal dynamics after the Comintern endorsed the decision to establish and support the LAI as a cover for Comintern activities in the

¹⁹ The argumentation on gaps, silences and “lost” history is found in Fowler (2007, pp.12-14). Franz Borkenau, a former communist and engaged in the KPD and the Comintern, was one of the first critics to describe the Comintern as a failure in his examination of the “world party” in 1938 (while it still existed). Borkenau argued that “the history of the Comintern can be summed up as a series of hopes and disappointments”, Franz Borkenau, *The Communist International*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1938, p.413. This one-dimensional opinion contrasts the approach introduced by historian Jane Degras in 1965. According to Degras, any research on the Comintern has to look beyond failure as the end of the Comintern, in fact, is an understanding refuted as an “irrelevant question”. On the contrary, any examination of the Comintern should focus on discerning its accomplishments. Failure, as a paradigm, rests on the postulation that the Comintern was a structure and idea established in a *milieu* characterised by a misreading of socio-political conditions, whilst its sudden liquidation in 1943 was an embarrassing moment for the promoters of world revolution. In conclusion, Degras states that the history of the Comintern deserves a broader context, which includes the “epochal event” the Russian revolution and the emergence of the Bolsheviks as the trumpeters of state power. Hence, the Comintern is “inseparable from Soviet history”, see Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents – Volume III*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1965, p.ix. Historian Apollon Davidson et al. (2003) introduced a similar argumentation, stating that the “Comintern was without doubt one of the most important global organisations ever to have existed”, see Apollon Davidson; Irina Filatova; Valentin Gorodnov & Sheridan Johns (eds.), *South Africa and the Communist International: a Documentary History. Volume I, Socialist Pilgrims to Bolshevik Footsoldiers, 1919-1930*, Frank Cass, London, 2003, p.1.

²⁰ Chakrabarty 2000, pp.97-99.

shape of a sympathising organisation (for more, see below). Secondly, to analyse whether there existed any patterns of independence of the International Secretariat and, on the basis of the above, how the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in Moscow implemented its practices in subjugating the LAI. While the LAI represented itself in public as a non-party organisation, claiming to have no affiliations with any political party or ideological conviction, the LAI was a political actor nonetheless. Intertwined with the Comintern and its network of subsidiary sections – the national communist parties, the mass and sympathising organisations – this thesis aims to introduce a *historie totale* of an organisation which is largely a marginalised feature within the historiography of international communism. One must not forget, however, that the LAI was the symbol of a political message which the engaged individuals treasured highly and which was worth defending. After the Second World War, some of these individuals became influential agenda-makers in the post-war societies, particularly in the decolonisation process. At the same time, one finds individuals who ended up as casualties to an ideology, communism, which they had regarded as being the answer and solution with which to retaliate against the system of colonialism and imperialism. The general expectation of this thesis is to present and establish a more nuanced understanding of a particular aspect of communist inter-war history. This study of the LAI brings to light what went on behind the façade and the often made-up plot.

The study of the LAI is a topic one can approach from different perspectives. The retrospective and nostalgic approach, for example, places the LAI within the context of decolonisation, a story which culminates in the 1955 Bandung conference. Yet, this perspective only confirms the mythology of the LAI and strengthens its ambiguous history. Thus, the *initial* and *determinant* perspective offers a more constructive approach. The initial perspective focuses on the initial purpose, intentions and goals of the LAI: e.g. how the LAI and the Comintern interacted to reach an understanding on how and why they collaborated to achieve the outspoken hopes attributed to the LAI. This perspective also helps to determine the origin of the LAI, and to explain how and why the LAI carried out its various strategies and directives, sanctioned by the Comintern, or whether the organisation acted independently.²¹ The determinant perspective focuses on two aspects, the distinction between *external* and *internal* factors, in order to evaluate the result and consequences of particular events and episodes. The external framework, or as Hermann Weber refers to it, the “exogenous explanations”, determines the structural position of the LAI within a general political and social context. For example, the emergence of the political struggle in the Soviet Union and Weimar Germany; the ideological twists and turns inside the Comintern; the trans-continental relations; and finally, the NSDAP’s ascendancy to power in Germany, which

²¹ For a discussion on reasons and causality, see C. Behan McCullagh, *The Truth of History*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp.236-238.

marked the literal end of the Weimar Republic after the Reichstag Fire in Berlin on 27 February 1933. The internal factors focus on the structural constraints and obligations imposed on the LAI, particularly its relations with Comintern headquarters in Moscow. This is, essentially, a question which addresses how the actors interacted to assess the course of the LAI, e.g. by establishing a number of working commissions in Moscow. Furthermore, this analysis aims to expose how the process to work out and formulate directives in the departments at Comintern headquarters developed, and to reveal the system set up by the communists to monitor and register how the European-based anti-imperialist movement was progressing over time.²² At this stage, therefore, it is logical to introduce the following two assumptions. Firstly, if perceived as a pawn in a larger scheme, whether the LAI acted exclusively as a promoter and defender of Soviet foreign policy. Secondly, whether the LAI was a unique entity, considered by the Comintern to be one of the most valuable organisations outside the Soviet Union, the main purpose of which was to find and establish contact with anti-colonial activists in Berlin and beyond. Yet, in the end, did the LAI willingly carry out its obligation to act as a distributor of Bolshevik propaganda in Europe, the USA, Latin America as well as in the colonial and semi-colonial countries on a global scale?

The fundamental field of enquiry of this study focuses on the question of motive, purpose and intention: i.e. why the LAI was established. The analysis has a chronological framework; however, thematic questions narrow down the postulation that the LAI was an ideological and organisational instrument of particular value for the Comintern in order to expand the colonial work of the international communist movement. Thus, the question addresses the need to discern patterns of relations by following a number of research questions: what was the character and nature of the process leading to the establishment of the LAI in February 1927? Was it one of mutual understanding between the actors in Berlin, the IAH and Münzenberg and Comintern headquarters in Moscow? How did the International Secretariat and the Comintern experience and respond to the effects of the LAI in 1927? Was the LAI self-sustaining, based on its own organisational strength, or was the International Secretariat dependent on receiving regular support from the Comintern? Of equal relevance is to address the question on whose behalf the LAI aimed its activities and its political agenda. Was the LAI merely a cover organisation for and serving the interests of the Comintern, or did the LAI promote an independent anti-imperialist agenda which

²² Hermann Weber discuss exogenous and endogenous factors in his reassessment of the KPD in connection with new empirical findings and scholarly conclusions after the opening of the Russian archives, see Weber (LaPorte, Morgan & Worley [eds.]) 2008, pp.22-44. The political scientist Philip Selznick emphasizes in his the study of “Bolshevik strategy and tactics” (1952) the need to discern *externally* and *inherent* tensions. Externally relates to when an organisation “faces a harsh environment, leading to inner stress and adaptive change of both the organisation and its environment”, whilst the inherent tension is “generated by the very act of delegation, which creates new centres of interest and power [...] an indispensable phase of organizational experience”, see Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon – A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (Second Edition), The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1960, pp.x-xi.

attracted the anti-colonial movement? This last question concerns how the LAI made its anti-imperialist agenda known to the public, e.g. propaganda campaigns, public meetings, conferences or congresses. Thus, these public displays of propaganda form a crucial part of this study; in particular, to evaluate the process of how the Comintern and the International Secretariat prepared their campaigns and congresses. The last thematic thread addresses the nature of the LAI and its actual historical legacy from a short and long perspective. How did the involved actors perceive and experience the LAI? In addition, is it possible to verify hierarchical relations between the actors, both on an individual and an institutional level?

The reason why there is an emphasis on chronology in this analysis is due to the structure of the empirical material and the relative scarcity of previous research. Furthermore, this is a history of the life and decline of an organisation. According to historian Geert van Goethem, “the history of an organisation” is likewise the “story of a life”. Thus, such a perspective promotes chronology with all its restrictions and narrative pitfalls, which in turn imply thorough and separate evaluations. A thematic approach would, however, face similar pitfalls. For example, anti-colonialism and the Comintern; the European anti-imperialist movement and its peripheries; the colonial question and the left-wing movement in Europe; or the structure and impact of colonialism and imperialism in a socio-political context during the inter-war years, thematic departures which would have to (largely) ignore the organisational dynamics and scope of the LAI. Therefore, to assess the political and organisational life of the LAI, this analysis merges chronology with thematic approaches.²³ The LAI, particularly the deliberations and activities developed at the nerve centre – the International Secretariat in Berlin – is the focus of our evaluation and analysis. On the one hand, its relations to the Comintern and, on the other hand, the individuals involved in dispersing anti-imperialism as an idea and as an activity. Several episodes or cases have posed a challenge to understand, e.g. why the decision-making process at Comintern headquarters assumed the direction it did and how this affected the International Secretariat. Much of the above, however, concerns the policy shifts that the Comintern promoted during the chronological limitation of the study, 1925-1933. This was a period, commonly understood in terms of Bolshevization and Stalinization, in which the Comintern subjected the sections to swift policy changes. Whilst the LAI had been founded during the height of the united front strategy, by 1928 however, the Comintern had changed course and introduced the radical doctrine of the “third period”, also known as “the new line”, or the infamous “class against class” policy,²⁴ which left in

²³ Goethem 2006, p.8.

²⁴ Jürgen Rojahn, “A Matter of Perspective: Some Remarks on the Periodization of the History of the Communist International”, in *Centre and Periphery. The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents*, Mikhail Narinsky and Jürgen Rojahn (eds.), IISG, Amsterdam, 1996, pp.35-45.

its wake much confusion and had immense consequences for the international communist movement. Another qualitative perspective, which is vital for the general context, is to make the distinction between the LAI as a representative for the anti-imperialist movement; and the intertwined relations of the LAI with the Comintern and the international communist movement, an organisational prerequisite that existed from beginning to end. However, after the NSDAP came to power in Germany in 1933, the International Secretariat escaped to Paris and, in August the same year, the apparatus of the LAI was transferred to London, and finally dissolved undramatically in 1937.²⁵ The study and ambition of this thesis do not, however, strive to analyse the endeavours of the International Secretariat in Paris or London. The focal point is to discern how and why the actors at the International Secretariat in Berlin realised that the LAI had come to the *end-of-the-road* in Berlin, due to reasons beyond their control.

This thesis is not a study of how the German communist movement created proletarian solidarity as an expression to orchestrate political and social campaigns to amass support from a moral or a financial perspective. Neither is it a study of the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU [B]; Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks); RCP [B]), nor of the KPD. However, one cannot disregard the influence and omnipotent role of the CPSU (B) and the KPD within the communist movement during the inter-war years. Nevertheless, the history of the LAI is not out of necessity written in the context of these two communist parties. Other contexts are equally relevant, e.g. the policing and monitoring carried out by national security services and the politics of empire; colonial liberations movements, the spread of radicalism and communism on a global scale, and the incursion of ideologies within Weimar Germany and their expressions on a socio-political level.

This thesis is a critical investigation of the LAI, based on how the contemporary actors experienced, described and referred to the organisation. Represented by its protagonists: the international communist movement, anti-colonial activists and the Comintern, as well as by its antagonists: the various national security services across the world, the European socialist movement and particularly the LSI,²⁶ the LAI was one of few political actors, which seriously questioned and criticised the system of colonialism and imperialism during the inter-war years. Further, the covert activities, sponsored and carried out by the LAI, offer a complex account of the

²⁵ John Saville, "The League Against Imperialism, 1927-1937", in *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Volume VII*, Macmillan Press, London, 1984, p.46.

²⁶ The LSI made efforts to oppose the political agenda and origin of the LAI. Founded in 1889, the LSI acted as the official representative for every European socialist party, functioning as an umbrella organisation influenced by the Marxist maxim, which aimed to protect and support the democratic process, the peaceful development of political power, and to regulate the labour market. The LSI's main ambition was the establishment of a broad political agenda in order to act as a political power on a national and international level, see Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism. The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, Harper Collins, London, 1996, pp.xx-xxi.

difficulties experienced gaining momentum in an organisation which introduced itself as a sympathising organisation, but which was also a cover organisation for the Comintern. Introducing itself in public as a radical non-party organisation, and yet its links to the Comintern largely determined the course of its history. Established in a *milieu* of consent and hope, both the LAI and the International Secretariat witnessed how the balance of power shifted in favour of the decision-making process at the Comintern headquarters in Moscow. This did not, however, imply the end of the LAI; it merely resulted in the LAI ending up serving other purposes than the one originally intended: to act as the Comintern's intermediary in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

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Previous Research: Historiography in Passim

The scholarly interest and historiographical trends in international communism and the Comintern, as both a social and a political phenomenon, introduce a vast academic vista. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, formerly closed archives were finally allowed the light of day in Moscow, a prerequisite that finally provided the scholarly community with the possibility of studying the Comintern and the impact of international communism as a political, cultural, social and economic actor. Thus, in the early 1990s, this gave rise to an increase in rich empirical studies of the Comintern and of the global impact of communism.²⁷ However, some aspects of international communism faced a reverse trend. Research on international actors that had intimate and structural relations to the Comintern – the mass and sympathising organisations – are often characterised by misconceptions and ambiguity. In reference to the LAI, two conclusions shed some light on the existing dilemma. According to the correct observation made by historian Peter Martin in the article “Die ‘Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung’” in Ulrich van der Heyden, and Joachim Zeller’s anthology on German colonialism, “the interest in this organisation has, for a long time, been at a low ebb”, while Vijay Prashad concludes that the “legacy of the LAI is ambiguous” despite its connection to the Bandung Conference in 1955.²⁸ The basic challenge here is two-fold. Firstly, to draw a distinction between historiographical trends and scholarly fields and, secondly, to discuss the academic and narrative contexts which have examined, interpreted and presented the LAI as a historical topic. Is the question of the LAI and its history exclusively a part of the historiography of the Comintern, or is it likewise a part of the history of decolonisation and

²⁷ Weitz 1997, p.12. Weitz resembled the results from the scholarly community as a “great outpouring of rich empirical studies” which, however, offered “few new questions or approaches to the history of communism”.

²⁸ Peter Martin, “Die ‘Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung’”, in „...*Macht und Anteil an der Weltherrschaft*“. Berlin und der deutsche Kolonialismus, Ulrich van der Heyden, Joachim Zeller (Hrsg.), Unrast Verlag, Berlin, 2005, pp.261-269. Martin’s focus is to introduce the process that led to the establishment of the LAI in Brussels, February 1927, above all on the forerunner to the LAI, the *League against Colonial Oppression* (established in Berlin on 10 February, 1926); Prashad 2007, p.29, 32.

the post-colonial critique? From a broader perspective, the topic of the LAI has been marginalised, treated and described in a peripheral sense when it comes to historical works of a general character on the inter-war period, above all in critical studies on international communism, anti-colonial movements, anti-imperialism as both a theory and practice, and the international labour movement. All of which can be wholly explained by the fact that previous research has limited itself either to pondering limitations, possibilities and cursory generalisations or through a biased framework. Firstly, John D. Hargreaves states in *African Affairs* (1993) that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent opening up of the Russian archives “greatly enhanced possibilities for research” on anti-colonial movements and the LAI. This was, however, an observation which had already been made by John Saville in his momentous survey of the British labour movement (1984), concluding that any attempt to write a “comprehensive evaluation” of the LAI and its anti-colonial history would fail because of the current inaccessibility to the empirical material locked away in Moscow. In 2008, historian Jonathan Derrick continued developing arguments on the challenge of conducting a “closer study of episodes, themes or individuals” linked to anti-colonial activity and organisations such as the LAI in his study of militant anti-colonialism in Africa and the West during the inter-war years.²⁹ Secondly, the empirical and ground-breaking study of the LAI by historian Mustafa Haikal, as introduced in the anthology *Aufstieg und Zerfall der Komintern* (1992), based exclusively (for the first time) on documents filed in the Comintern Archive in Moscow (RGASPI), offered a first glimpse into the possibilities of compiling a “comprehensive evaluation”. Yet, in this article, Haikal was content with determining the LAI’s chronological patterns from its inception in 1927 till 1929, with a focus on defining patterns of disintegration. In 1995, Haikal re-assessed his opinion of the LAI in his anthology *Willi Münzenberg: ein deutscher Kommunist im Spannungsfeld zwischen Stalinismus und Antifaschismus* (1995), emphasising the pivotal role Münzenberg had had in establishing the LAI.³⁰ Finally, the last perspective is the biased research results on the LAI, produced by curricular departments in the Soviet Union (the *Institute of Marxism-Leninism* in Moscow) and in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the *Karl-Marx Universität* in Leipzig, studies based on the principle of supporting communism as an ideology. Grigorii Zakharovich Sorokin’s study, *Antiimperialisticheskaia liga, 1927-1935*, published in Moscow 1965, is a pioneering account of

²⁹ Jonathan Derrick, *Africa’s ‘Agitators’. Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939*, Hurst & Company, London, 2008, p.5, 180-185.

³⁰ Mustafa Haikal, “Die Kommunistische Internationale und die ‘Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit’“, in *Aufstieg und Zerfall der Komintern. Studien zur Geschichte ihrer Transformation (1919-1943)*, Theodor Bergmann/Mario Keßler (Hg.), Podium Progressiv, München, 1992, pp.239-252. This anthology is one of the first critical assessments of the Comintern after the archives had been opened in Moscow; Mustafa Haikal, “Willi Münzenberg und die ‘Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit’“, in *Willi Münzenberg: ein deutscher Kommunist im Spannungsfeld zwischen Stalinismus und Antifaschismus*, Schlie/Roche (Hrsg.), Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1995, pp.141-153.

the LAI from the perspective that it introduced the LAI as one of the first organisations to support the struggle against imperialism. The glorification of the LAI was a view further developed in the official historiography of the Comintern in the book *Outline History of the Communist International*, endorsed and issued by the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU) in 1971, which described the organisation as “the first broad-based anti-imperialist united front” of the international “working class”. In 1987, a biased conception of the LAI culminated in the release of the anthology, *Die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, issued under the tutelage of the History Department at *Karl-Marx-Universität* in Leipzig, a book aiming to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the LAI at a conference in Leipzig on the symbolic date of 9-10 February, 1987. According to its foreword, the anthology addressed “the history and actuality of a little-known anti-colonial world organisation” by assessing the international ramifications of the LAI and its contacts with nationalist organisations and individuals (without any reference to archival sources). Hans Piazza, the acting editor of the anthology, stated that the LAI had been an organisation “motivated by the desire” to end “barbaric colonial rule and act in solidarity against imperialism”, conceding nevertheless that its outcome had had “varying consequences”.³¹ After the end of communism in the Soviet Union and in the GDR, Piazza and Haikal (the latter also attended the Leipzig conference in 1987), continued their work of analysing the LAI throughout the 1990s, with the slight but significant difference that the research based itself on documents located in the Comintern Archive in Moscow. For Piazza, the findings in the archive provided him with a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the LAI, which he described in the article “The Anti-Imperialist League and the Chinese Revolution” (2002): “the documents ... shed new light on the history of the AIL [LAI], which has enabled me to revise my previous view of the subject”.³²

³¹ Grigorii Zakharovich Sorkin, *Antiimperialisticheskaia liga, 1927-1935. Istoricheskii ocherk*, Glav Nauka, Moscow, 1965; A. I. Sobolev (“Head of group”), *Outline History of the Communist International*, Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Central Committee of the CPSU, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, pp.260-262; Hans Piazza (Hrsg.), *Die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit 1927-1937. Zur Geschichte und Aktualität einer wenig bekannten antikolonialen Weltorganisation*, Karl-Marx-Universität, Leipzig, 1987, p.5. Other examples of biased research is found in the theoretical organ of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, Hrsg.). During the 1960s, the *Beiträge*... functioned as a channel to revise, and re-introduce a history of the party, an undertaking that also had an effect on the anti-colonial discourse. See Emil Langer, „Konferenz über die antikolonialistischen Traditionen des Kampfes der deutschen Arbeiterklasse“, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 4/1963, Leipzig, pp.716-721, and, Adolf Rüger, „Die Erste Internationale Konferenz der Neger-Arbeiter (Hamburg 1930)“, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte* 5/1967, Leipzig, pp.782-797. The LAI is mentioned in a peripheral sense, mentioned merely as one of many actors in the German communist movement. Historian Catherine Epstein has examined the background and causal effects of the SED and the revision of party history, see *The Last Revolutionaries. German Communists and Their Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (2003).

³² Hans Piazza, “The Anti-Imperialist League and the Chinese Revolution”, in Leutner et al. (eds.), *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s. Between Triumph and Disaster*, Routledge, London, 2002, pp.166-176.

The above overview introduces three particular aspects. Firstly, one should not conclude that the LAI belongs to the historiography of the Comintern and international communism, a research field which divides itself into different scholarly interpretations and theories, e.g. the study of dynamics and structural relationships taking place at the centre (Moscow) and the periphery (the national sections/communist parties), deduced and interpreted through theoretical perspectives such as the totalitarian, revisionist or the comparative approach.³³ However, Frank Borkenau's somewhat dated and biased study of the Comintern, *The Communist International* (1938), introduced an essential thematic idea when it comes to the evaluation of the history of international communism and the Comintern, stating that it was a "puzzling phenomenon" built on "the firm hopes of the communists". Historian Apollon Davidson et al re-addressed the question in their documentary narrative on the South African communist movement in 1919-30 (2003), concluding that communism is an ideology that represents one of the "most important phenomena of the twentieth century", in which the Comintern symbolised the ambitions of the Bolshevik regime to spread communism on a global scale.

The second aspect relates to the challenges that the scholarly community has been forced to confront due to the archival discoveries after the collapse of the Soviet Union which, according to historian Kevin McDermott, has either confirmed existing interpretations or opened up "new vistas".³⁴ Thus, in the context of these "new vistas", a pivotal task is to carry out critical evaluations of the complex structure, functionality and instrumental use of the sympathising organisations which represented a crucial part of the international communist movement during the inter-war years. In conclusion then, prior to the demise of communism in Russia, critical assessments of the structure and involved actors in the Comintern were topics approached mainly from a political perspective which, additionally, in some cases, was lacking in its methodological and theoretical coherency. By now, however, as accurately observed by historian Alexander Vatlin, the study of the complex apparatus and ideological connotations of the Comintern is a scholarly field where "legends and myths co-exist" in document editions, academic assessments and dissertations, as well as on the Internet.³⁵

Thirdly, the quest is to discover why the narrative character of the previous research on the LAI is a field aptly defined here as historiography in passim. The major reason is that a majority of

³³ Examples of the revisionist school are found in Milorad M. Drachkovitch & Branko Lazitch (eds.), *The Comintern: Historical Highlights – Essays, Recollections, Documents*, Praeger, New York, 1966; Helmut Gruber, *Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern: International Communism in the Era of Stalin's Ascendancy*, Anchor Books, New York, 1974; Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1975. For the comparative approach, see Matthew Worley (ed.), *In Search of Revolution – International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2004.

³⁴ Borkenau 1938, p.413; Davidson et al. 2003, p.1; Kevin McDermott, "The history of the Comintern in light of new documents", in Rees & Thorpe (eds.) 1998, p.38.

³⁵ Vatlin 2009, p.9.

the research results on the LAI are either inaccurate or incoherent assumptions. However, the intention here is not to chronologically locate and describe the interpretations of the LAI in different categories, e.g. in a pre-Soviet or post-Soviet category. My focus is on assessing former interpretations of the LAI and their narrative contexts. The challenge is where to begin. A logical point of departure is from biographical works and memoirs that include, or focus, on Münzenberg's *persona*. The reason for this is that Münzenberg was the key individual in the history of the LAI, from its inception until its end. Additionally, the biographical approach in the study of communism and the Comintern has contributed to a greater understanding of its history via the methodology and theoretical approach addressed as prosopography.³⁶ Hence, biographical works on Münzenberg have contributed to establishing an understanding of his role in the Comintern, especially the range of organisational enterprises and manoeuvres masterminded by him. The biographies authored by Münzenberg's life-long companion, Babette Gross, *Willi Münzenberg. Eine politische Biographie* (1967), and Gross' sister, Margarete Buber-Neumann, in *Von Potsdam – Nach Moskau* (1957), as well as her second book, *Kriegsschauplätze der Weltrevolution* (1967), have determined the contextual scope and understanding of Münzenberg's life and career within the international communist movement, interpretations which have been adopted either in their entirety or partially in consecutive research. Those of Gross and Buber-Neumann are characteristic with their anti-communist bias, a consequence of their suffering from Stalinist repression and the societal turmoil caused by the Second World War, narratives which depict a period in their lives they shared together with other committed and well-known communists in Germany. While Gross' book is "a political biography" of Münzenberg, Buber-Neumann's two memoirs focused on her experiences of the KPD and the Comintern. Gross summarised the contextual panorama of the LAI as "Der Schrei der unterdrückten Völker", which describes how Münzenberg approached the colonial question in 1925, to fulfil the two-fold

³⁶ Prosopography, as a theoretical and methodological approach, is outlined in Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen & Andrew Flinn (eds.), *Agents of the Revolution. New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Peter Lang, Oxford (2005), and, John McIlroy, Kevin Morgan, Alan Campbell (eds.), *Party People, Communist Lives. Explorations in Biography*, Lawrence & Wishart, London (2001). Historian Lewis Namier focused in his study of eighteenth century English politics on examining a large number of individuals in order to establish an understanding of the larger context. According to Arthur Marwick, this developed a perspective that moves from an individual level and upwards, a methodology later addressed as prosopography, see Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (third edition), Macmillan, London, 1989, p.91, 402. The abundance of biographical works on national and international communism and the Comintern is located in Weber & Herbst (Hrsg.) (2004); Lazar Jeifets, Víctor Jeifets & Peter Huber (eds.), *La Internacional Comunista Y América Latina, 1919-1943. Diccionario Biográfico*, Instituto de Latinoamérica de la Academia de las Ciencias, Moscow (2004); Michael Buckmiller & Klaus Meschkat (Hrsg.), *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin (2007); Theodor Bergmann/Mario Keßler (Hrsg.), *Ketzer im Kommunismus. 23 biographische Essays*, VSA-Verlag, Hamburg, (2000); Branko Lazitch & Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern. New, Revised and Expanded Edition*, Hoover Institution, Stanford, 1986; William J. Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934-1939*, Yale University Press, New Haven (2002).

purpose of developing the IAH's international activities and, most importantly, assisting the Comintern's ambition to gain access to the colonies. According to Gross, the establishment of the LAI in 1927 was, in a sense, the culmination of Münzenberg's colonial work, the organisation of which by 1929 found itself completely subjected to the dictates of Comintern headquarters in Moscow. Buber-Neumann describes the functionality of the LAI in both of her books, included in a discussion on "Moscow and the coloured world", and Lenin's attitude towards the colonial and semi-colonial countries. However, in contrast to Gross, Buber-Neumann had a closer relationship to the LAI and its International Secretariat in Berlin after having worked there as a stenotypist in 1927.³⁷ Despite the insightful information provided by both Gross and Buber-Neumann, the books are littered with inconsistencies and misconceptions. For example, individuals are either misplaced or confused with other actors, yet this does not deny the fact that they represent standard works on the history of Münzenberg and the LAI. Published prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the GDR, they were a useful source for the studies produced outside of the communist sphere during the Cold War, introducing insightful interpretations on Münzenberg, but leaving the LAI categorised as one of his many entrepreneurial adventures. For example, the wistful articles by Robert Nigel Carew Hunt (1960) and Helmut Gruber (1966) on Münzenberg are still valid and vivid interpretations of his central role in establishing the LAI.³⁸ G. L. Ulmen's biographical appraisal of Karl August Wittfogel, the well-known Sinologist from Germany and engaged communist, in *The Science of Society* (1978) provides an insight into the teething problems the communists had in creating an the anti-imperialist agenda for the LAI.³⁹ Furthermore, in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (1971), George Padmore describes in riveting detail the intentions and manoeuvres of the German communist movement (with a focus on Münzenberg's leadership) to turn the LAI into a stronghold able to capitalise on the colonial question to the fullest. Burdened

³⁷ Gross 1967, pp.196-210; Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam Nach Moskau. Stationen eines Irrweges*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1957, pp.97-110; Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Kriegsschauplätze der Weltrevolution. Ein Bericht aus der Praxis der Komintern 1919-1943*, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1967, pp.299-307. Buber-Neumann worked together with other leading actors in the LAI, for example the Indian nationalist revolutionary Virendranath Chattophadyaya and the Hungarian communist Laszlo Dobos (see further below). Gross was engaged to Münzenberg, whilst Buber-Neumann was married to the well-known German communist Heinz Neumann (1902 – 1937), who was executed during the Great Terror and purging of the Comintern apparatus in Moscow in 1937, see Weber & Herbst 2004, pp.531-533.

³⁸ Carew Hunt (1960) based his article on interviewing Gross and Buber-Neumann, in which the LAI is described in a cursory fashion; Helmut Gruber, "Willi Munzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire 1921-1933", in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.38, No.3 (Sep., 1966), University of Chicago Press, pp.278-297. See also Jörgen Schleimann, "The Organisation Man. The Life and Work of Willi Münzenberg", in *Survey: a Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, No.55, April 1965, London, pp.64-91, which was based on the narratives found in Gross' and Buber-Neumann. Other accounts that fall within the same framework as the ones above are Til Schulz (Hrsg.) *Willi Münzenberg. Propaganda als Waffe. Ausgewählte Schriften 1919-1940*, März Verlag, Frankfurt am Main (1972); and, Rolf Surmann, *Die Münzenberg-Legende. Zur Publizistik der revolutionären deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1921-1933*, Prometh Verlag, Köln (1983).

³⁹ Gary L. Ulmen, *The Science of Society. Toward an Understanding of the Life and Work of Karl August Wittfogel*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1978, pp.80-85, 103-105. The sections on the LAI in Ulmen are based on his interviews with Wittfogel, Gross and Buber-Neumann, see p.ix.

by its lack of accurateness, however, Padmore's narrative of the 1927 Brussels Congress relies on secondary sources.⁴⁰ A majority of the misconceptions about the LAI after 1991 are, however, attributable to the vast number of biographical works on Münzenberg. Two representative examples of this are Stephen Koch's sensationalist biography of Münzenberg, *Double Lives* (1994), and Sean McMeekin's attempt to present Münzenberg's life within an academic framework, *The Red Millionaire* (2003). Koch's presentation of the LAI contains a number of critical source inaccuracies, e.g. brusquely concluding that the organisation was an "instrument for propaganda, sabotage and espionage" without any further assessment.⁴¹ McMeekin's biography was a remake of Gross' "political biography", which aimed to respond to Koch's "careless polemic" and "dramatic claims". Yet, where Koch magnified the extent of Münzenberg's influence, McMeekin perceived Münzenberg as a topic of prejudice, portraying him as a person who acted as an unabashed, calculated and stern believer, who promoted communism only in order to fulfil his own needs, above all, to make money. McMeekin's short passage on the LAI gives the wrong impression (based on a misreading of Gross) that the organisation disappeared in 1929, at the same time as the dissolution of the LAI's theoretical organ, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*. Considering the fact that Koch and McMeekin had access to the Comintern Archive (RGASPI) in Moscow,⁴² the misconceptions of the LAI in these two books leave us with more questions than answers. Nevertheless, in juxtaposition to both Koch and McMeekin, Nirode K. Barooah's biography on Virendranath Chattophadyaya, an Indian nationalist revolutionary and the "International Secretary" of the LAI, *Chatto. The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe* (2004), is in many respects a detailed study of the LAI, its inner dynamics and its ambition

⁴⁰ George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, 1971, pp.300-307. Padmore described Münzenberg as a "likeable German" in which "the colonial peoples" had a "sympathetic friend" (p.305). Padmore's own experience of the Comintern, Profintern, and its network(s) left him puzzled as to whether the Pan-African movement or communism would solve Africa's dilemma in the heyday of decolonization. Padmore opted for the former alternative in the end.

⁴¹ Koch 1995, p.64. For example, a typical example of an erroneous statement from Koch is a meeting between Münzenberg and Jawaharlal Nehru in Berlin, after the establishment of the LAI in 1932 (!) see p.39.

⁴² McMeekin 2003, p. 208, 310 (footnote 3), 348 (footnote 15). McMeekin borrowed the title for his book from a subtitle in Gross' biography on Münzenberg ("Der 'Rote Millionär'"), see Gross 1967 pp.211-215. The International Secretariat re-launched *The Anti-Imperialist Review* in 1931; see *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, Vol.1, No.1, September-October, Berlin, LAI International Secretariat, 1931. One of the most astonishing remarks made by McMeekin is how he compares Münzenberg and the Comintern with the "world's most formidable terrorist organizations" of today, i.e. "Islamic terrorists" (p.307). This comparison is not only bold; it pays lip service to speculations. One of the harshest critiques against Koch's and McMeekin's narratives was published by literary critic Michael Scammel in *New York Review of Books* (2005, pp.32-35), which concluded that the basic problem with Koch's and McMeekin's narratives is the flagrant categorization of Münzenberg's life "as a cautionary tale". Historian Tania Schlie had already in *Die Zeit* (1994, Nr.8) criticized Koch's "thesis" for its lack of evidence. See Michael Scammel, "The Mystery of Willi Münzenberg", in *New York Review of Books*, New York, 3/11-2005, and Tania Schlie, "Griffige These ohne Beweise", in *Die Zeit*, Nr.08, 18/2-1994. Rightfully then, in-depth assessments and interpretations of Münzenberg are preferably found in Wessel (1991); Tania Schlie/Simone Roche (Hrsg.), *Willi Münzenberg: ein deutscher Kommunist im Spannungsfeld zwischen Stalinismus und Antifaschismus*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1995; Theo Pinkus (Hrsg.), *Willi Münzenberg. Eine Dokumentation zur Muezenberg-Tagung im September 1989 in Zuerich*, Zusammengestellt von Peter Vonderhagen und Brigitte Walz-Richter, Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Zürich (1990).

to organise international anti-imperialist activity and propaganda. Nevertheless, Barooah focuses on Chatto's ties to the Indian nationalist movement in Europe and India and his personal relations, e.g. his intimate relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru as well as on Chatto's engagement to the well-known Agnes Smedley. After having conducted research over a period of thirty years, Barooah presents a balanced and thorough study of Chatto, although crucial aspects in the histories of both the LAI and Chatto are inaccurate.⁴³

The LAI was an international organisation which aspired to make an impact on the international political scene, thus, this has resulted in different historical interpretations: the historiography of transcontinental racial and nationalist movements, subaltern studies on colonial oppression as well as in regional and national studies of the growth of communism in both an imperialist as well as a colonial and semi-colonial context. All of the above fields concur in recognising the LAI as a distributor of anti-imperialist propaganda and, above all, as a source of inspiration. Research on Pan-Africanism, the "Black Belt" movement, and African nationalism during the inter-war years has largely discussed the LAI and its role in the framework of the Negro question and communism. Immanuel Geiss' ground-breaking study, *Panafrikanismus* (1968), claimed that communism and the LAI contributed to the strengthening of the struggle against colonialism in Africa, as communism was also an ideological alternative to the socialist and eclectic agenda of the Pan-African movement, inspired by the writings of William E. Burghardt du Bois and Marcus Garvey. J. Ayodele Langley elaborated further on Geiss' contentions in *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945* (1973), basing his narrative on the LAI on the writings of Padmore, Carew Hunt, A. Fenner Brockway's memoir *Inside the Left* (1942) and by interviewing the British socialist and one-time Secretary of the British LAI Section, Reginald Bridgeman. The opening up of the archives in Russia significantly changed the scientific and critical evaluation of the Pan-African movement and African nationalism and its links to international communism. Research results presented by historians such as Hakim Adi, Robbie Aitken and Mark Salomon as well as Holger Weiss' research project, "Comintern and African Nationalism, 1921-1935" initiated at Åbo Akademi University, link together the African and transatlantic Black radical movements with the anti-imperialist movement in Europe during the inter-war years.⁴⁴

⁴³ The errors included in Barooah are further discussed in this analysis. Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto. The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp.246-282. Other biographies and memoirs that mention the LAI are John Callaghan, *Rajani Palme Dutt. A Study in British Stalinism*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1993; Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru. A Biography Volume One 1889-1947*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1975; Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru*, Routledge, Oxon, 2004. Nehru's own account of the LAI in 1927 is worth reading, see Nehru (1953).

⁴⁴ The Comintern addressed Africa and the Afro-American population in the USA as the "Negro question", see further

Research on the emergence and characteristics of the Indian independence movement during the inter-war years and the history of Indian communism is vast and encompasses a wide variety of interpretations. Sobhanlal Datta Gupta's study, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943* (2006), is a pertinent example of the peripheral understanding of the LAI and its involvement in Indian politics. So too is the discerning analysis by Milton Israel in *Communications and Power* (1994), which unravels the links of communication and networks within the Indian nationalist struggle and links them with the anti-imperialist movement in Europe, in which the LAI and its International Secretariat played "a key role", as Israel states.⁴⁵

Josephine Fowler's analysis of the organisational contribution of Japanese and Chinese immigrants in international communist movements (2007) illustrates the global spread of the anti-imperialist movement, and is shrewd from the perspective that it puts the LAI in a migratory, multilingual, and transnational context, defining the organisation as a subject of inspiration.⁴⁶ The LAI's activity has also featured in national studies of the inter-war political history. Susanne Heyn's article, "Der kolonialkritische Diskurs der Weimarer Friedensbewegung zwischen Antikolonialismus und Kulturmission" (2005), analyses the colonial discussion in Germany after the Great War. Heyn categorises the LAI and its forerunner, the *League against Colonial*

in James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934, in *The American Historical Review*, The American Historical Association, Washington, Vol.106, Issue 2, 2001; Imanuel Geiss, *Panafrikanismus. Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, pp.251-264; J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945. A Study in Ideology and Social Classes*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, pp.308-310; P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism. The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*, Howard University Press, Washington, 1994. For Marcus Garvey, see the editorial work of Robert A. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, University of California Press, Berkeley (1986). For W. E. B. du Bois, see Bill V. Mullen, "Du Bois, Dark Princess, and the Afro-Asian International", in *Positions*, 11:1, Duke University Press, Durham Spring, 2003. For research on the African question, carried out from the 1990s and onward, see Hakim Adi, "The African Diaspora, Pan-Africanism and Anticolonial Ideologies", in *The Dark Webs. Perspectives on Colonialism in Africa*, Toyin Falola (ed.), Carolina Academic Press, Durham, 2005, pp.75-96; Hakim Adi, "Pan-Africanism and communism: the Comintern, the 'Negro' Question and the First International Conference of Negro Workers, Hamburg, 1930", in *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 1:2, Routledge, London, 2008, pp.237-254; Robbie Aitken, "From Cameroon to Germany and Back via Moscow and Paris: The Political Career of Joseph Bilé (1892-1959), Performer, 'Negerarbeiter', and Comintern Activist", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.43, No.4, Sage Publications, London, 2008, pp.597-616; Mark Salomon, *Cry was Unity. Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, (1998); Holger Weiss, *The Making of a Radical African Atlantic, 1922-1937: African American Agency, African Nationalists and the Comintern Connection* (unpublished manuscript), Åbo Akademi University (2011).

⁴⁵ Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943. Dialectics of Real and a Possible History*, Seribaan, Kolkata, 2006; Milton Israel, *Communications and power. Propaganda and the press in the Indian nationalist struggle, 1920-1947*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994. See John Callaghan, "Storm Over Asia: Comintern Colonial Policy in the Third Period", in *In Search of Revolution. International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, Matthew Worley (ed.), I. B. Tauris, London, 2004, pp.18-37. The dated yet still useful studies which provide biographical information on individuals tied to the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement, are Gene D. Overstreet & Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1959, and Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India. With Unpublished Documents from National Archives of India (1919-1924)*, compiled and edited by Subodh Roy, Editions Indian, Calcutta, 1971; see also John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971.

⁴⁶ Fowler (2007).

Oppression (LACO), within the context of the pacifist movement, as one of the most scathing critics against the pro-colonial movement in Germany in the 1920s.⁴⁷ In-depth accounts of the British and Irish LAI sections are to be found in Jean Jones' (1996) and Kate O'Malley's (2003) articles, studies which shed light on how the LAI gained attention among anti-colonial circles in Great Britain.⁴⁸ Ricardo Melgar Bao's examination of the Latin American anti-imperialist movement is illustrative of how the LAI has been a misunderstood topic and, despite recognising its central role within the international anti-imperialist movement, Bao only re-enacts the existing misreading of the organisation by referring to secondary sources.⁴⁹ Thomas Kampen's article, "Solidarität und Propaganda: Willi Münzenberg, die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe und China", is an intriguing study which analyses how the IAH and Münzenberg strove to consolidate the theme of "proletarian solidarity" in order to strengthen their material and moral campaigns in support of the Chinese struggle in 1925 and onwards throughout the 1920s. Kampen concludes that the LAI was a relevant actor which developed and strengthened the anti-imperialist movement and functioned as a centre of experience for the individuals involved in the organisation.⁵⁰

This critical survey of previous research into the LAI has shown, in its essence, that there exists a fundamental scarcity of information on how and why the LAI came into existence. However, from this historiography in passim, it is clear that the LAI is a topic which has been primarily interpreted as a political history from below, with a focus on the involved individuals (Münzenberg, Chatto), the Comintern connection or the socio-political *milieu* of which the LAI was a part during the inter-war years. This is an approach found particularly in the works of Haikal, Piazza and Martin, whilst biographical works and memoirs are frequently littered with inconsistencies or erroneous accounts. With the inclusion of the LAI within the history of decolonisation, and as a central actor within the postcolonial critique, the organisation has been raised to a different level, assuming a symbolic value driven by a ceremonial impetus. For example, the nostalgia of the LAI and its spiritual bond to the "Bandung moment" in 1955 is a

⁴⁷ Susanne Heyn, "Der kolonialkritische Diskurs der Weimarer Friedensbewegung zwischen Antikolonialismus und Kulturmission", in *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für Kritische Afrikastudien*, Nr.9/2005, 5. Jg, pp.37-65.

⁴⁸ Jean Jones, *The League against Imperialism*, Preston, 1996; Kate O'Malley, "The League Against Imperialism: British, Irish and Indian connections", in *Communist History Network Newsletter*, Kevin Morgan & Richard Cross (eds.), No.14, Spring 2003, University of Manchester, Manchester. Matthew Worley's description of the LAI in *Class against Class. The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2002, p.228, is based on Jones. See also Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence. Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008, p.100-101, 205, and for a brief introduction to the LAI in France, see Martin Thomas, "Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat, 1919-1930", in *The Journal of Modern History*, 77 (December 2005), University of Chicago, pp.917-955.

⁴⁹ Ricardo Melgar Bao, "The Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas between the East and Latin America", in *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 159, Vol.35 No.2, March 2008, pp.9-24.

⁵⁰ Thomas Kampen, "Solidarität und Propaganda: Willi Münzenberg, die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe und China", in *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*, Hans-Heinrich Nolte (Hrsg.), Jahrgang 5, Heft 2, Peter Lang, Berlin, (Herbst 2004), pp.99-105.

process described as a “historical sequence” which connected world events with intellectuals and activists, according to Christopher J. Lee (2010). However, Robert J. C. Young observed in *Postcolonialism* (2001) that one must recognise the relevance of the Comintern and the LAI as actors which “laid the basis for the orientation” of the post-war anti-colonial movements.⁵¹ Thus, it is fair to conclude that the historiographical leniency on the LAI has a stronger linkage to the history of the Comintern and, consequently, the present challenge is to discern the complex processes that focus on the formulation of ideas, objectives and instructions emanating from the connections between the LAI and the Comintern. Pivotal to this backdrop is the unravelling of the relations and ties which constituted the networks linking the LAI, the Comintern and the anti-imperialist movement.

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Archives, Documents and Method

This analysis of the LAI relies extensively on unpublished source material located in Russian and European archives.⁵² Printed documentary collections of official communist press material, or those taken from archival holdings in Germany, Russia, Great Britain and the USA, have assisted in providing both evidence and contextual explanations.⁵³ Another essential source is the official protocol of the 1927 Brussels Congress, *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*, published in June 1927, a publication preceded by the abridged version, *Der Brüsseler Kongreß gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, released in March 1927, two accounts which explain how the LAI was introduced to public. The aim here is to: firstly, discuss the vast number of documents extracted from the archives and secondly, to argue for the analytical methodology.

⁵¹ Lee 2010, pp.9-10; Prashad 2007, p.32. See also Young’s discussion on why the LAI and the Comintern “laid the basis for the orientation” for the development of post-war anti-colonial movements (2001, p.176).

⁵² For this study, the consulted archives have been the Comintern Archive (RGASPI) in Moscow; *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv Zentrales Parteiarchiv* (SAPMO-BA, ZPA) in Lichterfelde, Berlin, the *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis* (IISG) in Amsterdam; the *National Archives* (TNA) in Kew Gardens, London (research and extracted documents on the LAI in the TNA have been provided to me by my supervisor professor Holger Weiss); *Stockholm City Archive* (SCA); *Riksarkivet* (RA) in Stockholm; and *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv & bibliotek* (Labour Movement Archive & Library; ARAB) in Stockholm.

⁵³ The following documentary works have been consulted: Jane Degras, *The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents Volume 1-3* (Oxford University Press, London, 1956-1965), Robert V. Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism and the World. From Revolution to Collapse* (third edition, University of Vermont, Hanover, 1994); Edward Acton and Tom Stableford, *The Soviet Union. A Documentary History Volume 1 1917-1940* (University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 2005); Elfriede Lewerenz & Helga Geisler (Hrsg.), *Komintern und revolutionäre Partei. Die Kommunistische Internationale über die revolutionäre Partei und die marxistische-leninistische Weltanschauung der Arbeiterklasse. Auswahl von Dokumenten und Materialien 1919-1943* (Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1986); John Riddell’s editorial corpus, *The Communist International in Lenin’s Time. Lenin’s Struggle for a Revolutionary International. Documents: 1907-1916. The Preparatory Years* (Monad Press, New York, 1984), *The Communist International in Lenin’s Time. Founding the Communist International. Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919* (Pathfinder, New York, 1987) and *To See the Dawn. Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (Pathfinder, New York, 1993); Davidson et al. (2003).

The most valuable archive is the Comintern Archive, a section of the *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii* (Russian State Archive for Social and Political History; RGASPI) in Moscow. Prior to the collapse of communism in Russia in 1991, the Comintern Archive was a mythological institution in the study of international communism, kept under lock and key and located in the *Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism*. In October 1991, the archive re-designated itself as the *Russian Centre for Preservation and Study of Modern History Records* (RTsKhIDNI) and, with the *Rosarkhiv* reform in March 1999, the archive assumed its present name (RGASPI). Known for being the major source for the historical study of international communism and the Comintern during the existence of the Soviet Union, the Comintern Archive was, as noted by historian Branko Lazitch, subjected to the “Kremlin’s silence”. However, after 1991, it was no longer possible to remain silent. According to the former Director of the RGASPI, Kirill Anderson, in connection with the declaration of the “openness of archival information” in Russia in October 1991, the scholarly community could critically test the myths of communism by either visiting the archive in person, or consulting the Comintern Archive on the Internet (INCOMKA).⁵⁴

The Comintern Archive is an eclectic documentary resource. Despite its large quota of personal files (*lichnye delo*) on Comintern cadres,⁵⁵ the archive is not primarily a biographical source. On the contrary, the archive is a political archive which delineates the dynamics of communism as an ideology as well as the practical and theoretical efforts to promote communism and world revolution on a global scale. This involves, above all, an organisational framework and belief system represented by high-ranking decision makers and departments that reached all the way down to the grass roots of the movement. From its inception a multi-linguistic organisation, the Comintern engaged people from all the corners of the world who were not skilful in the Russian

⁵⁴ The bulk of literature in Russian archives illustrates the inquisitiveness amongst the scholarly community to discuss openness *versus* political sensitiveness, the character and content of the archives, collections and research possibilities. See further in the writings of historian and researcher on Russia, Patricia Kennedy Grimstead, and her research papers on Russian archives, for example, *Archives of Russia Five Years After: 'Purveyors of Sensations' or 'Shadows Cast to the Past'?*, Research Papers, IISG, Amsterdam, 1997, and “Russia’s ‘Trophy’ Archives—Still Prisoners of World War II?” (March 25 2002; taken from the Internet: < <http://www.osa.ceu.hu> >). Stephen Kotkin’s conclusion on the archival situation is also worth noting in this context, Stephen Kotkin, “1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.70, No.2 (Jun., 1998), The University of Chicago Press, pp.384-425; Lazitch 1986, p.viii; and Kirill Anderson, “A New Life for the Comintern Archives”, in *Comma*, International Council on Archives, Paris, 2002.3-4, pp.157-158. INCOMKA (*International Committee on the Project of Computerization of the Comintern Archive*) was a joint project initiated on the initiative of the *Federal Archival Service of Russia* (Rosarkhiv), and the *International Council on Archives* (ICA) in 1996. The original idea was to digitize a minor part of the holdings in the Comintern Archive (not the *fonds* of communist parties) to make the archive “visible”. The Comintern Archive consists of approximately 220,000 collections/*fonds* (between 20 and 25 million documents). The INCOMKA project has digitised approximately 1 million documents. For quantitative data, see Internet: < <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/db/fa/381.htm> >.

⁵⁵ John Earl Haynes, “170,000 Names for the INCOMKA Database of the Comintern Archives. The Results of International Cooperation”, in *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung / The International Newsletter of Communist Studies*, Mannheim, 2003, pp.360-375.

language, but who either chose to live in Moscow, travelled abroad on assignments or acted as plenipotentiaries of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI).⁵⁶ This meant that the Comintern had to issue directives and administrative instruction in a language comprehensible to everyone, thus, and considering the dominant influx of German communists as KPD representatives in Moscow, the German language was the *lingua franca* within the Comintern apparatus, lasting well into the 1930s.⁵⁷

The documents on the LAI are, at first glance, filed in a separate collection in the Comintern Archive or, according to the Russian archival system, *fond* 542 “Antiimperialistitsheskaja liga”, which holds 103 dossiers.⁵⁸ The documents in the LAI *fond* consist of a mixed assortment of correspondence, protocols of meetings and conferences, monthly reports from the International Secretariat in Berlin to Comintern headquarters in Moscow. In addition, there are personal letters, reports on individuals involved in the LAI, lists of members and attending participants at the two LAI congresses in Brussels (1927) and Frankfurt am Main (1929), budget proposals and financial negotiations, analytical reports of global events and political assessments in the shape of resolutions or intelligence.⁵⁹

The Comintern Archive is an organic archive. Despite the existence of a separate LAI *fond*, one must not overlook the observation that other documents on the organisation are located in a number of other *fonds* in the archive. From this standpoint, having attained this understanding of the archive, which tacitly unravels the structural functions of the Comintern, this analysis provides an in-depth study of the organisational dynamics at work, which existed in both horizontal and vertical structures. Thus, the understanding of the archive has, in turn, assisted the process of linking together the LAI with an array of institutional bodies, all active at the headquarters of the Comintern in Moscow: the ECCI Secretariat (495/18), the ECCI Bureau (495/20), the ECCI Bureau Secretariat (495/103), the Political Secretariat (495/3), the Political Commission (495/4),

⁵⁶ For conspiratorial work and behavioral norms imposed on the ECCI representatives and within the Comintern apparatus, see Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *The “Special” World. Stalin’s power apparatus and the Soviet system’s secret structures of communication 2*, Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 2009, pp.169-184.

⁵⁷ Weitz 1997, p.242. The documents examined and referred to in this study are in the following languages: German, English, French, Spanish and Russian.

⁵⁸ *Fond* designates collections that contain “personal papers and/or collections as well as groups of institutional records”. The reference system in this study follows the logic of *fond/collection*, *opis/inventory*, *delo/dossier*, and *list/page*: RGASPI *fond/opis/delo*, and *list/page* (fol.). See Grimstead (2002).

⁵⁹ “Intelligence” is perceived as a systematic strategy the LAI adhered to in order to supply Comintern headquarters with information on how both the organisation and the anti-colonial movement(s), were progressing. Its primary purpose was to facilitate the process of establishing strategies, or improve and enhance the policy choices made in Moscow. Thus, intelligence constituted a crucial part in the decision-making process. Martin Thomas’ discussion in *Empires of Intelligence* on human intelligence (Humint) as an “essential feature of the modern nation-state” to “integrate incoming information” is well-worth bearing in mind in this context, see Thomas 2008, pp.21-22. However, the collection of intelligence and the system of administration connecting Berlin with Moscow is not referred to as a process of “Humint” throughout this study. A similar definition of “intelligence” is given in Edward Waltz, *Knowledge Management in the Intelligence Enterprise*, Boston, 2003, p.1.

the Small Commission (495/6), the Standing Commission (495/7), the Eastern Secretariat (495/154), the West European Bureau (499/1), *fond* of secretary Iosif (Osip) Piatnitsky (495/19), the ECCI Organisational Bureau (495/25), the ECCI Agitprop Department (495/30) and the *fond* for “temporary” commissions of the ECCI (495/60). In addition, the LAI had extensive or brief collaborations with other international mass or sympathising organisations of the Comintern, e.g. *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (538), *Internationale Rote Hilfe* (539), *Peasants International/Krestintern* (535), *Profintern/Red International of Labour Unions* (534) as well as playing a crucial part in the emerging anti-Fascist movement (543/1). Documents on the LAI in the above-mentioned *fonds* are of a different character in comparison to the ones located in the LAI *fond*, e.g. protocols and decisions that focus on political, organisational and individual questions. This also concerns documents of different commissions, e.g. the “Commission for the Examination of the Question of a Colonial Congress in Brussels” (CEQCCB) in Moscow in 1926-27, as well as sources that disclose investigations and evaluations carried out by the Comintern on the anti-imperialist movement and the colonial work amongst the European communist parties, as well as accounts of the consistent interactionism the LAI had with the communist movement.⁶⁰ The large number of personal files (*lichnye dela*) in the Comintern Archive is, nevertheless, a valuable source, especially the ones linked directly to the LAI. Due to ethical restrictions on the release of the whole file, this is a challenge and a conundrum which, as noted by Alexander Vatlin, has to change in order to aid the process of reaching a full understanding of the nature of the Comintern. However, despite this conundrum, I have been fortunate enough to have been able to consult a fair share of the documents (not entire dossiers) in personal files. Material that has shed additional light on how the individuals experienced and, in some cases, described their commitment to the international communist movement. These personal files are, in a sense, testimonies which expose the obscure and tragic fates that a majority of these actors ultimately faced.⁶¹

The Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BA ZPA) in Lichterfelde, Berlin, is quite similar to the RGASPI: a political archive containing the dossiers of the Zentralkomitee der KPD (ZK KPD), the documents of the Berlin and Prussian police authorities (the *Schutzpolizei* and the Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung/Reich Commissar for the

⁶⁰ 53 *fonds* have been analysed in the Comintern Archive during this research, see further in *Bibliography: Archives, Sources and Literature*.

⁶¹ The archival staff at the Comintern Archive informed me prior to being able to examine the personal files, e.g. Münzenberg’s file (RGASPI 495/205/7000), that personal affidavits from the next of kin are needed in order to consult personal files. See further discussion on ethical questions in Vatlin 2009, p.169. A constructive and well-structured analysis, based on an extensive examination of personal files in the Comintern Archive, is Peter Huber’s study of the Swiss communist community in Moscow during the Stalinist repression; see Peter Huber, *Stalins Schatten in die Schweiz. Schweizer Kommunisten in Moskau: Verteidiger und Gefangene der Komintern*, Chronos Verlag, Zürich, (1995).

Supervision of Public Order, RKÜöO) as well as of governmental agencies such as the *Auswärtige Amt* (the German Foreign Department) and the Prussian Ministry of the Interior (Ministerium des Innern; MdI).⁶² The content of these documents provides an account, for example, of the correspondence from the ZK KPD to the German ECCI delegation in Moscow, the activities of the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement in Germany,⁶³ whilst articles (collected by the national security services) from the German communist press, e.g. the Comintern weekly paper, the *International Press Correspondence (Inprecorr)*, *Die Rote Fahne*, *Welt am Abend*, *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (A-I-Z), illustrate the public presentation of the LAI, sources which the German security services used to analyse the German communist movement. Additionally, RKÜöO reports and assessments on the colonial community in Berlin and across Germany, reveal the ties linking active foreign residents with the LAI and the International Secretariat. In 1926, *Auswärtige Amt* decided to keep a special dossier on the anti-colonial movement, a file which reveals the emergence of the anti-colonial movement in Berlin and, later, within the LAI. The personal files at SAPMO-BA are quite different from the ones at RGASPI. The content in these files exposes the retrospective experiences and agony of numerous individuals during the Second World War, actors who later assumed leading positions in connection with the establishment of the GDR. Hence, this is a source of information that makes it possible to assess the efforts of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland* (the KPD's successor; SED) in order to revise the history of German communism during the inter-war years. This historiographical process, aptly described as "politics of biography", emerged in the GDR during the 1950s and 1960s, often resulting in former communists (e.g. Münzenberg) being subjected to degradation, erroneous descriptions or simply being erased from the annals of history.⁶⁴

The dossiers and documents on the LAI at the National Archives (TNA), Kew Gardens, London, are characteristic of the type of intelligence linked exclusively to national security services (MI5, Scotland Yard), but also of the work of colonial administrative agencies such as the Colonial Office (CO) and the Home Office (HO).⁶⁵ A majority of the documents are assessments,

⁶² Groundbreaking empirical research in this context is Hermann Weber, *Der deutsche Kommunismus: Dokumente*, Köln (1963), and Karl Dietrich (Hrsg.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien. Bd 6, Die Generallinie: Rundschreiben des Zentralkomitees der KPD an die Bezirke 1929-1933*, Düsseldorf, Droste (1981).

⁶³ Microfilmed documents from the Comintern Archive were passed on from the *Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism* in Moscow during the 1970s to the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus* in Berlin.

⁶⁴ Epstein 2003, p.10. Illustrative of the above is the SED-sanctioned biographical work, *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung Biographisches Lexikon* (Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1970), which reduce Münzenberg's role and involvement in the German communist movement during the inter-war years, see K. Haferkorn, „Münzenberg, Wilhelm“, in *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung Biographisches Lexikon*, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (Hrsg.), Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1970, pp.340-342. With the opening of the archives in Moscow and Berlin, it has been possible to produce a more balanced biographical presentation, see Weber & Herbst (2004).

⁶⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the activities and strategies of British security services in the colonies during the inter-war years, see Thomas (2008).

compiled by the British security services, of the spread of anti-colonial/imperialist activism across the Empire and in Great Britain, embodied either by the LAI or by Comintern personages and colonial activists on British soil. This surveillance was an extensive system which relied on the interception of correspondence, a thorough scrutinizing of the British communist press and an exchange of intelligence with other foreign security services, e.g. the German and the Dutch. The principal strength of the TNA documents serves a two-fold purpose. Firstly, these accounts illustrate how British authorities pressured and demanded of its German counterpart to increase its surveillance of the communist movement in Germany. Secondly, a number of personal files on leading and less known communists, e.g. Münzenberg, the Hungarian Laszlo Dobos/Louis Gibarti and the Ukrainian Comintern emissary, David Alexandrovich Petrovsky, have contributed to establishing a deeper understanding of these actors' activities.

The IISG in Amsterdam has, aside from the LAI *fond* in the Comintern Archive and the LAI dossier at Stockholm City Archive (SCA, see below), a specified LAI collection. Located and divided chronologically into three dossiers, this collection contains (for the most part) published material on the LAI: invitations to and resolutions from the two international LAI congresses, and the General Council in Brussels, 9-11 December, 1927; transcripts of speeches; articles on the congresses of the LAI in contemporary journals; and newspapers. These sources have aided the analytical work of piecing together an understanding of the official presentation of the LAI. Oscar H. Swede (1900 – 1942), a pacifist from Great Britain, collected and passed on these documents to the IISG, a service also performed by the Dutch socialist and journalist Gijsbert Jasper van Munster.⁶⁶ Other collections at the IISG, e.g. the “Labour and Socialist Archives” contain documents that provide an account of how the LSI perceived the LAI and how it established a political discourse towards the LAI, a process directed by both the social democratic leader of Switzerland and secretary of the LSI, Friedrich Adler, and the International Secretary of the British *Labour Party*, William Gillies. Additionally, the papers of Swiss socialist and Münzenberg's personal friend, Fritz Brupbacher, a refreshing detour from the political narrative, provide an insight into the life of Münzenberg and Babette Gross in both Berlin and Paris.⁶⁷

Official publications, released by the LAI during 1928-1932, have been located in an LAI dossier in the personal collection of Carl Lindhagen at the SCA in Stockholm. Lindhagen was the Mayor of Stockholm, but was most renowned for his commitment to the pacifist and socialist

⁶⁶ Biographical information on Oscar H. Swede is taken from the IISG website, see Internet: < <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/en/files/s/10770731full.php> >. Prashad's account of the LAI is based (to a large extent) on the LAI Collection (3392.1) at IISG.

⁶⁷ Other examined collections at the IISG are the two dossiers on the “World Congress against the Imperialist War” (3390.2); the personal papers of socialist Leo Levy; the catalogue of the P. C. Joshi's Archives (volume 7) deposited at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Archives on Contemporary History in New Delhi.

movements. Two reasons explain why Lindhagen collected material on the LAI. Firstly, his personal relationship to Chatto (established during Chatto's exile in Stockholm in 1917-21), and secondly, Lindhagen fervently supported issues focusing on pacifism, colonialism and international relations.⁶⁸ The publications gathered by Lindhagen are *Pressedienst*, and *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, material released by the International Secretariat during 1928-32. Additionally, the dossier contains official material (resolutions and transcripts of speeches) from the second LAI Congress in Frankfurt am Main, in 1929, and letters from Münzenberg and Chatto. Other archives, consulted in Stockholm, are a crucial source for research on the labour movement, *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv & bibliotek* (Labour Movement Archive & Library; ARAB),⁶⁹ which consist of a vast collection of literature on international communism and the labour movement during the inter-war years, as well as the collections of the Swedish *Foreign Department* and the national security service at Riksarkivet (National Archives; RA).

The ambiguous history of the LAI confirms itself from this brief review of the available documents. It is therefore essential to establish methodological patterns in order to categorise, evaluate and analyse the empirical material. This observation comes from the realisation that the documents introduce a multitude of thematic threads which, due to their sheer quantitative size, require that the sources are placed in their proper context before attempting to establish causal explanations. Therefore, my analytical process has gone through three phases. Firstly, the history of the LAI is primarily a political history, with a focus on the obligations and restrictions the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in Moscow imposed on the individuals at the International Secretariat in Berlin. Yet, of equal relevance is a discussion of the observation that the history of the LAI does not only come across as a topic, explained within a political framework, but rather, this is a history that belongs to the global history of international communism. For this reason, and in order to avoid an overtly deterministic political narrative, the beginning and end of which are well known, other interpretative schemas have to be included. Biographical accounts (personal files, or biographies and memoirs, have made it possible to place

⁶⁸ The documents on the LAI at the Stockholm City Archive are referred to as the SCA CL Collection in this study. Carl Lindhagen's involvement with the LAI has been discussed by me in two articles, see Fredrik Petersson, "Proletariatets proviantkolonn: Internationella arbetarhjälpen i Sverige", in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, 2:2009, Historiska föreningen, Helsingfors, pp.220-247, and CoWoPa (Comintern Working Papers) 5, "Varför en liga mot imperialism? Grundandet av League against Imperialism 1927", Holger Weiss (red.), Åbo Akademi University, 2005, see Internet: < <https://www.abo.fi/student/media/7957/cowopa5petersson.pdf> >. Barooah (2003) has also consulted the LAI dossier in the CL Collection at SCA, "Carl Lindhagens samling 820, volume 131: Ligue contre l'Imperialisme, 1927 – 1932".

⁶⁹ In 1965, Witold S. Sworakowski stated that the literature collection at ARAB was a very useful source for scholars and researchers on the labour and communist movement, see Witold S. Sworakowski, *The Communist International and its Front Organisations – a Research Guide and Checklist of Holdings In American and European Libraries* (Stanford, 1965). An opinion highlighted by Weber & Herbst (Berlin, 2004).

the individuals in a central role, especially by revealing their engagement and the pressure(s) imposed upon them. This approach also entails a social context, e.g. living conditions, social ties and personal conflicts, factors that give the analysis a deeper dimension. In order to do this, this analysis must establish a fundamental understanding of the LAI within the context of the international situation in the 1920s and 1930s. A perspective that focuses particularly on the emergence or continuance of conflicts in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the political and social struggles in Germany and the Soviet Union and the global effects of the economic recession and its ensuing depression after 1929, contexts which provided the LAI with the impetus to shape an anti-imperialist agenda. Linked to the general research objective of this study, these contexts help to explain how and why the LAI and the Comintern conceived its strategies or put into practice political and organisational directives.⁷⁰ Secondly, this thesis relies primarily on documents in the Comintern Archive; however, this empirical dictum makes it necessary to reflect upon Kevin McDermott's remark that the Comintern Archive is "an indispensable source" where "historians ... tend to find what they want to find". Consequently, to reach a deeper understanding of the actual political and geographical ramifications of the LAI, sources located in other archives have corroborated the "central workings" of the Comintern apparatus in Moscow and enabled an understanding not only from above, but also, from below.⁷¹ The third phase concerns the logic of categorisation. By dividing the empirical material into three categories – political, organisational, and individual – this has helped to elucidate and evaluate the content of the documents as well as strengthened the analytical process. Furthermore, by categorising the sources, this has either clarified or validated critical source questions, e.g. authenticity, provenance, the date of production and type of documents (letters, protocols, directives, consultative material, intelligence and resolutions), purpose and aim as well as author and receiver. This categorisation has also either questioned the credibility of some sources or determined the position of various actors within the network. Finally, the categories have distinct thematic threads which separate the political – organisational – individual levels from each other, especially the relations between the International Secretariat and Comintern headquarters.

⁷⁰ Weitz is critical of a deterministic reading of communist history, above all the political history, a perspective of essential value for the methodology of this thesis, see Weitz 1997, pp.12-13; C. Behan McCullagh, *The Logic of History. Putting postmodernism in perspective*, Routledge, London, 2004, p.185.

⁷¹ McDermott 1998, pp.37-38. An example of McDermott's proposition is the empirical study of the German October 1923, which introduces and analyses documents from the party records of the Central Committee of the CPSU (B) located in the Comintern Archive and the Presidential Archive in Moscow, see Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Leonid G. Babichenko, Fridrich I. Firsov & Aleksandr Ju. Vatlin (Hrsg), *Deutsche Oktober 1923. Ein Revolutionsplan und sein Scheitern*, Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin (2003).

Table 1.1: Categorisation of the Empirical Material

Theme	Level
Political/Ideology	High/From Above/ Institutional/Hierarchical
Organisational	Middle/The Methodological Link between the Political and Individual Level/Bureaucracy
Individual	Low/From Below/Hierarchical

This categorisation also helps to distinguish a system of hierarchies of relations (see further below) which flow in both a vertical and a horizontal direction. Thus, the methodological approach has eased the process of establishing generalisations on the political and individual level, with the organisational level being the connection linking together the necessary incentives to realise an idea, a strategy or directives. However, this was a process determined by the rigid and bureaucratic structure at the headquarters of the Comintern in Moscow. Ultimately, historical investigations which seek to explain organisational changes focus on mapping out the origin of changes, a perspective which aims to discern patterns either from above or from below. The former focuses on how “rules were implemented, who came up with a plan for a change, who lobbied whom to support the proposal” (Comintern headquarters), while the latter focuses on the study of “departures from regulations” from above, which became so regular “as to constitute a new practice” in the behaviour within the sections of the Comintern (the International Secretariat).⁷² The sources show that the Comintern's authority followed its own rational logic and, therefore, this study aims to interpret how the International Secretariat reacted to the system of administration sponsored by the Comintern headquarters in Moscow.

Aside from categorising the sources in a proper context, especially since a majority of the documents extracted from the archives (the Comintern Archive, SAPMO and TNA) were never intended to undergo a critical investigation, this study seeks to accomplish (as far as possible) a “genuine” history of the LAI.⁷³ As separate accounts, each archive reveals an incomplete narrative; the methodological principle in the study has therefore adopted the cut-and-paste approach,⁷⁴ an

⁷² McCullagh 2004, p.187.

⁷³ John Costello and Oleg Tsarev's sensationalist study *Deadly Illusions* (Century, London, 1993) on Soviet espionage techniques concluded that “Soviet intelligence officers of that time never thought that their files would become a historical source, since it was never anticipated that even a formal institutional history would ever need to be written. The contemporary records were only kept to satisfy immediate and practical needs”, see Costello & Tsarev 1993, p.xxi. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov's *The Secret World of American Communism* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995, p.4) corroborate this opinion. A similar discussion is outlined in Davidson et al (2003, p.2), whilst Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen & Andrew Flinn (eds.) (2005, p.14) focus on the present opportunity to reach a “genuine historicisation” on the history of international communism.

⁷⁴ The “cut and paste” methodology was introduced by the author in Fredrik Petersson, “The League against Imperialism: The Most Valuable Organizational Tool for Bolshevik Propaganda in the ‘Imperialist’ and Colonial World during the Interwar Era? Synopsis of a doctoral thesis”, in *The International Newsletter of Communist Studies Online*, Bernhard H. Bayerlein (ed.), The European Workshop of Communist Studies, Mannheim, Vol. XIII (2007), No.20, pp.105-110.

approach which has contributed to the unravelling of the inner dynamics of structural relations and, in particular, the discussion concerning the reason why the Comintern endorsed the establishment of the LAI and how the organisation received support from the Comintern. The cut-and-paste methodology strives first to establish a number of observations in order to validate causal explanations and, secondly, to map out the empirical labyrinth. This is comparable to locating previously unknown “doors” to unknown “rooms”; hence, this methodology has helped to solve a number of questions. As noted in the critical assessment of structural analysis by sociologist Barry Wellman, this is a methodology inspired by tracing “lateral and vertical flows of information”. According to Wellman, this belongs to the “whole network approach”, which strives to identify “sources and targets” and “detect structural constraints on flows of resources”, a methodology and perspective which help to explain the structural boundaries of this study: to introduce and evaluate the relationships between the actors on an individual and institutional level, with ideology representing the mobilising factor. The network approach in this study aims to link together actors in a network of networks, actors belonging to separate or similar political groups and social categories, but who were unified by their political and anti-colonial activism.⁷⁵ Hence, a pivotal task for this study is to distinguish these network(s), particularly the interactionism between the International Secretariat in Berlin and Comintern headquarters in Moscow. The challenge is, however, according to the proposition outlined in historian Niels Erik Rosenfeldt’s analysis of the “secret apparatus” of the Comintern, to detect the “highly fragmented system” which the Comintern constructed in order to obscure and blur communications and connections.⁷⁶ As the LAI was a result of ideas introduced by the Comintern, the network analysis also strives to differentiate between ties of exchange and dependency. The reason for doing so is to understand the nature of the central functions within the LAI and the Comintern, e.g. to delineate the exchange of communications, the implementation of authority, power and control, to identify senders and

⁷⁵ Barry Wellman, “Structural analysis: from method and metaphor to theory and substance”, in *Social Structures. A Network Approach* (first edition: 1988), Barry Wellman & S. D. Berkowitz (eds.), Contemporary Studies in Sociology, Volume 15, JAI Press Inc, London, 1997, p.21, 26. A network can in many cases be interpreted and perceived in terms of a web. J. R. McNeill and William McNeill define a web as a “set of connections that link people to one another. These connections may take many forms: chance encounters, kinship, friendship, common worship, rivalry, enmity, economic exchange, ecological exchange, political cooperation, even military competition. In all such relationships, people communicate information and use that information to guide their future behaviour. They also communicate, or transfer, useful technologies, goods, crops, ideas and much else. [...] The exchange and spread of such information, [...] and inconveniences, and human responses to them, is what shapes history”, see J. R. McNeill & William McNeill, *The Human Web. A Bird's-Eye View of World History*, New York, 2003, pp.3-4.

⁷⁶ Rosenfeldt (2) 2009, p.179. An example of the above and, above all, in reference to the administrative system of the Comintern apparatus, see the table introduced in “Kominternhovedkvarteret – ‘Verdensrevolutionens generalstab’ – 1926-35”, in Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *Verdensrevolutionens generalstab. Komintern og det hemmelige apparat*, Gads Forlag, Kobenhavn, 2011, p.139. Edward Waltz’ analysis of the flow of communications in organizations, implies that the study of networks and the “structure and flow of knowledge” is somewhat “as mapping – explicitly representing the network of nodes (competencies) and links (relationships, knowledge flow paths) within the organization”, see Waltz 2003, p.112.

receivers and to establish both the actors who were a part of the LAI network and those who established networks of their own.⁷⁷

Central actors in this study are both individuals and institutions. In two cities, Berlin (the “global village” of the Comintern), and Moscow (Comintern headquarters), the individual actors came from different social, cultural and political backgrounds, whilst the institutions, above all the departments of the Comintern in Moscow, had a structural constraint on the LAI, either by sanctioning or restricting its activity. Who were the leading individuals within the LAI network? Is it possible to differentiate between the individual and institutional actors within both the LAI and the Comintern? Firstly, the *dramatis personae* (see Appendix II) of each actor focuses on disclosing their function and position within the LAI, a perspective that must include a topographical factor (Berlin and Moscow), especially as the social and political setting of these two cities were diametrically opposed to each other. Secondly, the “secret apparatus” and “basic rules of conspiracy” of the Comintern is a thematic framework that becomes evident in the “whole network approach”. However, where and when such aspects appear, first and foremost the highly secretive “Department for International Communications” (*Otdel mezhdunarodnoi svyazi*; OMS), a department which nevertheless must be perceived as a constituent and natural part of an organisational system that facilitated the distribution of political and administrative directives from Moscow to the national sections.⁷⁸ Thirdly, in order to coherently illustrate the networks of the LAI, the Comintern and of the anti-imperialist movement, especially its clusters (institutions, committees or commissions), a number of tables in the study delineate relevant organisational and egocentric networks.⁷⁹

The International Secretariat was the host, political and organisational educational centre, and meeting place for actors belonging to either the international communist movement or the anti-colonial movement. Throughout the chronology of this study, Münzenberg possesses a symbolic role as the informal leader of the LAI who took care of the contacts with both Comintern headquarters in Moscow and the ZK KPD in Berlin. However, other individuals were of equal importance, especially the *secretaries*: the Indian nationalist revolutionary and journalist Virendranath Chattophadyaya (1880 – 1937); the Hungarian communist and journalist Louis Gibarti (real name: Laszlo Dobos, 1895 – 1967); CPGB member and journalist Clemens Dutt (1893 – 1974); the Turkish communist and Comintern emissary Bekar Ferdi (real name: Mechnet

⁷⁷ Wellman 1997, pp.29-32; Cilja Harders, “Dimensionen des Netzwerkansatzes. Einführende theoretische Überlegungen”, in *Die islamische Welt als Netzwerk. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Netzwerkansatzes im islamischen Kontext*, Roman Loimeier (ed.), Ergon Verlag, Würzburg, 2000, p.41.

⁷⁸ See Rosenfeldt (2009 [2], pp.169-292) and Huber’s analysis on the “secret apparatus” of the Comintern and OMS (1995, pp.28-36).

⁷⁹ Wellman 1997, p.27, 43.

Schefik, 1890 – ?); Bohumil Smeral from Czechoslovakia and emissary of the Comintern (1880 – 1941); and the Japanese-Danish communist Hans Thøgersen (pseudonyms: “York”, “Miller”; 1902 – ?). Assisting the work of the secretaries, *functionaries* also played a crucial role: the Chinese Kuomintang representative and communist Hansin Liao (? – 1964); the Swiss communist and IAH functionary Federico Bach (real name: Fritz Sulzbacher, 1897 – 1978); the radical Japanese nationalist Teido Kunizaki who, during his German tenure, turned to communism (1894 - ?); the German communist and Sinologist Karl August Wittfogel (1896 – 1988); CPGB member Emile Burns (1889 – 1972); the German communist and IAH functionary Allo Bayer (?-?); the Swiss communist and IAH functionary Otto Schudel (1902 – 1979); and the German communist and steno-typist at the International Secretariat Ella Windmüller (?-?). Frequent visits by Comintern *representatives* to Berlin played a pivotal role in the administrative system of the International Secretariat. The well-known Indian revolutionary and communist, Manabendra Nath Roy (1887 – 1954), played a symbolic role in the initial phases of developing both the anti-colonial project and the LAI. The veteran communist from Japan, Sen Katayama (1859 – 1933), who appeared in public at LAI congresses, had a secret function as the leader for the ECCI delegations from Moscow. The British communist, Robin Page Arnot (1890 – 1986), examined the colonial work of the European communist parties in 1929, a process which also influenced the course of events linked to the LAI. Alexander Bittelman (“Alex”, 1890 – 1982), member of the *Workers’ Party America* (the WPA was the precursor to the *Communist Party of the USA*, CPUSA), acted for a short period as liaison for the International Secretariat in Moscow. Finally, the Ukrainian communist and Comintern emissary David Alexandrovich Petrovsky (real name: David Lipetz, 1886 – 1937) carried out a crucial and highly secretive mission (using the pseudonym “Isolde”) preparing the Brussels Congress in Berlin in January 1927. Petrovsky was an actor with numerous aliases: all used in different contexts and for widely-differing purposes.⁸⁰

The clandestine and secretive functions of the *West European Bureau* (the “foreign bureau of the ECCI”; WEB), an institutional actor established in 1928 for the purpose of strengthening the contacts between the ECCI and the national sections in Western Europe, were of great importance

⁸⁰ MI5 compiled a dossier on Petrovsky’s function as an emissary of the Comintern and ECCI representative in the CPGB, see TNA PRO KV2/1433. Davidson et al. (2003) introduced concise biographical sketches of individuals in the Comintern and the anti-colonial movement which, if supplemented with the biographical richness in Jelifets, Jelifets and Huber (eds.) (2004), disclose a majority of the pseudonyms used by Comintern agents and emissaries on international missions. Vilém Kahan had also pondered over the initial purpose as to why pseudonyms were used by the Comintern. For example, to maintain relations with the national sections and the mass organisations under the guise of secrecy, but also the aliases illustrate and give an “insight into the close personal relation between the delegations of the different parties”. The pseudonyms protected also the identity of the emissaries on a mission, as they also increased the chance to manipulate “the organs of the Comintern and its sections”, see Vilém Kahan, *Bibliography of the Communist International (1919-1979) – First Volume*, Leiden, 1990, p.33.

to the LAI.⁸¹ As a relay station for the ECCI, the WEB monitored and controlled whether or not the national sections were implementing the directives from Moscow. Acting as WEB leader in Berlin from 1929 till 1933, the Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov (“Helmut”; 1882 – 1949), was a central actor not only for the LAI, but also for the European communist movement. The German communist Richard Gyptner (“Alarich”, “Magnus”; 1901 – 1972) was the secretary of the WEB and assisted Dimitrov’s work. Other prominent European communists were conscripted to do work for the WEB, e.g. the CPGB member Aitken Ferguson (“Neptun”), the German communist and Profintern representative Fritz Heckert, and Jacques Doriot of the *Partei Communiste Francais* (PCF).⁸² Dimitrov co-ordinated the WEB’s contacts with the LAI through Münzenberg, Smeral, Ferdi and Clemens Dutt.

The leaders and members of the national LAI sections were also indispensable in the creation and maintenance of the anti-imperialist network. The British socialist and pacifist Reginald Bridgeman (1884 – 1968) was a leading actor in developing and fomenting LAI activities in Great Britain.⁸³ Other well-known socialist characters, e.g. the elderly George Lansbury (1859 – 1940) of the British *Labour Party*; the leader of the *Independent Labour Party* (ILP) James Maxton (1885 – 1946) and A. Fenner Brockway’s (1888 – 1988) brief but passionate connection with the LAI in 1927, were all prominent characters within the LAI during its initial phases. Edo Fimmen (1881 – 1941), the Dutch trade unionist and distinguished leader of the *Amsterdam International*,⁸⁴ was also one of Münzenberg’s friends and contributed greatly to paving the way for the LAI both

⁸¹ The WEB is not to be confused with its forerunner, the *West European Secretariat* (WES), which was formed in 1919, located in Berlin. In 1925, the WES was a defunct and shallow actor, according to the internal discussion in the Comintern. Empirical observations, especially the documents filed in the WEB *fond* in the Comintern Archive (RGASPI 499/1), have verified a gap in time between the years 1925 and 1927. Any critical assessment on the functions and activities of the WEB remains to be told, an actor that only appears in a peripheral sense in the history of international communism. Imperative research on the WES has, though, been conducted, see for example Vatlin “‘Genosse Thomas’ und die Geheimtätigkeit der Komintern in Deutschland 1919-1925”, in Alexander Vatlin, *Die Komintern 1919-1929. Historische Studien*, Decaton Verlag, Mainz, 1993, pp.21-44. This chapter was re-worked and included in Vatlin 2009, pp.247-254. The somewhat dated but intriguing depiction of the WES in Branko Lazitch and Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Lenin and the Comintern Volume I*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1972 pp.164-201, recounts the tale of the complex attempts to spread communism during the initial phase of the Comintern in 1919.

⁸² See fol. RGASPI 499/1; Huber 1995, p.148. Some of the members of the WEB are included in the biased biography on Georgi Dimitrov, Hans-Joachim Bernhard, Krysto Dontschew, Wolfgang Gruhn, Horst Hering & Ljubow Pawlowna Petrenko (Hrsg.), *Georgi Dimitroff*, Urania-Verlag, Leipzig, 1982, pp.27-31. The primary functions of the WEB was to nominate and send instructors to visit the communist parties in Western Europe; collect and disburse administrative and political instructions to the parties, send intelligence to the ECCI in Moscow for further consideration and to determine financial guidelines for the work of the parties.

⁸³ For Reginald Bridgeman, see John Saville, “Bridgeman, Reginald Francis Orlando”, in *Dictionary of Labour Biography Volume VII*, Joyce M. Bellamy & John Saville (eds.), The MacMillan Press, London, 1984, pp.26-40. Bridgeman’s personal archive is located at Brynmor Jones Library, Hull University in England.

⁸⁴ The *Amsterdam International*, also known as the *International Federation of Trade Unions* (IFTU), was established in Amsterdam (hence the name) in July of 1919, an organisation inspired by the Versailles peace treaty negotiations. Primary aim was to act in response to the devastation of the Great War by proclaiming “war on war” under the slogan to free the worker from capitalism. Whereas the LSI aimed its activities towards the socialist parties in Europe, the *Amsterdam International* wanted to act as a representative for the European labour movement and the trade unions, see Goethem (2006).

in the Netherlands and on an international basis. Charles Shipman from the USA, also known as Manuel Gomez and a member of the WPA/CPUSA, was one of the few actors in the USA striving to create a vigorous anti-imperialist movement who also had intimate ties to the International Secretariat in Berlin.

At Comintern headquarters in Moscow were the actors (the decision and agenda-makers) who decided the theory and practice of the LAI. In comparison to the relatively few contacts between the International Secretariat and the IAH and the ZK KPD in Berlin, the apparatus of the Comintern had a far more complex structure. In the capital of the Bolshevik state, its actors were located in networks differing in character, size and authority. Otto Wille Kuusinen (1881 – 1964), a Finnish émigré communist and distinguished Comintern secretary, often played a leading role in co-ordinating Müntzenberg's activities and vision of turning the LAI into an international mass organisation. Furthermore, Kuusinen was a symbol of authority who provided the LAI and the colonial question with direction and ideological impetus. From an organisational point of view, Kuusinen was involved in a range of departments at Comintern headquarters, especially the Eastern Department/Secretariat, which was the Comintern's communicative link with the LAI. One of Kuusinen's co-workers, the Deputy Head of the Eastern Secretariat and Hungarian communist Ludwig Ignatovich Magyar (real name: Lajos Milgorf; 1891 – 1937), had a pivotal role within the network, whilst Pavel Aleksandrovich Mif (real name: Mikhail Aleksandrovich Fortus; 1901 – 1938) and Robin Page Arnot were also on occasion particularly influential. Mauno Heimo 1894 – 1937), a Finnish communist, carried out chancellery work at Comintern headquarters and was a key actor who from time to time acted as Müntzenberg's personal liaison in relation to the LAI. Two authoritative characters crucial for the development and continuation of the LAI were, firstly, the Ukrainian communist Dmitri Manuilsky (1883 – 1959), the “eyes and ears” of the CPSU (B) in the Comintern. Along with Kuusinen, Manuilsky was a theoretical authority who provided Müntzenberg with guidelines on how to develop both the IAH's and the LAI's colonial work. The second person was the Russian-Lithuanian communist Osip Piatnitsky (1882 – 1938), who was responsible for financial, personnel and liaison matters within the Comintern.

The Comintern was an organisation characterised primarily by its hierarchy. Within this hierarchical structure, the LAI was a topic discussed, assessed, evaluated and determined at various levels, reaching all the way to the top of the structure. Both its authoritative department, the Political Secretariat, and its consultative organ, the Political Commission (established in 1929), frequently discussed the LAI. However, it was the ECCI Secretariat which began discussing the IAH's anti-colonial project and the preparations for the Brussels Congress in 1925-26, whilst after 1927, the Eastern Secretariat was the connective point. Sensitive or secretive matters were first

assessed by Piatnitsky before being transferred to the Small Commission (*Malaja komissija Politsekretariata*). Other departments which either frequently or intermittently discussed the LAI were the Standing Commission (*Postoiannaia komissii*), the ECCI Bureau, the ECCI Organisational Bureau (*Organizatsionnyi otдел; Orgotdel*) and the ECCI Agitprop Department (*Otdel propagandy i agitatsii*). Temporary commissions (*Raznye komissii*) were also devoted to examining the LAI.⁸⁵

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Linking the Ties that Bind Together

The Bolsheviks in Moscow governed the Comintern from its inception until its end. As noted by the historians Grant Adibekov, Eleonora Shakhnazarova and Kirill Shirinia in their anthology *Centre and Periphery* (1996), the “Comintern was inseparably linked” to the CPSU (B) “in respect of ideology, policy, organisation and material support”. In 1921, with the introduction of democratic centralism in the Comintern, an organisational principle establishing hierarchical relations from top to bottom, the one-way system of control exercised by the Comintern from the centre of Moscow over the periphery was confirmed.⁸⁶ Consequently, the dictates issued from the “centre”/from above (Comintern headquarters in Moscow) and broadcast to the “periphery”/from below (the national sections/communist parties) implied, according to McDermott and Agnew, a structure built on dependency and total loyalty towards the “centre”.⁸⁷ Is the history of the LAI a part of this “centre-periphery” paradigm or are other paradigms visible? Bearing in mind the relative scarcity of previous research done on the LAI and, more importantly, the richness of the empirical material, other questions are brought into focus here than just the “centre and periphery” paradigm. Thus, in order to outline and interpret, firstly, the complex relationships and behavioural patterns linking the International Secretariat to the Comintern apparatus, and secondly, the undertakings of the LAI and the Comintern to create a credible anti-imperialist agenda, it is relevant to search beyond the rigid *a priori* understanding of the LAI’s complete obedience

⁸⁵ The latter part of this section is based firstly, on the observations and conclusions drawn during the research and, secondly, on the following works: Rosenfeldt 2 (2009); Huber (1995); Lazitch (1986); Chase (2001); Vatlin (2009); Kimmo Rentola, “Finnish Communism, O. W. Kuusinen, and Their Two Native Countries”, in *Communism. National & International*, Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (eds.), Societas Historica Finlandiae, Helsinki, 1998, pp.159-181; Grant Adibekov & Eleonora Shakhnazarova, “Reconstructions of the Comintern Organisational Structure”, in *Centre and Periphery. The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents*, Narinsky & Rojahn (eds.), IISG, Amsterdam, 1996, pp.65-73; Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution 1919-1927*, Curzon Press, Richmond, 2000.

⁸⁶ Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.72; Kirill Shirinia, “The Comintern: A World Party and Its National Sections”, in *Centre and Periphery*, Narinsky & Rojahn (eds.), IISG, Amsterdam, 1996, p.169. The policy of democratic centralism, initially designed by Lenin, was introduced at the Third International Comintern Congress in Moscow (22 June – 12 July 1921) on the initiative of the ECCI.

⁸⁷ McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.xxi.

towards the Moscow elite. This requires a reconsideration of other perspectives. According to Norman LaPorte et al in the anthology *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern* (2008), once the research goes “beyond generalist claims and particularist modifiers” this calls for a reassessment of a more “complex, sophisticated and pluri-disciplinary understanding” of communism(s). Typical of this is research and theoretical conceptions taken from the prosopographical approach, the “history of everyday life”, or network theory. These academic advances have added rational depth to the understanding of the dynamics of the systems, structures and networks of international communism. Yet, at the same time, one must not ignore the reflection, as introduced in Hermann Weber’s ground-breaking study of German communism, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus* (1969), that despite communism having introduced itself as either national or international, any ensuing analysis and discussion has to include factors such as functionality, instrumentality and practical connotations caused by the hierarchical structure of the communist apparatus. It is therefore essential to highlight the impact of external (exogenous) and internal (endogenous) factors in order to establish a clearer understanding of communism as a political and social phenomenon.⁸⁸

Movements

The theoretical framework of this study aims to clarify the interactionism between the International Secretariat and the headquarters of the Comintern which developed over time. This perspective also addresses how the LAI and its International Secretariat interacted with representatives of the anti-colonial movement both in Berlin and around the world. Focusing on the character and outcome of political and organisational processes, this analysis aims to uncover intersections and mobilised networks, or networks which existed parallel to each other. The former is a discussion on direct and indirect links between individuals and institutional actors, while the latter relates to, according to the definition introduced by political scientist Sidney B. Tarrow, a process which tied “leaders” to the organisation of collective action in order to set in place “movement co-ordination and allowing movements to persist over time”.⁸⁹ This definition

⁸⁸ Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan and Matthew Worley (eds.), “Introduction: Stalinization and Communist Historiography”, in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern. Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2008, pp.1-3. For an adaptation of everyday life “stories”, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (1999); Bert Hoppe, *In Stalins Gefolgschaft. Moskau und die KPD 1928 – 1933*, R. Oldenburg Verlag, München, 2007, pp.11-19; Hermann Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik Band 1*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, pp.7-20.

⁸⁹ Sidney B Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social movements, collective action and politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994, p.136. Tarrow focused on the study of social movements in Italy and France during the nineteenth century and strove to develop Charles Tilly’s political process theory; Steven M. Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements. Theories from the Classical Era to the Present*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, 2011, p.125, 129, 136.

addresses the importance of finding out how and why relations between the International Secretariat in Berlin and Comintern headquarters in Moscow developed and changed over time. Most importantly, to examine how the Comintern put into practice its control over administrative questions and ideology. Fundamental to the above is to make a distinction between the terms *interactionism* and *movements*. Sociologist Georg Simmel observed, as noted in his analysis of “The Web of Group-Affiliations” (*Die Kreuzung sozialer Kreise*), that “as a higher concept binds together the elements [...] so do practical considerations bind together like individuals, who are otherwise affiliated with quite alien and unrelated groups”.⁹⁰ For the LAI, therefore, it is logical to concede that the “higher concept” and “practical considerations” were anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Thus, for this study it is essential to elucidate how, why and where individuals chose to “bind together” around a “cause or modify interest groups, unifications, organisations”. It is, therefore, of particular interest to define interactionism as a political and organisational process, in order to establish an understanding of how the actors responded to “shared understandings and common expectations” as well as the organised efforts to obtain change and to “establish a new order of life”. Tarrow suggests that this process of interactionism is defined by “collective action”, “feelings of solidarity”⁹¹ and “expressive behaviour and communication”, factors which contribute to the evaluation of the character and dynamics of social or political relationships. These collaborations, which address the major challenge to interpreting the LAI as a political topic, as expounded the political scientist Steven M. Buechler, focus on a macro-orientated view which has little to say in relation to “motivation, recruitment, conversion, or inter-personal dynamics within

⁹⁰ Georg Simmel, *Conflict and The Web of Group-Affiliations* (translated by Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix), The Free Press, New York, 1955, p.128.

⁹¹ *Solidarity* is a historical term based on the Christian notion of *fraternity* which, taken from the Latin *socius* (companion) has been associated with socialism and should be perceived as the adversary to nationalism, a political framework that emerged during the nineteenth century. Solidarity, as a social concept, strives to make participants recognise a common interest in the construction of an ideological identity. According to sociologist Emile Durkheim, the process of social interaction builds on social relationships and ties that bind individuals to groups, organisations and, in the end, to society. Hence, this marks the formation of a moral, devotional or an ideological contractual relationship. The LAI used solidarity as an impetus for its activities; however, the idea of solidarity existed in a limited socio-political context, which the communists used as a concept rather than in practice in order to maintain control over the movement. Furthermore, as noted in Steinar Stjernø’s reflection on Max Weber’s conceptualisation of solidarity, solidarity as such is not only integrative, it is also divisive, see Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p.25, 35, 37; Michele Dillon, *Introduction to Sociological Theory. Theorists, Concepts and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century*, Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, 2010, p.97; Norman Davies, *Europe. A History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p.835. In conclusion, the conceptual and practices of a “limited solidarity” was a topic addressed by the author at the conference “Solidarities Through History”, arranged by the Centre for International History at Columbia University, New York, in collaboration with The Harriman Institute, the Weatherhead Institute, the Middle East Institute, University of Leipzig and the Graduate School Advisory Council, March 30 2007. For the conference paper, “In Control of Solidarity? Willi Münzenberg, the Workers’ International Relief and League against Imperialism, 1921-1935”, see *Comintern Working Paper* (CoWoPa) 12, Internet: < <https://www.abo.fi/student/media/7957/cowopa12petersson.pdf> >.

movements”.⁹² One of the fundamental aims of this study is to look beyond this so-called macro-orientated interpretation.

The anti-colonial movement was the impetus for the LAI. The question is, nevertheless, whether one can perceive the LAI as a part of the anti-colonial movement, or whether the LAI strove to function as a political platform in order to unite the anti-colonial movement. It can be argued that the LAI was a construction that never intended to pose as a spokesperson for the anti-colonial movement. Instead, its primary ambition was to act as an international anti-imperialist voice, declaring its support for the struggle of the oppressed peoples in the fight against colonialism and imperialism. The conceptual relationship between colonialism and imperialism in the context of the Comintern and international communism deserves further clarification. Colonialism must be perceived as a *practice*, explicitly referring to the “occupation of a foreign land”, whilst imperialism is a *concept* representing a system that combined ideology and economic initiatives. Furthermore, administered from the centre to the periphery, imperialism is driven by the motive of preserving its grandiose projects of power. The common theme for colonialism and imperialism is power, a framework which seeks confirmation and validation through the establishment of an administrative system characterised by institutions of governance, economic patterns, ideas and values, which the colonisers imposed on the colonised.⁹³ In order to document and interpret the history of resistance against colonial oppression and imperialist exploitation, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty’s postcolonial critique of modernity and “history itself”, the study of colonialism is a subaltern history which aims to describe and “make the world more socially just”. One must, therefore, question and discuss cultural dichotomies such as “Europe/not Europe”, “developed/undeveloped” etc,⁹⁴ where nationalism, as advocated by anti-colonial activists during the inter-war years, considered the internationalism of the communist movement as a haven.⁹⁵ For the LAI, imperialism represented the *pièce de résistance* and structural framework used to attract attention from the anti-colonial movement in Europe. The Bolsheviks’ political interpretation of imperialism (*Imperializm*) ritualistically mirrored the “social and political realities” of the Soviet Union and its perception of Western society, referred to as a hostile political system in such terms as the “camp of imperialism” (*lager ‘imperializma’*) or “international imperialism” (*mezhdunarodny imperialism*). Soviet propaganda also placed imperialism within the context of the “militarism” of the West and capitalist society, and therefore

⁹² Simmel 1955, p.15; “Social Movements”, in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought*, William Outhwaite & Tom Bottomore (eds.), Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1993, p.598; Buechler 2011, p.90.

⁹³ Young 2001, p.17; Ferro 1997, p.1; Abernethy 2000, p.12.

⁹⁴ Chakrabarty 2000, p.72; Osterhammel 2001, pp.14-16.

⁹⁵ Thomas 2005, p.19.

imperialism was a colonial system the “imperialist nations” wanted to retain.⁹⁶ From a theoretical standpoint, to question a political system involving occupation and conquest, any critical study of imperialism should include an assessment of factors such as empire and imperial ambitions. Accordingly, the Marxist-Leninist conception of imperialism defines it as a broad structural system characterised by economic domination, though not necessarily political domination. Yet, imperialism as an idea and practice inherently distinguishes itself by its exercise and practice of power through “direct conquest”, or “political and economic influence”, administered via institutions and by ideological conviction. Construed and administered “from the centre” – the home country, e.g. Great Britain or France, the two leading empires in Europe during the inter-war years – the Empire used any measure at hand to extend its control over the furthest “reaches of the peripheries”. After the Great War in 1919, the resentment against the state-sanctioned system of “the centre” assumed theoretical and practical expressions amongst anti-colonial activists and movements residing in the “colonial metropolises” of Europe (Berlin, Paris, and London). For the Comintern, and then the LAI, these groups of anti-colonial activists would be their main target. In the heyday of the Comintern’s united front strategy, the LAI emerged as the actor and solution best suited to establishing connections with the anti-colonial movement(s) in Europe, which would, in turn, guarantee a political and organisational corridor to the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The Comintern’s primary motive in endorsing the establishment of the LAI in 1927 was to create an organisation that would realise the political and organisational efforts required to spread communism, thus enhancing the possibility of spreading communism to regions and countries previously inaccessible to the international communist movement due to the international fear caused by the practice of communism and the Bolshevik regime in Russia.⁹⁷ Foreign governments hostile towards the Bolshevik regime described the Comintern as a menace. Yet, for the mobilised anti-colonial movements after the Great War, communism was a vibrant ideology, which corresponded to their desire of achieving national independence; movements inspired by the nineteenth-century developmentalist view of history, explicitly formulated by Marx and Darwin. According to Elleke Boehmer, the anti-colonial movements strove to change the world order, fuelled by a nationalist agenda “in terms of political organisation” which emphasised a “cross- or

⁹⁶ “Imperialism (*Imperializm*)”, in Ilya Zemtsov, *Encyclopedia of Soviet Life*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1991, p. 158.

⁹⁷ Young 2001, pp.25-27; Abernethy 2000, pp.9-11; Chakrabarty 2000, p.41; Matthew G. Stanard, “Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2009, Vol.44 (1), Sage Publications, London, pp.27-48; Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920, Resistance in Interaction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.6. See Thomas (2008, p.17) analysis of how the British and French security services practiced their “extensions” of control in the colonial peripheries.

transnational in their range of reference and reception of influence”.⁹⁸ Protests by anti-colonial movements against the oppression of colonialism were, however, not the IAH’s primary focus in 1925. As the idea of the anti-colonial project took shape, the IAH used philanthropy as the incentive to create reactions to anti-imperialism. In 1925, the IAH’s philanthropy was a political framework, broadcast to the public in various campaigns and committees in order to introduce a social message focusing on the “shaping of the future of society”. Philanthropy was the concept which defined the colonial question for the IAH, particularly its role as a donor and towards the recipients.⁹⁹ What was the nature of the IAH’s philanthropy? It was to declare a social message under the pretext of “proletarian solidarity” in order to gather material and moral support, an undertaking driven by securing organisational support rather than altruistic motives. The question is why. Accordingly, the IAH’s anti-imperialist activism and propaganda, carried on by its offspring the LAI, is essentially a question of “political solidarity”. This is a question further addressed by the philosopher Sally J. Scholz, who writes that commitment to a political cause is a pivotal factor in the organisation of collective action, as in this case, against colonialism and imperialism. Thus, movements are, regardless of their political or social nature, a response to “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities”. Furthermore, as observed by Tarrow, this makes it necessary to evaluate the structural source of “collective political activity”.¹⁰⁰ The LAI justified its

⁹⁸ Ahmad 2009, p.6; Manela 2008, p.13; Boehmer 2002, p.3. See the discussion on the Western conception of the developmentalist idea from the eighteenth to the twentieth century in Hans-Jürgen Puhle, “Das atlantische Syndrom. Europa, Amerika und der ‘Westen’”, in *Wege der Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Jürgen Osterhammel, Dieter Langewiesche und Paul Nolte (Hrsg.), Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2006, pp.179-200.

⁹⁹ Thomas Adam, “Introduction”, in *Philanthropy, Patronage, and Civil Society. Experiences from Germany, Great Britain, and North America*, Thomas Adam (ed.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2004, pp.4-5; Hugh Cunningham & Joanna Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform. From the 1690s to 1850*, Macmillan, London, 1998, p.2, 4. Cunningham and Innes focus on the use of charity, philanthropy and reform during the *Age of Enlightenment*, with a chronological fixture from the French revolution to the European upheavals in 1848, and raise the question of the relations between donor and recipient by disclosing the dilemma of power and reciprocity. See also Robert H. Bremner, *Giving. Charity and Philanthropy in History*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1994, p.xii. Philanthropy is commonly defined as secular voluntary action which, in contrast to the religious term *charity*, aims to inspire the voluntary promotion of human welfare as a way of solving poverty.

¹⁰⁰ Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 2008, p.33, 59. Scholz writes that “starting a social movement is no easy task. The different commitments of the members of the solidarity group account in part for the sustaining force of political solidarity [...] some people will work diligently and systematically to chip away at what they perceive to be a system of oppression or injustice. Others will suddenly find themselves united by a passion for a cause or incensed by a current injustice. The unity that forms among actors might be close-knit and coherent or quite amorphous and fluid. Regardless of the diversity of commitments linking individual members and the power of the bond of the collective, political solidarity makes certain requirements on the participants” (p.70); Tarrow 1994, pp.4-5. Hence, the collective challenge for individuals, either in the form as densely or loosely-knit associations, is in resisting the pressures from “elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes” which, according to Tarrow, often take on exaggerated expressions due to the lack of resources, for example, money, organization or access to the state. One of the primal reasons for joining a movement is to go into opposition against the claims and policies of its adversaries – authorities or elites – a process that contributes to shaping an identity around a common cause. This represents *collective action*, in which the LAI wanted to attract the anti-colonial movement by organising public demonstrations and meetings, and the establishment of propaganda campaigns (public and letter writing campaigns; protest telegrams). However, failing to maintain collective action at a certain level, this

existence, either via the directives from the Comintern or through individual initiatives in Berlin, by identifying “collective challenges” around particular political incidents and causes, driven by the ambition to “sustain collective action” and solidarity in order to influence and control the anti-colonial movement.

Hierarchy of Relations

The hierarchy of relations is a theoretical account of how the organisation of the Comintern, according to the historian Inessa Iazhborovskaia, addressed questions concerning position, role as well as the functionality of “particular individuals and groups”.¹⁰¹ What, therefore, are the basic requirements to be included in the framework of the hierarchy of relations? Most importantly, this theoretical framework aims to explain the complexity of the organisational and political phenomena the Comintern has come to represent in retrospect. By identifying the nature and dynamics of the administrative systems which existed both at the International Secretariat and at Comintern headquarters, it is possible to distinguish the strategical incentives which aimed to determine and locate the activity of individuals “into certain channels”. This depended primarily on the existence of a hierarchy of relations, a structural phenomenon which placed the departments of the Comintern in a hierarchy. Furthermore, it defined the hierarchical position of the individuals, as well as their relations towards each other, hence, the system circulated around questions of “subordination and responsibility, of rights and obligations”. The following theoretical challenge for the study is to see whether Iazhborovskaia’s theory of organisation, which focuses in its essence on evaluating the dynamics and mechanisms of the “centre” in Moscow and its adherence to “the political line”,¹⁰² also existed outside the “centre”, and also whether it adhered to its own rational logic.

The LAI was a network which, in turn, twirled around a complex set of other networks, consisting of actors who shared a common belief both in the struggle against imperialism and, most importantly, in communism. From an internal perspective, the hierarchy that emerged among the individuals at the International Secretariat made a conscious separation between the people who had responsibility and rights, while others were bound to subordination and commitment. Hence, the distribution of rights and obligations at the International Secretariat, which constitutes the focal point of the hierarchy of relations, witnessed a division into three sections: *the core*, *believers* and *followers*. The core was a position reserved for trusted individuals who were granted

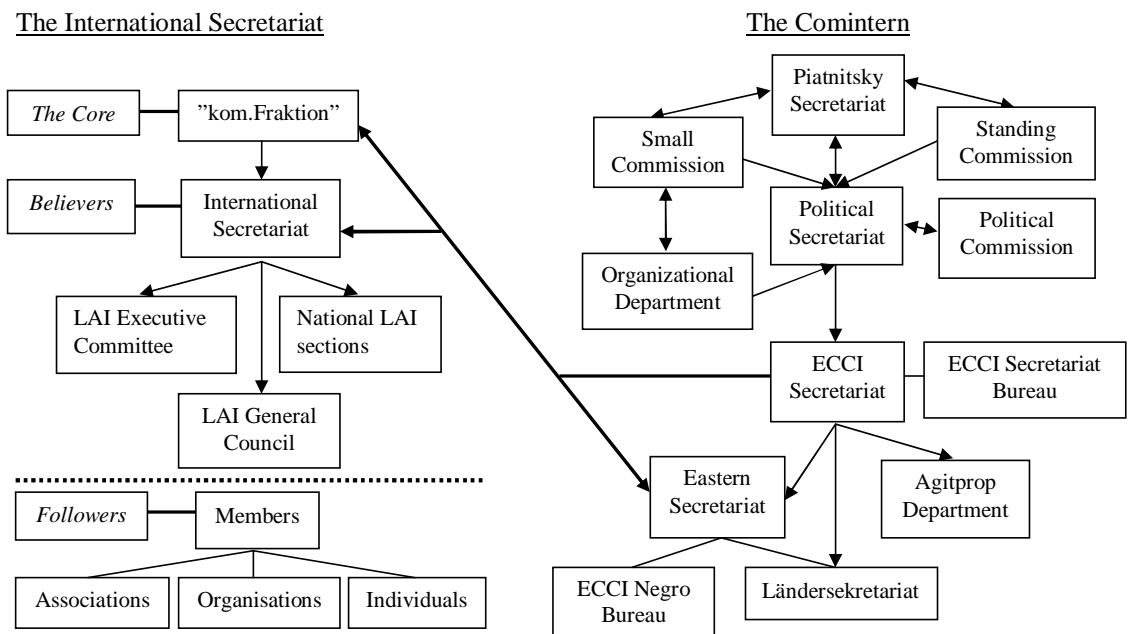
forces the movement to retreat “into isolation”. See also Wellman’s discussion (1997, p.46) on network and “collective political activity”.

¹⁰¹ Inessa Iazhborovskaia, “The Logic of the Development of the Organisational Structure and Mechanism of Administration in the Comintern”, in *Centre & Periphery*, Narinsky & Rojahn (eds.), IISG, Amsterdam, 1996, p.57.

¹⁰² Iazhborovskaia 1996, p.57, 59.

responsibilities and rights on the basis of their long-standing devotional relationship to the Comintern and communism: Münzenberg, Smeral, Ferdi, Clemens Dutt and Gibarti. The believers consisted primarily of anti-colonial activists who were living in Berlin and who had intimate connections with the International Secretariat. However, these individuals were largely restricted from gaining access to the core, even if they wanted to do so. The believers were a group represented by Chatto, Hansin Liau, Kunizaki and Otto Schudel. The followers were left-wing political, cultural or social groups, e.g. socialists, social democrats, pacifists, national revolutionaries, trade unionists and intellectuals, elements the LAI wanted to get involved in the anti-imperialist movement.

Table 1.2: The International Secretariat & the Comintern, 1927 – 1933



The focal point of this analysis is on the relations between the core and the believers, with the followers acting in the background as a contextual backdrop. What is the motive for such a demarcation? Whilst this study aims to portray the LAI as a global actor, in order to uncover the system and nature of the hierarchy of its relations, the central question is to evaluate the interactionism between the International Secretariat and Comintern headquarters. This also leads us to see whether the authority of the decision-makers in Moscow *vis-à-vis* the dependency of the LAI altered literally over time, or whether the organisation was a subservient slave to the dictates of Moscow from the beginning, existing merely as a vessel to broadcast its loyalty towards the

Soviet Union. To illustrate how these hierarchical relations developed, it is crucial to distinguish how and why the International Secretariat organised its activity as a sympathising communist organisation through, for example, congresses and conferences, anti-imperialist propaganda campaigns and curricular activity. This depended, almost without any exception, on carrying out the directives issued by Comintern headquarters, and also on the ideological constitution of the International Secretariat, the political composition of the LAI Executive Committee, the organisation of international missions and on the conscription of reliable and suitable members. This hierarchical administrative system depended, therefore, on its members swearing allegiance to the cause, i.e. the establishment and the continuance of an international anti-imperialist organisation.

A Sympathising Communist Organisation from the Inside

To comprehend the nature and structural foundation of the LAI, and the reasons why it was established, it is essential to address the functionality and instrumental use of the sympathising communist organisation. The erroneous term, *front organisation*, a term utilised by their antagonists, does not portray the LAI from an impartial perspective and blurs what it initially set out to be: a sympathising communist organisation and organisational cover initiated by the Comintern to work in the service of the international communist movement. The aim of this study is not to contribute to the narrative tradition which portrays the LAI as a front for the Comintern, a framework established during the existence of the LAI and, especially, during the Cold War.¹⁰³ Firstly, a sympathising communist organisation is not in any way connected to the general

¹⁰³ The writings and total number of works that describe the LAI as a “front organization” is monumental. However, the usage of the term is incorrectly linked to the “united front” strategy of the Comintern, a doctrine supported by the communist movement during the 1920s, formally abolished in 1928 and replaced by “the new line”/class against class policy. Characteristic examples of the above that have contributed to establishing the understanding of the sympathizing communist organizations as “fronts” are the following works: the pamphlet *The Communist Solar System* (The Labour Party, London, September, 1933), authored by William Gillies, the International Secretary of the *Second International*. According to Gillies, the fronts and the “sympathizing mass organizations” concerned themselves primarily with “communism in disguise”. Elizabeth Kirkpatrick Dilling’s *The Red Network: A “Who’s Who and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Chicago, 1934) was a self-financed enterprise aiming to define the anti-communist bias of the author *vis-à-vis* the American communist movement. Dilling defined the “International League against Imperialism” as “the parent organization” that had “branches in all parts of the world and is Moscow’s agency for spreading revolutionary doctrines amongst colonial peoples” (p.104). The report by the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, supported by the Senate of the USA, *Fourth Report on Un-American Activities in California: Communist Front Organizations*, more or less confirmed the perception of communist organizations as “fronts”. Released in 1948, the authors of the report stated that “front organizations are indispensable” to supporting and establishing “the ‘vanguard position’ of Communism and to pose as the only true friend of the ‘struggling masses’” (p.25). In reference to the LAI, the committee concluded that it had been an organization “directly under the control of the Communist International” (p.107). The last example is Louis Nemzer’s article, “The Soviet Friendship Societies”, in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1949, pp.265-284. According to Nemzer, who focused essentially on the association the *Friends of the Soviet Union* only to conclude that these so-called societies (or fronts) were “one aspect of the Kremlin’s power position in world politics in the extent and intensity of support given to its policies in foreign countries” (p.265).

perception of an organisation as a unified and permanent constellation.¹⁰⁴ The term *sympathising* was in fact a strategy implemented for the sole purpose of circumventing suspicion and probation by governmental authorities and agencies (national security services). However, the principal goal for a sympathising communist organisation was to extend communist influence. In October 1917, after the Bolsheviks had seized power, Lenin was adamant about the necessity of establishing organisations, associations and committees, organisational entities formed under the pretext of acting as an interactionist link between the communist party and the masses. According to the *lingua franca* of the Comintern, this form of organisation was a shape described as “auxiliary” (*podsobnyye*), “camouflage organisations” (*maskiruyuschiye organizatsii*) or as a “cover” (*maska, skryvat*). The fundamental purpose of the sympathising communist organisations was expounded in Kuusinen’s “Report of the Commission for Work among the Masses”, introduced at the Sixth ECCI Plenum in Moscow (17 February – 15 March 1926). As noted in the “Resolution of the Sixth ECCI Plenum on the Development of Methods and Forms for Consolidating Communist Party Influence on the Masses”, based on Lenin’s dictum “to use everything and everyone”, Kuusinen emphasised that the “organisatory [sic] role of the proletariat is its main role”. What did this imply? For Kuusinen, the international communist movement could only be strengthened by building up “not only communist organisations, but other organisations as well”. This primarily concerned the channelling of communist influence “over the masses” through “sympathising mass organisations” which, according to Kuusinen, needed an organisational structure that was “as flexible as possible”. This depended nevertheless on the creation of “a solar system of organisations and smaller committees around the Communist Party ... under the influence of our Party [Comintern]” rather than “under [a] mechanical leadership”.¹⁰⁵ According to Ludmila Stern’s study of the sympathy and moral support given by Western intellectuals towards the Soviet Union

¹⁰⁴ The general understanding of an organisation is not that it is a random and chaotic entity, but rather, an organization is perceived as a coherent entity that exists and functions around systems of rules and objectives, in co-existence with administrative and hierarchical structures, which is required to meet and challenge changes “in unanticipated ways”. If so, this calls for the adoption of “new routines and functions”, which depend on consultations from the “stakeholders” which, in the context of the study, was the Comintern. The organisational theorist, Clive Archer, defines the primary functions of an international organization as the following: *functionality*, the aims, activities and response from the members that justify the existence of the organisation; *instrumentality*, how the organization is “used by its members for particular ends”, and the set of common values every member shares; *arena*, the public places of the organisation, i.e. meeting places for the members to “come together to discuss, argue, co-operate or disagree”; and finally, level of independence, see Clive Archer, *International Organizations*, London, 1983, pp.1-2, pp.128-141. For further discussions on organisation, see Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization. Executive Edition*, Sage Publications, London, (1998), and Michael Barnett & Marha Finnemore, *Rules for the World. International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press (2004).

¹⁰⁵ Ludmila Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-40*, Routledge, Oxon, 2007, pp.43-45; Bernhard S. Morris, “Communist International Front Organizations”, in *World Politics*, Vol.9, No.1 (Oct.1956), Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.76-87. For the Sixth ECCI Plenum and the discussion on the “sympathizing mass organizations”, see “Resolution on the Development of Methods and Forms of the Organisation of Masses under the Influence of the Communist Parties”, in *Inprecorr*, Vol. 6, No. 40, 13/5-1926, pp.649-650; (Otto W. Kuusinen) “Report of the Commission for Work among Masses”, in *Inprecorr*, Vol.6, No.28, 15/4-1926, p.429.

during the inter-war years, and regardless of her erroneous use of the term “front”, the sympathising (as referred to here) organisations intentionally concealed their links to the Comintern, with the latter assuming the role of a silent partner/leader. Thus, the primary ambition was to extend communist influence outside the communist movement, an objective attained by distributing propaganda in cultural, social, or political left-wing spheres. For the Comintern, the sympathising organisation was an organisational design, devoted to establishing connections with the core of the left-wing movement, e.g. workers, pacifists, petit bourgeois and intellectuals. By focusing on particular topics of interest (“focus centred”) – educational and curricular activity, thematic study groups, war veterans’ organisations, sport associations, theatre groups, the pacifist and anti-colonial movements and questions of gender – the sympathising communist organisation assumed the shape of either an organisation, committee or an association. A fundamental prerequisite was that the sympathising organisation introduced a non-communist leadership to the public, and kept the public membership of communist party functionaries in the organisation (known in a political context) to a minimum. The organisational and political work was a process controlled by a “communist faction” (“kom.Fraktion”; kommunistische Fraktion), the primary aim of which was to ensure the inclusion of the maxim “in defence of the Soviet Union” and the process of socialist construction in the Soviet Union in its agenda.¹⁰⁶ Cultural and political organisations linked to the web of sympathising communist organisations of the Comintern (aside from the LAI) were the *Friends of the Soviet Union* (established 1927), the *Anti-Fascist League* (1923), the *International Association of Revolutionary Writers* (1930) and the *Anti-War Amsterdam/Pleyel Movement* (1932). However, it is essential to make a distinction between the sympathising organisations as distributors of propaganda and the functionality of mass organisations, where the latter in a majority of cases identified and introduced themselves in public as communist, and as members of the Comintern. Above all, the mass organisations targeted membership’s representative of society, in terms of place of residence, work, age, ideological conviction and gender.¹⁰⁷ The mass organisations of the Comintern were the IAH, the *Red*

¹⁰⁶ Stern 2007, pp.44-45. The sympathising communist organisation is a topic frequently subjected to biased interpretations. However, it must also be noted that the topic is a challenging one to research, examine, analyse and interpret. According to Selznick, the communist “front” was one of the organisational “weapons” at hand for the international communist movement to disguise the real political activities of the party, almost as the “architectural idea of a façade”. In Hannah Arendt’s ground-breaking study of totalitarianism, published after World War II, she observed that the “first glimpse of a totalitarian movement [is] through its front organisations”, whilst Witold S. Sworakowski concluded that the “global aims, the open and secret forms” took on the “bizarre methods of operation” in the “front organisations” of the Comintern, see Selznick (second edition) 1960, p.145; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt, San Diego, 1985 (first edition 1951), p.367; Sworakowski 1965, p.7. For a brief presentation of the “front organisations” of the Comintern, see Edward Hallet Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930-1935*, MacMillan Press, London, 1982, p.398.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory J. Kasza, *The Conscript Society. Administered Mass Organizations*, Yale University Press, New Haven,

International of Labour Unions (RILU; Profintern), *Internationale Rote Hilfe* (IRH; International Red Aid), *Krestintern* (Peasants' International) and the *Sportintern* (the Red Sport International). Was not the sympathising communist organisation required to carry out the decisions of the Comintern, and was it a relation free from a “mechanical leadership” by the Comintern, based rather on “influence”? For this study, these questions represent a vital theme. The proposal is that the LAI was no exception to the subjugation imposed on the mass organisations by the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. The obligations and commitment avowed by the LAI and its International Secretariat need to be revealed and interpreted in order to establish an understanding of the dynamics of a sympathising communist organisation.

The question of the intellectuals and their symbolic position within the sympathising communist organisations deserves a brief introduction in this context. Previous research offers well-informed and detailed studies of the intellectuals as fellow travellers to communism, who functioned as political sojourners to the homeland of the revolution and embraced “radicalism at a distance”. For example, Ludmila Stern’s critical assessment of the spiritual declaration of support western intellectuals gave to the Soviet Union, and David Caute’s somewhat dated, yet still valid, analysis of the theoretical character of fellow travelling as a lifestyle, represent constructive research. In fact, as noted by the Marxist historian Eric J. Hobsbawm, the Comintern and the Soviet Union only managed to attract intellectuals “on the left” in literature and the arts to openly declare their support.¹⁰⁸ Hobsbawm’s observation nevertheless corresponds to one of the fundamental aims of the LAI to exist as a sympathising communist organisation: to use intellectuals as an ideological varnish for the simple reason that they added credibility to the LAI’s anti-imperialist propaganda and agenda. Despite placing the intellectuals – the followers – at the forefront, this group was nevertheless a peripheral factor when it came to the measures taken by the LAI to gain access to the anti-colonial movement. They were used merely to ease the process.

1995, p.7. Kasza concluded that the general practice of treating and understanding administered mass organisations as weak interest groups or abortive political parties, in fact “obscures their true character” (p.11), a point of view that has much in common with the perception of the sympathising communist organisation.

¹⁰⁸ Stern (2007); David Caute, *The Fellow Travellers. Intellectual Friends of Communism* (revised edition), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World. Marx and Marxism 1840-2011*, Little Brown, London, 2011, pp.264-265. For a biased study of Western intellectuals and their connection to communism, see Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims. Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928-1978*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981. A more balanced examination is presented in Michael David-Fox, “The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The ‘Cultured West’ through Soviet Eyes”, in *The Journal of Modern History*, 75 (June 2003), The University of Chicago, pp.300-335. A majority of the research on the phenomenon of “fellow travellers”, in the context of communism, takes its point of departure in the apologist work introduced by Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God that Failed* (Bantam Books, New York, 1950), a book that discussed the idea of “the journey into Communism, and the return”. This book includes the writings of well-known intellectuals such as Arthur Koestler (who was a friend of Münzenberg, and who later wrote the introduction to Gross’ biography), Ignazio Silone, Richard Wright, André Gide, Louis Fischer and Stephen Spender.

The LAI adopted these tactics in order to function as a cover for the Comintern by addressing itself as a *league*. This term disguised the internal structure of the organisation and, above all, defined the LAI's objective to pose as a campaigner "against imperialism". The initial aim of a league, a perspective often neglected in critical assessments of such an organisational form, is of prime importance in this present study. A league strives to act as an ideological and organisational centre, driven by its ambition to join together associations, organisations and individuals which, in the present case of the LAI, meant the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. To emphasise the difference between a league and the aims of an "interest group", with the latter being an organised association that strives to "influence governmental decisions", a league feverishly advocates radical change and, moreover, a league is not equivalent to an organisation.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is logical to propose that, regardless of the fact that the LAI introduced itself in public as an organisation, the LAI was from the beginning never designed to function as one. Rather, the LAI was an agency, established solely for the purpose of functioning as a connective point and as an educational centre for activists and organisations in league with the anti-colonial movement across the world. The present challenge is both to examine and to reach an understanding as to whether the LAI merely functioned as a cover for the political and organisational ambitions of the Comintern, while at same time it also wanted to convince devoted individuals, associations or organisations that it worked exclusively in the interest of the anti-colonial movement.

This analysis is divided into three thematic categories and chronological parts. Part I introduces the background of how and why the IAH conceived the anti-colonial project in 1925, with a focus on how Lenin and the Comintern approached and defined the colonial question during 1914 – 1924. This part, comprising two chapters, establishes an understanding of the construction of the anti-colonial project from 1925 to February 1927. The focus of Part II is on the impact, euphoria and aftermath of the "First Congress against Colonialism and Imperialism" held in Brussels on 10-14 February, 1927. By introducing and evaluating the formal establishment of the LAI in 1927, Part II ends with a critical assessment of how and why the idea of an anti-imperialist utopia vanished. Moreover, in comparison to Part I, which is devoted to issues of construction and preparations, Part II highlights the initiatives taken by the LAI International Secretariat in Berlin and at Comintern headquarters in Moscow to exploit both the Brussels Congress and the LAI as the international representatives of the anti-imperialist movement. By far the largest section in the

¹⁰⁹ Kasza 1995, p.9. Political scientist Maurice Duverger's definition of a *league* is: "[A]ssociations set up with political aims, [...] they are solely organisations for propaganda and agitation. [...] by their very nature, leagues are violently anti-parliamentary: [...] The line development natural to the league is thus a transformation into an extremist party", see Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, Lethuen & Co. London, 1954, xxxii-xxxiii.

thesis – comprising four chapters which cover the two international LAI congresses – this analysis ends with a thorough assessment of the precarious interactionism in preparing the “Second Congress against Colonialism and Imperialism” held in Frankfurt am Main on 21-27 July, 1929. This part also investigates the Comintern's colonial strategy, and how the international communist movement struggled to adapt itself to the policy change from the united front to “the new line” (the “third period”/ class against class) in 1928, a turning point which forced the Comintern to reassess its colonial work. In Part III, the focus is on the ideological and organisational crisis (the *anni confusionis*; the year of confusion) in the LAI in connection with the aftermath of the second LAI Congress in 1929, leading to the transformation of the initial purpose and aim of the LAI. This involves a discussion on how and why the LAI and its network changed, becoming a malformed structure characterised by disintegration, hesitancy and indifference. Four chapters cover how particular internal and external episodes contributed to determining the bitter demise of the LAI and the International Secretariat which, during the first months of 1933, ultimately led the International Secretariat to realise that it did not have what was required to salvage the political situation in Berlin.

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PART I

Chapter 1. Conceiving the Anti-Colonial Project

The history of the LAI was created, formed and influenced by a series of episodes and incidents. Characteristic and symptomatic of the political and social landscape of the inter-war years, the LAI and its anti-imperialist agenda spurred a reaction amongst the representatives of the anti-colonial movement in 1927. In 1925, however, the IAH and Münzenberg did not proceed from the initial idea to use anti-imperialism as the guiding principle for its political drive. In fact, the IAH approached the colonial question under the pretext of stimulating relief activities outside Europe. Addressed under the guise of philanthropy and proletarian solidarity, the IAH had begun to manifest its presence in the Far East in 1923, culminating in the summer of 1925 in the introduction of the *Hands off China* campaign in Germany. Thus, the anti-colonial project of the IAH did not serve the purpose of paving the way for the establishment of an international anti-imperialist organisation. On the contrary, the project was an interactionist process which unified IAH's discourse of solidarity and philanthropy under the ideological supervision of the Comintern. As the enterprise reached its peak in 1925, previous tentative attempts of the Comintern to solidify the colonial work, e.g. the establishment of the *International Colonial Bureau* (ICBu) in 1924, had ended embarrassingly. Thus, the colonial work of the IAH in Weimar Germany resulted in an unexpected success for the IAH and Münzenberg in 1925, which further convinced Münzenberg to develop the anti-colonial project, an idea that would lead to the establishment of the LAI in 1927.

The focus and aim of this chapter is to analyse the loose threads which, from the outset, represented the structure of IAH's anti-colonial project. This concerns an examination of the ideas and organisational measures the IAH took to initiate its colonial work, which came to life with the introduction of the *Hands off China* campaign in June 1925, and the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* in December 1925. For Münzenberg and the IAH, the anti-colonial project was a pivotal source of inspiration and potency the Comintern could not fail to acknowledge. Hence, the mobilisation of proletarian solidarity, under the guise of philanthropy, was the turning point for the Comintern in developing the colonial question and strengthening the IAH's activities in 1925.

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Lenin, the Comintern and the Colonial Question, 1914 – 1924

The internationalism of the Comintern responded to the frantic calls for independence against the European domination of African and Asian peoples after the Great War. Delegates from the colonial world, who attended the Paris Peace Conference in Versailles 1919, were seeking an ideological platform which opposed and supported their struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Once the bliss of the “Wilsonian moment” had begun to fade, some of the colonial delegates began drifting towards Lenin and the Comintern as the answer to solving the colonial question. Whilst the peace conference turned into a disappointment for the colonial delegates, the material and human support wrested from the colonies to support the Great War left the European continent dependent on maintaining the colonial system in order to rebuild their shattered empires. Consequently, the colonised people and anti-colonial activists lost the confidence, as noted by David B. Abernethy, “they may have placed in their rulers’ ability or desire to improve their lives”.¹¹⁰ From this perspective, the euphoria of communism and the impact of the Comintern, along with the vision to create a better world, became an ideological haven for the anti-colonial movement in its struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

The inaugural congress of the Comintern in 1919, celebrated the unification of “revolutionary parties of the world proletariat”. However, the congress left much unsaid about the colonial question. Nevertheless, Lenin believed that the revolutionary upheavals emerging in Europe after the Great War would affect the heart of imperialism in “the metropolitan states” in Europe, leading to provocations and the final liberation of the colonies. A point of view which was supported by Nikolai Bukharin who, in an article in *Pravda* on 6 March, 1919, argued that “all the filth and dirt [...] in the colonies” was the result of the “most active agent generating it: capitalism”. For the Comintern, therefore, a fundamental task was to support the “oppressed in their liberation struggle”.¹¹¹

The Comintern’s general understanding of the colonial question as well as colonialism and imperialism as a societal phenomenon was a result of Lenin’s theories on national self-determination and imperialism. Theories which had been inspired by the earlier writings of Rudolf Hilferding, John Atkison Hobson and Bukharin, which Lenin had referred to while living in exile in Switzerland during the height of the Great War, writing his own theories and acting as the leader

¹¹⁰ Adas 2010, pp.79-80; Steiner (2005); Manela (2007); Abernethy 2000, p.104, 129; Vatlin 2009, pp.21-34.

¹¹¹ John Riddell (ed.), *The Communist International in Lenin’s Time. Founding the Communist International. Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919*, Pathfinder, New York, 1987, pp.307-308; Young 2001, p.127; Michael Weiner, “Comintern in East Asia”, in *The Comintern*, McDermott & Agnew (eds.), Macmillan Press, Houndmills, 1996, p.159. In October, 1917, the Bolshevik regime reached out to the Caucasus region and Central Asia to support the Petrograd coup. This was a strategy that aimed to consolidate the newly-born Bolshevik state, and to undermine the influence amongst the imperialist powers on the Russian border, above all from the British Empire. This also introduced the image of the October 1917 “revolution” as an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution, see further in Callaghan 2004, p.19.

of the Zimmerwald movement.¹¹² According to his *Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1916), Lenin distinguished three types of national states: the capitalist countries in Western Europe and the United States; the “developed bourgeois-democratic national movements and the heightened national struggle” in Eastern European and Tsarist Russia, whilst the last category, the colonial and semi-colonial countries, found themselves in a stage “beginning or far from finished” of developing “bourgeois-democratic movements”. It was the release of Lenin’s study, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), which had a strong historical impact on the communist perception of imperialism. Based on Hobson’s *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) which had highlighted the colonial system at the turn of the century, Lenin stated that economic and political factors are essential to realising that imperialism was a phenomenon which stood on “the threshold to socialist revolution”.¹¹³ A postulation further developed by Stalin in 1918. According to an article by Stalin, published in *Pravda* on November 1918, “Der Oktoberumsturz und die nationale Frage”, the theory of imperialism had become a political reality in tsarist Russia. Stalin stated in the context of the enslaved colonial and semi-colonial countries (India, Persia and China) and the right to national self-determination, that the “international significance of the October Revolution” had altered the political disavowal of the “colonised countries”. Comparing the colonial struggle to the victorious feat of the Bolsheviks in 1917, Stalin concluded:

It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression into the general question of emancipating the oppressed nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism; [...] It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the Enslaved East, having created a new line of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed nations of the East.¹¹⁴

¹¹² For an analysis of Lenin and the Bolshevik émigré group (the “Zimmerwald movement”) and the initial idea to establish the Comintern/Third International, see Vatlin 2009, pp.11-38; Lazitch & Drachkovitch 1972, pp.3-49. Lenin’s sojourn in Switzerland also served the purpose of establishing international ties, e.g. Lenin met Müntzenberg in Zürich 1915. This relationship lasted for years. In August of 1921, when Müntzenberg visited Moscow to attend the Third International Comintern Congress, Lenin instructed Müntzenberg in person to establish solidarity and material relief campaigns in Germany. Addressed as the *Foreign Committee for the Organization of Worker Relief for the Hungry in Soviet Russia*, this was a loosely-knit structure, built around various committees, the prototype of what later became the IAH, Lazitch & Drachkovitch 1972, p.18; Gross 1967, pp.125-139.

¹¹³ Hugh Seton-Watson, “Nationalism and Imperialism”, in *The Impact of the Russian Revolution 1917-1967*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs (ed.), Oxford University Press, London, 1967, p.144. Lenin’s study on imperialism is a work reprinted on innumerable occasions; for example, a third edition saw its release in Sweden in 1972, V. I. Lenin, *Imperialismen som kapitalismens högsta stadium*, Progress Moskva/Arbetarkultur Stockholm, 1972, p.7, 74-85.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Stalin, “Der Oktoberumsturz und die nationale Frage”, in *Pravda*, Nr.241 & 250, 6 & 19/11-1918. Taken from J. W. Stalin, *Werke 4 November 1917 – 1920*, Zentralkomitee der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion (Bolschewiki) (Hrsg.), Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1951, pp.93-98; Young 2001, p.126. Stalin’s idea on the colonial question was not a novelty for him. In 1913, Stalin had authored the article, “Marxismus und nationale Frage”, published in the

The Comintern introduced itself as both the arch-enemy of world imperialism and as the moral supporter of the struggle of the oppressed, a political declaration given due attention at the Second International Comintern Congress in 1920 (19 July – 7 August). As anti-colonial disorder had erupted in 1919, characterised by the protests in China against Japanese colonialism and European imperialism, as well as in Korea, India and Egypt, these episodes determined the colonial discussion at the congress. Yet, the debate between Manabendra Nath Roy and Lenin on the latter's colonial theses left a lasting imprint, a discussion which focused on how the Comintern should sponsor the development of a communist movement in the colonies. In Lenin's opinion, the communists had to establish an alliance with national bourgeoisie elements, an argument Roy refuted as being illogical, urging Lenin to understand that the movement should consist of class-conscious workers in the colonies. The outcome of their discussion was a compromise as the congress endorsed Lenin's *Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, which advocated co-operation and independence.¹¹⁵ The introduction of the "Twenty-One Conditions" at the congress nevertheless superseded the message of the colonial theses,¹¹⁶ principles that determined how the members of the Comintern, or members seeking admission into the Comintern, should behave. According to these conditions, which included the stipulated opinion of the Comintern on the colonial question, the following was required of every member of the world party:

In the Colonial question and that of the oppressed nationalities, there is necessarily an especially distinct and clear line of conduct of the parties of countries where the bourgeoisie possesses such colonies or oppresses other nationalities. Every party desirous of belonging to the Third International should be bound to denounce without any reserve all the methods of "its own" imperialists in the colonies, supporting not only in words but practically a movement of liberation in the colonies. [...]¹¹⁷

Russian revolutionary periodical, *Prosveschshenije* (Die Aufklärung), which introduced the theoretical foundation for Stalin's opinion on the national question. This document was re-printed and published as a pamphlet in 1914, "Nationale Frage und Marxismus". Taken from J. W. Stalin, *Werke 2 1907 – 1913*, Zentralkomitee der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion (Bolschewiki) (Hrsg.), Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1952, pp.162-196, 215.

¹¹⁵ Manela 2007, pp.215-225; Callaghan 2004, p.20; Weiner 1996, pp.160-161; V. I. Lenin, "Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions for the Second Congress of the Communist International", taken from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Volume 31 (Second English Edition), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, pp.144-151. Roy stated that there existed no communist movement in India, where the leadership and influence of Mahatma Gandhi's *India National Congress* over the nationalist movement could not be trusted. Thus, the Comintern had to "assist exclusively" to form a communist movement in India argued Roy, a process that had to focus on organising the broad masses, discuss the class struggle rather than investing energy in building ties to bourgeois nationalist movements.

¹¹⁶ According to Sassoon, the "Twenty-one Conditions" demanded almost nothing in terms of ideology and strategy; it was a genuine statement that focused on organizational questions. Furthermore, as observed by Vatlin, Lenin's mistake was to mould the Comintern on the revolutionary experiences of the Bolsheviks in Russia, see Sassoon 1996, pp.32-33; Vatlin (2009). According to one of the contemporary participants in 1919, the socialist Angelica Balabanoff who, for a short period acted as secretary of the "new international", the "International became a bureaucratic apparatus before a real Communist movement was born", see Angelica Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1938, p.247.

¹¹⁷ "Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, approved by the Second Comintern Congress, August,

To manifest a political opinion on the colonial question, the Comintern focused on the Far East (the “people of Asia”) and the Muslim population. In an attempt to highlight the question, the Comintern organised the “First Congress of the Peoples of the East” in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 1–7 September 1920, a location recognised as the “heart of the oil industry” in Russia. In total, 2,050 delegates attended the congress, representing a cross-section of political and anti-colonial activists, which fitted the nascent oriental policy of the Comintern. The Baku Congress was not an extension of the colonial discussions that had taken place at the second Comintern Congress; on the contrary, the ambition of the event was to establish an understanding amongst the delegates “in the fight against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation”. Nonetheless, the far-reaching objective was to form an alliance between the Comintern and the colonial liberation movement in Asia and, above all, “to win them fully to communism”. Grigori Zinoviev (1883 – 1936), the Chairman of the Comintern, and the Polish communist Karl Radek (real name: Karol Sobelson; 1885 – 1937), promised at the congress that the Comintern intended to support the liberation movements in Turkey, Persia and the Transcaucasian Republics. In retrospect, the Baku Congress was one of the first forums where anti-colonial activists met, discussed ideas and exchanged opinions on the future of the “peoples of the East” after the Great War. Amongst the delegates, the congress had a mobilising effect, while for the Comintern, the event provided impetus to develop its colonial work. However, this was not a congress of different political, social or cultural groups. In fact, it was an event characterised as being a “heterogeneous gathering of communists, anarchists and radical nationalists”.¹¹⁸ The Far Eastern liberation movement had assumed extraordinary proportions in connection with the Chinese nationalist struggle, and with the practices of Japanese imperialism. For the Comintern, this movement represented a vital source in order to establish support for its colonial policy, especially after the revolutionary tide in Europe had petered out in the beginning of the 1920s. The Comintern approached the anti-imperialist “bourgeois-nationalist” Kuomintang (KMT), and its leader Sun Yat-sen, while at the same time supervising the foundation of the *Communist Party of China* (CPCh). Hence, the strategy of the Comintern was to merge the Bolshevik theory of imperialism with Lenin’s concept of the united front in China. For Lenin, the Far Eastern revolutions were not destined to follow the logic of socialist progression, since the

1920”, taken from Daniels (ed.) 1994, p.33. Paragraph eight continues: “It should demand the expulsion of its own Imperialists from such colonies, and cultivate among the workingmen of its own country a truly fraternal attitude towards the working population of the colonies and oppressed nationalities, and carry on a systematic agitation in its own army against every kind of oppression of the colonial population”.

¹¹⁸ See Riddell (ed.) (1993); Mohammed Nuri El-Amin, “The Role of International Communism in the Muslim World and in Egypt and the Sudan”, in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.23, No.1 (May, 1996), Taylor & Francis, pp.29-53; Solmaz Rustamova-Tohidi, “The First Congress of the Peoples of the East: Aims, Tasks, Results”, in Narinsky and Rojahn (eds.), IISG, Amsterdam, 1996, pp.74-80; Weiner 1996, p.162.

liberation movements were in their essence nationalist, thus, requiring the communists to enter into temporary alliances with the bourgeois liberation movements.¹¹⁹

The advances of the Bolshevik regime and the Comintern to extend communist influence in colonial and semi-colonial countries attracted the attention of the national security services, especially those of Britain and France. In Germany, however, the KPD had to confront a humiliating defeat after its unsuccessful quest for power in March 1921 had been thwarted by the paramilitary group, the *Freikorps*.¹²⁰ Hence, the colonial question turned into a far more problematic question than expected for the Comintern, a conclusion introduced at the Fourth International Comintern Congress in 1922 (5 November – 5 December). According to the speech delivered by Tan Malaka, the leader of the *Communist Party of the Dutch East Indies* [forerunner to the *Communist Party of Indonesia*; PKI], revolutionary socialism should be moulded upon the existing cultural conditions in the Far East in comparison to the tentative, political steps taken thus far. Aside from Malaka's observation, the only measure taken at the congress to strengthen the colonial discourse of the Comintern, was to endorse theses on the Eastern and the Negro question.¹²¹ Much to the displeasure of the international communist movement, the Bolshevik regime and the sections of the Comintern had, by the beginning of the 1920s, realised that they were defending an ideology that met with resistance around the world. In the aftermath of the KPD's ill-conceived plot in 1921, which the Comintern had eagerly supported, the KPD nonetheless made a second attempt to seize power in Germany in October 1923 (also known as the "German October"). Due to a lack of communications between the KPD and the Comintern, this attempt was (again) a failure, which forced the party briefly into illegality, leaving the German communist movement debarred and humiliated. Because of the "German October", the Comintern advocated a change in its political and organisational work in order to become a political actor of importance in international politics. The decision-makers in Moscow launched the principle of Bolshevization to either mould or correct the sections, a policy introduced at the Fifth International Comintern congress in 1924 (17 June – 2 July). According to the Comintern, Bolshevization implicitly recommended that every communist party adopt the historical experiences of the Russian Communist Party.¹²² Expecting the policy to contribute to a structural fortification within the parties, in the context of the national and colonial questions addressed at the congress, Manuilsky urged (later included in the "Resolution of the Fifth Comintern Congress on the Report of the ECCI") the necessity of adopting the united front as a strategy to develop its colonial work:

¹¹⁹ Weiner 1996, pp.163-164; Pantsov 2000, pp.41-43.

¹²⁰ Young 2001, p.143; Weitz 1997, pp.105-108; Thomas (2008).

¹²¹ Young 2001, p.146; Kahan 1990, p.20.

¹²² Bayerlein, Babichenko, Firsov & Vatlin (2003); Rojahn 1996, pp.39-41.

[...] the Comintern has to win the revolutionary movements of liberation, amongst the colonial peoples and all Eastern peoples, as allies of the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries.¹²³

Yet, Manuilsky only uncovered the Comintern's internal and external difficulties in building bridges to colonial and semi-colonial countries and the Comintern had, therefore, no other option than to turn its attention towards the “colonial metropolises” in Europe in order to solve the colonial question.

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The International Colonial Bureau of the Comintern in Paris, 1924

In 1924, the ECCI authorised Manabendra Nath Roy, the recognised expert on the colonial question in the Comintern, to lead the *International Colonial Bureau* (ICBu) in Paris. The initial idea behind the ICBu was to establish contacts with French and British anti-colonial movements in France and Great Britain, and to get the PCF and CPGB to carry out colonial work. Roy worked together with the PCF leader Jacques Doriot, and with the ECCI representative of the PCF August Guralski in Paris, to realise the objectives of the Eastern Department. However, the ICBu turned into an agency affected by external episodes and internal pressure, all of which contributed to its sudden demise in January 1925.

Roy arrived in Paris on July 1924, and began by observing the nature of the colonial work within the communist movement, only to conclude that the Comintern's colonial question, as well as the activities of the anti-colonial movement, existed parallel to each other on both an organisational and political level. For the ICBu, therefore, the primary aim was to break this established structure, and to make Paris the connective centre for anti-colonial activists, an objective Clemens Dutt, the British communist, assisted Roy in achieving. Did the ICBu realise any of the above? The ICBu confirmed contact with, for example, the leader of the *Rif Liberation Army* and tribal chieftain Abd el-Krim al Khattabi,¹²⁴ and organised a small conference against

¹²³ “Resolution of the Fifth Comintern Congress on the Report of the ECCI”, in Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents. Volume II 1923-1928*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960, p.106. Taken from *Imprecorr*, iv, 91, p.1154, 17/7-1924. This congress adopted resolutions on the national and colonial question, and on the Negro question, Kahan 1990, p.21. The congress was convened after Lenin's demise in January 1924.

¹²⁴ Abd el-Krim al Khattabi (Abdelkrim) did not initially intend to seek a conflict with the French Mandate powers in the initial stage of a campaign that put forward the demand to liberate the Rif region in Morocco from the Spanish protectorate. In May 1925, however, a military clash between French military and tribesmen from the Rif region occurred, which resulted in a conflict that lasted for one year, dominated by the strength of French (armaments and personnel). The disorder ended on 25 May 1926, with Abdelkrim's arrest and subsequent deportation to the island La Reunion. Abdelkrim spent twenty years in exile, but *en route* to France, he managed to escape in Port Said, and settled down in Egypt. In Cairo, he co-ordinated the liaison service for the North African nationalist movement. Abdelkrim died in 1963, see Marvine Howe, *Morocco. The Islamists Awakening and Other Challenges*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p.66.

colonialism in Paris. In 1924, the French anti-colonial movement was starting to take hold, and the activities of the ICBu contributed to increase anti-colonial propaganda. However, after the dissolution of the ICBu, the anti-colonial work of the PCF culminated, in 1925-26, in a large campaign against colonial war, which was supported by the *Union Intercoloniale*, an association that was a sub-section of the PCF, formed under the pretext of supporting rebellion in the French colonies and providing native propagandists with political education in France.¹²⁵ There were two reasons why the ICBu never gained momentum. Firstly, Roy was embroiled in a personal conflict with Rajani Palme Dutt, Clemens Dutt's brother and self-professed expert on the Indian question in the CPGB. Secondly, the constant lack of money contributed to bringing the ICBu to its knees and, once the French security service *Sûreté* decided to act, this bureau ceased to function. On 30 January, 1925, French police arrested Roy who, on the direct orders of the authorities, was deported with immediate effect from France, and he left by crossing the Luxembourgian border. His arrest marked the swift end of the ICBu, but it also left the colonial work of the PCF and CPGB without any direction, and "dislocated" the contacts of the European communist movement within the Indian communist movement.¹²⁶

The ICBu's setback affected the Comintern's vision of developing colonial work in one of the leading "colonial metropolises" in Europe at the beginning of 1925. Concurrently, the anti-colonial movement in Berlin was progressively assuming its role as the executor of the Comintern's hopes and expectations of having "a centre" for its colonial work in Western Europe. For Münzenberg and the IAH, the colonial question was not a defined topic but, at the beginning of 1925, the question represented a chance for organisational growth and political transformation. This depended totally on finding a motive for the IAH to initiate some level of colonial work. According to Mustafa Haikal's analysis, the IAH founded the LAI,¹²⁷ but what led to its establishment and why did the IAH get involved in colonial work?

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¹²⁵ Derrick 2008, p.151; Edwards 2003, p.16.

¹²⁶ Mustafa Haikal, "Das Internationale Kolonialbüro der Komintern in Paris", in *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung*, Bernhard Bayerlein (ed.), Mannheim, 1993, pp.126-130. The Ministry of Interior in France arranged for the immediate deportation of Roy from France to Luxembourg. For Roy and Dutt's "diplomatic" relations, see Callaghan 1993, pp.86-94. Roy visited Berlin before travelling back to Moscow, see Overstreet and Windmiller 1959, p.74.

¹²⁷ Haikal 1995, p.141.

Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, Philanthropy and the Colonial Question

In 1926, the IAH celebrated its first five years of existence. Commemorating its role as a progressive socio-political actor, and organiser of relief support and solidarity campaigns, the IAH published Münzenberg's book, *Fünf Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*. According to Münzenberg, this book was an overview setting out the original aim and growth of IAH's organisational structure from 1921 to 1926, an organisation no longer comparable to its original shape due to the changes in the political landscape since 1921. Münzenberg stated that the IAH had succeeded in transforming itself into an "international proletarian relief organisation", existing not only for the purpose of functioning as a social almsgiver, but rather as a social actor acting "through the proletariat for the proletariat". Münzenberg emphasised that the IAH's work was being carried out by the IAH sections in Europe (England, France, Belgium, Elsass-Lothringen, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Russia), as well as in Africa, North and South America, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Japan and Mexico.¹²⁸

The growth of the IAH also explained the transformation of the organisational structure of the organisation, as Münzenberg stated, a process which included a shift in focus for its socio-political work by including questions of philanthropy, e.g. the oppression of colonial and semi-colonial countries. The question is what purpose did the IAH's philanthropy serve? Was it in the interest of the donors rather than those of the recipients? For Münzenberg, the IAH's "strong, international connections and relations" were a convincing fact illustrating the IAH's capacity to organise strong campaigns of agitation and propaganda which, in 1925, had made it possible for the organisation to support "the struggle for the liberation of the colonial peoples". An operation, co-ordinated by the "special colonial section" at IAH headquarters in Berlin, and subordinated to the direct supervision of the Central Committee IAH in Berlin, Münzenberg claimed that the colonial work had confirmed contacts with "hundreds of social revolutionary colonial groups and organisations".¹²⁹ However, from an internal perspective the situation looked somewhat different, and the so-called "special colonial section" was merely a reference to an institution which only involved of a handful of individuals.

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Enquiries into the Philanthropic Approach and the ZK KPD Circular

The IAH's "proletarian solidarity" relief operations were the guiding principle behind its colonial work. For example, the gathering of material support for Japan after the earthquake there in 1923

¹²⁸ Willi Münzenberg, *Fünf Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin, 1926, p.9, 28.

¹²⁹ Münzenberg 1926, p.28.

and, in 1924, after the catastrophic flood in China.¹³⁰ The advance towards philanthropy as a new activity for the IAH did not, however, occur unnoticed. In Berlin, *Auswärtige Amt* (the German Foreign Department) questioned the transformed political character of the IAH, making enquiries into the reasons for the change. Realising that the IAH had become a political actor across Europe, *Auswärtige Amt* sent out information to the German consulates on the organisation, which also included a brief account of the German communist movement. As noted in a “Secret report”, dated 30 March, 1925:

Since its foundation [the IAH has] gone through a transformation, there cannot be any doubt, that the activity in the philanthropic area only functions as a means to prepare Bolshevik ideas and preparation for world revolution.¹³¹

According to *Auswärtige Amt*, the IAH’s philanthropy indicated a definite change in its political direction, as well as a new focus for its activities. If so, German authorities had to expose the supporters of the new agenda. In an analysis of the publications (*Not und Brot*, and *Mitteilungsblatt für die Funktionäre des Bundes der Freunde der IAH*), released by the IAH, *Auswärtige Amt* linked together a number of associations, *Bund der Freunde der IAH*, *Künstlerhilfe der IAH* and the *Anti-Fascist League*, to the IAH.¹³²

This “Secret report” included an elusive query. Allegedly, in December of 1924, Münzenberg had transferred through the IAH the sum of five million francs to the PCF in France. *Auswärtige Amt* suspected this transaction to be the first of many too come, particularly as there was a reference to the fact that the money would finance a colonial sub-section of the PCF in Paris: the “French Committee for Colonial Propaganda” [Colonial Commission of the PCF]. For the *Auswärtige Amt*, therefore, the IAH’s philanthropy was a strategy and cover for distributing money to France in order to finance Bolshevik propaganda using the colonial question as its pretext. Despite the empirical shortcomings of the “Secret Report”, e.g. *Auswärtige Amt* had omitted any reference to the original source; it is the report’s conclusion that deserves attention, which implied that the IAH had reserved the right to lead the colonial work in Europe.¹³³ Yet, at this stage, it is rather bold to suggest that this was the beginning of the IAH’s anti-colonial project. Instead, this report indicates that the IAH was but one link in a long chain of money distribution from Moscow to Paris. Additionally, other documents verifying Münzenberg’s transaction of five million francs

¹³⁰ RGASPI 538/2/27, 26-29, Bericht des Reichssekretariats, to, ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, [undated]; Münzenberg 1926, p.20, 67.

¹³¹ TNA PRO GFM Berlin, Secret report to the German General Consulate in Antwerp from the German Foreign Office, Berlin, 30/3-1925. British troops most likely seized the document during the Second World War.

¹³² TNA PRO GFM Berlin, Secret report to the German General Consulate in Antwerp from the German Foreign Office, Berlin, 30/3-1925.

¹³³ TNA PRO GFM Berlin, Secret report to the German General Consulate in Antwerp from the German Foreign Office, Berlin, 30/3-1925.

have not surfaced. If the network of the IAH was functioning as one of many financial links of the Comintern within Europe, this activity had to remain secret, with no trail being left in the documents. In conclusion, as noted in a report from IAH headquarters in Berlin on 5 January to the KPD “Org-Büro” (Organisational Bureau) in Berlin, which summarised the activities of the organisation in 1924 and its scheduled plans for 1925, any reference to colonial work or contacts with the Colonial Commission PCF was to be omitted.¹³⁴

Yet, in January 1925, the ZK KPD announced the IAH’s colonial work in a “Rundschreiben” (circular letter) to the German communist movement. According to the ZK KPD, the IAH should begin by establishing a proletarian solidarity campaign in support of the liberation struggle of the “oppressed peoples” in China, Japan and in other colonial countries. The political discourse of this campaign would focus on raising awareness in Europe of the “economic backwardness” of the oppressed colonial peoples and nations caused by “capitalist oppression”, while the IAH also intended to enlighten “the colonial masses” with education on the question of “class”. The ZK KPD wanted the IAH to construct “bridges of solidarity”: firstly, between the labour movement in Europe and the USA and, secondly, to link these “bridges” with “the oppressed peoples” in the colonies. This would establish “a natural alliance of class struggling workers” around the world. The ZK KPD expected the IAH to become an organisation which could unify the labour movement in Europe and the USA in order to protest against the “Imperialist system”. If successful, the second step for the IAH would, therefore, be to build a “bridge of solidarity” with “the oppressed peoples” in the colonies, a “natural alliance of class struggling workers” across the world.¹³⁵

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Null and Void

The colonial question had an impact on the IAH. Yet, in 1925, a serious question overshadowed the transformed character of the IAH. Apparently, due to internal squabbles and controversial decisions, the IAH was on the brink of collapse.¹³⁶ The proposition that internal dissent represented one of the reasons why the colonial question had surfaced as a new field of activity for the IAH is, however, a vague one. Above all, the question, at this stage, was a tentative topic, in

¹³⁴ RGASPI 538/2/27, 2-3, Report from the IAH, unsigned, Berlin, to Org-Büro/ZK KPD, Berlin, 5/1-1925.

¹³⁵ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 3003/OR ARG/Sammlung „Rote Hilfe“/7, p.82, Rundschreiben [Berlin, im Januar 1925].

¹³⁶ Gross and McMeekin provide a background to and interpretation of the direction of the IAH in 1924-25, a period characterized by internal turbulence, an on-going power struggle between the IAH and the IRH, and by financial shortcomings rooted in commercial failures. Francesco Misiano, IAH functionary in Moscow, stated in May 1926 that the basic problem for the IAH in 1924-26 was “too many ventures, no means, many debts”, see McMeekin 2003, pp.169-172, quote taken from fol. RGASPI 538/2/37, 77, Report from Misiano, Moscow to Kornblum, Moscow, 27/5-1926.

which the IAH had no strategy, or focused objective. The German context was also different from the French one. In the spring of 1925, the PCF took the colonial anti-war campaign out onto the streets. On 16 May, the PCF organised a public meeting at Luna Park in Paris, attended by representatives of the KIM (Kommunistisches Internatsional Molodezhi; the *Communist Youth International*), the communist trade union *Confédération Générale du Travail-Unitaire* (CGTU) and the *Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants* (ARAC).¹³⁷ In Moscow, Nikolai Bukharin pondered the colonial question. At the Fifth Enlarged ECCI Plenum (21 March – 6 April, 1925), Bukharin concluded that the colonial question was “nothing but the question of the relations between town and country on a world scale”.¹³⁸ Hence, none of the above explains the starting point for the IAH’s colonial work (aside from the aforementioned vague reference in the January “Rundschreiben” from the ZK KPD). On 22 April, Karl Müller (? – ?), Münzenberg’s liaison at IAH headquarters in Moscow, defined the dilemma facing the IAH with respect to developing any colonial activity in a letter to the Ukrainian communist and Secretary of the ECCI Isaak Romanovich Kornblum:

If you can recall, you requested a proposal from us concerning the planned IAH campaigns that would be forwarded in writing to the ECCI Secretariat. That is no longer possible, because at this time no campaign is planned to take place in China, and after the catastrophic flood last year [in China], no additional tasks have been given to our Chinese delegates [...] I do not even know whether it is necessary to provide the Comintern with any specific proposals. If you are of a different opinion, then we will look at what kind of proposal you might have. We have, in this case, acted in full accordance with the 1 December, 1924 guidelines from the Comintern, concerning the activity of the IAH.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, the IAH nourished the ambition to use China as a focal point for its anti-colonial project. Chinese campaigns by the IAH and the Comintern (the IAH campaign in China after the catastrophic flood and the *Hands off China* campaign, a joint effort by the ECCI and the Profintern

¹³⁷ Derrick 2008, p.153.

¹³⁸ Nikolai Bukharin, “Extracts from the Theses of the Fifth ECCI Plenum on the Peasant Question”, in Degras vol.II 1960, p.201. Taken from *Inprekorr*, v, 77 [80], 1026 [1078], 11/5-1925. The plenum agreed on the necessity to reorganize the Eastern Department in order to get the colonial work operational. Thus, the overarching aim was to get the Eastern Department to establish an “own organization”, supported by “propaganda sub-departments”, under the leadership of 24 “comrades from eight Eastern countries”. The primary aim of this re-organization was to confirm “contact with non-communist revolutionary organizations and help them to work out their programme and tactics”, see Degras vol.II 1960, p.247.

¹³⁹ RGASPI 538/2/27, 39-39b, Letter from Karl Müller, IAH Headquarters, Moscow, to Kornblum, ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 22/4-1925. The Fifth Enlarged ECCI Plenum in Moscow (21/3 – 6/4-1925) discussed the colonial question and, according to the resolution introduced by the ECCI Colonial Commission, focused on India, Java, Egypt and other “dependent countries”, see Degras vol.II 1960, p.187. For a biography on Kornblum (1880 – 1948; known pseudonym: “Wladimir Tulskey”), see JEIFETS, JEIFETS, & HUBER 2004, p.167.

in the summer of 1924), having quickly lost their momentum,¹⁴⁰ Müller questioned what kind of focus the IAH should have within the Chinese context.

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Hands off China and Against the Cruelties in Syria

Sun Yat-sen, the KMT's undisputed leader, died in Beijing on 12 March, 1925.¹⁴¹ Prior to his demise, Sun Yat-sen had travelled to Shanghai in January, in order to strengthen the nationalist struggle in China. However, a majority of the KMT's activities were conducted in the Cantonese region, where members of the *Communist Party of China* (CPCh) were co-operating with the “left-wing” KMT to such an extent that foreigners visiting China, as well as members of the “right-wing” KMT, believed that the communists had hijacked the movement. Both Chinese and foreign communists were prominent figures in Canton, the most prominent being Chou En-Lai, the Russian emissary Michael Borodin and the Russian “General Galen” (V. K. Blykher/Blücher).¹⁴²

Whilst this was all part of the political struggle in China, the episode which set the IAH's activities in motion in 1925 took place in Shanghai on May 30, 1925. The British Concession police in Shanghai, a part of the British Mandate military forces, killed thirteen individuals at a demonstration, an incident which created a wave of international reaction. This action led to large-scale strikes and student unrest in China itself, a movement focusing on the social unrest, poor economic conditions and the slave-like working conditions in the Chinese textile industry. When the Chinese labour movement demanded the organisation of trade unions, an argument introduced by the communists, the Chinese workers went on strike. After this bloody episode in Shanghai and the ensuing turbulence throughout China had ended, *Inprekorr* published a written statement from the CPCh, accusing the British of having carried out an “act of imperialist policy” and, later, *Inprekorr* started to run the news feature “Hands off China” on a regular basis.¹⁴³ For the IAH, the

¹⁴⁰ Degras vol.II 1960, p.169. Taken from *Inprekorr*, iv, 117, 1538, 9/9-1924. The establishment of the “first” *Hands off China* campaign occurred after an armed uprising in Canton in 1924, between the “Merchants’ Volunteers” (an association armed and financed by local merchants’ and the British Mandate authorities) and the KMT. By October, the KMT had disarmed the association, and British military forces avoided confrontation.

¹⁴¹ Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions. China from the 1800s to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p.191. Sun Yat-sen suffered from cancer to the liver. After his death, he quickly earned a national and international reputation.

¹⁴² Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949*, Longman, London, 1995, pp.124-125; Pantsov (2000).

¹⁴³ The Shanghai episode and its ensuing strike doubled the total number of members in Chinese trade unions over a couple of weeks which, after a while, the communists controlled. According to Jack Gray, the work of Borodin reached its climax in connection with the Shanghai episode, see Degras vol.II, 1960, p.218; Gray 1990, p.217, 219; Münzenberg (1926). In February, 1926, Manuilsky stated in the *Communist International* that the “events in Shanghai” had ushered in a “new era in human history”, see Günther Nollau, *International Communism and World Revolution. History & Methods*, London, Hollis & Carter, 1961, p.102. Manuilsky's understanding of what was happening in China was a product of the notations made by one of his assistants in Moscow in January 1926. See fol. RGASPI 523/1/58, 1-13, Material on China, compiled by unknown author, Moscow, to Manuilsky, Moscow, January, 1926.

violence in Shanghai corresponded with its aim of establishing a proletarian solidarity campaign in support of the Chinese national liberation struggle. According to Münzenberg, the China campaign was the IAH's "fourth largest international action".¹⁴⁴ Thus the political message of the *Hands off China* campaign in its protest against colonialism began to overshadow the IAH's relief activities and would become its guiding principle.

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The Birth of a Campaign: Anti-Colonialism in Germany

In June 1925, Münzenberg instructed the IAH apparatus in Berlin to distribute information on the *Hands off China* within the German labour movement. Optimistic about the outcome of its campaign, Münzenberg informed Kornblum that much depended on getting the German communist movement to express its support for the campaign before developing the issue further. On 12 June, the Comintern contributed by releasing a joint manifesto from the ECCI, Profintern and the KIM protesting "against imperialist atrocities in China". Nonetheless, for Münzenberg, the first step in consolidating the campaign was to get prominent intellectuals to sign petitions, and to initiate negotiations with representatives of the *Amsterdam International* in order to get their support for the campaign. However, the fundamental dilemma that needed to be solved was the financial question. According to Münzenberg, the protest rallies provided a perfect arena for the IAH to galvanise support, e.g. money collections and to sell "Chinahilfsmarken" (*Chinese obligations*) in Europe, the latter symbolising a "proletarian bond", using the surplus of the sales to sponsor the Chinese workers on strike. The ECCI had to approve this obligation idea; however, Münzenberg argued that it would be foolish to delay something that had already been set in motion, especially as the IAH intended to celebrate the birth of the campaign at a "China Evening" in Berlin on 22 June.¹⁴⁵ In a report from "D. O" [?], a functionary at the ZK KPD secretariat in Berlin, the evening was convened in a "good atmosphere" and was a "unified political rally" which had every chance of "making progress".¹⁴⁶

The "China Evening" was a test for the IAH in order to evaluate whether the anti-colonial rhetoric had had any impact. This rhetoric is illustrated in the transcript for a speech which was given at an IAH demonstration in Berlin in July, which declared that the "Chinese brothers" faced

¹⁴⁴ Münzenberg 1926, p.104.

¹⁴⁵ RGASPI 538/2/27, 75, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum, Moscow, 3/6-1925. The enclosed documents were not filed in connection with the report. Münzenberg promised Kornblum to send a detailed report on the "China evening", see fol. RGASPI 538/2/27, 78, Letter from Münzenberg to Kornblum, 18/6-1925. See further in Münzenberg 1926, pp.104-120 for the China campaign, and for the 12 June manifesto, see "Manifesto of the ECCI, RILU, and YCI against Imperialist Atrocities in China", *Inprecorr*, v, 93, 1260, 12/6-1925, taken from Degras vol.II 1960, pp.218-220.

¹⁴⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 20-22, Letter from D. O, Berlin to Heinz Neumann, Moscow, 23/6-1925.

the “canons of unified English – American – French – Japanese Imperialism”, a struggle in which European workers had to support the anticipated hopes of “their Chinese labour brothers” in order to achieve revolution.¹⁴⁷ Münzenberg informed Kuusinen that the general objective of this campaign was to follow the dictates of the united front strategy. Firstly, the campaign had to establish itself as a progressive feature in Germany before introducing the campaign, via the organisation of large demonstrations, in “every country”. Secondly, Münzenberg requested that Kuusinen instruct the European communist parties to support the campaign and the IAH, and asked whether the CPSU (B) would consider the idea of organising money collections in the Soviet Union. If the CPSU (B) supported the Chinese campaign, Münzenberg promised to include this in the propaganda, with a focus on how the Soviet proletariat had declared its solidarity with the struggles of the Chinese worker.¹⁴⁸

The IAH was not entirely on its own in drawing attention to the Chinese question. On 18 June, the ECCI and the Profintern sent a telegram to the LSI Executive in Zürich, requesting a chance to collaborate against the “politics of the imperialist powers” and to support the struggle of the Chinese workers’. The LSI Bureau replied and thanked them for their proposal, however, the LSI criticised the Comintern for only acting “at the last moment, when a political crisis has reached its climax”. In comparison to the Comintern’s *modus operandi*, the LSI favoured “a timely and conscientious preparation for common action” rooted in firm organisational groundwork, rather than a “method of improvisation”. Confirming that they were poles apart on the political barometer, the LSI questioned why the Comintern had proposed the creation of a “common platform”.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the LSI had already established an antagonistic position towards the Comintern, the international communist movement and the IAH. On 6 May, 1924, Friedrich Adler, the secretary of the LSI, despatched a circular letter to every association and party affiliated with the LSI, instructing everyone to avoid the IAH for the simple reason that it was “a communist

¹⁴⁷ SAPMO-BA ZPA 1507/67115, 83-86, Manuscript of speech, 15/7-1925.

¹⁴⁸ RGASPI 538/2/27, 77, Telegram from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow [undated, 1925]. Münzenberg organized (at least) three other campaigns and relief committees in 1925. “In defence of Soviet Russia”, a solidarity campaign in support of the Hungarian communist Mátyás Rákosi, who had been imprisoned and faced trial in Budapest in the fall of 1925 and, finally, a protest campaign against Mussolini and the Italian Fascist regime, which had prohibited the activities of the IAH. The *modus operandi* of the IAH campaigns was a process Münzenberg gradually refined, in which the focus on getting prominent individuals (intellectuals) involved became a focal point. On October 7, 1925, Münzenberg informed the ECCI Secretariat that several intellectuals had promised to support the work of the Central Committee of the IAH in the Rákosi campaign, see fol. RGASPI 538/2/27, 138-141, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 7/10-1925. In the 1930s, the CPSU (B) was described as the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Vsesoiuznaia Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia (bol’shevikov), VKP (b), see J. Arch Getty & Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror. Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010, p.xiii.

¹⁴⁹ IISG LSI Collection 3033/10, Telegramm der Kommunistischen Internationale und der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale, [signed] Kuusinen & Nin, Moscow, to the LSI, 18/6-1925; IISG LSI Collection 3033/19-20, (Draft) To the Executive of the Communist International, Zürich, 4/7-1925.

institution which, under the cloak of the so-called ‘United Front’, works politically for the Communists”.¹⁵⁰

The ZK KPD kept the trickle of information flowing from Berlin to Comintern headquarters in Moscow. Ernst Schneller (1890 – 1944), German communist and functionary at the ZK KPD secretariat in Berlin, notified Heinz Neumann in Moscow in a letter dated 18 June, that the *Hands off China* campaign had had an impact on the political scene both in Berlin and throughout Germany, and had encouraged Chinese activists in the city to willingly participate.¹⁵¹ Leo Flieg (1893 – 1939), the “grey eminence” at the KPD Polbüro in Berlin, in charge of the KPD’s covert business and liaison services, and Münzenberg’s friend, informed Neumann on 26 June that the *Hands off China* campaign had exceeded the KPD’s expectations, concluding that the campaign had every chance of becoming a political “success” (*ein Schlager werden wird*).¹⁵²

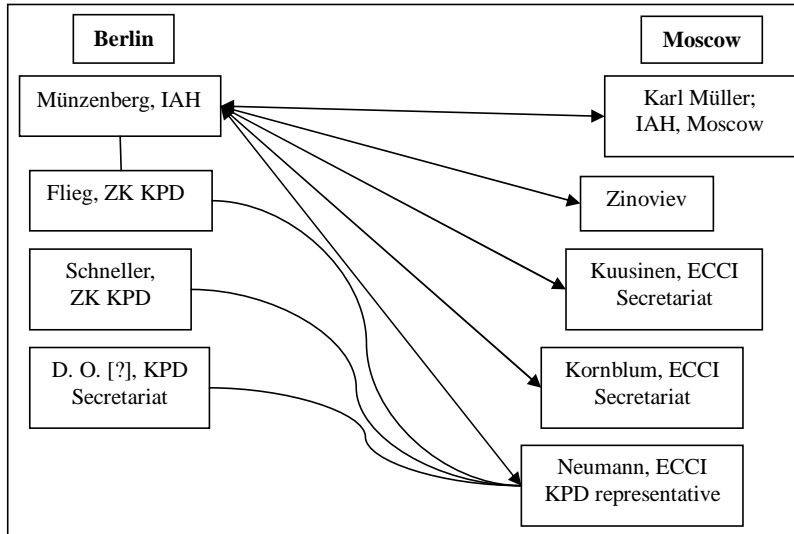
The *Hands off China* campaign relied from the outset foremost on the nature of individual relations. Introduced to the public and taken out onto the Berlin streets in the summer of 1925, the communication links running between Berlin and Moscow (the IAH, KPD, the KPD representative in Moscow and the ECCI), are possible to trace, re-construct and evaluate.

¹⁵⁰ IISG LSI Collection 3050/3, To the Parties affiliated to the L. S. I., Friedrich Adler, Zürich, 6/4-1924. The European labour movement continued to question the very nature of the IAH in 1925. According to Gross, the Belgian *Workers’ Party* published several documents that mentioned the communist links of the IAH, a public stunt that resulted in a joint resolution from the British *Labour Party* and the British *Trade Union Council*, demanding the IAH to focus on relief campaigns rather than instigating political propaganda, see Gross 1967, p.159.

¹⁵¹ Schneller was a party theoretician in the KPD, acting both as editor of the journal *Internationale* and as the leader of the study circle, “Marxistisch-Leninistischen Zirkel”, in Berlin. On 11 October, 1944, the SS executed Schneller in the KZ Sachsenhausen along with 26 other prisoners; SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 18, Letter from Schneller, Berlin, to H. Neumann in Moscow, 18/6-1925. “Ernst Schneller“, in Weber & Herbst (Hrsg.) 2004, pp.687-688. Arthur Koestler wrote in *The God that Failed* that Schneller resembled “a thin, bony man [...] with a pinched, taut-skinned face and an awkward smile”, who only read the “official Party organ, *Rote Fahne*”, see Arthur Koestler, in Crossman (ed.), 1954, p.25.

¹⁵² SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 23-25, Letter from Flieg, Berlin, to Neumann, Moscow, 26/6-1925. Flieg’s comment (in German) was “Ich hoffe, dass ein Schlager werden wird.”

Table 2.1: The Network behind the *Hands off China* Campaign, June-August 1925



Münzenberg’s ties confirm that he was in contact with both the Comintern’s high-ranking secretaries Kuusinen and Kornblum, and with the Chairman of the Comintern, Zinoviev. Flieg and Schneller had Neumann as their liaison in Moscow (KPD representative at the ECCI). More importantly, the anti-colonial project and the China campaign depended on the nature of these individual relations rather than on maintaining a system which relied on receiving directives *per se* from the ECCI Secretariat, the Eastern Department or from the ZK KPD. For Münzenberg, Kurt Müller was the key actor in developing the anti-colonial project.

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A Mission to Beijing and Ambitions of a “Great Demonstration” in Berlin

In May (“not later than 12 May”), Müller left Moscow on an IAH mission to Beijing, travelling with the Swiss communist Siegfried Bamatter and “a Russian Comrade”. Müller sent a report to the ECCI Secretariat members (Kornblum, Piatnitsky and the Russian Grigorii Naumovich Voitinsky), outlining the IAH’s area of operation and the *Hands off China* campaign in China.¹⁵³ Francesco Misiano (1884 – 1936), the Italian communist, in charge of the IAH film production company *Mezhrabpom-Film* at IAH headquarters in Moscow, visited Münzenberg in Berlin to work out the details of the *Hands off China* campaign in July. In a report from Münzenberg and Misiano to the ECCI, the IAH had begun to evaluate the results of the *Hands off China* campaign,

¹⁵³ RGASPI 538/2/27, 45-50, Kommerz-Abteilung [bericht] IAH, to, ECCI Secretariat [?], Moscow [?], undated, year: 1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 91-94, Letter from Karl Müller, Beijing, to Kornblum, Piatnitsky, Voitinsky, Moscow, 14/7-1925. For biography on Siegfried Bamatter (1892 – 1966), see Jeifets, Jeifets & Huber 2004, pp.42-43, and, for Grigorii Naumovich Voitinsky, see Pantsov 2000, p.295.

e.g. “well-known” characters in China [unknown] had sent “greetings of sympathy” to the Central Committee of the IAH. However, as the leadership in both the CPGB and the *Workers’ Party of America* (WPA) showed no intention of supporting the IAH in its work, the ECCI was forced to exert pressure on these parties, Münzenberg argued.¹⁵⁴ It seems, however, that Münzenberg was either unaware of, or had overlooked the steps taken by the WPA. Manuel Gomez, the leader of the *All American Anti-Imperialist League* (AAAIL, established in Chicago in 1925, the colonial section of the WPA), had published a communiqué on 2 July appealing to “all trade unions, the *Socialist Party* and every organisation in sympathy with the cause of the Chinese people” to support the *Hands off China* campaign. The signatories of this communiqué disclosed the overt communist connotations of the appeal: the Executive Secretary of the WPA, C. E. Ruthenberg, the Chairman of the WPA, William Z. Foster and the secretary of the *Trade Union Educational League*, Jack W. Johnstone.¹⁵⁵

It was a difficult undertaking to break the communist parties’ ignorance *vis-à-vis* the IAH. Münzenberg told Kuusinen that it did not matter whether the IAH had the ambition to “create the widest relief campaign” so long as the communist parties took no notice of the organisation. According to Münzenberg, this point of view had been expressed in the reports from the IAH sections in Germany, France, Czechoslovakia and England, fearing the imminent collapse of the campaign. However, this represented a division of authority in Münzenberg’s opinion, telling Kuusinen that the IAH had to remain in control of the campaign if the parties chose to provide administrative and moral support.¹⁵⁶ For the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, it was a question of guaranteeing that the campaign would continue and, if so, Münzenberg promised Kuusinen and Piatnitsky to bring the campaign to a conclusive end, the impressive finale being a “great demonstration” in Berlin.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ RGASPI 538/2/27, 95-96, Letter from Münzenberg & Misiano, Berlin/Moscow, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 17/7-1925. Münzenberg and Misiano informed the ECCI Secretariat of the work done to secure support from the *Amsterdam International*. According to Münzenberg, two “Amsterdammers” had contacted him merely to inform him that the *Amsterdam International* was reluctant to co-operate with the IAH on this question. For biography on Francesco Misiano, see Lazitch 1986, pp.319-320.

¹⁵⁵ RGASPI 515/1/575, 4-5, Circular letter from Manuel Gomez, AAAIL, Chicago, 2/7-1925. Gomez informed that the AAAIL, WPA and the *Trade Union Educational League* expected to use everything possible to attract the trade unions, the *Socialist Party* and any workers and peasants’ organization to support the campaign. For Manuel Gomez/Charles Shipman, see his autobiography, Charles Shipman, *It Had to Be Revolution. Memoirs of an American Radical*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993. Harvey Klehr writes in the “Foreword” that the memoir “provides a fascinating picture of one journey of commitment and disillusion” (p.xi).

¹⁵⁶ RGASPI 538/2/27, 95-96, Letter from Münzenberg and Misiano, Berlin/Moscow, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 17/7-1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 97-98, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 19/7-1925.

¹⁵⁷ RGASPI 538/2/27, 103, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 21/7-1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 104, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 23/7-1925. Münzenberg promised to send a detailed report of the *Hands off China* campaign to Kuusinen. Further, Piatnitsky received an edited budget for the costs to print a “China Bulletin”, a publication which aimed to illustrate the progression of the campaign in China. However, it was another question, the internal controversy in the KPD, with its focus on the “ultra leftist” fraction (Ruth Fischer, Maslow and the political line of the KPD “Central” [ZK KPD]) which gained attention in the German communist

The Finale of the Hands off China Campaign, Berlin, 16 August, 1925

The *Hands off China* campaign culminated in the Berlin Congress on 16 August, 1925. After having organised public demonstrations throughout the summer, the IAH organised this congress at the “Herrenhaus”, leaving Münzenberg assured of the fact that the IAH apparatus had organised the entire event, with the “Herrenhaus” Congress bringing together representatives of the European trade union movement and intellectuals in support of the Chinese liberation struggle.¹⁵⁸ However, it was a congress prepared at the last minute. The IAH did not begin sending out invitations to organisations, committees and associations to attend a congress to discuss the situation in China until 1 August. On the invitation, Münzenberg, together with the German socialist Georg Ledebour, introduced themselves as the hosts for the congress, with the Central Committee of the IAH as its organiser.¹⁵⁹

Six hundred delegates attended the “Herrenhaus” Congress, according to a report from the Chief of Police in Berlin, who had taken extra notice of the presence of twelve “young Chinese”. Münzenberg presented different figures in a letter to Zinoviev, stating that the congress had been attended by almost 1,000 individuals, a third of which had been prominent intellectuals, e.g. theosophist Graf von Reventlow, and Münzenberg’s friend the painter Käthe Kollwitz. The “Herrenhaus” had been modestly decorated with flags and banners declaring “Hände weg von China, according to Münzenberg.¹⁶⁰ The Berlin Chief of Police observed how Ledebour had guided the congress with accuracy and that the delivered speeches were “fiery” and sincere, primarily because the speakers had avoided criticising the German government. A number of well-known communists had attended the event, e.g. the KPD member Wilhelm Pieck as the IRH delegate, whilst the ZK KPD member Fritz Heckert attended as a Profintern delegate. The performance of Tschang Pah Chung, a Chinese student and the KMT representative in Berlin, had been a euphoric demonstration, urging the crowd to understand the need to unify the workers and peasants in China. Ernst Meyer, a lawyer and journalist from Berlin, discussed the “relevance of the current struggle in China” and criticised the “ignorant bystander [...] bourgeoisie press” in

movement. In a letter to Zinoviev on July 21, Münzenberg declared that he had publicly denounced the Fischer-Maslow leadership at several party district conferences; see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 65-66, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev in Moscow, 21/7-1925. The ECCI published a critical statement to Fischer and Maslow in *Inprecorr* on September 4 1925, aimed at “all organizations and members” of the KPD, see Degras vol.II 1960, pp.223-227; Ben Fowkes, *Communism in Germany Under the Weimar Republic*, Macmillan Press London (1984); Weitz (1997). For Fischer’s own interpretation, see Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism – A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, 1948).

¹⁵⁸ Münzenberg 1926, p.120.

¹⁵⁹ RGASPI 495/30/165, 72, Einladung zu dem Kongress ‚Hände weg von China‘, Berlin, 1/8-1925.

¹⁶⁰ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115/123, 98-103, Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol. Prä. Berlin, 27/8-1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 110, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 18/8-1925. The congress was an event characterized by its “cheerful atmosphere” according to the Berlin Chief of Police.

Germany. According to Meyer, the IAH had succeeded where everyone else had failed, to secure material support for and declare solidarity in support of the Chinese struggle.¹⁶¹ Chung and Meyer's speeches functioned as somewhat of a prelude to Münzenberg's performance at the congress. The Berlin Chief of Police wrote that Münzenberg had taken the rostrum, from where he delivered a fierce attack against the "bourgeois press", accusing the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland* (SPD) of not understanding the colonial question. In connection with the turmoil in China, the political ethos and pathos of the IAH had proven to be a correct attitude, in which the non-party character of the organisation had been emphasised to the fullest, Münzenberg argued. It was not a question of the IAH acting as a "leading army, acting uncritically everywhere" but rather of the IAH being "a proletarian institution supporting the suffering innocent and proletarian strugglers". This statement in itself implied a transformation of the IAH. Münzenberg explained that the IAH had the ambition to become a political force to be reckoned with in the "imperialist nations", and in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The international "success" of the *Hands off China* campaign was the evidence justifying the IAH's position, Münzenberg stated. For example, the IAH had collected one million Gold Marks since June, four fifths of which had been collected in the Soviet Union, whilst over one thousand public meetings had been organised in Germany, Austria, France, Holland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, England and the USA. In order to bring the finale of the campaign to fruition, Münzenberg wanted to send an "objective" delegation to carry out a field study of the social situation in Beijing, consisting of well-known individuals from Germany, England and France.¹⁶² However, any indication of such a delegation ever leaving Europe and travelling to Beijing, remains unknown. Instead, the idea was (most likely) a publicity stunt used by Münzenberg to stir up the crowd. Ending the congress, Ledebour gave the final speech, declaring that the IAH's proletarian solidarity was a "logical consequence" of the war that "socialism was carrying out against colonial policy". The crowd joined in at the ceremonial end, urging for the realisation of world revolution before singing "The International".¹⁶³ Once the congress was over, Münzenberg realised that the Chinese campaign had brought to light other aspects apart from relief support; that the colonial issue was one containing a broad spectrum of ideological facets and organisational possibilities.

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¹⁶¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115/123, 98-103, Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol. Prä. Berlin, 27/8-1925. The Berlin police monitored the congress to see whether any participants expressed hostile comments against the German government. For example, Meyer expressed concern over the fact that German business enterprises in Berlin and Hamburg facilitated the transport of arms on Japanese ships to China.

¹⁶² SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115/123, 98-103, Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol. Prä. Berlin, 27/8-1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 110, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 18/8-1925. Münzenberg mentioned the figure of one thousand to Zinoviev.

¹⁶³ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115/123, 98-103, Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol. Prä. Berlin, 27/8-1925.

“An International Anti-Colonial Congress”

The success of the *Hands off China* campaign, and its climax at the “Herrenhaus” Congress, convinced Münzenberg that the IAH was capable of organising anti-colonial propaganda. Excited with the results, Münzenberg wrote to Zinoviev on 18 August, informing him of his intentions to expand the IAH’s colonial work’s remit. Apparently, a particular episode had aroused Münzenberg during the “Herrenhaus” Congress. A couple of professors from China and representatives of Chinese trade unions (no names mentioned) had approached Münzenberg after the congress, suggesting that he encourage the Central Committee of the IAH to organise “a real, all-encompassing congress against imperialist colonial politics, in [either] Brussels or Copenhagen”. These representatives seemed to have been unaware that Münzenberg was the man in charge of the IAH; however, the idea confirmed Münzenberg’s original vision, telling Zinoviev that “the idea makes me happy”. For Münzenberg, the “Herrenhaus” Congress was the moment which confirmed the IAH’s position in relation to the colonial community in Berlin and, more importantly, the potential of using this community as an intermediary in establishing contacts with anti-colonial and nationalist organisations in Beijing, Morocco, Egypt, India and other colonial countries. In fact, several of the delegates at the “Herrenhaus” had promised Münzenberg to send delegations from the colonies to this international anti-colonial congress. Thus, Münzenberg assured Zinoviev that the IAH had the capacity to fulfil the colonial work of the Comintern and to support the current line, which suggested the coming of “increased colonial wars”. Thorough preparation would be required to ensure that the international congress would produce a “strong political effect”. The political impact of the “Herrenhaus” Congress had, according to Münzenberg, proven the possibility of polarising the Comintern’s position on the colonial question *vis-a-vis* the LSI, especially as the latter was also convening for its international congress in Marseille in August.¹⁶⁴

Münzenberg’s first concern was not to construct a network with anti-colonial activists; his focus was on the international anti-colonial congress. Suggesting convening the event sometime in October or November, Münzenberg intended to use the IAH’s few existing colonial contacts, to spread the word about the congress, and for it to convene in either Brussels or Copenhagen, cities that offered the greatest opportunity to create a demonstration against “the colonial politics of the imperialists”. For Münzenberg, the initial challenge at this stage was to foster an understanding

¹⁶⁴ RGASPI 538/2/27, 108-109, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 18/8-1925. Münzenberg eagerly anticipated fulfilling the “request” of the ECCI Secretariat to organize propaganda against the International LSI congress, see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 67, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Wuletzki, Moscow, 17/8-1925. On 20 August, the ECCI declared in *Inprecorr* that “the unprecedented accentuation of the colonial and semi-colonial liberation struggles” was a reflection of the international “political situation”; see “[Extracts] A Letter from the ECCI to All Organizations and Members of the German Communist Party”, *Inprecorr*, v, 128, 4/9-1925, p.1863, taken from Degras vol.II 1960, p.227.

amongst the disparate political camps in Germany of the IAH's philanthropy and proletarian solidarity. Hence, this depended on stimulating his contacts with the German pacifist movement in order to gain access to the political, social and cultural layers inaccessible to the German communist movement. Nevertheless, Münzenberg knew that the connections between the IAH and the German pacifist organisation, the *League for Human Rights*' (LHR), and his personal contact with its secretary Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, made it possible for the IAH to introduce the LHR as the co-arranger for this international anti-colonial congress. Münzenberg told Zinoviev that if he managed to convince Lehmann-Russbüldt to support the idea, this would, in turn, provide the IAH with access to the LHR network of "100 prominent artists and politicians" to be used in the propaganda against colonialism.¹⁶⁵

Whilst the LHR connection seemed promising for Münzenberg, negotiations with the *Amsterdam International* to support the campaign were not successful. The Central Committee of the *Amsterdam International* rejected the IAH's proposal at a meeting on 18 August, according to Münzenberg's "man of trust" (*Vertrauensmann*) in the *Amsterdam International*.¹⁶⁶ Who was this "man of trust"? Münzenberg never disclosed the identity of this person. However, a plausible candidate was the trade unionist and socialist Edo Fimmen from the Netherlands, a respected character within the *Amsterdam International*. One of Münzenberg's friends, their relationship stretching back to the foundation of the "Auslandskomitees zur Organisierung der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Rußland" in Berlin on 13 August, 1921. As the official representative of, and holding the position as Secretary of the *Amsterdam International*, Fimmen used to travel to Berlin where he would also meet Münzenberg to discuss the progression of the Soviet Russian relief campaign. Moreover, in the summer of 1925, Fimmen regularly visited Berlin to hold lengthy discussions with Münzenberg on the "Russian question". For Münzenberg, Fimmen's contacts with the European trade union movement were a particularly valuable source, Gross later stated in her biography.¹⁶⁷ Thus, it is likely that Fimmen was the "man of trust" Münzenberg used as his intermediary in conducting the negotiations with the *Amsterdam International*.

Despite this setback, Münzenberg perceived the *Hands off China* campaign as being a source of inspiration in developing the idea of organising an international anti-colonial congress. On the

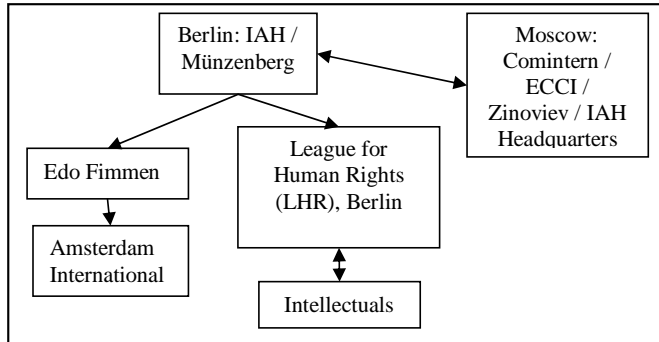
¹⁶⁵ RGASPI 538/2/27, 108-109, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 18/8-1925.

¹⁶⁶ RGASPI 538/2/27, 110, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 18/8-1925. Münzenberg promised to send information to the ECCI if the "Amsterdammers" changed their attitude on the China campaign.

¹⁶⁷ The trickle of correspondence between Fimmen and Münzenberg is significant in the Comintern Archive. For example, Fimmen told Münzenberg that he had avoided mentioning the ties of the IAH to the Comintern during his meetings with trade union representatives; see fol. RGASPI 538/2/24, 23-24. See Willy Buschak's biography on Fimmen, *Edo Fimmen. Der schöne Traum von Europa und die Globalisierung*, Klartext Verlag, Essen (2002); Gross 1967, p.129, 168-170. For Fimmen's role and position in the European labour movement during the inter-war years and the response of the *Amsterdam International* on Profintern's attempt to gain a foothold in the trade unions, see Patrick Pasture, "The Inter-war Origins of International Labour's European Commitment (1919-1934), in *Contemporary European History*, Vol.10, Nr.2 (2001), Cambridge University Press, pp. 221-237.

other hand, however, Münzenberg and the IAH had to adapt themselves to existing structural relationships, a pre-condition strong enough to either endorse or ignore their ambition to begin the preparatory work. According to the table below, the IAH and its anti-colonial project was a narrow structure, having at its disposal only a few, limited contacts outside the communist movement.

Table 2.2: The Colonial Question and Outline of Actors, 1925



Source: RGASPI 538/2/27, 108-109, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 18/8-1925

Is this table representative of how the IAH conceived the anti-colonial project? So far, the anti-colonial project of the IAH had only focused on China as the sole topic, but reactions outside this context indicated a shift in direction for the IAH's colonial work during the latter half of 1925. Münzenberg had also begun to get a clearer picture of the existing anti-colonial movements in Europe, actors who would be able to put forward, defend and support the IAH's propaganda against "oppressive imperialist systems". The "Herrenhaus" Congress experience had proven to the IAH that the colonial question was a very constructive field to pursue, which in turn prompted the IAH to seek closer ties and contact with the anti-colonial movement, a proposition outlined by Münzenberg to Zinoviev,

The question is so important and relevant that I will do what it takes to make it possible for me to visit you [Zinoviev] within the next few days, and speak with you in person about this plan.¹⁶⁸

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Ripening of the Hands off China Campaign, September-December 1925

Münzenberg's ambition to organise the international anti-colonial congress in October or November 1925 was not realised. In fact, the *Hands off China* campaign seems to have run out of steam after both the "Herrenhaus" Congress and a couple of public demonstrations in Stuttgart-

¹⁶⁸ RGASPI 538/2/27, 108-109, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 18/8-1925.

Cannstadt and Darmstadt in Germany.¹⁶⁹ According to Münzenberg, the major reason for this was that the propaganda material was out of date. In a letter to Bela Kun, a Hungarian communist and member of the ECCI in charge of the ECCI Agitprop Department in Moscow, Münzenberg urged him to revise the material and get someone to send it to IAH headquarters in Berlin.¹⁷⁰

This went against Münzenberg's expectations of keeping the campaign alive in either Germany or in the European IAH sections. In an attempt to do this, Münzenberg instructed the British IAH section to investigate whether it would be possible to get the anti-colonial movements "within the British empire" interested in supporting the *Hands off China* campaign. Münzenberg proposed that the most logical step would be to stimulate the establishment of a "Pro-China-Aktion" (*Pro China Campaign*), in which the section should focus its propaganda on the colonial liberation struggle, instead of introducing itself as an organiser of material relief. Additionally, Münzenberg argued that London was the epitome of a colonial metropolis and, therefore, the most logical place to introduce anti-colonial campaigns, which hopefully would attract anti-colonial activists and nationalist organisations known to use the city as a connective centre. In a letter to the ECCI Secretariat, Münzenberg explained that one only had to note the large participation of colonial delegates who had attended the "Imperial Labour Conference" in London, an event organised by the *International Labour Organisation* (the ILO, established on the initiative of the *League of Nations*). However, much of the above depended on the need to construct an independent network, free of any overt connections to the Comintern or to communists known for their involvement in the colonial question, Roy in particular. Consequently then, Münzenberg hoped that the IAH could prepare and carry out the congress on its own, an ambition that relied on establishing independent contacts in South Africa and India, where Münzenberg mentioned Joshi, the secretary of the *Indian Society*, as being a particular valuable candidate to approach. Yet, if the *Hands off China* campaign had reached its climax, Münzenberg urged the ECCI Secretariat to endorse a new campaign, "India for China", expecting the Comintern to work out "the political aspects" of the campaign.¹⁷¹

This was the essence of Münzenberg's relationship to Comintern headquarters in Moscow, i.e. a division of responsibilities between "organisational" and "political" questions. For Münzenberg, caught up in the euphoria and potential strength of the colonial question, he believed that the

¹⁶⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67115, 89-103, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung, 27/8-1925.

¹⁷⁰ RGASPI 538/2/27, 119, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bela Kun, Moscow, 10/9-1925. Münzenberg enclosed posters and admission tickets for a "China event" (no date given) in Berlin, suggesting that Kun use this material as a source of inspiration.

¹⁷¹ RGASPI 538/2/27, 123, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 12/9-1925. The *International Labour Organisation* (ILO) established in 1919 in connection with the discussions of the Versailles Peace Treaty negotiations. The ILO aimed to preserve the tradition, developed by the nineteenth-century labour and social movements, which demanded social justice and higher living standards for the working class, see C. Howard-Ellis, *The Origin, Structure & Working of the League of Nations*, The Lawbook Exchange, Clark, 2003.

Comintern would not object to assisting in the work to provide new political material (resolutions, theses and propaganda material) for the China campaign. Additionally, Münzenberg also believed that he had the right to act independently in administering the daily routines at IAH headquarters in Berlin, particularly the activities of the committees, associations or campaigns established by the IAH. Nonetheless, Münzenberg, Misiano and the German communist Friedrich “Fritz” Platten, assured the ECCI Secretariat that the IAH did not intend to deviate from the sanctioned policy of the CPSU (B) or, for that matter, the adopted decisions of the Fifth International Comintern congress in 1924, as well as those from the Fifth Enlarged ECCI Plenum (21 March-April 1925). Moreover, the IAH begged the ECCI Secretariat to remember that the IAH was not at all involved in the on-going fractional dispute within the KPD.¹⁷²

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Closing of the Books

The Fourteenth Party Congress of the CPSU (B) convened in Moscow on 18-31 December 1925. After Lenin’s death in 1924, a power vacuum had emerged within the Bolshevik elite; the congress therefore expected to project the appearance of a unified party, guided by discipline. However, the congress progressed in another direction, only mirroring the internal confusion of the party. During the discussion of the Comintern, the CPSU (B) urged the world party to cease its demand for the imminent realisation of world revolution which the leaders of the sections constantly repeated in their propaganda. According to the CPSU (B), the Comintern’s focus should instead be on assisting to solve the current crisis within the party and explaining to the communist movement the difficulties of building socialism in a backward country.¹⁷³

At the Comintern, the discussion of China was carried out on a different level. For the Comintern, the *Hands off China* campaign had created a positive, political effect in both Germany and beyond, especially as the world party considered the coming of revolution in China as a critical “link in the chain of world revolution”. For the IAH, the campaign had been a success.

¹⁷² RGASPI 538/2/27, 111-111a, Letter from Münzenberg, Misiano and Platten, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 7/9-1925. For a summary of the Fifth International Comintern Congress, and the Fifth Enlarged ECCI Plenum, see Kahan 1990, p.21, 25. Münzenberg, Misiano and Platten suggested that Clara Zetkin act as mediator for the contacts with the ECCI. The fractional disputes concerned a controversy between the CPSU (B) and the KPD on the question of “Bolshevization”, which had its origin in the Fischer-Maslow fraction. The conflict affected the activity at Comintern headquarters and Münzenberg wondered, therefore, whether the ECCI Secretariat was able to sort out the “delay”, whilst in Germany, Münzenberg had become involved to solve the dispute between the ZK KPD and the Fischer-Maslow fraction.

¹⁷³ Degras vol.II 1960, pp.243-244. Manuilsky was the author of these objectives, which the ECCI sent to the national sections in August of 1925. In January 1926, the ECCI Agitprop Department published a complement to the above, stating that: “By ‘perspectives of world revolution’ we do not mean a precise or approximate prediction of the date when the revolution will break out in one country or another, or even in the world”, see Degras vol.II 1960, p.239. Taken from *Inprekorr*, vi, 10, 125, 14/1-1926.

According to the ECCI, by the end of 1925 the IAH stood on the threshold of becoming a genuine mass organisation, especially as the organisation had grown in size and scope due to its recruitment of intellectuals, artists and scientists supporting both the Bolsheviks and communism. Finally, the IAH's "real task" of "winning" groups "over to Soviet Russia and the CI [Comintern]" was no longer a far-fetched vision and, furthermore, the IAH was the instrument through which the Comintern would establish "millions of large sympathising organisations".¹⁷⁴ Münzenberg could only agree, despite declaring that the IAH headquarters in Berlin was in a chaotic state. Nonetheless, Münzenberg promised in return to the ECCI Secretariat, that he, along with the German communist and secretary of the IAH Paul Scholze, and the IAH functionary from the Netherlands John William Kruyt,¹⁷⁵ would do everything possible to fulfil the Comintern's objectives:

The IAH has become an indispensable part of the communist mass movement. Within the framework of the communist movement, the IAH has the task of acting as a cover organisation for the Communist International, [...] to gather masses of non-party and independent workers' and left-wing intellectuals and through our work draw them closer to the Communist International and its ideology.¹⁷⁶

This spurred the IAH on to continue developing its organisational activity. However, by displaying ideological obedience to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in Moscow, this statement proves how much the IAH was dependent upon the arbitrariness of the ECCI in continuing to support the organisation.¹⁷⁷ The IAH had, in fact, become comfortable with the thought of involving itself more deeply in the colonial question at the end of 1925, proposing to the ECCI Secretariat that the organisation wanted to act as a socio-political actor in the "backward countries" in order to pave the way for either the establishment of communist parties, or of a communist movement. The Chinese question did, however, require a change in its *modus*

¹⁷⁴ Degras vol.II 1960, p.240. Taken from *Inprekorr*, vi, 10, 125, 14/1-1926; RGASPI 538/2/27, 114-118, Report on IAH [undated]; Münzenberg 1926, pp.23-25.

¹⁷⁵ For biography on Kruyt, see Internet: < <http://www.iisg.nl/bwsa/bios/kruyt.html> >.

¹⁷⁶ RGASPI 538/2/27, 222-227, Report from IAH, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 10/12-1925. The IAH considered its anti-colonial work as a precursor to establishing a communist movement in regions and countries which either had no communist party or a weak communist movement. At the end of 1925, therefore, the moment in time had arrived to formulate a strategy on how to develop its anti-colonial work. This proposition depended on getting the ECCI to endorse the idea and, above all, get the headquarters of the IAH operational. According to this report, IAH headquarters had only a minimal staff at the office, devoted to dealing with international contacts, correspondence as well as developing and leading the propaganda work. Its staff consisted of Münzenberg, the Dutch communist John William Kruyt, the German Paul Scholze, two stenotypists and a house cleaner. The IAH requested that the ECCI Secretariat ask Clara Zetkin, who had visited IAH headquarters in December, whether they needed someone to verify the desolation in Berlin.

¹⁷⁷ Münzenberg sent a similar report to the ZK KPD on 30 December, adding that he wondered why the ZK KPD had avoided contact for several weeks. The IAH, IRH and the *Roten Frontkämpferbund* should act as a collective "block to support the unemployed in Germany against the SPD, argued Münzenberg and, if successful, this would attract large masses to join the communist movement, see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 70-71, Report from Münzenberg in Berlin to Zentrale der KPD, 30/12-1925.

operandi, the IAH stated, insisting on a more specific agenda which would focus more on exposing the social situation of the Chinese workers. If endorsed by the Comintern, and if successful, the IAH wanted to establish a united front against oppression in China, which would have to include representatives from the trade unions in China as well as left-wing socialists and academics in Europe.¹⁷⁸

In December 1925, Münzenberg finally informed Kornblum, Kuusinen and Piatnitsky that the *Hands off China* campaign had yielded good results. The campaign had confirmed contacts between the IAH and Kou Meng-yu, who had been appointed as the secretary of the Chinese IAH section in Shanghai and was Headmaster at Beijing University, and also with other scholars at Beijing University [no names mentioned], as well as with intellectuals in Europe and the USA. According to Münzenberg, the IAH's colonial work in 1925 had "awoken interest" in social, cultural and political circles; however, the campaign was not yet strong enough to solidify the colonial question within the IAH. To strengthen this field of activity, Münzenberg advocated a shift in direction, referring to the societal turmoil in Syria (see further below), which had similar characteristics to the Chinese nationalist struggle. In December, the IAH organised a public demonstration in Berlin, on the direct orders of the ZK KPD, with the slogan "China in Revolution, the Cruelties in Syria, and the International Working Class" (*China in Revolution, die Greuel in Syrien und die internationale Arbeiterklasse*). Thus, Münzenberg required the ECCI to authorise the IAH to pursue the Syria question, and merge it with the political pathos of the Chinese campaign. This new campaign intended to follow the established patterns of the *Hands off China* campaign, i.e. sending petitions to governmental authorities, collecting signatures and money and organising both public demonstrations and international congresses. However, Münzenberg introduced a new strategy in comparison to the China campaign, suggesting building the Syria campaign around a committee, rather than only focusing on public demonstrations of solidarity.¹⁷⁹ This strategy would serve a two-fold purpose for the IAH. Firstly, establishing the IAH in the Middle East and North Africa, and secondly, gaining access to the Arab and North African anti-colonial movement in Berlin.

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¹⁷⁸ RGASPI 538/2/27, 222-227, Report from IAH, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 10/12-1925.

¹⁷⁹ RGASPI 538/2/27, 212-214, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum, Kuusinen and Piatnitsky, Moscow, 8/12-1925; SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/148, 69, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 8/12-1925; RGASPI 538/2/27, 222-227, Report from the IAH/Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 10/12-1925.

Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee, 8 December, 1925

The foundation of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* was a rapid process. According to its first public communiqué, published in Münzenberg's *Welt am Abend* on 16 December, the committee declared that the "bloody colonial wars" determined the nature of the "current international political scene". The committee declared that this was a system of political expression, created and supported by the *League of Nations* in order to allow the Mandate powers to maintain their repressive grip on their colonial dominions. With reference to the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty, the results of these negotiations had stimulated the growth of colonial disorder in the Arab region. Hence, a focal point of protest for the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* was against the rule of "the great imperialist powers" Great Britain and France in Egypt, Persia, Morocco, Palestine and Mesopotamia. After the end of the Great War, the Arab region was an unstable region, characterised by violent outbursts. The situation in Syria came to head in 1925 with a nationalist uprising, which focused on the identity of the Syrian state rather than being a question of Arab nationalism. According to David K. Fieldhouse, this rebellion was "one of the major turning points in modern Syrian history", one which the French military suppressed in 1927.¹⁸⁰

In comparison to the *Hands off China* campaign, the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* did not focus solely on raising material or financial relief; on the contrary, the campaign was overtly political in its support for the Syrian nationalist struggle. Münzenberg used his connection to the LHR to turn the committee into a forum for intellectuals in Germany to air their political discontent, particularly by signing petitions. For example, author Ernst Toller, Ledebour, the artist John Heartfield, the Manager of the left-wing theatre *Weltbühne* in Berlin Erwin Piscator and the well-known communist figurehead Clara Zetkin, lent their names to the committee. Additionally, the committee also organised a number of public demonstrations and "one large meeting" in

¹⁸⁰ In June 1925, the Druze population attacked the French military. The unstable situation forced the work to complete the first Syrian constitution to take a brief pause, whilst the French military curbed the rebellion with harsh discipline and control. Armed opponents, e.g. the nationalist clique the "Damascus radicals", which had connections to the *Shahbandar's People's Party* and the Druze populace, defeated the French army in the initial stage. Whilst the rebellion had spread itself across Syria by the end of 1925, described as a "genuine nationalist rebellion", the French army finally suppressed the uprising, causing extensive loss of human lives and the destruction of property, something the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* highlighted in its propaganda. According to the committee, several hundred Syrian individuals found themselves in prison, whilst the military siege of Damascus had lasted for 50 hours, ending with over 6,000 casualties in Syria. Another actor, the PCF, used the Syrian uprising as an opportunity to strengthen its network in North Africa. In connection with the Rif Revolt, the PCF established a section in Tunis which distributed propaganda in support of the Syrian uprising, see further in David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, pp.286-288; SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 22/V S.U.F./95, 18a-18b, "Gegen die Greuel in Syrien", 1925. On the PCF branch in Tunis, see Young 2001, p.147, taken from Maxime Rodinson, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, London, Zed Books, 1979, p.88. See also Thomas (2008). The Syrian rebellion ended in the middle of 1926, with France deploying 50,000 soldiers to Syria on a permanent basis to secure control over the country.

Berlin, with active assistance from the IAH, managing to get colonial activists to deliver speeches.¹⁸¹

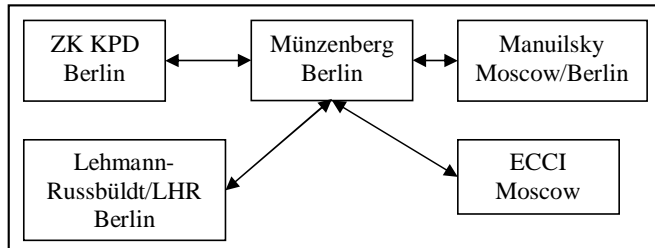
The Syria Committee was formed as the result of a joint discussion between Münzenberg, the ZK KPD and Manuilsky. For Münzenberg, this committee provided the IAH with an opportunity to enhance its colonial work, an argument which had been introduced by Manuilsky in December. While Manuilsky was reflecting on the general aims of the IAH, the ZK KPD instructed Münzenberg to organise a demonstration against the “cruelties in Syria” in Berlin in December 1925. Despite the positive response to the China campaign, Münzenberg did not intend to set up a new campaign. The Syria campaign should have a committee as a representative source. This also corresponded with the ECCI Secretariat's demand that the IAH establish either sympathising committees or organisations. According to Münzenberg, the committee should be “totally separate in its organisation and have no connection with the IAH”, and secondly, if the committee became a success in Germany, the IAH intended to form similar committees in England, Switzerland and France. “To lead” the committee, Münzenberg nominated the “non-communist” Fritz Danziger, a member of the *Socialist Bund* in Germany, an actor who would attract the German pacifist movement's support for the committee. For the IAH, the Syria Committee could serve the purpose of paving the way for its activities in Syria, e.g. to send material relief to Syria.¹⁸² Münzenberg's proposal implied a separation between the organisational capacities of the IAH and the political

¹⁸¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 22/V S.U.F./95, 18a-18b, “Gegen die Greuel in Syrien“, December 1925; Mario Kessler, “Antikoloniale Bündnisse im syrischen Volksbefreiungskrieg (1925-1927)“, in *Die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, H. Piazza (ed.), Leipzig, 1987, p.102. Kessler refers to *Welt am Abend*, 16/12-1925. Münzenberg and the IAH did not manage to collect the names of 50 “prominent characters”, ending only with forty-four signatures. For example: professor Schollenbruch, Gerhard Pohl, Dr. Flack, Dr. Boenheim, Dr. Klauber, Dr. Meng, Henry Guilbeaux, Frich Mühsam, Johannes B. Becher, Fritz Weiss, F. Rubiner, R. Schlichter, Bruno Boimann, Dr. med. Schminko, Wieland Herzfelde [John Heartfield's brother], L. Märten, Dr. Ernst Schwarz and Carl Grünberg, see fol. RGASPI 538/3/47, 9-13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Müller/IAH office, Moscow, 26/1-1925. Ernst Toller's first contact with the anti-colonial movement in Germany was in connection with the formation of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*. Kirsten Reimers erroneously writes that Toller only became involved in July of 1926, as a member of the *League against Colonial Oppression* (LACO), see Kirsten Reimers, *Das bewältigen des wirklichen*, Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, p.159; Richard Dove, *He was a German: a biography of Ernst Toller*, Libris, London, 1990, pp.144-145. Toller acted later as a delegate of the German LACO Section at the Brussels congress in February 1927; see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.239.

¹⁸² SAPMO-BA, ZPA I 6/3/148, 68, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 8/12-1925; SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 22/V S.U.F./95, 18a-18b, „Gegen die Greuel in Syrien“, December 1925. The office of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* in Berlin was at Bambergerstraße 60. Furthermore, this idea never saw the light of day. Münzenberg had expected to divide the relief support campaign into two phases. The first phase would send a “commission to investigate” Syria, represented primarily of “socialists” and consisting of prominent individuals from Germany, in December 1925. During the second phase, the IAH intended to organize the sending of medicine, bandages and sanitary assistance to Syria, under the supervision of German “socialist” doctors. Münzenberg contacted Manuilsky (“Samuely”), employed as the ECCI's representative in Berlin during 1924-25, in charge of the contacts between the ZK KPD and the ECCI. According to Ruth Fischer's biased account, Manuilsky found himself constantly in conflict with the ZK KPD, charged with taking advantage of his mission to Berlin. For example, Manuilsky rented several flats for himself and his colleagues and ignored the recommendations from the ZK KPD on how to act in Germany. Manuilsky used to send instructors to the local KPD branches. He also held unauthorised meetings with individuals in the party, organised trips for intellectuals to visit the Soviet Union and collected intelligence, see Fischer 1948, p.394; Lazitch 1986, p.296; Nollau 1961, p.160.

ethos of the Syria Committee. Additionally, the committee was the product of negotiations, with Müntzenberg being the prime negotiator: Müntzenberg – ZK KPD; Müntzenberg – Manuilsky; Müntzenberg – Lehmann-Russbüldt/LHR; Müntzenberg – ECCI in Moscow.

Table 2.3: Actors in the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*, December 1925



However, this committee was a product of the mind and, in the end, the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* was not the answer to promoting the colonial question within the IAH. This was, in a sense, a symptom of the political and social obstacles the communist movement faced in establishing itself in the Middle East. According to Franz Borkenau, the Comintern's attempts to exercise any influence in the region was more or less futile, but why? Firstly, the communist parties in Syria, Palestine and Egypt were unable to establish themselves as active organisations. Secondly, this failure defined itself by social explanations, e.g. the communist movement could not compete with the religious and racial structures in the Arab countries. Thus, the Middle East and the Arab region seemed immune towards the attempts of the international communist movement to penetrate its sociological structures.¹⁸³

The IAH's inability to carry out any operations of material relief in Syria was a temporary setback. According to a report from the British Colonial Office, dated December 1926, the IAH assured the ECCI that it would continue its work laying the groundwork for the communist movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries at the beginning of 1926. Nevertheless, British authorities suspected that the primary purpose of both the Chinese and Syrian campaigns had been to unite the European left-wing movement around a common cause. Despite the claim that the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* had introduced itself as a global voice, it was an entirely German affair striving to build on the benevolence of politically-conscious individuals, associations and organisations in Europe. For example, the French author Henri Barbusse, one of Müntzenberg's friends, had attempted to establish a branch of the committee in Paris, an effort which went largely unnoticed and attracted only a minimal amount of attention in France.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Borkenau 1938, p.295; Nuri El-Amin (1996).

¹⁸⁴ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, REPORT on the Activities of the "League against Oppression in the Colonies, December 1926.

At the end of 1925, the IAH wanted to find a new direction for its colonial work, especially to make the transition from being a sponsor of campaigns/committees/associations to sponsoring a more organised entity. While the political message of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* had, again, verified the political ethos of its anti-colonial rhetoric, making it possible for the IAH to establish connections with social and political groups previously inaccessible to the German communist movement, the challenge ahead was to expand its anti-colonial project. To do so, the IAH had to secure an organisational platform which existed independently of the IAH. However, to carry out this gargantuan task, the IAH had to devote additional energy to facilitating a structural *milieu* for this organisational platform in Berlin, a project that had to find acceptance among the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in Moscow.

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Selling the Anti-Colonial Project

The *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* never gained enough momentum to unify anti-colonial movements into an organisational and political body. Münzenberg had, however, no intention of letting this opportunity disappear. Especially as the Chinese, Syrian and Moroccan campaigns (part of the Syrian campaign)¹⁸⁵ had been successful ventures undertaken by the IAH in 1925. Meanwhile, these campaigns had attracted the attention of the national state security agencies in both Germany (the *Auswärtige Amt*) and Great Britain (the British Colonial Office; CO, in London, in charge of administering, monitoring and supervising order in the British colonies). In 1926, the CO concluded that political movements, with a special focus on the colonial question, had taken advantage of the “profound dissatisfaction” that evidently existed amongst European intellectuals and the trade unions. Movements which, more importantly, capitalised on the resentment against the excessive use of military force in territories the British Empire perceived as being mandates.¹⁸⁶ The IAH was also aiming to fulfil the objective introduced at the Fifth Enlarged ECCI Plenum, which urged the international communist movement to “establish contact with non-communist revolutionary organisations and to help them work out their programme and tactics”. However, this involved negotiations with the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. For the IAH, in the beginning of January, Münzenberg had to sell the anti-colonial project to the Eastern Department in Moscow. Münzenberg formulated a vision which aimed to transform the IAH's colonial work: i.e. rather than establishing committees and

¹⁸⁵ The conflict between the Moroccan Rif Berber population and the Spanish and French militaries erupted in 1921 and ended in 1927, see David H. Slavin, “The French Left and the Rif War, 1924-25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Jan., 1991), pp.5-32; Thomas (2008).

¹⁸⁶ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, REPORT on the Activities of the “League against Oppression in the Colonies, December 1926.

campaigns, to carry out the colonial work in an organised form. This vision was a moderate construction. However, Münzenberg's ambition was to get the Eastern Department to consent to providing financial and political support.

Münzenberg feared that the Syria Committee would experience a similar loss of momentum as the one experienced by the China campaign. Contacting Müller at IAH headquarters in Moscow on 26 January, Münzenberg explained the basic tasks for the IAH's colonial work, matters that needed urgent solutions. Firstly, to re-organise the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* with the sole purpose of creating a separation from the IAH which, in turn, would stimulate the formation of an independent organisation against colonialism. Münzenberg referred to the new committee as the *Action Committee against the Colonial Politics of the Imperialists* or the *Action Committee* ("Aktionskomitee gegen die imperialistische Kolonialpolitik"), a committee which had to make a sharp distinction between organisational and political matters. What were the reasons for this? For Münzenberg, the IAH's main objective was to keep the committee "steady in our hands". This was a conclusion based on Münzenberg's experience of the Syria Committee, which had introduced the socialist/pacifist Fritz Danziger as leader and had, therefore, managed to display the eager participation of left-wing intellectuals, socialist doctors and representatives of colonial groups in Berlin. The *Action Committee* was to continue utilising non-communist figures in leading positions, something that would secure the establishment of connections with the colonial community in Berlin. Münzenberg informed Müller, for example, about the "strong groups" from the Rif region, Muslim associations, the Berlin Kuomintang office, Syria, Indian Muslims, Persian student associations as well as active and politically-conscious individuals from India, Afghanistan and Korea currently in Berlin. In fact, colonial individuals were already carrying out work for the Syria Committee; persons who would later assume leading positions in the *Action Committee*, but only if the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters authorised this anti-colonial project, Münzenberg stated.¹⁸⁷

To commemorate the transformation of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* into the *Action Committee*, Münzenberg wanted to orchestrate a public, yet modest colonial conference in Berlin in February. The Syria Committee had sent out invitations to the conference at the "Rathauskeller" to specifically-selected guests in January. However, Münzenberg explained to Müller that the event should convene in a discrete fashion, thus, the invitation did not mention either the "time or the agenda or the list of speakers". In comparison to the *Hands off China Congress* in August, the preparatory work for the "Rathauskeller" Conference was an undertaking guided by conspiracy, with only a limited circle of people being allowed to know the initial idea of

¹⁸⁷ RGASPI 538/3/47, 9-13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Müller/IAH office, Moscow, 26/1-1925 [sic, 1926].

transforming the Syria Committee. Nevertheless, this was done through the service of colonial “specialists” in Berlin linked to the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*. The IAH had received “a number of addresses” for some contacts in the colonies. According to Münzenberg, these addresses illustrated the chance “to create a persistent connection” with anti-colonial activists and organisations.¹⁸⁸

Yet, this vision was only a temporary one at this stage. Earlier attempts, particularly the failure of the ICBu as well as Roy’s undertakings in 1924, had revealed the internal and external difficulties in establishing functional colonial work. One of the few successful auxiliary organisations to carry out any colonial work in the European communist parties was the PCF, with its attention on the colonial disorder in North Africa in 1925 which, at the beginning of 1926, was still a campaign playing a key role. For the IAH, therefore, the task was to establish reliable links to colonial individuals, sustain the activities of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* before taking the step towards transformation and, above all, to confirm an organisational strength which did not depend on the approval of the communist parties. In comparison to the PCF and CPGB, both having claimed to have produced modest results, the latter claiming to be the only party that had existing contacts with communist parties and associations in the British colonies, the IAH’s colonial work was in its infancy. Nevertheless, the CPGB exaggerated its influence in the colonies, particularly when the so-called parties and associations in the mid-1920s consisted of loose structures and had at their disposal only a small membership in India, Egypt, Syria and Palestine.¹⁸⁹

The list of names of colonial contacts was the evidence Münzenberg had striven to find, and he instructed Müller to present the document to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, particularly to those at both the ECCI and at the Eastern Department. This document would confirm that the IAH was doing everything to create a vigorous anti-colonial movement in Berlin. What did this list contain? Firstly, the document contained the names and addresses of twenty-one individuals, associations, trade unions and organisations in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Secondly, the list was not a product of Münzenberg’s network but had instead been compiled by the colonial members of the Syria Committee and other contacts. Thirdly, some of the names had

¹⁸⁸ RGASPI 538/3/47, 9-13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Müller/IAH office, Moscow, 26/1-1925 [1926]. Münzenberg told Müller of the urgency of convening the colonial conference. According to Münzenberg, a rumour suggested that the conference had received “great attention” in the Berlin press, as well as in the English paper, the *Morning Post*, and in the Egyptian press. In 1927, the British Head Office was one of the first to evaluate the founding conference of the LACO, see TNA HO 144 10693, Labour Party – Industrial Department – THE LEAGUE AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION, year: 1927. For the location of the conference (“Rathauskeller”) in Berlin, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/4, 2-4, Protokoll der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926.

¹⁸⁹ For the Colonial Commission of the CPGB, see Degras vol.II 1960, p.247; Callaghan 1993, p.60, 90; Derrick (2008). See further in Thomas (2008) for an analysis of the attitude and response of the British and French security services towards the activities of the communists in the countries mentioned above.

surfaced in connection with the *Hands off China* campaign in 1925, e.g. Kou Meng-yu and Joshi. Finally, the list was an exposé of national IAH sections, e.g. the Mexican section and the Brazilian IAH section in Rio de Janeiro with its secretary Paolo de Lacerda.¹⁹⁰ The essential purpose of this list was partly to vindicate the IAH's growth on a global scale, partly to show to the decision-makers in Moscow that Berlin was the most logical place to locate the centre of their anti-colonial project. At this stage, however, this was an undertaking that depended exclusively on the networks of other actors. Achmed Hassan Mattar, a Moroccan nationalist and a journalist with ties to the Rif region, was the link between the nationalist *Klub der Zaglulisten* (“Zaglulist Club”) in Berlin and the Syria Committee, providing addresses to candidates in Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti and Kenya. Travelling frequently between Tangiers and Berlin, Mattar had an extensive network which he shared with the Syria Committee, e.g. four hundred addresses of potential anti-colonial contacts in Egypt and the Sudan, including the addresses of the representatives of the Egyptian nationalist party the *Zaghlul Party* Omar Tosoon and Yaur Bey, and that of the “nationalist” Ibrahim Hafis at the Egyptian Ministry of Finance in Cairo.¹⁹¹

This list included the address of the *American Negro Labour Congress* (ANLC), a forum for Afro-American activists but which was, in reality, a communist-initiated Negro-sympathising organisation, established in Chicago 1925 on direct instructions from Lovett Fort-Witheman under the guise of the WPA, and contrived in Moscow. According to the list, the ANLC had branches in the West Indies, Philippines and in West Africa. However, the reference to a so-called “Anti-Imperialist League” in West Africa is ambiguous. One reason for suggesting the existence of such a “league” was the result of intelligence, compiled in a “list of 100 Negro organisations in Africa and the West-Indies”, which the ANLC had sent to either the Syria Committee or the IAH in the beginning of 1926. This may also explain why the West African anti-colonial activists, the journalist Casely Hayford from the Gold Coast and Samuel R. Wood, were on this list. According to Imanuel Geiss, the discussions on “colonial reforms” in West Africa increased during 1923-25, in connection with the establishment of the “National Congress of British West Africa” (the “Congress”). This political movement engaged Hayford and Wood, the former being one of the driving forces behind the foundation of the *West African Students' Union* (WASU) in London in 1925. Additionally, the “Congress” organised a congress in Bathurst, Gambia, 24 December, 1925

¹⁹⁰ RGASPI 538/3/47, 14, List of names [compiled by *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*], Berlin, to Müller, Moscow, January 1926. For Kou Meng-Yu and Joshi, see Münzenberg 1926, p.112, 131.

¹⁹¹ RGASPI 538/3/47, 14, List of names [compiled by *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*], Berlin, to Müller, Moscow, January 1926. Manela writes that the *Zaghlul Party* dominated “Egyptian politics in the inter-war years”, a nationalist movement established by Sa’d Zaghlul, a veteran of the Egyptian political scene during the first decades of the twentieth century. Today described in Egypt as the “Father of the Nation”, see Manela 2007, p.9. For Gibarti’s evaluation of Achmed Hassan Mattar, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/5, 4-5, Report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Department, Moscow, 23/2-1926; Martin 2005, pp.261-269.

– 10 January, 1926, which both Hayford and Wood attended. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the attention created by this conference earned the two of them a place on this list, categorised as being representatives of the West-African anti-colonial movement. If the Syria Committee ever did have any contact with Hayford or Wood, this would most likely have been as either channels to other activists or to the West African press.¹⁹² In conclusion, this list does not prove the existence of nor does it reveal the nature of any of the networks of either the Syria Committee or the IAH. On the contrary, these addresses were, in a majority of cases, the names of actors the IAH wanted to involve in its anti-colonial project. In addition, it was a document frequently re-edited with the inclusion of new names and addresses.¹⁹³ For Münzenberg, this list was a vital source of intelligence Müller had to use in order to convince the Eastern Department to authorise the anti-colonial project, which depended, ultimately, on Müller's legwork in Moscow.

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The Selling Scheme

Münzenberg instructed Müller to “take a walk down” to Comintern headquarters, where he had to convince the decision-makers to authorise the colonial conference in Berlin. What particular tasks did Münzenberg give to Müller? Most importantly, Müller had to go to the Eastern Department and hand over Münzenberg's letter to either Kuusinen or Roy before giving a brief report on the IAH's colonial work in Berlin. This report would give the impression, firstly, that the IAH was following the directives of Kuusinen and Roy, which had been passed on to Münzenberg during his latest visit to Moscow (unknown). Secondly, Müller was to describe the scheduled colonial conference at the “Rathauskeller” as a constructive idea in developing the anti-colonial project, especially since colonial activists in the Syria Committee had spread the word about the conference. If Müller got the feeling that the Eastern Department seemed reluctant to sanction the conference, Münzenberg recommended that Müller tell Kuusinen and Roy that the IAH did not intend to take any further initiative until the ECCI had given its opinion on the question. However,

¹⁹² RGASPI 538/3/47, 14, List of names [compiled by *Against the Cruelties in Syria* committee], Berlin, to Müller, Moscow, January 1926. In October, 1925, the ANLC established itself in Chicago. Its impact was, however, minimal. According to George Sachs, a left-wing activist and journalist from South Africa, in his report to the Comintern on January of 1926: “The recent Negro Congress in America has seemingly not had any response on the African continent as far as South Africa is concerned”, see fol. RGASPI 495/64/49, 3-4, taken from Davidson 2003, p.143-144. Co-founders of the ANLC were the Afro-Americans Richard B. Moore and Cyril B. Briggs, who wanted the ANLC to function as an instrument to unite Afro-American trade unionists and progressive intellectuals into one representative body, see Anthony Bogues, *Caliban's Freedom. The Early Political Thought of C. L. R. James*, Pluto Press, 1997, p.79, 83. For Hayford, Wood, the “Congress”, and the conference in Bathurst, Gambia, see Geiss 1968, pp.173, 220-226. Additional names on “the list” were Abd el Gader el Amin from the Khartoum province (“translator”, and representative of the trade union *Sudan Egyptian Union*) and Hassar Rusdi; Mustafa Ibrahim Bey in Brazil; Juan Pallot of the “Rif Committee”; Yussuf Khan, the “President of the Islamic United Recr. Club in Aden”; E. Bumkelle in Mombasa, Kenya; and A. Benebilla, the representative of French Somaliland in the Djibouti region.

¹⁹³ RGASPI 542/1/4, 46 [List of names], LACO, International Secretariat, Berlin, [undated] 1926.

if the above failed, Müller should contact Manuilsky at Comintern headquarters, introduce himself as “Münzenberg’s man”, and be “short in your report”. The reason why Münzenberg was focusing on the Eastern Department – the department in charge of colonial work at Comintern headquarters in Moscow – was based on the fact that the IAH needed support in the formulation of political directives and material, as well as with administrative assistance and finance.¹⁹⁴

Whether Müller visited the Eastern Department to carry out Münzenberg’s instructions remains unknown. Empirical material (reports or correspondence) do not verify any of the above, aside from one document, which indicates that Müller seems to have managed to sell the IAH’s anti-colonial project. In an edited version of Münzenberg’s letter to Müller, signed by Müller, addressed to the *All Union Central Council of Soviet Labour Unions* (Allunionistischen Zentralrats der Sowjetgewerkschaften; AUCCSLU, or its Russian acronym: WZSPS) in Moscow on 6 February, Müller requested that the AUCCSLU support the IAH’s colonial work. Whilst this represents only one observation, suggesting that the Eastern Department had approved of Müller’s presentation and endorsed Münzenberg’s idea, the conclusion is, however, that, without the approval of the anti-colonial project at some hierarchical level within the Comintern apparatus, Müller could not have sent the letter to the AUCCSLU.¹⁹⁵ Is it possible to conclude that this confirmed a connection between the IAH’s colonial work and the Eastern Department? As the anti-colonial project had been a gradual process since the beginning of 1925, who was involved to guide the work in Moscow, and what was the nature of these relations in both Berlin and Moscow?

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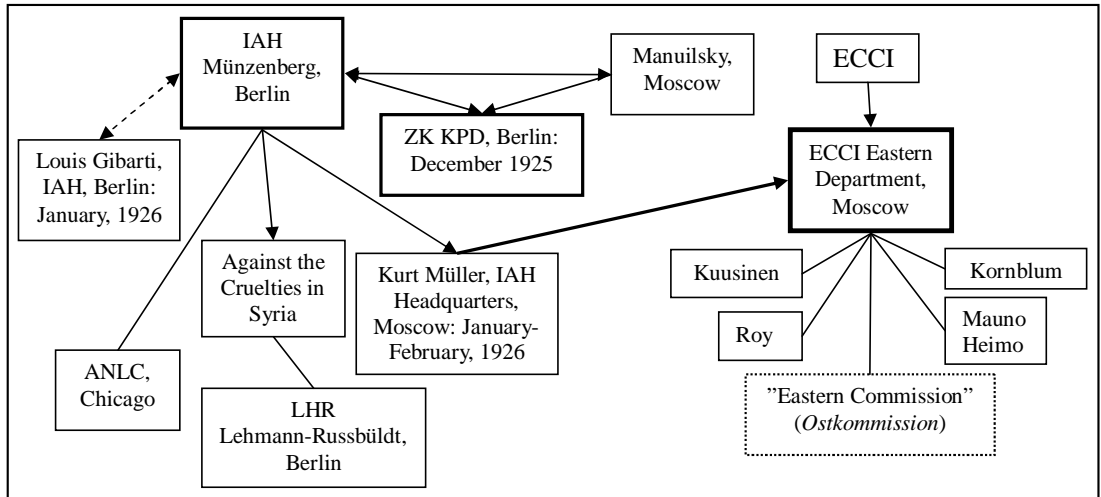
Interactionism Inside the Anti-Colonial Project

The actors in the anti-colonial project, represented by Münzenberg and the IAH, the Syria Committee and the Eastern Department, had to set up a functional network. Most importantly, they had to link together individuals in Berlin and Moscow with the departments at Comintern headquarters. Covering a chronological time-frame from December 1925 to February 1926, their efforts to do this indicate a swift interactionist process, guided by determination and commitment to strengthen the loose structure of the colonial work carried out by the IAH.

¹⁹⁴ RGASPI 538/3/47, 9-13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Müller/IAH headquarters, Moscow, 26/1-1925.

¹⁹⁵ RGASPI 538/3/75, 3, Letter from the IAH Committee, Moscow, to WZSPS [AUCCSLU], Moscow, 6/2-1926.

Table 2.4: Interactionist Structure of the Anti-Colonial Project, December 1925 – February 1926



Key actors in this network were Münzenberg, Manuilsky and the ZK KPD, a structure which expanded over a brief period in order to include other actors, with Kurt Müller assuming a key position. Nevertheless, it was Louis Gibarti, the Hungarian communist and IAH functionary, nominated by Münzenberg as his right-hand-man on the colonial question, who took over the role Müller once had. A decision most likely based on the fact that the Eastern Department had assumed the functions previously carried out by Müller, e.g. establishing “direct contacts with Eastern peoples” (the nationalist Cantonese government in China and with Chinese students at the *Kommunistischeskii universitet trudiashchikhsia Vostoka*, [Communist University for Eastern Workers; KUTV] in Moscow). Thus, Gibarti was left in charge of the colonial question in Berlin. One of his first assignments for the Syria Committee was to complete a list of addresses of colonial organisations in London and to send those on the list invitations to its colonial conference in Berlin.¹⁹⁶ Aside from the Eastern Department, individuals at Comintern headquarters were the key to developing the anti-colonial project during the initial stages, e.g. Mauno Heimo, an émigré communist from Finland and Kuusinen’s close associate in Moscow. Additionally, Münzenberg had heard a rumour implying that the Eastern Department was planning to form an “Eastern Commission” (*Ostkommission*). Therefore, Müller had to see to it that Münzenberg became involved in this commission.¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Münzenberg must have misread the Eastern Department’s intentions. In fact, the “Eastern Commission” only came into existence after the

¹⁹⁶ Any trace of such a list in the Comintern Archive remains missing.

¹⁹⁷ RGASPI 538/3/47, 9-13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Müller/IAH office, Moscow, 26/1-1925.

colonial conference at the “Rathauskeller” in Berlin, an event which witnessed the establishment of the *League against Colonial Oppression* (LACO) on 10 February, 1926.

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Chapter 2. Birth

The “Rathauskeller” Conference was the official inauguration of the anti-colonial project in Berlin. Convening at 6.30 pm on 10 February, 1926, the conference also witnessed the foundation of the *League against Colonial Oppression* (Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung; LACO). Münzenberg imagined that this colonial conference would see the creation of a new anti-colonial “committee”, based on the organisational structure of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*. However, the “Rathauskeller” Conference took a further step by advocating the formation a “league” instead of just another “committee”. Attending the conference were 43 delegates representing a cross-section of anti-colonial activists, German left-wing organisations in Berlin and foreign delegates. Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt addressed the delegates before welcoming Gibarti, acting in the role as IAH secretary and representative of the Syria Committee, who declared that the conference represented an opportunity to discuss how to unify “organisations of different colonial peoples and the organisations on the political left in Germany”. The primary aim of the LACO was, therefore, to lay the foundations of an anti-colonial movement in Germany, which would focus on creating a forum for grandiose ideas and organising the disparate characters of the existing anti-colonial movements into one single movement.¹⁹⁸

The aim of this chapter is to disclose and interpret the birth of the anti-colonial project that Münzenberg and the IAH had begun to conceptualise in 1925. Notwithstanding the success of the IAH’s colonial campaigns and committees in Germany, the LACO represented, in both spirit and flesh, the practices and mobilisation of its colonial work in 1926. Interpreted in terms of *birth*, this suggests that the IAH consciously separated itself from the anti-colonial project, partly in order to pave the way for another sympathising organisation, and partly to realise Münzenberg’s ambition of organising an international congress against colonialism and imperialism in Brussels in 1926. This latest endeavour had been a process which had tested the relationship between Münzenberg in Berlin and Comintern headquarters in Moscow when it came down to finalising the preparatory work for the anti-colonial congress. Most importantly, this chapter provides a prelude to the foundation of the LAI in February 1927, and contradicts the conclusions outlined by Gross and McMeekin which suggest that Münzenberg wanted to use Paris as the venue for the anti-colonial

¹⁹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/4, 2-4, Protokoll der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926; RGASPI 542/1/4, 5-6, Anwesenheitsliste der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926; TNA HO 144 10693, Labour Party – Industrial Department – THE LEAGUE AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION, year: 1927. See Adam Hochschild’s *Bury the Chains* (2005) for a similar episode, which, however, took place in London in a different setting and chronological fixture. Yet, the similarity of these two meetings is that these events inspired the recipients (the attending delegates), and therefore, represent a symbolic value to initiate a movement around a common cause.

Congress instead of Brussels. A proposition far removed from the actual initial idea. The primary aim here is to delineate why Münzenberg had determined to hold the international congress against colonialism and imperialism in Brussels, an idea which had sprung into his head as early as August 1925. Brussels represented the locale and epitome of colonialism as a system of oppressive imperialism, with Belgium's colonial policy in the so-called Congo Free State being a mixture of the "realities of colonisation and the ideology of imperialism".¹⁹⁹

The "Anwesenheitsliste" (*List of Attendance*) tells us who attended the "Rathauskeller" Conference and, furthermore, from the conference's protocol it is possible to determine the delegates' reactions to, for example, Gibarti and Münzenberg's speeches. German citizens dominated the conference, individuals who belonged to either associations, organisations or parties. For example, the LHR (Lehmann-Russbüldt, Albert Cruter), KPD (Ferdinand Timps), IAH (Münzenberg, Fritz Weiss, and Düwell), the *Socialist Bund* (Ledebour), the *Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany* (USPD) and the IRH, but there were also unaffiliated individuals, e.g. Albert Einstein's personal secretary, Siegfried Jakoby. Foreign delegates also attended the event: Teddy Johnsen of the Swedish IAH section; IAH functionaries John W. Kruyt from the Netherlands (who was actually living in Berlin at that moment) and Federico Bach from Switzerland; the Russian students Pervovnikov and Shapiro [first names unknown]; and Hans Baer, the TASS representative. The colonial influx at the conference was a cross-section of the anti-colonial movement in Berlin. For example, Virendranath Chattophadyaya (Chatto), was misleadingly listed as the delegate of the *Communist Party of India*; A. C. N. Nambiar, the representative of "India" – an Indian journalist and Chatto's personal friend; and Suraj Kishun from India as the delegate of the *Central European Indian Association* (Verein der Inder in Zentraleuropa). In fact, all three belonged to a clique in Berlin opposed to Roy's vision of how to achieve national independence in India. The Berlin clique wanted nationalism to be the impetus to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle, the proponents of which, in comparison to Roy, wanted to stimulate the question of class struggle in India.²⁰⁰ Delegates of the KMT Wang Fen Sian, V. S. Hsie and Richard Fischer were present, as were representatives of the Chinese student community

¹⁹⁹ Gross 1967, p.199; McMeekin 2003, p.196; Young 2001, p.25; Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost. A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Macmillan Publishers, London, (1999). The societal disorder and violent repression caused by Belgian colonialism functioned, for example, as a source of inspiration for Joseph Conrad to write the famous novel *Heart of Darkness* (published in 1899).

²⁰⁰ Chatto and Münzenberg established a relationship in connection with the formation of the LACO. Chatto was working as a teacher at the Municipal School Farm in Scharfenberg outside Berlin in the beginning of 1926 and was contacted by Münzenberg asking whether he would be willing to "attend a meeting" in February, which would focus on a discussion to prepare an international anti-colonial congress in Brussels, see fol. RGASPI 495/213/186, 215-228, Report from Chatto to the ICC on his political career and life in general, Moscow, 15/10-1931. See *Introduction*, Barooah (2004), and Gupta 2006, p.38 for Chatto. A. C. N. Nambiar is introduced in the chapter *Utopia Redefined, Part I*.

in Berlin Koegang Tong and Chi Chiang Chad. Jahia Haschni of the *Arab Student Association*, Achmed Assadoff of the *Communist Party of Persia*, Mohammed Pour Reza of the *Socialist Party of Persia* and N. Tschelebi of the *Islamic Academic Association* represented the Middle East and North Africa, while Makube and Munumi represented the African continent.²⁰¹

The “Rathauskeller” Conference was the opportunity to introduce the anti-colonial project to a receptive public, arranged in a modest *milieu*. According to Gibarti, the conference aimed to highlight the character of the protests against the “increasing colonising appetite” of the “Imperialist Grand Powers”. In relation to Gibarti’s main idea, Münzenberg registered the attendees’ reactions after Gibarti had concluded that the methods of the anti-colonial movement, e.g. the protest campaigns or the circulation of signed petitions to state governments, had had its day. Thus, Gibarti stated that the IAH had the ambition to create a vigorous centre for the anti-colonial movement in Berlin, represented by the LACO. The challenge for Münzenberg was to outline a vision on how to realise this.²⁰²

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The Münzenbergian Vision: the LACO, the Anti-Colonial Movement and the “International Congress”

At the “Rathauskeller” Conference, Münzenberg expected to receive responses on three topics: the establishment and location of an anti-colonial movement in Berlin; getting the attending delegates to approve the idea of allowing the IAH to organise an international anti-colonial congress; and to put these objectives into practice. Münzenberg declared in his speech that everyone had to understand the necessity of broadening the political agenda of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* and of endorsing the formation of “a general league against colonial oppression”. According to Münzenberg, this was a response to the “giant global political processes” taking place in the Far Eastern countries, especially in China. This “general league” [LACO] aimed, therefore, to support the anti-colonial movement by acting as an international “information service” in the service of “politicians and journalists”. According to Münzenberg, the general functions of this league would be to distribute anti-colonial propaganda and function as a rallying point for anti-colonial activists around the world, which meant that contacts would need to be established with colonial associations and organisations in Berlin and in Europe (Paris, London, Amsterdam and Brussels). Thus, the LACO would be the instrument Münzenberg intended to use in order to connect the anti-colonial movement in Europe with activists in the colonial and semi-

²⁰¹ RGASPI 542/1/4, 5-6, Anwesenheitsliste, Berliner Rathauskeller, 10/2-1926.

²⁰² RGASPI 542/1/4, 2-4, Protokoll der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926.

colonial countries and, in order to do this, different methods of communication via correspondence and propaganda would be utilised.²⁰³

The ambiance of the “Rathauskeller” Conference may have inspired Münzenberg to introduce the LACO as a public actor, a concept that would, in turn, convince the delegates to authorise the IAH to organise an international anti-colonial congress. As specified in the LACO statutes (publicly released in August/September 1926), the LACO's primary function was to “promote among the widest circles an understanding of the nature of colonial policy and its effects on the oppressed peoples”. Nonetheless, whilst propaganda would be the key to spreading the word on the LACO, Münzenberg was hoping for more. By letting the LACO assume a leading role in his colonial work, through the “regular organising of international congresses”, its impact would be global, Münzenberg argued at the conference. The congresses and propaganda had to highlight “imperialist colonial policy”, “the struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples”, “the importance of colonial policy in relation to the international proletariat” and introduce a strategy to the public on how to “support the colonial struggle”. Yet, it was the first international anti-colonial congress serving a higher purpose for Münzenberg. He expected the LACO to succeed in its endeavours which, in conjunction with the anti-colonial congress, would lead to the birth of an active anti-colonial movement and have an impact on all the “major power centres” in Europe, as well as spread itself across India, China, the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America. Münzenberg conceded that this vision relied on the consent of the delegates at the “Rathauskeller”, and declared that the IAH intended to withdraw the idea if they did not approve of the IAH being the formal organiser of an international congress, suggesting instead the arrangement of “an enlarged conference with colonial liaisons”. This was a hazardous proposition. Passing the decision into the hands of the delegates, everyone nonetheless “unanimously adopted” the approval of the LACO to function as the centre for a “permanent campaign” against colonialism, and authorised the IAH to organise the international congress.²⁰⁴

The “Rathauskeller” Conference did not nominate any members for the LACO Executive. On 23 February 1926, the Executive held its inaugural meeting in Berlin and, as noted in a later report by the *Auswärtige Amt*, Fritz Danziger acted as Chairman of the LACO, along with Helene

²⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/4, 2-4, Protokoll der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926.

²⁰⁴ The conference ended at 9 pm. Conference documents (the protocol and list of attendance) were sent to the Eastern Department, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/4, 2-4, Protokoll der im Berliner Rathauskeller am 10. Februar abgehaltenen Konferenz der deutschen Organisationen und der Kolonialvertreter, Berlin, 10/2-1926. RGASPI 542/1/4, 7, Vorläufige Statuten der Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung, Berlin, 4/6-1926. The LACO published its statutes in August or September 1926, according to *Auswärtige Amt*. The draft was completed at the LACO International Secretariat in Berlin on June 4 and sent to the Eastern Department in Moscow. According to its statutes, the LACO intended to “elucidate to the widest circles the nature of colonial politics and their effects on suppressing and the oppressed peoples”, organize public protest rallies against “colonial imperialism” and amass “practical relief to the needy people”. A copy of these statutes is filed in the LAI Collection at IISG, see 3392.1/12.

Stöcker, Baron von Schönaich, D. Bersius and Ledebour.²⁰⁵ In July, the LACO introduced the full membership of its Executive, intelligence that the *Auswärtige Amt* would later use to delineate the geographical spread of the organisation.

Table 3.1: Composition of the LACO Executive, July 1926

Fritz Danziger (Chairman)	Germany
Baron v. Schönaich	Germany
Alfons Paquet	Germany
Helene Stöcker	Germany
Georg Ledebour	Germany
Willi Münzenberg	Germany
Henri Barbusse	France
Albert Fournier	France
Henriette Roland Holst	The Netherlands
Dr. P. Berlage	The Netherlands
Professor Schelderup	Norway
Martin Andersen Nexö	Denmark
Ivar Koge	Sweden
Landova Stychowa	Czechoslovakia
Professor Nedely	Czechoslovakia
Dr. I.U. Bartoscheck	Czechoslovakia
Dr. phil. Weisskopf	Czechoslovakia
Friedrich Adler	Austria
Herman Frischauf	Austria
Maria Lazar	Austria
Dr. Lukac	Austria
Alfons Goldschmidt	Mexico
F. Liebaers	Belgium
Fritz Brupbacher	Switzerland
Bishop W. Montgomery Brown	USA
Kou Meng-yu	China
Lin Wee Min	China
George C. Hsue	China
Shapurji Saklatvala	England ²⁰⁶

The political composition of the LACO Executive was a continuance of the patterns established in connection with the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*. Avoiding introducing itself as an overtly communist organisation and, especially, retaining Danziger as Chairman, the structure of

²⁰⁵ RGASPI 542/1/5, 4-5, Report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/2-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 4, *Auswärtige Amt*, eing., Berlin, 29/4-1926.

²⁰⁶ SAPMO BA-ZPA R1001/6751, 6-7, LACO, Abteilung Sekr. Berlin, 16/7-1926.

the Syria Committee continued on in the transformed shape of the LACO. Political actors from Western Europe dominated the membership quota, although the Executive also displayed a preference for intellectuals and scholars. Aside from Münzenberg, Shapurji Saklatvala, a Member of Parliament (M. P.) in Great Britain and CPGB member, was one of the few communists. Moreover, Swiss author and Münzenberg's friend, Fritz Brupbacher, was given a seat, whilst the nomination of Friedrich Adler, the LSI secretary, must have been regarded as a political victory for the LACO.

Münzenberg's publishing house in Berlin, the Neuer Deutscher Verlag and its publications, most notably the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (A-I-Z), reported on the establishment of the LACO on 11 March, which also mentioned the plan to hold an international anti-colonial congress. According to the article "Gegen die Unterdrückung und Vergewaltigung der Kolonialvölker" (Against the Oppression and Rape of the Colonial Peoples), the IAH promised to assist the LACO in the preparation of a "colonial congress in Brussels" in the near future.²⁰⁷

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The LACO, Comintern and Berlin

The Comintern had to confront both external and internal challenges in 1926. The former concerned two episodes which questioned the capacity of the international communist movement to, on the one hand, initiate political collaborations and, on the other hand, capitalise on political opportunities. With the increased relations between the Comintern and the KMT, Stalin's direct involvement in shaping the policy and strategy of the communists focused on the "rapid upsurge of the anti-imperialist movement" in China, according to Alexander Pantsov. However, there existed no sanctioned collaboration with the KMT and, as the Comintern had turned down a request from the KMT to become members of the "world party", Chiang Kai-shek staged an "anti-communist coup" in Shanghai on 20 March, 1926.²⁰⁸ The second episode occurred in England when the British labour movement supported a general strike in the mining industry in which the IAH chose to get involved. Münzenberg was proud of the swift action taken to support the striking miners with "brotherly demonstrations of solidarity", while others perceived the outcome differently. For example, Franz Borkenau stated that the strike had "swept away" three years' of the CPGB's work

²⁰⁷ "Aus der Bewegung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe", in *A-I-Z*, 1924 Nov. – 1927 Dez., Jahrg. IV, 11/3-1926, p.6.

²⁰⁸ The KMT request was turned down during a private meeting between Voitinsky, Zinoviev and Stalin, see Pantsov 2000, pp.89-92; "Immediate Problems of the International Communist Movement", in *Inprecorr*, Vol. 6, No. 40, 13/5-1926, pp.613-624. Voitinsky's role was pivotal in formulating the Comintern's attitude towards the Chinese revolution, see for example the article "HANDS OFF CHINA: The Situation in China and the Plans of the Imperialist", in *Inprecorr*, published on 6 May, 1926.

to gain a foothold in the British trade unions, especially after the British *Trade Union Council* (TUC) had refused any kind of collaboration with the communist movement.²⁰⁹

In Moscow, the Comintern was facing a re-organisation of its administrative apparatus. Also, due to the on-going power struggle within the CPSU (B), its rhetoric and internal communication became an expression of the conflict.²¹⁰ Münzenberg's correspondence to Zinoviev eased off, only to suddenly end in 1926, after Münzenberg had chosen Bukharin to be his new correspondent on important matters. However, it was with the introduction of Kuusinen's "Solar System" theory at the Sixth ECCI Plenum in March (see further in *Introduction*), that the course of activities of the mass and sympathising organisations found a new direction.²¹¹

Münzenberg attended this plenum in Moscow, and returned to Berlin inspired by the Comintern's attitude towards the mass and sympathising organisations, particularly Kuusinen's statement declaring the necessity of the international communist movement to support "organisations against colonial atrocities and oppression of Eastern peoples". Shortly afterwards, Münzenberg informed the Eastern Secretariat that the "League [LACO] is a living and active organisation".²¹²

The LACO International Secretariat was located at 69 Bambergerstraße, with Gibarti working with Danziger and Bach at the bureau.²¹³ The principal aim of its work in the initial stages was to fulfil three objectives. Its first objective was to distribute information and propaganda about the foundation of the LACO in Berlin, focusing on giving the impression that the LACO and Berlin was the centre for the European anti-colonial movement – a proposition aimed especially towards "the Eastern peoples" in China and India, according to Gibarti's statement at the inaugural meeting of the LACO Executive on 23 February in Berlin. Its second objective was to get the LACO to start constructing a transcontinental network. "The new addresses", which Hassan Mattar had given to the LACO, had, as noted by Gibarti in a report to the Eastern Secretariat, provided the

²⁰⁹ Münzenberg 1926, p.121; Borkeu 1938, p.280. The British communist, Jack T. Murphy, in response to the breach in relations between the TUC and CPGB, published the book *The Political Meaning of the Great Strike* in 1926, where he criticized the "weak and politically mislead" TUC.

²¹⁰ For the political struggle within the CPSU (B) and its effect on the Comintern, particularly Zinoviev's fall from grace and removal as Chairman of the Comintern, see Degras vol.II 1960, pp.309-310, taken from *Inprecorr*, vi, 128, 2208, 26/10-1926. Pantsov (2000) includes a detailed narrative on the power struggle between the Zinoviev opposition and the Stalin camp; see also Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.68. For an introduction to the Seventh Enlarged ECCI Plenum, see Degras vol.II 1960, pp.312-354 and Kahan 1990, p.26.

²¹¹ The colonial work of the IAH was an activity administered by the Eastern Department in Moscow, where later, after the Sixth ECCI Plenum, there was a department addressed as the Eastern *Secretariat*, see Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, pp. 66-68; "Resolution on the Development of Methods and Forms of the Organisation of Masses under the Influence of the Communist Parties", in *Inprecorr*, Vol. 6, No. 40, 13/5-1926, pp.649-650.

²¹² RGASPI 542/1/3, 1, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/3-1926.

²¹³ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Information and analysis on the LACO, Colonial Office, London, [undated] year: 1926. The bureau of the German LACO section was located at No.1b Schadowstraße. For a biography of Federico Bach, see Jefeets, Jefeets & Huber 2004, p.41.

LACO with information on potential and useful contacts in both the Sudan and Egypt. Mattar had also told Gibarti to consider the idea of organising a courier service to distribute LACO pamphlets and other propaganda material which would follow the one-way route: Berlin – Marseille – Egypt – the Arab region – Djibouti – Kenya. Its third and final objective was control. Gibarti promised the Eastern Secretariat, after having met the LACO Executive, that the LACO would remain “steady in our hands [the communists]”.²¹⁴

The *pièce de résistance* was, however, the international congress against colonialism and imperialism. Whilst Münzenberg had introduced his vision at the “Rathauskeller”, Gibarti was in charge of co-ordinating the process in Berlin. In order to commence the preparatory work, the LACO International Secretariat began sending out invitations in March, a document which discloses the political aim of the international anti-colonial congress:

The “League against Cruelties and Oppression in the Colonies” which unites the representatives of responsible bodies of the international Labour movement and those of cultural organisations and scientific and intellectual societies with the representatives of the oppressed nations all over the world, intends to summon an International Conference against the cruelties and oppression of the imperials’ rule in the colonies and dependencies or in countries threatened with a similar fate.²¹⁵

Included on the actual invitation, the political agenda declared that the LACO aimed to investigate “the working-conditions in the colonial lands and other countries in a semi-colonial state” and to create “an international protest movement against the cruelties and oppression” committed by “the military forces of the imperialist powers” in China, Syria and Morocco. Also, to organise international relief actions “in support of the most endangered nations” in dire “need of moral and material support”, an initiative which would unite everyone engaged in the struggle “against imperialism and the establishment of permanent relations between all important parties and political groups conducting this fight”.²¹⁶ Thus, the agenda implicitly suggested a prolongation of the IAH’s relief operations in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, whilst the LACO’s ultimate ambition was to establish a common platform for the anti-colonial movement.

The list of addresses at the LACO International Secretariat was a crucial source. Aside from Mattar’s contribution towards connections with anti-colonial activists and organisations in North

²¹⁴ TNA PRO KV 2/1401, CROSS-Reference, Subject: GIBARTI, Louis Otto, 23/2-1926; RGASPI 542/1/5, 4-5, Report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/2-1926.

²¹⁵ SAPMO-BA, ZPA R1001/6751, 20-22, Invitation to the Brussels Congress, LACO Secretariat, Berlin, signed: Gibarti, to Hasrat Mohani, Berlin, 9/3-1926. Hasrat Mohani was the official representative for the *All India National Congress* (AINC) and spokesperson for Dr. Ansari in Berlin. On 28 April, the LACO sent an invitation to the secretary of the *Khilafat Committee*, Maulana Shaukat Ali Saheb, in Berlin. The *Khilafat Committee* had Bombay as the centre for its operations.

²¹⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 20-22, Invitation to the Brussels Congress, LACO Secretariat, Berlin, signed: Gibarti, to Hasrat Mohani, Berlin, 9/3-1926.

Africa,²¹⁷ the IAH also assisted efforts to find new contacts: Kou Meng-yu in China, the ANLC and AAAIL in Chicago, while Alfons Goldschmidt sent a list of addresses of potential contacts in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the USA to Gibarti.²¹⁸ However, it was not only a question of gaining a foothold in colonial countries, the LACO especially wanted to establish itself in the “imperialist nations”. For example, in Chicago, Manuel Gomez of the AAAIL invited representatives of the IAH and the ANLC to discuss the idea of forming an LACO section. However, their sole recommendation was to establish a committee to seek out anti-colonial activists in the USA who would be eager to contribute money to finance the journey for a delegation to the anti-colonial congress. Gomez told Gibarti that there was neither the time nor the energy to support an LACO section.²¹⁹

Münzenberg emphasised the use of correspondence as the most constructive method of creating and sustaining the LACO network.²²⁰ In March, Gibarti sent an invitation to Joshi, the general secretary of the *All India Trade Union Council* (AITUC) in Bombay, an individual Münzenberg considered a highly coveted character to involve in the anti-colonial congress. Mahbulul Hug, Joshi’s personal secretary, responded to the invitation and to Gibarti’s letter and promised to send a delegation to the Brussels Congress. However, Hug mentioned that one should not disregard the travel restrictions imposed on particular individuals in India, administered by the British colonial authorities.²²¹ Another example was the invitation sent to Hasrat Mohani, a member of the Berlin branch of the Muslim *Khalifat Committee* who had also attended the “Rathauskeller” Conference;²²² and the invitation to the *Khalifat Committee* branch in Alexandria,

²¹⁷ The RKÜÖ uncovered the activities of Mattar in 1927. The main question was to find out why he was residing in Germany, above all his contacts to the anti-colonial movement and the demonstrations, organised by the IAH. On 4 October, 1927, the Merseburg police authorities revoked Mattar’s residence permit with immediate effect. However, prior to this decision, Mattar had attended the Brussels Congress as part of the African delegation, acting as the representative for the Rif’s population, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/67113, 2-6, Betr. Komm. Propaganda, Abschrift, Münster 5/9-1927, Merseburg, 4/10-1927, Berlin, 25/10-1927; Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.253.

²¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/5, 4-5, Report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/2-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 36, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 31/8-1926. Bao 2008 pp.9-24; Erik Ching & Jussi Pakkasvirta, “Latin American Materials in the Comintern Archive”, in *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 35, No.1 (2000), pp.138-149; Manuel Caballero, *Latin America and the Comintern 1919-1943*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1986).

²¹⁹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 58, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum, Moscow, 7/7-1926 [copy]; RGASPI 542/1/3, 19, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 7/7-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 20-21, Letter from Manuel Gomez, AAAIL, Chicago, to Gibarti, Berlin, 24/6-1926. Gomez requested from the IAH “Central Bureau” (*Zentralbüro*) in Berlin the transfer of some money to the AAAIL. In the end, Münzenberg forwarded Gomez letter to Kornblum and Roy.

²²⁰ RGASPI 542/1/3, 13-14, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/6-1926.

²²¹ RGASPI 542/1/18, 10, Letter to Gibarti, Paris/London, from AITUC Secretary Mahbulul Hug, Bombay, 8/4-1926; Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.234; TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, List of organisations and individuals to be invited to the LACO/Brussels Congress. Intercepted by the Sudanese Government, transmitted to the British Colonial Office, 24/11-1926. The AITUC never sent a delegation to the congress as evidenced by the list of attendance in *Das Flammenzeichen*; see Gibarti (ed.) 1927.

²²² SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 20-22, Invitation to the Brussels Congress, sent from LACO Secretariat, Berlin, to

sent through the secretaries Hajj Muhammad Jalabi and Mohammed Taraq Eminbawi in Berlin. According to the *Khalifat Committee's* reply to Gibarti, the intention was to get the leader of the committee, Tassun Pascha, accompanied by a delegation, to attend the congress.²²³ Additionally, Münzenberg stated in a report to the Eastern Secretariat that the spread of information on the LACO had confirmed reliable contacts with the *Indian Labour Union* and with the Executive Committee of the Cantonese National Government in China.²²⁴

Not everyone appreciated receiving their invitation. The figurehead of the *Indian National Congress* (INC) and symbolic leader of the Indian independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi, also received an invitation. In his response to Gibarti on 3 April, Gandhi explained that neither he nor the INC could support, from a moral perspective, the LACO's agenda. Gandhi declared that his methods to break the system of British colonial rule in India, which referred implicitly to the concepts of *ahimsa* ("non-violence") and *Shakti* ("soul force"), did not correspond with the message being broadcast by the LACO. According to Gandhi, the "methods of the socialists [...] are in an experimental phase of development", with the supposed purpose and aim of this so-called anti-colonial movement bringing about "a certain fright".²²⁵ Several responses to the invitations did not provide any definite answer as to whether they were planning to send any delegations to the congress or not. Several responses even suggested using the LACO as a channel to increase anti-colonial propaganda in their own country, or territory. In a letter from Kou Meng-yu to the LACO International Secretariat, dated 13 July, the KMT had "with the greatest pleasure" heard of "the creation" of the LACO, asking whether the organisation could send "circulars in English, German and French languages" to China for distribution amongst "the widest public". In another letter, this one from Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT expressed its "profoundest gratitude and sympathy", but could not guarantee to send a delegation.²²⁶

Propaganda was the key element for the LACO International Secretariat at this stage, however. Protest meetings in Berlin and across Germany were the preferred forum and, perhaps due to its

Hasrat Mohani Esq., Berlin, 9/3-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 23, LACO, Berlin, to Mr. Maulana Shaukat Ali Saheb, Secretary of the Khalifat Committee, Bombay, 28/4-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 8, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 4/5-1926. See Barooah 2004, p.249, 277.

²²³ Münzenberg used the correspondence addressed to the International Secretariat as a means of illustrating to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters that the LAI had established contacts with colonial countries. For example, Zinoviev received the letter from the *Khalifat Committee*, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 4, Answer from Tschelebi, Tassun Pascha's secretary, undated; RGASPI 542/1/3, 5, Answer from Moh. Tarag Elminbawi, undated; RGASPI 542/1/3, 3, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, 17/4-1926. The intercepted list included Tassun Pascha's address in Alexandria (he never attended the Brussels Congress, see Gibarti [ed.] 1927, p.235).

²²⁴ RGASPI 542/1/3, 8, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 4/5-1926.

²²⁵ RGASPI 542/1/18, 8, Letter to Gibarti, Berlin, from M K Gandhi (Ashram Sabarmati), 3/4-1926; Young 2001, pp.320-323.

²²⁶ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from Kou Meng Yu, Canton, to LACO, Berlin, 13/7-1926; TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from the Political Administration Military Council National Government, Canton, to LACO, Berlin, 26/6-1926. Chiang Kai-shek wrongly addressed the LACO as the "League of Colonial Suppression". Whether the letter ever arrived at the LACO International Secretariat is unknown.

infancy, to agitate against the “colonial politics” and “imperialist policy” in the Middle East, North Africa and China, as well as to provide information about the congress.²²⁷ Gibarti explained the general purpose of the meetings in an article, “Warum Kolonial-Kongress?”, published in the LACO theoretical organ, *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf*, convinced that “hundreds of mass meetings” against the “cruelties [and] unlawful and unconstitutional dealing of the colonising powers”, had managed to “stir the German people”.²²⁸

National security services began to notice the increase in anti-colonial propaganda in Germany. One of the first to react to the “initiative of different pacifist organisations” to form “a league” against colonial oppression was the *Auswärtige Amt*.²²⁹ An observation which sparked off an active collaboration between the *Auswärtige Amt* and the *Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung* (RKÜöO) in Berlin, in accumulating intelligence on the LACO.²³⁰ According to the RKÜöO, the LACO was an organisation which appeared to be only broadcasting a pacifist agenda aimed at the anti-colonial and pacifist movements, particularly the LHR, in order to achieve some kind of higher purpose. The question was what kind of purpose. The *Auswärtige Amt*, however, deployed a more subtle strategy: infiltration. Building its intelligence on “reports from the inside”, *Auswärtige Amt* could analyse LACO pamphlets, leaflets and reports from

²²⁷ RGASPI 542/1/3, 1, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/3-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow, 13/4-1926. The anti-colonial work of the PCF in France progressed, at first, in a positive direction. This was about to change, however. In April, the ZK KPD received a letter from the PCF, proposing the idea of holding a “powerful demonstration and conference” in Paris in May. Its focus would be on the “colonial atrocities” committed by the French military in Syria and Morocco, the socio-political situations in the above countries, the basics of French imperialism, the political situation in the Mediterranean region and the development of the national liberation struggle in co-operation with the communist movements in Syria and Morocco. The PCF requested that the ZK KPD send one, or several representatives to assist with the preparations for the demonstration and conference. In the end, however, the PCF did not manage to realise these ideas. Forced to cancel the entire event, the affair was an embarrassing episode for the PCF. Paul Reinhold Dietrich (1889 – 1937), the secretary of the ZK KPD Secretariat in Berlin, notified the German ECCI delegation in Moscow of the “complete failure” and incapacity of the PCF to organize a colonial demonstration. According to Dietrich, the PCF had not made the necessary preparations, e.g. representatives from the communist parties in Belgium, Italy and Great Britain had not received an invitation to the conference. Thus, in order to evaluate the reasons for the failure, the ZK KPD Secretariat instructed the German communist, “Philipp” [?], to travel to Paris and carry out an investigation; see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/34, 94, Letter from PCF, Paris, to ZK KPD, Berlin, 23/4-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 291-292, Report from Paul D. at ZK KPD Sekretariat, Berlin, to deutsche Vertretung EKKI, Moscow, 26/5-1926. For Paul Reinhold Dietrich, see Weber & Herbst 2004, pp.155-156. On November 5, 1937, the Soviet Military Collegium sanctioned the execution of Dietrich in Leningrad.

²²⁸ Louis Gibarti, “Warum Kolonial-Kongress?”, in *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf – Mitteilungsblatt der Liga gegen Unterdrückung*, Nr. 3, Berlin, 5/7-1926, 29-30; TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Report on the Activities of the “League against Oppression in the Colonies”, December 1926. The RK observed that the anti-colonial propaganda on the streets in Berlin had suddenly increased during 1926. In particular, a *Hands off China* demonstration, which the KPD had organised on 23 September, had taken on the character of “a big political demonstration”. The KPD and anti-colonialism was, nevertheless a public act, the RK suspected, in order to satisfy the demands of “Russian foreign policy”, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/111, 8, Analysis of subversive activities and movements in Germany, 1/11-1926.

²²⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 4, Auswärtiges Amt, eing., Berlin, 29/4-1926. The information from the *Auswärtige Amt* mentioned Helene Stöcker, *Freiherrn v. Schoenaich*, Kapitän D. Bersius, Georg Ledebour and LACO chairman Fritz Danziger, as well as the address of the LACO International Secretariat in Berlin at 60 Bambergerstraße.

²³⁰ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 5, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, signed: A. A., an das Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 5/8-1926.

unknown informants. An example of the latter was the information from an undisclosed member of the German pro-colonial association, *Vereinigung für deutsche Siedlung und Wanderung* (Association for German Settlement and Emigration, a pro-colonial lobbyist association in Germany which demanded the retrieval of the lost colonies), who had become a member of the LACO for the sole purpose of assisting the *Auswärtige Amt*.²³¹ British intelligence (MI5 and Scotland Yard) had also reacted to the LACO propaganda, especially to the argument that it was an organisation against colonialism and imperialism with the ambition of evolving into a global actor. Scotland Yard completed an analysis of the LACO in 1926, a report being forwarded to the CO in London. According to this analysis, British security services had to focus on detecting whether any British citizen was in contact with, or had any kind of associations to, groups or committees critical towards the British Empire's colonial policy. As for the LACO, its global ambitions had to be monitored, Scotland Yard concluded. Apparently, British security services had detected activities with explicit links to the LACO, e.g. in China, Japan, Persia, Arabia, Syria, Indo-China, India, Indonesia, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, French West Africa, Madagascar, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Rhodesia, French Somaliland, South Africa, USA, Mexico, Cuba, the West Indies, Latin America and the Philippines. However, this was a conclusion based on the LACO's official publications, with Scotland Yard focusing particularly on individual connections to the LACO in England. For example, Saklatvala had, along with the British socialist and former diplomat Reginald Bridgeman, organised LACO activities. Nonetheless, Scotland Yard argued that the LACO "may, however, have exaggerated the extent of its ramifications",²³² whereas the CO recommended categorising the LACO as subversive due to its communist connections, particularly as it was known to be "an offspring" of the IAH.²³³

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²³¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/112, 119, Reichskomm. f.d. überwachung d. öffentl. Ordnung u.Nachrichtensammelstelle im RMI, 1/11-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 10, Short note from unknown informant, *Vereinigung für deutsche Siedlung und Wanderung*, Berlin, to *Auswärtige Amt*, Berlin, 30/9-1926. The undisclosed informant told *Auswärtige Amt* that he/she had been a LACO member for six months.

²³² TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Information on and analysis of the LACO, [December 1926] author: Lidell, Scotland Yard. Lidell used primarily official material, published by the LACO, to discern whether the organization had any contact with British colonies, e.g. the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, South Africa and the West Indies.

²³³ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Information on and analysis of the LACO, [December 1926] author: Lidell. Federico Bach, being the secretary of the LACO, was an indication that the LACO had a connection to the IAH, stated Lidell. For R. C. Lindsay at the British Embassy in Berlin, this was sufficient evidence to consider the link between these two organisations as valid, see TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from R.C. Lindsay, British Embassy, Berlin, to Sir Austen Chamberlain, London, 18/11-1926.

En route to Brussels: Assembling the Anti-Imperialist Network

After having established the LACO in February, Münzenberg expected Comintern headquarters to provide a response to his idea of holding an international anti-colonial congress in Brussels. However, the Comintern decided to put the question on hold until after the Sixth ECCI Plenum. On 19 March, the ECCI Secretariat finally discussed the question of arranging “a conference for the purpose of the struggle against colonialism and imperialism”, instructing Roy to act as the Eastern Secretariat’s representative in all contact with Münzenberg and, above all, to conduct an investigation before reaching a final decision on the idea. Nevertheless, the ECCI Secretariat wondered whether Roy would be able to achieve any results, considering that there were no documents on the LACO at Comintern headquarters. To solve this empirical dilemma, the ECCI Secretariat endorsed the establishment of the “Commission for the Examination of the Question of a Colonial Congress in Brussels” (CEQCCB), which had to outline the political details of the congress, nominating Roy as the “responsible leader”, along with the Russian B. A. Wassiljew of the ECCI Orgdepartment (*Orgabteilung*), the KPD representative Ottomar Geschke (1882 – 1957), “Jacob” [unknown] and John Pepper (real name: Jozsef Pogany; a Hungarian communist). Given ten days to complete a report,²³⁴ Roy introduced the “Resolution of the CEQCCB” to the ECCI Secretariat on 30 March. According to this resolution, the CEQCCB recommended it as being “desirable” to organise an international anti-colonial congress, particularly as the event had every chance of succeeding where the Comintern had previously failed, i.e. in establishing contacts with anti-colonial activists. It was primarily a question of mobilising the “struggles of the oppressed colonial peoples” in the European trade unions, and to convince the “liberal bourgeois elements [in Europe in] the struggling colonies” to support a movement controlled by the communists. This resolution highlighted the following “elements” to invite to the congress:

1. European and American labour organisations.
2. Liberal and radical bourgeois organisations.
3. Well-known individuals interested in the colonial question.
4. National revolutionary organisations in the colonies.
5. Labour organisations in the colonies.
6. Democratic emigrant organisations in the colonies.²³⁵

Nonetheless, the CEQCCB suspected that there was a risk in approaching and involving some of the groups above. However, for as long as the LACO, under the active supervision of the

²³⁴ RGASPI 495/18/424, 28-32, Protokoll Nr.63 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI, 19/3-1926. Present at the meeting were Zinoviev, Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Humbert-Droz, Ercoli, Roy, Smeral, Kornblum, Pepper, Bela Kun, Ferdi, Karl Kilbom and Heimo. The commission was given an additional three days to complete the assignment, see RGASPI 495/18/425, 8, Protokoll Nr.65 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI, 29/3-1926. For Ottomar Geschke, see Weber & Herbst 2004, pp.242-243. Geschke was one of the “old guards” in the German communist movement. The son of a blacksmith, an active social democrat and, later, a Spartacist, he also joined the KPD in 1919. Geschke died of heart failure in East Berlin on 17 May 1957. For B. A. Wassiljew, see Huber 1994, pp.457-458.

²³⁵ RGASPI 495/18/425, 32-33, RESOLUTION from the CEQCCB, Moscow, 30/3-1926.

Comintern, convinced these groups to participate with enthusiasm, this would facilitate the formation of “a permanent organisation ‘League against Colonial Atrocities’ or something similar”. This depended on Münzenberg and Gibarti fulfilling the demand to regularly send “copies of all letters, printed matter and other documents received from the colonies, or organisations and individuals connected with the revolutionary movement in the colonies” to Moscow. These documents were essential in order to prepare the congress from a political and administrative perspective in a “thorough and comprehensive” way.²³⁶ Münzenberg received the CEQCCB’s resolution in April. On 17 April, Münzenberg suggested to Zinoviev in a letter that the Brussels Congress and the LACO could prove to be the answer in realising the Comintern’s desire to establish contact with anti-colonial organisations and individuals.²³⁷

The CEQCCB was an instrument of control which aimed to supervise the activities of the LACO and the Brussels Congress – an organisational initiative which relied on the active engagement of the Eastern Secretariat, the IAH and Münzenberg, and the ZK KPD. According to the CEQCCB resolution, the ZK KPD had to engage itself more actively in colonial work, e.g. by nominating a member at the secretariat in Berlin to examine and write a report on the accumulated results of the LACO in Germany, and send it “within a fortnight” to the ECCI Secretariat. Additionally, a “confidential preparation committee”, consisting of representatives from the European communist parties, was to also evaluate the LACO, whereas a “propaganda and organisational committee” would “popularise the idea” of the Brussels Congress in left-wing socio-political circles in Europe.²³⁸

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“What shall I do with this colonial movement?”

Münzenberg did not appreciate the CEQCCB’s resolution. If this was their reaction to the LACO and the congress as a political and organisational project, Münzenberg questioned the adequacy of the Eastern Secretariat to send a resolution as a first type of response. For Münzenberg, the primary motive was to set in motion the preparatory work; however, the Eastern Secretariat’s silence on the matter caused confusion about how to proceed. On 29 May, in a letter from the ECCI Secretariat to Münzenberg, the reason given for its silence was so that the CEQCCB would

²³⁶ RGASPI 495/18/425, 32-33, RESOLUTION from the CEQCCB, Moscow, 30/3-1926. The content of the documents the CEQCCB had at its disposal is not known; RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Moscow/Berlin, 29/5-1926. The *modus operandi* to keep the flow of information running from Berlin to Moscow assisted, in turn, in shaping the character of the empirical material filed in the Comintern Archive, i.e. extensive collections of reports, correspondence and miscellaneous material from the national sections as well as from the mass and sympathising organisations.

²³⁷ RGASPI 542/1/3, 3, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 17/4-1926.

²³⁸ RGASPI 495/18/425, 32-33, RESOLUTION from the Commission to guide the work of the colonial congress, Moscow, 30/3-1926.

have time to examine the documents from Berlin. Nonetheless, both Münzenberg and Gibarti stated that the *incomunicado* had contributed to the difficulties in establishing daily routines at the LACO International Secretariat and, more importantly, the LACO had not received any money from the Comintern. The Eastern Secretariat had to solve the financial question so that the LACO could pay salaries, a cost covered by the IAH.²³⁹

Münzenberg argued that the CEQCCB resolution questioned his authority, as did the involvement of the IAH in the LACO, due to the recommendation to get someone from the ZK KPD to assess the LACO. A far better solution, according to Münzenberg, was to send a “reliable Comrade” from the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow to Berlin to assess the LACO. Moreover, the ZK KPD Secretariat seemed completely uninterested in the activities of the LACO.²⁴⁰ Perhaps Münzenberg’s aversion towards getting the ZK KPD involved was an expression of his fear that it would endanger the IAH’s influence on the LACO and its colonial work in Germany. Furthermore, Münzenberg most likely expected to continue negotiations with the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters on the colonial question (the ECCI Secretariat, the Eastern Secretariat, Zinoviev and Roy), without the ZK KPD interfering in the discussions.²⁴¹ The silence from both the ECCI Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat in relation to the LACO appears to have made Münzenberg ponder the idea that a shift in power was imminent, which would leave the ZK KPD controlling and leading the colonial work through the LACO. In order to get some kind of reaction from the Eastern Secretariat, Münzenberg asked “what shall I do with this colonial movement?”, a movement which had received a lot of attention in the German bourgeois press (*Die Weltbühne*). Münzenberg expected to receive a definite answer from the ECCI and the Eastern Secretariat during his visit in Moscow at the end of May, and to have a “personal consultation” with Roy.²⁴²

The ZK KPD obeyed the CEQCCB’s instruction. Leo Flieg contacted the German ECCI delegation in Moscow on 13 April, expressing how difficult it was to find a “comrade” in Berlin

²³⁹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 13/4-1926; RGASPI 542/1/5, 4-5, Report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/2-1926. For the response from the ECCI Secretariat, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/5-1926.

²⁴⁰ RGASPI 542/1/3, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 13/4-1926.

²⁴¹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 3, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Zinoviev, Moscow, 17/4-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 54, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Department, Moscow, 17/4-1926. In the letters, Münzenberg repeated the request to get the Eastern Secretariat and the ECCI to send a “reliable Comrade” to Berlin.

²⁴² Münzenberg wondered when the Eastern Secretariat intended to send “concrete information, instructions, or whatever kind of wish” concerning the LACO. Furthermore, at the end of May, Münzenberg visited Moscow but was unable to meet Roy, who was preoccupied with “political questions” and travel arrangements, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 6, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/4-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 7, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 28/4-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 8, Letter from “Willi” [J. W. Kruyt], Berlin, Eastern Department, Moscow, 4/5-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 12, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 14/6-1926.

willing to assess the LACO and travel to Moscow to deliver a report to the Eastern Secretariat.²⁴³ In response to Flieg's information, the ECCI Secretariat wondered when the ZK KPD would resolve the matter. In the end, the ZK KPD instructed the German communist Ernst Schneller, to carry out the assignment in Berlin and then travel to Moscow.²⁴⁴ Perhaps Schneller's experience of the *Hands off China* campaign was the reason given by the ZK KPD for its choice of candidate, someone who had some knowledge of the IAH's colonial work. Schneller received the ZK KPD's instruction to write a "brief report" on the LACO and, *en route* to Moscow, to study the "temporary" statutes of the LACO.²⁴⁵

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The Nature and Question of the LACO

Schneller's appointment earned him an omnipotent position within the LACO. For Münzenberg, this went completely against both his vision and the work being carried out by Gibarti. The interaction between the LACO and the Comintern at this stage in developing the colonial work and the Brussels Congress needs to be looked at more closely, including such factors as suspicion and concealment, administrative and organisational solutions, and the question of an anti-colonial "pilgrimage". This was a process which revealed the initial purpose and intentions of the LACO and the reason why the Comintern perceived the organisation as being a pivotal actor.

The Objectives: On 29 May, the ECCI Secretariat handed to Münzenberg in person in Moscow the confidential objectives on "the question of the League against Colonial Domination and [...] the Colonial Congress". According to these objectives, if the Comintern endorsed the LACO's status as a permanent organisation, it had to be thoroughly "built up [...] intensified and systematised" and, if done so properly, the LACO could be "very useful". In comparison to the CEQCCB resolution's recommendations, which suggested the "formation of a permanent organisation" as being "desirable", the ECCI Secretariat expected the LACO "to act as a neutral intermediary between the Communist International and nationalist movements in the colonies".²⁴⁶

²⁴³ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 249-251, Report from Leo [Flieg] ZK KPD Sekretariat, Berlin, to "deutsche Vertretung EKKI", Moscow, 13/4-1926. Flieg urged the German ECCI delegation to give its fullest support to the ZK KPD representative once he had arrived in Moscow.

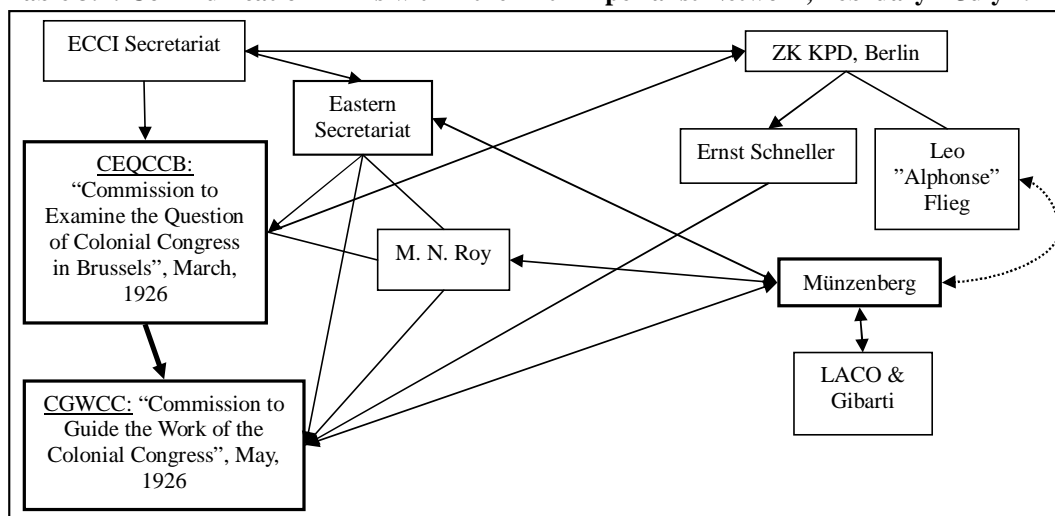
²⁴⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 6, Letter from Zentralkomitee der KPD, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 27/4-1926. The ZK KPD told Heimo that the CEQCCB resolution had arrived in Berlin on 21 April; SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 10, Letter from ZK KPD, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 18/5-1926.

²⁴⁵ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 11, Note from ZK KPD, Berlin, to Ernst Schneller, Berlin, 19/5-1926. In 1927, Schneller argued that the ZK KPD had to bring the mass organizations in Germany under the strictest party control, see Christian Striefler, *Kampf um die Macht*, Propyläen, Berlin, 1993, p.262.

²⁴⁶ RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Moscow, 29/5-1926. The ECCI Secretariat dissolved the CEQCCB on 30 March. In April, Roy continued to analyse the documents on the LACO, and involved the ZK KPD in the process.

The Eastern Secretariat was the key, the ECCI Secretariat concluded. As the CEQCCB was no longer involved, the ECCI Secretariat endorsed the decision to establish the “Commission to Guide the Work of the Colonial Congress” (hereinafter: the CGWCC). This commission aimed to strengthen its interaction with Münzenberg, e.g. by sending “regular instructions” to him on how to prepare the congress. Roy acted as the leader of the commission, who, along with Schneller and Voitinsky (replaced by the Russian Fedor Petrov; real name: Fedor Feodorovich Raskolnikov on 28 June, 1926), began the work of organising the congress.²⁴⁷ The following table delineates the actors and their links of communication in preparing the congress in 1926.²⁴⁸

Table 3.2: Communication Links within the Anti-Imperialist Network, February – July 1926



Suspicion: The CGWCC raised concerns about some of the active “elements” in the anti-colonial movement in Berlin. Essentially a question of control for the CGWCC, which described Berlin as a place overcrowded with “opportunist and provocative elements” who found the LACO attractive; the question was to ensure that Münzenberg did not admit any suspicious individuals into the core. According to a confidential letter from the ECCI Secretariat to Münzenberg on 2

²⁴⁷ However, Roy was the author of the confidential directives, despite the signature “ECCI Secretariat”. Münzenberg knew that the “leader” of the “permanent commission [CGWCC]” had written the document; hence, this makes it logical to link Roy as the author of the directives, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Moscow, 29/5-1926. The ECCI Secretariat nominated the members of the commission, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/431, 1-4, Protokoll Nr. 79 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI, 28/6-1926. Petrov replaced Voitinsky on 28 June, for unknown reasons. One possible explanation was the strained relationship between the Comintern and the KMT which, in the summer of 1926 had, more or less, collapsed. Considering that Voitinsky, the “expert” on the Chinese question, had to devote all his attention to this question, at the same time as acting as the Head of the ECCI Far Eastern Bureau, he had to resign from this commission, see Pantsov, 2000, pp.93-95, 295. Any records of the CGWCC meetings in Moscow are minimal. The only reference found informs us that a meeting to discuss the congress preparations was convened at Comintern headquarters in Room 54 on 1 August, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 28, Short note from Roy, Moscow, 29/7-1926.

²⁴⁸ Dotted links indicate informal contacts between some of the actors, for example, Münzenberg and Flieg.

July, the LACO had to “act very carefully” in its contacts with “colonial emigrant groups”, and let the CGWCC evaluate them in order to confirm whether they were “bona-fide” organisations and, more importantly, whether they should be allowed to attend the congress. Therefore, any “direct contact” with colonial organisations had to adhere to the following strategy in order to sort out the bad eggs:

Before establishing contact with them, or inviting them to participate in the Congress, their reliability and representative character should be carefully determined [...] Immigrant elements [in Berlin] might be used in the beginning to establish this contact, but to insure [ensure; author’s remark] that authoritative representative delegations come from the colonial countries, it is absolutely necessary to eliminate intermediaries.²⁴⁹

This strategy was a re-conceptualisation of Roy’s opinion of the “oriental peoples resident in Berlin” to Münzenberg, in which he warned of the potential formation of “a fraction” aiming to “liberate” the movement of communist control.²⁵⁰ However, after reading the instruction, Münzenberg concluded that it was an enormous task to screen the colonial contacts of the LACO. In order to solve the dilemma, Münzenberg asked Roy to get Piatnitsky to send a “reliable Comrade” to Berlin, and for “the instructor” to guide “the work politically in close collaboration with the IAH (Communist Fraction)”.²⁵¹

The “Desirable Elements” and Strategies of Concealment: Concealment ran parallel with Roy’s suspicion, a frame of mind which defined the preparatory work of the IAH, LACO, and the Eastern Secretariat. Gibarti’s political vision had a broad remit, particularly as the LACO was an actor that would gain the attention of “desirable elements”, represented by “prominent” left-wing trade union and social democratic leaders, bourgeois radicals, pacifists and intellectuals. However, the ECCI Secretariat were of a different opinion and wanted delegates of European trade unions and “liberal radical elements in the imperialist countries” to dominate the congress. If any delegates from colonial and semi-colonial countries were to attend the event in Brussels, they should preferably belong to national revolutionary organisations or associations, trade unions, liberal democrat movements or emigrant organisations.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926.

²⁵⁰ RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Moscow, 29/5-1926. Roy warned Münzenberg that some of the anti-colonial activists in Berlin whom he seemed to “deeply trust”, e.g. the Syrians Hashin Bey and Tarak Muntas, were of a highly suspicious character. Additionally, Roy criticized a conference Chatto had organized in Berlin on 30 April, at which Bey and Muntas had introduced the idea of establishing an independent anti-colonial committee. However, Roy seems to have based his conclusion mostly (if not all) on hearsay.

²⁵¹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926. Münzenberg renewed the request of getting a “reliable Comrade” to Berlin in his letters to Roy and Piatnitsky, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 18, Letter from Münzenberg to Roy in Moscow, 6/7-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 57, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 6/7-1926.

²⁵² RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926. The

The disparate political character of the congress made the ECCI Secretariat's position precarious, making it necessary for it to adopt conspiratorial methods in order to conceal and preserve the hidden aim of the Brussels congress. Münzenberg was instructed to form a "communist fraction", which would include representatives of communist parties from the "most important imperialist countries", to "influence and direct the entire work of the LACO" at the congress:

The Communist Fraction should try to remain as much as possible in the background, so that neither the League nor the Congress is too obviously identified with the Communists.²⁵³

This was a *modus operandi* which corresponded to the policy endorsed by the Sixth ECCI Plenum in 1926.²⁵⁴ The ECCI Secretariat stated that the fraction operating in Brussels had to secure "close and constant collaboration" between the delegates of the communist parties and colonial organisations, as well as influence every delegation, yet behave cautiously and conceal every trace leading back to the "communist fraction". Prior to the Brussels Congress, the ECCI Secretariat instructed the ECCI delegation to act vigilantly, and "to organise its conferences cautiously without advertising them and without admitting any outsiders". Additionally, if the delegation knew of any groups or individuals who displayed an inclination towards, or eagerness to discuss communism, the delegation had to secure "communist influence ... on these elements".²⁵⁵

A Warning from Münzenberg: The preparatory work for the Brussels Congress was, however, not entirely a conspiratorial process; administrative and organisational questions were equally relevant. According to Münzenberg, after the Comintern had decided to involve the "deutsche Zentrale" [ZK KPD] in the LACO, this damaged the LACO's relations with both the ECCI and the Eastern Secretariat. Roy had no other option than to correct Münzenberg. As leader of the CGWCC, Roy stated that "in accordance with the resolution of 30 March (a copy which was sent to you)", Münzenberg could not object to Schneller's nomination as it served the purpose of

ECCI Secretariat seemed content with the "satisfactory progress" of the LACO in establishing contact with organisations in China and India. For Gibarti and the "desirable elements", see TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from LACO Secretaries L. Gibarti & F. Danziger, 17/9-1926; RGASPI 495/18/425, 32-33, RESOLUTION from the CEQCCB, Moscow, 30/3-1926. The CEQCCB resolution focused on the following groups: European and American labour organisations, liberal and radical bourgeois organisations, well-known individuals interested in the colonial question, national revolutionary organisations in the colonies, labour organisations in the colonies and democratic emigrant organisations in the colonies.

²⁵³ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926.

²⁵⁴ The "Resolution on the Organisation and Structure of Communist Fractions in Trade Unions", adopted at the Sixth ECCI Plenum, instructed fractions to "carry out active fraction work" at congresses and, further, to "convene [...] meetings" before the event commenced, and to "guide and supervise communist work" together with a "bureau" which had "full political responsibility". Additionally, members of the fraction had to follow the strictest of discipline and adopt a "uniform attitude", see Degras vol.II 1960, pp.268-271, taken from *Inprecorr*, vi, 65, p.986, 29/4-1926.

²⁵⁵ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926; RGASPI 495/18/534, 41-43, Instructions to the [ECCI] delegates to the Brussels Congress, Moscow, ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 4/2-1927.

stimulating the “collaboration and general direction of the KPD, extended through Comrade Schneller” in order to assist the work of Münzenberg and the LACO.²⁵⁶

Münzenberg was not, however, content with Roy’s explanation, wondering whether the Comintern even intended to support the preparations for the congress. Proud of the fact that the IAH had managed to sustain the activities of the LACO, and for as long the Eastern Secretariat ignored the request of sending a “reliable Comrade”, Münzenberg warned Roy that the congress would most likely fail. Yet, the anti-colonial project would not slip through the IAH’s fingers. According to Münzenberg, if the Comintern continued to ignore his requests, the IAH intended to turn the congress into a genuine IAH affair, and convene the event in Berlin in September or October. This warning was a response to the lack of information on political, administrative and financial issues from the Eastern Secretariat, and Münzenberg concluded that the Comintern should not count on gaining access to the anti-colonial movement in Berlin, Europe and beyond.²⁵⁷ This was an act of blackmail, through which Münzenberg’s quite desperate attempt to threaten Roy, in retrospect, only aimed to secure the Comintern’s support. Münzenberg’s warning had the desired effect. According to the ECCI Secretariat (authored by Roy),

The congress should not be a narrow I.A.H. Conference. It should be given a broad political character and called the “International Congress of Colonial People”.²⁵⁸

Roy was the author of this response, which the ECCI Secretariat used to criticise Münzenberg’s agenda. According to the ECCI Secretariat, Münzenberg should forget the idea of staging “a narrow I.A.H. Conference”, and his agenda needed correction. What did Münzenberg’s agenda contain? Firstly, the congress should focus on the geographical spread and impact of IAH’s relief campaigns in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Secondly, Münzenberg wanted Fimmen, the British socialist George Lansbury, an unknown individual of the German left-wing movement and colonial delegates in Berlin to lead the congress and to present reports on the colonial liberation

²⁵⁶ RGASPI 542/1/3, 10-11, (Confidential) Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/5-1926. Münzenberg was not satisfied with Roy’s explanation, and expressed doubt as to whether Schneller’s examination really intended to assist the LACO in its work. Instead, Münzenberg suspected that this was an act of exaggeration on behalf of the ECCI Secretariat and the ZK KPD; see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 13-14, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/6-1926.

²⁵⁷ RGASPI 542/1/3, 13-14, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/6-1926.

²⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926. For a copy of this document, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/432, 122-124, while the location of Roy’s original draft remains unknown. On 5 July, the ECCI Secretariat examined the draft and decided to give Roy an additional three days to edit and make a few changes to the document before despatching the instructions to Münzenberg. Yet, the Small Commission (*Eng.kom*) had to review the final version, and authorise a German translation of the document into English, see RGASPI 495/18/431, 1-4, Protokoll Nr. 79 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI, 28/6-1926. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Stern, Smeral, Ercoli, Kornblum, Pepper, Petrov, and Roy; RGASPI 495/18/432, 1-4, Protokoll Nr.80 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des EKKI, 5/7-1926. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Ercoli, Codovilla, Smeral, Kornblum, Roy, Gyptner, Petrov and Heimo.

struggle.²⁵⁹ However, the ECCI Secretariat's expectations for the congress appeared to be somewhat different. According to the ECCI Secretariat's "secret instruction", the congress was a forum at which reports were to be given "on imperialist oppression in the colonies by representatives of the respective countries"; "the liberation movement in the colonies and its support by the working class in the imperialist countries", having "Eddo" [sic] Fimmen and Lansbury delivering the speeches. The congress should also discuss the co-ordination of "the liberation and working class movements in the colonial countries" in order to stimulate the establishment of "a permanent organisation to support the liberation movement in the colonies".²⁶⁰ Apparently, the 2 July agenda was only a revised version of the agenda which had been included with the LACO congress invitation, which Gibarti had begun to send out in March. In September, the LACO Provisional Committee adopted the final version of the agenda at a meeting in Berlin:

Proposed by the Provisional Committee to the Congress of the Oppressed Nations.

[1.] Reports on the oppression of the imperialist powers in the colonies and other countries, menaced in their independence. (Speakers shall be the representatives of all oppressed nations.)

[2.] The emancipation movement of the oppressed nations and its support by labour organisations and progressive parties in the imperialist countries. (Speakers on this point shall be: George Lansbury, M. P. London; Edo Fimmen, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Amsterdam and the General Secretary of the LACO, Berlin.

[3.] The co-ordination of the forces of the national emancipation movement with the forces of the labour movement in the colonial as well as in the imperialist countries.

[4.] The building-up of the LACO as a great International Organisation in order to link up all forces combating international imperialism and to ensure the effective support of the emancipation fight of the oppressed nations.²⁶¹

Gibarti, Danziger, and Chatto circulated this September agenda to organisations, associations and individuals around the world. In some cases, e.g. in Egypt and the Sudan, British security services intercepted and thus prevented the invitations and agenda from reaching their final destinations. However, the invitations did also reach some of the recipients, e.g. Robert Minor, the member of the Central Executive Committee of the WPA in Chicago, did receive Gibarti's letter. However, the security services did successfully manage to disrupt the LACO International Secretariat's

²⁵⁹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 13-14, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/6-1926. This is the first occasion when Münzenberg introduced the names of preferred actors to represent the political nature of the congress.

²⁶⁰ RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926.

²⁶¹ RGASPI 495/18/484, 5, Agenda – Proposed by the Provisional Committee, Gibarti, September 1926.

correspondence. In order, therefore, to attract attention to the congress, the LACO decided to circulate the invitation in December 1926. This invitation itself also proved just how much the LACO's reputation had improved by referring to the members of the "Provisional Committee of the International Congress against Colonial Oppression". This group was introduced as the official organisers of the congress and comprised: Mme Sun Yat-sen; Kou Meng-yu; Jawaharlal Nehru; the Egyptian Mohamed Hafiz Ramadan Bey; Ramon de Negri from Mexico; the German scholar Theodor Lessing; Goldschmidt; Münzenberg; Barbusse; the French author Fernand Buisson; Albert Fournier; Lansbury; the leader of the *Independent Labour Party* (ILP) James Maxton; Saklatvala; the scholar and representative of the *National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People* (NAACP) William Pickens; the pacifist and leader of the *American Civil Liberties Union* Roger Baldwin; as well as delegates of the *Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico* José Vasconcelos, Manuel Ugarte, Louis Casabona and César Falcon.²⁶² This "Provisional Committee" was a reflection of the disparate political and cultural characters involved in the anti-colonial movement, with the LACO representing itself to the public as a non-party organisation.

"The Anti-Colonial Pilgrimage": The Brussels Congress was an event the ECCI Secretariat wanted to use as a forum and channel to create an "international demonstration against colonialism and imperialism" against the "most important imperialist countries" in Europe. It was a question of stirring up interest and attention before the congress. According to Gibarti, this depended on "enlisting the widest possible support" in Europe amongst the "desirable elements", and on turning the congress into an anti-colonial "pilgrimage" linking together believers from the labour movement, from colonial, cultural and relief organisations, and from both intellectuals and individuals. Gibarti expected that a demonstration against colonialism would tip the scale in favour of "centralising" the movement and provide impetus to "every anti-imperialist force" around the world. In fact, Gibarti argued that the IAH's philanthropy, symbolised by the *Hands off China* campaign and the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*, was evidence of the IAH's constructive political work on the colonial question.²⁶³

²⁶² Chatto had begun to work at the LACO International Secretariat after the "Rathauskeller" Conference in February 1926; TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from the LACO Secretariat, Berlin, signed F. Danziger & L. Gibarti, to unknown individual/organisation, Egypt, 17/9-1926. British security services intercepted this letter in October. Neville Henderson, the "Acting High Commissioner at the Residency" in Ramleh, notified the British Foreign Minister, Austen Chamberlain on the LACO on 2 October, 1926. The reference on India is taken from Barooah (2004, p.249, 277); RGASPI 495/18/484, 1-2, Letter from Gibarti, International Secretariat, LACO, to Robert Minor, Chicago, 11/11-1926. For a biography of Minor, see Lazitch, 1986, p.318. The final version of the agenda and the invitation has been located in the files of *Auswärtige Amt*, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1001/6751, 27, Invitation to the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, Berlin, 15/12-1926, and the LAI Collection at IISG, see 3392.1/1, Invitation to the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, Berlin, 15/12-1926.

²⁶³ SAPMO-BA, ZPA R 3003/ORA/1218 Sammlung 6 – Rote Hilfe, 29-30, "Der koloniale Freiheitskampf – Mitteilungsblatt der Liga gegen Unterdrückung", Nr. 3, Berlin, 5/7-1926. Gibarti suggested a number of current political topics, e.g. China, Syria, the Rif's rebellion in Morocco, the strike movement in the Dutch-Indies, and Egypt

After the ECCI Secretariat had resolved to disclose the intentions behind the Brussels Congress and, especially in connection with the establishment of the CGWCC in Moscow, Münzenberg was able to calm down for the moment. It was now a question of when, and whether, the congress would be able to be convened.

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Postponement

From August 1926 till January 1927, the negotiations between Münzenberg and the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters gained pace. For Münzenberg, the LACO International Secretariat had to distribute propaganda and information on the congress, increase its preparatory work and verify its contacts with colonial activists.²⁶⁴ According to Münzenberg in his article, “An Colonial Conference” (*Für eine Kolonialkonferenz*), published in *Inprecorr* on 3 August:

[...] the most important step which the League [LACO] has taken is the effort to convoke in the course of the present year an International Conference which shall unite the representatives of numerous colonial and semi-colonial countries, as well as the representatives of organisations in all States which are sympathetically inclined towards the endeavours of colonial peoples.²⁶⁵

While this article served as an opportunity to draw attention to the anti-colonial congress, for Münzenberg, however, it also served as an opportunity to put pressure on the decision-makers in Moscow: Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Piatnitsky and Roy. Münzenberg explained to Roy that one of the reasons for going public in *Inprecorr* was due to the results of his negotiations with Roy, the ECCI and the Eastern Secretariat in June-July. Yet this article was not Münzenberg’s own product. In fact, Bukharin had given Münzenberg some advice on how to formulate the text and strengthen his argumentation.²⁶⁶ Münzenberg seemed to believe that, once the ECCI Secretariat had given its consent, and with the formation of the CGWCC, it would be possible to convene the congress in October or November. The ECCI Secretariat was, however, of a different opinion and, already in July, told Münzenberg to wait until the spring of 1927. This was a recommendation that went

as focal points to “centralise the movement”, see RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat in Moscow to Münzenberg in Berlin, 2/7-1926.

²⁶⁴ RGASPI 542/1/3, 22, Letter from Münzenberg, Carlsbad, to Roy, Moscow, 14/7-1926.

²⁶⁵ William Gillies, the “International Secretary” of the British *Labour Party*, used excerpts from Münzenberg’s *Inprecorr* article as the basis for an analysis of the LAI in 1927, see TNA HO 144 10693.

²⁶⁶ Apparently, Münzenberg stopped sending any letters to Zinoviev in August. One logical reason is that Münzenberg was keenly following how the internal power struggle within the CPSU (B) was progressing over time; Gross 1967, p.199. Taken from *Inprecorr*, 3/8-1926, p.301; RGASPI 542/1/3, 35, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/8-1926.

against Münzenberg's ambition to capitalise on the enthusiasm which organisations, committees and individuals had expressed towards the congress.²⁶⁷

Münzenberg knew, however, that Bukharin supported his vision of continuing the preparations for the congress, despite the risk of postponement and the lack of support from the ZK KPD. Additionally, Münzenberg seemed to have avoided informing Roy of Bukharin's support in writing the *Inprecorr* article.²⁶⁸ In September, Münzenberg requested that Manuilsky and Bukharin exert pressure on both Roy and the CGWCC in order to change their minds about postponing the congress.²⁶⁹ On 13 September, however, Münzenberg's enthusiasm waned after a meeting with the LACO Executive in Berlin. Gibarti reported on how the preparations were progressing, only to conclude that it was both illogical and impossible to hold the congress in October or November – “it is essential to prepare the Congress with the utmost care” – recommending that the LACO Executive endorse the decision to postpone the event. The LACO “kom.Fraktion” authorised this decision at its meeting on 14 September, where the members, the PCF representative, Pierre Sémar, Saklatvala, the KPD member Philipp Dengel and Gibarti, all questioned Münzenberg's motive for rushing the process, urging him to understand that January 1927 was a far better option.²⁷⁰ The “kom.Fraktion” examined the lists of invitations, the nomination of key speakers and Münzenberg's budget (which he had sent to Bukharin). According to his budget, the congress was estimated to cost \$15,000, out of which the IAH intended to contribute \$10,000 with the additional \$5,000 coming from the Comintern.²⁷¹

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²⁶⁷ RGASPI 542/1/3, 13-14, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/6-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 15-17, Instructions from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 2/7-1926.

²⁶⁸ RGASPI 542/1/3, 35, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 24/8-1926.

²⁶⁹ RGASPI 542/1/3, 38, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Manuilsky, Moscow, 9/9-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 39-40, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 9/9-1926.

²⁷⁰ Otto Braun, member of the KPD, belonged to the “kom.Fraktion”. However, on 10 September, the *Schutzpolizei* in Berlin arrested Braun, hence, he did not attend the meeting, TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from the LACO Secretaries Gibarti and Bach to unknown recipient, Egypt, 17/9-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 39-40, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 9/9-1926. Münzenberg urged that the Brussels Congress had to convene in the “first days of December”. For Sémar, see Lazitch 1986, p. 421; for Philipp Dengel, Lazitch 1986, p.89 and Otto Braun, see Weber & Herbst 2004, pp.122-123. Sémar visited Berlin *en route* to Moscow, where he attended the Seventh ECCI Plenum (which Münzenberg also took part in).

²⁷¹ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Letter from the LACO secretaries Gibarti & Bach, to unknown recipient, Egypt, 17/9-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 39-40, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 9/9-1926. \$15,000 in 1926 would be, according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 2009, equivalent to \$185,000, a sum calculated with the help of the historical database < <http://www.measuringworth.com> >.

Assembling Connections and the Pacifist Approach

I merely take care of the organisational and technical preparations; the political preparation must, by all means, be taken care of by a responsible representative from the Comintern.

Münzenberg to Bukharin, 9/9-1926

Using Brussels as the arena for this anti-colonial congress had been an essential question for Münzenberg to resolve ever since August 1925. According to Gross, Münzenberg instructed Gibarti to visit Brussels in the autumn of 1926 and begin making enquiries with the proper authorities in order to see whether the congress could be convened in the colonial metropolis.²⁷² The reason why Münzenberg wanted to locate the congress in Brussels needs clarification. Firstly, the LACO hoped to capitalise on the symbolism of the city, especially its status as one of the leading imperialist nations in Europe after the Great War. This made it logical for the LACO, therefore, to use the colonial metropolis as a springboard for anti-colonial propaganda. The challenge was to convince the Belgian authorities to approve of the idea, a process which involved both *ad hoc* solutions and deliberate deceit, in which Gibarti assumed his role to perfection in order to create smoke screens concealing the covert agency of both the LACO and the Comintern. However, the congress in Brussels was a last minute call. On 11 November 1926, Gibarti sent a letter to Robert Minor in Chicago, telling him that the anti-colonial congress in Brussels would open on 20 January, 1927.²⁷³ However, this was not true. In fact, neither Gibarti nor the LACO had received permission from the Belgian authorities in November; instead, the negotiations were an uncertain and tedious process.

Gibarti initiated negotiations with Emile Vandervelde, the Belgian Foreign Minister, leader of the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (Belgian Labour Party) and secretary of the LSI, in October. Vandervelde had a well-known reputation within the European left-wing political movement for his long-standing commitment against the social effects of Belgian colonialism, particularly the implementation and administration of the system in the Congo Free State. Critical of the splendour and decorations in Brussels, on one occasion in the Belgian parliament, Vandervelde made a sarcastic remark about the “monumental arches which will someday be called the Arches of the Severed Hands”. For Münzenberg and Gibarti, one of the primary aims in approaching Vandervelde was to expose the LSI’s indifference and lack of commitment towards the colonial question. Thus, Vandervelde experienced it as “difficult to turn down” Gibarti’s proposal,

²⁷² Gross 1967, pp.199-200.

²⁷³ RGASPI 495/18/484, 1-2, Letter from Gibarti, International Secretariat, LACO, to Robert Minor, Chicago, 11/11-1926.

according to Gross. Yet, Vandervelde demanded a service in return from Gibarti. The LACO had to promise that the congress would not contain any derogatory statements and avoid commenting on Belgian colonialism, especially the social situation in Congo. Additionally, Gibarti had to send a detailed list, containing the names and political affiliation of every delegate to the Belgian Foreign Ministry, a document later passed on to the Belgian security service *Sûreté*. If the LACO fulfilled these demands, Vandervelde promised Gibarti that the LACO could use Brussels as the venue, placing the medieval palace *Palais d' Egmont* at their disposal.²⁷⁴

Gibarti and Vandervelde concluded their negotiations in January 1927. However, prior to this, the uncertainty of when and whether Vandervelde would answer the request resulted in Münzenberg developing a strained relationship to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. This dilemma focused on determining who was responsible for completing the political, financial and administrative preparations. In Münzenberg's opinion, Kuusinen, Bukharin and Manuilsky had to organise the political agenda, Piatnitsky the budget, while Münzenberg expected to conclude the administrative work in collaboration with both Roy and the CGWCC. To further pressurise the decision-makers in Moscow, Münzenberg frequently repeated: "interest in this colonial conference is growing".²⁷⁵ While Münzenberg and the LACO waited for Vandervelde to decide whether the congress would be able to convene in January or February, this went completely against the explicit ambition of both the ECCI and the Eastern Secretariat. On 29 December 1926, Roy submitted a draft resolution from the CGWCC, "Resolution on the International Congress against Imperialist Oppression to be held at Brussels", to the Political Secretariat, which recommended a different date for the congress to the one given by Münzenberg and Gibarti. Apparently, the CGWCC emphasised the necessity to postpone the congress "until June 1927 in order that satisfactory preparations [could] be made". On 4 January 1927, at a meeting at Comintern headquarters, Roy decided along with Petrov, Bukharin and the French communist Edgar Morin, on the advisability of postponing the congress.²⁷⁶ Receiving information of this decision, as

²⁷⁴ Gross 1967, 199-200. For Vandervelde's quote, see Hochschild 1999, p.165.

²⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/3, 44, Letter from Münzenberg, Moscow, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 26/11-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 52, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrov, Moscow, 24/12-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 53, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 24/12-1926. In the letter to Petrov, Münzenberg enclosed a copy of an "English telegram" (contents unknown), the unedited version in French and English of the congress invitation; a list of names of the Chinese delegation; and a letter from Julio Antonio Mella in Puerto Rico.

²⁷⁶ RGASPI 495/60/116, 1, Secret protocol of a meeting with the CGWCC, Moscow, 4/1-1927; RGASPI 495/3/2, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.3 der Sitzung des Polit-Sekretariats des EKKI, 5/1-1927. Present at the meeting were Bukharin (chairman), Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Roy, Humbert-Droz, Smeral, Remmele, Ercoli, Schatzkin, Lozovsky, Murphy, Heimo, Zetlin, Kachan and Lu. According to this protocol, Bukharin feared the reaction from Münzenberg after receiving the decision to postpone the congress; therefore, in order to calm him down, the ECCI Secretariat had to send a short telegram to explain why it was necessary to do so. For the draft resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/2, 69-70, DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION TO BE HELD AT BRUSSELS. For the adopted resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/2, 55-57, RESOLUTION ON THE

included in the CGWCC resolution, Münzenberg contacted Heimo – appointed as liaison for Münzenberg and the IAH at Comintern headquarters in December 1926 – telling him that Gibarti had not yet concluded the negotiations with Vandervelde. According to Münzenberg, Heimo had to realise that:

One must not forget that the congress was [...] suggested by us [the IAH], arranged by us from the very beginning, of course in agreement and by a wish from our friends over there [Comintern, Moscow] to organise as wide as possible in order to include bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, left-wing labour unions and social democratic layers [...] The people actually believe that they are leading the thing [Brussels Congress]. This belief has to be maintained at any cost.²⁷⁷

Münzenberg wanted the Comintern to understand the necessity of maintaining this belief about the congress amongst “the people”, represented by the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, left-wing labour unions and social democratic “layers”. However, the stress of not receiving an answer from Vandervelde, combined with the pressure from the decision-makers in Moscow, forced Münzenberg to question whether the Comintern intended to support the congress at all. Münzenberg told the ECCI Secretariat that, during his recent visit to Moscow, in connection with the Seventh ECCI Plenum in November, Bukharin, Kuusinen and Piatnitsky had agreed to let the LACO hold the congress in February 1927. However, if postponement was the only option left, the ECCI Secretariat had to guarantee a couple of Münzenberg’s demands. Firstly, the ECCI Presidium had to propose a new date. Secondly, the Eastern Secretariat should send a “reliable Comrade” from Moscow to conclude preparations with Münzenberg in Berlin. This final demand was all about money. Münzenberg stated that Piatnitsky had to reach a decision on the budget and deposit \$5,000 in one of his bank accounts in Berlin in order to guarantee the continuation of the congress preparations.²⁷⁸ Münzenberg contacted Piatnitsky, urging him to understand that if the congress was postponed *ad infinitum*, the Comintern had to send a “large allowance” [sum

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION TO BE HELD AT BRUSSELS, 5/1-1927.

²⁷⁷ RGASPI 542/1/7, 2, (Original) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the EKKI Sekretariat der Komintern, Moscow, 3/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 12-15, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 8/1-1927. Heimo informed Münzenberg that the ECCI Secretariat had adopted the CGWCC resolution, whereas the Political Secretariat intended to discuss Münzenberg’s critical remarks. For Münzenberg’s reply to Heimo, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 11/1-1927. For Heimo’s nomination as Münzenberg’s liaison in Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, 12-15, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 8/1-1927 (taken from McMeekin 2003, p.197). Münzenberg continued to protest against the postponement in his letters to Heimo and the ECCI Secretariat, arguing that the “Congress must begin, at any cost”; see fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, 4, Telegram from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 5, Telegram from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo in Moscow, 1927.

²⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/7, 2, Letter (original) from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the EKKI Sekretariat der Komintern, Moscow, 3/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/3, 44, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 26/11-1926. The meeting, which Münzenberg referred to, took place in Moscow on 18 November, see fol. RGASPI 495/60/109, 52, Short note from Roy, 18/11-1926.

unknown] to pay for the prolonged stay of the delegations in Brussels and Berlin, as well as to cover the preparatory work of the “kom.Fraktion”, which would have to be cancelled unless the money was forthcoming. This remark did the trick. Piatnitsky revised the budget and, in the case of postponement, granted every delegate the sum of 15 Marks per day to cover extra expenses.²⁷⁹

In the beginning of January, the Belgian Foreign Ministry approved the LACO’s application. Nevertheless, the LACO was well prepared. According to the December invitation from the LACO “Provisional Committee”: “we heartily invite you to attend the Congress convoked by them on 10th February 1927, in Brussels”. A bold act and, furthermore, once the decision of the Foreign Ministry in Belgium became a known fact, reactions were particularly harsh. How did the news of the date of the Brussels Congress become known? Firstly, the Colonial Office in London received intelligence informing them of the visit by a British communist, Andrew Rothstein, to the LACO International Secretariat in Berlin on 10-11 January. At this meeting, Bach mentioned that the Brussels Congress was “definitely fixed for February 10th”. Secondly, Münzenberg told the ECCI Secretariat that the protests by the Dutch and the USA governments had not influenced the decision of the Belgians to authorise the congress. Additionally, the Belgian authorities had promised Gibarti that they would neither interfere with nor harass the delegates at the first “International Congress against Imperialist Oppression” at the Palais d’Egmont in Brussels, scheduled to convene on 10 February, 1927.²⁸⁰ Münzenberg’s statement did not, however, convince the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters that it would be convenient to hold the congress on 10 February, especially as the question of the “desirable elements” of the political agenda had not yet been resolved.

The members of the CGWCC – Roy, Petrov and Vittorio (“Victorio”) Codovilla, a communist of Italian origin (who had emigrated to Argentina at an early age) – warned Münzenberg of the potential risk that the congress could become a showcase of “ideological confusion”. According to the CGWCC, the political and cultural nature of the contacts the LACO had established with the different organisations, associations and individuals since February 1926, was the major reason for

²⁷⁹ RGASPI 542/1/7, 2, Letter (original) from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the EKKI Sekretariat der Komintern, Moscow, 3/1-1927; RGASPI 495/19/44, 6, Ausgaben für den Brüsseler Kongress bis zum 15. Jan., Piatnitsky, Moscow, 15/1-1927. One way of collecting money was through special funds. According to the Colonial Office in London, the collection of money from Canton and Mexico financed the LACO Secretariat. Münzenberg was addressed as the “treasurer” of the LACO, and deposited money in one of his accounts at the *Commerz- und Privatbank* in Berlin, see TNA PRO CO 323 971 1.

²⁸⁰ TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Letter from Lidell, New Scotland Yard, to Clauson, Colonial Office, London, 12/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 9, Letter (copy) from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 10/1-1927. In December 1926, the LACO International Secretariat sent out information that 10 February 1927 was the definite date for the congress, despite not having received a formal decision from the Belgian Foreign Ministry. Münzenberg sent the congress invitation to Petrov and Kuusinen on December 24, see SAPMO-BA ZPA, R1001/6751, 27, Invitation to the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, LACO, Berlin, 15/12-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 52, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrov, Moscow, 24/12-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 53, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 24/12-1926.

raising this concern. However, once the CGWCC understood the ramifications and potential use of the invited delegates, some of whom had an international reputation and could be recruits for communism, the criticism eased off. Jawaharlal Nehru was a typical example of this. While Gandhi refrained from any further contacts with Gibarti and the LACO, Nehru, on the other hand, told Chatto of his intention to participate in the congress. For Gibarti, this was a major political victory, and he urgently informed the ECCI Secretariat in a telegram, Gross writes, that Nehru intended to attend the congress as an accredited delegate of the *Indian National Congress*. Hearing that Nehru was planning to attend, the CGWCC relaxed its suspicious attitude.²⁸¹

Nehru visited Europe in 1926, travelling with wife Kamila, and arrived in Berlin in December 1926. Nehru later wrote of his impressions of Berlin in his book, *An Autobiography* (1936) and, in the context of the Brussels Congress, quickly realised the necessity of attending this international demonstration against colonialism and imperialism:

I learnt there of a forthcoming Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, which was to be held in Brussels. The idea appealed to me, and I wrote home [to his father Motilal Nehru and the INC, author's own remark], suggesting that the INC might take official part in the Brussels Congress.²⁸²

However, what tipped the scale in favour of Nehru's desire to participate in the congress was, primarily, a personal reason. The relationship between Nehru and Chatto's sister, Sarojini Naidu, the renowned poet from India and anti-colonial activist, better known as the "Nightingale of India", who had also acted as the leader of the INC for a brief period in the 1920s, was a contributing factor in convincing him to participate. According to Barooah, Nehru treasured his "friendly relations with many members of Chatto's family in India", which also provided him with access to "political exiles and radical elements from abroad" who were living in Berlin. The INC had to approve of Nehru's request to attend as the accredited delegate of the organisation, which his father, Motilal Nehru, confirmed in a letter to Nehru, dated 30 December.²⁸³

This was part of the administrative puzzle Gibarti masterminded in constructing an impressive list of prominent delegates. Another example was the case of Casely Hayford, to whom Gibarti sent an invitation, along with a second letter to the West African journal, *The Gold Coast Leader*, in Sekondi. However, Gibarti seems to have been unaware of the fact that Casely Hayford was in England, thus it was his brother, Sydney S. Hayford, who received the letter. In his reply to

²⁸¹ Gross 1967, p.200. For Vittorio Codovilla, see Caballero 1986, p.156.

²⁸² Nehru 1936, p.161.

²⁸³ Barooah 2004, pp.248-249, 277; Motilal Nehru to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30/12-1926. Taken from Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters. Written mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and some written by him*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958, pp.53-54; Nehru 1936, p.161. Motilal told Jawaharlal: "your expenses are to be paid" by the INC. The secretary of the INC, Rangaswami, sent a letter of confirmation to Nehru and Gibarti, confirming Nehru as the accredited INC representative at the congress. For Sarojini Naidu, see Ahmad 2009, pp.106-117.

Gibarti, which British security services intercepted and passed on to the CO, Sydney S. Hayford stated that he, along with his brother and *The Gold Coast Leader*”, were in “sympathy” with the LACO and, wondered whether Gibarti could send any additional material.²⁸⁴ A third example illustrates the attempts to spread the word on the LACO's political agenda and the Brussels Congress in Mexico. The LACO intended to use the strategy of the *Hands off China* campaign, in particular the collection of names of prominent German intellectuals to sign petitions, in order to establish a *Hands off Mexico* campaign in both Mexico and the USA in the autumn of 1926. Münzenberg informed Bukharin that the reason for this was to protest against the “imperialist attempts [the USA] to interfere in the internal affairs of Mexico”.²⁸⁵

The despatching of congress invitations and other documents on the Brussels Congress made the LACO prone to closer inspection by national security services. British security branches in North Africa co-ordinated their monitoring to see whether any material from the LACO was being circulated in the region. For example, British colonial authorities in the Sudan confiscated a document which included the names and addresses of organisations and individuals invited to the congress. From a theoretical perspective, this document depicted the transcontinental ambitions and magnitude of the LACO in 1926. Apparently, the LACO had invited one hundred and one organisations, represented by one hundred and thirty-four delegates, who either knew about the Brussels Congress or were planning to attend it. For the British Empire, the agenda and possible impact of the Brussels Congress posed a potential threat, especially if the invitations had reached anti-colonial activists in India (21) and Egypt (75).²⁸⁶

However, the intercepted LACO document did not disclose the actual nature of the LACO network. In fact, at this point in time, it was a sparsely-populated and small structure. Aside from its German connections and its covert liaison with the Comintern, the LACO had only succeeded in engaging a few individuals in Great Britain, especially the British socialist and avid anti-colonial activist, Reginald Bridgeman. As the leader of the London-based *Chinese Information*

²⁸⁴ TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Letter from S. S. Hayford, Anona Chambers, Sekondi, Gold Coast, W. Africa, to Gibarti, Berlin, 18/11-1926; TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Letter from Lidell at Scotland Yard to Clauson, 13/12-1926. British security services circumvented Gibarti's attempt, however. Liddell informed the CO on 13 December of the attempt by the LACO International Secretariat to establish a link between the LACO and “The Gold Coast Leader”. Additionally, whether Gibarti ever received Hayford's letter remains unknown.

²⁸⁵ RGASPI 542/1/3, 36, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 31/8-1926. The LACO sent a protest telegram to the US government in September, which the LACO also included in one of its publications, the *Press Service*, see TNA PRO CO 323 966 1. Münzenberg provided Roy with documents that showed that the LACO had established contact with the colonies. One example was a letter from an unknown Palestinian in Jerusalem [?], requesting the IAH to send doctors and medicine to Syria, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/3, 41, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 16/9-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 42, Letter from an unknown author in Palestine to Münzenberg, Berlin, 8/9-1926 [Abschrift].

²⁸⁶ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Secret letter from the War Office, Whitehall, London, to Clauson, Colonial Office, 24/11-1926; TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, List of invited organisations and individuals to the Brussels Congress, intercepted by Sudanese authorities, November 1926.

Bureau (CIB), which was reporting on the development and activities of the KMT in 1926, as well as having a web of contacts to the Chinese anti-colonial movement in England, Bridgeman's network was a source coveted by the LACO. According to the Colonial Office, in a report on the "activities of the 'League against Oppression in the Colonies'", Bridgeman and Saklatvala had held meetings in London in November-December 1926 to discuss the necessary steps in forming a British LACO section. On 2 December, a meeting was held in the House of Commons in London, attended by representatives of the CPGB, the *Labour Party* and the ILP – Saklatvala, Lansbury, Ellen Wilkinson, J. Compton, J. J. Tinker and Ernest Thurtle, and a decision was made to establish a British LACO section. Aware of the risk represented by the LACO's communist ties, Saklatvala recommended that Gibarti and Münzenberg treat the "Russian connection ... boldly and without reservations". Yet, it was through Bridgeman's contacts, not Saklatvala, that the LACO International Secretariat maintained its contacts with the British section in London.²⁸⁷ Despite the existence of a section in London, which existed merely on paper for the sole purpose of sending delegates from a "leading imperialist nation" to Brussels, British security services suspected that the organisation could become a future political force to reckon with. Hence, it was of particular value for the security services to register any kind of evidence that indicated an increase in LACO activities and, in general, any anti-colonial activism in Great Britain and the colonies. Nonetheless, other governmental agencies in London, e.g. the British Foreign Office, concluded that, after examining the "composition of the [LACO] Executive", the security services could be assured of "a sufficient guarantee that nothing practical will ever be accomplished by this League".²⁸⁸

The situation in Germany was completely different. Towards the end of 1926, the LACO and the Brussels Congress were both topics intertwined with the anti-colonial and pacifist movements in Germany. The RKÜöO had observed the chronological development of the LACO and concluded that the organisation had intimate ties to nine pacifist organisations and associations: *Bund der religiöse Sozialisten*, *Bund Entschiedener Schulreformer*, *Deutscher Monistenbund*, *Vereinigung der Freunde von Religion und Völkerfrieden*, *Deutsche Bund für Mutterschutz*, *Grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft*, *Volksbund für Geistesfreiheit*, *Bund freier sozialistischer Organisationen* and the LHR. The RKÜöO did not, however, focus on the question of whether the LACO was a communist organisation or not. Instead, it focused on why the LHR had a connection to the KPD. Noting the relationship between Münzenberg and Lehmann-Russbüldt, which also

²⁸⁷ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, REPORT on the Activities of the "League against oppression in the Colonies, December 1926; Saville 1984, pp.40-50. Bridgeman's personal archive at Hull University contains "a list of organizations and individuals who had accepted and those who had been approached" in England. Scotland Yard concluded in December, 1926, that the LACO was a "communist" organization due to its intimate connection to the IAH in Germany and, furthermore, the British LACO section had come into being due to the efforts of CPGB members Saklatvala and Bridgeman, see TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Letter from Lidell at Scotland Yard to Clauson, 13/12-1926.

²⁸⁸ TNA PRO CO 323 966 1, Short note by Halder, Foreign Office, London, 25/11-1926.

implied an instrumental link to IAH headquarters in Berlin, the RKÜöO increased its surveillance of the LHR during November 1926 – January 1927, for the purpose of verifying a link between these two organisations. The RKÜöO ended its investigation, completed a report in January and passed on the material to the *Prussian Ministry of the Interior* (MdI). According to this report, the LHR was a “revolutionary, pacifist” organisation which endorsed “extreme deviationist” tendencies, e.g. the abolishment of the *Reichswehr* and the right to refuse military conscription. Nevertheless, the greatest worry was the suspicion that the LHR seemed to be a channel for getting its members into the KPD.²⁸⁹ This report did not mention the connection between the LACO and the LHR, despite including the reference to Münzenberg as a member of the LACO Executive. Thus, it seems as though the RKÜöO had not been able to confirm the location of the LHR office in Berlin as the LHR shared the same corridor as the LACO and, according to the recollections of Buber-Neumann in her book, *Von Potsdam Nach Moskau* (1957), she asked herself “[O]ur neighbour fought for ‘human rights’, we for ‘anti-imperialism’. Was this not in principle the same?”²⁹⁰

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The Aggravated Network

In January 1927, Münzenberg’s relationship to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters on the question of the Brussels Congress was irrational due to a number of incidents which ultimately aggravated the network and threw the congress preparations into confusion. At this point in time, some of the actors began to question the very essence of both the Brussels Congress and the anti-colonial project, which culminated in the Comintern’s demand to postpone the event. All of the above was a result of the faltering administrative, financial and political preparations, a dilemma that weighed heavily upon Münzenberg, the IAH and the LACO. Indicative of this tense dilemma, the earlier trickle of correspondence between Münzenberg and Comintern headquarters suddenly increased dramatically during January and up until the beginning of February. According to the documents in the LAI and IAH *fond*, Münzenberg despatched twenty-three letters and telegrams to Heimo (17), the ECCI Secretariat (5) and Kuusinen (1), whilst Heimo and the ECCI Secretariat sent seven letters to Münzenberg.²⁹¹ Additionally, the LACO International Secretariat looked as if

²⁸⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/111, 8, Reichskomm. f.d. überwachung d. öffentl. Ordnung u. Nachrichtensammelstelle im RMI, 1/11-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67210, 162, Betrifft: Liga – Kommunisten (o.D., Maschinenschrift), 1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67208, 30, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung, Berlin, an das Ministerium des Innern, Berlin, 8/1-1927.

²⁹⁰ Buber-Neumann 1957, p.110.

²⁹¹ The estimated amount of correspondence to and from Berlin and Moscow is based on fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, and

it was heading towards total chaos in January, an unwanted scenario, characterised by impatience, indecisiveness and uncertainty, which placed the final phase of preparing the “first international demonstration against colonialism and imperialism” in a critical situation. However, the attempted revolutionary uprisings in Indonesia, first in Java in November 1926 and a second attempt in Sumatra in January 1927, suddenly emerged as a convenient moment for the LACO to increase its propaganda advertising the Brussels Congress in Germany.

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From Indonesia to Berlin

The nationalist uprising in Indonesia was a violent protest against Dutch colonial rule. Organised and staged by the *Communist Party of Indonesia* (PKI), the uprising also provided the communists with the opportunity to infiltrate and assume control over the Indonesian nationalist organisation, *Sarekat Rakjat*, and strengthen the opposition against the religious association, *Sarekat Islam*. The colonial disorder in Batavia in November 1926, and in Silungkang, Sumatra, in January 1927, was a blueprint of the kind of anti-colonial turmoil that was breaking out during the 1920s. Armed forces confronted the police in Batavia and managed to destroy communication devices (telephone exchanges and cables) before the Dutch military put an end to the chaos in December. The Sumatran attempt ended in a similar way, leaving 13,000 arrested and several casualties in its wake. In the aftermath of the disorder, a number of Indonesian communists escaped to Singapore in what was then the British Straits Settlement in order to re-route the “anti-Dutch activities” and find new recruits to the communist movement. The leader of the PKI, Tan Malaka, supervised this work. However, later, in October 1927, he appeared in Berlin, suspected of acting as an LAI “agent”, according to the RKÜöO.²⁹²

The idea to raise awareness of the Indonesian disorder in Germany did not emanate from the LACO International Secretariat. The ECCI Secretariat instructed Heimo to get Müntzenberg to establish a proletarian solidarity campaign in support of the Javanese revolutionaries and to use the

fol. RGASPI 542/1/7. Mustafa Haikal made a similar calculation which focused, however, on the number of occasions the ECCI, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI Secretariat, and the Eastern Secretariat discussed the anti-colonial congress from March 1926 to February 1927, see Haikal 1992, p.241.

²⁹² Boon Kheng Cheah, *From PKI to the Comintern, 1924-1941*, SEAP Publications, 1992, pp.9-10. For statistics on the number of arrests in Java and Sumatra, see Internet: < <http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl61/indonesi.htm> >. For a background and narrative of the history of the PKI in its formative period, see Cheah 6-12. See also Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Equinox Publishing, Jakarta, (first edition 1965), 2006; On Tan Malaka, see Lazitch 1986, pp.291-292; Cheah (1992, p.8, footnote 16); SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/67113, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung, Ausländer im Reich (1927-1929), Kriminal-Oberkommissar Oexle, Berlin, 26/10-1927. *Inprecorr* released information on 23 November 1926 concerning a support campaign established on the initiative of the ECCI, which declared that the “anti-imperialist revolt is spreading, from China it has reached Java, where the oppressed ... have risen against Dutch imperialism”, see the “ECCI Manifesto on the Revolt in Indonesia”, *Inprecorr*, vi, 143, 2506, 23/11-1926, taken from Degras vol.II, 1960, pp.310-312.

LACO for this purpose. The IAH apparatus in Berlin was to provide organisational assistance and guarantee the carrying out of the campaign, however, the campaign was to, more importantly, highlight the propaganda concerning the anti-colonial congress. The LACO adopted a pacifist ethos for the Indonesian campaign which, according to Münzenberg, would ensure that the protests against the implementation of capital punishment in Java would get the LHR and German intellectuals to support the campaign. Using similar propaganda methods to those that had been developed by the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*, the LACO sent a protest telegram to the Dutch Foreign Ministry in The Hague on 11 January.²⁹³ According to this telegram, signed by Gibarti, the “General Secretary of the ‘World League against Colonial Oppression’”, the LACO opposed the “draconian measures of oppression” in Java and Sumatra. Prominent individuals supported the petition, e.g. Barbusse, Georges Pioch, Emilie Chauvelon, Léon Werth, Albert Fournier, Maxton, Helen Crawford, S. O. Davies, Frances Countess of Warridge, Arthur James (A. J.) Cook, Lansbury, Arthur Holitscher, Goldschmidt, Alfons Paquet, Helene Stöcker, Lehmann-Russbüldt, Pfarrer Bleier and Eduard Fuchs, the German author and communist, who had been involved in the covert operations of the West European Secretariat (WES) as cashier. This petition urged the Dutch Foreign Ministry to allow an “impartial commission” to travel to Java and Sumatra to conduct an investigation, this group consisting of the author Bernhard Shaw, the French physicist Paul Langevin as well as the explorer and philanthropist Fridtjof Nansen from Norway. However, nothing of the above happened and an LAI delegation left Europe to visit India and the Far East in 1927-28. This visit will be more closely explored in the following chapter. Nonetheless, for Münzenberg, the Java campaign had finally begun to erode the value of using the names of intellectuals and left-wing politicians, telling Heimo that “unfortunately it is so, that the frequent use of these signatures wears [them] out, and [they] are no longer that effective”.²⁹⁴

The Java campaign in Germany was a vehicle used to raise awareness of the Brussels Congress, e.g. at public meetings in Berlin. On 13 January, “at 8 o’clock” in the “Festsaal des Herrenhaus”, the LACO held a meeting, at which the NAACP representative, the “American Negro Professor” William Pickens, was introduced. Pickens delivered a speech on “Das Negerproblem in Nordamerika”, along with the Chinese delegate Chi Kai-chi [real name: Ch’ao-

²⁹³ RGASPI 538/2/40, 17, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 11/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 29, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 17/1-1927. The ECCI Secretariat instructed Münzenberg that the Brussels Congress was a perfect opportunity to promote the pamphlet *Indonesien hat das Wort*, authored by the Indonesian communist and member of the ECCI Presidium, A. Semaun. To do so, Münzenberg had to use a publishing company, not known to have any communist ties, to distribute the pamphlet, see fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, 59, Information from the ECCI Secretariat to Münzenberg, 28/1-1927. For Semaun, see Lazitch 1986, p.422. *The Korean Problem* was another pamphlet circulated amongst the delegates at the congress, a pamphlet which focused on the question of “Japanese imperialism” on the Korean peninsula; see IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/38.

²⁹⁴ RGASPI 538/2/40, 17, Letter from Münzenberg to Heimo in Moscow, 11/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/14, 3, Telegramm (an das) Außenministerium Den Haag, 11/1-1927. Heimo received a copy of the telegram; see fol. RGASPI 542/1/18, 2, Telegram Nr.21, Berlin, 11/1-1927.

Ting Chi, delegate of the *Association for the Spreading of Sun-Yat-Senism in America*]. Both Gibarti and the German journalist Leo Laina used the evening as an opportunity to provide information about the Brussels Congress and to nominate candidates of the German LACO section who would attend the event: Arthur Holitscher, Ernst Toller, Lucie Peters and the secretary Hans Jäger.²⁹⁵ An undisclosed informant in the service of *Auswärtige Amt*, who identified himself/herself as a member of the pro-colonial association *Vereinigung für deutsche Siedlung und Wanderung*, also attended this meeting and sent a report on the pacifist nature of the LACO. According to this report, the LACO had co-operated with the *Bund der Kriegsgegner und Kriegsverweigerer*, an association suspected of nourishing communist links and, further, Pickens' speech was a "lengthy and irrelevant" oration on the Negro question. At the end of the meeting, the informant had a private talk with Gibarti which left the unidentified informant with the impression that Gibarti was not a German but instead a 28-year-old Jew from Hungary.²⁹⁶

Münzenberg appreciated Pickens performance and physical presence in Berlin, especially as it gave him a chance to meet and hold discussions with anti-colonial activists. However, Münzenberg was not capable of solving every personal issue. Jimmy La Guma, a South African communist from Cape Town and delegate of the *African National Congress* (ANC), arrived either in Berlin or in Brussels in January, although no preparations had been made beforehand to sort out where to accommodate him, a question that left Münzenberg dumbfounded and unsure as to how to act.²⁹⁷ The second question, characteristic of Münzenberg's erratic behaviour during the final stages of the congress preparations, was his relationship to the German communist press. It did not matter that Münzenberg had a media empire of his own, other journals and newspapers of the communist press were a crucial factor in creating maximum exposure for the congress. However, Münzenberg argued that none of them seemed to care. The daily official organ of the KPD, *Die Rote Fahne*, had failed completely by not including a single word on the congress, according to Münzenberg. Accusing the editors of "sabotaging" the IAH and the LACO, Münzenberg urged Heimo to

²⁹⁵ *A-I-Z* printed a picture of Pickens from the "Herrenhause" in Berlin, under the heading: "[T]he American Negro Professor William Pickens", see *A-I-Z*, Jahrg. IV, Nr. 4, Berlin, p.16. SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 24, Öffentlichen Mitgliederversammlung, LACO, Berlin, 6/1-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/115, 42, Report by Reichskommissar, Berlin, 28/3-1927. Pickens never attended the Brussels congress. Yet, this did not prevent the LAI from including Pickens name in *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*, along with explanation that he "did not arrive in time", and the NAACP was a "participant" organisation in the congress, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.236. For the German LACO Section at the congress, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.238-239.

²⁹⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA, R1001/6751, 30-31, (Secret report from unknown informant), *Auswärtige Amt*, Abt. III a1, Berlin, Wilhelmsstr.74, 14/1-1927.

²⁹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/7, 2 (Original) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Sekretariat der Komintern, Moskau (dated Berlin, 3.1.1927); RGASPI 538/2/40, 8, Telegram from Münzenberg, Berlin, to "Anderson" [?], Hotel Lux, Moscow, January, 1927. Münzenberg asked if "Anderson" could send some instructions on how to solve the problem. Hotel Lux was the preferred accommodation for the Comintern and its foreign delegates during their visits in Moscow; see Ruth von Mayenburg, *Hotel Lux. Das Absteigequartier der Weltrevolution*, München (1991).

instigate an impartial investigation to find out the reasons for this mistake.²⁹⁸ Heimo had, however, already advised Münzenberg on how to solve the press question, a strategy which implied a conscious separation from the KPD press. According to Heimo, the LACO and the IAH apparatus should, as a first step, use every “source possible” to spread the word about the congress. The second step was to let the congress “Press Bureau” (“Presse-Büro”) assess the political persuasion of every newspaper that had declared an intention to attend. Thus, the only thing Heimo requested of Münzenberg was to distribute the agenda and general information concerning the congress to the “bourgeoisie press and its correspondents”, material that had to “get them to believe”.²⁹⁹

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Chaotic Preparations: Determination vis-à-vis Hesitation

Münzenberg approached the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters differently, depending on whom he chose to contact. Whilst he confronted Heimo in a straightforward manner, other actors received a more reverent approach. On 24 January, Münzenberg sent a letter to Kuusinen, asking him to understand that the work with the communist mass organisations was a “very personal question”, especially as the work contributed to building up a strong communist movement. As an example of his sincere devotion to this work, Münzenberg informed Kuusinen of his idea to create a “giant campaign in defence of Soviet Russia” and for it to coincide with the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. This idea also fitted the political framework of both the LACO and the Brussels Congress.³⁰⁰ According to Gross, Münzenberg was aware that he was playing a “high game”, especially after having realised that the anti-colonial project symbolised more than a mere support campaign for Soviet Russian foreign policy.³⁰¹ Furthermore, in January, Münzenberg knew that relations with Comintern headquarters were about to reach a breaking

²⁹⁸ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/361, 1-3, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo in Moscow, 17/1-1927. A copy of Münzenberg’s letter is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 30-32.

²⁹⁹ Heimo informed Münzenberg that *Inprecorr* intended to publish articles, short reports and release telegrams about the congress, a procedure carried out using the strictest sense of selection and authorization of the material before publication. An unknown correspondent, nominated by the chief editor of the *Inprecorr* in Berlin, the Hungarian communist and journalist Gyula Alpári (pseudonym: Julius), would be in charge of this work. Additionally, a “special correspondent” from TASS intended to leave Moscow and visit the congress in Brussels, where he/she planned to write articles, see fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, 78, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 5/2-1927. For Gyula Alpári/Julius, see Lazitch 1986, pp.4-5, and Morgan, Cohen, & Flinn (eds.) (2005).

³⁰⁰ The Russian campaign also involved a conflict between Münzenberg and the German author and communist, Eduard Fuchs, formerly the cashier of the *West European Secretariat* (WES). The nature of this conflict was a competition, i.e. Münzenberg and Fuchs competed as to who was going to be the first to establish a support campaign in defence of the Soviet Union. On January 27, 1927, in a letter to Olga Kamenewa, Fuchs stated that the only good thing Münzenberg seemed capable of doing was to construct “Potemkinesque” façades. The LACO was a suitable example of where Münzenberg used the colonial liberation struggle as a strategy to lead the “stupid and ignorant”, see further see SAPMO-BA ZPA, NY 4005/73, 33, Letter from Eduard Fuchs, Berlin, to Clara Zetkin, Moscow, 27/1-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA NY 4005/73, 35-37, Letter from Eduard Fuchs, Berlin, to [Olga] Kamenewa, Moscow, 27/1-1927. For Fuchs and WES, see Vatlin (2009).

³⁰¹ RGASPI 538/2/40, 37-41, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 24/1-1927; Gross 1967, p.202.

point. Frustrated over the fact that the IAH apparatus had supported the LACO in preparing the congress, instead of the Comintern, Münzenberg questioned if and when the Comintern would complete the political agenda and the material (the congress theses, resolutions and manifesto). Münzenberg notified Heimo that the Comintern had to understand that the anti-colonial movement was an “independent” movement, strong enough to turn the Comintern into a bystander in Brussels.³⁰² Introducing the above to Petrov and Kuusinen, Münzenberg nonetheless promised to get the LACO to “increase activity on all fronts” in order to finish the preparatory work. Yet, the Comintern had to send a “politically responsible Comrade” to Berlin to prepare the political material.³⁰³ Additionally, Münzenberg wanted Heimo to let him know when Bukharin and Kuusinen had completed these theses and resolutions.³⁰⁴

Completing the Political Preparations and the “reliable Comrade(s)”: Münzenberg believed that only a “reliable Comrade” from Moscow could complete the political preparations in Berlin.³⁰⁵ A demand which, in turn, set in motion a process that, with hindsight, has proven difficult to decipher and assess. The “reliable Comrade” arrived in Berlin in January; however, the person had not travelled *en route* from Moscow, but from London. The identity of the “reliable Comrade” was David Alexandrovich Petrovsky, Comintern emissary and ECCI representative in the CPGB in London, who in Berlin had assumed the pseudonym “Isolde” (Isolde/Petrovsky). Any formal decision at Comintern headquarters sanctioning Isolde/Petrovsky’s mission to Berlin remains unknown, e.g. there is no mention of this decision in the protocols of either the ECCI, the Political Secretariat or the Organisational Department. Apparently, prior to Petrovsky’s arrival in Berlin, he had been in London in December to give, in total “secrecy”, instruction to a CPGB functionary, Philip Spratt, before his departure from England to India on a Comintern mission. This mission involved, for example, performing organisational work in India, establishing closer ties to the INC, supervising the activities of the communist *Bengal Workers’ and Peasants’ Party* and publishing a pamphlet on the Indian nationalist movement.³⁰⁶ According to a biographical

³⁰² RGASPI 542/1/7, 9, (Copy) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, January 1927.

³⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/3, 52, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrov, Moscow, 24/12-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 53, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 24/12-1926; RGASPI 542/1/3, 39-40, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 9/9-1926.

³⁰⁴ RGASPI 542/1/7, 15-17, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 15/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 19-20, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 17/1-1927. The Political Secretariat wanted Bukharin and Kuusinen to write the material.

³⁰⁵ RGASPI 538/2/40, 20-21, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 11/1-1927.

³⁰⁶ According to the known pseudonyms used by Petrovsky presented in Davidson (et al.), “Isolde” was one of his aliases. Furthermore, biographical accounts and documents shed some light on Petrovsky’s whereabouts during December 1926-January 1927, see Davidson 2003, p.xxxiv; Haithcox 1971, pp.56-57; Degras vol.II 1960, p.558; Worley 2002, p.60, 82; Philip Spratt, *Blowing Up India. Reminiscences and Reflections of a Former Comintern Emissary*, Calcutta, Prachi Prakashan, 1955, pp.29-30. Clemens Dutt recommended sending Spratt to India. After Spratt had received secret instructions from Petrovsky in London, Dutt accompanied him to Paris. Once he had arrived in India, Spratt published the pamphlet *India and China*, which resulted in his arrest in August 1927. Later Spratt

summary of Petrovsky compiled by MI5, Petrovsky had assumed Roy's position at the Eastern Secretariat in January 1927. The reason for this was that the Political Secretariat had assigned Roy to travel to Hankow in China, along with Jaques Doriot (PCF), Tom Mann (CPGB), Earl Russel Browder (WPA and Profintern) and the Chinese communist Tan Ping-shan, as representatives of the *International Workers' Delegation* to attend the *Pan-Pacific Labour Conference* in May.³⁰⁷ Thus, this required an administrative change in the anti-colonial project and its network, which left Roy detached from the colonial work in Europe, while Münzenberg expected Heimo to find a new liaison on the colonial question in Moscow. Evidently, the rather swift solution was to nominate Petrovsky, who depended on Roy to provide advice on how to approach this assignment in Berlin. On 15 January, Münzenberg sent a note to Heimo and thanked him for the arrival of the "Moscow delegate".³⁰⁸ Nonetheless, Petrovsky was not the only "reliable Comrade" active in Berlin. On the contrary, traces of a second person, engaged to assist the machinery of both the Comintern and the Brussels Congress, was someone who identified himself/herself as "Irmgard". The identity behind the pseudonym "Irmgard" remains a riddle. However, the strength of the information included in the correspondence from both Isolde/Petrovsky and "Irmgard" makes up for this ambiguity. Most importantly, these accounts provide an insight into how these two actors perceived the situation in Berlin which, in comparison to Münzenberg's abrasive estimations to Heimo and the ECCI Secretariat, depict a completely different scenario.

Isolde/Petrovsky described the chaos and disorder at the LACO International Secretariat to Roy thus: "muddled as things are, we must try [...] to make the best of it", realising that postponement was no longer a valid option in January. With the continuing "ignorant" attitude of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, a shadow was cast over the actual successes achieved by the LACO, especially the success in getting Nehru to participate in the congress which was a political victory. "Irmgard" outlined a more negative picture, portraying the "machinery" as being in total chaos, having only Gibarti and one steno-typist at the secretariat, whereas Münzenberg had spent too much money.³⁰⁹ Evidently, it seems that the assistance of "Irmgard" and Isolde/Petrovsky was not enough. Marcel Rosenberg, the Russian Foreign Council representative in Berlin, stepped in to help Münzenberg examine some of the documents of the

wrote that the motive for this mission was not to act "as an expert" on the Indian question, but rather "I was chosen because I was unknown to the police, and my job was to be [...] a messenger and reporter".

³⁰⁷ TNA PRO KV2/1433, Biographical information on Bennett/Petrovsky, 17/6-1928; RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 26/1-1927. The delegation wanted to establish contacts with Chinese communists and radical trade-union leaders, see Lazitch 1986, p.457, and the IWD and KMT, see Pantsov 2000; Haithcox 1971, pp.63-64.

³⁰⁸ RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 26/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 27, Letter from Isolde/Petrovsky, Berlin, to M.N. Roy, Moscow, 17/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 15-17, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 15/1-1927.

³⁰⁹ RGASPI 542/1/7, 27, Letter from Isolde/Petrovsky, Berlin, to M.N. Roy, Moscow, 17/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 62, Letter from "Irmgard", Berlin, to Petrov, Moscow, 28/1-1927.

congress, e.g. reviewing lists of invited intellectuals and preparing the publication of bulletins for the congress. According to Gross, while Münzenberg was enthusiastic, Rosenberg did his best to enforce “the Moscow line” on the congress.³¹⁰

In the end, the services of the “reliable Comrades” were not enough to calm Münzenberg down. Expecting the ECCI Secretariat to send Manuilsky, who, however, had no intentions of leaving Moscow, Heimo did his best to placate Münzenberg by informing him of the composition of the ECCI delegation.³¹¹ The Japanese communist, Sen Katayama, acting as the leader of this delegation, together with “Wright”,³¹² Wassiljew, A. Semaun and CPGB member Iosif (Joseph) Fineberg, planned to arrive in Brussels prior to the opening.³¹³ This clashed with Münzenberg’s original idea of organising a meeting with the delegation in Berlin first, yet, due to the short space of time, the delegation had to travel directly to Brussels. Prior to their departure from Moscow, the ECCI Secretariat gave the ECCI delegation confidential directives, which recommended that they act carefully, be cautious of “every speech”, and “work out together with the speaker the theses and the plan”. The principle was the following,

[1.] Our delegation organises its conferences cautiously without advertising them and without admitting any outsiders. [2.] The delegation as a whole as well as its individual members should by no means speak officially in our name. [3.] The task of the delegation is to secure leadership over the work of the Congress. [4.] With this in view the delegation distributes [sic] amongst its members present at the congress to find the elements nearest to us and to exert through them, their influence on the respective delegations.³¹⁴

Why did the ECCI Secretariat give the ECCI delegation these directives, and what was their motive? Firstly, the congress was a forum uniting the delegates around a common cause, thus, it was essential that the political agenda, the resolutions and the congress manifesto embodied this spirit of unity. Thus, this would facilitate their motive to “convert” the anti-colonial congress into “a grand anti-imperialist demonstration”. The second objective was to use the congress as a venue at which to launch propaganda against the colonial policies of both the LSI, the *Amsterdam International* and those of the social democratic movement and, above all, to portray the

³¹⁰ Gross 1967, pp.200-202. Münzenberg used his apartment at 9a Tiergarten for his meetings with Rosenberg.

³¹¹ RGASPI 538/2/40, 45, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 25/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 60, Information (unknown author), Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/1-1927. The Profintern did not intend to send a delegation, see fol. RGASPI 538/2/40, 60, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/1-1927.

³¹² A pseudonym most likely used either by Malayan communist and British Special Branch agent in the 1930s and 1940s, Lai Tek, or the Australian communist Tom Wright (Kheng 1992, p.26).

³¹³ RGASPI 495/60/115, 5-6, Minutes of the meeting of the Brussels Commission, 28/2-1927; RGASPI 495/6/5, 33-33b, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.17 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekr., Moscow, 8/3-1927.

³¹⁴ RGASPI 495/18/534, 41-43, Instructions to the [ECCI] delegates to the Brussels Congress, 4/2-1927.

international communist movement as the real supporter of the colonial struggle.³¹⁵ The ECCI delegation were not the only actors devoted to guaranteeing communist domination of the congress. The so-called “Fraktionsbüro” (*Fraction Bureau*) would finalise the resolutions and theses on location in Brussels. At the end of January, the ECCI Secretariat nominated the members of this “Fraktionsbüro”, consisting of the ECCI representative [Petrovsky], Walter Stöcker of the ZK KPD, Münzenberg, an unknown PCF delegate, and the leader of the CPGB Arthur MacManus (1891/92 – 1927). The general plan was to combine the expertise of the ECCI delegation and the “Fraktionsbüro” in Brussels in order to realise the vision outlined in the CGWCC resolution:

[T]o set up an International Committee of the League Against Imperialist Oppression, and to draw all political and industrial working class organisations, bourgeois radical, pacifist and cultural bodies, sympathising with the liberation movements in the colonies [...] into the League.³¹⁶

By the end of January, the political material was, however, nowhere near completion. Consequently, Münzenberg asked whether the ECCI Secretariat could allow the IAH to work out the guidelines for the material, suggesting Roy, Rothstein, Doriot and Isolde/Petrovsky to assist with the work.³¹⁷ The ECCI Secretariat paid no attention to Münzenberg’s suggestion. However, at the same time, Münzenberg must have known that Bukharin and Kuusinen had not written the theses and resolutions. Hence, the ECCI Secretariat suggested that the ECCI delegation work out “on the spot depending on the composition of the Congress” together with the “Fraktionsbüro”, drafts for the theses and resolutions.³¹⁸ This answer flew in the face of Münzenberg’s expectations. Apparently, the congress material was an essential factor which had to be presented and examined at the “fractional meeting” at the *Hotel du Globe* in Brussels at “4 pm” on 7 February, Münzenberg stated. Disappointed that Comintern headquarters had been unable to finish the political material “despite my insistent demands”, Münzenberg nonetheless had the intention to leave Berlin on 6 February and visit Fimmen in Amsterdam before departing for Brussels.³¹⁹ However, does this imply that there were other actors at play, aside from the ECCI delegation and the “Fraktionsbüro”, in resolving this dilemma?

³¹⁵ RGASPI 495/18/534, 41-43, Instructions to the [ECCI] delegates to the Brussels Congress, 4/2-1927.

³¹⁶ RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 26/1-1927. For the resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/2, 55-57, RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION TO BE HELD AT BRUSSELS, 5/1-1927.

³¹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/7, 49, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 18/1-1927.

³¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/7, 9, (copy) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, January, 1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 65-66, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 31/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 60, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/1-1927.

³¹⁹ RGASPI 538/2/40, 65-66, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 31/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 9, Letter (copy) from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, February, 1927.

The choice fell on Karl August Wittfogel, the renowned Sinologist and scholar at the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University, also a member of the KPD, to complete some of the congress resolutions. G. L. Ulmen writes that Wittfogel received an urgent telegram from the ZK KPD summoning him to Berlin a couple of days before the opening of the congress. Living in Frankfurt, Wittfogel travelled immediately to Berlin and went straight to KPD headquarters. Once there, a ZK KPD representative told him that his recent book, *Awakening China*, which focused partly on the Chinese national liberation movement, had been brought to the attention of Comintern headquarters in Moscow. Yet, the visit served a far more important purpose. Wittfogel received the instruction that “somebody from over there [Moscow]” wanted to meet him in Berlin, whose identity remained unknown to Wittfogel (a plausible candidate is Isolde/Petrovsky), according to Ulmen. The primary purpose of this Comintern representative meeting Wittfogel was to get him to write the political resolution for the Brussels Congress, especially considering both his knowledge of and political engagement in the Chinese national liberation struggle. Initially honoured by having received an assignment, the effort required to write the resolution turned, however, into a gruesome experience. Understanding that he was not in any position to be able to oppose the wishes of the Comintern representative, which would also implicitly mean opposing the authority of the ZK KPD, Wittfogel chose to see it as an opportunity to attend the anti-colonial congress, as the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt did not want to pay for his journey to Brussels. The Comintern representative gave Wittfogel only a few days in which to complete the resolution. Wittfogel contacted his friend Fritz Weiss in Berlin to help him out, only to realise that the task was overwhelming:

We just could not do it [...] having spent one of the most tortured intellectual episodes of my life, I went back to the [...] great unknown man from Moscow, on Monday morning and he said “Where is the resolution?, and I said, “There isn’t one. I just could not do it”.³²⁰

The Comintern representative reacted with distress. However, without showing any sign of irritation, the representative invited Wittfogel to accompany him to Brussels and to assist the “great unknown man from Moscow” in protecting the “secret material ... kept in his suitcase”.³²¹

The preparatory work with the political material was a confused process, characterised by inefficiency, which confirmed the tense relations which had emerged between Münzenberg and the ECCI Secretariat. In fact, the outcome of this tedious process altered the original concept of the congress. According to the CGWCC resolution, the congress was supposed to support the nationalist liberation movements in the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Hedjaz and Mesopotamia), the French colonies in North Africa, India, Indonesia, China, Latin America and

³²⁰ Ulmen 1978, pp.83-85. Fritz Weiss was also connected to the IAH in Berlin.

³²¹ Ulmen 1978, p.85.

“all” Negro organisations. On 4 February, the ECCI Secretariat instructed the ECCI delegation to implement a change in focus on the congress agenda and devote attention to the establishment of contacts with anti-colonial activists from India, Egypt and other British colonies.³²²

The Financial Solution: Gibarti expected to turn the congress into a large gathering for anti-colonial activists, a vision which depended on finding a solution to the financial costs of arranging the congress. According to Münzenberg, the total cost for the event would be \$15,000, however, as “Irmgard” observed, the money poured right through his fingers. This did not seem to bother Münzenberg, demanding that Heimo secure a rapid influx of money and, if this was not forthcoming, he could not promise to be able to arrange the preparations properly. Münzenberg argued that money was the key to a successful congress, with the IAH already having supported the LACO financially which had drained the IAH of its finances. To approve Münzenberg’s demand, the ECCI Secretariat granted him “a part of the sum” [unknown] on 25 January, which he would receive in person at the “fraction” meeting in Brussels on 7 February. This was not enough to satisfy Münzenberg, who told Heimo that the Comintern had to reimburse the IAH after the congress. On 7 February, Münzenberg declared that the congress account was still \$5,000 short.³²³

Despite Heimo’s promise to Münzenberg that the budget was “in the hands” of the Political Secretariat, it was still, nevertheless, a matter under Piatnitsky’s jurisdiction. According to the document, “Ausgaben für den Brüsseler Kongress bis zum 15. Jan” (*Expenses for the Brussels Congress until January 15*), authored by Piatnitsky, this account disclosed the actual costs for the congress, and how Piatnitsky had meticulously calculated every cost. Estimating the cost of the Brussels Congress at \$13,625 which, in comparison to Münzenberg’s budget estimate (\$15,000), had reduced the budget estimate by \$1,375, Piatnitski had divided the budget into separate sections: expenses for delegations arriving from outside Europe; colonial delegations from within Europe; money to intellectuals and the staff of the LACO; and money spent by the LACO and Münzenberg. The delegations and individual expecting financial support for their travel expenses were the South African delegation (South African Labour Congress, CPSA; \$1,500); Manuel Gomez and the “American” delegation (\$2,500); the “Labour Bund” from Ceylon (\$500); and the Sudanese delegation (\$200). Piatnitsky concluded that the sum of \$3,000 would cover their return journeys. Colonial delegations from France, the *Committee in Defence of the Negro Race* and its

³²² RGASPI 495/3/2, 55-57, RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST IMPERIALIST OPPRESSION TO BE HELD AT BRUSSELS, 5/1-1927; RGASPI 495/18/534, 41-43, Instructions to the [ECCI] delegates to the Brussels Congress, 4/2-1927.

³²³ RGASPI 542/1/7, 15-17, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 15/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 57, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 25/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 57, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 25/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 26/1-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 10, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 7/2-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 83-85, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 7/2-1927.

representative, the Senegalese Lamine Senghor, received \$750, while the Indonesian nationalist organisation in the Netherlands, *Perhimpunan Indonesia* (PI), had received \$500 in January. The costs for the LACO staff (Münzenberg, three political secretaries, three typists and three translators) and ten intellectuals, amounted to \$1,125. In the latter case, Piatnitsky referred to Helene Stöcker, Paquet, Lessing, and the scientist Friedrich Karl Lehnhoff Wyld (1871 – 1932), who would each receive \$150 to cover travel expenses and an additional 15 Marks per day, dependent upon their appearance at the congress. The cost of sending telegrams, particularly those despatched by the “Fraktionsbüro” in Berlin prior to the opening of the congress, and to delegations waiting in Brussels, Paris and London, was estimated at \$1,600. Administrative costs, e.g. the rental fee for the *Palais d’Egmont* (\$150), printed materials and stenograms (\$600), extra personnel and travel expenses for the LACO secretariats in Berlin and Brussels (\$400), the despatching of telegrams from the congress “Press Bureau” (\$700), were all presented in detail by Piatnitsky. On 26 January, the Political Secretariat endorsed Piatnitsky’s budget and Heimo informed Münzenberg of the final decision on “the money question”.³²⁴

The chaotic preparations ended just a few days before the congress. However, the Political Secretariat had one final objection, asking Münzenberg if Brussels really was the most suitable place to hold the anti-colonial congress, suggesting Berlin, Basel, Geneva or Copenhagen instead. The reason why the Comintern had proposed these other locations was their fear of the repercussions from national security services, a factor that would most likely occur both during and after the anti-colonial congress in Brussels. If Münzenberg agreed to change location for the congress, the Political Secretariat promised to establish a protest campaign against the “Imperialist intrigues” of the Netherlands, USA and Belgium.³²⁵ Münzenberg responded that the idea was ill-conceived, and told Heimo that the Brussels Congress would convene at “any cost and under any circumstance”.³²⁶

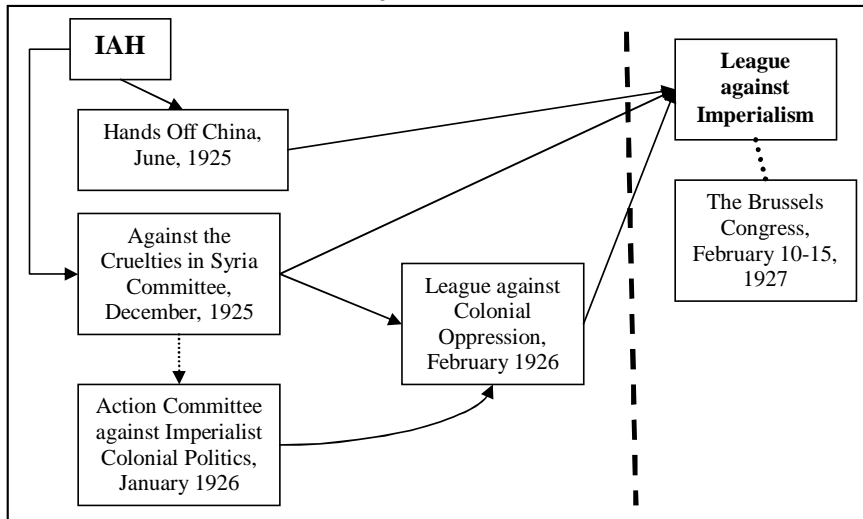
In conclusion, the table below illustrates the chronological progression (1925-27) and transformation of the anti-colonial project, a result of the continual negotiations between Münzenberg, the IAH, the LACO International Secretariat and Gibarti, with the Comintern.

³²⁴ RGASPI 495/19/44, 3, Ausgaben für den Brüsseler Kongress bis zum 15. Jan., Piatnitsky, Moscow, 15/-1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter (“Betr. Kolonialkongress”) from Heimo, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 26/1-1927.

³²⁵ RGASPI 542/1/7, 27, Letter from Isolde/Bennet, Berlin, to Roy, Moscow, 15/1-1927; RGASPI 538/2/40, 55-58, Letter from Heimo [?] in Moscow to Münzenberg in Berlin, 26/1-1927.

³²⁶ RGASPI 538/2/40, 65-66, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 31/1-1927. Despite the position of Münzenberg within the Comintern hierarchy, the congress preparations had progressed to the point that it was no longer possible to restrain Münzenberg and the IAH apparatus in Berlin. Additionally, Isolde/Petrovsky concluded that if postponement was the only option available, this would “confuse” the delegates as well as the antagonists (national security services and the LSD), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 67, Letter from Isolde/Bennet, Berlin, to Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Moscow, 31/1-1927.

Table 3.3: The Anti-Colonial Project, 1925 – 1927



The international congress against colonialism and imperialism in Brussels was an idea, spurred on by the enthusiasm of the *Hands off China* campaign in Berlin in August 1925. In February 1927, both Münzenberg’s and the LACO’s vision was on the verge of turning into reality. The IAH apparatus had acted as the organisational backbone in support of the LACO in 1926, a fact which, according to Isolde/Petrovsky, had made Petrov in Moscow realise that the IAH “machinery” worked in tune with philanthropy as its guiding political principle.³²⁷ Thus, the advance of the IAH towards philanthropy had made it possible to approach and use the rhetoric of anti-colonialism to stimulate the establishment of the LACO, a politically-attractive sympathising organisation which had gained attention amongst widely divergent socio-political circles in Berlin and beyond. Despite their anti-colonial project, and their centre being in Berlin, Brussels was the critical stepping-stone to Münzenberg and the Comintern realising their vision of establishing a vigorous anti-imperialist movement.

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³²⁷ RGASPI 542/1/7, 67, Letter from Isolde/Petrovsky, Berlin, to Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Moscow, 31/1-1927.

PART II

Chapter 3. Demonstration

Our congress requires no director [...] All [political] parties and organisations, through the participation of their delegations and representatives, have unanimously agreed upon the establishment of [...] a World League against Imperialism [...] We are neither visionaries nor utopian dreamers, we know very well the limit of our strength and abilities to perform.

Münzenberg, Brussels, 13/2-1927

For the first time, the imprisoned, sacrificed and murdered peoples are united together in a bloc.

Henri Barbusse, Opening Speech,
Brussels, 10/2-1927

Der Kongress der Milliarde.

A-I-Z, Jahrg.VI, No.9, p.8, 1927

The “Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism” at the Palais d’Egmont in Brussels was convened on 10 February, 1927. On 13 February, after Münzenberg had declared the establishment of the international anti-imperialist organisation the *League against Imperialism and for National Independence*, the crowd responded with jubilant cheers, marking the euphoric end of the congress. The reaction of euphoria and collective joy was also captured and illustrated in the official protocol, *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont* (hereinafter: *Das Flammenzeichen*), released in June 1927, through Münzenberg’s Neuer Deutscher Verlag.³²⁸ This title was an allusion to the ideological vision for the congress: the spiritual and rapturous awakening of the international anti-imperialist movement. Most importantly, the Brussels Congress marked the birth of an active movement. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the first tentative and prudent steps taken by the LAI in 1927. With particular reference to the *milieu* of the Brussels Congress, the “first congress against colonialism and imperialism” witnessed the culmination of Münzenberg’s anti-colonial project. The Brussels Congress was, above all, an international event displaying the consent and eager participation of individuals who wanted to discuss anti-colonialism as both a political phenomenon and a movement. Perceived as such, the euphoria of the congress underscored the LAI’s necessary desire to manifest itself as a global and political actor. To realise

³²⁸ Gibarti (ed.) 1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA I/2/5/33, 467-471, Report from Willi Münzenberg to H. Remmele in Moscow, 10/6-1927.

this vision, it was necessary to form national LAI sections in the most important “imperialist nations” and in the colonial countries. The demonstration in Brussels was, for the organisers (Münzenberg, the LACO, IAH and the Comintern), the pretext on which to capitalise on the interactionism and collective joy displayed at the congress. The Brussels Congress answered the question as to why the LAI was aiming to fulfil the aim of posing as an international anti-imperialist force and to unify the anti-colonial movement. However, this question raises the need to assess the Comintern's initial motive for supporting the congress. Hence, if this episode was the pretext on which to establish the LAI, how did the communist and non-communist delegates perceive the event, particularly the thematic shift from anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism? Vijay Prashad claims that the Brussels Congress “provided the foundation for the Third World” as it prepared the ground for an “experiment in intra-planetary solidarity”.³²⁹ It was undoubtedly an experiment guided by spontaneity and, above all, control, sharing a common understanding that the expectations of the delegates and, in particular, those of the Comintern had to be implemented.

In total, 174 delegates representing 134 organisations, associations or political parties from 34 countries attended the Brussels Congress. Münzenberg observed in his speech on 13 February, that 104 delegates represented the colonial countries. However, a majority of the colonial delegates lived in Europe, although some had travelled from the colonies to Brussels.³³⁰ Separated into two geographical categories which, in a sense, mirrored the political and cultural mixture of the congress: the first category was the “oppressing imperialist nations” and the second was the oppressed and colonised nations themselves. The table below further illustrates the nationalities and total number of delegates present in Brussels.

³²⁹ Prashad 2007, 22.

³³⁰ RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Manuscript of Münzenberg's speech, Brussels Congress, 14/2-1927. The printed version of this speech, taken from the manuscript, was later included in *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont* (Gibarti 1927, pp.215-224). Gross' depiction of the Brussels Congress relied on *Das Flammenzeichen*. Geiss concluded in 1968 that the official protocol was a “rare source”, as well as Gross' narrative of the event, see Geiss 1968, pp.253-258. Degras included a short note on the congress (vol. II 1960, p.354). The documents on the congress (manuscripts of speeches, resolutions, notes, reports and other miscellaneous material) are filed in *fond* 542/1/69.

Table 4.1: Geographical Representation at the Brussels Congress, 10-13 February 1927

1. China	25
2. India	7
3. Indonesia	6
4. Indo-China	6
5. Korea	4
6. Syria	3
7. Persia	2
8. Japan	1
9. Palestine	1
10. Africa (South Africa, North Africa, Egypt)	10
11. Negroes from the French Colonies	4
12. USA & Latin America	15
13. England	15
14. France	14
15. Germany	26
16. Italy	3
17. Austria	2
18. Czechoslovakia	2
19. Switzerland	2
20. Netherlands	11
21. Belgium	15
Total:	174

Source: “Bericht der Mandats-Prüfungskommission”, in *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*, Louis Gibarti (Hg.), Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin, 1927, p.229.

The delegates received a warm welcome upon arrival at the Palais d’Egmont. Provided with the pamphlet, *Adressen an den Kongress gegen Kolonialunterdrückung und Imperialismus* (Greetings to the Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism), which included salutations from a number of distinguished individuals to the congress, the delegates could read how Albert Einstein – nominated as LAI Honorary President at the end of the congress – stated that “in your congress, the solidly united endeavour of the oppressed to achieve independence takes bodily shape”, whilst Gandhi declared “I wish you, however, from the depths of my heart, every success in your deliberations”. This continued with a greeting from the French author Romain Rolland, “your Colonial Conference is of the highest importance”, a statement also re-phrased in the joint speech by Barbusse, the British delegate, S. O. Davies and André Marteaux from Belgium, delivered in connection with the opening ceremony. Unable to attend the first day of the congress, the elderly and prominent British socialist leader George Lansbury, had, nevertheless, sent a telegram *en route* to Brussels, which stated that the moment had arrived to form “a League in support of the oppressed and the oppressed nations”.³³¹

³³¹ RGASPI 542/1/69, 97-100, Adressen an den Kongress gegen Kolonialunterdrückung und Imperialismus Brüssel, den 10 Februar 1927, Palais Egmont. A second version of this pamphlet also included greetings from the Indian nationalist leader, Gauri Shankar Misra; the secretary of the central council of the *Bombay Trade Unions*, S. B. Jhabwala; President of the *Social Democratic Party* in Switzerland, Ernst Reinhard; the “aged leader of the Indian Freedom movement”, Rustom Cama Bhikhaiji; the WPA member, Scott Nearing; leader of the Egyptian *Nationalist*

The congress agenda was a reflection of the then current system of colonialism and imperialism. However, in compliance with Vandervelde's directives from the previous year, the congress avoided the sensitive issue of Belgian colonialism and the situation in the Congo Free State. According to *Das Flammenzeichen*, the agenda focused on: 1. The Freedom Struggle of the Chinese People; 2. British Imperialism in India, Persia and Mesopotamia; 3. North American Imperialism and its Risks; 4. The Egyptian Liberation Struggle and the Arab People; 5. The African Struggle and its Liberation; 6. The Negro Freedom Struggle; 7. The Struggle for Indonesian Independence; 8. The Freedom Struggle of the Indo-Chinese Peoples; 9. The Struggle of the Korean People against Japan; 10. Italian Fascism as an Expression of Imperialism; 11. The Colonial Hunger of New German Imperialism; 12. The Connection of the National Revolutionary Movement with the Proletarian Class Struggle; 13. Tactics of the Proletarian Class Struggle and its Support of the Colonial Liberation Struggle; 14. The Freedom Struggle of the Oppressed Peoples and the Trade Unions; 15. The "Cultural Mission" of the Western People; 16. The Establishment of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence.³³²

Bridgeman was the accredited delegate of the British LACO Section. After the first day of the congress, Bridgeman returned to his room at the *Hotel Metropole* and wrote a letter to W. N. Ewer, the editor of the British left-wing paper the *Daily Herald*. According to Bridgeman, the event was "thoroughly international" and, despite "lacking in orderly arrangement", this was "made up for in enthusiasm" due to the large attendance of colonial delegates.³³³ Jawaharlal Nehru attended the congress together with his wife Kamala, and experienced the congress in similar terms. Nehru was part of the session "British Imperialism in India, Persia and Mesopotamia", along with the Persian Ahmed Assadoff (who lived in Berlin) and, afterwards, fraternised with other delegates who shared the same antagonism towards colonialism, e.g. individuals from Java, Indo-China, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. The congress left Nehru astonished by the interactionism that had developed between colonial delegates, standing side-by-side with representatives of European labour organisations which "had been playing a leading part in European Labour struggles for a generation". Nehru also remarked on the "important" attendance of communist delegates, who he believed acted as "representatives of trade union[s] or similar

Party, Hafiz Ramadam Bey, see IISG, see LAI Collection 3392.1/6, Adressen an den Kongress gegen Kolonialunterdrückung und Imperialismus, Brüssel, den 10. Februar 1927 Palais „Egmont“. For Barbusse, Davies and Marteaux's joint speech, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.13-18, whilst Lansbury's message is taken from the IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/8, Message from George Lansbury to the Congress (is also included in Gibarti [ed.] 1927, pp.9-12).

³³² "Inhaltsverzeichnis", Gibarti (ed.), 1927, pp.282-284.

³³³ TNA KV2/1919, Intercepted letter [MI5], R. Bridgeman, Hotel Metropole, Brussels, to W. N. Ewer (editor of the *Daily Herald*), London, 10/2-1027. Bridgeman feared that the Belgian authorities planned to close the congress due to its aggressive anti-colonial rhetoric. Yet, it had been a "highly successful" opening day.

organisations”.³³⁴ The contrasting “colourfulness” of the congress stunned Mohammad Hatta, the leader of the Indonesian nationalist organisation, *Perhimpunan Indonesia* (PI):

However colourful and diverse the races and political colours, in purpose and aspiration, people, we are of one mind. Never before had the world seen such a congress gather [...] For five days the accusations of suppressed peoples against acts of violence resounded in colourful variety.³³⁵

According to Christian Albrecht Siebeck’s assessment of Hatta, *Mohammad Hatta und der indonesische Sozialismus Staatsdenken eines Indonesischen Nationalisten* (1978), the Brussels Congress provided Hatta with a life-long experience of the character of the European labour movement through which, for the first time, he met and established contact with leading figures such as Fimmen, Münzenberg, Ledebour and Maxton.³³⁶

Manuel Gomez was the unofficial leader of the USA delegation, but introduced himself in public as the AAAIL delegate. Later Gomez [Charles Shipman] wrote in his autobiography, *It Had to Be Revolution*, that the congress was a “star-studded affair”, and remembered the “entrepreneurial genius” Münzenberg who, in the service of communism, was nonetheless also a genuine supporter of the anti-imperialist movement. Gomez shared the rostrum with José Vasconcelos, Carlos Quijano of the *Revolutionary Party of Venezuela* and Ismael Martinez of the *Tampico Labour Union* from Mexico, giving a speech on the “robbery politics” of the USA in the Caribbean and Latin America. As a political manifesto, the four of them signed a collective declaration as a symbol of the beginning of the anti-imperialist struggle in “every American country” (*Erklärung der Delegation aller amerikanischen Länder über die Organisation des anti-imperialistischen Kampfes in der amerikanisch-pazifischen Region*).³³⁷

For Josiah Tshangana Gumede, the ANC leader and delegate, emotions ran high during the congress. According to Raymond van Diemel’s biography on Gumede, *In Search of ‘Freedom, Fair Play and Justice’* (2001), the Brussels Congress gave Gumede an insight into the nature of

³³⁴ Nehru 1936, pp.162-163. Nehru was stunned by the moral demonstration expressed by “quite a number of distinguished persons” the organisers had managed to invite, or who had become aware of the congress, e.g. Einstein, Madame Sun Yat Sen and Romain Rolland. According to *Das Flammenzeichen*, the Nehru's speech was an act “extremely well received” by the crowd, above all the statement: [the] “The Indian problem is not a purely national problem, but one which affects a large number of other countries directly and the whole world indirectly, in the sense that it directly affects the greatest and most powerful imperialism of our time”, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp. 55-60, and fol. RGASPI 542/1/69, 62-64, Excerpt of Nehru’s manuscript in Brussels, 1927.

³³⁵ Mohammad Hatta, “The Brussels Congress against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression and our Foreign Propaganda”, in *Portrait of a Patriot*, Deliar Noer (ed.), The Hague, 1972, 158-164. Taken from *Indonesia Merdeka*, 1927.

³³⁶ Christian Albrecht Siebeck, *Mohammad Hatta und der indonesische Sozialismus Staatsdenken eines Indonesischen Nationalisten*, Heidelberg, 1978, 82-83. Hatta’s speech was entitled “Der Kampf um Indonesiens Unabhängigkeit”, focusing on the character, expression and economic “exploitation” by Dutch imperialism in Indonesia, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.131-142.

³³⁷ Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.63-79, 236, 256; Shipman 1993, p.162.

European political engagement and ideology, an understanding which defined his perception of the world. Having departed from Cape Town, South Africa, by boat, Gumede travelled in the company of La Guma and Daniel Colraine, the delegate of the *South African Trade Union Congress*. Arriving in London, the three of them went directly to Brussels. On the journey, La Guma and Colraine tried to broaden Gumede's "limited understanding of communism", a learning process which continued in Brussels by meeting other African and Afro-American delegates, e.g. Richard B. Moore, the delegate of both the ANLC and the *Universal Negro Improvement Association* (UNIA), as well as a member of the WPA. Gumede met the Senegalese Lamine Senghor, the delegate of the Paris-based association *Committee in Defence of the Negro Race*, Max Bloncourt from the Antilles and delegate of the *Inter-Colonial Association* (section of the "old colonies and black peoples") and the Haitian Carlos Deambrosis Martins, the delegate of the *Haitian Patriotic Union*. Gumede eagerly listened to Moore's declaration at the congress, which concluded that the "fight against imperialism is ... an incessant struggle against imperialistic ideology". Afterwards, Gumede listened to Senghor and Moore as they explained the necessity of unifying the national liberation struggle in the colonies with the activities of the communist parties. The "Negro Commission", presided over by Senghor, represented the Negro question at the congress, through which Moore introduced the "United Resolution on the Negro Question". This resolution was, however, a replica of another resolution which had been adopted by the UNIA at the "Fifth Annual Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World" at Liberty Hall, New York, on August 1, 1926. For Gumede, the Brussels episode was a "satisfying" experience, which implied the beginning of a "new era for the oppressed peoples".³³⁸

The euphoria at the congress also captivated the delegates from the "Imperialist nations". Lansbury, after having arrived in Brussels, felt "the harmony" at the congress, and as noted in his article, "A Great Week-End", published in *Labour Weekly* on 19 February: "we were in truth an international congress". According to Lansbury, "ideal men [such as] Comrade Gibarti and Bach

³³⁸ Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice'. Josiah Tshangana Gumede, 1867-1947: A Biography*, see Internet: < <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/search-freedom/chapter6.htm> >. Josiah Tshangana Gumede, "Bericht über die Behandlung der afrikanischen Neger", in Gibarti (ed.), Berlin, 1927, pp.123-126. Gumede focused on the "500-year victimisation and oppression of the Negro people" in his speech. For the Negro question at the congress, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.113-130. The Negro resolution and composition of the "Negro Commission" was later included in Richard B. Moore, W. Burghardt Turner & Joyce Moore Turner (eds.), *Caribbean Militant in Harlem Collected Writings 1920-1972*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, pp.53-54, 143-144. Raymond van Diemel discussed Gumede and La Guma's European and Russian experience at a conference in Moscow on September 14, 2001. For the conference paper, "'I have seen the new Jerusalem': Revisiting and re-conceptualising Josiah T. Gumede and Jimmy La Guma's USSR visit of 1927", see Internet: < <http://www.whatnextjournal.co.uk/Pages/History/Gumede.html> > and *Sechaba*, "J. T. Gumede: ANC President 1927-1930", December, 1982, Internet: < http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gumede_jt.html >. The Negro resolution, as well as the resolution from the UNIA conference on August 1, 1926, has been located at the IISG, LAI Collection 3392.1/54, 3392.1/55. A copy of the UNIA resolution is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/5, 88-92 (German version).

... full of the Ideal of an international solidarity”, proved that this was not a movement “directed from Moscow”. Convinced that the congress was an act of “spontaneity”, Lansbury sincerely believed the LAI to be a manifestation of the internationalist message of socialism with the creation of “an Anti-Imperialist International”. Ellen Wilkinson, the ILP delegate and an M. P., shared Lansbury’s belief in the LAI, and later declared that the congress was “not some Machiavellian plot of the wicked Red Russians against the British Empire”.³³⁹ Buber-Neumann stated that the euphoria of the congress had blinded Lansbury, and left the “grand old man” convinced that the idea that Moscow had “initiated and directed the Brussels Congress” was nothing more than a rumour filled with “total nonsense”.³⁴⁰

One of the most illustrative examples of how the congress euphoria had entranced the delegates was the case of A. Fenner Brockway, the General Secretary of the ILP. On the opening day, Brockway delivered a speech on the Chinese liberation struggle and, towards the end, offered his hand to the Chinese delegate and representative of the Central Executive Committee of the KMT, Hansin Liau. As they joined their hands on the stage and raised them up in the air, the congress hall erupted with an enthusiastic applause. It was an act symbolising the building of a bridge between the oppressed and imperialist nations. However, this was not a spontaneous act. Brockway re-collected in his autobiography, *Inside the Left*, that Münzenberg had introduced the idea:

“End your speech by a declaration of unity with the Chinese workers and peasants,” Münzenberg whispered as I stepped onto the rostrum. I did so and, as the sentences were uttered, a Chinese comrade [Hansin Liau] stood at my side with an outstretched hand. I took it – and the whole audience, black, brown, yellow and white, rose and roared its applause. Münzenberg was a master of such strokes of drama.³⁴¹

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³³⁹ TNA HO 144 10693, George Lansbury M. P., “A Great Week-End”, in *Labour Weekly*, 19/2-1927. Ellen Wilkinson, M. P. and ILP member, published the article “Painted Saints” in the same issue as Lansbury’s article. According to Wilkinson, this was “the most dramatic conference I was ever at”, praising Gibarti for his “truly remarkable organising skill”. The British HO used the articles to analyse the Brussels Congress.

³⁴⁰ Buber-Neumann 1957, pp.97-98.

³⁴¹ Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.31-33. For Brockway and Liau’s symbolic act, see p.33. Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left. Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1942, (second impression 1947), 167. The British delegation consisted of Reginald Bridgeman (British LACO Section), Helen Crawford (IAH), S.O. Davies (*South Wales Miners’ Association*), Harry Pollitt (*National Minority Movement*; NMM, however, off the record, the CPGB), M. Brown (NMM), R. W. Postgate (*Plebs League*), George Stokes (*London Labour Union Council*), William Brown (Secretary of the *Amsterdam International*). George Lansbury [Vice President of the *British Labour Party*, M. P.], Ellen Wilkinson [ILP, M. P.], John Beckett [ILP, M. P.] whilst Arthur MacManus [CPGB, and member of the Fraction Bureau], Herbert W. Jones, James Crossley and William Rust attended as private individuals, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.238-239, 253-254.

The Communist Perception of the Congress

Sen Katayama was the “representative of the Japanese labour movement” at the congress; however, unbeknownst to those present, he was acting as the leader of both the ECCI delegation and of the “Fraktionsbüro”, secretly directing the activities of both. After the congress, Katayama returned to Moscow and both compiled and provided Petrov with a report on the event. According to his report, Katayama had been impressed with Brockway and Liau’s demonstration to such a degree that he described the act as a “great step toward the international solidarity between the oppressed and oppressing nationalities”. The “harmony” of the Brussels Congress was a result of the collective understanding amongst the delegates on “the fight against Imperialism and for the National Independence” Katayama concluded.³⁴² On 13 February, Münzenberg sent a report to the ECCI Secretariat immediately after his speech, in which he explained that the covert strategy of the “Fraktionsbüro” had greatly enhanced the work of the communists at the congress. Münzenberg explained that while a few “important delegates from the colonial countries”, e.g. Nehru, had realised that the communists were acting “behind the scenes”, they had not declared a single “word of hostile criticism” against the communists. Münzenberg wrote that the reason for this was that the delegates appreciated and expressed gratitude towards the organisers (“us”) for having made the effort to hold a congress against colonialism and imperialism. Whilst the Chinese delegation was “entirely” under “our influence”, Münzenberg described how Nehru had approached him at the *Palais d’Egmont*, wondering whether it was possible to meet “Russian Comrades”, e.g. the KIM delegate and communist from Georgia, Vissarion Vissarionovich (Besso) Lominadze (1897 – 1935).³⁴³

Katayama had a more subtle approach to making contact with delegates, or with entire delegations. By inviting the so-called “desirable elements” to an evening dinner, Katayama evaluated the guests closely:

By this manner, we [got] all the responsible comrades ... acquainted with the delegates of importance, so that when we met at the Executive or Presidium meeting we knew each other and this greatly smoothed the business of the Congress.³⁴⁴

After the dinner was over, and as the guests were leaving, Katayama summoned the “Fraktionsbüro” for a discussion on the further use of the dinner guests. Apparently, Katayama was

³⁴² RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, (Confidential) Report from Katayama, Moscow, to Petrov/F.F. Raskolnikov, Moscow 24/2-1927. Katayama delivered a speech entitled “The Struggle of the Korean People against Japan” together with the representative of the *Korean Association* in France, Kin Fa Lin, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.146-158.

³⁴³ RGASPI 542/1/7, 89, Letter from Münzenberg, Brussels, to ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 13/2-1927. For the influence of the ECCI delegation over the Chinese delegation, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, Confidential letter from Katayama, Moscow, to Petrov/F.F. Raskolnikov, Moscow 24/2-1927. For Besso Lominadze, see Gross 1967, p.205; Buber-Neumann 1957, p.100; Chase 2002, p.485; and Lazitch 1986, pp.273-274.

³⁴⁴ RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, Confidential letter from Katayama, Moscow, to Petrov/F.F. Raskolnikov, Moscow 24/2-1927.

satisfied with how the “Fraktionsbüro” had concealed its existence from all outsiders during the congress:

No-one knew the existence of such a Bureau [had] been directing the congress [...] everything [...] was discussed and decided at the Small Buro [“Fraktionsbüro”] beforehand and carried out later by the Presidium or by a commission. Thus, the congress made the desired progress to a successful end.³⁴⁵

The various national security services had, however, uncovered the manoeuvres of the communists simply by assigning agents to attend the congress. The British ambassador in Brussels, George Dixon Grahame, sent a report to the British Foreign Minister, Austen Chamberlain on 11 February, noting the dominant feature of “student elements” and that a “large number of [...] representatives [...] seem to be foreigners resident in Belgium”. Grahame had also heard from one of his informants on location that a majority of the “discussions are taking place behind closed doors, only delegates being admitted”. Furthermore, *Auswärtige Amt* received intelligence from the German legation in Brussels which stated that “last week, a fairly strong communist-biased congress against the oppression of colonial peoples” had been convened in Brussels.³⁴⁶

Münzenberg wanted to capture the euphoria of the congress in print. An ambition which, most importantly, inspired the publication of *Das Flammenzeichen*, including nineteen plates depicting the *beaconesque* collective joy and passion among the delegates.³⁴⁷ Additionally, the European communist press provided space by including vivid reports and summaries on a “number of important and stirring speeches”, Münzenberg stated. These included, for example, *Wiener*

³⁴⁵ RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, (Confidential) Report from Katayama, Moscow, to Comrade Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Moscow, 24/2-1927. *Das Flammenzeichen* did not mention MacManus as a member of the CPGB, see further in CoWoPa 5, Fredrik Petersson, “Varför en liga mot imperialism? Grundandet av League against Imperialism 1927”, Åbo Academy, 2005, Internet: < <https://www.abo.fi/student/media/7957/cowopa5petersson.pdf> >. For biography on MacManus, see Lazitch 1986, pp.288-289; Davidson (2003); and Katayama, Lazitch 1986, pp.211-212.

³⁴⁶ TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Confidential report from George Dixon Grahame, Brussels, to Sir Austen Chamberlain, London, 11/2-1927. Agents from various national security services attended the congress in disguise. Nehru later wrote the following account of the Brussels Congress: “[...] it was viewed with some consternation by the Foreign and Colonial Offices of the Imperialist powers. [...] probably full of international spies, many of the delegates even representing various secret services. We had an amusing instance of this. An American friend of mine [unknown], who was in Paris, had a visit from a Frenchman who belonged to the French secret service. [...] When he had finished his enquiries he asked the American if he did not recognise him, for they had met previously. The American looked hard but he had to admit that he could not place him at all. The secret service agent then told him that he had met him at the Brussels Congress disguised as a Negro delegate, with his face, hands etc. all blacked over!”, see Nehru 1936, pp.163, 164. For the report from the German legation in Brussels, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 36, Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Brüssel Inhalt: Kongress gegen koloniale Unterdrückung, to Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 15/2-1927.

³⁴⁷ *Das Flammenzeichen* included pictures that showed a message of unity and harmony at the congress. The delegates crowded together during a plenary session in the “large hall”, the unity of the Indian and Chinese delegations and the “international” composition of the congress. Furthermore, the images presented the LAI General Council with a picture portraying Fimmen, Senghor and the general secretary of the KMT, Lu Chung Lin holding hands, with Nehru seated beside them, and Münzenberg and Katayama next to each other. Other illustrations show how Senghor clenched his fist in his determination to continue the anti-colonial struggle; the “establishment of relations between the English-Chinese” brotherhood (Lansbury patted Liau on the shoulder, while Münzenberg stood in the background with a big smile on his face), see Gibarti (ed.) 1927. The picture of Lansbury and Liau was also used as the cover for the March issue of the *A-I-Z* (VI.Jahrgang, Nr.9, Berlin, 6/3-1927).

Arbeiter-Zeitung, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, the *Daily Herald*, *Le Peuple*, *Libre Belgique*, *Drapeau Rouge*, *Inprecorr* and *Norrskensflamman*. However, the social democratic newspapers were discrete and cautious in their assessments, while the “bourgeois press” had at least commented on the congress. The *A-I-Z* covered the event extensively. In two separate issues, articles and photographs shed some light on “Der erste Kongress gegen koloniale Unterdrückung” and “Die unterdrückten Völker stehen auf! Fotos vom I. Internationalen Kongress gegen Imperialismus und Kolonialherrschaft”.³⁴⁸

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The Grand Finale: The Shift from Anti-Colonialism to Anti-Imperialism

The Brussels Congress built a bridge between disparate political and nationalist groups. In order to consolidate this unity, the election of the LAI Executive and its Honorary Presidium left the crowd with the impression that the moment had come to establish a dynamic movement.

This election had been a process preceded by Münzenberg’s speech, “Die Gründung die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit”, the final topic on the congress agenda. For Münzenberg, this speech and performance was the culmination of the anti-colonial project, especially as it was a test of faith to see whether it was possible to form “a permanent organisation to secure the support of the European proletariat for the liberation movements in the colonies”. The fundamental aim of Münzenberg’s speech was to capitalise on the euphoria amongst the delegates in order to be able to declare that the moment had arrived to make the shift from anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism. Thus, while the LACO had functioned as a vehicle in co-ordinating and preparing the Brussels Congress, the foundation of the LAI served the purpose of unifying the anti-colonial movement around the question of anti-imperialism. The LACO had been acting as a centre of gravity for the anti-colonial movement in Berlin, focusing exclusively on the question of *colonial oppression*, a focus which had, nonetheless, as suggested here, limited the LACO’s access to the anti-colonial movement. Thus, the Brussels Congress was the opportunity for Münzenberg, the IAH and the Comintern to switch the anti-colonial agenda over to focusing on anti-imperialism – a point which requires further clarification. While both terms involve “forms of

³⁴⁸ Willi Münzenberg, “From Demonstration to Organisation”, in *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, Berlin, Vol.1, No.1, July 1928, pp.4-10. Other newspapers that included reports on the congress were the *Temps*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Kölnische Zeitung* and the Swedish conservative paper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*. The Swedish communist paper, *Norrskensflamman* (daily organ of the *Communist Party of Sweden*) included reports on the Brussels Congress. For example, “En antiimperialistisk konferens” (*An Anti-Imperialist Conference*, published February 19), “Nationell frihet – social jämlikhet” (*National Freedom – Social Equality*; 22 February), “En världsliga bildad mot imperialismen” (*The Establishment of a World League against Imperialism*; 26 February). *Norrskensflamman* used the reports from *Inprecorr* and TASS. See also “Der erste Kongress koloniale Unterdrückung, in *A-I-Z*, VI.Jahrgang, Nr.9, Berlin, 6/3-1927; TNO PRO CO 323 971 1, Confidential report from George Dixon Grahame, Brussels, to Sir Austen Chamberlain, London, 11/2-1927; and “The League against Imperialism”, in *Labour Monthly*, Vol.9, No.3, March 1927, 179-184.

subjugation of one people by another”, the Brussels Congress agenda deliberately moved away from *colonialism*, to focus explicitly on *imperialism*. The anti-colonial propaganda, introduced and supported by the LACO, had protested, *per se*, against the administration of “colonial oppression” by the “imperialist nations” in the “periphery” (the colonial and semi-colonial countries). For the LAI, the intention was not to continue this form of agitation but rather to refer to *anti-imperialism* as the principal aim of its activities. By shifting its focus from the situation in the colonies, the LAI expected to aim its propaganda and activities towards the “centre”, i.e. the imperialist nations and the “grandiose projects of powers”.³⁴⁹ This required a strengthening of the *modus operandi* the LACO had tried to establish, particularly the formation of active national sections to support the work of the LAI International Secretariat. If the Brussels Congress was the momentum of the LACO, the “rapturous” climax of the “first congress against imperialism and for national independence” gave birth to the LAI, for which, according to Münzenberg, Brussels was “neither the end, nor the beginning of a new powerful movement”. The establishment of the LAI was an epochal event that “honoured to dutifully support every worker, employee, every progressive and anti-imperialist minded human”, not guided by prejudice of divergent social, cultural, political or national backgrounds, Münzenberg stated:

Black or yellow, whether brown or white as skin colour, whether engaged for political or religious reasons, do hereby declare that: we have here commonly forged a powerful weapon against the common enemy, the equally oppressive Imperialism [...] in Europe, [...] Asia, in Africa as well as in America.³⁵⁰

This “historical moment” in the history of colonialism had managed to summon delegates from the “imperialist nations” in Europe and the USA, having pacifists, communists, socialists and trade union officials seated next to each other to fulfil the principal aim of the congress:

Today [13 February], on this afternoon, it was decided to establish the League against Imperialism [...] The LAI [...] shall invite [...] organisations, parties, trade unions and individuals [...] to lead the struggle against capitalism, imperialist rule, in support of national determination and national independence for every people, and for equal rights for every class and human [...] From today, we are no more a loose conference, but the first international congress of the World League against Imperialism.³⁵¹

Münzenberg emphasised that the “struggle against capitalism [and] imperialist rule” was a demarcation and a new beginning in the history of the labour and the national liberation movements. In this context, Münzenberg declared that the LAI was an actor determined to

³⁴⁹ Young 2001, pp.15-17.

³⁵⁰ RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Transcript of Münzenberg’s speech, Brussels, 14/2-1927.

³⁵¹ RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Transcript of Münzenberg’s speech, Brussels, 14/2-1927.

counteract the existing social and institutional order of the world, particularly the notion that “Imperialism is always the one who takes home the game” (*der lachende Dritte ist der Imperialismus*). After Münzenberg ended his speech, the *Palais d’Egmont* exploded in a “stormy, continued cheering”, as noted in the official transcript of the speech, while Colrairie, the South African delegate, and Albert Fournier, the delegate of the French LACO Section, joined Münzenberg on the rostrum to declare their “fullest sympathy and understanding”.³⁵²

The election of the LAI Honorary Presidium and the LAI Executive, was a celebration of the achievements of the Brussels Congress. The former included Albert Einstein, Barbusse, Mme Sun Yat-sen (not present) and General Lu Chung Lin of the KMT, while the latter included Lansbury as Chairman of the LAI Executive and Fimmen as deputy Chairman. Nehru, Liau, Senghor, Marteaux, Münzenberg, Ugarte and Hatta were elected members of the Executive, having Gibarti, Roger Baldwin and Bridgeman as substitutes. The constitution of the LAI General Council included an array of different political actors, e.g. Chen Kuen of the *Central Council of the General Chinese Labour Unions*, Kou Meng-yu, Katayama, Martinez, Vasconcelos, A. Alminia of the *Philippine Association for Independence*, Mohamed Hafiz Ramadan Bey, Hadj-Ahmed Messali of *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (ENA), Colrairie, Semaun, Kin Fa Lin, Assadoff, Gomez, Brockway, S. O. Davies, Harry Pollitt, S. Saklatvala (not present),³⁵³ the Dutch author Henriette Roland-Holst, the secretary of the Belgian LACO Section Georges Gérard, the Belgian journalist and editor P. S. Spaak, Charles Plisnier from Belgium, the journalist and IAH representative from Italy Victorio Verri, Guido Miglioli of the Italian association *Katholische Gewerkschaften*, the representative of the French pacifist *International Womens’ League for Peace and Freedom* Madame Duchêne, Lessing, Ledebour, Helene Stöcker and the IAH member Professor Nejedli from Czechoslovakia.³⁵⁴

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³⁵² RGASPI 542/1/69, 37-49, Transcript of Münzenberg’s speech, Brussels, 14/2-1927; Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.224-227.

³⁵³ Saklatvala did not attend the Brussels Congress due to the fact that, from January to April 1927, he was visiting India, see Sehri Saklatvala [Saklatvala’s daughter], *The Fifth Commandment* (Miranda Press, UK, 1991), taken from the Internet: < <http://www.maze-in.com/saklatvala/pages/17.htm> >.

³⁵⁴ Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp.241-242. The LAI Executive Committee and the General Council was included in an abridged version of the Brussels Congress – *Der Brüsseler Kongress gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit vom 10. bis 15. Februar 1927 im Palais Egmont – Brüssel* (Internationale Sekretariat, Berlin, March, 1927). Lazitch erroneously stated that Ho Chi Minh attended the Brussels Congress, which he never did. Firstly, the known pseudonyms used by Ho Chi Minh around this time were “Ly Thuy”/“Vuong Son Nhi”/“Thau Chin” (1924-1928) and none of the above appear in *Das Flammenzeichen*. Secondly, Lazitch writes that Ho Chi Minh attended the Brussels Congress in 1928, a statement which, in itself, is inaccurate from a chronological point of view since no LAI congress ever took place in Brussels in 1928. In the same context, Lazitch mentioned that Ho Chi Minh was in Canton, China, from December 1924 to April 1927, working as a translator at the Soviet consulate and as an assistant for the emissary of the Comintern, Mikhail Borodin, see Lazitch 1986, pp.175-177; Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.235.

Merging the Anti-Imperialist Movement

The “Organisation Resolution” confirmed the shift from anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism, a document outlining the organisational foundation of the LAI. According to Section 9, the LAI needed to establish national secretariats/sections in countries where “imperialism raged violently”, institutional actors who had to function as relay stations for the movement. This involved, above all, the registration and provision of information to the LAI International Secretariat on the character and nature of imperialist policy in the home countries. Thus, this practice not only aimed to link together the national sections and the LAI Executive with the International Secretariat; this implied that the International Secretariat was both receiver of intelligence and dispatcher of directives back to the sections.³⁵⁵ Making a historical distinction between the LACO and the LAI, the “Organisation Resolution” declared that the former had been the forerunner for the latter, thus, transforming the organisational structure was the most logical step to take. This required the merging of existing committees, associations or colonial campaigns into the LAI. As noted in Section 10, which merely re-phrased the arguments introduced by Münzenberg, the following step was crucial:

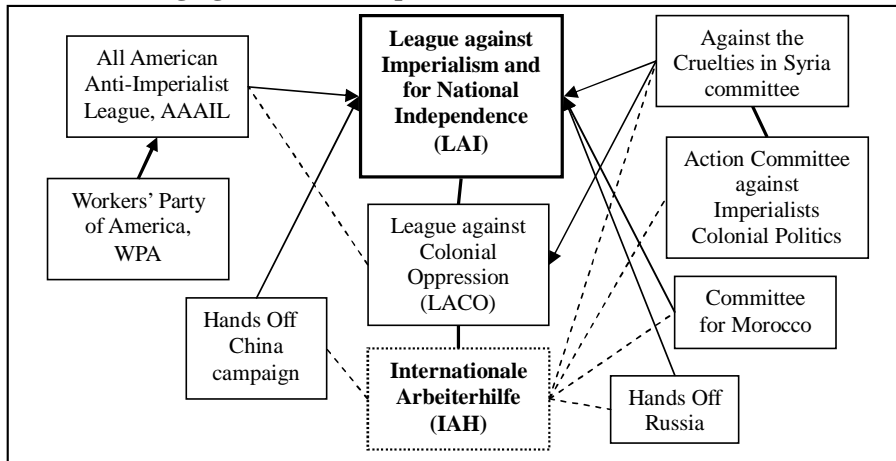
The General Council, the Executive and established secretariats in different countries, must make every effort to bring together [*zusammenzufassen*] and unite every existing organisation and committee like the *Hands off China* [Hände weg von China], *Hands off Russia*” [Hände weg von Russland], *Committee for Syria* [Against the Cruelties in Syria committee], *Committee for Morocco* [Komitee für Marokko], *League against Colonial Oppression* [LACO] and the *All American Anti-Imperialist League* [AAAIL] within the newly-created *League against Imperialism*.³⁵⁶

The merging of these committees, associations and campaigns would place the LAI, from a hierarchical perspective, at the centre.

³⁵⁵ “Organisationsresolution”, in Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.228.

³⁵⁶ Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.228; *Der Brüsseler Kongress* 1927, pp.37-38. The British communist journal, *Labour Monthly*, published the “Organisationsresolution” in its March issue (1927, pp.179-185), see paragraph 11.

Table 4.2: Merging of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: a Theoretical Outline



Source: Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.228; “Der Brüsseler Kongress gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit“, LAI, Berlin, February/March, 1927, pp.37-38

The “Organisation Resolution” did not mention the LAI’s intimate tie to the IAH. Apparently, it was essential to keep the IAH separated from the LAI in order to fulfil the Comintern’s strategy of creating “millions of large sympathising organisations”. However, some of the actors included in the merging process remained independent, e.g. the AAAIL continued its activity in the USA, and the *Hands off China* campaign had proven to be a powerful institution of propaganda which was not dependent upon the euphoria of the LAI and the Brussels Congress.

The establishment of the LAI in Brussels also indicated a separation from its forerunner in Berlin, the IAH. This enabled the creation of an organisation capable of sustaining and performing independent activity, shaped by an independent political discourse predestined by its own ambitions and realities. This involved a separate control and administration of the political work and the need to get the LAI to seek its financial support from Comintern headquarters in Moscow, instead of depending on the services of the IAH. According to Gibarti, the LAI, as an independent non-party organisation, was far from being “a success”, despite the euphoria of the Brussels Congress; this was only the beginning of the creation of a strong movement.³⁵⁷ For Katayama, the objective was obvious: [F]inally, there remains to make the League [LAI] grow in our interest. [...] The Congress was successfully concluded upon the election of the new executive [...].³⁵⁸

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³⁵⁷ Louis Gibarti, “Vorwort”, in Gibarti (ed.) 1927, pp. 6-7; Petersson 2007, p.14.

³⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, Confidential letter Katayama, Moscow, to Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Moscow 24/2-1927.

Euphoria (not Utopia)

Attendance at the Congress was such that it even surprised me.

Münzenberg to the ECCI Secretariat,
21/2-1927

The euphoria of the Brussels Congress was an unexpected surprise for both Münzenberg and the Comintern. Richard Stites once wrote that euphoria resembles the sensation of “the good light” which, if applied to the Brussels Congress and the delegates, the establishment of the LAI provided a “feeling of relief, of collective joy, of being rewarded at long last for the patience and suffering of generations of humanity”. Stretching back to the “Wilsonian moment” in 1919, and how the Versailles Peace Treaty negotiations had totally ignored the colonial question, this moment in Brussels was a step forward for the anti-colonial movement on the international political arena, referring back here to Stites, “to realise all the beautiful dreams” of achieving national self-determination and independence.³⁵⁹

After the Brussels Congress, the LAI was determined not only to capitalise on the success of the congress but, also, to co-ordinate the organisational structure of the anti-imperialist movement and its network. While the functions of the LACO had merged into the LAI, its nerve centre, the International Secretariat, had remained intact in Berlin. Hence, the process about to take place served a twofold purpose: firstly, the International Secretariat had to secure a relationship with Comintern headquarters in Moscow and, secondly, it had to support the work to establish national LAI sections across the world. This monumental task focused on solving *organisational*, *financial*, *institutional* and *individual* questions. In all of this, the LAI did not benefit from the increased suspicion from its primary antagonists, i.e. the LSI and the national security services.

In February-March, the LAI organised demonstrations in Berlin and across Germany, to celebrate and spread propaganda about the “first international congress against imperialism”. For Münzenberg, the “decisive success” of the Brussels Congress resided in the “strong participation of Chinese, Indian and [...] English delegations”. According to his report to the ECCI Secretariat on 21 February, “we had counted [...] on 100 to 120 delegates and got 180 to 200”, with the event realising its objective of criticising the pro-colonial movement in Germany and the colonial policies of both the SPD and the LSI.³⁶⁰ The euphoria among the delegates had, however, surprised Münzenberg who, in connection with the drama of the congress, invited some of the delegates to visit Berlin and come to a private party at his apartment. Buber-Neumann was at this party, and

³⁵⁹ Stites 1989, p.39. For the Versailles Peace Treaty, see Manela (2007).

³⁶⁰ RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927.

later explained that Münzenberg had made everyone aware that, due to his organising skills, the Brussels Congress had been a success. Additionally, the party was a chance for Münzenberg to continue evaluating some of the guests and to continue gathering intelligence. Münzenberg told the ECCI Secretariat that the bulk of material accumulated both during and after the congress had forced him to wonder: “what will happen now?” The decision-makers at Comintern headquarters had to act swiftly for the simple reason of ensuring that the LAI remained “steady in our hands” and, especially, in order to endorse the decision to support the creation of “a large organisation”, Münzenberg concluded.³⁶¹

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An Evening in Berlin and Demonstrations in Germany

Babette Gross invited her sister to meet “international comrades” in Berlin. When Buber-Neumann arrived at the apartment Münzenberg shared with Gross, the place was crowded with a “mixture of multicoloured races: Negroes, Chinese and Mohammedans [...] all glowing nationalists”, e.g. Lansbury, the artist Käthe Gussfeld, Gumede, Senghor, Gomez, Mazhar Bey El Bakri of the *Syrian Rebels* branch in Berlin (“Hauptquartier der syrischen Aufständischen”), Besso Lominadze, Mattar, Hansin Liau and La Guma. Stunned by the “pathos and cheerfulness” at the party, Buber-Neumann observed how Münzenberg paid extra attention to certain guests. While the “cheerfulness” made Lominadze, Gomez, and El Bakri break out into singing “funny songs”, Gumede considered this to be offensive, telling Münzenberg that such behaviour was not appropriate for “genuine fighters”. To rightfully honour the achievements of the Brussels Congress, Gumede urged everyone to sing “The International”; an idea Münzenberg put an end to, by asking everyone to stop singing.³⁶²

The Brussels Congress had been an emotional experience for some of the delegates. Invited to attend a closed meeting at the International Secretariat at 48 Wilhelmstraße (IAH headquarters in Berlin), once there, Gumede declared his devotion to the anti-imperialist cause in the most enthusiastic terms. His performance was described by Otto Schudel in an interview for the South

³⁶¹ RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927. If one reflects on the fact that the Brussels Congress ended on 14 February and that Münzenberg’s report was completed on 21 February, this party must have taken place sometime between February 15-21.

³⁶² Buber-Neumann 1957, 97-107. For El Bahkri, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.253; van Diemel (2001). The German communist Käthe Gussfeldt worked as a translator (French and English) during the Brussels Congress. Known also as “Ethel Chiles”, British police arrested Gussfeldt in London in May, charged with conducting espionage in the service of the CPGB and of “organising workshop committees for control and supervision of the production and transport of war material” to China, see TNA KV2 1919, Letter from L. Gibarti to F. Brockway (copy to R. Bridgeman), 31/5-1927; TNA KV2 1919, Letter from G.M. Liddell, New Scotland Yard, to Harker, copy, original in P.F. 38688, copies sent to MI5, 7/6-1927.

African journal, *Sechaba*, in 1982. Schudel, an IAH functionary from Switzerland, instructed to work at the International Secretariat in 1927, described how:

Josiah Tshangana Gumede and I were standing side by side. He towered over most of those present with his tall, powerful figure. Most of the whites he had met until then had treated him with contempt and that was why this Berlin meeting was so infinitely important. For the first time he stood as an equal among people of all races, all colours and various beliefs, united in brotherhood with the purpose of putting an end to the contemptible system of colonialism. Josiah Tshangana Gumede was so overwhelmed by this experience that his eyes were filled with tears. "I am so happy!" he stammered. Then he drew himself up and added: "I am going to fight!"³⁶³

Gumede appeared as a prominent figure in the LAI campaign ("Anti-Colonial Day") in Germany throughout February and March, which aimed to raise awareness of the Brussels Congress. At an LAI rally in Hamburg on 27 February, Gumede compared the LAI with the *League of Nations*; with the important difference, however, being that the LAI was the "Völkerbund aller unterdrückten Nationen und Rassen".³⁶⁴ This campaign started in Cologne on 20 February, where 71 delegates, representing 28 cultural or labour organisations (several had also visited the Brussels Congress) gathered to discuss the potential future of the LAI. At this meeting, Nehru, Chi-Kai-Chi of the Canton government and Manrique from the *Mexican Peasant Association* [governor of Santa Luis de Podosa, not present at the Brussels Congress] delivered lectures on the urgent task of co-ordinating the links between the colonial liberation movements and the European labour movement. Gibarti, appearing as LAI secretary, and the French communist and secretary of the French LAI Section Jacques Vantadour, discussed the crucial step of establishing the LAI around the world. Other LAI meetings of a similar character were convened in Berlin, Dresden and Essen. On 29 March, Gibarti informed the ECCI Secretariat of the successful formation of local LAI

³⁶³ Schudel was interviewed in Basle on 19 December, 1977, see *Sechaba* (1982). For Otto Schudel, see Huber 1994, pp.448-449; and the Swiss *Sozialarchiv*, Internet: < http://www.sozialarchiv.ch/Bestaende/Archive/archWeb/Ar198_18frameset.htm >.

³⁶⁴ Peter Martin & Christine Alonzo (eds.), *Zwischen Charleston und Stehschritt. Schwarze im Nationalsozialismus*, Dölling und Galitz Verlag, Hamburg, 2004, p.183. This public meeting took place at the "Astoriapalast" in Barmbeck on 27 February, which began at 10 am, with an entry fee of 30 pfennig. Magda Hoppstock-Hut, the representative of the *Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit*, delivered a report on the Brussels Congress, Wang-Chu from Canton introduced a discussion on the chance to defeat "Imperialism" in China and Gumede ended the meeting with a speech on the liberation struggle of the coloured races. Gumede left Germany as an avid devotee to the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement, travelling together with La Guma to the Soviet Union. In November 1927, Gumede belonged to a 917-strong delegation representing 40 countries and participated in the "World Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union" at the Dom Soiuзов (House of the Trade Unions), in Moscow on 10-12 November, 1927. Other delegates in Moscow were e.g. Jawaharlal Nehru, Helene Stöcker, Rudyard Kuczynski, the painter Diego Rivera from Mexico, the journalist Egon Erwin Kisch from Germany and Goldschmidt. Diemel concluded that Gumede did not admit to being a communist, hence, this made him "especially targeted to be imprinted with the successes of the Russian Revolution", above all the goal to achieve national independence. Harry Haywood, the Afro-American communist and student at the *International Lenin School* (ILS) in Moscow, stated that Gumede was a "special friend of us Black students", see Diemel (2001), and "Internationale Delegationen", in *A-I-Z*, Jahrg.VI, Nr. 45, Berlin, p.13.

branches in Hamburg, Cologne, Essen, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Remscheid, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin.³⁶⁵ Many of the above undertakings were, however, carried out with the support of the IAH administrative apparatus in Berlin. For example, the headquarters of the IAH was a rallying point for the LAI, providing the organisation with a location where public meetings during the initial phase could be held.³⁶⁶

The International Secretariat, along with the Berlin LAI branch, held a series of seminars as a method of introducing an anti-imperialist agenda. In March, the course “Imperialism and Colonial Politics”, held at IAH headquarters in March, included seminars with Lehmann-Lucas [?] on the “Imperialist Trends in Modern Times”, while the German anti-colonial activist Martin Hoffmann³⁶⁷ discussed “Germany’s Colonial Politics before the War”. This continued with Münzenberg’s opinion on “Germany’s Colonial Politics and its Danger for the Working Class”, Hansin Liau on “The Chinese Struggle and its Meaning for the International Working Class”, Goldschmidt on “The Latin American Struggle” and Chatto holding a short course on “India”.³⁶⁸ These seminars were a project, preceded by the launch of the LAI organ, *Kolonial Revue*, in February, a forum which aimed to discuss anti-imperialism as both a theory and practice. Released through the IAH’s media apparatus, the first issue of the journal included articles by Barbusse (“Selbstbestimmungsrecht den Kolonialvölkern”), Ledebour (“Kolonialer Umschwung”), Chattophadyaya (“Die historische Bedeutung des Brüsseler Kongresses für Indien”), Wittfogel (“Zu den Kämpfen in China”) and the Chinese S. E. Wang-King-Ky (“Das heutige China im Lichte der ungleichen Verträge”).³⁶⁹ Additionally, each member of the LAI had to sign a “Declaration of Membership” (*Beitrittserklärung*), a symbolic as well as an organisational act declaring the signatory’s commitment to the cause. According to this “Declaration”, the members of the LAI had responsibilities and obligations which included, for example, the “dissemination in large circles of information about the character of colonial politics and its effect on the oppressed

³⁶⁵ RGASPI 542/1/4, 8, Einladung Anti-Kolonial-Tagung, 20/2-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1507/2032, 41-45, Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung und Antikolonialer Kongress in Brüssels. Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, Berlin, 28/3-1927; RGASPI 542/1/17, 1-14, Report from Gibarti/LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/3-1927; Mustafa Haikal, “Zwischen Brüssel und Frankfurt am Main – Zum Anteil deutscher Kommunisten an der Entwicklung der Antiimperialistischer Liga”, in *Die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, H. Piazza (Hg.), Leipzig, 1987, pp.82-84.

³⁶⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 48, Weltliga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung und Imperialismus. Deutsche Geschäftsstelle, Berlin, 28/2-1927. Intelligence on this meeting was sent to the *Auswärtige Amt* on 3 March, 1927.

³⁶⁷ Martin D. Hoffman worked with the documents in the “LAI archive” at the International Secretariat to write an analysis of colonial ambitions in Germany, later published in the pamphlet *Keine Kolonien!* (1927), see Michael Schubert, *Der schwarze Fremde. Das Bild des Schwarzafrikaners in der parlamentarischen und publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre*, Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 2003, p.344.

³⁶⁸ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 61, Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung, Berlin, 7/3-1927.

³⁶⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 83, Cover of “Kolonial-Revue”, No.1, I.Jahrgang, Berlin, Februar, 1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 48, Weltliga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung und Imperialismus. Deutsche Geschäftsstelle, Berlin, 28/2-1927.

peoples”.³⁷⁰ All of which was, nevertheless, a part of the propaganda machinery set in motion after the Brussels Congress. In reality, the International Secretariat had no clear direction on how to consolidate the LAI, nor was it appropriate to continue relying upon the assistance of the IAH. For Chatto, the situation was intolerable, particularly as the International Secretariat had to share an office with the LHR at IAH headquarters.³⁷¹

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The Direction of Euphoria

The Amsterdam Conference marks the decisive step towards the consolidation of the movement to support the national liberation struggle.

Münzenberg to the ECCI Secretariat, April 1927

By March 1927, just one month after the LAI’s rapturous inception, the euphoria of the Brussels Congress was over. For Münzenberg, the situation had become uncomfortable, informing the ECCI Secretariat that the LAI consumed much of his energy and, more importantly, it had caused disorder in his management of the daily work at IAH headquarters. Münzenberg addressed the need to sort out the “inner organisation” of the LAI, i.e. the International Secretariat, and to establish routines – a prerequisite which would enable him to provide the LAI with advice and recommendations, rather than merely solving administrative questions. A crucial step in this direction was to establish communication links between the International Secretariat and the LAI Executive members. Another step was to convince Lansbury and Marteaux not to resign from the LAI. However, at the same time, Münzenberg questioned whether it was prudent for Chatto to continue negotiating with Nehru.³⁷² The ECCI delegation refuted Münzenberg’s proposal to dismiss Nehru as being rash. At a meeting in Moscow on 28 February, the ECCI delegation (now re-named the “Brussels Commission”) wanted Hermann Remmele, the KPD representative in the ECCI in Moscow, to devise a plan on how to maintain contact with Nehru during his visit to Germany and Europe. The “Brussels Commission” perceived Nehru as a crucial intermediary in establishing a link between the LAI and “the prominent men in the Left Wing of the INC” as well as in “persuading [the INC] to act in accordance with the tactics of the Kuomintang”. Remmele had to consider the idea of sending a member of the “Brussels Commission” from Moscow to attend the KPD “Parteitag” in Essen. On location in Berlin, this representative could meet and

³⁷⁰ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 49, Beitrittserklärung, Berlin, 1927. The German communist Lucy Peters acted as secretary of the Berlin LAI branch. The annual LAI membership fee was the sum of two Marks.

³⁷¹ RGASPI 542/1/16, 15-16, Letter from Chatto, Amsterdam, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 31/3-1927.

³⁷² RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927.

invite Nehru to the KPD Congress and there discuss the steps necessary in forming an LAI section in India. However, the “Brussels Commission” made the logical recommendation to summon Münzenberg to Moscow and get him to bring every “scrap of paper” on the congress. Aside from organising the “Anti-Colonial Day” in Germany, the International Secretariat reinforced the work distributing propaganda on the LAI to the “democratic press” and published “special literature” on the “methods of the Kuomintang” and on the colonial struggle in India and Egypt.³⁷³

The LAI Executive had not held any inaugural meeting during the Brussels Congress. Katayama concluded that the general consensus was to “hold it within six weeks” after the congress, telling the Eastern Secretariat to prepare theses, write directives and complete the “statutes of the LAI”.³⁷⁴ Thus, the manner of Katayama’s reaction implies that none of the actors, departments or individuals at Comintern headquarters, were prepared for the eventual success of the Brussels Congress. This created a scenario centred on *ad hoc* solutions. On 8 March, the Small Commission instructed Petrov to take care of the LAI Executive issue, and to use the ECCI representatives travelling to Essen to attend the KPD “Parteitag” as couriers to pass on documents for the “communist members of the [LAI] Executive” [Münzenberg and Gibarti]. This coincided with the information from Münzenberg to the ECCI Secretariat that the LAI Executive meeting would be convened in Amsterdam on 28-29 March. At this meeting, Münzenberg and Gibarti intended to focus on the question of how to co-ordinate relations between the International Secretariat and the LAI Executive, as well as on the challenge of establishing national LAI sections.³⁷⁵

The LAI Executive meeting tested the euphoria of the LAI. Present in Amsterdam, Münzenberg, Lansbury, Bridgeman, Nehru, Fimmen, Baldwin, Chatto and Hansin Liau, the session approved Lansbury as the Chairman of the LAI, while Fimmen, in his role as vice-deputy, was to also act as a contact between the LAI Executive and the International Secretariat. After the meeting, Münzenberg told the ECCI Secretariat in a report that the LAI was “a real organisation”, in which the LAI Executive appeared to represent a constructive forum in which to discuss organisational and political questions. In Amsterdam, the Executive members vowed to introduce

³⁷³ RGASPI 495/60/115, 5-6, Minutes of the meeting of the Brussels Commission, 28/2-1927; RGASPI 495/6/5, 33-33b, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.17 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekr., Moscow, 8/3-1927. On 21 February, the International Secretariat sent every resolution, thesis, speech transcript and congress manifesto to Heimo in Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/44, 10-11, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 21/2-1927.

³⁷⁴ RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, Confidential letter from Katayama, Moscow, to Petrov/Raskolnikov, Moscow 24/2-1927.

³⁷⁵ RGASPI 495/6/5, 33-33b, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.17 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekr., Moscow, 8/3-1927. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Jules Humbert-Droz, Haken [?], Abramow, Heimo, Mehring, Rait, Petrov and Kornblum. For Münzenberg’s letter to the ECCI Secretariat, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 159-160, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 11/3-1927; RGASPI 542/1/17, 1-14, Report from Gibarti/LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/3-1927. The ECCI Secretariat had to endorse the idea of holding the inaugural meeting of the LAI Executive in Amsterdam.

the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement to the trade unions and political parties, as well as to form “important centres of the anti-imperialist movement” [national LAI sections]. The latter was a question related exclusively to the organising of LAI activities within the British Empire. According to Münzenberg, Bridgeman seemed eager to “realise [the] branching out [of the LAI] all over the world”.³⁷⁶

Gibarti had a different perception of how to develop the LAI, compared to Münzenberg. For Gibarti, the Weimar Republic was the perfect location for the centre of the international anti-imperialist movement, particularly due to the fact that Germany had lost every colony at the humiliating Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919. Therefore, Gibarti argued that the LAI had “great freedom” to organise anti-imperialist activism out in the open in Germany, e.g. the Reichstag could be used to develop the parliamentary work of the organisation:

We believe that the LAI's function is in its parliamentary work, which for the [...] British colonies has an enormous meaning and is an inevitable necessity. We believe that this work has to be developed and firmly rooted by arranging information meetings about the Brussels Congress, [...] China, Mexico and other questions.³⁷⁷

The LAI had the “British colonies” as one of its key targets; however, this was a daunting challenge to solve. Nevertheless, according to Gibarti, since the LAI had prominent members involved in parliamentary circles in Great Britain, e.g. Lansbury, Wilkinson, Brockway and John Beckett, perhaps the colonial question could stir up some attention in the British parliament. Evidence of the above occurred shortly after the Brussels Congress when Lansbury and Wilkinson raised the question in the House of Commons in London. Gibarti informed the ECCI Secretariat that the “creative work” of Lansbury and Wilkinson consisted of a protest against the British authorities' decision not to allow Chinese citizens to enter England if they had participated at the Brussels Congress. In the records and protocols of the British parliament, this protest has gone missing, yet at the same time, British security services observed how LAI members in England

³⁷⁶ RGASPI 542/1/16, 83-86, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, April, 1927. The British Embassy in Berlin closely followed the international aspirations which the LAI Executive had introduced in Amsterdam. Lindsay at the Embassy notified Austen Chamberlain that the LAI planned to send a delegation to China, consisting of Barbusse, Lansbury, Bridgeman, Purcell and Goldschmidt. According to an article in *Die Rote Fahne*, which had caught Lindsay's attention, a remark had made mention of the fact that the delegation intended to investigate the “practical effects of the imperialist system”, see TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Report from the British Embassy in Berlin to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 4/4-1927. Münzenberg introduced this plan in a report to the ECCI Secretariat. However, in the end, nothing ever happened, for two reasons: firstly, the KMT putsch in April had made it impossible to send a socialist delegation from Europe to China and, secondly, the British authorities had no intention (most likely) of authorising any visa applications.

³⁷⁷ RGASPI 542/1/16, 1-14, Tätigkeitsbericht des Sekretariats seit dem 18 Februar 1927 – 29 März 1927. A copy of the report is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 1-14. Münzenberg was aware of the content in Gibarti's reports, especially as Münzenberg examined every document before passing on the material to Moscow. Jules Humbert-Droz, the French communist and Comintern functionary, functioned as the receiver of Münzenberg's “reports” on the LAI after the Brussels Congress, see for example fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 15, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Jules Humbert-Droz, Moscow, 9/6-1927. For Germany and the colonies, see Poley 2005, pp.11-12.

“confined themselves chiefly to the putting forward of a number of questions in Parliament on Colonial subjects and to the holding of various Committee meetings which took place in Committee Rooms of the House of Commons”.³⁷⁸ This parliamentary approach did not confine itself to the British parliament; a second episode played itself out in the Swedish parliament. Carl Lindhagen, the mayor of Stockholm and member of the First Chamber of Parliament in Stockholm, Sweden, as well as being a devoted pacifist and socialist, contacted Gibarti in a letter dated 4 March. Lindhagen used this occasion to send his greetings to the organisers of the “first congress in support of the oppressed peoples”, introducing himself as a “long-standing and well-known character” in the Swedish parliament. Lindhagen’s primary reason for contacting the LAI was to inform them that he had introduced the question of the “Asian awakening” in the First Chamber on 22 February. According to the First Chamber’s protocol, Lindhagen’s interpellation to get the Swedish government to react on the Far Eastern political situation was a futile exercise. The Chairman of the First Chamber concluded during the session that the question had no relevance whatsoever for the political situation in Sweden and kindly asked Lindhagen never to raise the question again.³⁷⁹ Yet, Gibarti believed that, if the LAI was aiming to support the parliamentary approach, this had to be co-ordinated with public demonstrations and political meetings outside parliamentary circles.³⁸⁰

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The Structure of the LAI and the “Anti-Imperialist Commission”

The vibrant mixture of nationalities in Berlin was a haven for the anti-colonial movement, a *milieu* representative of a colonial metropolis in Europe during the inter-war years. For Münzenberg, the colonial community in Berlin convinced him that the city was the most logical “place” to locate the centre of the LAI. However, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters were of a different opinion. The Small Commission questioned whether Berlin really could provide the International Secretariat with sufficient contacts. In fact, the “Organisation Resolution” adopted at the Brussels

³⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/17, 1-14, Report from Gibarti/LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/3-1927. Gibarti informed the ECCI Secretariat that the British LAI Section had held a meeting in the House of Commons to discuss the “war plans of British Imperialism in China”. Labour M. Ps and trade union leaders attended this meeting, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 24-30, Quarterly report from Liau & Gibarti, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1927. For the meetings in the British parliament, see Internet: < <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> >; TNA HO 144 10693, Secret report, analysis on the LAI, 1929.

³⁷⁹ Lindhagen received information on the Brussels congress from Chatto, based solely on their contact since Chatto’s sojourn in Stockholm between 1917-21, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/18, 6, Letter from Carl Lindhagen in Stockholm to Gibarti, the International Secretariat, Berlin, 4/3-1927. For a brief biography of Lindhagen, which includes some of his writings, see Hans Wahlgren (red.), *Carl Lindhagen – drömmare och stridsman*, Munka-Ljungby, Humanistiska förlaget (1997). Lindhagen’s contacts with the International Secretariat is a topic discussed in Fredrik Petersson (CoWoPa5), “Varför en liga mot imperialism? Grundandet av League against Imperialism, 1927”, see: < <https://www.abo.fi/student/media/7957/cowopa5petersson.pdf> >.

³⁸⁰ RGASPI 542/1/17, 31-39, Quarterly report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, August, 1927.

Congress advocated Paris as the location for the International Secretariat. The question of settling the definitive location of the International Secretariat evolved into an animated dispute, which left Münzenberg discontent with the character of the discussions, particularly the information from Misiano, which claimed that the Small Commission expected Gibarti and Barbusse to lead the International Secretariat in Paris, an idea which caused Münzenberg to frown upon hearing it.³⁸¹ The reason behind this idea was probably that the Small Commission did not want to create an obvious link between the LAI and the German communist movement. A fear, grounded in the public attention the Brussels Congress had created, particularly the claim that the LAI was “a German affair” under the direct influence of the German communist movement. At the other extreme, however, German authorities did their best to confirm whether or not the LAI was “a German affair”. If so, as noted by the *Auswärtige Amt*, the idea of having an organisation that devoted itself to co-ordinating an international anti-imperialist movement, using Berlin as the centre for its activities, was a serious proposition. Additionally, the RKÜöO questioned “the real nature” of the LAI – was it a communist, radical or a pacifist organisation? In an evaluation of the LAI’s activities in Berlin, the RKÜöO increased its attention to confirming whether there existed any connection between the LAI, the Comintern and the KPD. If the organisation turned out to be “subversive”, controlled by the communists and harbouring desirable tendencies towards the colonial community in Berlin, German authorities resolved to take every step to neutralise the LAI, especially if the organisation circulated Bolshevik propaganda in Germany.³⁸²

Münzenberg was obviously against the idea to transfer the International Secretariat to Paris. The ECCI Secretariat had to understand that the proposition “dishonoured” and “attacked” Münzenberg’s capacity as an organiser. According to Münzenberg, Barbusse was a poor choice as secretary, particularly as he frequently suffered from poor health and lived in Paris, whereas Gibarti could not be trusted when left to his own devices. Why did Münzenberg oppose the idea of letting Gibarti lead the International Secretariat in Paris? At one point, Münzenberg told Palmiro Togliatti, a communist from Italy, also known as “Ercoli”, acting for a short period after the Brussels Congress as the political advisor for the LAI at Comintern headquarters, that Gibarti had to be “strictly controlled ... almost every hour, every day”. Münzenberg believed that this would

³⁸¹ “Organisationsresolution“ [paragraph 6], in Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.228; RGASPI 542/1/7, 170, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat/“Freund“, Moscow, 14/3-1927; RGASPI 495/6/5, 33-33b, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.17 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekr., Moscow, 8/3-1927.

³⁸² SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/115, 41-45, Analysis by Reichskommissar, Berlin, 28/3-1927. The dossier SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/2032, 41-45, contains a copy of this analysis. Münzenberg managed, for some reason, to get a hold of the RKÜöO analysis, which he sent to the Eastern Secretariat on 25 August. According to Münzenberg, it was an interesting document that depicted how “the enemy” perceived the LAI. Yet, in the end, the LAI could not use the document in its propaganda as it endangered the original source, Münzenberg concluded, see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/361, 15, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 25/8-1927. See Münzenberg’s report SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/361, 16-17, a copy of this report is located in fol. RGASPI 542/1/9, 72-73.

prevent Gibarti from “instigating political rubbish”, as well as correct his poor skills as an organiser.³⁸³ The underlying motive for Münzenberg expressing such a harsh opinion of Gibarti is unknown; however, a plausible explanation is that Münzenberg's opinion had been influenced by a personal dispute which had flared up between the two of them in 1926 in connection with the discussion to postpone the Brussels Congress.³⁸⁴

Other actors were also involved in the location question. After the meeting of the LAI Executive in Amsterdam, Fimmen questioned why the International Secretariat had to be located in Berlin. Fimmen told Chatto and Nehru that Amsterdam was by far a better option from which to administer the LAI's international activities, especially with its access to naval ports and, despite London being one of the “hearts of imperialism”, the “constant surveillance” by British security services would restrict the LAI from prospering. Chatto took note of Fimmen's remarks and wrote a report to Münzenberg, informing him that the meeting had changed his opinion of Fimmen (whom Chatto had, at first, believed to be “a communist”). According to Chatto, Fimmen claimed not to be “afraid of any communists” and, despite the fact that the “Comintern had had their eyes everywhere” at the Brussels Congress and that Münzenberg had a “nose for certain things”, this did not imply that he was “a skilled organiser”.³⁸⁵ A possible explanation for Fimmen's critique towards the location of the International Secretariat in Berlin, and his personal remark against Münzenberg, was his desire and, at the same time, his incapacity to control the development of the LAI.

Münzenberg did not intend to let this question pass by unnoticed, telling the ECCI Secretariat that he could approve of a “subsidiary bureau”, similar to the International Secretariat, in Paris, an idea the LAI Executive endorsed in August. This was the step confirming Berlin as the permanent base for the International Secretariat, whereas the “French LAI Bureau” in Paris (established in March-April 1927) had two “employees” who provided visiting representatives of the LAI and the Comintern with “auxiliary help”. However, in August, Gibarti concluded that the surveillance of the French *Sûreté* was preventing the bureau from doing any constructive work, and had more or less brought the LAI in France to a momentary standstill.³⁸⁶ Others have interpreted the above

³⁸³ RGASPI 542/1/7, 170, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat/“Freund“, Moscow, 14/3-1927. Münzenberg described Gibarti as “my man of confidence and executor of my directives”. This letter also mentions that Togliatti/Ercoli was a key person for the LAI in Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/7, 159-160, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 11/3-1927.

³⁸⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA RY1/I 2/6/2, 95, [Kopie] Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Org.-Abtl. der B. L. [Bezirksleitung der KPD], Berlin, 23/6-1926; SAPMO-BA ZPA RY1/I 2/6/2, 97-98a, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bezirksleitung der KPD, Berlin, 29/6-1926.

³⁸⁵ RGASPI 542/1/16, 15-16, Letter from Chatto, Amsterdam, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 31/3-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927. Fimmen criticised Münzenberg's connections with the communist movement, yet he believed that “Russian money” had not financed the Brussels Congress.

³⁸⁶ RGASPI 542/1/10, 59-60, Organising report, [undated]. The LAI secretariat in Paris was located at 10 Rue Notre

discussion in a different fashion, characteristic of the misconceptions which prevail in the earlier research into the LAI and European anti-colonialism. For example, Martin Thomas' discerning analysis, *Empires of Intelligence*, which focuses on the efforts of French and British security services to control colonial disorder, includes an erroneous reading of the history of the LAI. Thomas writes that the LAI "was not entirely under Communist control" after the Brussels Congress and, at the "1928 Congress in Amsterdam shifted its base [...] to Paris and London" [author's note: the LAI on two separate occasions held *meetings* with its LAI Executive in Amsterdam, in March 1927 and in April 1929, never any *congresses*].³⁸⁷ The causality and end result of the location question was, however, somewhat different. On 28 April 1928, the LAI Executive endorsed at its meeting in Brussels the decision to locate the International Secretariat "permanently" in Berlin. The reason for this was that it had become impossible to sustain any kind of anti-imperialist activity in Paris due to the surveillance of the French police and, as noted by Chatto, the cost of financing *two* International Secretariats was too expensive.³⁸⁸

Another serious issue was the question of finance. Gibarti observed on 29 March that, due to the shortage of funds at the International Secretariat, the LAI had retreated into a state of "vacillation", unable to sustain or establish "large campaigns".³⁸⁹ This remark from Gibarti indicates that the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters had not anticipated that the LAI would create such an impact. However, it was not up to Gibarti to solve the question of securing finance for the International Secretariat. This was a question under Münzenberg's jurisdiction, so it was Münzenberg, along with his contacts in the ECCI, the Political Secretariat, the Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky, who began these negotiations after the Brussels Congress. First, however, Münzenberg expected Piatnitsky to reimburse the IAH for every cost linked exclusively to the congress. On 28 February, Münzenberg explained to Piatnitsky that the "business" [IAH] in Germany was on the threshold of collapsing due to its support of the LACO and the congress. Hence, in order to pay the overhead costs for the congress, Münzenberg had borrowed money from other communist organisations and individuals [unknown], "people" who expected to get their money back. According to Münzenberg, the congress had cost 49,522.04 Marks, and the sum of money handed over in Brussels (\$4,880) was not sufficient to balance the IAH account, thus, Piatnitsky had to authorise an additional sum of \$7,000 to cover the extra costs and loans. In relation to securing the activities at the International Secretariat in Berlin, Münzenberg demanded

Dame de Lorette ; RGASPI 542/1/17, 31-39, Quarterly report by Gibarti, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, August, 1927.

³⁸⁷ Thomas 2008, p.100.

³⁸⁸ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928.

³⁸⁹ RGASPI 542/1/17, 1-14, Report from Gibarti/LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/3-1927.

“a minimum” of 5,000 Marks, per month.³⁹⁰ In his letter to Piatnitsky, Münzenberg enclosed a budget, “Unterlage zur Beurteilung der finanziellen Bedürfnisse des Sekretariats für einen Monat“, a document detailing the primary functions of the International Secretariat. For example, the expected cost to print and distribute propaganda, and to send LAI representatives from Berlin to visit the national LAI sections. Münzenberg concluded that a monthly allowance of 6,755 Marks would guarantee the existence of the International Secretariat.³⁹¹

Piatnitsky did not send any response to Münzenberg concerning the budget. Apparently, Piatnitsky added this document to the pile of material the ECCI Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat had begun to gather on the LAI after the Brussels Congress in order to reach a definitive decision on the LAI.³⁹² In June, four months after the Brussels Congress, the Political Secretariat endorsed a resolution from the “ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission” (“Anti-Imperialist Commission”) granting the International Secretariat a monthly budget of \$1,500, a sum which would come up for renegotiation after six months. The primary purpose and aim of this sum was to cover “organisational and agitative tasks”.

The “Anti-Imperialist Commission”, established on Piatnitsky’s direct order, assumed the responsibilities of former commissions connected to the anti-colonial project. Its primary obligation was to define political, organisational and financial guidelines for the LAI, solely for the purpose of assisting the Political Secretariat’s decision-making process in relation to the LAI and its nerve centre, the International Secretariat. Petrovsky was the leader of the commission, working together with Jules Humbert-Droz, Smeral, Münzenberg, Pierre Semard, Petrov, Vittorio Codevilla, Jay Lovestone, “Besso” Lominadze, Schüller, Geschke and J. R. Campbell. The

³⁹⁰ RGASPI 542/1/7, 146-147, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to “Genosse” Piatnitsky, Moscow, 28/2-1927; RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927. Nehru had promised to send 10,000 Marks to the International Secretariat sometime in 1927, a transaction, which according to Münzenberg, Motilal Nehru would organise. On the other hand, financial negotiations with “the Englishman” [Bridgeman] had broken down.

³⁹¹ The budget proposal from Münzenberg to Piatnitsky tells the following: the weekly newsletter of the LAI, *Pressedienst*, would be released in French, British, German, Arab, and Spanish versions, at the estimated cost of 50 Marks per language, and issue. Circular letters to the national LAI sections (in German, British, and French) at an expected cost of 800 Marks, and the monthly cost for telegrams was estimated at 400 Marks (Piatnitsky marked the later sum). The theoretical organ of the LAI, the *Colonial Review (Kolonial Revue)*, should have a quarterly circulation, and printed in a German, English, and French edition at the cost of 2,000 Marks. For the secretaries at the International Secretariat, a crucial part was to carry out assignments in Europe; this required 600 Marks per month to cover travel expenses. Administrative duties and costs, for example, salaries for secretaries, three steno typists with language skills, and other kind of support, at an expected cost of 2,850 Marks. This also included social welfare for the employed in Berlin (social security fund, and insurances). Taxes amounted to 300 Marks a month, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/319, Page 7, Unterlage zur Beurteilung der finanziellen Bedürfnisse des Sekretariats für einen Monat: [Februar], year: 1927, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow.

³⁹² Gibarti was the one who frequently complained about the lack of money, declaring, for example, to the Eastern Secretariat and Petrov that the lack of “organised finances” had left the International Secretariat unable to carry out any kind of work, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/15, 1-14, „Tätigkeitsbericht des Sekretariats seit dem 18. Februar 1927 - 29. März 27“, Gibarti, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 29/3-1927; RGASPI 542/1/16, 25-32, Report from Gibarti and Liau, Berlin, to Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Ost-Abteilung/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1927.

outcome of discussions within the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” was pivotal for the future direction of the LAI. Remmele, acting as the Political Secretariat’s spokesperson, instructed Humbert-Droz and Petrovsky to complete and sign the LAI resolution in June, in order to provide the International Secretariat with renewed impetus to generate activity.³⁹³

The “Anti-Imperialist Commission” was the institutional actor which defined the political agenda of the LAI. The LAI’s first objective was to “vigorously support the Chinese revolution” and its second objective was to establish “an energetic struggle against the war threat and [Imperialist] preparations against the Soviet Union”. This agenda contradicted the original and “central task” of the LAI, endorsed by the Political Secretariat prior to the Brussels Congress in January 1927: “the creation of a permanent organisation to secure the support of the European proletariat for the liberation movements in the colonies”. This revised agenda suggested a more radical and political approach, probably inspired by the “absolutely successful demonstration” in Brussels. How did the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” imagine that the LAI would put this agenda into practice? The first step was pragmatic. The LAI had to mobilise “every proletarian force as well as other layers and groups [...] to assist in the support of the Chinese revolution and the struggle against the war threat”, an initiative which would enhance the chances of establishing “strong relations” in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. For the “Anti-Imperialist Commission”, the LAI was the Comintern’s hope for success, where other attempts had failed, in establishing a connection to the colonial world.³⁹⁴

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Gather All Visionaries and Utopian Dreamers

After the Brussels Congress, a crucial element for the LAI was to find individuals eager to support, contribute and assist the process of establishing national sections. This was the essential idea behind gathering every visionary and “utopian dreamer” to join the cause. What kind of expressions and consequences did this process entail? While Berlin was the LAI’s focal point from the beginning, the ambition, however, was to form “vigorous” sections where “imperialism raged violently”, e.g. Great Britain, the Netherlands, India, USA and Latin America. According to

³⁹³ RGASPI 495/60/109, 13, Letter from the ECCI Anti-imperialist Commission, Moscow, to Alfred Kurella/Agitprop, Moscow, 5/6-1927; RGASPI 495/7/2, 12a, Protokoll der Ständigen Kommission des EKKI, Moscow, 12/5-1927; RGASPI 495/3/18, 136-139, Decision by the ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission, Moscow, 15/6-1927. Piatnitsky ordered Smeral, Remmele, Murphy, Humbert-Droz and Kuusinen to obey this decision.

³⁹⁴ RGASPI 495/3/18, 136-139, Resolution, ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission, Moscow, 15/6-1927. The Political Secretariat discussed the political agenda of the LAI on 8 August. The protocol was, however, filed in a “Sondermappe” (*Special Dossier*); see fol. RGASPI 495/3/22, 1-2, Protocol Nr.38, Polit-Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 6/8-1927. Present at the meeting were Bukharin, Piatnitsky, Petrovsky, Remmele, Kreibich, Scheflo, Luhani, Ratt (Ostabl.), Wurm, Macci, Kornblum, Pepper, Reesema, Schüller, Wassiljew, Neumann, de Bouque, Spencer, Reit, Fürnberg, Ferdi, Hies and Thibo.

Katayama's observation, the LAI had to portray itself as being the successor to the LACO, concluding that it was "inadvisable for the time being to dissolve such organisation[s] as the *League to Combat Colonial Oppression, Hands off China* organisations".³⁹⁵ Hence, the national sections were a crucial part of the idea to validate the creation of an international anti-imperialist organisation.

At the beginning of 1927, the so-called communist "solar system" in Germany was in a state of chaos. According to an analysis of the nature of the communist propaganda in Germany in January, carried out by two members of the ECCI Agitprop Department in Moscow ("Günther", pseudonym of German communist Hans Glaubauf and "Jablonski" [identity unknown]), the result exposed a flawed and confused movement. "Günther"/Glaubauf and "Jablonski" stated that the relation of the KPD Agitprop department in Berlin to its counterpart at Comintern headquarters in Moscow was beyond contempt. The activities and work of the mass organisations (the IAH and the IRH) were inadequate, while the inherent weakness of the ZK KPD and the KPD Agitprop department did nothing to co-ordinate the mass organisations. Hence, the result was a scenario which damaged the party, having an array of actors carrying out similar work in competition with each other, and outmanoeuvring the propaganda of the KPD.³⁹⁶ The only response the ZK KPD seemed capable of coming up with was to impose "bureaucratic restraints" on the IAH and IRH, which contributed to establishing a competitive *milieu* leaving the mass organisations to fight amongst one another on the social and political arena in Germany, "Günther"/Glaubauf and "Jablonski" concluded. It was within this structural setting that the International Secretariat had to adapt itself after the Brussels Congress. It also had to comply with the Small Commission's demand that the International Secretariat stand in "constant liaison" with the Eastern Secretariat and with the LAI Executive's "kom.Fraktion".³⁹⁷

In Berlin, the colonial microcosm consisted of individuals from India, Indonesia, China, North Africa, Equatorial Africa, the Arab countries and Latin America, some of whom showed an interest in the LAI after the Brussels Congress. For the RKÜÖ, this was an unwanted scenario, causing it to decide to increase its monitoring of the colonial influx into the city, filing intelligence in the dossier "Einreiseanträge, Ausländer außer Russen" (Entry Permit, Foreigners except Russians),

³⁹⁵ RGASPI 495/60/115, 5-6, Minutes of the meeting of the Brussels Commission, 28/2-1927.

³⁹⁶ RGASPI 495/30/320, 36-39, Notizen zum Bericht über die Agitproparbeit in Deutschland, March, 1927.

³⁹⁷ RGASPI 495/6/5, 33-33b, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.17 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekr. Moscow, 8/3-1927. The Political Secretariat wanted to establish a closer connection between the LAI and the *Communist Youth International* (KIM/KJI), an idea originally introduced by Münzenberg, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/44, 1-2, Protocol Nr.21, Polit-Sekretariat, Moscow, 15/4-1927. Present at the meeting were Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Humbert-Droz, Murphy, Maggi, Smeral, Treint, Bela Kun, Schneller, Duncan, Manner, Pepper, Wassiljew, Kachan, Schubin and Schumann.

material sent, for example, to the *Auswärtige Amt* on a regular basis.³⁹⁸ The case of a chemistry student from India, Khwaja Abdul Hamid (29/10-1898, Aligarh), is a good illustration of this. Hamid arrived in Berlin in September 1924 to conduct studies at Humboldt University and, at that time, was not perceived as an anti-colonial activist. However, after the Brussels Congress, the RKÜöO began to register Hamid's sudden interest and engagement in the anti-colonial movement in Berlin, above all his contacts with Münzenberg and the IAH. The "Pension Puttfarken" in Berlin, Hamid's place of residence, was, according to the RKÜöO, a "frequent meeting location for Indian revolutionaries" and other colonial activists, an observation which strengthened their suspicion that Hamid had established a connection to radical and subversive movements. Additionally, Hamid had most likely participated at the Brussels Congress, the RKÜöO stated. However, his name does not appear in *Das Flammenzeichen*, although Hamid could have attended as a guest, not as a delegate of any organisation, association or party. This kind of monitoring coincided with the RKÜöO's decision to begin its surveillance of colonial associations in Berlin, e.g. the *Indische Vereinigungen* and the *Islamitische Kommission für das Rifgebiet*.³⁹⁹

Berlin's political landscape determined the International Secretariat's opportunities for developing itself, while the establishment of national LAI sections in Europe, India, the USA and Latin America all had different trajectories. In May, Gibarti informed the ECCI Secretariat of the first, tentative steps taken in forming national LAI sections. While the work was proceeding as planned, it was, however, an undertaking characterised by a lack of money:

The International Secretariat has, since the Brussels Congress, been doing its best to establish branches of the LAI in different colonial and semi-colonial countries, or at least to interest various political organisations in the special aims and objects of the League. The results obtained would have been far more satisfactory and substantial if the machinery of the Secretariat had been developed to deal with its enormous tasks, but the lack of financial means and, consequently, of the necessary apparatus has constituted a very serious hindrance in this respect to the work of the Secretariat during the period under review, viz. February to May 1927.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67115, Einreiseanträge, Ausländer außer Russen (1922-1929). Berlin became a centre for anti-colonial activism after the Brussels Congress, which, in a majority of cases had a relation to the LAI. For the German security services and police authorities, this called for an increase in monitoring of the LAI.

³⁹⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67116, 10, Letter from Criminal Inspector Oexle in Berlin to the Reichskommissar, 1/3-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67116, 128-129 Akten betr. Indische Vereinigungen in Deutschland (1926-1927) & Akten betr. Islamitische Kommission für das Rifgebiet (1927-1928). The "Pension Puttfarken" was located at 7 Agricolastraße in Berlin.

⁴⁰⁰ RGASPI 542/1/17, 24-30, Quarterly report from Liau and Gibarti, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1927. Liau and Gibarti also sent the report to Petrov on June 6, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/16, 25-32, whilst Münzenberg enclosed the report to Humbert-Droz, and J. T. Murphy on June 9, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 15 [Humbert-Droz], 23 [Murphy]. A fourth copy has been located in fol. RGASPI 542/1/16, 57-67.

The “lack of financial means” and a poorly developed “apparatus” are, however, not the only reasons explaining why the task of supporting the formation of sections had become so complex. For example, Münzenberg argued at about the same time that the development of sections was “positive”.⁴⁰¹ Hence, it is essential to include other aspects rather than, for example, seek the answers in the “sectarian squabbles” within the international communist movement.⁴⁰² This entails an evaluation which includes political context, suspicion and hesitance, and how some of the actors were striving to capitalise on the euphoria of the Brussels Congress. In England and China, for example, the political context determined the framework of LAI activity, where suspicion and surveillance defined the formation of sections in England and the Netherlands. From the perspective of the “Anti-Imperialist Commission”, the LAI had every chance of establishing active and vigorous sections, if they followed the suggested path:

[...] national organisations of the League must be built up on a mass basis through the affiliation of trade unions, trade councils, local labour parties, peasant organisations and individual membership as far as is possible. The Communist Parties of these countries must give special attention to this task. At least one leading member of the Central Committee should be in charge of the League work and actively participate in the Communist Fraction of the International Executive of the League.⁴⁰³

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The “Provisional” Character of the British LAI Section, 1927

The British Empire and its colonies were a coveted target for the LAI. The first step was to establish a section in the heart of British imperialism, London. While Bridgeman and Saklatvala had laid the foundation of an anti-imperialist organisation in England (LACO) prior to the Brussels Congress, the follow-up and consolidation proved, however, to be more of a challenge. The International Secretariat and the Comintern defined the LAI section in England as a “provisional” institution in 1927, defined by hesitancy and internal doubt. This characterisation ended in July 1928, when a British LAI Section saw the light of day. Petrovsky remarked on the tedious process of establishing an LAI section during his frequent visits to London, particularly the relations between communist and non-communist members. Additionally, the LSI questioned why some of its members, e.g. Lansbury and Fenner Brockway (see further below), also expressed their

⁴⁰¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 467-471, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Remmele, Moscow, 10/6-1927.

⁴⁰² Nicholas Owen, “Critics of Empire in Britain”, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Roger Louis et. al (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p.203.

⁴⁰³ RGASPI 495/103/155, 6-11, Direktiven für die Arbeit der LAI, Moscow, 22/9-1927 [German version]; RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927 [English version].

devotion to the LAI, a dilemma which made it difficult to find a trajectory for the British LAI Section.

Bridgeman was, from the beginning, the person who co-ordinated the work to form a section, receiving support from e.g. Helen Crawford, the IAH representative, who provided both administrative assistance and new contacts. Petrovsky later concluded in two reports in 1928 (4 March and 20 April), addressed to the Eastern Secretariat, that, despite Bridgeman's enthusiasm, it had been the CPGB that had sanctioned the idea to form a section. However, the CPGB acknowledged the fact that Bridgeman was the key that made the difference between success and failure:

A report was given to the Colonial Committee [CPGB] on 21st February. Steps were taken to obtain publicity for the resolutions, and it was decided to approach Bridgeman with a plan of procedure. Harry Pollitt reported on 28.2 that he had seen Bridgeman who was ready to call a meeting of the British delegation in Brussels. It was decided to pressure Bridgeman into calling the meeting, which was to style itself as the provisional committee of the British Section of the League and summon a conference in London of sympathetic organisations.⁴⁰⁴

Presented with Pollitt's instruction, Bridgeman contacted Lansbury and Brockway asking them to assist in preparing the establishment of this "provisional committee". However, a crack emerged when Lansbury began making enquiries in March into the LAI's alleged communist ties. Bridgeman then contacted Nehru, informing him that the LAI could very well be heading towards an uncertain future in England if the *Labour Party* began questioning the LAI, something which, in turn, would also affect the ILP and Brockway.⁴⁰⁵

Bridgeman, however, had other matters on his mind than launching an investigation into the LAI's communist connections, and focused instead on the first meeting of the "provisional committee of the British LAI Section", which convened in the House of Commons in London on 7 April. Delegates who had also attended the Brussels Congress met and unanimously agreed to form a so-called LAI "sub-committee", the objective of which was to pave the way for the official establishment of a British LAI Section. To co-ordinate this work, the meeting elected Brockway as Chairman of the "sub-committee", Bridgeman as secretary and Lansbury as treasurer. During the meeting, Münzenberg instructed Crawford to "draw up a list of people and representatives of organisations to be approached with a view to becoming associated with the League", as well as to

⁴⁰⁴ RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, 20/4-1928. The receiver of Petrovsky's report is unknown; however, the most plausible recipients were the Eastern Secretariat and the Colonial Commission CPGB in London.

⁴⁰⁵ RGASPI 542/1/18, 5, Letter from Bridgeman, London, to Jawaharlal Nehru, Montana, 1/3-1927. This episode is also included in Marcel van der Linden and F. L. van Holthoorn's short narrative on the genesis of the British LAI Section, in *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830-1940*, Brill, 1988, pp.577-580. A narrative based on John Saville (1984).

publish LAI propaganda in “the Socialist and Communist press”, with a particular focus on calling for financial contributions to support this “provisional section”.⁴⁰⁶

Without further ado, Brockway began to contact prominent actors within the European socialist movement. On 8 April, Brockway sent a letter to Friedrich Adler, secretary of the LSI, to explain that the rumour implicitly suggesting that the communists were the actual organisers of the Brussels Congress “has been exaggerated”. Admitting to Adler that he had been deeply involved in the congress as an ILP delegate and had also been expected to lead the establishment of an LAI section in England, Brockway wanted some kind of consent from the LSI and, above all, to get the LSI involved in the LAI:

We felt, however, that it was a mistake to leave such a representative movement in the hands of the communists. The nationalists and Latin American parties were represented, which seemed to us a reason why the Socialists should actively participate. It is already serious how weak the influence of the Communists is and, although we understand that they have financial resources not open to us, we think all legitimate opportunity should be taken of increasing our influence.⁴⁰⁷

The general idea Brockway had was to affiliate the ILP with the LAI as a collective member; however, this required Adler’s approval. The content of Brockway’s letter attracted Adler’s attention, and, in his response on 13 April, he told Brockway that “the Communists, who are the real founders of this league”, had never shown any intention of wanting to collaborate with the LSI on the colonial question. Adler assured Brockway that this was not, however, a definitive answer to his ILP request, suggesting that Brockway wait until the next meeting of the LSI Executive in September 1927. However, Adler’s personal opinion on this issue revealed his attitude towards Brockway’s involvement in the LAI:

[...] we would weaken our International if we were not able, in such questions of first-rate importance, to take action unitedly [sic] as an International. If we should come to a decision to take part, we must, in my view, create conditions which would give us an influence in such a league corresponding to the importance of our International which, with its seven million members, would be by far the strongest organisation to come into consideration at all.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, 20/4-1928; RGASPI 542/1/20, 1-3, Report on the British LAI Section, London, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 7/4-1927. Gibarti and Liau verified the establishment of the “provisional committee” in a report to the ECCI Secretariat on May 31, 1927, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 24-30.

⁴⁰⁷ IISG Labour and Socialist Archives, Dossier 284/1, Letter from Brockway, London, to Adler, Zurich, 8/4-1927.

⁴⁰⁸ IISG Labour and Socialist Archives, Dossier 284/2, Letter from Adler, Zurich, to Brockway, London, 13/4-1927.

In the period between Brockway's request in April and Adler's inquisitive reply and, both prior to, during and after the LSI Executive meeting in September, the LSI formulated its understanding of the LAI. The sole reason for doing this was to be able to respond to and counteract the spread of the LAI within the European socialist movement, a question further discussed below.

The "provisional committee" came into existence about the time that British and Soviet diplomatic relations broke down in 1927. British security services, MI5 and the *Special Intelligence Service* (SIS), had all increased their surveillance of the communist movement due to the social unrest in China and the fact that both the Comintern and the Bolsheviks supported the KMT. This particularly involved the monitoring of the activities of suspected Soviet agents known to be residing in England. According to Zara Steiner, this was a result of Chamberlain yielding to anti-Bolshevik attitudes in the British parliament. Fuelled by intelligence gathered by the SIS, these documents were enough to confirm MI5's opinion that subversive communist movements had gained a strong position on British soil and, on 12 May, this operation culminated in the raid of the Soviet Trade Delegation and the All-Russian Co-operative Society, known as the ARCOS raid, in London. During this raid, British authorities seized a number of documents which verified that the Soviet Union had an extensive network of spies in England, manoeuvred by both the Comintern and the CPGB. This all led to a break down in foreign relations between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, reaching a climax on 23 May once the British Government had authorised the decision to effectively deport every Soviet diplomat from British soil.⁴⁰⁹

While it may appear that the ARCOS raid had no practical effect on the "provisional" LAI section, this episode may, however, have contributed to increased doubts about the LAI being raised by some of the actors. Thus, to reach a consensus on the LAI's suspected communist ties, Brockway contacted Gibarti in Berlin, asking him to clarify some "points raised" by the *Labour Party* and the LSI. Apologising for the "inquisitorial" questions, particularly as Brockway was "very happy with the all-inclusive character of this movement", the least Gibarti could do was to shed some light on whether "you receive money from Russia". This also involved making an account of what kind of organisations had funded the LAI after the congress, the total number of communist members in the LAI and the Executive Committee, and whether Gibarti was a member of the KPD.⁴¹⁰ Gibarti's answer was a typical smokescreen in order to conceal the connection between the LAI and the Comintern. However, British security services intercepted Gibarti's reply

⁴⁰⁹ Steiner 2005, p.538; Michael Hughes, *Inside the Enigma. British Officials in Russia, 1900-1939*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 1997, pp.216-218; Austen Chamberlain & Robert C. Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters. The Correspondence of Sir Austen Chamberlain with his Sisters Hilda and Ida, 1916-1937*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.305-306.

⁴¹⁰ Brockway's letter has been located in the LAI *fond*, while Gibarti's reply to Brockway and Lansbury has been located in Brockway's personal file at TNA. RGASPI 542/1/18, 20-21, Letter from Brockway, London, to Gibarti, International Secretariat, Berlin, 16/5-1927.

to Brockway and were therefore able, via New Scotland Yard and MI5, to analyse some of the correspondence between the members. According to Gibarti, avoiding mentioning the involvement of the Comintern or the KPD, the International Secretariat had received money after the Brussels Congress from Fimmen, Goldschmidt and the American journalist Agnes Smedley (who was also Chatto's partner) as well as from the KMT. On the question of whether Gibarti was a member of the KPD, Gibarti stated, "I am not a member of the Communist Party". This was an obvious lie. According to a document in Gibarti's personal file in the Comintern Archive, he had become a member of the *Communist Party of Hungary* in 1919 and had had his membership transferred to the KPD on 29 February, 1924.⁴¹¹

Brockway was, nevertheless, content with Gibarti's explanation. However, Lansbury and the LSI remained suspicious. On 16 June, at a meeting of the "provisional committee" in the House of Commons, Lansbury resigned from the LAI, complaining of being "overburdened" with work as the sole reason for leaving his position as Chairman of the LAI. In the eyes of Petrovsky, Lansbury's act of "self-defence" left Brockway shattered and he too was, for a brief moment, disillusioned about the LAI.⁴¹² This critical moment raised serious doubts about the very idea of establishing an LAI section in England. Hence, to save what was left of the "provisional committee", Gibarti left Paris and hastened to London. Yet, the RKÜöO took note of Gibarti's journey and suspected that the reason for his trip was to "exploit" the current political conflict between the Soviet Union and Great Britain. This was not the case, however. Apparently though, Gibarti's visit caused more harm than good which, according to the "Anti-Imperialist Commission", proved Gibarti's incapability of co-operating with the CPGB to organise an anti-imperialist congress in England during the summer of 1927.⁴¹³ The step from a "provisional committee" to becoming a British LAI Section turned into a complex process, with ideology becoming the central issue in 1928.

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⁴¹¹ According to Gibarti, the LAI had received funding from the KMT, the *All China Labour Union*, the *National League* in Mexico, the *Pacific Coast Hindustani Association*, Professor Barakatualla Maulavie, Alfons Goldschmidt, the German LACO Section, the Berlin branch of the *Egyptian Nationalist Party* and the IAH, see TNA KV2/1919, Letter from L. Gibarti to F. Brockway (copy to R. Bridgeman), 31/5-1927. Lansbury received a similar explanation, see TNA KV2/1919, Letter from L. Gibarti to G. Lansbury (copy to R. Bridgeman), 1/6-1927). For Gibarti's personal file, see fol. RGASPI 495/205/6048, 1, Biography on Gibarti, undated.

⁴¹² RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Petrovsky re. LAI, London [?], to the Eastern Secretariat [?], Moscow, 20/4-1928; RGASPI 542/1/18, 26, Report by Helen Crawford, London, to Gibarti, Berlin, 17/6-1927.

⁴¹³ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 81, Report, Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, Berlin, to Polizeipräsidenten Abt.I.A., Berlin, 14/6-1927. The RKÜöO passed on this report to the *Auswärtige Amt*. For this assessment of Gibarti, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/18, 136-139, Resolution, ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission, Moscow, 15/6-1927.

The Chinese Influx into Berlin: Hansin Liau and the Chinese National Agency

The Chinese national liberation struggle had been a central issue at the Brussels Congress, which, with the attendance of a thirty-strong delegation, symbolised the anti-colonial struggle. Yet, it was a delegation overtly European in character, nineteen of which lived in Europe. For example, representatives of the KMT Executive Committee, the KMT “European Centre” in Berlin and the delegates from the KMT sections were living in either France, Belgium, England or the Netherlands. In Berlin, the *Schutzpolizei* noticed a sudden increase in the number of Chinese individuals displaying an inclination towards anti-colonialism in February, e.g. Dr. Koyang Tong of the *Hauptverband Chinesischer Studenten in Deutschland*, Sia Ting of the KMT “European Centre”, Y. S. Hsie of the German KMT section and Hansin Liau.⁴¹⁴

Hansin Liau was the LAI’s and the International Secretariat’s key actor in maintaining the momentum of its Chinese propaganda. For Münzenberg, Liau’s symbolic performance at the Brussels Congress and his connection to the KMT, proved Liau to be a character that Münzenberg could place at the front to lead the Chinese work in Berlin. According to Jenö (Eugen) Varga (1879 – 1964), a Hungarian communist and chief theoretician on economic matters at the Comintern and with whom Liau had worked in Berlin 1924-27 in the *Statistical and Information Bureau* (the “Varga Bureau”, sanctioned on the direct orders of the ECCI), Liau was a trustworthy “comrade”. In addition, after having been involved in establishing the CPCh in China, Liau travelled to Germany and had his membership transferred to the KPD in 1923. Perceived as being the leading expert on the Chinese question in Berlin, despite being connected with the dissolution of the “Varga Bureau” in the beginning of 1927, Liau had to find a new occupation within the German communist movement.⁴¹⁵

In April, Münzenberg handpicked Liau to lead a centre for Chinese nationalist propaganda in Europe, entitled the *Chinese National Agency*, with covert links to the International Secretariat. According to an outline of this agency as presented to Petrovsky by Münzenberg on 22 April, with Petrovsky presenting the idea to the Small Commission in Moscow, the plan struck a chord of

⁴¹⁴ Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p26, 233-234. A majority of the delegates from the Chinese delegation travelled to Berlin after the Brussels Congress, arriving by train on 17 February. The Chief of Police in Berlin informed the Head of the *Schutzpolizei*, Oexle, about the activities of the Chinese populace in Berlin, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115, 180, Der Polizeipräsident. Abteilung IA. Tgb. Nr.235 I.A.3.27., Berlin, 5/3-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507 67115, 212, Der Polizeipräsident. Abteilung IA. Tgb. Nr.235, 11/4-1927.

⁴¹⁵ Varga described Liau as a “hard-working and satisfying” person who “lived in a proletarian fashion [...] active in every matter in Berlin that related to Chinese questions”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/29, 3, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, arrived in Moscow 17/1-1928 (the letter was read by Heimo). For Varga, see Lazitch 1986, pp.492-493; RGASPI 495/225/1043, 38-39, Letter from Hansin Liau and Dora Dombrowski-Liau to the German delegation of the ECCI, Moscow, 3/2-1936; RGASPI 495/225/1043,41, Anlage Nr.5 – Letter from E. Varga, Moscow, 1/3-1930. The *Statistical and Information Bureau*, which had been established on the direct orders of Lenin and endorsed by the ECCI Presidium on September 6 1921, functioned as a vehicle for the Comintern to collect “full and truthful information”, see Sobolev (ed.) 1971, p.137.

approval. The initial aim of the agency was to “improve the telegraphic information service regarding China” in Europe, using Liau as its official representative. Münzenberg stated that it was essential to locate the agency in Berlin, especially as Germany had an “absolutely neutral” position in its relation to China compared to that of Great Britain. By getting Liau to pose as the official author of the propaganda, this would disguise the original authors of the material. According to Petrovsky, Liau should never write any of the propaganda, a task assigned to the Soviet news agency in Moscow, TASS. Hence, TASS would complete manuscripts for telegrams and other political propaganda and, once completed, transmit the material to Liau. What was the reason for doing this? Petrovsky believed that a crucial aspect of the agency was to conceal the original source behind the propaganda. In fact, the propaganda released through the agency should give the impression of working counter-clockwise, i.e. it had to appear as though the agency provided TASS and *Inprecorr* with information on China. The Berlin Chief of Police chose to pay closer attention to a different aspect of the *Chinese National Agency* which, in a sense, disclosed its second aim, which was to establish contact with Chinese activists in Berlin, London and Paris.⁴¹⁶

Why did Münzenberg suggest the establishment of the *Chinese National Agency*? Political developments in China provide a clear answer. On 12 April 1927, the KMT staged a violent and bloody putsch against its former allies, the Chinese communists in Shanghai, assuming power over the nationalist movement and establishing the Nanking government. This episode implied a “qualitative change” for the Chinese anti-imperialist movement in China, as expressed by Edmund S. K. Fung.⁴¹⁷ Therefore, for Münzenberg, the idea of the *Chinese National Agency* was a reaction against the KMT putsch as well as a response to the LAI’s need to re-assess its attitude towards the Chinese national liberation struggle. While the connection between the European communist movement and the KMT “European Centre” had suddenly disappeared, Liau, who had once belonged to the “Left” KMT (which advocated closer collaboration with the communists in China), appeared as the most logical person to lead the opposition. On 21 April, in an article in *Inprecorr*, Liau argued that “the treachery of Chiang Kai-shek does not come unexpectedly. This danger has already existed for a year [...] our people and our Party [CPCh] will adopt an irreconcilable attitude to this treachery”.⁴¹⁸ The *Chinese National Agency* was a response to this political change in China which had, above all, shattered any possibility of establishing an LAI

⁴¹⁶ RGASPI 495/30/350, 18-19, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 22/4-1927; RGASPI 495/6/5, 70, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.23 der Sitzung der Eng-Kommission des Sekretariats, Moscow, 28/4-1927. The protocol was made out in one copy, classified as “Strictly confidential” (*Streng vertraulich!*); SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67115, 213, Betrifft: Chinesische Nationalagentur, 23/5-1927.

⁴¹⁷ Edmund S. K. Fung, “Anti-Imperialism and the Left Guomindang”, in *Modern China*, Vol.11, No.1 (Jan., 1985), Sage Publications Inc., p.39; Pantsov (2000); Karin-Irene Eiermann, *Chinesische Komintern-Delegierte in Moskau in den 1920er/1930er Jahren*, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, Berlin, 2009, pp.53-57.

⁴¹⁸ Hansin Liau, *Inprecorr*, Vol.7, No.26, April 21, 1927, 527-528. Taken from Robert C. North & Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy’s Mission to China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1963, pp.66-67.

section in the country. The IAH representative in China, Kou Meng-yu, was no longer of any use. As leader of the KMT Propaganda Section, Kou Meng-yu became, after the April putsch, the Minister of Education in the Nanking government.⁴¹⁹

On 30 April, the deliberations on the *Chinese National Agency* in Moscow were completed. Once Münzenberg had provided Petrovsky with additional material on the plan, the ECCI Agitprop Department began preparing the details for the agency. With Liao as leader, and with 3,500 Marks per month (for the first three months) to cover all expenses, the editors of the *Imprecorr* in Berlin, the Hungarian communist Gyula Alpári [pseudonym: “Julius”] and “Boros” [identity unknown] were to supervise and control the agency, particularly Liao’s contacts with the “bourgeoisie press and journalists” in Berlin.⁴²⁰

An evaluation of the practical impact of the *Chinese National Agency* (CNA) is complex, particularly as Liao combined his work for this agency with the activities of the International Secretariat.⁴²¹ However, the agency was, for a brief period, a visible actor in Berlin. The Ministerium des Innern (the Prussian Ministry of the Interior; MdI) noted Liao as being a “very active” leader of the agency; however, it was not possible to confirm whether the money came from a “Russian connection”.⁴²² In the end, however, money was the central question. The agency found itself crippled by a constant shortage of funds and, despite minor contributions from the International Secretariat; it did not have enough money to cover its costs. By July, several of the actors began to perceive the endeavour as a failure. Bridgeman told Liao in a letter that the propaganda of the agency in England “had failed ... The English press is almost entirely in the hands of the capitalists”. According to Bridgeman, the main mistake from the beginning was to locate the agency in Berlin, especially when the propaganda was aimed towards the British Empire. How could Liao keep track of the daily political scenario in England when he did not live in the country? Bridgeman concluded that the despatching of telegrams from Berlin to London on

⁴¹⁹ Historical recollections of Kou Meng-yu are scarce. According to some documents, which explain how the KMT prepared the putsch against the communists in China in 1926-27, his position and nomination as Minister of Education after the April putsch is disclosed: “Minister of Education: Dr. Kou Meng Yu. He is probably the best known of the additions to the Nationalist Government’s roster of portfolio holders. Dr. Kou Meng Yu was, for years, famous in Chinese educational circles and was the Dean of the Faculties of the National University at Peking. His association with the KMT finally made his continuance in that post impossible. He left Peking [in 1926], to the deep regret of the student body at the National University. In Canton he was made head of the Propaganda Section of the Central party headquarters. He has long been a member of the Central Executive Committee of the party and during the past year has been a member of the Political Council”, see the Internet: < <http://119.97.209.45/shownews.asp?id=43673> >.

⁴²⁰ The *Chinese National Agency* was located at Friedrichstraße 232, RGASPI 495/30/350, 18-19, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 22/4-1927; RGASPI 495/30/350, 20-21, Reply from Agitprop Department, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 30/4-1927.

⁴²¹ RGASPI 542/1/16, 25-32, Report on the activities LAI, Gibarti & Liao, to Petrov/F. F. Raskolnikov, Ost-Abteilung, Moskau, signed: 31/5-1927, despatched from Berlin, 9/6-1927.

⁴²² SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/67115, 238, Der Preußische Minister des Innern, Berlin, an der Regierungspräsident, Berlin, 3/8-1927.

a daily basis was not enough; it was also a rather costly and inefficient operation.⁴²³ It was the combination of surveillance by German authorities and the lack of money which led to the *Chinese National Agency* disintegrating under its own weight. In August, in order to save whatever was what left, the agency merged with the International Secretariat.⁴²⁴ For Liau, the dissolution of the *Chinese National Agency* was not a disappointment; in fact, he believed that he was a key figure in both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement, an ambition which assumed a completely different trajectory towards the end of 1927.

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Nehru's Euphoria and Jhabwala's Loneliness

The Brussels Congress created a reaction within the Indian national liberation movement. For example, it had convinced Nehru of the strength of the anti-imperialist movement in Europe. However, the political and social backdrop to forming an LAI section in India was completely different from the political *milieu* in Europe. The LAI appeared, therefore, to be an answer to the call from the anti-colonial movement in India to establish a network connecting India with Europe.

After the Great War, Berlin was a haven and centre for the émigré Indian nationalist revolutionary community in Europe. In 1921, Chatto assumed a leading position within the group of Indian nationalists, whilst for the Comintern, Roy was the leader expected to co-ordinate a connection from Europe to India. Whilst the Brussels Congress sent vibrations throughout the anti-imperialist movement in Europe, this did not imply that in 1927 there existed any functional connection which the LAI could use.⁴²⁵ According to Nehru, the Indian community in Berlin was a group which primarily engaged itself in quarrels “amongst themselves”, leaving out any kind of coherent political discussion. Perceiving Chatto as a “very able and [...] delightful” person, and not a “regular communist [...] but communistically inclined”, Roy impressed Nehru with his “intellectual level”. The impact of the Brussels Congress shaped Nehru’s understanding of the global dominance of colonialism and its politics and, after the congress, Nehru concluded that the event “helped me to understand some of the problems of the colonial and dependent countries”.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ RGASPI 542/1/18, 29-32, Letter from R. Bridgeman, London, to Hansin Liau, Berlin, 30/6-1927. Bridgeman stated that the *Chinese National Agency* was a valuable propaganda instrument: “[A]ll the persons and Members of Parliament who receive them [telegrams], as well as for our Service as they can be used in the bulletins and speeches and, moreover, they give the representatives of the workers party in the Parliament the opportunity to make interpellations in the House of Commons”. However, the cost of sending telegrams on a daily basis from London to Liau in Berlin was a difficult undertaking for Bridgeman, particularly to “allocate funds”.

⁴²⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/67115, 242-244, Betrifft: Chinesische Propaganda, 14/7-1927.

⁴²⁵ Overstreet and Windmiller 1959, p.40, 77-87; Barooah (2004).

⁴²⁶ Nehru 1936, pp.151-154, 163. Nehru travelled to Moscow together with his father Motilal, where he met Roy in Moscow in October 1927 in connection with the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Bolshevik “revolution”. The Soviet Russian agency, the *Society for Cultural Relations to Foreign Countries* (VOKS), functioned as the main organiser and covered all expenses and practical arrangements for their journey to the Soviet Union. Nehru visited

Nevertheless, Nehru had a pragmatic and realistic understanding of the congress and made the distinction between the euphoria of the congress and the political reality facing the INC in India. For example, Nehru told Bridgeman that the LAI should not count on the INC affiliating. This statement was based on the dictum introduced by Gandhi, which declared that the INC did not look to socialism as the answer to solve the Indian independence struggle. In fact, Nehru argued that it could be dangerous for the INC to enter into an alliance with an organisation which was “professedly socialist and partly communist” and would most likely be perceived as suspicious in India.⁴²⁷ This did not, however, make Nehru conceal his enthusiasm for the Brussels Congress from Gandhi:

I do not expect much from it [LAI] and indeed I am quite sure that none of the members of the so-called imperialist or oppressing nations will help us in the least whenever their interests conflict with ours. [...] But I welcome all legitimate methods of getting into touch with other countries and peoples so that we may be able to understand their viewpoint and world politics generally. I do not think it is desirable [...] for India to [go it alone] now or in the future. It is solely with a view to self-education and self-improvement that I desire external contacts ... [and] study of other people and their ideas.⁴²⁸

Nehru understood that if the INC developed a connection with the LAI, this would contribute to strengthening his perception of the anti-imperialist movement and, above all, expand his network into Europe. The INC did not, however, condone Nehru’s activities after the congress, regardless of Nehru’s symbolic performance at the event. Gandhi explained in a letter to Nehru: “I myself do not expect much from this league [...] because its free activity depends upon the goodwill of the very powers that are partners in the exploitation of the oppressed nations”.⁴²⁹ Nonetheless, the Brussels Congress did represent a “turning-point” for Nehru, Sarvapelli Gopal writes in his biography of Nehru, an event which had provided him with both political awareness and practical experience, the latter as a result of assisting Chatto in Berlin with the preparations for the congress.⁴³⁰ The International Secretariat realised at an early stage that Nehru would not easily convince the INC to support the establishment of an LAI section in India. Thus, the LAI had to find a contact elsewhere in India.

Moscow for four days, impressed with the “capital of international communism”. After his return to India, Nehru published a number of “random sketches and impressions” in the literary form of a “panegyric” on the Soviet system in the Indian nationalist press, see Haithcox 1971, p.90.

⁴²⁷ TNA PRO CO 323 971 1, Secret report on the Congress in Brussels, author: Lidell, no date, year: 1927.

⁴²⁸ Letter from Nehru to Gandhi, 22/4-1927. Taken from Gopal 1975, pp.105-106. Nehru told Gibarti that the “international co-operation of the national movement in India opens up unlimited prospects and is likely to strengthen the Indian nationalists”, intelligence which Gibarti passed on to the Eastern Secretariat, fol. RGASPI 542/1/17, 24-30.

⁴²⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, Nandi Hill, Mysore State, to Nehru, 25/5-1927, in Nehru, 1958, pp.54-55. Gandhi told Nehru, “you are on the spot and you may see an altruistic improvement in the atmosphere there which I miss altogether”.

⁴³⁰ Gopal 1975, p.100.

S. H. Jhabwala, the Parsi labour leader and secretary of the *Bombay Central Labour Board*, became the International Secretariat's contact in India. According to Philip Spratt, Jhabwala was “a queer, dreamy but energetic person who was secretary or president of fifteen or twenty unions round Bombay”.⁴³¹ In the aftermath of the Brussels Congress, Jhabwala contacted Gibarti with the ambition of forming an LAI section in Bombay, introducing himself as the spokesperson for the Bombay labour movement, a position Jhabwala intended to use in order to write and publish articles on the LAI in India. This required a favour in return, however. To get the work started in Bombay, Gibarti should send him material about the LAI, and some financial support. Jhabwala explained that he only had “50 Rupees in his wallet” and, since “this poor country” was under no circumstances comparable to Europe, Gibarti had one choice if the LAI wanted to establish a section in India: the International Secretariat had to provide money.⁴³²

The International Secretariat did not ignore Jhabwala's financial request. However, this question was part of the general discussion about how much money the LAI needed to build up an international organisation. For Gibarti, Jhabwala's interest was used as a pretext to introduce him to the LAI Executive as “our Indian secretary” (whether Jhabwala knew this remains unknown). However, this does not imply that he received any money. Thus, on 30 September, 1927, Jhabwala sent a second request to Gibarti wondering how much money he could expect, particularly as the *Bombay Central Labour Union* was considering joining the LAI as a collective member.⁴³³ This question was ultimately sorted out by Münzenberg and Piatnitsky. Münzenberg sent a financial report to Piatnitsky, informing him that the “Bombay secretariat, Jhabwala” had required a sum of £100 to commence activity.⁴³⁴ The question is whether Jhabwala ever received any money.

One year later, on 19 October 1928, Jhabwala wondered when the monthly allowance of 100 Rupees would arrive. The situation in India had worsened since 1927, caused by the increasing surveillance of British security services which, according to Jhabwala, had thwarted the activities of the LAI. The lack of money, combined with the prohibitive measures of the British colonial authorities, was the root of Jhabwala's loneliness in Bombay. Jhabwala concluded in his letter to Chatto that the political situation in India was a constant battle against “every vindictive cynic”, with every parcel from the International Secretariat “seeming to disappear”.⁴³⁵ The British authorities in India systematically confiscated packages containing subversive political material,

⁴³¹ Spratt 1955, pp.36-37. Spratt met Jhabwala for the first time at the session of the *All Indian Trade Union Council* (AITUC) in Delhi in March 1927, at which Saklatvala also delivered a speech (Haithcox 1971, p.98).

⁴³² RGASPI 542/1/18, 7, Letter from Jhabwala, Bombay, to Gibarti, Paris or Berlin, 30/3-1927.

⁴³³ TNA KV2/1919, Letter from L. Gibarti to G. Lansbury (copy to R. Bridgeman), 1/6-1927; RGASPI 542/1/18, 57, Letter from S. I. Jhabwala, Bombay, to Gibarti, Berlin, 30/9-1927.

⁴³⁴ RGASPI 495/19/319, 8, Folgende Zuwendungen sind an nationale Sektionen zur Ermöglichung des Beginns der Arbeit zu senden, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, year: 1927. According to Piatnitsky, \$100 was equivalent to 2,000 Marks.

⁴³⁵ RGASPI 542/1/29, 81, Letter from S.H. Jhabwala, Bombay, to Chatto, Berlin, 19/10-1928.

which was a crucial source of information with which to evaluate the nature of the Indian nationalist movement. In February 1929, the British Head Office in London took a further step in refining this strategy. According to a directive to the India Office in London, it was of particular necessity to destabilise the relations between subversive movements in Europe and the Indian independence movement. Head Office recommended the confiscation of every letter, telegram and package sent from the LAI International Secretariat to specific individuals in India, e.g. Jhabwala. With this directive, the British authorities aimed to restrict the LAI's political space; above all, to intercept and prohibit "literature from the LAI" and to refuse to grant "passports to Indians who were known to be connected with the League".⁴³⁶ In 1929, Jhabwala's connection with the LAI ended. Arrested in 1929, and as one of the defendants in the Meerut conspiracy trial in 1933 (see *Utopia Redefined, Part II*), Jhabwala received a sentence of four years' "rigorous imprisonment".⁴³⁷ The Indian question thus became a topic which continued to haunt and challenge the International Secretariat, much dependent upon the capacity of one person: Chatto.

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"Little Help for the Starting": the LAI in the USA and Latin America

To organise LAI activities in the USA and Latin America was a major undertaking, carried out by specific individuals. The AAAIL delegate, Gomez, was one of many who had attended Münzenberg's party in his apartment in Berlin and, additionally, was "one of many foreign fraternal delegates" at the KPD Party day in Essen. Other actors, on whose services the International Secretariat depended, were Julio A. Mella and the LAI functionary Federico Bach, who prepared the way for the establishment of LAI sections in Latin America, leaving Gomez in charge of the USA section. Gomez/Shipman remembered that the forerunner of the LAI section in the USA, the AAAIL, was "largely a matter of propaganda", which had attracted radical liberals such as Pickens, Baldwin and Robert Moss Lovett, alongside well-known American communists such as Scott Nearing, William Z. Foster and William ("Bill") F. Dunne.⁴³⁸ At the beginning of 1927, the AAAIL existed, however, only on paper. The Brussels Congress was, therefore, the impetus needed to revive the American anti-imperialist movement, through the formation of an LAI section. A document, the "Outline for the Work of the League against Imperialism and

⁴³⁶ TNA HO 144 10693, Peel, Secret Information regarding LAI, India Office, Whitehall, 27/2-1929. Peel described the case to Amery and Austen Chamberlain: "I am seriously perturbed by the dangerous possibilities of the League's interference in Indian affairs, particularly in view of the great interest which Moscow is known to be taking in India [...] I am convinced of the necessity of taking any steps that may be possible to limit its capacity for mischief. The Government of India [...] have [sic] announced their intention of treating the League as a definitely hostile organisation".

⁴³⁷ Robin Page Arnot, *Labour Monthly*, Volume 15, February 1933, Number 2, pp.96-101.

⁴³⁸ RGASPI 542/1/7, 120-123, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 21/2-1927; Shipman 1993, pp.153-157, 163-164.

Colonial Rule and for National Independence [LAICNI] in the United States”, dated 24 February 1927, introduced the necessary measures. The author(s) of this document remain unknown; however, it is logical to assume that Gomez and Münzenberg worked out the fundamental guidelines for the project in Berlin and, after its completion, sent the outline to Comintern headquarters in Moscow for further deliberation.⁴³⁹ What does this outline reveal, and what were the principal reasons for establishing an LAI section in the USA? To supervise the initial establishment phase, a “directing committee”, consisting of Gomez as the leader, the American author Baldwin, the left-wing activist Upton Sinclair, and Pickens, would assume the former responsibilities and contacts of the AAAIL, especially those with Latin America, resulting in the gradual and quiet “disappearance” of the AAAIL. The USA LAI Section was to focus its activities on relief campaigns, e.g. “temporary Hands off Mexico committees” were channels distributing the LAI’s propaganda and agenda. Through these campaigns and committees, the section would acquire and “secure contact and work directly with movements in US colonies”. This depended on solving a number of issues guaranteeing the cover and relations of the section to the Comintern. The “press bureau” of the section would release a theoretical journal on anti-imperialist questions, while other tasks involved the sending of inquisitive commissions to US colonies, developing parliamentary activity by attending “hearings before the US Senate and House of Representatives”, establishing communication links with US colonies and semi-colonies and organising public mass meetings, demonstrations and conferences. Without any reasonable doubt, the theoretical framework of the USA LAI Section was a part of the sympathising communist organisation strategy envisioned and supported by Münzenberg. Above all, the section had to follow the Comintern’s dictum to demonstrate in public its sympathy for the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union. Thus, the section's primary aim was to “build an international consciousness, [...] among the US workers and the oppressed people’s movement” through the use of “covert” methods “with extreme care”, which would guarantee the “clear conception that Soviet Russia and the Comintern are the best friends of the oppressed peoples”. The inauguration of the USA LAI Section was held in New York on 14 July 1927, at “a large conference”, at which Gomez and Richard B. Moore introduced the fundamental principles of the paragraphs described above.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ RGASPI 542/1/19, 28-29, “OUTLINE FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND COLONIAL RULE AND FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE [LAICNI], IN THE UNITED STATES”, 24/2-1927; Shipman 1993, p.164.

⁴⁴⁰ RGASPI 542/1/19, 28-29, “OUTLINE FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND COLONIAL RULE AND FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE [LAICNI], IN THE UNITED STATES”, 24/2-1927. This document was divided into “methods of work”, “tasks of the US Section”, “program of the US Section”, “finance” and “organisational principles”; RGASPI 542/1/18, 28, 28, Letter from W. Pickens, New York, to Gibarti, Berlin/Paris, 14/7-1927. Present at the meeting were, e.g. Lewis S. Gannet of the *Nation*, Scott Nearing, Bishop Jones of the *Reconciliation Society* and Nevin Sayre. In the summer of 1927, New York was the centre of LAI activity in the

While Gomez co-ordinated LAI operations in the USA, the Cuban nationalist Julio A. Mella had a similar function in Mexico, initially. According to the February “Outline”, Mella was to supervise the formation of “a central bureau” in Mexico City, an undertaking which required money. Münzenberg consulted Codovilla on how much it would cost to establish the “Mexican secretariat” and the USA LAI Section, choosing in the end to give the former \$200 and the latter \$500.⁴⁴¹ Just as Gomez had done, Mella had attended Münzenberg’s private party in Berlin in February, travelled to Moscow in March and then returned to Paris. Waiting to begin his journey home, Mella began to doubt the very idea and strength of the LAI as an organisation. Mella told Münzenberg that he wanted to organise a sympathising public rally in Paris in support of the Cuban anti-imperialist movement and the LAI, asking Münzenberg whether he could contribute with some money for “a little help for the starting”. Mella warned Münzenberg of the risk that “scepticism” could thwart the intentions of the LAI. Therefore, Münzenberg should deploy all available means and measures to sustain the vitality of the movement.⁴⁴²

Federico Bach turned out to be Münzenberg’s candidate to establish the “Mexican secretariat” in Mexico City. In June, Bach left Berlin for Mexico to perform this service, on Münzenberg’s instructions, as intermediary for both the LAI and the IAH. After arriving in Mexico, Bach introduced himself as a journalist for the *A-I-Z* with the purpose of his visit being to conduct and write articles on the social situation in Mexico.⁴⁴³ Nevertheless, this decision was also firmly rooted in Moscow. According to the expectations of the “Anti-Imperialist Commission”, the LAI should act swiftly to establish sections in Mexico and across Latin America during the summer of 1927. On 8 July, the Political Secretariat expressed concern after having heard a report from

USA and one could find the office of the USA LAI Section in “a dusty room” at 32 Union Square, see Shipman 1993, pp.165-166.

⁴⁴¹ RGASPI 542/1/19, 28-29, “OUTLINE FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND COLONIAL RULE AND FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE [LAICNI], IN THE UNITED STATES”, 24/2-1927; RGASPI 495/19/319, 8, Folgende Zuwendungen sind an nationale Sektionen zur Ermöglichung des Beginns der Arbeit zu senden, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, undated, year: 1927. Münzenberg downsized the budget by half, and explained that: “The LAICNI (international headquarters) should contribute \$1,000 cash, and should take out a loan of an additional \$1,000 to help establish the office and bring out the first issues of the magazine, [...] The loan to be made to Baldwin and Gomez, and the \$1,000 donation to be a private arrangement between the international headquarters [LAI/Berlin] and the All-American Anti-Imperialist League (US Section), which should immediately turn the money over to Baldwin and Gomez as a contribution from the AAAIL”. According to the “outline”, the section should collect money from different sources: “the Garland Fund; donations from time to time, based upon contribution lists for specific campaigns; dues; sale of the magazine”. The *Garland Fund* was founded in 1922 by Harvard College student, Charles Garland, after making a donation of \$800,000 to *The American Fund for Public Service*, and located in New York. Its initial aim was to provide radical actors that wanted to bring change to the social reform system in the USA with material and financial support. For example, the NAACP received 100,000 \$ to “study the legal status of African Americans and plan a legal campaign”, see Internet: < www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-segregation.html >.

⁴⁴² RGASPI 542/1/19, 104, Short note on Mella, Moscow, 23/3-1927; RGASPI 542/1/18, 19, Letter from Mella, Paris, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 6/5-1927.

⁴⁴³ SAPMO-BA ZPA I/2/5/33, 467-471, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Remmele in Moscow, 10/6-1927.

Codevilla on the poor turnout at the LAI attempts to establish activity in Latin America.⁴⁴⁴ Bach had, however, only just arrived in Mexico, and was faced with an immense task from the start. Apparently, the contacts in Mexico had not done any preparatory work, a dilemma which worsened over time. In the beginning of 1928, Bach explained to Münzenberg in a letter that he wanted to leave Mexico, “being stuck” in a country far from home; however, without any money and no valid visa to enter the USA, he could not leave. In the end, Bach did not receive any money from Münzenberg but chose to remain in the country.⁴⁴⁵ However, the LAI’s forsaking of Bach was not the last attempt to establish LAI activities in Mexico.

Alfons Goldschmidt, described by Münzenberg as “my old brother-in-arms”, had been an avid follower of the IAH since 1921 and had a deep engagement in the socio-political situation of the Latin American countries. In comparison to the tedious experience of Bach in Mexico, Goldschmidt assumed the role as Münzenberg’s intermediary in Mexico and assisted in the work to establish *Münzenbergian* committees and organisations. Goldschmidt lived in Mexico City where he worked as a lecturer in national economics at the university and, thus, had access to a broad academic network. However, returning to Mexico after the Brussels Congress, Goldschmidt met the well-known painter Diego Rivera for the first time. According to Goldschmidt, Rivera’s “new form of revolutionary art” left him “stunned” and, as Rivera was “on the left side” of politics, Goldschmidt invited him to accompany him to Moscow to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Russian revolution. As a result of Goldschmidt and Rivera’s journey to Moscow, and their subsequent participation in the LAI General Council in Brussels (see next chapter) on 9-11 December 1927, Rivera gained a seat on the LAI Executive.⁴⁴⁶

During the initial phases, the impetus and political enthusiasm to establish LAI sections in the USA and Latin America looked promising. However, from 1928 to 1932, the practical undertakings required to realise these plans took a turn for the worse, characterised by an internal crisis within the American communist movement as well as by personal tragedies. On 10 January

⁴⁴⁴ RGASPI 495/3/18, 136-139, Resolution, ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission, Moscow, 15/6-1927; RGASPI 495/3/18, 9-11, Protocol, Nr.33, Polit-Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 8/7-1927. Present at the meeting were Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Remmele, Braun, Petrov, Maggi [Egidio Gennari], Nin, Codevilla, Ferdi, Smeral, Manuilsky, Bennet/Petrovsky, Schublin, Schneller, Cremet, Kornblum, Günther, Orloff, Smoliansky, Manner, Setlin, Virtanen and Heimo. The content of Codevilla’s report remains unknown.

⁴⁴⁵ RGASPI 542/1/28, 1-2, Letter from Bach, Mexico City, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 10/1-1928. Henrick Stahr’s study of the discursive use of photographs in the context of the racial question, include an analysis of *A-I-Z*. According to Stahr, Bach cancelled his KPD membership and broke with the German communist movement in 1929 and remained, for the entirety of his life, in Mexico, Henrick Stahr, *Fotojournalismus zwischen Exotismus und Rassismus. Darstellungen von Schwarzen und Indianern in Foto-Text-Artikeln deutscher Wochenillustrierter 1919-1939*, Verlag Dr. Kovac, Hamburg, 2004, pp.438-439.

⁴⁴⁶ For Münzenberg’s description of Goldschmidt, see NA SÄPO SE/RA/420640.01, Stockholms Krimavd., 6:e Roteln, serie FIII, 1929-1941 Rapport rörande IAH, september 1933. Goldschmidt’s meeting with Rivera is mentioned in Stahr 2004, p.443. The international delegation to Moscow is given in *A-I-Z*, Jahrgang VI (1927), No.45, Berlin, p.13. For Rivera’s nomination as a member of the LAI Executive, see *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr.1, International Secretariat, Berlin, 15/3-1928.

1929, a suspected agent of the Cuban government murdered Mella in Mexico City. The consequent reaction from the international anti-imperialist movement was to portray Mella as a martyr and as a victim of imperialist policy. On an organisational level, the internal and fractional struggles and expulsions within the *Communist Party of the USA* (CPUSA, see further in *Utopia Redefined, Part I*) after the Sixth International Comintern Congress in Moscow 1928, had a serious impact on the USA LAI Section. Gomez was not content with the unabashed praise of Stalin in the CPUSA, criticising the party for its lack of understanding and, in 1932, he was forced to resign “from the directorship of the Anti-Imperialist Department” in New York.⁴⁴⁷ From an individual perspective, the original candidates destined to establish LAI sections in the USA and Latin America: Gomez, Bach and Mella had either been expelled, forsaken or murdered.

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A Conflict of Interest in the Netherlands and Beyond...

The LAI and the Brussels Congress also attracted attention in the Netherlands in 1927. According to Katayama’s evaluation after the congress, Hatta’s and Fimmen’s performances indicated a bright future for the LAI, particularly the services of the latter who turned the congress into “a success” due to his experienced and well-mannered behaviour. Thus, if the LAI and its International Secretariat could expose and utilise the Indonesian conflict to its fullest, this would ease the process of establishing an LAI section in the Netherlands.⁴⁴⁸ However, the *Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (SDAP) reacted against how the LAI began to develop itself in the Netherlands, above all, against Fimmen’s role as deputy. On 19 September, the Secretary of the SDAP, Cornelis Werkhoven (1887 – 1928), sent a letter to Adler in Zurich, requesting advice on what to do with the LAI and Fimmen and asking if the LSI could confirm whether the LAI really “was an organ of Moscow”. The primary reason for Werkhoven contacting Adler was that “some members of our party” had joined forces with Dutch communists in order to publish the official newspaper of the Dutch LAI Section, *Recht en Vrijheid* (Right and Freedom). Adler replied to Werkhoven, telling him merely to observe the fact that the official protocol of the Brussels Congress, *Das Flammenzeichen*, had been released through the “communist company” Neuer Deutscher Verlag in Berlin, which was run by the infamous German communist Münzenberg. Based on this information, Adler told Werkhoven to draw his own conclusions and, if he needed any additional

⁴⁴⁷ The WPA renamed itself the CPUSA at the Sixth International Comintern Congress in 1928. Caballero 1986, p.160; Shipman 1993, pp.173-185. Shipman claimed that he was not bothered about his expulsion from the “Anti-Imperialist Department”.

⁴⁴⁸ RGASPI 542/1/7, 131-132, Confidential letter from Sen Katayama, Moscow, to Comrade Petrov/Raskolnikov, Moscow, 24/2-1927. Fimmen’s linguistic skills in English, German and French had been a useful asset at the congress, according to Katayama, who believed Fimmen to be “in thought and action fully on our side”.

information on the LAI, Adler told him that the LSI intended to go public in October with an analysis of the LAI in the LSI organ, *Internationale Information*.⁴⁴⁹ According to Adler, the primary aim of this analysis (further introduced and discussed below) was to disprove the LAI's ideological platform and to reveal the organisation as "a Moscow-product". Thus, the analysis aimed to revise the current and popular opinion of the LAI which had emerged in the European socialist movement and, above all, to send out a warning to every member of the LSI about the risk of affiliating with the LAI. In October, after the publication of the LSI's analysis, the Dutch social democratic newspaper, *Het Volk*, stated that the LAI was an unofficial arm of "Russian foreign policy". One of its most shameful acts was Fimmen's defence of the organisation at public SDAP meetings; hence, *Het Volk* concluded that it was not the "social democrats' task to act as henchmen for Russian foreign policy".⁴⁵⁰ Münzenberg knew that the Dutch social democratic movement had criticised Fimmen harshly for his involvement in the LAI. However, it seems that Fimmen's precarious situation was of minor relevance for Münzenberg, informing Petrovsky that the newspaper, *Recht en Vrijheid*, had reached a circulation of 2,000 issues per month in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, despite this newspaper's success, the Dutch LAI Section was more or less a loosely-knit committee focusing on establishing propaganda campaigns against the harassment of Indonesian students in the Netherlands, e.g. by declaring its support for *Perhimpunan Indonesia*.⁴⁵¹

In 1924, amidst the academic *milieu* of and radicalism amongst Indonesian anti-colonial activists living in the Netherlands, the PI had emerged as an outspoken voice against Dutch colonialism and was a group targeted by the Dutch security service for being subversive.⁴⁵² For the Comintern, the PI was a highly coveted group on which to exert influence after the Brussels Congress, particularly considering Hatta's influential position within the PI as well as being a member of the LAI Executive; thus, the Comintern had found its candidate. Raden Darsono, co-founder of the PKI and member of the "Indonesian Section" at the ECCI Information Department in Moscow in 1927, informed the Small Commission that the secretary of the *Communist Party of*

⁴⁴⁹ IISG LSI Archives 3050/29, Letter from Cornelis Werkhoven, Amsterdam, to Adler, Zurich, 19/9-1927; IISG LSI Archives 3050/33-35, Letter from Adler, Zurich, to Werkhoven, Amsterdam, 28/9-1927.

⁴⁵⁰ IISG LSI Archives 3050/44-45, *Het Volk*, Leitartikel: Die Liga, 21.X.1927. At the top of this document, Adler had written: "Kolonialliga".

⁴⁵¹ RGASPI 495/30/350, 27, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 23/10-1927. See Buschak (2002, p.134) for a brief account of Fimmen's involvement in the LAI.

⁴⁵² Hatta was a leading actor in the Indonesian liberation movement. According to Sieback's thesis on Hatta's political career, the Indonesian nationalist movement merged in Europe by linking together student clubs, the *Sarekat Islam*, with associations such as the *Muhammadiyah*, *Jong Islamietenbond* and the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*, the latter functioning as the driving force. In connection with the aftermath of the rebellions in Java and Sumatra, the activism of the Indonesian nationalist movement in the Netherlands increased, including providing support for the establishment of the *National Party of Indonesia* in Indonesia which, by July 1927 was under the leadership of Sukarno, see Siebeck 1978, p.81.

Holland (CPH) Pieter Bergsma, had befriended Hatta in Brussels. According to Darsono, this relationship with Bergsma could be expected to convince Hatta to support the Dutch communist movement which, in turn, would lead to the CPH gaining access to the Indonesian student community. To confirm the accuracy of his statement, Darsono passed Hatta's letter to Bergsma (dated 6 March) on to the Small Commission. This letter included a description of their meeting in Brussels and how the encounter had inspired Hatta to ponder the idea of associating the PI with the CPH.⁴⁵³

The Dutch security service responded, however, by thwarting any attempts by the PI to confirm a close relation with the CPH. By increasing its surveillance in the Netherlands and in the colonial dominions, the Dutch government depended, nonetheless, on the services of other foreign security services to gather intelligence on the PI. For example, an enquiry concerning the PI from the Political Intelligence Department in Amsterdam to MI5 set off a chain reaction. At the British consulate in Batavia, the official J. Crosby began the process of accumulating intelligence on the PI. Prior to providing the Dutch East Indian government in Batavia and the Dutch Political Intelligence Department with any material on the PI in July, Crosby sent a summary to Austen Chamberlain in London which concluded that the organisation was "violently nationalistic [...] has shown to be in contact with Moscow".⁴⁵⁴ Crosby's report definitely contributed to making the Dutch security service decide to begin to register every person known to be, or suspected of being, a PI member in the Netherlands. For Hatta, this had drastic consequences. After Hatta had visited Switzerland in August, and *en route* to the Netherlands, travelling in the company of other fellow Indonesian nationalists Nazir Pamontjak, Ali Sastroamidjojo and Abdul Madjid Djojoaningrat, they were all arrested by the Dutch border authorities who charged them with sponsoring a "prohibited organisation" which promoted "the realisation of revolution" by distributing "propaganda against the Dutch kingdom". After a lengthy legal process, the verdict was handed down on 9 March 1928 acquitting Hatta and his fellow travellers of all charges. For the Dutch LAI Section, the Hatta case functioned as a mobilising factor in centralising the anti-imperialist movement in the Netherlands, e.g. via anti-imperialist campaigns which focused on the continued harassment by Dutch authorities towards the Indonesian community.⁴⁵⁵

It was another episode, however, which exposed the internal conflict of interest within the LAI and the European anti-imperialist movement in 1927-28: the adventure of the "Dutch-Indies

⁴⁵³ RGASPI 495/6/44, 121, Letter from the Polit-Secretariat [signed: Raden Darsono], Moscow, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 6/8-1927. For Darsono, see Lazitch 1986, p.87. Darsono wrote that the Dutch police kept the Indonesian students in the Netherlands under constant surveillance. Bergsma's name was not included in *Das Flammenzeichen*, fol. RGASPI 495/154/747, 1, Letter from Hatta, Den Haag, to Bergsma, Amsterdam, 6/3-1927.

⁴⁵⁴ TNA PRO 323 971 1, Confidential report from J. Crosby, Batavia, to A. Chamberlain, London, 26/7-1927.

⁴⁵⁵ Siebeck 1978, p.85-86.

Delegation” – an idea which, from the outset, aimed to get the LAI to exploit the political situation in Indonesia. Although the LACO had introduced the idea of sending an “impartial” delegation to the Dutch-Indies already in January 1927, this had proven to be impractical. However, due to the success of the Brussels Congress, Piatnitsky re-assessed this question in July, asking Münzenberg to investigate whether it was still possible to organise and send a delegation to the Dutch-Indies. Nevertheless, the adventure of the “Dutch-Indies Delegation” begins with a desperate letter, dated 30 May 1930, from Saklatvala to Piatnitsky, who for the time being was in Glasgow, requesting assistance to solve “a very uncomfortable” situation.⁴⁵⁶ As an isolated episode, this letter is barely coherent. However, other documents in the Piatnitsky secretariat *fond* explain the background for Saklatvala’s desperate plea for help, a matter which originated with the “Dutch-Indies Delegation” and which involved the very core of the LAI network.

Münzenberg introduced “the question of the Dutch-Indies Delegation” to the CPH Secretary Louis de Visser, in July, as, according to Piatnitsky’s instructions, the issue had to be raised before the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne on 20-21 August, 1927.⁴⁵⁷ According to Münzenberg, the general idea was to send a delegation to Java and Sumatra, with each and every member of the delegation having to be nominated with caution and having to stay in the country for at least for one and half month to investigate the social outcome of the January uprising. This would, for example, enable them to gain an understanding of the extent of Dutch colonial oppression as well as provide an opportunity to establish contacts with Indonesian anti-imperialist activists.⁴⁵⁸

Piatnitsky expected Münzenberg to convince the LAI Executive to sanction the idea of the “Dutch-Indies Delegation”. Thus, after de Visser had informed Münzenberg that the CPH had approved the plan in general, the LAI “kom.Fraktion” (Münzenberg, Gibarti and Saklatvala) held a secret meeting in a left-wing bookshop in Cologne on 19 August, to sort out the details before the LAI Executive meeting.⁴⁵⁹ On 20 August, Münzenberg, Saklatvala and Gibarti met the other LAI Executive members and other functionaries: Chatto, Fimmen, Brockway, Barbusse, Nehru, Liau, Hatta, Marteaux, Bridgeman, Dhuni Chand from India, M. P. and member of the *Labour Party* Mardy Jones, the leader of the Dutch LAI Section and “left-wing” socialist Henri Lefèbre, the

⁴⁵⁶ RGASPI 495/19/319, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 22/8-1927; RGASPI 542/1/44, 68-72, Letter from Saklatvala, Glasgow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 30/5-1930.

⁴⁵⁷ RGASPI 495/19/319, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 22/8-1927; Piatnitsky passed on Münzenberg’s letter to the Small Commission, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/319, 3, Note from [H.] Kurella, Moscow, to “Kleine Kommission”, Moscow, 25/8-1927.

⁴⁵⁸ Louis de Visser guaranteed Münzenberg that the CPH had received his first plan for the Dutch-Indies delegation, which the CPH endorsed on 22 July, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/319, 1, Letter from Louis de Visser/C. P. Holland, Amsterdam, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 18/8-1927; RGASPI 495/19/319, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 22/8-1927.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA KV/1919, Secret. G.S. (S). No:2211. Extract relating to Fenner Brockway. Author: G.S.I British Army of the Rhine, 2/9-1927. An undisclosed informant in the service of British security services in Germany had gathered intelligence on this secret LAI meeting in Cologne.

Indonesian Abdul Manaff and Mme. Duchêne of the French-based pacifist association the *International Womens' League for Peace and Freedom*. Gibarti introduced the primary topic for discussion at the meeting, i.e. the LAI and its support for the Chinese liberation struggle, a topic which merely satisfied the expectations of the "Anti-Imperialist Commission" in Moscow. After the meeting, Gibarti stated in his report to the Eastern Secretariat that the LAI aimed to focus its activities on the "imperialist nations":

It is evident, that the intensive activity of our organisation and the expressed sympathies in the colonial and semi-colonial countries have produced a reaction from the imperialist governments.⁴⁶⁰

The "Dutch-Indies Delegation" was one of those so-called responses, which the LAI Executive readily endorsed. On 22 August, Münzenberg informed Piatnitsky of the composition of the delegation: Barbusse, Jones, Lefèbre and Goldschmidt (who for the time being was in Mexico). The last two members were the lawyer Gatot and the leader of the Dutch IAH section H. van Walree, who were both living in Amsterdam and, according to Münzenberg, belonged to "our circle".⁴⁶¹

The original composition of the "Dutch-Indies Delegation" never left Europe. What happened and what were the reasons for this? Firstly, any definite decision or discussion disclosing the reasons for this, e.g. from Piatnitsky, Münzenberg or the Small Commission in Moscow, remain unknown. Secondly, a possible explanation is that the delegation was expensive. According to the budget sent from Münzenberg to the CPH Secretariat in Amsterdam, the Dutch party had estimated the cost of sending the delegation to Java and Sumatra at \$12,000 (\$2,000 per delegate, covering a minimum of 50 days) and expected to be reimbursed later by Piatnitsky. The CPH Secretariat explained to Münzenberg that it was "not possible" to endorse this budget, particularly as the plan had been "so indistinctly" presented.⁴⁶² Münzenberg's reaction to the CPH Secretariat's critique is unknown; however, it must have indicated some kind of foreclosure on the idea of sending a delegation to the Dutch-Indies. However, as it turned out, the central question was to secure the necessary visas for the members in the delegation. Petrovsky informed Münzenberg, in a letter dated 13 October, that the delegation could not leave Europe until the communist members had

⁴⁶⁰ Mme Duchene acted as Lamine Senghor's substitute, Senghor being unable to leave Paris due to illness, SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/127, 107-110, 15.) Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung. Bezug R.No.In.Ber.Nr.121,s.44 ff., Berlin, 15/10-1927; RGASPI 542/1/9, 69, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bennet/Petrovsky, Moscow, 22/8-1927; RGASPI 542/1/17, 31-39, Manuscript, Gibarti's report from the LAI Executive Committee, Cologne, 20-21/1927.

⁴⁶¹ RGASPI 495/19/319, 2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 22/8-1927.

⁴⁶² RGASPI 495/19/319, 22, (Abschrift) Letter from the Secretariat of the CPH, Amsterdam, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 24/9-1927. According to CPI (2009), \$12,000 is equivalent to \$148,000, while \$2,000 is \$24,700 (CPI/2009). Münzenberg passed on this letter from the CPH secretariat to Petrovsky, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/319, 21, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 30/9-1927. Petrovsky explained to Münzenberg that "we are not going to approve of a single Pfennig beyond the existing limits of the budget", see RGASPI 495/30/367, 224, Letter from Bennet [Petrovsky], Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 3/10-1927.

received their visas.⁴⁶³ Ultimately, this did not happen and, as mentioned in Petrovsky's letter, one member of the delegation had already left Europe. On 11 October 1927, Mardy Jones left Marseilles by a boat destined first for India, and then for Indonesia, where he aimed to fulfil his duty of conducting a social and political survey of colonial oppression. The crux of the matter was that neither Münzenberg, Piatnitsky nor the LAI had sanctioned Jones' journey. Apparently, the explanation for and reason why Jones left Europe were the result of a breach in communications:

The telegrams despatched to him by the League informing him that the delegation which it had been proposed should visit Indonesia had been abandoned had never reached him.⁴⁶⁴

In 1930, Saklatvala faced up to the effects of Jones' journey. In his letter to Piatnitsky, Saklatvala told of his resistance to electing Jones as a member of the delegation:

It was under the advice of other Party members [Gibarti and Münzenberg], that Mardy was elected by the League ["kom.Fraktion"]. I was personally opposed to it, and was recommending W.T. Kelly [?], but I was instructed to withdraw my objection and to back up Mardy Jones' selection at the League's meeting [in Cologne]. The Party idea was to secure a T.U. figure, and Mardy's connection with the MFGB [*Miners' Federation of Great Britain*] and also his position as Secretary of all the T.U. groups of MPs in the House were considered very valuable.⁴⁶⁵

Evidently, the "very valuable" Jones corresponded to the "party idea" of sending a neutral individual to the British and Dutch colonies. Considering Jones' position as an M.P. (*Labour Party* representative for the Pontypridd district), and his connection to the British trade union movement, the LAI and the CPGB expected that this would be sufficient to avoid the scrutiny of the British and the Dutch security services. Ultimately, this did not matter as the information on the apparent cancellation of the delegation by the International Secretariat and the LAI "provisional committee" in London, did not reach Jones in time. Most importantly, the adventure of Jones' journey exposed the weak structure of the LAI.

Jones arrived back in England on 6 March, 1928, after a journey which had included stopovers in British India, Bengal, Malaya and Singapore. After arriving in Batavia, a "Dutch official" had confronted Jones, making enquiries about his connections to the LAI, deciding to deny him any

⁴⁶³ RGASPI 495/30/367, 243, Letter from Bennet [Petrovsky], Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 13/10-1927.

⁴⁶⁴ Reginald Bridgeman, *Information Bulletin*, No.2, Supplement, 15/4-1928.

⁴⁶⁵ RGASPI, 542/1/44, 68-72, Letter from Saklatvala, Glasgow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 30/5-1930. Petrovsky later reported that the "provisional" British LAI committee had decided on July 26, 1927, to send Brockway and Saklatvala to the LAI Executive in Cologne. After the meeting, Mardy Jones received the request to travel "to Jarva [sic] as a British delegate on [sic] a League delegation", see fol. RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Bennet/Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 20/4-1928.

chance of leaving the ship. Thus, Jones had no other option left than to return to England.⁴⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Bridgeman was content with the result of Jones' journey:

[...] Jones had attended the *All-India National Congress* in Madras [...] Throughout his stay in India he had received valuable assistance from Mr. Joshi, [...] Jones had met most of the Indian leaders including Gandhi and Ansari, [...] spent a good deal of time in the Bengal coalfields and had been able to collect valuable information regarding coal-mining conditions in India. He addressed numerous public meetings, [...]⁴⁶⁷

Whilst the short-term effect of Jones' journey was a success, ultimately, it turned into a conflict which lasted several years, focusing exclusively on who had funded the journey and the settling of debts.

The total cost for Jones' journey, including travel arrangements and additional costs (clothes, food), came to £587. This sum also corresponds to the one Saklatvala had notified Piatnitsky about (£600). For Saklatvala, this was a question of who had contributed with money and, above all, who expected reimbursement. In September 1927, the LAI Executive had instructed the International Secretariat to give every delegate £500 (£300 "cash in hand" and an additional sum of £200 after their departure from Marseille). Saklatvala was the financial contact for Jones in London. Securing £300 in London, Saklatvala handed over the money to Jones. However, the money did not come from Saklatvala, but was a loan issued by the lawyer "Thompson" [unknown], who made Saklatvala liable for payment. "Thompson" had in all confidentiality advised Jones to leave London as quickly as possible after receiving the money. This was not the end of it as the trickle of money continued:

Mardy went ahead. He took our money [underlining made by Piatnitsky, author's remark] first. He bought clothes etc. and obtained his 1st class return passage and secured his passport. We kept [...] £300 for the League. We got evasive replies. Then we got a [...] letter that Gibarti had £250 cash at his office in Paris, and was to pay some in cash to Mardy Jones on his way to Marseilles. This was quite definite and unconditional. Mr. Thompson agreed to make a tariff £350. Mardy however refused to more without being paid first, as the League had shown too many changes of mind. Chattophadyaya again assured us that this was all quite certain. Mardy Jones then only agreed to shift if we paid him in London further cash as "loan", on his note [...] but that we were to be paid only when the League paid up. [...] Thus Mr. Thompson obtained from Mardy Jones a letter of authority to collect direct from the LAI

⁴⁶⁶ The Batavian port authorities questioned why Jones wanted to visit Java and, furthermore, it is likely that the British authorities in Madras, India [which had been Jones' point of departure], had informed the Dutch mandate authorities of Jones' arrival, see Reginald Bridgeman, *Information Bulletin*, No.2, Supplement, Berlin, 15/4-1928.

⁴⁶⁷ RGASPI, 542/1/44, 68-72, Letter from Saklatvala, Glasgow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 30/5-1930; Reginald Bridgeman, *Information Bulletin*, No.2, Supplement, 15/4-1928.

£150 as soon as possible. Mardy had £500 cash. Subsequently he wired to Bridgeman from Madras before leaving for Java and obtained his other £100 from Bridgeman.⁴⁶⁸

Thus, three actors funded Jones' journey: the "Thompson loan" (£350); the LAI (£150); and Bridgeman (£100). The original idea was to settle the money question at the LAI General Council meeting in Brussels in December 1927. However, as Saklatvala handed over the affidavit concerning the "Thompson loan" to Chatto and Gibarti, and Bridgeman expected to receive his £100, Chatto suddenly turned and said that £300 of Mardy's budget had been sent back to some of the [communist] parties. Saklatvala later remembered how Chatto had said that the reason for this was that he was "dissatisfied with Mardy Jones's speech" in India. For Saklatvala, this was a disaster, especially when the "Thompson loan" had not been authorised from the beginning by "his client, and only on my recommendation and liability". Thus, the money Jones had procured did, in fact, belong to a third party, apparently unaware of the transaction. It did not matter that Saklatvala urged the International Secretariat to give him the money (which they refused to do), the dilemma haunted him over the following years. By 1930, Saklatvala was no longer capable of brushing the question aside. In a letter to Piatnitsky, Saklatvala explained that it was "hopeless dealing with" the International Secretariat:

I must appeal to the Comintern to enable Berlin to settle this a/c [account] with me. [...] Berlin has still to pay £200, which is [...] £50 for Bridgeman and £150 for me to repay somebody's a/c. My position right now is very uncomfortable.⁴⁶⁹

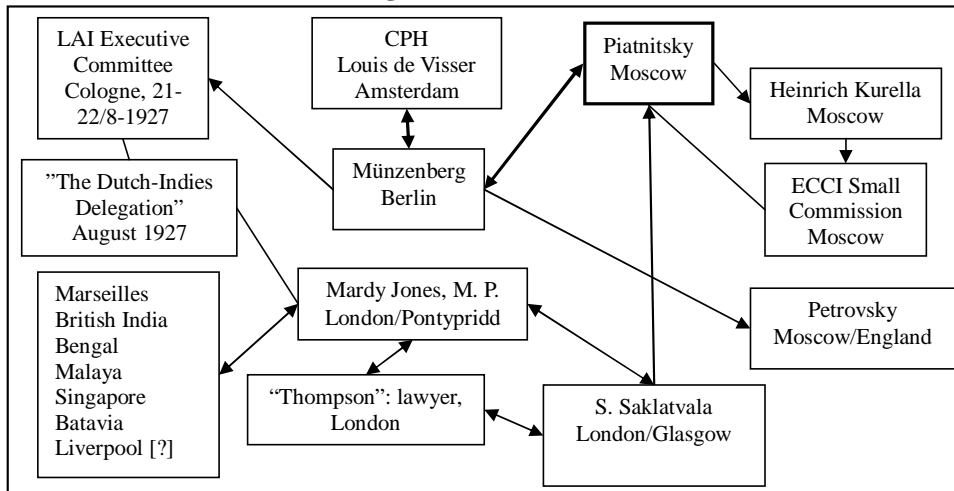
Whether or how Piatnitsky responded to Saklatvala's desperate plea for help remains unknown. However, for the LAI, the Jones' journey was a nominal propaganda victory, stating that he had established connections in Indonesia with the PI and *Sarekat Islam*.⁴⁷⁰ The LAI ignored the fact that Jones had never even set foot on Indonesian soil. According to the table below, the interactionist process of the "Dutch-Indies Delegation" only managed to send one person, Jones, on an adventure to British India and the Far East in 1927-1928.

⁴⁶⁸ RGASPI, 542/1/44, 68-72, Letter from Saklatvala, Glasgow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 30/5-1930. In 1927, Gibarti travelled on a regular basis between Berlin and Paris.

⁴⁶⁹ RGASPI, 542/1/44, 68-72, Letter from Saklatvala, Glasgow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 30/5-1930.

⁴⁷⁰ *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*. Internationales Sekretariat, Nr.1, 15. März, 1928, Berlin.

Table 4.3: The Dutch-Indies Delegation, 1927 – 1930



The establishment of national LAI sections, or propaganda sections (the *Chinese National Agency* in Berlin) had, towards the end of 1927/beginning of 1928, either not been successful or were complete failures. It had been a process influenced by external circumstances, e.g. the KMT putsch against the communists in China and the confirmed strained foreign relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union in connection with the ARCOS raid. However, the process had also established the nature of the relationship between the International Secretariat in Berlin and Comintern headquarters in Moscow. From February to June 1927, this was a process characterised by both silence and a lack of money from Moscow. At the same time, the International Secretariat had to confront factors such as reluctance and suspicion among some of its members, which also affected the LAI’s chance of capitalising on the euphoria of the Brussels Congress. Once the LSI took action, the political understanding of the LAI faced a drastic change.

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The LAI “Organism” Investigated and Experienced

The LAI had broached the colonial question within the European labour and social democratic movements. Appearing on the political arena as one of the few credible actors actively criticising colonialism and imperialism, the LAI left the LSI initially confounded as to what to do and how to respond. The LAI’s success, confirmed by willing support from a number of prominent left-wing personalities, both during and after the Brussels Congress, proved that the colonial question was a potent issue. According to Fimmen, the Brussels Congress illustrated that it was “unfortunate that the colonial question” had not received “proper attention from the LSI and the *Amsterdam*

International".⁴⁷¹ Hence, the only credible solution was to mobilise and unify every "International" in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism, which would also involve seeking support from the Comintern and Profintern, Fimmen stated. Additionally, the Brussels Congress "Manifesto", signed by Lansbury, Fimmen and the LAI Executive, described the LSI as an institution of ignorance:

The national liberation movement of the Asian, African and American peoples is, in its scope, a world phenomenon. And now it [the movement] is – *organically connected and united* [own italics] with the freedom struggle of the proletariat of the old capitalist society – transforming our planet into an entirely civilised world, opening up a new chapter in world history, the history of mankind all over the world. [...] We encourage anyone [...] who does not live from the fruits of this oppression, who hates modern slavery and bondage [...] to join and support us. The oppressed and enslaved peoples expect to receive support from the working class in the advanced countries, [...]⁴⁷²

By linking the organic metaphor to the colonial struggle against the "old capitalist society", in which the LAI represented itself as the leader of a movement capable of transforming the world, this statement challenged the LSI. If one speaks in terms of making the leap from a *Gemeinschaft* to a *Gesellschaft*, the LAI therefore expected to merge colonial kinship and organic ties with organisational heterogeneity and political competitiveness. However, this compelled the LAI to act, according to the analogy introduced by Gareth Morgan, as an "organism [...] open to their environment", an organism which had to "achieve an appropriate relation with that environment" in order to succeed.⁴⁷³

Meanwhile, the LSI was observing how the LAI introduced itself in the public sphere after the Brussels Congress. Realising at an early stage that the LAI had penetrated deep into the European socialist movement, the LSI understood that, in order to confront the LAI, it would need to expose the very structure (ideological, organisational and individual) of the LAI. On 7 October, 1927, the publication of the LSI's analysis of the LAI, "Zur Geschichte der Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung" (On the History of the League against Colonial Oppression), in the *Internationale Information*, announced the LSI's objective to expose the LAI. The release of this analysis also indicated that the European socialist movement intended to confront the LAI on the colonial question. Additionally, national security services would refer to this analysis as a source of information on the LAI.

⁴⁷¹ See *Introduction* for the LSI and the *Amsterdam International*.

⁴⁷² For Fimmen, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.196; and the Brussels Congress "Manifesto", p.246, 250.

⁴⁷³ Bryan S. Turner & Chris Rojek, *Society and Culture. Principles of Scarcity and Solidarity*, Sage Publications, London, 2001, p.26; Morgan 1998, p.38, 40.

The release of the LSI's analysis in October was no great sensation. While Lansbury's resignation from the LAI Executive in June had given a hint of what was to come, by August, during the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne, Fimmen, Nehru and Brockway were questioning the very purpose of the organisation, accusing Gibarti of dishonest behaviour and of having disguised the activities of the International Secretariat. Nehru later described the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne as a decisive experience for him, especially in the way the episode had revealed the dynamics and "inner conflicts" of the "Western Labour world", and the "aggressive and rather vulgar methods" of the communists and "their habit of denouncing everybody who did not agree with them".⁴⁷⁴

The manner in which the communist members in the LAI Executive interacted with the non-communist members did not, however, have any rational explanation. According to the "Anti-Imperialist Commission" in Moscow, there existed a risk that the "non-communist element" in the LAI Executive were plotting a possible "take over" of the LAI. Thus, Münzenberg had to guarantee the exertion of "communist influence" by getting communists to assume "leading positions" in the LAI Executive, e.g. by giving the KIM a permanent seat, while the International Secretariat was to remain in "constant contact" with the ECCI Agitprop Department in Moscow in order to receive regular instructions on Comintern policy. In the latter case, this would imply receiving instructions on the propaganda campaign against the KMT and signal its protest against the collaboration between the LSI and the British *Labour Party* "to liquidate" the LAI.⁴⁷⁵

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The LAI Detonated. The LSI and the History of the LAI

The LAI is the legitimate child of the well-known German communist M.d.R [Author's note: Member of the Reichstag] Willi Münzenberg.

Internationale Information, 7/10-1927

The LSI's 7 October analysis focused on the political and organisational nature of the LAI. Accusing the LAI of being a "sham", the LSI argued that, in reality, there was no Executive representing the LAI; Münzenberg, the "spiritus rector [and] well-known German communist",

⁴⁷⁴ RGASPI 542/1/17, 31-39, Manuscript, Gibarti's report from the LAI Executive Committee, Cologne, 20-21/1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/2035, 107-110, Report on LAI, Berlin, 15/10-1927. Nehru supported the opinion of the "Anglo-American members" (the non-communist members in the LAI Executive) despite their attraction to communism and the Comintern line ("distaste") against the LSI and the colonial question, see Nehru 1936, p.163.

⁴⁷⁵ RGASPI 495/3/18, 136-139, Resolution, ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission, Moscow, 15/6-1927. On 13 July, the Political Secretariat adopted the "Guidelines for a Campaign against the Amsterdam International Congress", which aimed to protest against the leaders of social democracy and the socialists in Europe, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/18, 101-104, "Richtlinien für die Kampagne gegen den internationalen Kongress von Amsterdam", 13/7-1927.

was in charge and, consequently, the LAI was “another United Front tactic of the Bolsheviks”.⁴⁷⁶ This analysis had been an undertaking meticulously planned and organised by the LSI, under the direct supervision of Adler and William Gillies, the secretary of the *Labour Party* International Department in London. Its primary aim was to expose the LAI’s communist connections and, with any luck, create a split between the prominent socialist characters who had expressed an emotional engagement in the LAI, e.g. Brockway, Fimmen, Maxton, A. J. Cook, John Beckett and Wilkinson. For Adler, a principal motive was to question how they could defend the LAI, while at the same time posing as leaders of socialist parties which were members of the LSI. Brockway was an exceptional figure in this context. As introduced above, Brockway quickly assumed the role as the strongest defender of the LAI, telling Adler to understand the necessity of letting the ILP affiliate with the LAI. Adler was horrified by the thought that Brockway might succeed in convincing the ILP to affiliate with the LAI, which, in turn, would call into question the LSI’s political credibility as well as being a breach of its statutes: “the Parties associated with the LSI undertake not to affiliate with any other political International”.⁴⁷⁷

Brockway remained convinced that the LAI was an issue that went beyond political borders, and that every member in the LAI Executive had equal rights and responsibilities ignoring the question of political affiliations, despite Gibarti’s omnipotent influence at the International Secretariat in Berlin. For this reason, Brockway informed Adler of his intention to raise “the issue of the LAI” at the next LSI Executive meeting in Brussels in September.⁴⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Adler remained silent. However, with the release, on 26 August, of Brockway’s article, “The Coloured Peoples’ International”, in the British left-wing paper, *The New Leader*, Adler was left with no other option than to respond. The question was how to present a response to Brockway’s conclusion that the LSI and the *Amsterdam International* seemed indifferent towards the colonial question, and that the rumour of the “communist connections” of both the LAI and the Brussels Congress was nonsense. According to Brockway, the anti-colonial struggle was a topic which extended beyond the political sphere:

I have attended many conferences which have been described as “International”, but only one of them was international, [...] At the last International Socialist Conference at Marseilles [August 1925], there were no “coloured” representatives among the delegates. [...] But one international conference, in my experience, placed the whites in their proper

⁴⁷⁶ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “Zur Geschichte der Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung“, in *Internationale Information*, IV, No. 52, 7/10-1927, Zürich, pp.438-448.

⁴⁷⁷ IISG LSI Archives, 284/2, Letter from Adler, Zurich, to Brockway, London, 13/4-1927.

⁴⁷⁸ IISG LSA Archives 284/8-10, Zur Sitzung der Exekutive der SAI [LSI], Zürich, September 1927. Petrovsky later wrote that Brockway had collected 50 prominent signatures [unknown] prior to the LAI Executive in Cologne, aiming to create an “advisory committee” for the LAI. However, and if the committee ever held a meeting is unknown, see fol. RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, 20/4-1928.

place. It was held at Brussels last February. From the platform the conference hall was a remarkable sight. Every race seemed to be there.⁴⁷⁹

The question of race, as a social and cultural demarcation, convinced Brockway of the “international” scope and aim of the LAI. Brockway stated that the LSI’s “suspicion and even opposition” contradicted the inert nature and goodwill of the socialist movement in supporting a political actor such as the LAI:

The whisperings of Labour officials suffering from the Communist complex have been supplemented by reports that Scotland Yard is keeping an eye upon the organisation and that one should consequently be careful before associating with it. [...] Personally, I think it would be suicidal if Socialists refrained from any association with this movement, even if it had been initiated by the Communists. It has done what the Socialist International has failed to do – seriously begin the task of uniting the proletarian movements among the coloured races.⁴⁸⁰

Brockway argued that any of the qualms he had had about the LAI had disappeared “after a very close and careful examination”, and were “absolutely unjustified”. The constitution of the LAI Executive was proof of this where, out of twelve members “only three [were] communists” and “they by no means exert a decisive influence”. What was the reason for Brockway going public and announcing his commitment to the LAI in such explicit terms? In a letter from Gibarti to Brockway prior to the release of this article in *The New Leader*, Gibarti explains why Brockway acted as he did:

We understand that once more the accusation has been put forward that our League is a semi-Communist organisation, financed and led by the Soviet Government or by the Communist International. More than once we have officially and emphatically repudiated these [...] statements and have proved that our funds are not derived from Russian money. [...] However, we declare ourselves prepared to meet any representative body of the Socialist International, [...] We have nothing to hide.⁴⁸¹

After the publication of this article, Brockway informed Adler that the LAI had “nothing to hide”. By repeating Gibarti’s words in his letter to Adler, Brockway stated that the LSI was about to

⁴⁷⁹ The article is filed in the LSI Archives at IISG, and constituted a part of the working material Adler and Gillies had at its disposal to analyse the LAI, see IISG LSA Archives 284/5-7, “The Coloured Peoples’ International”, by A. Fenner Brockway (*The New Leader* 26 August, 1927) [copy].

⁴⁸⁰ IISG LSA Archives 284/5-7, “The Coloured Peoples’ International”, by A. Fenner Brockway (*The New Leader* 26 August, 1927) [copy].

⁴⁸¹ IISG LSI Archives 284/4, Letter from Gibarti, Cologne, to Brockway, London, 21/8-1927. Brockway requested a couple of changes from Gibarti and Münzenberg after the Cologne meeting. For example, according to Petrovsky’s report, Brockway wanted to locate his personal secretary at the International Secretariat in order to gain “access to all documents”, see fol. RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Bennet/Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 20/4-1928.

commit “a great mistake” if they remained “indifferent to this movement”. For Adler, both Brockway’s article and Gibarti’s letter were the confirmation that Adler had been waiting for, particularly after hearing that Brockway intended to re-route the communist tendency of the organisation in a more “socialist direction” and, thereby, turn the LAI into “one of the biggest factors in the future development of the world”.⁴⁸² Adler’s reaction was one of anxiety, suspecting the LAI of being well on the way to usurping the ILP, and becoming a political force the LSI would have to combat. A logical step for Adler was to instigate an analysis of the LAI; however, this required empirical observation. On 30 August, Gillies contacted the Russian émigré journalist and member of the *Menshevik Party*, Rafail Abramovic, who was living in Berlin. Perceived as being the LSI’s expert on the “Russian question”, Gillies wondered whether Abramovic had any material on the LAI. Additionally, Gillies requested that Adler send back the “file on the Brussels Congress of the Colonial League”.⁴⁸³ In England, Brockway continued to declare his belief in the LAI in public arenas. On 16 September, *The New Leader* published a second article from Brockway, in which he concluded: “whatever the truth about the Communist initiative in creating the League, it had succeeded in combining the anti-Imperialist movements of the subject races and that it is suicidal for Socialists to remain outside a development of such immense possibilities”.⁴⁸⁴

Brockway was one of many focal points in Adler’s and Gillies investigation of the LAI. Their primary aim was to get their analysis and additional documents on the LAI prepared in time for the LSI Executive meeting in Brussels in September. From the end of August to the middle of September, Gillies carried out his work with diligence and compiled a thick dossier of material which revealed the “communist connection” of the LAI, documents which included, for example, the article by Münzenberg in *Inprecorr* (August 1926) – the theoretical organ of the LAI, copies of the *Kolonial Revue*, miscellaneous articles in *Kölnische Zeitung* and in *A-I-Z*, as well as the LAI’s circular letters. At the LSI Executive meeting in September, Gillies provided each delegate with copies of these documents,⁴⁸⁵ confident that this material would stimulate a discussion on the LAI. In comparison to Brockway’s naïve ambition to get the LSI Executive to endorse the decision to let the ILP affiliate with the LAI, Adler and Gillies expected the LSI Executive to both approve their analysis and to publish their results in the *Internationale Information*. Brockway attended the

⁴⁸² IISG LSI Archives 284/3, Letter from Brockway, London, to Adler, Zurich, 30/8-1927. Brockway enclosed a copy of Gibarti’s letter to Adler.

⁴⁸³ IISG LSI Archives 3050/9, Letter from Gillies, London, to R. Abramovic, Berlin, 30/8-1927. In 1931, Abramovic, together with Adler, Vandervelde and the French socialist Leon Blum, published the book *Der Moskauer Prozess und die Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale* (Berlin, Verlag J. H. W. Dietz Nachfolger); IISG LSI Archives 3050/10, Short note from Adler, Zurich, to Gillies, London, 3/9-1927. Adler explained to Gillies that he had sent back the LAI file on 24 February, wishing him the best of luck in “finding the documents in your office”.

⁴⁸⁴ Quote taken from Saville Vol. VII 1984, p.43.

⁴⁸⁵ IISG LSA Archives 284/8-10, Zur Sitzung der Exekutive der SAI [LSI], Zürich, September 1927. Gillies’ summary constituted the very basis of the LSI’s analysis of the LAI.

meeting, only to realise that the LAI question and his defence of the organisation would be the focus of the meeting. The LSI Executive confronted Brockway, demanding him to explain why he deserved to remain as the ILP's representative within the LSI. Brockway later wrote that this episode had been a horrible experience. The leader of the SPD Otto Wels "made a terrific attack [...] stormed like a mad bull", accusing Brockway of running the errands of the KPD in organising anti-social democratic propaganda in Germany, whereas Gillies and Adler denounced Brockway's contacts with the LAI. At the end of the session, "condemned by all", the LSI Executive demanded that Brockway resign, either from the LAI or from the LSI Executive. Opposing the harsh statements against his *persona*, Brockway argued that the LSI had no colonial agenda, only to receive the answer that the LSI was on the verge of mobilising and "pressing forward with its colonial work".⁴⁸⁶

After this meeting with the LSI Executive in Brussels, Gillies continued to evaluate the connections and patterns linking prominent non-communists members with the LAI. For example, Gillies provided Adler with information on Fimmen's behaviour as an LAI member. In his letter, Gillies informed Adler that he had met a delegate of the *Mexican Federation of Labour* (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana; CROM) in Paris, who had denied that Fimmen had posed as a CROM delegate at the Brussels Congress. Fimmen had acted deceitfully, particularly as this trade union did not want to have any kind of association with the LAI, and it was a shameful performance as he had not asked for permission to introduce himself as "their representative".⁴⁸⁷ Nevertheless, other actors chose to continue to defend the LAI. Roger Baldwin sent a letter to Adler on 24 September, stating that the International Secretariat would soon move to Paris, thus, this would be the end of "Münzenberg's close supervision" in Berlin. Urging Adler to understand that the LAI not was a "Communist façade", Baldwin explained that the anti-imperialist movement had "developed just as we who are not Communists had determined it should", while the LAI existed and worked "above party and factional interests" in support of "colonial freedom".⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps Baldwin's letter convinced Adler that the LAI had become a success amongst prominent left-wing personalities, as Adler contacted Gillies on 28 September, requesting him to send him a copy of an article which included "quotations on the Colonial League" the LSI Executive had discussed in Brussels. These "quotations" had originally come from an issue of the *Inprecorr* (published on 13 May 1926), which had introduced Kuusinen's communist "solar system" theory

⁴⁸⁶ Brockway 1942 (second impression 1947), pp.167-169; Saville Vol. VII 1984, pp.40-50.

⁴⁸⁷ IISG LSI Archives 3050/30, Letter from Gillies, London, to Adler, Zurich, 22/9-1927. For Fimmen and the CROM, see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.236.

⁴⁸⁸ IISG LSI Archives 3050/31-32, Letter from Baldwin, Paris, to Adler, Zurich, 24/9-1927.

(see *Introduction*). After receiving the copy, Adler highlighted the following quote, the main gist of the LSI's October analysis,

[...] organisations against colonial atrocities and oppression of Eastern peoples are new types of sympathising mass organisations which will become more evident in many countries in the immediate future.⁴⁸⁹

The LSI feared that the LAI would evolve into “a mass organisation”. Thus, for Adler and Gillies, their October analysis would expose the LAI as being nothing less than a front organisation in the service of the Comintern.

The publication of the LSI's analysis on 7 October shook the very foundation and credibility of the LAI as a non-political actor. Once news of the LSI's “History of the League against Colonial Oppression” had been made public, national security services considered this analysis to be a useful source. On 15 October, the RKÜöO in Berlin used the document as reference material to describe the LAI as a “relief organisation for Soviet Russian foreign policy and propagandist for Comintern's world revolution propaganda”.⁴⁹⁰ The analysis questioned the LAI as a political actor, but it also initiated a process to deprive the LAI of political credibility within the European socialist movement. However, the communists only had themselves to blame, the LSI stated. Firstly, by giving Münzenberg a distinguished role on the LAI Executive had been a serious mistake, a crucial fact used by the LSI to categorise the organisation as being *communist*. The LSI analysis introduced an understanding that the LAI and the anti-colonial project had been under Münzenberg's patronage from the beginning. While the International Secretariat was located in the same building as IAH headquarters in Berlin, the LAI did not disguise its similarities to other “Münzenbergian leagues” and to the IAH. Secondly, the LSI warned the European socialist, social democratic and trade union movements against getting in contact with the LAI, especially as it was an offspring of the IAH, created and refined in line with “Bolshevik united front manoeuvres”. The LAI was the creation of the policy advocated by the Comintern at the Sixth ECCI Plenum in 1926, the LSI argued. Hence, the European socialist movement had to begin to grasp the extent of the far-stretching ambitions of the communists, and to realise that the LAI was only a part of a grander scheme that the Comintern had conceived in order to establish a communist “solar system” under the pretext of exerting “communist influence on the masses”. Thirdly, Adler and Gillies exposed the origins of the anti-colonial project from a genealogical perspective. By linking the LAI with

⁴⁸⁹ IISG LSI Archives 3050/36, Telegram from Adler, Zurich, to Gillies, London, 28/9-1927. For Gillies' reply and confirmation to Adler, see IISG LSI Archives 3050/37, Short note from Gillies, London, to Adler, Zurich, 29/9-1927; IISG LSI Archives 3050/38, Extract from Resolution, *Inprecorr* (13/5-1926, Vol.6, No.40). Adler had written his name at the top of this document.

⁴⁹⁰ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, “Zur Geschichte der Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung“, in *Internationale Information*, IV, No. 52, 7/10-1927, Zürich, 438-448; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/2035, 107-110, Report on the LAI, Berlin, 15/10-1927.

the transformation of the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee* to the LACO in 1926, the LSI stated that the IAH's anti-colonial project had culminated in the transformation of the movement in Brussels in 1927.⁴⁹¹

A couple of days after the release of the LSI's analysis, Brockway chose to resign from the LAI Executive. He had been planning to visit Gibarti in Paris, together with Maxton, in the beginning of October; however, after reading this analysis, Brockway cancelled this journey. On 11 October, Brockway sent his letter of resignation to Gibarti, describing how the political situation and critique had broken his spirit. Unable to maintain any "official connection to the League", Brockway had finally taken a stand, explaining that his position on the LSI Executive was more valuable than retaining his LAI Executive membership. Yet, this did not imply a definitive end, Brockway stated, asking Gibarti to understand the difference between official and unofficial ties. Brockway had evidently instructed Maxton to assume the role as liaison, a decision which would guarantee the ILP's continued "fullest sympathy and support" towards the LAI.⁴⁹² Hence, when Gillies contacted Brockway on 22 October, expecting to hear some kind of public announcement of his resignation from the LAI Executive,⁴⁹³ this belief remained intact. In what way did Brockway assist the LAI? According to Petrovsky, prior to the LAI General Council in Brussels in December 1927, Brockway had wired "for money in advance" to cover the travel expenses of the British LAI Section back to England.⁴⁹⁴

The LAI and the colonial question caused an upheaval within the LSI in 1927. Yet, on the other hand, it also initiated a discussion on colonialism and imperialism within the LSI. The establishment of the LAI, and also Brockway's criticism of the lack of any discussion on the colonial question, and on the question of a "coloured peoples' international", had certainly contributed to this. The LSI Executive meeting held in Brussels in September 1927 had included the colonial question on its agenda and resolved to establish a colonial commission to begin the work of examining "the colonial problem". The primary aim of this was to get the LSI to instigate an independent colonial agenda. The LSI Executive instructed the commission to send questionnaires to every "affiliated party", including questions aimed at discerning the political, social and structural effects of the colonial mandate system, but also whether there existed any labour movements in the colonies, as well as the question of race. The results of these

⁴⁹¹ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, "Zur Geschichte der Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung", in *Internationale Information*, IV, No. 52, 7/10-1927, Zürich, 438-448. The LSI had collected the official publications of the LAI (*Die koloniale Freiheitskampf*, various LACO and LAI pamphlets, *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*) and *Inprecorr*.

⁴⁹² RGASPI 542/1/18, 58, (Confidential) Letter from Brockway, London, to Gibarti, Paris [3 Rue Parmentier, Neuilly s/Seine], 11/10-1927.

⁴⁹³ IISG LSI Archives 3050/46, Letter from Gillies, London, to Brockway, 22/10-1927. Gillies urged Brockway to explain "in reality" his position in the LAI, something he would be "very grateful" to hear.

⁴⁹⁴ RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Bennet on the British LAI Section, 20/4-1928.

questionnaires would assist the commission in presenting a structural understanding of the colonial question to the LSI Executive in December 1927.⁴⁹⁵

How did the International Secretariat react to the LSI's analysis? Initially, the International Secretariat chose silence. The "Anti-Imperialist Commission" in Moscow instructed the International Secretariat to wait until a response had been thoroughly prepared, a response, which, above all, should not be too overtly antagonistic and demagogic towards social democracy in order not to lose the support of the left-wing movement in Europe. The proper moment to deliver their response would be during the LAI General Council in December, the "Anti-Imperialist Commission" concluded.⁴⁹⁶ This was a major mistake. Hence, the LAI's silence strengthened the LSI's analysis as it rampaged through the European labour movement. At the same time, after the release of the LSI analysis, another explanation shed light on why the International Secretariat seemed unable to send the LSI an answer. Apparently, the hierarchy of relations at the International Secretariat in Berlin had evolved into a scene of conflict

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"I am an oppressed colonial slave of the LAI!"

Hansin Liao's narrative portrays the International Secretariat both in a state of chaos and embroiled in a power struggle. With the dissolution of the *Chinese National Agency* in July 1927, and with Liao becoming a member of staff at the International Secretariat, he had expected to strengthen his position within the anti-imperialist movement. However, by assuming a position at the International Secretariat, a drastic change had occurred in Liao's life. In January 1928, Liao sent a letter to Petrovsky in Moscow reminding him that "you at one time offered me your support". What was the reason for Liao's plea for help? Firstly, Liao argued that the LAI and its International Secretariat were futile enterprises. Secondly, Liao described how Münzenberg and Gibarti oppressed and harassed some of the colonial members at the bureau in Berlin, stating, "I am an oppressed colonial slave of the LAI!"⁴⁹⁷ His loss of faith in the LAI was a process that had begun when Liao had wanted to gain access to the International Secretariat's core. However, for the LAI, Liao was an ideal actor to head its propaganda campaign against the "treacherous" KMT, an idea which Liao had, initially, willingly accepted. According to confidential instructions from

⁴⁹⁵ IISG LSI Archives 285/1, Z.74 [Directives of the LSI Executive] Fragebogen, September 1927. The result of the investigation, the answers from the affiliated parties and the ensuing analysis, are questions for further examination. For example, to evaluate whether the report contributed to either establishing or revising the LSI's attitude on the colonial question in connection with the LSI's international congress in Brussels, 5-11 August, 1928.

⁴⁹⁶ RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927.

⁴⁹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/29, 2, Letter from Liao, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 13/1-1928.

the ECCI Secretariat to Münzenberg in connection with the LAI General Council, the LAI was to use Liau in the following manner:

At the next sitting of the Enlarged General Council of the League, the Chinese question must be raised. The attempt of the European reformists to support the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and Fascist trade unions in China should be met with a sharp criticism of the Kuomintang. *Chinese delegates, particularly some of the former Kuomintang members* [Hansin Liau, own italics], should lead this attack upon the Kuomintang.⁴⁹⁸

The crux of the matter was that Liau perceived himself as something more than just a tool of propaganda. In August 1927, Liau expected Münzenberg to give him the position as “political secretary” at the International Secretariat, and to be in charge of the Chinese question. However, Münzenberg seemed reluctant to meet Liau’s request and, when Liau confronted Münzenberg, Münzenberg refused to answer. Liau informed Petrovsky that he was at a loss as to how to act, or what to say and, finally, he asked the steno-typist at the International Secretariat, the German communist Ella Windmüller, what was really happening at the bureau. The only recommendation Windmüller gave Liau was to approach Münzenberg again and, at a second meeting between the two men, Liau realised that he could forget the position as political secretary. Liau stated that the indifference of Münzenberg and Gibarti towards dealing with “personal disputes” constituted the very essence of the inherent problems that had emerged at the International Secretariat. Critical of “the unequal distribution of power”, Liau denounced Münzenberg and Gibarti’s despotic behaviour, which would, in the end, prevent the LAI from taking the leap “from demonstration to organisation”.⁴⁹⁹

In October, Liau felt that discipline at the International Secretariat “had completely broken down” and that the unified opposition of the Münzenberg and Gibarti “fraction” was a major issue. Codevilla visited the International Secretariat in October, telling Liau that Gibarti intended to “fight till the end” to curtail his ambition of becoming political secretary. Additionally, Liau informed Petrovsky that Münzenberg continuously harassed him by expressing “mocking comments” every time they met, e.g. suggesting that Liau collect “some money” for the LAI. The money issue was a satirical and malicious statement which Münzenberg used to degrade Liau, particularly as Liau had not received any salary at all from the LAI between October 1927 and

⁴⁹⁸ RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 22/9-1927. Liau financed the printing of the pamphlet with his own money (105 Marks), in order to be able to distribute it among the delegates attending the *Fourth Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions* in Paris in July. Expecting Münzenberg to reimburse him for the costs, Liau complained about not having received any money. Petrovsky received a copy of this pamphlet; see fol. RGASPI 495/30/339, 5-6, Pamphlet by Hansin Liau, 28/7-1927; RGASPI 542/1/29, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ RGASPI 495/30/350, 23-24, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 10/10-1927; RGASPI 542/1/29, 2, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 13/1-1928.

January 1928. Thus, living on the edge with his wife, KPD member Dora Dombrowski-Liau, the ZK KPD granted Liau a short-term loan. This loan became due in January, but Liau had no money. Because of all this, at the beginning of 1928, Liau desperately wanted to find a way out of the LAI.⁵⁰⁰ However, is it possible to discover the reasons for Liau's isolation at the International Secretariat, and why he accused Münzenberg and Gibarti of harassment?

The root of the dispute seems to have been focused on issues relating to re-organisation and political engagement. The discussion on whether to locate the International Secretariat in Berlin or Paris had also involved Liau's position within the LAI. Codevilla had told Liau to consider Paris as an option if he wanted to find a solution to his problems in Berlin and, if he accepted this offer, the position as political secretary would be his. However, despite the good intentions of Codevilla's proposal, Liau explained that he could barely speak a single word of French. This would prevent him from carrying out any kind of work and, more importantly, he dreaded the idea of having to share the Paris office with Gibarti. Liau had already criticised Gibarti's frequent journeys between Berlin and Paris, a cost which drained the already strained LAI budget. For Liau, the most convenient solution was to locate Gibarti permanently, along with one steno-typist, in Paris, while he could assume the role as political secretary in Berlin, working together with Chatto to "sort out the important correspondence", edit the *Kolonial Revue* and have Windmüller and one assistant take care of the administrative business ("store all documents").⁵⁰¹ It was a question of re-organising the International Secretariat in order to increase the LAI's activism and, by doing so, establishing the LAI as an international organisation, Liau argued. In January 1928, Liau nonetheless concluded that the LAI was nothing more than a façade. One of the principal reasons for Liau coming to this conclusion was that none of the members at the International Secretariat discussed the colonial question, although Münzenberg did not allow him to take part in any political discussions. In November 1927, Liau was in Moscow, where he met Heimo at Comintern headquarters and explained to him how the core at the International Secretariat were excluding him, a dilemma which prevented him from doing any constructive work, just as it confirmed that the LAI was nothing more than an illusion. Heimo told Liau to contact Petrovsky in the future if the situation in Berlin worsened and, in the meantime, to continue working on the Chinese question.⁵⁰² Liau informed the ECCI Agitprop Department that the LAI could be more than a vehicle for anti-imperialist propaganda; however, this required a new impetus:

⁵⁰⁰ RGASPI 542/1/29, 2, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 13/1-1928. Perhaps the ZK KPD granted Liau a short-term loan; see fol. RGASPI 495/225/1043, 41, Anlage Nr.4 – KPD delegation of the ECCI, 10/2-1930.

⁵⁰¹ RGASPI 495/30/350, 23-24, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 10/10-1927; RGASPI 495/30/350, 32, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to ECCI Agitprop Department, Moscow, November, 1927.

⁵⁰² RGASPI 495/30/350, 23-24, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 10/10-1927; RGASPI 542/1/29, 3, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat/Heimo, Moscow, 17/1-1928. If Liau wanted to contact Goldfarb, Heimo told him to use Petrovsky as a reference.

[...] to establish an international organisation of struggle, then the existing manner of work, which is only built on airy propaganda, must cease to exist. Solid work has to start, and be prepared to confront suspicions from different circles.⁵⁰³

Liau urged the ECCI Agitprop Department to understand the necessity of reinforcing the “spirit of struggle” within the LAI; however, the euphoria of the Brussels Congress was a moment which had passed. The challenge ahead, therefore, looked insurmountable, especially as the International Secretariat depended more and more upon receiving directives on a regular basis from the Comintern, while at the same being forced to confront the effects of the LSI analysis. As if this were not enough, Liau concluded that the constant lack of money was due to the “minimal” budget endorsed by the Comintern and the fact that some of the money being handed over to Münzenberg in Berlin from couriers arriving from Moscow were in “bad or non-exchangeable currencies”. Liau could not grasp why the International Secretariat preferred this method of payment to “regular credit transactions”.⁵⁰⁴

This conflict with Münzenberg left a lasting impression on Liau’s life. Due to the intolerable situation in Berlin, Liau handed over two letters of resignation in January 1928, one to the ECCI Secretariat and the other to Münzenberg and Gibarti. Liau declared that it was impossible for him to remain in Berlin, promising to stay on at the International Secretariat until the ECCI had approved his resignation. Münzenberg did not object to Liau’s wish to leave the International Secretariat.⁵⁰⁵

In December 1928, Liau left Berlin and travelled, with his wife, to Moscow. Arriving in Moscow, Liau had to confront the charge from the Chinese communist émigré group in Berlin accusing him of condoning “deviationist policies”. However, the International Control Commission (the cadre department and repressive organ within the Comintern; ICC) acquitted Liau of this charge and, in April 1929, Liau and his wife had their KPD memberships transferred to the CPSU (B).⁵⁰⁶ During the investigation, the ICC nevertheless wanted to know why Liau had resigned from the International Secretariat. As noted in a letter from Liau to the German ECCI

⁵⁰³ RGASPI 495/30/350, 32, Re-organisation of the LAI, Liau, Berlin, to ECCI Agitprop Department, November 1927 (from the original in German).

⁵⁰⁴ RGASPI 495/30/350, 32, Re-organisation of the LAI, Liau, Berlin, to ECCI Agitprop Department, November 1927.

⁵⁰⁵ RGASPI 542/1/29, 3, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Heimo/ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 17/1-1928; RGASPI 542/1/29, 4, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Münzenberg and Gibarti, Berlin, 17/1-1928. Münzenberg passed on a copy of Liau’s letter to the ECCI Secretariat, fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 6-7, Report from Münzenberg, Brussels, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/4-1928.

⁵⁰⁶ The question of Liau and his political dishonesty concerned his former contact with the Berlin section of the KMT, a question the Chinese ECCI delegation in Moscow wanted to investigate. Fritz Heckert supported Liau in this respect, telling Wang Ming, the representative of the Chinese delegation in Moscow, that Liau was an honest and reliable individual, thus, it was an illogical act to suspect him of deviationist activities, see fol. RGASPI 495/225/1043, 42, Anlage Nr.7 – Letter from Heckert, Berlin, to Wang Ming, Moscow, 1930; RGASPI 495/225/1043, 40, Anlage Nr.2, ICC Protocol, Moscow, 13/3-1929.

delegation (Pieck, Heckert and “Weber”, real name: Heinrich Wiatrek), the “reasons for my resignation” were based on Münzenberg’s lies and behaviour. For example, Münzenberg had spread the false rumour that Liau had wanted to leave Berlin for the sole purpose of pursuing studies at the KUTV in Moscow. If the German ECCI delegation did not believe him, Liau suggested that they contact Codevilla or Chatto, individuals who would be able to verify the accuracy of his account. For Münzenberg, on the other hand, the whole ordeal with Liau was a burden. At a meeting with Robin Page Arnot, CPGB member and Comintern emissary, in Frankfurt am Main on 3 January 1929, Münzenberg asked him to finally sort out the controversy with Liau, a matter concerning a quarrel over “Lebensmittel” (*means of life*; money).⁵⁰⁷

The narrative on Liau introduces an in-depth understanding of the LAI in 1927. While early 1927 had witnessed the euphoria of the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement in Brussels after the 10-14 February Brussels Congress, towards the end of the year, one of its fervent supporters experienced the organisation as a vision about to disappear. Despite the Brussels Congress having paved the way for the establishment of the LAI, a majority of its activities in the aftermath of the event only verified the difficulties encountered in trying to achieve a global influence. For example, the idea and practical efforts required to establish national sections and to respond to both the antagonism from the LSI and the increased suspicion from domestic and foreign national security services. Yet, the defining factor was the Comintern’s ambivalence towards reacting immediately upon the success of the Brussels Congress, a conundrum which created tense relations between the International Secretariat and the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. By the time the Comintern had begun to understand the potential political and organisational strength of the LAI, particularly with the formation of the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” in Moscow in June 1927, the euphoria of the Brussels Congress had passed. Nonetheless, for the Comintern, the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” represented its instrument of control, essential to scrutinising the International Secretariat in Moscow. According to Münzenberg, the LAI had to create a second, forceful political demonstration in 1927; hence, the inaugural meeting of the LAI General Council was to be a pivotal event, aimed at correcting the feeling of insecurity that had begun to manifest itself within the LAI.

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⁵⁰⁷ RGASPI 495/225/1043, 38-39, Letter from Hansin Liau and Dora Dombrowski-Liau, Moscow, “An die deutsche Vertretung bei EKKI, z.H. der Genossen Pieck, Heckert und Weber, Moscow, 3/2-1936; RGASPI 542/1/30, 1, Handwritten letter from Robin Page Arnot, Frankfurt a/M, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 3/1-1929. Arnot recommended to Kuusinen that the “matter can very well lie over”.

Chapter 4. Brussels Revisited

Experience has demonstrated that the League can be a powerful instrument to unite the colonial peoples and the working classes of the imperialist countries in the struggle against imperialism.

ECCI Anti-Imperialist Commission,
Moscow, 22/9-1927

The League will become a powerful organ.

Sen Katayama, Moscow, 6/2-1928

On 25 November 1927, Lamine Senghor passed away at the age of 38 in Fréjus, France. Paralysed by tuberculosis and suffering from a loss of speech, Senghor's death was caused by having served in the French army during the Great War. An ardent defender of social rights for the black race, and an outspoken anti-colonial activist in France, Senghor's demise was a severe blow to the anti-colonial movement in France. As the leader and co-founder of *La Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre* (CDNR) and a member of the PCF, Senghor's fiery performance at the Brussels Congress had given him a prominent position within the anti-imperialist movement. His performance in Brussels also made the French *Sûreté* aware of the need to rigorously monitor Senghor's movements in 1927. As a member of the LAI Executive, Senghor was the spokesperson for the African liberation struggle, especially for the West African movement in Europe. However, in the summer of 1927, Senghor had resigned from the CDNR due to fractional disputes, only to establish, together with the French Sudanese (now Mali) activist Garan Kouyaté, the radical organisation *Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre* (League for the Defence of the Negro Race; LDRN).⁵⁰⁸ Senghor's death was not, initially, given martyrdom status. However, in July 1928, Münzenberg wrote in the LAI's political organ, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*:

In France, the African Lamine Senghor, the brave representative of his suffering race, who was elected a Member of the Executive Committee of the LAI, and whose speech at the Congress was a passionate and mordant denunciation of French Imperialism, fell victim to

⁵⁰⁸ Langley 1973, pp.305-306. After July 1927, Senghor was a "marked man", bedridden by disease and prior to his own demise, both his father and son (Diene, 22 August 1927) had died. The LDRN organ in France, *La Race Nègre*, published on May 1928, Senghor's obituary, which declared "un bon nègre, un sincère africain [...] soldat de sa race", RGASPI 542/1/10, 52-57, Summary of meeting with the LAI communist fraction, Brussels, 6/12-1927; Young 2001, pp.263-269; Geiss, 1968, p.241; Holger Weiss (CoWoPa6), "Glimpses of African Political Engagement in Weimar Germany", Åbo Akademi; Philippe Dewitte, *Les Mouvements nègres en France, 1919-1939*, Paris, Harmattan (1985).

the rancour of the authorities. He was arrested and cast into prison, where he died a few months later of tuberculosis.⁵⁰⁹

In a bizarre way, Senghor's demise illustrated the fragile internal status within the LAI at the end of 1927. The LSI's October analysis had contributed to enhancing the difficult work to solidify the organisational work of the LAI in Europe, e.g. by establishing active national sections, while the hierarchical relations at the International Secretariat and the lack of secure finances had defined its structural limitations. Thus, the LAI General Council in Brussels on 9-11 December 1927, would be a chance for the LAI, Münzenberg and the Comintern to rectify former mistakes in order to make the leap from demonstration to organisation.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the continued endeavours of the LAI to secure its organisational structure. The LAI General Council in Brussels emphasised the end of euphoria, while at the very same moment the International Secretariat was struggling to establish functional patterns of organisation. Hence, the passing of euphoria made the LAI liable to begin answering to the protagonists (the Comintern, the national sections and the LAI Executive) for its actions, as well as responding to the antagonists (the national security services and the LSI). The LAI General Council served a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, to confirm the LAI as a transcontinental actor and as the leader of the anti-imperialist movement and, on the other hand, the International Secretariat expected that the moment had arrived to increase its control of the national sections, by beginning to use the LAI as a hub for anti-colonial activists in Germany, Europe and beyond. The LAI "kom.Fraktion" and the Comintern referred to control as being the overriding guiding principle behind the preparations for the LAI General Council meeting. Moreover, the LSI analysis had forced the "Anti-Imperialist Commission" in Moscow to concede that there existed a real chance of losing control over "a powerful instrument uniting the colonial peoples and the working classes of the imperialist countries". This required, therefore, the "kom.Fraktion" to act vigilantly against the representatives of the socialist movement within the LAI:

[...] the Social Democratic and Reformist leaders of the labour movements in the imperialist countries, together with the radical intellectual defenders of imperialism, are trying to sabotage the League and capture its leadership. In view of this danger, the activities of the

⁵⁰⁹ Münzenberg 1928, pp.4-10. The British LAI Section protested against the arrests of Senghor in France. On 7 April 1927, at a meeting of the "provisional committee" of the British LAI Section in the House of Commons in London, the section adopted "[A] protest against the arrest ... signed by all the members and forwarded to the French government" due to Senghor's arrest in Paris "on his return from the Brussels Congress on account" of his speeches", see RGASPI 542/1/10, 1-3, Report on the British LAI Section, London, to International Secretariat, Berlin, 7/4-1927.

Communist fraction inside the League must be strengthened politically and organisationally.⁵¹⁰

From a chronological and thematic perspective, this chapter depicts and analyses the evolutionary road travelled by the LAI prior to the Sixth International Comintern Congress (17 July 1928 – 1 September) in Moscow.

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The Road to Revisiting Brussels

Münzenberg's original idea was to arrange the first LAI General Council in Paris in November 1927. The Reichskommissar in Berlin noticed how Münzenberg described this first meeting of the council as being more of an “enlarged anti-colonial conference” announcing the “unification of the anti-imperialist movement on an organisational and ideological” level, one which would link the LAI to “the revolutionary struggle”.⁵¹¹ In comparison to the improvised and hasty preparatory work prior to the Brussels Congress, the LAI General Council needed proper organisation. On 10 September 1927, Münzenberg sent a list of the delegates who would be receiving an invitation to Petrov at the Eastern Secretariat. If “Moscow had any additional names” to add to the list, Münzenberg had to have the names as soon as possible.⁵¹² However, at an early stage, Münzenberg had to find a new location for the council after the French *Sûreté* denied the LAI the possibility of convening the event in Paris, leaving Münzenberg with a second option: Amsterdam.⁵¹³ In October, Münzenberg met Fimmen in Amsterdam. During their discussion, Fimmen told Münzenberg that the Dutch government intended to refuse every visa application from “party comrades” planning to enter the Netherlands. The only option left for Münzenberg was to revisit Brussels.⁵¹⁴

Münzenberg had counted on inviting 89 delegates at a total cost of \$10,695, a figure that would cover both travel and administrative expenses. The document, “Zur Sitzung des Generalrates werden eingeladen”, compiled by Münzenberg and sent to Petrovsky (who passed it on to Piatnitsky), reveals who the invited delegates were: the LAI Honorary Presidium (Barbusse,

⁵¹⁰ RGASPI 495/103/155, 6-11, Direktiven für die Arbeit der LAI, Moscow, 22/9-1927 [German version]; RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927 [English version].

⁵¹¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/127, 109, 15. Reichskommissar: Liga gegen koloniale Unterdrückung, November 1927.

⁵¹² RGASPI 542/1/10, 20, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrov, Moscow, 10/9-1927; RGASPI 542/1/10, 21-22, Zur Sitzung des Generalrates werden eingeladen, Münzenberg, Berlin, 10/9-1927.

⁵¹³ RGASPI 495/19/319, 9, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky/Bennet, Moscow, 15/9-1927; RGASPI 542/1/10, 23, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 15/9-1927. The letters from Münzenberg to Petrovsky and Kuusinen were identical, and arrived in Moscow on September 26.

⁵¹⁴ RGASPI 495/30/350, 26, Letter from Münzenberg, Amsterdam, to Bennet, Moscow, 23/10-1927. Any documents clarifying why Münzenberg opted for Brussels as the arena for the LAI General Council remain missing. However, it must have been a logical choice, suggesting that Gibarti only had to renew his contact with Emile Vandervelde.

Einstein, “Frau” Sun Yat-sen and Lu Chung Lin), the LAI Executive (Fimmen, Nehru, Liau, Senghor, Marteaux, Münzenberg, Ugarte, Hatta, Gibarti, Baldwin and Bridgeman), the General Council (Chen Kuen of the *Central Council of the All Chinese Labour Union* from Canton, Mella, Martinez, Katayama, Semaun, Colraine, Vasconcelos, A. Alminiana of the *Verband für die Unabhängigkeit der Philippinen*, Mohamed Hafiz Ramadan Bey, Hadj-Ahmed Messali, Kin Fa Lin, Assadoff, Gomez and Pollitt [for the remaining members, see footnote below]). Additional guests Münzenberg wanted to invite were the leader of the Tripoli-based Islamic organisation *Senussi* (in French: Sanussi) Sidi Ben Achmed, the general secretary of the *Destour Party* [Destour is the Arabic term for *constitution*] in Tunisia Ahmed Assafi, the chairman of the *Arab Congress* Djemal Effendi El Husseini, the representative of the India LAI Section in Bombay Jhabwala, Hasrat Mohani, Diego Rivera, the member of the Brazilian parliament Mauricio de Lacerda, Clements Kadalie of the trade union *Industrial and Commercial Union* in South Africa, the South African communist William Henry (Bill) Andrews as delegate of the *South African Trade Union Congress* and an unknown representative by the name of “Smith” from the trade union *Sierra Leone Railway Workers’ Union*.⁵¹⁵

Getting everyone to attend the council was easier said than done. In October, Nehru visited Paris, where he frequently met up with Gibarti. At one of their *rendezvous*, Nehru told Gibarti that he could not attend the General Council because he was intending to visit Moscow, with his father Motilal, to witness the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Russian revolution. After Moscow, Nehru expected to return to Paris (he arrived in Paris at the end of November), before travelling back to India. Apparently, Nehru left Marseille by boat on 2 December, in the company of his wife, sister and daughter, and returned to India, where he attended the INC congress at Madras. Nonetheless, Motilal Nehru stayed behind in Europe for an additional three months and, among many things, attended the LAI General Council.⁵¹⁶ The African delegates were a challenge for Münzenberg. At the Brussels Congress, Richard B. Moore and the “Negro Commission” had sorted out the Negro question. However, and despite Senghor’s deteriorating health and frequent confinement in prison, the General Council had to introduce some kind of revised policy on the

⁵¹⁵ RGASPI 495/19/319, 10-12, Zur Sitzung des Generalrates werden eingeladen, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky/Bennet, Moscow, 15/9-1927. Additional members of the LAI General Council were: Brockway, S. O. Davies, Saklatvala, Henriette Roland-Holst, the secretary of the Belgian LAI Section Georges Gérard, the editor P. S. Spaak and Charles Plisnier from Belgium, journalist Victorio Verri (from Italy, but living in Moscow), Guido Miglioli from Italy, Madame Duchêne, Léon Vernochet, Albert Fournier, Theodor Lessing, Alfons Goldschmidt, Ledebour, “Frau” Helene Stöcker and Nejedly from Prague, Czechoslovakia. For a copy of the list (addressed to Kuusinen), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/10, 24-26.

⁵¹⁶ RGASPI 542/1/18, 59, Letter from Nehru, Paris, to Chatto, Berlin, 22/10-1927. The International Secretariat forwarded Nehru’s letter to Petrovsky in Moscow. Nehru later described the Moscow visit as “worthwhile”, particularly as the experience provided “a background” which contradicted his somewhat preconceived understanding of Soviet Russia and the Bolshevik regime. For Motilal Nehru, the journey was a “novel”, Nehru 1942 (1953), pp.164-165.

African question, as well as begin the work of securing connections with the African continent. Münzenberg began the search in Moscow by contacting both the KUTV and other contacts who knew of African individuals who were either living in or were visiting the city. Early on, Münzenberg omitted “Smith”, the unknown delegate of the *Sierra Leone Railway Workers’ Union*, and replaced him with the Chairman, E. A. Richards. Richards was visiting Moscow in the company of a delegation in connection with the celebration of the Tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. For Münzenberg, he was a suitable candidate to send directly *en route* from Moscow to Brussels. Yet, this idea came to nothing. In November, Richards informed the International Secretariat that he had no chance of arriving in time for the council in Brussels. Nevertheless, Richards suggested a replacement: the West African Kweku Bankole Awooner-Renner (later the founder of the *Ashanti Freedom Society* in West Africa in the 1930s), who, in 1927, was pursuing studies at the KUTV in Moscow. Awooner-Renner had received the invitation from Richards in person in Moscow and asked whether the Eastern Secretariat could approve sending him to Brussels.⁵¹⁷ Another example was the case of Ngyuen Ai Quoc (“Ngyuen the Patriot”, better known as Ho Chi Minh) and his experience of the LAI General Council. According to William J. Duiker’s biography, in 1927 Ngyuen Ai Quoc was on the verge of becoming an experienced Comintern emissary. The LAI General Council in Brussels was a rewarding event for Ngyuen Ai Quoc, after a tedious journey from Moscow, Berlin and Paris, arriving in Brussels only to meet and discuss with other anti-colonial activists, e.g. Sukarno, Soong Qingling (Sun Yat-sen’s widow) and Katayama.⁵¹⁸

The General Council agenda focused on the LAI’s political and organisational development since its inception in Brussels. This included a discussion on China, India, the Arab countries, Indonesia, the “imperialist terror in the colonies”, the war threat [against the Soviet Union] and the “colonial exploitation and the labour unions in the imperialist countries”.⁵¹⁹ *A-I-Z* published an

⁵¹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/10, 24-26, Zur Sitzung des Generalrates werden eingeladen, Münzenberg, Berlin, September, 1927. In October 1927, Clements Kadalie published the article, “The Old and the New Africa”, in *Labour Monthly*, London, Vol.9, No.10, pp.624-631; RGASPI 542/1/8, 171, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 1/10-1927. Münzenberg calculated with the participation of La Guma and Gumedé at the General Council, however, their visit to the Soviet Union made it impossible to attend; fol. RGASPI 542/1/8, 190, (copy) letter from E.A. Richards, Moscow (Hotel Passage), to the Secretary, LAI, Berlin, 12/11-1927; RGASPI 495/64/166, 1-2, Handwritten letter from Kweku Bankole [Awooner-Renner], Moscow, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 14/11-1927. For Awooner-Renner, see Weiss (2011), and for an analysis of African and Black Americans students at the educational units of the Comintern in Moscow, see Woodford McClellan, “Africans and Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934”, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.26, No.2 (1993), Boston University African Studies Centre, pp.371-390; *A-I-Z*, “II. Brüsseler Kongress”, VI Jahrg., Nr.50, 14/12-1927. See also Linden Lewis, “Richard B. Moore: The Making of a Caribbean Organic Intellectual”, in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol.25, No.5 (May, 1995), Sage Publications, pp.589-609.

⁵¹⁸ The activities of Ho Chi Minh in Europe prior to his participation at the LAI General Council were of a diverse nature. In October, he carried out work at the International Secretariat in Berlin, while in November he visited the PCF in Paris, see William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, Hyperion, New York, 2000, pp.148-149.

⁵¹⁹ The bulk of documents relating to the LAI General Council (resolutions and protocols), are located in the LAI *fond*,

account, which stated that the council was the “second Brussels Congress” (II Brüsseler Kongress); however, this event was not open to the public. According to the German legation in Brussels, the council convened “behind closed doors” in the Madeleine Haal, and the delegates seemed to act upon a directive not to utter a single word to the press.⁵²⁰ This was a strategy which complied with the instructions contrived by the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” directing the council to focus on the political situations in China, India and North Africa (Egypt), and to establish a consensus to protest against the social democratic movement in Europe, the LSI and the KMT. The “Anti-Imperialist Commission” warned the International Secretariat of the possible risk of having to confront “the danger of becoming an organ of reformist penetration into the colonial nationalist and labour movements”. Hence, to curb such a development, the International Secretariat needed to “act cautiously”, while still reinforcing the “basic tasks” of the LAI:

The League must base itself on all classes and elements antagonistic to imperialism. The basic task of the League is to penetrate the broad democratic mass organisations in the colonial countries. With this purpose in mind every available means should be utilised. The intellectuals in the colonial countries play an important role in the anti-imperialist struggle. [...] Anti-imperialist propaganda must be distributed among the colonial students in Europe who can be used to establish contact with the nationalist revolutionary movements in their respective countries. In the imperialist countries the League must carry on an anti-imperialist campaign inside the workers’, peasants’ and democratic organisations. It must find support in the trade unions, co-operatives, peasant organisations, [...] ⁵²¹

The “Anti-Imperialist Commission” did, however, introduce a more radical approach for LAI activities which, in a sense, indicated a departure from its original outline. Above all, the suggestion to replace “leading figures in the social democratic and bourgeois radical circles in the imperialist countries” in the LAI with “elements [colonial students] antagonistic to imperialism” pointed towards a shift. If the LAI carried out the above, the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” believed that this would be the beginning of a “united front in the colonial countries” which, in

yet, a list of the attending delegates is missing. Further, the IISG LAI Collection contains resolutions and the agenda of the council (3392.1/111, Provisorische Tagesordnung der Generalratssitzung, LAI, Brüssel, December 1927). A copy of the agenda is also filed at SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, Provisorische Tagungsordnung [undated] 1927. According to the agenda, the key speakers were Fimmen, Gibarti, Mme. Sun-Yat-Sen, Motilal Nehru, the Arab Shekib Arslan, Scott Nearing and Barbusse.

⁵²⁰ A-I-Z, 1924 Nov. – 1927 Dez., Jahrg. VI, Nr. 50, 14/12-1927, Berlin, 2. A-I-Z reported that the “conference was convened under different circumstances” in comparison to the “first” Brussels Congress, whereas the German legation in Brussels notified the *Auswärtige Amt* that it seemed as if the LAI was a genuine “German affair”, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 89, Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Brüssel, an das Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 14/12-1927.

⁵²¹ RGASPI 495/103/155, 6-11, Direktiven für die Arbeit der LAI, Moscow, 22/9-1927 [German version]; RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927 [English version]. The “Anti-Imperialist Commission” defined Egypt and “the backward colonial countries (African colonies and some Latin-American countries)” as falling within the political boundaries of the LAI’s “general political line”.

turn, would “win over” anti-colonial organisations and national revolutionary activists in the struggle against both colonialism and social democracy. Why did the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” advocate a possible purge of the LAI Executive? Evidently, this was due to a fear emanating from the LSI’s October analysis. Thus, the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” expected the General Council to protest against the LSI, and those who did not should preferably leave the LAI. However, this proposal also had the potential to shatter the very concept of the LAI. In the end, the General Council responded to the LSI’s analysis in the “Resolution of the General Council of the League against Imperialism on the attitude of the II:nd International”. According to this resolution, the LAI objected to the “misleading, unjustified and untrue” analysis by the LSI, particularly as it violated “the principles of Socialism”, in support of the “capitalist and imperialist governments”. However, the endorsed resolution was serene, in comparison to the original version. The original version of the resolution (authored by the “Anti-Imperialist Commission”) was a verbal attack against the LSI, using callous terms, e.g. branding the leaders of social democracy as “agents of imperialism”. The endorsed resolution omitted these kinds of phrases, recommending that every worker and member of social democratic and socialist parties (known to be affiliated to the LSI) protect socialist values by becoming either individual or collective members of the LAI.⁵²²

The LAI General Council was a test of faith for the Comintern to see whether the LAI could remain “steady in our hands”. Katayama was the unofficial ECCI representative at the council. According to Katayama’s report to the Eastern Secretariat on 6 February 1928, the council was the “first gathering of importance” after the Brussels Congress to enshrine the LAI as the leader of a movement in support of “the colonial peoples”. Katayama seemed convinced that the communists were in total control over “the aim of the LAI”:

[The LAI] aims to connect with national revolutionary parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and with fighting anti-imperialist groups in Europe and America. The communists shall hold the most important authoritative positions within the national sections of the LAI and in the International Secretariat, and a majority in the [...] Executive, and function more or less indiscreetly.⁵²³

⁵²² According to the introductory note in the resolution, the LAI based their response on “the document of 7th October 1927, published by the LSI (Second International) presenting itself as a ‘History of the League against Imperialism’” and denying the claim that the LAI was “nothing but a communist manoeuvre”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/13, 11, “Resolution of the General Council of the League against Imperialism on the attitude of the II:nd International”, LAI General Council, Brussels, 9-11-1927. RGASPI 495/103/155, 6-11, Direktiven für die Arbeit der LAI, Moscow, 22/9-1927 [German version]; RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927 [English version]. The pamphlet “Résolutions adoptées à la session du conseil général tenue à Bruxelles”, included every resolution.

⁵²³ RGASPI 542/1/26, 18-32, “General Council of League Against Imperialism”, Sen Katayama, 6/2-1928; RGASPI 542/1/13, 51-54, “Resolutions Entwurf”, 6/12-1927.

The “authoritative positions” of the communists in the LAI were kept secret from the non-communist members. After the council, Münzenberg stated in his article, “Against Colonial Oppression”, published in the European communist and socialist press, that the General Council had focused essentially on solving “organisational questions”, rather than discussing “political questions”. Admitting that the teething problems associated with establishing functional and active national sections were proving to be far more difficult than expected, Münzenberg emphasised the necessity of finding a solution to this organisational problem.⁵²⁴

Roy did not attend the council; however, he summoned the “Anti-Imperialist Commission” in Moscow to a meeting in the “Red Corner” at Comintern headquarters to discuss the event, the LAI and anti-imperialist propaganda.⁵²⁵ Katayama observed in his report to the ECCI Secretariat that the LAI was “still in its formative period, although we have had two Conferences, in February and December 1927”. Despite the international circulation of pamphlets, resolutions and manifestos, the results were inadequate:

The basis of the League is weak and not wide enough. The League is still in the state of preparation and planning. The League is not yet based on mass organisation and, in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, propaganda work has hardly been started. It must be improved and developed, by all possible means, into a real mass organisation. [...] The supreme task of the LAI is to apply the theory and practics [sic] contained in the writing and deeds accomplished by Lenin.⁵²⁶

Katayama criticised the incapacity of the International Secretariat to turn the LAI into or at least get the organisation to pose as a mass organisation. According to Mustafa Haikal’s analysis, the council was the start of a “disintegrative process” within the LAI.⁵²⁷ This observation partly explains why the Comintern pressured the LAI into carrying out the directives from Moscow, and partly confirms why the council served as an opportunity to see whether the communists were still in control of the LAI. However, the Comintern had, from the very beginning, controlled the LAI, a point of view overlooked by Haikal.

The new constitution of the LAI Executive at the council confirmed the continuing strategy of the Comintern to support a sympathising communist organisation. Maxton assumed Lansbury’s

⁵²⁴ RGASPI 542/1/13, 1-2, Organisationsresolution, Brüsseler Tagung, 9-11 Dezember 1927. The “Organisationsresolution” was merely a reprint of the one introduced in Brussels on 14 February, 1927; Willi Münzenberg, “Mot kolonialt förtryck”, in *Norrskensflamman*, Luleå, 30/12-1927, 6-7.

⁵²⁵ Hans Piazza referred to Roy’s report in the article “Manabendra Nath Roy. Ein alter und bewährter Soldat in Indiens Freiheitskampf”, in *Ketzer im Kommunismus. 23 biographisches Essays*, Theodor Bergmann/Mario Kessler (Hrsg.), VSA-Verlag Hamburg, 2000, p.206, see fol. 542/1/8, 185ff. For the meeting in the “Red Corner”, see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 1, Short note (in French) [stamped date] 13/1-1928.

⁵²⁶ RGASPI 495/18/613, 20-23, Information regarding the Press Organ of the LAI (English version), Katayama, submitted to the ECCI Secretariat, 24/1-1928.

⁵²⁷ Haikal 1992, pp.239-252.

position as Chairman (Brockway had temporarily held this position during the autumn of 1927), and Fimmen continued as vice-deputy. Liao and Gibarti were, despite Liao's on-going conflict with both Münzenberg and Gibarti, nominated as secretaries at the International Secretariat. The LAI Executive comprised Nehru, the delegate of the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* Mustapha Chedli, Hatta, Saklatvala, Mme. Duchêne, Münzenberg, Marteaux, Rivera, Bridgeman and Baldwin. According to the International Secretariat, the General Council celebrated the LAI as a transcontinental actor, with active sections and members in Europe, North Africa, USA, Mexico, India, Indonesia and China.⁵²⁸

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An Excursus: The Chinese Question

The "Anti-Imperialist Commission" instructed Münzenberg to address the Chinese question "decisively" at the General Council. The primary aim of this request was to increase the LAI's contacts with "revolutionary organisations" in China, rather than depend on the benevolence of "bourgeois nationalist and reformist labour leaders" in China.⁵²⁹ According to the resolution on China adopted at the council, "the next urgent political task" for the LAI was to "popularise" the Chinese nationalist movement in Europe and the USA by strengthening the anti-imperialist propaganda within the labour movement. Above all, the LAI General Council had to demonstrate to the public that, despite the "set-backs suffered by the movement for freedom in a number of colonial countries, these did not provide any reason for pessimism". The supporters of "the Chinese revolution" had to organise and mobilise "world-wide resistance", regardless of the LSI's "official policy", which merely defended "imperialist intervention" in China.⁵³⁰ The explanation for the tone of this resolution was, however, the outcome of a hasty, internal discussion.

Prepared just in time for the opening of the General Council, the Chinese resolution was a result of the recent turn of events in China, i.e. the Canton [Guangzhou] insurrection in November 1927, which had ended with the KMT's repression of the Chinese communist movement. After the KMT's putsch in April 1927, the CPCh had primarily focused its activities on organising and supporting peasant rebellions. According to the leaders of the CPCh, it was essential to sustain

⁵²⁸ *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr.1, 15/3-1928.

⁵²⁹ RGASPI 495/103/155, 6-11, Direktiven für die Arbeit der LAI, Moscow, 22/9-1927 [German version]; RGASPI 495/103/155, 23-27, Confidential, DIRECTIVES FOR THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, 18/11-1927 [English version].

⁵³⁰ For the draft, see RGASPI 542/1/13, 51-54, "Resolution Entwurf", December, 1927; RGASPI 542/1/13, 43-44, "Resolution des Exekutiv-Komitees der "Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit", LAI, Brussels, General Council, 9-11/12-1927. Copies of the resolutions on China and the political resolution are filed at the IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/118, Political Resolution of the General Council of the LAI, Brussels Conference, 9-11/1927, and, 3392.1/112, Resolution of the General Council of the LAI on the Chinese Question, Brussels Conference, 9-11/1927.

social unrest in “cities and villages” at any cost and, if successful, this would lead to a “general insurrection” and the establishment of local Soviets, an undertaking supported by the Comintern. In November, Heinz Neumann left Moscow with the instruction to travel to Canton and assist Lominadze in organising an insurrection in the “Canton commune”, a historic reference to the 1871 Paris commune. However, the insurrection failed embarrassingly and was an extraordinarily violent episode and, for both Neumann and Lominadze, a personal disaster. The “Canton commune” lasted only three days, ending with a heavy loss of human life, leaving the Soviet consulate in Canton ransacked and five Soviet diplomats executed by the KMT. This conclusive end also marked the definitive end of diplomatic relations between the KMT and the Soviet Union, as well as making it more difficult for the Comintern to organise covert operations in China.⁵³¹

For Liau, the Canton insurrection was an ideal opportunity to organise proletarian solidarity demonstrations in Germany and Europe; however, he soon realised that neither Münzenberg nor Gibarti seemed willing to publish “a single publication” on the topic. On 28 December, with the help of a loan conceivably issued by the ZK KPD, Liau published an official LAI protest against the KMT’s conduct in suppressing the insurrection.⁵³² The China question was Liau’s source of inspiration, a devotion he shared with other activists of Chinese origin. Thus, one method to spread an opinion on what was happening in China was to send some of these activists on missions within Europe. For example, Liau instructed the Chinese Ch’ao-Ting Chi (see *Birth*) to travel to London and assist the British LAI Section in organising an “extensive campaign for the defence and support of the Chinese revolution”. For Liau, Chi was the ideal candidate due to his commitment to anti-colonial ideals. Nevertheless, this undertaking ended abruptly. When the ship “Stadt Antwerpen” docked in Dover, England on 11 January, British port authorities refused to let Chi enter the country.⁵³³

⁵³¹ In “compliance with a direct order from Stalin”, the communists in China staged the Canton insurrection. However, comparing the “Canton commune” with the socialist “Paris commune”, which lasted for only about two months (March to 28 May 1871) was bold, see Degras vol.II 1960, pp.414-415, and Sassoon 1996, p.12.

⁵³² RGASPI 542/1/29, 2, Letter from Liau, Berlin, to Petrovsky, Moscow, 13/1-1928.

⁵³³ On 14 January, Ch’ao-Ting Chi sent a letter to Liau, which provided details on the failure of the mission. Chi left Berlin on 10 January and boarded the boat “Stadt Antwerpen” at Oostende, final destination Dover. Arriving on January 11, British port authorities refused Chi permission to enter the country because his passport had a Russian visa. According to Chi, the port authorities turned “hostile”, subjected him to interrogation and conducted a thorough search of his luggage. Requested to answer whether he had any personal relations with any suspected individuals [unknown] in England, or whether Chi had any information about King Street in London [CPGB headquarters] and whether the name “Larkin” meant anything to him. According to Chi, the officers received the following statement: “I am a student of good standing at the Law School of the University of Chicago. As I intended to spend a few months studying in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe, I obtained an English visa for a whole year as well as French and German visas for the same period [inserted in handwriting in the document]. I left America on 15th October 1927 and arrived in Berlin [*Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont* states that Chi attended the Brussels Congress, however] via Havre at the end of October. As some countrymen of mine intended visiting Moscow to witness the 10th Anniversary Celebrations I joined the group and was in Russia till 7th December. I have since been in Germany. Early in the present month I announced to the International Office of the LAI my intention to go to Great Britain and the Secretary [Liau] suggested that I should help the British League to place the true facts regarding the situation in China

By the beginning of 1928, the International Secretariat seemed incapable of organising independent campaigns, at least in Liao's opinion. Furthermore, on 28 June 1928, Liao's scepticism was more or less confirmed when Münzenberg informed the International Secretariat at a meeting in Berlin that the IAH aimed to assume responsibility over the Chinese campaign. Münzenberg stated that the IAH was preparing to launch the relief campaign, "Aid to the Chinese Workers" (*Hilfe für die Chinesischen Arbeiter*), and expected to use both LAI and LHR networks to circulate propaganda. Prominent intellectuals and left-wing politicians in Germany had promised to both sign petitions and defend the campaign in public, Münzenberg stated. Hence, the campaign was a replica of the strategies developed in connection with the *Hands off China* campaign and the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*.⁵³⁴

The aftermath of the LAI General Council indicated that the LAI was suffering from organisational constraints. On 11 December 1927, several of the delegates left Brussels with the feeling that the LAI was heading towards an uncertain future.

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Pre-empting the Disintegration: The Case of the British LAI Section

The "provisional" British LAI Section faced an ideological confrontation after the LAI General Council. Maxton, Bridgeman and Beckett, the non-communist members, questioned the real motives of the LAI and its communist representatives. Furthermore, Pollitt questioned the doubts and the incompetence of its non-communist members:

You people said that this was a communist manoeuvre. But for twelve months we communists have deliberately kept out of it in order to let you have a chance. And now, we and the working class can see that you have sabotaged it for twelve months, that you were not capable of doing anything.⁵³⁵

The communist connections had taken on an overt character at the General Council, thus, the non-communist members pondered over the available options for leaving the LAI. For Pollitt, the fear

before the British people." Chi explained to Liao that he had managed to avoid a body search by protesting that it was a violation of his personal rights. However, the authorities had examined "every slip of paper". In the end, British authorities decided to prohibit Chi from stepping onto British soil (paragraph "1/3g"), hearing from a police officer that "we do not want you in England, that's all", see Gibarti (ed.) 1927, p.234; RGASPI 542/1/29, 6-7, Report by Ch'ao-Ting Chi to Liao, International Secretariat, Berlin, 14/1-1928. Liao edited the report from Chi and included it in the March issue of the *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus* (Berlin, Nr.1, 15/3-1928).

⁵³⁴ RGASPI 542/1/27, 31, Excerpts, protocol from a meeting at the International Secretariat, Berlin, 29/6-1928; RGASPI 542/1/27, 29-30, Protocol, International Secretariat, Berlin, 29/6-1928. To strengthen the campaign, Münzenberg used the services of the *Rote Front Kämpfer*, the *German Peace Association* ("Deutschen Friedensgesellschaft"), the *Socialist Association* ("Sozialistischer Bund") and Profintern. The campaign also established local branches in Hamburg, Frankfurt and Dresden.

⁵³⁵ RGASPI 495/100/545, 1, "Report from Great Britain", author: Petrovsky, London, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 4/3-1928.

and hesitancy of Maxton, Bridgeman and Beckett exposed the need to coerce them, and to convince the section to adhere to the CPGB's instructions. Apparently, in 1928 the situation within the "provisional" British LAI Section was mirroring the political context of the British labour and communist movement. According to Matthew Worley, in 1927-32 the CPGB found itself "increasingly detached from the mainstream of the British labour movement" due to its support and endorsement of a political culture which focused on "revolutionary class-consciousness".⁵³⁶ In 1928, the "provisional" British LAI Section was no exception to the above. The communist members in the "provisional LAI committee" seem to have considered the LAI as an enigma, particularly from the perspective of transforming the committee into a vigorous section. On 7 July, 1928, at the "Essex Hall" in London, the question was, in a sense, solved at the inaugural conference of the British LAI Section. From the beginning of 1928, right up until the "Essex Hall" conference in July, it had been a process whereby the communists tried to coerce but also to save the "provisional LAI committee" from collapsing under its own weight.

On 15 December 1927, the members of the "provisional LAI committee" had a meeting in London, at which Bridgeman spoke of "his shattered faith" in the LAI, suggesting the formation of an "Imperialism Committee of the ILP" in order to salvage his devotion to the anti-colonial cause. Petrovsky (whether or not he was present at the meeting is unknown) wrote that Saklatvala had told Bridgeman to wait before reaching a final decision. However, after the meeting, Saklatvala notified Rothstein at the CPGB Colonial Commission about what had happened. Rothstein asked Saklatvala whether it was necessary to re-organise the committee, then told Saklatvala to compile a "list of names" of suitable candidates to replace the ILP representatives.⁵³⁷

Bridgeman's cynicism caused the CPGB to react in order to maintain control of the "provisional committee". To test the "gloomy attitude" among the non-communist members, the committee had to establish anti-imperialist activism in London and convince the non-communist members to support the cause. Apparently, nothing happened in January and, on 27 February, the communists strode into action. Saklatvala and Pollitt accused Bridgeman, Beckett and Maxton of ignoring the LAI, to which they responded that the LAI was a "hopeless proposition", referring to the opinion of the *Labour Party*, which had stated that the LAI was "very bad from the principal [sic] point of view and also politically".⁵³⁸ This was the lowest point in the "provisional LAI

⁵³⁶ Worley 2002, p.3, 194.

⁵³⁷ RGASPI 495/100/545, 2-5, Report by Petrovsky on the British LAI Section, 20/4-1928. Saklatvala suggested that the CPGB member, Vera Crossly, should assume Bridgeman's position as secretary.

⁵³⁸ RGASPI 495/100/545, 1, Letter from Petrovsky, London, to unknown receiver, 4/3-1928. The receiver of Petrovsky's letter is unclear; however, the most likely recipients must have been either the "Anti-Imperialist Commission", the Eastern Secretariat or the Colonial Commission of the CPGB.

committee”, indicating that the LAI had reached a dead-end in Great Britain. However, Petrovsky emerged as the architect capable of solving the crisis.

In the beginning of March, Petrovsky returned to London after having attended the Ninth ECCI Plenum in Moscow (9-25 February, 1928). In Moscow, Petrovsky had been involved in the discussion of the “English question”, an experience Petrovsky most likely had on his mind when he attended a meeting of the “provisional LAI committee” in London in March. According to Petrovsky, Maxton threatened to resign as LAI Chairman, whereas Bridgeman accused Gibarti of “spoiling everything all the time”. The response from the communist members was fierce, and the “very strong attack” by Pollitt and Saklatvala had been a “very funny” scene to witness, Petrovsky concluded. Nevertheless, the meeting did not signal the definitive end and, before the session was over, Maxton, Beckett and Bridgeman requested some time to consult the ILP Executive before reaching a decision on how to act. A couple of days after the meeting, Maxton contacted Saklatvala in London and explained that the LAI had a “glorious future” in England, and promised to remain in the LAI along with Bridgeman and Beckett.⁵³⁹ What was the reason for Maxton’s, Beckett’s and Bridgeman’s change of heart? The most likely explanation is the realisation that if they left the “provisional LAI committee”, the communists would completely control the LAI’s work in Great Britain and, therefore, be able to influence the British anti-imperialist movement.

Petrovsky informed the Eastern Secretariat that the CPGB had “to be more aggressive with the Maxton people”. Hence, Petrovsky appointed Saklatvala as his liaison to supervise the “provisional LAI committee” and, if Bridgeman and Maxton chose to leave or if the Colonial Commission of the CPGB deleted their names, the communists had to increase their influence over the committee. A part of this scheme was to nominate Joan Thompson, CPGB member, to assume Bridgeman’s position as organiser, while getting Bridgeman to act as political secretary. Thus, at some level, Petrovsky still considered Bridgeman to be a valuable asset for the LAI in Great Britain. The nomination of Thompson as *organiser* was, however, of a more subtle nature. In fact, Emile Burns, CPGB member and secretary of the British section of the *Friends of Soviet Russia* as well as Head of the *Labour Research Department* (LRD) in London, had a huge influence over

⁵³⁹ TNA KV2/1433, Biographical information, Bennet/Petrovsky/Goldfarb, 1928-1929. MI5 concluded that Petrovsky was the “leader of a group within the ECCI which favoured a closer rapprochement” with the CPGB. This concerned a policy shift in the CPGB, linked to the then current political situation in Great Britain. While the “bourgeois dictatorship” in Great Britain was no longer a “liberal” force, but rather a “reactionary” force according to the Comintern, the Ninth ECCI Plenum adopted a resolution which instructed the CPGB to begin to act “as an independent organisation” rather than seeking collaborations with the *Labour Party* and the *Trade Union General Council*. At the Ninth ECCI Plenum, Petrovsky was one of the central actors to discuss the “English question”, see Degras vol.II 1960, 427-428; RGASPI 495/100/545, 1, Letter from Petrovsky, London, to unknown receiver, 4/3-1928.

Thompson and could therefore monitor the work of the “provisional LAI committee” and influence the political agenda via Thompson.⁵⁴⁰

Petrovsky’s primary aim, however, was to transform the “provisional committee” into an active and organised section, capable of carrying out anti-imperialist activism in Great Britain. In comparison to Münzenberg’s vision, Petrovsky had a different approach planned for this section. While Münzenberg expected the British LAI Section to focus primarily on propaganda (campaigns and public demonstrations), Petrovsky understood that the political realities and cultures in Great Britain and Germany were different. For Petrovsky, parliamentary activism was the key in a British context, rather than taking the movement out “onto the streets”. Yet, this did not underestimate the value of propaganda, especially as parliamentary activism went hand-in-hand with propaganda, e.g. the publication of a weekly LAI bulletin in England. The parliamentary approach was more than an idea. On 4 April, Saklatvala delivered a speech (prepared in advance by the CPGB’s Colonial Commission) in the House of Commons, a performance Petrovsky described as the “first big public advertisement” in England of the LAI. Shortly after the speech, the “provisional LAI committee” released a British LAI bulletin, enclosed in *Mitteilungsblatt der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, published by the International Secretariat. In this bulletin, Bridgeman explained the inherent weakness of the “provisional LAI committee”:

The main difficulty which confronts the Committee of the British Section is that those associated with it can only devote a fraction of their busy lives to the work of the League.

The members have neither time nor money, while to make the work of the League effective full-time work is required.⁵⁴¹

To celebrate the leap from a “provisional LAI committee” to becoming an LAI section, Münzenberg instructed Maxton and Bridgeman on how to prepare the “Essex Hall” conference in London.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ RGASPI 495/100/545, 1, Letter from Petrovsky, London, to unknown receiver, 4/3-1928. According to Emile Burns’ autobiography, filed in his personal file (lichnye delo) in the Comintern Archive, Burns was in charge of “informal group discussions of the Party fraction” at the LRD. The CPGB had infiltrated the LRD, an institution which, from the beginning, functioned as an independent actor in the service of the British labour movement, which in the 1920s, had become a centre and liaison service for the Comintern emissaries on covert missions in Great Britain. Located in London, the public character of the LRD was to facilitate with left-wing information and propaganda of a scholarly character on the socialist and labour movement, statistics and on the trade unions. According to Philip Spratt, the communists “penetrated” the LRD and used it as a “cover and an agency for dispensing propaganda”, see RGASPI 495/198/11, 64-68, Autobiography, Emile Burns, 11/1-1932; Haithcox 1971, p.52; Spratt 1955, p.22.

⁵⁴¹ *Mitteilungsblatt der Liga gegen Imperialismus*. Internationales Sekretariat, Berlin, Nr.2, 21/4-1928. Supplement. British Section, Reginald Bridgeman, 15/4-1928; RGASPI 495/100/545, 1, Letter from Petrovsky, London, to unknown receiver, 4/3-1928.

⁵⁴² Maxton and Bridgeman acted as the formal organisers of the LAI conference at Essex Hall in London. However, Münzenberg provided Maxton with the original agenda for the event, whereas the latter received the instruction to make the best of the opportunity to join up “thousands of individual members”, to win “them over” to support the LAI and, finally, to establish a united front against imperialism together with “left-wing social democrats”, fol. RGASPI 542/1/29, 28-29, Confidential letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Maxton, London, 6/6-1928. A copy of this letter was

The organisational confusion prevalent within the LAI was not solved during the LAI General Council in Brussels; it merely increased or exposed existing problems. Nevertheless, Münzenberg believed that the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement were heading towards a brighter future, “due to the Brussels Conference and on the initiative of the LAI [...] in numerous countries over the past months strong sections of the League have been formed”.⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, the LAI General Council marked the definitive end of the euphoria.

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The End of Euphoria

I consider the situation to be bleak. There is no energy, diplomacy or moral strength [...] The LAI is an extremely important movement, and we must try to return to its 1927 basis [...] The LAI, for the moment, has neither head nor feet.

Fimmen, LAI Executive Committee,
Brussels, 28/4-1928

The International Secretariat organised a public meeting in Berlin on 16 December, 1927, at which Münzenberg proclaimed both the results of the LAI General Council and the LAI's international expansion.⁵⁴⁴ After Fimmen had arrived back in Amsterdam after the General Council, he sent a letter to Münzenberg explaining that he was thinking of resigning as vice-deputy because the LAI was turning into “a bluff”. For Münzenberg, however, the council did not mirror Fimmen's disillusion, telling Kuusinen that it was “a victory” for the communists.⁵⁴⁵ With a focus on the *sine qua non* of both the LAI and the International Secretariat, what were their obligations and restrictions after the General Council, and how dependent was the LAI on receiving support from the Comintern and the IAH? Münzenberg considered it to be obvious that the LAI was an independent organisation which, as a result of the Brussels Congress, was no longer under the jurisdiction of the IAH, and was expected to carry out activity without receiving any financial and administrative assistance from the IAH apparatus. The ECCI Bureau Secretariat did not, however, agree with Münzenberg. On 18 August 1927, the ECCI Bureau Secretariat resolved that the IAH

also filed in the CPGB *fond*; fol. 495/100/545, 11 [English version], 12-13 [German version]. British Head Office intercepted the letter, later used as empirical material in an analysis of the LAI by the British secret police in 1929 (TNA HO 144 10693).

⁵⁴³ Willi Münzenberg, “Mot kolonialt förtryck” [“Against Colonial Oppression”], in *Norrskensflamman*, Luleå, 30/12-1927, 6-7.

⁵⁴⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 88, Invitation, Report on results of LAI General Council, LAI, Berliner Sekretariat, 9/12-1927.

⁵⁴⁵ Taken from Haikal 1992, pp.251-252. Haikal refers to the LAI *fond* 542, *opis* 1, *delo* 8, but left out any reference to the *list* or the date for Fimmen's letter. For Münzenberg's letter to Kuusinen, Haikal referred to the IAH *fond* 538, *opis* 2, *delo* 40 (neither list nor date).

must “energetically support” the LAI in establishing national sections. A question re-addressed by the ECCI Organisational Department (*Orgotdel*) in 1929:

The initiative to create the organisation [LAI], its establishment and achievement at the large anti-imperialist Congress in February 1927 in Brussels, came from the Communist International and the Central Committee of the IAH.⁵⁴⁶

The central question for the LAI in 1928 was to understand that the euphoria of the Brussels Congress was over. For the International Secretariat, it was all about adapting to the current situation, e.g. the changes in structural and individual relations, as well as adhering to Comintern policy.

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Back in Berlin

The LAI left the inner sanctums at IAH headquarters in Berlin in the beginning of 1928. While the German LAI Section found an office at 10 II Monbijouplatz, the International Secretariat had a bureau at 24 Friedrichstraße. At the same time, the LAI attempted to amplify its anti-imperialist propaganda on the political scene in Berlin. On 20 January, the German section organised a public meeting at the “Sturmsaal”, at which Ledebour called out to every “sympathiser” to begin understanding the “ambitions and expectations” of Germany in regaining its former colonies.⁵⁴⁷ According to the political scientist Mary J. Townsend, who had conducted a field survey of the political situation in Germany in 1928, the escalating propaganda of pro-colonial societies and associations in Germany, demanding the recovery of the lost “overseas Empire”,⁵⁴⁸ also served the interests of the LAI. The LAI’s agitation against Germany’s colonial desires did not pass by without attracting attention. Informants, working in the service of the *Auswärtige Amt* initially observed that it seemed as though the LAI was no longer an organisation of any importance, and

⁵⁴⁶ The ECCI Bureau Secretariat put the wrong date on this document. Via the statement, which suggests that that IAH had “to organise agitation on a large scale in favour of the USSR [...] the forthcoming X Anniversary of the October Revolution, to further the organisation of the ‘Friends of the New Russia’ [the Friends of Soviet Union]”, indicates that the resolution was a document introduced in 1927, not 1928, see fol. RGASPI 495/103/149, 13-16, Resolution on the question of the International Workers Relief, ECCI Bureau Secretariat, Moscow, 18/8-1928 [correct year:1927]; RGASPI 495/25/1255, 71, Bericht über die Tätigkeit der IAH in den letzten Jahren, [IAH.-Kommission], Moscow, 6/2-1929. The “IAH.-Kommission” in Moscow in 1929 used this document in its analysis of the IAH, see RGASPI 495/3/86, 54, Protokoll No.22 der Sitzung des Politsekrt. am Freitag, Moscow, 8/2-1929.

⁵⁴⁷ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 88, Invitation, Report on results of the LAI General Council, LAI, Berliner Sekretariat, 9/12-1927; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 99, Information from the LAI, Berlin, 15/1-1928. The *Friends of the Soviet Union* shared the same office of the International Secretariat at 24 Friedrichstrasse in 1928, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67113, 112, Reichskommissar: Vermerk: Aus privater Quelle, Berlin, August 1928.

⁵⁴⁸ Townsend 1928, p.65. Townsend wrote that “literature and propaganda in the shape of colonial histories, treatises, novels depicting life in Africa and in the South Seas, pamphlets replete with statistics, magazine and newspaper articles have literally poured from the press since 1918, telling the Germans more about their former colonies”. Magazines such as the *Koloniale Rundschau* and *Kolonialdeutsche* were the leading actors in developing pro-colonial propaganda.

was pretty much a shadow of its former self in Berlin. According to separate reports from two informants belonging to the German pro-colonial movement, one was V. Lindequist, a secretary in the *Vereinigung für Deutsche Siedlung und Wanderung* and the second, a member of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde* [identity unknown], *Auswärtige Amt* had pieced together intelligence on the “Sturmsaal” meeting. The informant from the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde* had in fact taken the assignment seriously by becoming a member of the LAI, and attended the “Sturmsaal” meeting on location. The following report describes the event as having been a bizarre experience. Having arrived at 7.30 p.m., the informant noticed that one male and two females were just sitting and waiting for the meeting to begin. Yet, at 8 pm, nothing had happened, whereupon the informant left, only to find out a couple of days afterwards that the meeting had later been cancelled due to poor attendance.⁵⁴⁹ Additionally, a third source notified the *Auswärtige Amt* of the International Secretariat’s plan to stage a big demonstration on 4 March at the *Piscator-Bühne*, the well-known avant-garde and leftist theatre scene in Berlin. Entitled “Koloniale Welt in Flammen!”, the demonstration was scheduled to include speeches from Goldschmidt, the author Arthur Holitscher and the journalist Armin T. Wegner, and to be a display of colonial culture and music, e.g. the performance of a “Persian trio” and the singing of Indian and Javanese melodies.⁵⁵⁰

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Resignation, Renunciation and a Breach in Communications

In the beginning of 1928, the International Secretariat introduced an organ in the service of its members and the LAI Executive, the *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*. A second publication, *Pressedienst*, launched around the same time, was aimed towards the left-wing press. The primary aim of these two publications was to introduce the LAI to a broader public. Despite these publications being both edited and printed in Berlin, they were, in essence, a product of the Eastern Secretariat and the ECCI Agitprop Department in Moscow. The International Secretariat

⁵⁴⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 98, Short note from “Vereinigung für Deutsche Siedlung U. Wanderung” an *Auswärtige Amt*, Berlin, 16/1-1928; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 101, Report from “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde”, Berlin, to *Auswärtige Amt*, Berlin, 3/2-1928.

⁵⁵⁰ Münzenberg wanted the demonstration to “leave a good impact”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/28, 22, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Roy [Sekr. Scho./K.], Moscow, 13/2-1928. SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 102, Short note from “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde”, Berlin, to *Auswärtige Amt*, Berlin, 14/2-1928; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 103, [Poster] “Piscator-Bühne – Koloniale Welt in Flammen”, Berlin, 4/3-1928. A copy of this poster is located in the LAI *fond* fol. RGASPI 541/1/28, 23. Münzenberg enclosed this poster in his letter to Roy. Further, Armin T. Wegner, journalist and photographer, born in Germany in 1886, illustrated through his photos during the Great War the atrocities taking place in Armenian deportation camps in 1915-1916. This turned Wegner into a prominent spokesperson against how Ottoman Turkey treated its Armenian population and, after the Great War, Wegner was an engaged pacifist and anti-militarist. Wegner passed away in Rome at the age of 92 on 17 May, 1978, see Internet: < <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/wegnerbio.html> >.

received prepared articles for inclusion in these publications, e.g. articles on Egypt and the Middle East, as well as the KMT's "white terror" in China. The official development of the LAI at the beginning of 1928 was a line of activity which nonetheless had to confront the complications at the International Secretariat, a question which challenged the internal individual and organisational structure in Berlin. After Liau had handed in his resignation in January, he nevertheless stayed on at the International Secretariat out of gratitude towards Petrovsky and the ECCI, and in February, Gibarti suddenly resigned from his position as secretary.

The *Informationsbulletin* stated on 15 March 1928, that Gibarti had left the LAI due to "health problems", which had forced him to take "a longer vacation".⁵⁵¹ His sudden disappearance remains a mystery, however, and whether or not it was based on Münzenberg's criticism of Gibarti's capabilities as a "poor organiser", is pure speculation. Yet, Gibarti's resignation appears to have been caused not by health problems but by other factors. According to Gibarti's personal file in the Comintern Archive, there is not a single clue indicating the reason for his resignation. The only reference is that he was "assigned to conduct international missions for the IAH, for example in the USA".⁵⁵² One of Gibarti's first public appearances occurred in New York on 15 June 1929, acting as the "representative of the *International League against Imperialism*" at a public rally at Irving Plaza which had been organised by the AAAIL.⁵⁵³ This suggests a time gap of over one year and four months. Furthermore, Gibarti's personal file in the TNA does not provide any additional information about his whereabouts after February 1928, while stating, as does his file in the Comintern Archive, that Gibarti acted as an "international representative" of the IAH and LAI in the USA in 1928-29.⁵⁵⁴ The crux of the matter is to verify Gibarti's whereabouts during this period. The most logical assumption is that, after Gibarti left the International Secretariat, he went to Moscow as a student at one of the Comintern's educational units, e.g. the *International Lenin School* (ILS).⁵⁵⁵ Completing a political education that lasted for about one year, Gibarti became a

⁵⁵¹ *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Berlin, Nr.1, 15/3-1928. For the decision on Paris, see *Mitteilungsblatt der Liga gegen Imperialismus*. Internationales Sekretariat, Berlin, Nr.2, 21/4-1928.

⁵⁵² RGASPI 495/205/6048, I, Biography on Gibarti, undated.

⁵⁵³ FOIA 61-6065-60, AAAIL.

⁵⁵⁴ On June 14, 1939, N. D. Borum, representative at the Embassy of the USA in London, sent a letter to Lidell to inform him about Gibarti's career as an international communist. According to Borum, whatever Gibarti had to say "carries little weight". For example, that Gibarti had resigned from the International Secretariat because the LAI was "under communist influence" was nothing short of utter nonsense, TNA KV2/1401.

⁵⁵⁵ The *International Lenin School* (ILS) was an "instrument" of Bolshevization that existed from 1926-1938 in Moscow. More specifically, the ILS was as a curricular institute which, according to Cohen and Morgan, aimed to "produce a new stratum of leading communist party cadres, young, proletarian, disciplined and free of the taint of reformism" which, after the Second World War, assumed leading positions in the international communist movement. Famous ILS alumni were, for example, Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito, Wladyslaw Gomulka from Poland and the General Secretary of East Germany, Erich Honecker, Gidon Cohen & Kevin Morgan, "Stalin's Sausage Machine. British Students at the International Lenin School, 1926-37", in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.13, No.4, 2002, pp.327-355.

fully-fledged agent in the service of the Soviet Foreign Department and acted as a Comintern emissary, having the USA and Europe as his operative field.⁵⁵⁶

The disappearance of Gibarti symbolised the uncertain road ahead for both the LAI and the International Secretariat in 1928. At the same time, other events were occurring which would have a lasting impact on the international communist movement, e.g. the Ninth ECCI Plenum held in Moscow in February 1928. This plenum determined the pace for the Comintern's political and organisational development, and highlighted the expulsion of the Trotsky opposition from the CPSU (B), as well as evaluating the reports from the Chinese, English, French and trade union commissions.⁵⁵⁷ The focus of the plenum was a critical examination of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and its societal and ideological implications for Soviet society, a question that suggests the start of the conflict between Bukharin and Stalin.⁵⁵⁸ This plenum put forward an understanding that the communist movement had to act carefully in its contacts with the social democratic movement. This, in turn, strengthened antagonism which the Comintern endorsed, urging the national sections to follow the "general turn to the left". However, several of the communist parties, e.g. the CPGB and the PCF, did not agree with this policy.⁵⁵⁹ In conclusion, the Ninth ECCI Plenum signalled an imminent policy shift within the Comintern, which revealed itself in all its full glory at the Sixth International Comintern congress (17 July – 1 September 1928). For the LAI, the ideological message introduced at the Ninth ECCI Plenum did not correspond with its aim to sustain a united front against colonialism and imperialism.⁵⁶⁰

This likely Comintern policy shift was not, however, the only sign. On 16 February, Münzenberg sharply criticised Bukharin for the extreme indifference at Comintern headquarters in

⁵⁵⁶ For a similar discussion on Gibarti's presumed "role" as an agent in the service of Bolshevism and the Comintern, Koch writes that Gibarti was a "willing participant in espionage recruitment", see Koch 1995, p.343 (footnote 23). However, and according to the empirical dilemma outlined above, any documents verifying that such was the case have not been found and, if any exist, the documents are most likely kept in the KGB archive in Moscow.

⁵⁵⁷ Kahan 1990, 28.

⁵⁵⁸ Research and scholarly interpretations of the origin of the NEP, its practical implementations and consequences for Soviet society, as well as the plots connected to the decision to shun the policy in 1928-29, is a topic evaluated and analysed in, for example, David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilisation. Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-war Russia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, pp.154-155, 164; Acton & Stableford, 2005, pp.149-183, 263-264; Figes 2007, pp.86-87; Robert Himmer, "The Transition from War Communism to the New Economic Policy: An Analysis of Stalin's View", in *The Russian Review*, vol.53, Hoover Institution, Stanford, 1994, p.516; Fitzpatrick (1999).

⁵⁵⁹ According to Borkenau, the Comintern took a "leap into the abyss" after 1927, Borkenau 1938, pp.334-335.

⁵⁶⁰ A majority of the discussions and disagreements at the plenum centred around Bukharin's excessive belief in the "revolutionary potential" of the Western labour movement, and the impatience of the international communist movement to transform world revolution into a political reality. Furthermore, this also concerned the dilemma of having properly "bolshevised" national sections, whereas the isolated centre of the international communist movement – Comintern headquarters in Moscow – had more or less lost its contact with the national sections, the mass and sympathising organisations, see Degras vol.II 1960, 423-425; Nicholas N. Kozlov & Eric D. Weitz, "Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol24, No.3, (Jul., 1989), Sage Publications, pp.387-410; Matthew Worley, "Courting Disaster? The Communist International in the Third Period", in *In Search of Revolution. International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, Matthew Worley (ed.), London, 2004, pp.6-7; Priestland 2007, p.178.

Moscow, urging him initiate a re-organisation of the entire apparatus. Münzenberg emphasised the necessity of establishing effective administrative routines, e.g. smaller departments and of restoring the system which supported regular contact with the international sections. According to Münzenberg, the prevailing bureaucratic malpractice in Moscow had sabotaged much of his work in January-February, and it seemed as though the situation at Comintern headquarters was in a truly poor state, not even comparable to the situation of 1919.⁵⁶¹ The International Secretariat sided, of course, with Münzenberg. The International Secretariat sent information to the LAI Executive and to the LAI's collective and affiliated members, declaring that due to "circumstances beyond their control" [neglecting to mention that a breach in communications with Comintern headquarters in Moscow was the sole reason], it had become troublesome to carry out routine work, e.g. sending material and directives to the national sections.⁵⁶²

The liaison question alluded to by Münzenberg was, however, part of a challenge the entire European communist movement was facing in the beginning of 1928. At the Ninth ECCI Plenum, the Comintern resolved to improve relations between Moscow and the communist parties in Western Europe and, therefore, in accordance with the ECCI's directive, endorsed the establishment of the *West European Bureau* (WEB). However, this was a process already set in motion on 13 April 1927, when the Political Secretariat had discussed the idea of a "foreign bureau of the ECCI" in a closed session in Moscow. The Political Secretariat instructed Bukharin, Kuusinen and Piatnitsky to work out details for "a bureau" in Western Europe, which had to include the aim and purpose, methods and strategy, individual composition and location of the bureau.⁵⁶³ The confidential document, "Entwurf eines Beschlusses des EKKI über die Errichtung eines Westeuropäischen Büros", perhaps the result of an evaluation carried out by Bukharin, Kuusinen and Piatnitsky, contains the directive that the WEB should establish "urgently a contact (*Fühlung*) between the ECCI and the West European sections", although the bureau was to be

⁵⁶¹ Münzenberg explained to Bukharin that his long relationship with the international communist movement and the Bolsheviks, stretching back to 1914, had given him an insight into how the bureaucracy and administrative structure in the Comintern functioned and, above all, how Moscow positioned itself in relation to the national sections, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25/1-2, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 16/2-1928. An erroneous interpretation of Münzenberg's relation to Bukharin is introduced by Sean McMeekin in a research note (2002), published in *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung*. According to McMeekin, "Bukharin was probably the greatest Münzenberg sucker" of all in the Comintern, frequently and intentionally deceived by the "Red Millionaire" [Münzenberg], who pushed the argument that "he never received any money from Moscow" to an extreme, see McMeekin 2002, pp.418-419. However, the relationship between the two of them was much more intricate than this, based not entirely on money, but also on hierarchical relations and structure, ambitions for power as well as historical ties and a commitment to the communist movement, something McMeekin ignores.

⁵⁶² *Informationsbulletin der LAI*, Nr. 1, 15/3-1928.

⁵⁶³ Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.69; RGASPI 495/3/13, 66, 66, (Streng vertraulich!) Protokoll Nr.20 der geschlossene Sitzung des Polit-Sekretariats vom 13. April 1927, [Moscow]. Present at the meeting were Bukharin, Kuusinen, Murphy, Piatnitsky, Humbert-Droz, Maggi, Petrov, Schneller, Duncan, Zetlin and Heimo. See Fredrik Petersson, "Melting Down the Iceberg: the Communist International, Organisational Perspectives and Archival Issues. A Research Report", CoWoPa 7, Åbo Academy, 2006.

located in Berlin. The second objective was to guarantee that couriers provided the ECCI with intelligence on the “Brüderparteien” [the national communist parties], i.e. on the day-to-day routines within the parties. This included whether the parties put the ECCI’s instructions and decisions into practice, as well as reporting any internal disputes or conflicts. This was an arrangement which also applied in the other direction. The WEB was the ECCI’s monitoring agency and relay station in Western Europe, and oversaw whether the “Brüderparteien” were carrying out its instructions, or neglecting to do so.⁵⁶⁴

In 1928, the WEB had no direct influence on the International Secretariat. Another episode produced a more dramatic effect: the decision of the Political Secretariat on 16 March to remove Roy as LAI liaison in Moscow, resulting in a breach in relations between the International Secretariat and Comintern headquarters. The sole reason given by the Political Secretariat was “on the future use of Comrade Roy, no decision”.⁵⁶⁵ For the International Secretariat, this meant the loss of a personal liaison at the Eastern Secretariat, thus, Münzenberg suggested that Petrovsky assume Roy’s position. However, Petrovsky’s commitment to the CPGB consumed all of his time and energy, leaving him unable to look after the LAI. It was not until June that the Political Secretariat found a temporary solution by nominating Heimo to “supervise the foreign activities of the LAI”.⁵⁶⁶ Thus, from March to June 1928, the International Secretariat had no regular contact with the Eastern Secretariat at Comintern headquarters. During this period, however, the decision-makers in Moscow kept discussions on the LAI to a minimum. One of the few occasions it was discussed was prior to the LAI Executive meeting in Brussels on 28-29 April, as Piatnitsky and the Political Secretariat were preparing the details for its agenda, once the ECCI Bureau Secretariat had re-examined the preparations of the Brussels Congress in 1926-27.⁵⁶⁷ While the LAI General

⁵⁶⁴ This confidential draft functioned as consultative material for the ECCI, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/33, 132, (Vertraulich) Entwurf eines Beschlusses des EKKI über die Errichtung eines Westeuropäischen Büros, Moscow, [undated] 1928 [copy]; Vatlin 2009, p.141.

⁵⁶⁵ Roy was sick when he left Moscow in February or March. After arriving in Switzerland, Roy never returned to the Soviet Union. He was unable to attend the Ninth ECCI Plenum, despite having been re-elected to the ECCI Presidium and, as noted by Piazza, around this time the Comintern began its “demontage” of Roy, Piazza 2000, p.210, taken from fol. RGASPI 495/3/72, 9.

⁵⁶⁶ Münzenberg sent Heimo a copy of the March issue of *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf*, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 10, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo [Wi./K.], Moscow, Berlin 18/6-1928; RGASPI 542/1/28, 33-34, *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf*, Berlin, 1/3-1928.

⁵⁶⁷ RGASPI 495/3/89, 4-5, Protocol No.23, ECCI Polit-Secretariat, Moscow, 15/2-1928. Present at the meeting were Lozovsky, Barbé, Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Chitarow, Bell, Ulbricht, Bela Kun, Keirowa, Furman/Purman, Manner, Miezkiwisch, Gusev, Angaretis, Heimo, Martinov, Wurm, Wassiljew, Schublin, Wolfe, Rwal, Stassiak, Michailov, Krastin, Stassowa, Riess, Gerisch, Bebedova, Glaubauf, Kachan and Krastina (steno-typist). However, this resolution remains missing in the files at Comintern Archive. At the receiving end (most likely), Münzenberg was the recipient of the resolution. The examined documents in Moscow were the “Resolution on the International Congress against Imperialist Oppression to be held at Brussels, Adopted by the Political Secretariat of the ECCP” (5/1-1927, reviewed 4 April); “INSTRUCTIONS TO THE DELEGATES AT THE BRUSSELS CONGRESS” (4/2-1927, reviewed 9 April); “Resolution of the Commission for the Examination of the Question of a Colonial Congress in Brussels” (30/3-1926, reviewed April 20); and a confidential letter from the ECCI Secretariat to Münzenberg (2/7-1926, reviewed April 21), see fol. RGASPI 495/103/154.

Council in Brussels in December 1927 indicated the end of euphoria, the LAI Executive meeting in Brussels in April, confirmed its end.

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Confirming the End of Euphoria: The Return to Brussels

The LAI Executive meeting in Brussels on 28-29 April focused on the purpose and aims of the LAI. With its return to Brussels, some of the Executive members chose to confront the organisation. Fimmen stated at the meeting, as noted in the protocol, that the LAI had “neither head nor feet”, an observation which, in a sense, described the end of euphoria, while the session highlighted the LAI’s inability to make the leap from demonstration to organisation. Even several of the LAI Executive members themselves were conspicuous by their absence, e.g. Nehru had returned to India, Rivera was living in Mexico, Baldwin was in the USA, Hatta was unable to attend despite his recent acquittal (see previous chapter) and Mme. Duchêne remained in France. Thus, only a few members were present at the meeting: Maxton, Bridgeman, Saklatvala, Fimmen, Marteaux, Abdul Manaff and Pamontjak (as substitutes for Hatta), Liau, Chatto and Münzenberg. According to Münzenberg, in his report to the ECCI Secretariat, the session resembled the convening of “a small office meeting”.⁵⁶⁸

Fimmen highlighted the question of a possible disintegration of the LAI, a fear resulting from the lack of tangible results. It did not matter that the Dutch LAI Section had distinguished itself in connection with the propaganda campaign to free Hatta; Fimmen initiated a discussion on why the other sections had failed. For example, in Belgium, the *Sûreté* had effectively prevented the Belgian LAI Section from taking any tentative steps. In France, the LAI section faced a different problem apart from the continued hostility of the French security services, Fimmen stated, describing how the PCF’s indifference had crippled any kind of initiative. Furthermore, on the other side of the Channel, the incapacity of the “provisional LAI committee” in England to exploit British imperialism and its slogan – the “leading imperialist nation” – was nothing more than shameful. Fimmen accused Maxton of not succeeding in raising any awareness of the LAI within the British labour movement, concluding that the common worker in England did not even know about the LAI, despite the debacle of Lansbury’s and Brockway’s resignations in 1927. Maxton tried to explain that the LAI’s outlook in Great Britain looked “promising”, though Chatto remained unconvinced. For Chatto, Bridgeman was the key to building up a functional LAI section, urging him to establish connections with colonial individuals in England by focusing on colonial associations in London, e.g. the *Workers’ Welfare League of India*, the *Indian Information*

⁵⁶⁸ RGASPI 542/1/25, 6-7, Report from Münzenberg, Brussels, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/4-1928.

Centre and the *Indian Defence League*. However, before admitting them into the LAI, Bridgeman had to evaluate their political leanings and reliability. However, Bridgeman explained that contact with the Indian groups had ended in nothing; instead, they refused to have anything to do with the LAI due to their affiliation with the *Labour Party*. The political and organisational deadlock within the “provisional LAI committee” in London had to be broken, therefore Chatto told Maxton and Bridgeman to focus on finding individuals rather than seeking the membership of collective members (organisations and associations). According to the protocol, Fimmen had listened to the discussion, only to conclude that it seemed as though the LAI only had two functional sections in 1928: the Dutch and the German. Nevertheless, Fimmen queried the validity of this statement, telling Münzenberg that the German section was only managing to survive due to the IAH’s support. For Münzenberg, the situation was far more complex, explaining to the LAI Executive members the reasons why the LAI had an active section in Germany:

Two reasons explain why it was easy to establish the LAI in Germany. Germany does not possess any colonies, and the resistance from the government is not so strong concerning the work of the LAI. The development of big propaganda campaigns against the demand in Germany to acquire colonies is, therefore, thoroughly developed.⁵⁶⁹

Germany’s lack of colonies as an outcome of the Versailles Peace Treaty, and the inattentiveness of the German security services towards an organisation such as the LAI, explained its success, not the IAH’s active support, Münzenberg argued. However, the LAI Executive should not forget Münzenberg’s expertise and experience in organising propaganda campaigns, committees, associations and organisations, a process initiated in Germany in 1921. Thus, Münzenberg argued, this had made it “easy [to] get and to direct the German worker” to participate in political movements. As proof of the above, the German LAI Section had sixteen branches in the country. In Frankfurt am Main, for example, the branch had 600 registered members under the supervision of “a teacher” [Karl August Wittfogel] and, in total, the LAI had about 5,000 members alone in Germany. The only response that Fimmen could give was that the LAI newspaper, *Recht en Vrijheid*, had had 600 subscribers before the Dutch authorities decided to ban it in the beginning of 1928.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ RGASPI 542/1/25, 6-7, Report from Münzenberg, Brussels, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/4-1928; RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), sent by Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928. For a copy of the protocol, see LAI *fond* fol. 542/1/26, 38-49.

⁵⁷⁰ The LAI had active branches in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin. According to Münzenberg, members had to fulfil two essential tasks. Firstly, organise public meetings every second week and secondly, distribute (under the supervision of the Berlin section) *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf*. In response to Münzenberg’s confident report, Fimmen stated that non-party individuals, socialists, anarchists and Indonesians constituted the bulk of the Dutch LAI Section membership. The journal, *Recht und Freiheit*, had a steady circulation of 600 copies and, despite the frequent prohibition of the journal, the LAI had a good following in seven or eight regions, RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-

Despite the LAI's lack of progress, a more serious issue was the LSI's relentless antagonism, Fimmen stated, informing the LAI Executive that the LSI did not intend to tone down its criticism of the LAI. In fact, the LSI campaign against the LAI would most likely be discussed at the LSI's international congress in Brussels on 5-11 August, 1928. Maxton agreed with Fimmen, explaining how the LSI report had created an ideological divide within the socialist and labour movements in Europe, with the LAI having become more or less an ostracised political object.⁵⁷¹ After the LAI Executive meeting, the information from Fimmen and Maxton on the LSI's intentions was a task for the International Secretariat to solve. The question was how and whether the LAI was capable of responding to the LSI's hostility. The first step was to gather intelligence on the LSI's colonial policy. From an unknown source, Münzenberg knew that the LSI's Colonial Commission had convened a meeting in Brussels on 2-3 June. Thus, Münzenberg drafted an article, based on the intelligence from his source [content unknown], "Die Beschlüsse der II Internationale gegen die unterdrückten Völker", and sent it to Bukharin on 22 June, along with the request to "please use" and publish this article in *Pravda*. According to Münzenberg, the primary aim of this article was to accuse Adler and the LSI of their ignorance of the real purpose of the LAI: to raise awareness of the "revolutionary movement in colonial and semi-colonial regions" in Europe – an undertaking the LSI had neglected to acknowledge in connection with the establishment of the *League of Nations* in 1919.⁵⁷² Yet, this article was a constituent part of Münzenberg's propaganda machinery, frequently used when responding to the socialist movement. For the International Secretariat, the preferred strategy to disrupt the LSI's colonial policy was of a more subtle nature. Firstly, the LAI could not refute that the LSI was the gravitational centre of the socialist movement in Europe and, secondly, if the LSI chose to include the colonial question on its agenda at its congress in August, the International Secretariat knew that it would attract political attention. On 29 June, during a meeting at the International Secretariat, Münzenberg, Chatto, Liao and Hatta decided to approach colonial organisations, associations and students in Berlin and London which they knew had received invitations to the LSI congress. Their primary aim for doing this was to influence and "convert" these colonial elements to act as "messengers" and to present "resolutions of protest" at the congress. According to the International Secretariat, these protests had to focus on the "cowardice of social democracy" in not supporting the LAI. For Chatto, this was a chance to

28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), sent by Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928.

⁵⁷¹ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), sent by Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928.

⁵⁷² RGASPI 542/1/28, 40, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 22/6-1928; RGASPI 542/1/28, 41-54, Manuscript, author: Münzenberg, June, 1928. Bukharin edited the manuscript. Münzenberg believed that the LSI had a strategy for the colonial question, urging Fimmen to understand that the LSI "Colonial Committee" did nothing more than "throw sand in the eyes" of the oppressed peoples, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/29, 28-29, (Confidential) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Maxton, London, 6/6-1928.

evaluate his network to Indian nationalists in Berlin, Europe and India, contacting, for example, the *India Association* in England, Nehru and Jhabwala in Bombay, with the latter providing additional contacts to the workers and peasants' movements in India. This plan revived Liao's interest in the LAI; he introduced the idea of approaching radical political circles in European ports, preferably among seamen in Hamburg and Amsterdam, contacts which could spread the word about the LAI and its attitude towards the LSI congress. Additional groups the LAI should contact were the colonial student associations and Latin American organisations in Berlin, Liao concluded. Yet, how could the International Secretariat guarantee that the LSI congress would hear the LAI's protests? Evidently, the International Secretariat considered it wise to infiltrate the LSI congress, having Chatto and Liao attend the event disguised as journalists but, "in reality", as LAI representatives.⁵⁷³ It is unknown whether this plan was carried out; however, according to an RKÜÖ report, Chatto was planning to travel to Brussels in August 1928 under the pseudonym "Hussein".⁵⁷⁴

The LAI Executive meeting wanted to find a solution to two particular problems in order to explain the internal weakness of the LAI. Firstly, the LAI Executive had to endorse a decision granting the International Secretariat the right to use Berlin as its permanent base and, secondly, reach a decision on the political representation of the International Secretariat, hence, a decisive step to turn the LAI into a mass organisation. For Maxton, the logical step was to grant the International Secretariat a more authoritative position, stating, "I am a politician and a tactician, organisational and financial questions are not for me". However, after Gibarti's sudden resignation, the division of labour at the International Secretariat was in a state of chaos, as it was lacking in both skilled co-workers and a shortage of funds, e.g. Chatto informed those present that occasional contributions of money had ceased, Nehru had sent a one-off contribution and nothing more, while Baldwin refused to send any money as long as the International Secretariat was in a state of confusion and "none of the staff" in the French and British sections had any money. On 29 April, Münzenberg sent a request to the ECCI Secretariat, wondering why the International Secretariat had not received its monthly allowance of \$1,500 since January 1928, concluding that if no money arrived, the only solution left was perhaps to liquidate the LAI.⁵⁷⁵ With reference to the political constitution of the International Secretariat, Münzenberg wanted to nominate "a communist and a non-communist" to work as political secretaries in Berlin. However, Maxton did not agree, arguing

⁵⁷³ RGASPI 542/1/27, 29-30, Protocol, LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, 29/6-1928 ; RGASPI 542/1/27, 32-33, Protocol, LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, 30/6-1928.

⁵⁷⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/67113, 112, Reichskommissar: Vermerk: Aus privater Quelle, Berlin, August 1928.

⁵⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), sent by Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928; RGASPI 542/1/25, 6-7, Report from Münzenberg, Brussels, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/4-1928.

that the LAI would benefit from a broader political representation, suggesting that the International Secretariat should include a representative of the socialists (Maxton), the trade unions (Fimmen), the colonial national revolutionary movement (Chatto) and the communist movement (Münzenberg). The LAI Executive endorsed Maxton's proposal and approved Chatto as the new "International Secretary" of the LAI.⁵⁷⁶

The Brussels LAI Executive was Chatto's rise to prominence. Before the meeting, Chatto sent a letter to Nehru, explaining how he believed that the political "future" of the LAI depended on a dynamic collaboration between the communist, social democratic and trade union movements in the imperialist countries, in order to support the colonial revolutionary movement. In May, Chatto contacted Nehru again, stating that the latest LAI Executive meeting had confirmed his assumption, proud of the fact that he was now acting as the "political secretary" of the LAI.⁵⁷⁷ For Münzenberg, Chatto's election was a decent choice, informing the ECCI Secretariat that he trusted Chatto to be capable of carrying out the duties entrusted to him. At this point in time, Münzenberg needed someone he could trust at the International Secretariat. Preoccupied with organising an anti-fascist campaign, with Barbusse and Rolland as symbolic leaders of the campaign, Münzenberg had neither the time nor the energy to get involved with the LAI.⁵⁷⁸

The determination of its political representation and Chatto's endorsement as "International Secretary" did not, however, solve the LAI's organisational gridlock. Now that the International Secretariat had no personal liaison at Comintern headquarters – Heimo was a temporary solution in June – the LAI nerve centre in Berlin could only observe how some of the sections engaged themselves in internal squabbles. After the Ninth ECCI Plenum, the international communist movement had to adapt itself to the policy direction and rhetoric of the event. For example, the CPH, the CPGB and the PCF were struggling to grasp the theoretical ramifications of Comintern policy. The internal confusion within the CPH was also affecting the Dutch LAI Section. According to Hatta, fractional struggles had almost consumed the section in May, a fight sponsored by both the CPH and the SDAP which ended in a definitive split between the

⁵⁷⁶ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), sent by Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928.

⁵⁷⁷ British security services intercepted Chatto's letters to Nehru. The first letter to Roy is also included in Barooah's biography on Chatto; yet, Barooah wrongly concludes that the LAI Executive convened on April 2 (no location given). Barooah refers to Horst Krueger's [Krüger] dated article "Zum Einfluss internationaler Faktoren auf die Herausbildung und Entwicklung der antiimperialistischen Haltung Jawaharlal Nehrus", in E. N. Komarov et al. (Hrsg.), *Politik und Ideologie im gegenwärtigen Indien*, Berlin, 1976, p.333; Barooah 2004, p.256, 278 (see footnote 47). The second letter is located in the files of British Head Office, see TNA HO 144 10693, Secret report, analysis of LAI, MI5, year: 1929.

⁵⁷⁸ It was not possible for Münzenberg to assist Chatto "due to other commitments". Firstly, he had to visit Frankfurt am Main on a party assignment and, secondly, co-ordinate the IAH apparatus in Berlin in May, in order to prepare for an anti-fascist campaign together with the WEB. A campaign Münzenberg was expecting would turn into a euphoric demonstration, like the Brussels Congress, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 6-7, Report from Münzenberg, Brussels, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 29/4-1928., see fol. RGASPI 542/1/29, 20-22, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to WEB, Berlin, 18/5-1928.

communist and non-communist members. Witnessing this political struggle, Hatta felt both dissatisfaction with and contempt towards the communist members' behaviour, informing the secretary of the Dutch LAI Section, the journalist and communist Gijsbert Jasper van Munster, that the conflict would lead either to the dissolution of the section or turn it into a subsidiary section of the CPH. Thus, if the PI resigned from the LAI for "tactical reasons", this would leave the section completely isolated. At the same time, Hatta left the Netherlands and moved to Locarno, Switzerland, in May, a decision taken after having experienced the Dutch legal system.⁵⁷⁹ Nonetheless, and quite similar to Brockway's commitment to the anti-imperialist movement, Hatta made the distinction between organisational and individual engagement. Hatta attended a meeting of the International Secretariat in Berlin on 29 June 1928, and explained that he expected to maintain contact both with the International Secretariat and with Chatto. His primary reason for doing this was to remain on the LAI Executive in the capacity as an individual member, not as a delegate of the PI.⁵⁸⁰ However, the International Secretariat was looking in a different direction at this point in time, expecting to secure the collective membership of the Profintern, an objective which tested both the credibility and the organisational strength of the LAI.

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The Profintern Connection

The International Secretariat had tried to get the Profintern to support the LAI ever since the Brussels Congress. In March 1927, the General Secretary of the Profintern, Solomon Abramovich Lozovsky, concluded that, for the time being, the Profintern had no intention of associating with the LAI unless the organisation corrected a few "practical measures".⁵⁸¹ What were these "practical measures"? What Lozovsky was referring to was the size and scale of the LAI; this was also a matter devoid of ideological connotations. Achieving the Profintern's confirmation and consent turned into a long, drawn-out process for the International Secretariat. On 18 June, 1928, Münzenberg requested that Heimo make a few enquiries at Comintern headquarters to see whether it would be possible to convince the Profintern to become a collective member. What was Münzenberg's primary aim? In April, the LAI Executive had concluded at its meeting in Brussels that the LAI had very few trade unions as members, to which Maxton had suggested approaching "Russian organisations to affiliate". Later, in June, Münzenberg told Maxton that this was a "wise

⁵⁷⁹ RGASPI 542/1/29, 23, Letter from G. J. van Munster, Amsterdam, to the LAI Executive, Berlin, 23/5-1928; RGASPI 542/1/29, 24, Letter from G. J. van Munster, Amsterdam, to Hatta, Locarno, 23/5-1928; RGASPI 542/1/29, 25, Letter from Hatta, Locarno, to Munster, Amsterdam, 10/5-1928.

⁵⁸⁰ RGASPI 542/1/27, 29-30, Protocol, International Secretariat, Berlin 29/6-1928.

⁵⁸¹ TNA HO 144 10693, [Intercepted] Telegram from the General Secretary A. Lozovsky of the RILU/Profintern, To all Trade Union Organisations that Participated in the Anti-Imperialist Congress held in Brussels, Moscow, No.160/7, 15/3-1927.

suggestion”, telling him that the process to get the Profintern to affiliate as a collective member had begun.⁵⁸² However, at this stage, Münzenberg had only thought of initiating negotiations with the Profintern. A second motive for Münzenberg was money, telling Heimo that if the Profintern became a member, this would guarantee the LAI an annual contribution of 25,000 Roubles in membership fees. However, Münzenberg and the LAI had to first answer Lozovsky’s demand that a minimum of five “important” trade unions be affiliated as collective members of the LAI.⁵⁸³

Münzenberg had set in motion a cautious project, telling Heimo to act carefully. Firstly, Heimo was to consult with Petrovsky before trying to arrange any meetings with Profintern representatives in Moscow, suggesting that he approach the Ukrainian Grigorij Natnovic Melnitschansky (1886 – 1937)⁵⁸⁴ and the Russian Ya. K. Yaglom (1898 – 1939).⁵⁸⁵ In connection with Heimo’s enquiries, the International Secretariat started to collect the addresses of “important” international trade unions in Europe.⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the Profintern turned down Heimo’s request for the simple reason that the LAI could not present any tangible contacts with trade unions, forcing the International Secretariat to adopt a new approach. On 20 September, Münzenberg and Chatto sent a letter of enquiry to the AUCCSLU (“Zentralrats der Sowjetgewerkschaften”) in Moscow, asking whether they would consider becoming a collective member. The AUCCSLU then sent on their enquiry to the Secretariat of the Profintern. To convince the AUCCSLU that the enquiry was a serious and sincere act, the International Secretariat introduced a “minimum of five big trade unions” as members of the LAI, covering a geographical representation from Cuba, West Africa and India (the *Municipal Workers’ Union*, *Railway Workers’ Union* and the *Railway Administration Workers’ Union* in Bombay, the *Cuban Labour Association* and the *Santo Domingo*

⁵⁸² RGASPI 542/1/29, 28-29, Confidential letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Maxton, London, 6/6-1928. A copy of this letter was also filed in the CPGB *fond*, see fol. 495/100/545, 11 [English version], 12-13 [German version]. The British security services intercepted this letter and passed it on to Head Office, see TNA HO 144 10693.

⁵⁸³ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protocol, LAI Executive Committee meeting, Brussels (28/4-1928), from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bukharin, Moscow, 24/5-1928; RGASPI 542/1/25, 10, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo [Wi./K.] Moscow, 18/6-1928.

⁵⁸⁴ Grigorij Natnovic Melnitschansky (1886 – 1937) became a member of the *Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party* in 1902. In 1910, he emigrated to the USA where he worked as a journalist, publishing articles in the Russian socialist paper *Novyj mir*, and he remained in the USA until 1917. After the October Bolshevik coup in 1917, Melnitschansky returned to Russia together with Trotsky and began his career as a trade unionist (functionary) in the 1920s. Delegated to carry out an international mission in 1928, Melnitschansky had a prominent position within the LAI in 1929-31. In 1937, during the purge of the Comintern apparatus in Moscow, Melnitschansky received the death sentence, see Reiner Tosstorff, *Profintern. Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920-1937*, Paderborn, 2004, p.738. Archival staff at RGASPI have provided me with additional information on Melnitschansky.

⁵⁸⁵ Ya L. Yaglom (1898-1939) became a member of the *Russian Communist Party* in 1918 and, during the 1920s, worked for the Profintern. Expelled from the party in 1930, accused of supporting “rightist-opportunist activities”, Yaglom regained his membership after having subjected himself to the act of self-criticism. Arrested by the NKVD in Moscow (unknown date) during the Great Terror, he died in prison in 1939, see “Yaglom, Ya. K.”, in Heinrich E. Schulz, Paul K. Urban, Andrew I. Lebed (eds.), *Who was who in the USSR. A Biographic Directory Containing 5,015 Biographies of Prominent Soviet Historical Personalities*, The Scarecrow Press, New Jersey, 1972, p.600.

⁵⁸⁶ Münzenberg requested that Heimo send addresses of trade unions and workers’ organisations in Finland and Norway to the International Secretariat, RGASPI 542/1/25, 13, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 20/8-1928.

National Labour Union Association in Havana and the West-African *Sierra Leone Railway Workers' Union*). Münzenberg and Chatto argued that if the Profintern chose to become a collective member, this would be a step that would strengthen the work to “build a bridge” between the “coloured workers and the trade unions” in the “imperialist nations”.⁵⁸⁷ On 5 October 1928, the Profintern Presidium endorsed the decision to join the LAI as a collective member.⁵⁸⁸

The establishment of a connection with the Profintern strengthened the trade union character of the LAI. The International Secretariat expected to use the trade union question as a topic to counteract the LSI's antagonism. Thus, with a rapid influx of new members on a collective basis, the LAI was on the threshold of becoming a mass organisation, rather than merely an ideological defender of the anti-imperialist movement. However, this was a theory which had to face the hardship of reality. In comparison to the euphoria of 1927, 1928 had been far from a thriving period for the LAI. Epitomised by the LSI's hostility and the momentary breach in communications with Comintern headquarters in Moscow, the International Secretariat had also lost three central actors: Roy, Gibarti and, in some respects, Liau. Despite the short time-frame, the first half of 1928 was a decisive period in that it defined the end of euphoria and exposed the LAI as being a frail organisation. To curb this negative trend, the International Secretariat published the first issue of the LAI organ, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, in July 1928. This release also coincided with an event which had a lasting impact on the international communist movement: the ideological “turn to the left” at the Sixth International Congress in Moscow. Hence, “the third period” of the Comintern came into being.

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⁵⁸⁷ RGASPI 542/1/25, 28-32, Letter from the Sekretäre [Münzenberg + Chattophadyaya], Berlin, to Zentralrat der Gewerkschaften der USSR, Moscow, 20/9-1928.

⁵⁸⁸ Profintern sent this decision to the International Secretariat in November, see *Pressedienst*, Nr. 11, Internationale Sekretariats, Berlin, 7/11-1928.

Chapter 5. Utopia Redefined, Part I

It must be admitted that, up till now, not all the parties in the Communist International have fully grasped the decisive importance which the establishment of close, regular and unbroken relations with the national revolutionary movements in the colonies has in affording these movements active and practical help.

Theses on the Revolutionary Movement
in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries,
adopted by the Sixth Comintern
Congress, Moscow, 1/9-1928

Following on from the visit of a member of the Eastern Secretariat to you, and on his discussion with you of the possibility of holding a conference of Western European parties on Colonial work, [...] for the purpose of reviewing the work of the parties and putting into operation the decisions of the Congresses of the CI on colonial questions.

Arnot to the Secretariat of the PCF, Paris,
25/3-1929

The Sixth International Comintern Congress in Moscow (17 July – 1 September 1928) was the ideological watershed for the international communist movement during the inter-war years. Four years after the last congress in 1924, two years late by its own statutes, leaders and delegates of communist parties – 515 delegates representing 58 parties – gathered at the “Palace of Labour” of the Soviet trade unions in Moscow. The congress was the “scene of a muted, but none the less real, struggle” which, according to McDermott and Agnew, functioned as the ceremonial introduction and celebration of “the third period”, better known as the “class-against-class” policy and referred to in the Comintern as “the “new line”. The congress was also the scene of visible conflicts and appraisals, e.g. the crystallisation of a personal conflict between Bukharin and Stalin as well as the public disavowal of NEP. Thus, the Comintern gave its support to the Bolshevik regime’s decision to take the leap into the collectivisation and industrialisation of Soviet society.

The Comintern's “new line” represented, firstly, an ideological panorama which corroborated the inherent strength of communism to act as an independent political entity, capable of existing detached from the influence of social democracy. Secondly, the Comintern and the national sections portrayed themselves as the genuine radical representatives of a working-class party. Bukharin conceptualised the theoretical framework of “the new line”, in which he predicted the coming of a global capitalist crisis. This was the essence of “the third period” during which,

according to Bukharin, the crisis would lead to a second wave of international revolutionary activity. The first wave, after the end of the Great War, had failed rather embarrassingly, despite the struggle of the working-class against the ruling structures of social, political and economic systems. The prerequisite of “the third period” depended, therefore, on the inherent strength of the international communist movement. However, “the new line” required the Comintern and its sections to apply a sterner attitude towards the social democratic and trade union movements, the LSI and the nationalist reformist movements, referring to the latter category as defenders of “Gandhism”, “Sun Yat-senism” or “Garveyism”, all of which were working in the service of imperialism, while brusquely categorising the former as “social fascists”. “The new line” witnessed the ultimate end of the “united front” strategy and, instead, the Comintern sanctioned and favoured the *modus operandi* of establishing collaborations with movements “from below”, i.e. the workers and peasants.⁵⁸⁹

The Comintern’s historiography and vocabulary throughout the period 1928-1933 constitutes one of its most notorious and disputed periods, displaying tendencies of isolation and sectarianism as well as the decline of the communist movement on a global scale. “The third period” is a topic covered in several studies and interpreted *en masse*, thus, my primary aim here is not to re-enact the comprehensive history of the Sixth Comintern Congress. Yet, one has to recognise and understand that the congress laid out a new structural setting and ideological point of departure for both the Comintern and the international communist movement. Additionally, the paragraphs of the “General Rules” adopted at the congress confirmed the end of democratic centralism. According to Adibekov and Shakhnazarova, these paragraphs “stressed the necessity of observing strict party discipline and immediately carrying out the Comintern’s decisions”. Nevertheless, the understanding of the Sixth Comintern Congress and its ideological implications had a perpetual impact within the parties. For example, the CPGB interpreted “the new line” in terms of consolidation “from below”; however, the practical imprint was one of frustration and chaos. Alternatively, for the KPD, “the new line” was the continuing and strengthening of control, which the Comintern apparatus administered in Moscow *vis-à-vis* the German communist movement. McDermott and Agnew suggest that in order to put the logic of “the third period” in its proper

⁵⁸⁹ The “class against class” concept had first surfaced when the PCF had been evaluating the results of its electoral tactics in 1927, and was a term first coined by Jules Humbert-Droz. The term “social fascism/fascists” became the political *lingua franca* of the Comintern after the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow in July, 1929, see Theodore Draper, *American Communism & Soviet Russia*, Transaction Publishers, 2003, p.300; McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.67, 72-73, 77; “Programme of the Communist International Adopted at its Sixth Congress”, *Protokoll*, vi, 4, September 1, p.45. The programme for the congress was published in June, introduced by Bukharin in the opening speech at the congress, taken from Degras vol.II, 1960, pp.471-526. Esmonde Higgins, delegate of the CP of Australia, wrote that 515 delegates from 55 countries had attended the congress, out of which 100 came from “outside of Europe” and 74 from “actual colonial countries, see fol. RGASPI 495/94/44, taken from the Internet: < http://epress.anu.edu.au/oul/mobile_devices/ch02s20.html >; Kozlov & Weitz 1989, p.387.

context, one has to assess and understand the “complex interplay of socio-economic analysis, internal factional struggles in the USSR, Soviet foreign policy concerns and the concrete experiences of the communist parties themselves”.⁵⁹⁰ The higher principle was the quest for the continued Bolshevization of the international communist movement. Thus, this placed both ideology and the structures of the communist movement in a vice, having the Comintern serve as an “instrument in settling tactical controversies of Russian rather than international significance”.⁵⁹¹ This chapter aims to investigate and analyse the nature of colonial work within the communist movement in Europe. My focus will be centred mainly on the communist parties in Europe, for the simple purpose of establishing a deeper understanding of the complexities the LAI and its International Secretariat were facing while trying to pose as an ardent defender of the anti-imperialist movement in Europe.

The “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries”, introduced and endorsed at the congress, defined the political and organisational trajectory for the LAI and the communist parties in their colonial work. The author responsible for the “theses” was Kuusinen, who also presented the document at the congress. The primary aim of the “theses” was to question the earlier nature of colonial work in both the Comintern and the sections. Firstly, Kuusinen had reassessed the communist movement’s expectation of gaining a permanent foothold in China which, after the KMT putsch and the Cantonese debacle in 1927, had been dashed. Thus, India and its national revolutionary movement was the new target that the Comintern and the parties should support. Secondly, Kuusinen urged the communist parties of “the metropolitan countries” to establish “lively connections” with “corresponding organisations” in the colonies, a line of activity that up until 1928 had been inadequately followed up. However, the colonial “theses” was primarily the product of Stalin’s active and direct involvement. Before the congress convened, Kuusinen had sent extensive drafts of his “theses” to Stalin, asking for consultation and advice. According to Stalin’s corrections, Kuusinen had to narrow down the extensive material, which left the impression more of a commentary than a “theses” on the colonial question. Thus, Stalin instructed Kuusinen to focus on the class perspective and to apply it to typical colonies (India, Indonesia), semi-colonies (China, Egypt) and the dependent states (Mexico and Persia).⁵⁹² After Kuusinen had presented the “theses”, the ensuing debate at the congress exposed a split between the delegates on the colonial question. Wassiljew, Saklatvala and the Indian delegate

⁵⁹⁰ “Statutes of the Communist International Adopted at its Sixth Congress”, taken from Degras vol.II 1960, pp.464-470; Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.69; Worley 2002, pp.1-20; Hoppe 2007, p.33; McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.68.

⁵⁹¹ Fowkes 1984, p.195.

⁵⁹² Documents on how the colonial “theses” was prepared by Kuusinen, and corrected by Stalin are filed in fol. RGASPI 82/2/221, 11, 119-161, 162-163. On 12 July, Stalin told Kuusinen that he was sorry for his late reply. These documents were given to me for my perusal by Professor Kimmo Rentola, University of Turku.

Sikandar S. Usmani, accused the communist parties in the “imperialist nations” of their indifference towards supporting the anti-colonial movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The main question was, however, the decolonisation debate, which highlighted the question of whether the “metropolitan country” promoted or retarded the development of industrialisation in the colonies. According to Kuusinen, this was “nothing but an imperialist lie”, while some members of the CPGB delegation, Rothstein and Petrovsky (attending the congress as “Bennet”), argued that the “theses” underestimated the level of industrialisation in the colonies. Two members of the CPGB, Arnot and Murphy, refuted Rothstein and Petrovsky’s statement as nonsense. Thus, the debate produced a split in the CPGB on the colonial question. Later, in December 1928, according to the observations of MI5, Petrovsky was “no longer a person of much importance” in questions relating to Great Britain and India.⁵⁹³

The Sixth International Comintern Congress was a clash between experience and understanding for both the delegates present and for those who were not. The official consensus was that the congress had been a “formal affair” pointing out the bright future of the international communist movement, although several delegates had perceived the event in other terms.⁵⁹⁴ For example, the Catalan and Profintern delegate, Andreu Nín (1892 – 1937), concluded that the congress and the shift from the united front to “the third period” had been typical of the “epileptic zigzags” that only ended in “complete disarray” in the world party.⁵⁹⁵ Roy did not attend this congress. On 17 December 1928, Roy sent a letter to Arnot in which he declared, “I am an outcast”. However, this did not prevent him from objecting to the implications of “the new line”, telling Arnot “that the International has become insane”.⁵⁹⁶ The Swedish socialist Karl Kilbom

⁵⁹³ “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries Adopted by the Sixth Congress”, taken from Degras vol.II 1960, pp.526-547, originally published in *Protokoll*, vi, 4, p.154; Petrovsky was not re-elected as a member of the ECCI, instead, he was no longer a “person of much importance” in matters relating to India, MI5 stated. Yet, Petrovsky continued the secret work of the Comintern and, connected to the WEB in 1929, Petrovsky performed liaison and secret work in Great Britain and the USA, while in May 1929, he briefly filled in as the ECCI representative in the WEB in Berlin, see TNA PRO KV2/1433, Biographical information concerning Bennett/Petrovsky, 1928-1929; Worley 2002, p.139.

⁵⁹⁴ Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.69; Borkenau 1936, p.336.

⁵⁹⁵ Degras vol.II 1960, p.652; McDermott and Agnew 1996, p.86; For Andreu Nín, see Reiner Tosstorff, “Andreu Nín und Joaquín Maurín. Vom revolutionären Syndikalismus zum antistalinistischen Kommunismus”, in *Ketzer im Kommunismus*, Bergmann/ Kessler (Hrsg.), VSA-Verlag Hamburg, 2000, pp.218-241.

⁵⁹⁶ The Comintern had not yet categorised Roy as a *persona non grata*. Residing in Berlin, Roy began to experience his isolation from the movement. Writing to Arnot, Roy wrote: “You know I am entirely ignorant of what is happening in the Centre [Comintern; Moscow]. I had been patiently waiting for John [?]; but he could not enlighten me any more than others before him had done. As a matter of fact, he confessed that he himself did not know what was happening. I do not wish you to divulge official secrets to an outcast; but would it be very inconvenient for you to inform me as to the general tendency of the new policy [class against class]. For example, I have not the slightest idea where I stand and what am I expected to do in the future. I presume that it is not desired that I should be pushed out of things altogether. I cannot believe that the International has become insane. Nevertheless, when I am not told anything officially, very mean rumours are being spread throughout the International. And by its attitude, the International gives moral support to these mean intrigues against me. I know that it is very difficult to get to the root of these dirty things; but they injure my position just the same. I do hope you would send me a word from time to time so that I might keep

(1885 – 1961) was, both during and prior to the Sixth International Comintern Congress, a member of the *Communist Party of Sweden* and carried out covert missions as a Comintern agent in Europe. However, Kilbom did not attend the Sixth Comintern Congress due to illness. Kilbom was a friend of Münzenberg, and visited him in Berlin shortly after the congress had ended. Münzenberg asked him why he had been absent and Kilbom gave his explanation, to which Münzenberg replied, “so you were politically ill! That was a wise decision on your behalf, because now everything is coming apart in the Russian governance”.⁵⁹⁷ The Sixth International Comintern Congress was, above all, an ideological demonstration and a continuance of the work to re-route and adjust the organisational structure of the Comintern. Hence, “the new line” was the ideological varnish which justified why the Comintern chose to ignore former policies, strategies and methods, in its aim to create a world of communism. The crux of the matter was to make the colonial question comprehensible and even logical enough for the communist movement to be able to support.

This chapter is part one of two consecutive parts which focus on analysing the hierarchical relations of the Comintern apparatus (institutions and departments). Essentially, my primary aim is to discern how the Comintern implemented objectives such as control, focus and the defining of the colonial work of both the LAI and the communist parties in Europe.⁵⁹⁸ The terms above demonstrate how and why the relations and functions (and dysfunctions) between the centre – Moscow/Comintern headquarters – and the periphery – Berlin/the International Secretariat assumed a new phase after the Sixth Comintern Congress. This calls for the need, firstly, to elucidate the character and structure of the relations between the centre and periphery and, secondly, to evaluate the theoretical and practical ramifications of the colonial work at Comintern headquarters and in the national sections. According to Kuusinen at the congress, the communist parties had not “fully grasped” the important task of developing and supporting its colonial work.

in touch with the general line of affairs”, RGASPI 495/215/18, 167, Letter from Roy, Berlin, to R. P. Arnot, Moscow/Berlin, 17/12-1928.

⁵⁹⁷ Kilbom remembered Münzenberg fondly, describing him as a genius in questions relating to organisation and propaganda. According to Kilbom, Münzenberg was one of the few capable men who actually achieved something in the Comintern, primarily due to his ability to predict which way the political current was shifting. In 1928, and after the Sixth International Comintern Congress, Kilbom visited Münzenberg in Berlin, where Münzenberg told Kilbom his idea of establishing an independent communist party in Germany. However, Münzenberg recognised that this would be an impossible task to realise, see Karl Kilbom, *Cirkeln slutes*, Stockholm, 1955, p.109. For a biography on Kilbom, see Lazitch 1986, pp.214-215.

⁵⁹⁸ Arch Getty & Naumov 2010, p.96. Despite the fact that Getty and Naumov focus on different periods, the terms control, focus and defining are, by their semantic nature, useful as illustrations of how the Comintern attempted to correct and get the colonial work operational. Additionally, Brigitte Studer suggests in her analysis on Stalinization as a complex system of power relations, that the “exercise of power” through hierarchical structures was, until 1936-38, “effected by subtler means”, see Brigitte Studer, “Stalinization: Balance Sheet of a Complex Notion”, in LaPorte, Morgan and Worley (eds.), 2008, p.54.

Thus, this was a prerequisite which forced the parties to begin supporting organisations such as the LAI and the LDRN. This chapter focuses, therefore, on how the Comintern scrutinised and re-assessed the colonial work of the European communist parties. Robin Page Arnot, the CPGB member and Comintern emissary, was the candidate Kuusinen instructed to evaluate and direct the Comintern's colonial work. This was an agreement which also worked in the other direction, i.e. Arnot only answered to Kuusinen. This was a process which relegated the LAI and its International Secretariat to the role of bystander in this chapter. The reason for this is as follows: the methodological analysis of the empirical material has provided an understanding as to why the Comintern decided in 1928 to solve the existing problem of the colonial question in the communist parties. It is, therefore, relevant to emphasise the contextual *milieu*, i.e. the ideological and organisational setting in which the LAI re-structured itself. Furthermore, the colonial question was the focal point of two separate and parallel investigations at Comintern headquarters in 1929: firstly, Arnot's investigation and secondly, the preparatory work for the second international LAI congress, the former having a binding effect on the latter. This chapter and the one following aim to confirm that the machinations at Comintern headquarters in 1928-29 determined how the hierarchy of relations at the International Secretariat linked itself together with both the national LAI sections and the anti-imperialist movement, and, more importantly, with the departments and individuals at Comintern headquarters in Moscow.

The Comintern and the LAI were both facing changes as a result of the ideological impact of the Sixth Comintern Congress. Interpreted in terms of utopia, and if one considers Richard Stites' definition of "administrative utopia", a thematic framework focusing on those "holding power", the utopian strivings to turn the LAI into a mass organisation contradicted the aims of the hierarchy. By this I mean the character of the discipline and rationality of the administrative utopia, put forward by those holding power, i.e. the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters.⁵⁹⁹ This scenario emerged at the Sixth Comintern Congress during the debate on the role and use of the sympathising organisations. Münzenberg complained of "the general neglect of work in non-party organisations" under the umbrella of both the Comintern apparatus and the communist parties, stating that if this ignorance continued, it was possible to see the development of political opportunism in these organisations. The communist parties did not seem to understand that the sole purpose of the sympathising organisations was to "awaken the apathetic, to build bridges to non-party people" reluctant to join the communist party but, at the same time, expressing their

⁵⁹⁹ Stites 1989, pp.19, 23-24. Stephen Kotkin argued against several of Stites' contentions and his interpretation of Stalin's "administrative utopia", stating that Stites had failed to acknowledge the co-existence of genuine enthusiasm with widespread coercion, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, pp.15-16.

sympathy towards the Soviet Union, Münzenberg stated. The international communist movement simply had to understand that these organisations both counteracted social democratic influence and found recruits for communism. Münzenberg referred to the *Friends of the Soviet Union*, the *Red Front Fighters* and the LAI as exceptional examples of the above. However, several of the congress delegates merely responded that the “abundance of such subsidiary organisations” was “a heavy burden on small [communist] parties”.⁶⁰⁰

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Adapting to Ideology, and Chatto’s Network

Münzenberg left Moscow and the Sixth International Comintern Congress before it was over. However, he left with the feeling that the question of the sympathising organisations was a sensitive topic. This did not prevent Münzenberg from introducing the rhetoric of “the new line” at the meeting of the LAI Executive in Berlin on 18-19 August. How did this find its expression? One evident sign was that, while the former ambition of the LAI Executive had been to find a long-term solution to the political and organisational issues, after the Sixth Comintern Congress, however, these decisions ended up becoming more like short-term agreements. For example, the political representation at the International Secretariat, previously agreed to include a proportional division between the representatives of the socialist, communist, trade union and national revolutionary movements at the Brussels LAI Executive meeting on 28-29 April 1928, was a decision Münzenberg wanted to change. For Chatto, however, this made it possible for him to strengthen both his network and the Indian question within the LAI.

Saklatvala, Maxton, Mme Duchêne, Ledebour, Lessing, Münzenberg and Chatto were present at the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin in August. According to a report in *Labour Monthly* and the summary by the RMDI (the Reich Ministry of the Interior), this meeting revealed Münzenberg’s intention to adapt the new policy of the Comintern to the LAI. As noted in *Labour Monthly*, the LAI approved of the “decisions and resolution on the colonial question at the Congress of the Third International”, which “correspond entirely to the aims and principles” of the organisation on the questions of China and India. During the discussion on the LSI, a split between the LAI Executive members became evident, particularly with regard to the statement that the LAI presented itself “not [as] a section of the Comintern, or of the Communist Party” and the challenging of the LSI to answer for its “service to imperialism”.⁶⁰¹ According to the RMDI,

⁶⁰⁰ Degras vol.II 1960, p.465.

⁶⁰¹ “INTERNATIONAL – Executive Meeting of the League against Imperialism”, in *Labour Monthly*, Vol.10, Number 10, October 1928, London, pp.634-635. After the Berlin meeting, the LAI Executive released a resolution on the LSI and the Comintern on the colonial question, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/27, 41-42.

Maxton had not approved of Münzenberg's harsh critique of the LSI, urging him to understand that the LAI depended on the support of organisations which were also affiliated with the LSI. Münzenberg allegedly replied that any future collaboration with organisations, parties or associations affiliated with the LSI, would be like embarking upon the wrong political road. The RMDI concluded that the dispute between these two leading characters was peculiar from the point of view that this was the first visible proof of the communist "circle" acting in a hostile manner towards the socialists.⁶⁰²

This remark and his ongoing debate with Maxton irritated Münzenberg, fearing that this would lead to a "deep crisis" in the British LAI Section. Apparently, a rumour was circulating that both A. J. Cook and Ellen Wilkinson were considering leaving the LAI. Thus, Münzenberg advocated the use of direct diplomacy to avoid any sudden change within the section.⁶⁰³ Babette Gross received Münzenberg's instruction to leave Berlin as soon as possible, and to visit the LAI office in London. On 13 November, Gross had a closed meeting with Rothstein, Saklatvala, Bridgeman and Maxton to discuss the "political arguments" and, more importantly, to find out whether Maxton really was a devoted anti-imperialist. According to Münzenberg's report to Kuusinen and Arnot, Gross listened to how Maxton regretted putting forward the statement that the LAI depended on the support of the labour movement in Europe, promising Gross that he intended to "remain at any cost" on the LAI Executive. Gross' mission to London was a success for Münzenberg, and it averted a potential crisis within the British LAI Section.⁶⁰⁴

The International Secretariat organised two public events in Berlin in August. The first took place at the "Lehrer-Vereinshaus" on Alexanderplatz on 20 August, where Saklatvala, the anti-colonial activist and Indian nationalist Mohammed Ali, Pen-Bei of the *All Chinese Labour Association*, the representative of the Egyptian national revolutionary movement Abd El Mansir and Münzenberg all delivered speeches.⁶⁰⁵ The second event was of a different nature. Saklatvala and Münzenberg invited members of the pacifist association, the *Inter-Parliamentary Union*, to attend a meeting at the restaurant "Rheingold" on 26 August. The only tangible result of this

⁶⁰² SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/146, 72-73, 10, Liga gegen Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, RMDI, Berlin, September 1928.

⁶⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/25, 45-46, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 12/11-1928.

⁶⁰⁴ RGASPI 542/1/25, 52, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen & Arnot, Moscow, 22/11-1928. Münzenberg kept sending letters to Kuusinen, informing him of the suspected ideological deviation of the British LAI Section, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 55, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow [arrived in Moscow 6/12-1928]. With Gross back in Berlin, the crisis was at an end.

⁶⁰⁵ Additionally, the information to the members mentioned the "obvious duty" of distributing a minimum of ten membership cards in "circles that might show an interest for the LAI", SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 107, Information "an unsere Mitglieder", LAI International Secretariat, Berlin, 8/8-1928.

meeting was that some of the delegates visited the International Secretariat, e.g. Wissa Wassef Bey and Mohammed Sabri from Egypt, and Carl Lindhagen.⁶⁰⁶

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Chatto's Egocentric Network: The Origins of the Anti-Imperialist Hub

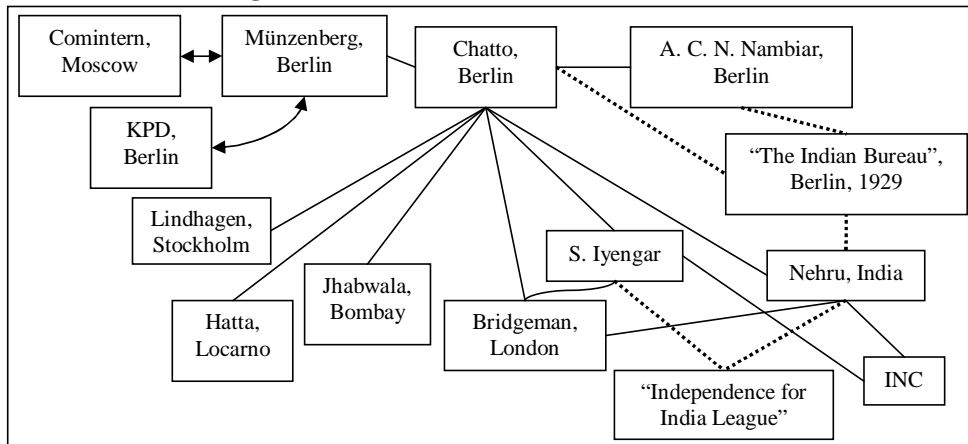
Chatto's position as "International Political Secretary" at the International Secretariat was an authoritative position within the LAI. In 1928, Chatto's primary focus was to re-organise the LAI network with an emphasis on individual contacts, and turn the LAI into a hub for anti-imperialist activists in Berlin, Europe and beyond. Having experienced the tremors and temporary isolation of the International Secretariat during the first half of 1928, characterised by Gibarti's sudden resignation and the breach in communications with Comintern headquarters in Moscow, Chatto began the project of turning his egocentric network into reality.⁶⁰⁷

Chatto's life and career as a devoted Indian nationalist and anti-colonial activist, and as a national revolutionary in the service of communism, is a topic covered in Barooah and Milton Israel's studies. However, these studies do not present the dynamics of Chatto's egocentric network in the context of the LAI. By re-constructing Chatto's network in 1928-29, a transcontinental network emerges linking together India, Berlin and Moscow. The table below introduces the key actors in Chatto's network, a structure which not only exclusively focused on Chatto; the table shows that some of the ties went beyond his remit. These ties nevertheless depended on the knowledge Chatto possessed, e.g. in shaping the anti-imperialist agenda of the Comintern. This was a precondition which existed particularly in relation to Chatto's relations with Müinzenberg and Nehru, the former being the link between the International Secretariat and both the Comintern and the KPD, with the latter trying to mobilise the activities of the LAI in India.

⁶⁰⁶ RGASPI 542/1/27, 34-36, Report, Müinzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow 28/8-1928. Chatto, Ella Windmüller and Otto Schudel attended this meeting. Furthermore, Babette Gross appeared as an accredited journalist for the *A-I-Z*, whereas Lehmann-Russbüldt of the *League for Human Rights* delivered a speech declaring his continued support of the colonial independence struggle. Founded in 1887, the *Inter-Parliamentary Union* wanted to stimulate a discussion on international conflicts on a governmental level. Similar organisations and institutional actors established at the end of the nineteenth century were, e.g. the *Institute of International Law* (1873), the *International Peace Bureau* (1891) and the *Nobel Committee*, see Davies 1996, p.874.

⁶⁰⁷ The above discussion draws inspiration from Barry Wellman's evaluation of network theory, which suggests that "egocentric (or personal) networks" strive to avoid confusion, as well as to define structural boundaries from the "standpoint of focal individuals"; see Wellman 1997, p.27.

Table 6.1: Chatto's Egocentric Network, 1928-29



Chatto perfected his egocentric network in 1928-29. Some of his contacts, e.g. with Bridgeman and Hattata, were realised in 1928, while his connection to Lindhagen could be traced back to the time Chatto was living in Stockholm in 1917-21.

India was the main challenge for the International Secretariat in 1928. Jhabwala's loneliness and the surveillance of the British security services symbolised the problematic scenario of distributing the LAI's propaganda, and of sending money to India. The International Secretariat relied therefore on the services of Comintern emissaries, e.g. from the CPGB, to carry out missions in India. This was an arrangement Chatto wanted to change. Nevertheless, when the emissaries passed through Berlin *en route* to India, they received additional instructions from Chatto. For example, the case of the British journalist and CPGB member Hugh Lester Hutchinson, sent on a mission to India in 1928, tells the tale of how the scheme worked in practice. According to Haithcox, Hutchinson left London in September 1928 and stopped over in Berlin, where he visited the International Secretariat and met (most likely) Chatto before departing. On the other hand, as Münzenberg informed Kuusinen, a British "Comrade ... [was] sent to India". Arriving in Bombay, Hutchinson assumed the position as editor of the left-wing journal *New Spark* – a zealous allusion to Lenin's journal *Iskra* – working together with Shushani Nambiar (Chatto's sister), the two of them ending up having an affair.⁶⁰⁸

However, Shushani Nambiar was also married to the Indian journalist, A. C. N. Nambiar, Chatto's close friend and collaborator who helped him organise Indian anti-colonial propaganda in

⁶⁰⁸ Hugh Lester Hutchinson published *Conspiracy at Meerut* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1935), a tale of his adventures in India. During Haithcox's interview with Philip Spratt, he received details about Hutchinson and Nambiar's "love affair" and about Hutchinson's editorial role at the *New Spark*. However, to verify Spratt's information, Haithcox consulted the papers of the Home Department, Government of India, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 45-46, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 12/11-1928; Haithcox 1971, 54, 308 (footnotes 51 & 52).

Berlin, an undertaking which was at odds with Roy's work to unify the Indian nationalist movement in the city. In May 1923, Chatto provided both his sister and her husband with assistance to leave London and move to Berlin and, in February 1926, Nambiar attended the "Rathauskeller" conference, as well as the Brussels Congress in 1927.⁶⁰⁹ Aside from his personal connection and contact with Chatto, working as a correspondent for the pro-nationalist agency *Free Press of India* and a member of the *All India Congress Committee* (AICC), Nambiar also had an independent network "ready to respond to the instructions of AICC officials".⁶¹⁰ As Chatto was also the brother of the renowned poet Sarojini Naidu, Chatto agreed to act as protector and advisor for her son, M. J. S. Naidu. The Indian connections at the International Secretariat became evident in the summer of 1928, with the visit of the former leader of the INC, Srinivasa Iyengar, to Berlin. Prior to this, Iyengar had been in England, where he both attended and delivered a speech at the inaugural conference of the British LAI Section in London. In Berlin, Iyengar met Chatto, Sarojini Naidu and her son at the International Secretariat. The RKÜöO registered these meetings and suspected that the aim of Iyengar's visit in Berlin was to meet Bolshevik officials at the Soviet consulate. For Sarojini Naidu, the purpose of her stopover in Berlin during the summer of 1928 was to see whether her son was coping with his studies at Humboldt University, but also to work with her brother Chatto at the International Secretariat, the RKÜöO concluded.⁶¹¹

The major achievement of Chatto and Nambiar was the establishment of the "Berlin Indian Students' Information Bureau" (the "Indian Bureau") in Berlin in February 1929. The "Indian Bureau" was a sub-section of the International Secretariat, a result of the interactionism between Chatto, Nambiar and Nehru, the latter having convinced the INC to give its moral consent and provide financial support to the LAI. In fact, the "Indian Bureau" had a historic tie to "The Indian News Service and Information Bureau" which Chatto had established after having been deported from Sweden in 1921 and ending up in Berlin. In 1929, the primary aim of the "Indian Bureau" was to recruit Indian anti-colonial activists and students in Berlin. One year later, on 5 November 1930, Chatto sent a report to the Eastern Secretariat entitled "Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin", a document Piatnitsky also consulted, which included a description of the purpose and aim of the "Indian Bureau":

⁶⁰⁹ Nambiar and Chatto had, for example, organised propaganda against British imperialism by publishing papers: the anti-colonial *Indo-German Commercial Review* and its successor, the *Industrial and Trade Review for India*, in 1923-24, publications which also competed with Roy's pro-nationalist publication, *Vanguard*, in Berlin, see Barooah 2004, pp.189-190.

⁶¹⁰ Israel 1994, p.260.

⁶¹¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/67113, 112, Reichskommissar: Vermerk: Aus privater Quelle, Berlin, August, 1928. In the summer of 1928, Iyengar visited Moscow and met Stalin; however, whether he attended the Sixth International Comintern Congress is not known, see Overstreet & Windmiller 1956, pp.112-113. Sarojini Naidu was a "distinguished female member" of the INC; see Haithcox, 1971, p.54. The above is also introduced and discussed in the article, Fredrik Petersson, "Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: The League against Imperialism and Berlin, 1925 – 33", in *Interventions: International Journal of Post-Colonial Studies* (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

In connection with the Indian students' work we would like to draw special attention to the importance of the Indian Bureau which was created in February 1929 by the National Congress at Chatto's suggestion and placed by the Congress under the control of Nambiar and Chatto. We have found it extremely useful as a centre for recruiting students, for finding out the best and most reliable *among them* [added by hand], *to take up the question of sending literature* [added by hand] and also for obtaining journals, books and other literature on India, which are not directly available without payment by the League.⁶¹²

The "Indian Bureau" advocated a radical approach towards British imperialism and the Indian question, which resonated with Chatto's vision of constructing a viable channel for anti-imperialist activism. For Nehru, the bureau represented a channel through which to improve relations with both the LAI and with the anti-imperialist movement in Europe. In 1928, after Nehru had returned to India, politically invigorated after his experience of the Brussels Congress and the nature of the anti-colonial movement in Europe, Nehru assumed the role as the "leading advocate of [...] international connections for India's freedom fighters" in India. Hence, the LAI and Chatto were decisive links to radical, nationalist and anti-colonial movements in the West for Nehru. In October 1928, Nehru and Iyengar formed the anti-colonial association, *Independence for India League*, in India; an organisational initiative which evidently made Chatto "particularly happy" as it was more or less a blueprint of the anti-imperialist agenda supported by the LAI. However, at the end of the day, Nehru also had an independent agenda, according to which he aimed to use the LAI for his own purposes. For example, the LAI's transcontinental network was a perfect vehicle to use and with which to "participate in orchestrated letter-writing campaigns to change views among Congressmen [INC representatives in India and Great Britain] as well as outsiders in the direction of a further radicalisation of the movement".⁶¹³ For a short period, the *Independence for India League* was one of the few existing LAI channels into India. However, in India, some people perceived the association as a hostile actor and, therefore, chose to ignore it entirely. According to Motilal Nehru, as noted in a letter to theosophist Annie Besant in India, "I have no fear of this group" and it would "be easy to dispose of their colourable imitations by simply leaving them to stew in their own juice".⁶¹⁴

Chatto's connections in Europe were of an intimate nature. As Hatta had decided to establish a more personal relation to the International Secretariat in 1928, Chatto acted as his contact and

⁶¹² To avoid any linguistic misinterpretation from German to English, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin, author: Chatto, Berlin, 5/11-1930. For the original, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 38-42, Kurse für koloniale Studenten in Berlin, Chatto, Berlin, Piatnitsky [?], Moscow, 5/11-1930. The date stamped on the document: "6.NOV.1930", informs us of the date of its arrival at Comintern headquarters in Moscow.

⁶¹³ Israel 1994, p.256-259; Barooh 2004, p.259.

⁶¹⁴ Letter from Motilal Nehru, Allahabad, to Annie Besant, Adyar, Madras, 30/9-1928, in Nehru 1958, pp.63-67.

receiver of intelligence on the PI, once Hatta had resigned from the Dutch LAI Section in June 1928. However, this did not imply that he chose to ignore the development of the section in the Netherlands, informing Chatto, for example, of how the “fanatical” behaviour of the CPH had destroyed the section.⁶¹⁵ Hatta also performed a service for Chatto by recruiting anti-colonial activists in the Netherlands who seemed open to influence and suited to receiving political education. According to Münzenberg, commenting on 20 January 1929 to Kuusinen on Hatta’s efforts in finding candidates, Hatta “is very close to us”.⁶¹⁶ A particular case further illustrates this collaboration between Chatto and Hatta. When Hatta notified Chatto of his intentions to resign as leader of the PI in January 1929, the candidate selected to assume the leadership, an Indonesian law student at the University of Leiden, Abdullah Sukur, had to receive an in-depth education on the colonial question under the tutelage of the LAI in Berlin. According to Hatta, Chatto should accept the “still young” Sukur to come to Berlin and receive a thorough education:

I judge it necessary that he comes to Berlin to undergo a “practice school” in our bureau. I hope to send him on the 10th of October. Because he cannot expende [sic] more than Mk. 100 (60 Gulden) per month, please let me know as soon as possible, if this sum is sufficient for living in Berlin. Can you find a cheap but rather good boarding-house for him [...] on payment of Mk. 85 a 90 per month?⁶¹⁷

Hence, this case suggests that the International Secretariat was functioning both as a hub and as an educational centre for inexperienced anti-colonial activists in Berlin and beyond.

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The Indian Debacle and the LAI's Turning Point

Chatto’s egocentric network represented one of the LAI’s transcontinental communication links outside Germany. However, through the attempts and manoeuvres of the Comintern emissaries, the LAI made an effort to establish itself in India at the end of 1928: at the annual INC conference in Calcutta. Scheduled to convene in December, Nehru sent a request in October to the International Secretariat asking Chatto to send “a fraternal delegate” to the conference.⁶¹⁸ Nehru’s letter arrived

⁶¹⁵ Members of the Dutch LAI Section and the PI had a meeting in Amsterdam on 19 November, to discuss the conflict, see RGASPI 542/1/29, 77, Letter from Hatta, The Hague, to Chatto, Berlin, 27/9-1928; RGASPI 542/1/29, 83.

⁶¹⁶ RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 20/1-1929.

⁶¹⁷ Whether Sukur ever travelled to Berlin to undergo “political training” is unknown. Rudolf Mrázek’s study, *Sjahir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia* (SEAP Publications, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1994, p.66), indicates that Sukur became “duly elected” as the leader of the PI in 1929. However, Mrázek does not mention that Hatta wanted to resign from the PI, a point of view Hatta had introduced to Chatto in 1928, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/29, 77, Letter from Hatta, The Hague, to Chatto, Berlin, 27/9-1928.

⁶¹⁸ Nehru wondered whether the International Secretariat would have the courtesy to “convey” the invitation to every organisation “affiliated or associated” to the LAI, RGASPI 542/1/29, 78, Letter from Nehru to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 9/10-1928.

in Berlin on 11 November (perhaps due to the interception of the British security services in India), thus, Münzenberg asked Chatto for advice on how to proceed, while Kuusinen was assigned to find a candidate in Moscow to travel to Calcutta as a representative of the LAI. Münzenberg made it clear that he simply did not have the time or energy to find a candidate in Berlin, as he was mainly preoccupied with the ZK KPD and with the *Friends of the Soviet Union*.⁶¹⁹

In Moscow, Kuusinen instructed the WPA member Jack W. Johnstone, who had also attended the Sixth International Comintern Congress, to travel to India as the LAI representative and to deliver “a programme speech” at the INC conference. After the mission, Johnstone had to send a report to the Eastern Secretariat, with a focus on the INC’s attitude *vis-à-vis* the LAI.⁶²⁰

From the outset, Johnstone’s mission to India turned into a disaster. On 22 November, Johnstone arrived in Calcutta only to have the local police strictly monitor his whereabouts in the city. Nevertheless, Johnstone managed to attend and deliver his speech at the INC conference on 18-20 December in Jharia, Bihar. However, after having given his speech, the police arrested Johnstone outside the conference hall and placed him in custody. After having been incarcerated for sixteen days in an Indian prison, British colonial authorities put Johnstone on a British ship destined for Genoa, Italy. The farce continued when the ship docked in Genoa, where Italian port authorities arrested Johnstone. Johnstone’s tragedy and ordeal nevertheless provided the LAI with renewed impetus to organise a propaganda campaign against the legal systems of both the British and Italian authorities. According to *Pressedienst*, Johnstone’s “strange imprisonment” was a symptom of the oppressive techniques the “imperialist nations” repeatedly put into practice against both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement. In the USA, the AAAIL organised public meetings in both New York and Washington, while representatives of the British LAI Section introduced a discussion on Johnstone’s arrest in the House of Commons. Once Italian authorities had released Johnstone from prison, he travelled back to Moscow where, in 1931, he assumed a position at the ECCI Caribbean Bureau.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ RGASPI 542/1/25, 45-46, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 12/11-1928.

⁶²⁰ The reason why Kuusinen delegated Robin Page Arnot the task of nominating the LAI representative was a logical decision, particularly since Arnot worked at the “II. Sektion” at the Eastern Secretariat, a sub-department in charge of the India question at Comintern headquarters, see fol. RGASPI 495/6/16, 30, Vorschlag an das Polit-Sekretariat für die Zusammensetzung der Länder-Sekretariat, Moscow, September, 1928. For a biography of Jack W. Johnstone, see JEIFETS, JEIFETS, & HUBER (eds.) 2004, p.160; RGASPI 542/1/25, 78-79, Confidential letter to Münzenberg from R Page Arnot in Moscow, 20/12-1928; TNA KV2/1783, Intercepted letter, Arnot to Spratt, 1929.

⁶²¹ Spratt met Johnstone in India and told him “what an opportunity you have got to make a name for yourself in the International”, see Spratt 1955, p.41; *Pressedienst*, Nr. 4, 7/2-1929; Haithcox 1971, p.106. Paul Crough, the secretary of the New York Section of the AAAIL, feared that Johnstone would face execution after his arrest in India. This was the impetus to establish “a mass protest movement” in the USA, represented by the AAAIL, the *International Labour Defence, Trade Union Educational League* and the ANCL. Moreover, this support campaign also provided an opportunity to broadcast propaganda against the war threat and in defence of the Soviet Union, see fol. RGASPI

The debacle of Johnstone's mission to India reflects the problems the LAI was facing in its efforts to establish itself in India. This episode was also somewhat of a watershed for the LAI as an international actor on the public, political scene. For Münzenberg, Johnstone's adventure only confirmed the fear that the LAI was unable to establish itself as an organisation in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Despite contacts with organisations and individuals in Egypt, Palestine, both North and South Africa and Latin America, Münzenberg informed Kuusinen that these contacts were of an insufficient character as long as the LAI could not carry out the simplest of anti-imperialist activity, e.g. either distribute anti-imperialist propaganda or organise public meetings. Thus, the International Secretariat could only become efficient and productive if its work focused more on securing contacts with individuals rather than organisations in the colonies.⁶²² Münzenberg's conclusion was a confirmation of Chatto's 1928 vision, i.e. of turning the LAI into a hub and educational centre for the anti-imperialist movement, an insight spurred on by the meagre results of Johnstone's misadventure, as well as the fiasco of having sent Mardy Jones as a "one-man" delegation to the Dutch-Indies in 1927. These two missions further complicated the LAI's efforts to establish itself outside Europe.

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The Reversed Trojan Horse

So the League faces a new period, the second period, a period not of demonstration and betrayal on the part of certain elements, but the second period must be an organised, systematic campaign against imperialism. [...] the League must have a strong workers' and peasants' basis, a strong trade union basis. We must draw wide masses into the League. [...] in the second phase of the second period of the League we must be for MILITANT STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM.

James W. Ford, Cologne, 16/1-1929

The Comintern's "new line" had a reversed Trojan horse effect within the LAI, characterised by political rhetoric which rejected political associations with both non-communist individuals and organisations. According to the mythology of the Trojan horse, a strategy aimed at infiltrating the

515/1/1840, 1, Letter from Paul Crough, secretary in New York, to all branches of the AAAIL, organisers and affiliated organisations, 3/1-1929.

⁶²² RGASPI 542/1/25, 45-46, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 12/11-1928. Chatto was in regular contact with La Guma in South Africa, and the ECCI South American Secretariat in Buenos Aires.

bastion of the enemy from within, for the LAI, the Comintern's policy change questioned its agenda and very existence.⁶²³ In Cologne, at the meeting of the LAI Executive on 15-16 January 1929, the reversed Trojan Horse scenario emerged as a political reality within the LAI. In the words of the Profintern delegate and WPA member James W. Ford (1893 – 1957), who at the meeting told the LAI Executive that the LAI was facing “a new period” of radicalism and needed, therefore, to reinforce its struggle against the “betrayal on the part of certain elements”, his statement nevertheless indicated a split. According to Ford, the LAI had to make the leap from demonstration to militancy.⁶²⁴ Ford's aggressive rhetoric was particularly aimed at the British trade unionist and general secretary of the *Miners' Federation of Great Britain* (MFGB) A. J. Cook, as well as Maxton, accusing both of them of harbouring reformist tendencies – “Cookism and Maxtonism”. In Ford's report to the ECCI Negro Bureau, he concluded that:

It is clear, however, that the League is dominated by the reformists. In the future, if we are to pursue and carry out our new line, especially at the World Congress of the League we must begin immediately to mobilise our forces and bring large masses of workers and peasants, especially of the colonies, who are under our influence, into this congress. We must begin immediately to prepare organisationally and ideologically.⁶²⁵

Ford's conclusion was a re-phrasing of the Comintern's “new line”, an observation which also served the purpose of affirming the correctness of Kuusinen's colonial “theses”. By defining Cook and Maxton as defenders of a reformist policy, “Cookism and Maxtonism”, this also stigmatised them as political degenerates, an act which indicated the beginning of a split between the different political camps within the LAI. However, Ford had only adopted the Comintern's *lingua franca* and endorsed political discourse, which sponsored verbal attacks against “reformists” as justifiable political targets.⁶²⁶ For Münzenberg, the LAI Executive meeting had been a “delightful” event

⁶²³ The Trojan Horse metaphor is not a bold suggestion I must argue. Historian David McKnight uses this analogy in his study of the origins of the Cold War, especially in the context of when the Comintern introduced its Popular Front policy in 1935, see David McKnight, *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War. The Conspiratorial Heritage*, Frank Cass Publishers, New York, 2002, pp.153-154.

⁶²⁴ RGASPI 495/155/70, 74-76. Copy of speech, delivered by J. W. Ford at the meeting of the EC of the LAI in Cologne, ECCI Negro Bureau, Moscow, 16/1-1929. In April 1932, Ford concluded in his autobiography (filed in his personal file in the Comintern Archive) that he “formally entered the revolutionary movement in 1925” by joining the ANLC in Chicago. At the Fourth International Profintern Congress in Moscow in 1928, Ford was “elected as a member of the Executive Bureau and charged with developing the work of the Negro Bureau of the RILU”, see fol. RGASPI 495/261/6747, 67-71. See Weiss (2011) on Ford's work to prepare the “First International Conference of Negro Workers”. For a biography on Ford, see Jefeets, Jefeets, & Huber (eds.), 2004, p.113.

⁶²⁵ RGASPI 495/155/70, 62-68, Report from J. W. Ford to the ECCI, Moscow, January, 1929. For A. J. Cook, see Ralph H. Desmarais & John Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Volume III, Bellamy & Saville (eds.), Macmillan Press, London, 1976, pp.38-49.

⁶²⁶ According to Kuusinen's colonial “theses”: “the formation of any kind of bloc between the communist party and the national-reformist opposition must be rejected; this does not exclude temporary agreements and the co-ordination of activities in particular anti-imperialist actions [underlining by author], provided that the activities of the bourgeois opposition can be utilized to develop the mass movement, [...] Of course, in this work the communists must at the same time carry on the most relentless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois nationalism and against the

where the communists for the first time had been in the majority. In his report to Kuusinen, Münzenberg described how the LAI Executive meeting had almost functioned as a means of delineating an ideological divide between the communist and non-communist members on the LAI Executive. Furthermore, according to the analysis by LaPorte and Morgan of the Stalinist leadership cult, which is comparable to the context outlined above, the communist strategy and behavioural scheme followed the logic of “a little like ‘war communism’ in its fantasy of a *tabula rasa* on which a revolutionary party or society could be established”.⁶²⁷ Therefore, Cook and Maxton represented the enemy, in the flesh, the main opponents against the communists in the rush to secure domination over particular issues, which, in the case of the LAI, was the trade union question. Additionally, the LAI meeting in Cologne also witnessed how the International Secretariat celebrated both the recent affiliation of the Profintern as collective members and having had a Profintern delegation attend its session. This Profintern delegation was the result of Münzenberg’s having requested that Kuusinen see whether it would be possible to send a “large Profintern delegation” to Cologne, which would put the trade union question at the top of the agenda.⁶²⁸ Kuusinen presented this request to the Political Secretariat, which endorsed the decision to instruct the Profintern Executive Committee to prepare a theoretical guideline on the “precarious” trade union question and to provide the LAI “kom.Fraktion” with this material prior to the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne.⁶²⁹

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The Litmus Test: the LAI Executive Meeting in Cologne 15-16 January 1929

The LAI Executive meeting in Cologne, which would expose the LAI as a fragile organisation, was the prelude to the second international LAI congress (later known as the Frankfurt Congress). Attending the meeting off the record, Robin Page Arnot observed how the colonial question as a

slightest signs of its influence inside the labour movement”, see “Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries Adopted by the Sixth Comintern Congress”, taken from Degras vol.II, 1960, p.541.

⁶²⁷ RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 20/1-1929; Norman LaPorte & Kevin Morgan, “‘Kings among their subjects’? Ernst Thälmann, Harry Pollitt and the Leadership Cult as Stalinization”, LaPorte, Morgan & Worley (eds.) 2008, p.138.

⁶²⁸ RGASPI 542/1/25, 45-46, Letter from Münzenberg to Kuusinen in Moscow, 12/11-1928. On October 17, Münzenberg stated in a letter to Heimo that the International Secretariat had invited trade unions in England, Norway, Finland and Egypt. However, in order to define a strategy on the trade union question at the LAI Executive meeting, Münzenberg wanted to hold a “closed pre-conference” meeting with representatives from British, French, German, Belgian and Italian communist parties. The initial idea had been to convene the LAI Executive in either Brussels or in Paris on 1-2 December; however, Münzenberg’s commitments to the ZK KPD, and the *Friends of the Soviet Union* delayed the meeting for “at least one month”, opting finally for Cologne, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/61, 246, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Heimo, Moscow, 17/10-1928; TNA HO 144 10693, Secret report, analysis of the LAI by MI5, year: 1929.

⁶²⁹ The Political Secretariat instructed the International Secretariat to avoid holding the LAI Executive meeting on the same date as the Tenth Party Day of the CPGB (19 January 1929, Bermondsey), RGASPI 495/3/61, 90a-91, Protocol Nr.9, Polit-Secretariat of the ECCEI, 26/10-1928.

topic was being treated by the socialist and communist movements in Europe, an experience which confirmed the need to carry out a vigorous investigation of the European communist parties' colonial work. Additionally, Fimmen, Mme Duchêne, Cook, S. O. Davies, Maxton, Bridgeman, Alex Gossip, the secretary of the LAI bureau in London and Arnot's wife Olive Budden, Saklatvala, Pollitt, the leader of the *Arab National Congress* Suri, the Chinese Ju Fei, Hatta, Goldschmidt, Chatto, Münzenberg, Arnot and the Profintern delegation (Melnitschansky, KPD member Fritz Heckert and Ford) had arrived in Cologne to attend the LAI Executive meeting.⁶³⁰ For the British LAI Section, the LAI Executive meeting was a tedious episode. In Arnot's report to Kuusinen, the journey from London to Cologne had confirmed for the members of the section the authorities' "increasingly antagonistic attitude towards the Liga [LAI]", as Maxton, Bridgeman and Saklatvala were "held up by Belgian police" *en route* to Cologne. Once the session had ended, and travelling back to London after having docked in Dover, a "special commissar" of the British port authorities subjected Budden to a thorough interrogation, asking her about her connections with the LAI.⁶³¹

The Cologne meeting followed a logic determined by the communists. Münzenberg opened the session, declaring that he was proud of the "proletarian participation" which the Profintern represented:

The Executive Committee of the LAI sincerely salutes the representatives of the Profintern, present at this meeting of the LAI Executive. The Executive Committee considers the collective affiliation of the Profintern with the LAI as a step [illegible] start for the development of the anti-imperialist movement in the world.⁶³²

Münzenberg also outlined the LAI's ideological direction since the Brussels Congress. Firstly, the LAI had managed to establish a firm organisational structure and, secondly, the LAI was no longer a forum for intellectuals, in fact the LAI was a representative for proletarian organisations and trade unions.⁶³³ This argument was a reference to the agenda for the session which, according to Arnot's notes, focused on the "relation of the anti-imperialist League to the trade unions on an international scale and in semi-colonial and colonial countries", the "position of the liberation struggle and position of trade unions in the Arab countries especially in Palestine", the "suggestion of an Anti-Imperialist World Congress in Summer 1929", "India, Afghanistan" and the anti-

⁶³⁰ Rivera, Nehru, Baldwin, Chedli and Marteaux did not attend the meeting due to geographical or other reasons, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 20/1-1929.

⁶³¹ RGASPI 542/1/32, 18, Letter from R. P. Arnot, Cologne, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 16/1-1929. For the British LAI delegation, see TNA HO 144 10693, Secret report, analysis of the LAI, MI5, year: 1929; Internet: < <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1929/jan/31/customs-examination-papers-and-documents> >; *PresseDienst*, Internationales Sekretariats, Berlin, Nr.4, 7/2-1929, p.1.

⁶³² RGASPI 542/1/32, 3, Begrüßungsadresse für die russische Delegation [Profintern] an der EK-Sitzung der LAI in Köln, 14/1-1929.

⁶³³ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/151, 125-129, Liga gegen Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, 1929.

imperialist “Youth”. This agenda also proved to both the RK and the RKÜöO the necessity of continuing to monitor the activities of the LAI in Germany.⁶³⁴

The trade union question was the ideological litmus test for the LAI. “The whole thing [...] was a clash with the reformists”, according to Ford, which had established a fear among “our comrades” that the non-communists “were looking for an opportunity to withdraw from the League”.⁶³⁵ Ford took charge of the discussion, while Maxton refused to provide any response to the accusation of being a “reformist”. However, Cook urged the LAI Executive to “be realistic as well as Marxist”, suggesting the constructive option to “link the trade unions with the LAI”, an initiative guided by “the spirit of internationalism”. In fact, Cook believed that the attendance of “Russian comrades” in Cologne was evidence that it was possible to unify “Communists and reformists ... under one objective”: to turn the LAI into “a real international organisation”. The communists rejected Cook’s argument with contempt. Pollitt accused Cook of not having any “faith in the masses”, concluding that the LAI faced the challenge of “harnessing” the trade unions, as well as developing a “consistent leadership” within the LAI Executive capable of carrying out LAI resolutions in practice.⁶³⁶ Melnitschansky continued by categorising every word from Cook as “the purest nonsense”, demanding that the LAI Executive understand that the “class struggle” was the only method at hand to prevent war. Yet, Melnitschansky gave an assurance that the Profintern had no intention of turning the LAI into a “Red International”. Heckert developed Melnitschansky’s argument and concluded that the LAI had to increase its propaganda with a focus on the “overthrow of Imperialism and the liberation of the colonial peoples”. MI5 observed in a secret report that the discussions had gotten out of hand at the meeting, whereupon Münzenberg had had to step in and end the intense debate by explaining that the LAI was neither a communist, socialist nor a social democratic movement, participation based solely on one’s support for its political agenda.⁶³⁷ Münzenberg’s argument was, however, a contradiction.

⁶³⁴ RGASPI 542/1/32, 14, Agenda, Cologne, 15-16/1-1929 [compiled and sent by R. P. Arnot to Kuusinen]; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/151, 125-129, Liga gegen Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, 1929. According to the Reichskommissar, the development of the anti-imperialist movement in Latin America had also been discussed at the LAI Executive meeting, based on a report from the “Professor”, Alfons Goldschmidt, who had recently arrived in Germany after a trip to Latin America. Goldschmidt also published the impressions of his journey in *A-I-Z* and *Weltbühne*. The RK included an assessment of how Goldschmidt’s activities in Mexico had been a topic of interest. In reference to a published article [unknown source and author], the RK realised that some people perceived Goldschmidt as an “agent voyageur” in Mexico and an avid supporter of Bolshevism. Hence, the RK suspected that Goldschmidt’s Latin American journey was a mission sanctioned by the Comintern.

⁶³⁵ RGASPI 495/155/70, 62-68, Report from J. W. Ford to the ECCI, Moscow, January 1929. This report has been found in *fond* 534/3/450, 53-59, Report on Trip in Interest of the Work of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU and the Negro Bureau of the Comintern and the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism (Ford) [January 1929; written 14.2.29?].

⁶³⁶ RGASPI 542/1/32, 19-21, Report (R. P. Arnot) on trade union question, Cologne, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 15/1-1929.

⁶³⁷ TNA HO 144 10693, Secret report, analysis of the LAI by MI5, year: 1929; RGASPI 495/155/70, 62-68, Report from J. W. Ford to the ECCI, Moscow, January, 1929. Münzenberg argued that the British LAI Section was “very apathetic”; however, if the section followed the “example of the Mexican comrades [who had established] 30

According to its adopted resolution on the trade union question at the session “Die Gewerkschaften und die Liga gegen Imperialismus”, the LAI urged every trade union in Europe to understand that the “daily struggle” against imperialism was in essence based on “class character”. Also, that “class-aware” trade unions’ should establish connections with similar revolutionary organisations in the colonies, a step which would “preserve” the independence of the anti-imperialist movement in order to avoid any influence of “national and bourgeoisie parties”.⁶³⁸

Convinced that the trade union debate had produced no negative impact on the LAI, Münzenberg told Kuusinen that the Cologne meeting seemed to have strengthened the belief amongst the “bourgeoisie and social democratic circles” within the LAI that the organisation was a non-party organisation, rather than “a section of the Comintern”. Accordingly, Münzenberg explained how Bridgeman and Maxton had fallen for the illusion that the LAI Executive was a forum for “open political” discussions,⁶³⁹ while branding Cook, “the Englishman”, to be no longer of “any use”, telling Kuusinen that other candidates might as well assist in the work to establish LAI sections in India, the Arab region and other colonial countries. Fimmen, however, experienced the Cologne meeting as a disappointment, particularly the behaviour of the Profintern delegation, which led to him telling Münzenberg that he was considering resigning from his position as vice-deputy. However, if Fimmen continued down this path, Arnot told Kuusinen, the LAI would have to launch a political campaign against Fimmen.⁶⁴⁰

After Cook had returned to England, disturbed by the callous atmosphere of the Cologne meeting and suffering from poor health, he had to confront an investigation initiated by the MFGB. In June 1929, *Labour Monthly* published the article, “Cook’s Break with the Revolutionary Working Class”, accusing Cook of treachery. This article included a statement from Cook, responding to the critique as being “false” and misrepresentative of “my actions and opinions”, explaining how he did not understand how the communists interpreted the message of socialism. In conclusion, Cook stated, “Comradeship means something higher and nobler than the example set by the British Communist Party in their campaign of personalities, hate, vilification and destruction”.⁶⁴¹

organisations of the League”, this would alter the level of anti-imperialist activism in the British Empire, rather than just having a movement located exclusively in London, see RGASPI 542/1/32, 22, Report of the EC of the LAI, Tuesday Session/Latin America.

⁶³⁸ SCA CL Collection, volume 130, “Resolution, Köln. Die Gewerkschaften und die Liga gegen Imperialismus“, 15-16/1-1929.

⁶³⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 20/1-1929. *Pressedienst* published the LAI’s resolutions on India, the Arab region and Youth on 7 February, see *Pressedienst*, Nr. 4, 7/2-1929.

⁶⁴⁰ RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Report from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 20/1-1929. For Arnot’s idea, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 3-4, Letter/report, probably written and signed by Willi Münzenberg, Berlin 20/1-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 5-7, Handwritten letter from R. Page Arnot to Otto Kuusinen in Moscow, 29/1-1929. Arnot told Kuusinen to contact the International Secretariat if he wanted a copy of A. J. Cook’s speech in Cologne.

⁶⁴¹ A. J. Cook, “Cook’s Break with the Revolutionary Working Class”, in *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, June 1929,

Deceit as a Strategy of Control: From London to Moscow, Berlin and Back Again...

The trade union question had an immediate political effect on the LAI. Most importantly, the International Secretariat had to reinforce its control over the British LAI Section. Bridgeman was nevertheless enthusiastic and, after arriving back in London, he published an article on both the LAI and the trade union question in the British socialist paper, the *Manchester Guardian*. However, this article caused irritation and was not appreciated. According to Arnot, neither the British LAI Section nor the Colonial Commission of the CPGB had sanctioned Bridgeman to publish this article, and Arnot accused Bridgeman of having caused “considerable trouble”, which had infuriated him. One reason for Arnot’s irritation was that Bridgeman had stated that if the British trade unions followed the example set by the LAI, they would be making a “big concession to the Russians”. In an attempt to coerce Bridgeman and Cook, Arnot summoned them to a meeting in London on 21 January, only to hear that neither of them appreciated the “obvious” communist dominance within the LAI. Arnot decided to inform Münzenberg of this attitude, which constituted a threat in the “fight against imperialism”, and that Bridgeman’s “misinterpretation” required correction.⁶⁴² Pollitt sided, of course, with Arnot in this case, telling Münzenberg that the Colonial Commission of the CPGB had decided not to publish the trade union resolution, recommending that the International Secretariat act swiftly in order to put an end to Bridgeman’s “wrongful report” by sending him “the correct version” of the trade union resolution.⁶⁴³ The crux of this matter being that, at this point in time, no “correct version” of the trade union resolution even existed.

On 8 February, the Political Secretariat in Moscow evaluated the results of both the LAI Executive meeting and the trade union question, deciding to correct Bridgeman at all costs and resolving to use the International Secretariat as the key to finding a solution to this problem, preferably by releasing its “correct version”. However, the International Secretariat could not act before the “speedy publication of Comrade Melnitschansky’s speech at the Plenum of the League in Great Britain, the USSR and other countries” had created some kind of political impact. The Political Secretariat's scheme was an idea characterised by intentional deceit from the very beginning, in which it had to appear as though Bridgeman and the British LAI Section had

Number 6, pp.342-348. The LAI Executive resolved at its next meeting (Amsterdam, 13-14 April 1929) to remove Cook from the agenda of the second international LAI congress, explaining, “representatives of affiliated organisations should have first place and, since Cook was present in January only by virtue of his personal position which he has since abandoned...”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51. For the investigation against Cook, see Desmarais & Saville vol.III 1976, p.44. Cook passed away on 2 November, 1931.

⁶⁴² RGASPI 542/1/30, 8, Letter from Arnot, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 28/1-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 5-7, [Handwritten] letter from R. Page Arnot, London, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 29/1-1929.

⁶⁴³ RGASPI 542/1/30, 9, Letter from Pollitt, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/1- 1929.

received the correct version of the trade union resolution from the International Secretariat, while this was an idea contrived by the Political Secretariat. Münzenberg attended the meeting in Moscow on 8 February and was, therefore, aware of the Political Secretariat's intentions, and he, along with Melnitschansky, Tom Bell and Petrovsky as leader, was instructed to write a declaration that had to avoid using "reformist expressions".⁶⁴⁴ On 16 February, the Political Secretariat endorsed the "correct version", "Resolution über die Tagung der Exekutive der antiimperialistische Liga", instructing the International Secretariat to publish the resolution, and to send a personal copy to Bridgeman, with an emphasis on the following statement:

The Executive Committee of the League is guided in its work by the decision of the Inaugural Congress of the League (February 1927) which clearly formulated the general line of struggle against imperialism and colonial oppression and the method of active aid to the defence of the revolutionary movement in the colonial, semi-colonial and subordinate countries [...] The work of the League has been crowned with success in the sense that the trade union organisations of a number of countries, including the Trade Union Federations of the USSR [Profintern] and India, have joined the League. [...] The League will consider it its duty to criticise and expose the activity of the trade union organisations directed in overt or covert form towards the support of imperialist plunder and colonial oppression [...] The League will be most critical and will advance the most determined demands in relation to the unions belonging to the League.⁶⁴⁵

Accordingly, Bridgeman had to believe that the original aim and purpose of the LAI remained firm, i.e. to be a supporter of the struggle against imperialism and colonial oppression, although this now also entailed the obligation to criticise and expose the opponents and supporters of the "imperialist system".⁶⁴⁶ For the LAI, the trade union question and the ensuing debate in Cologne exposed the fragile non-political character of the LAI, confirming a split between the communist and non-communist members.

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⁶⁴⁴ RGASPI 495/3/89, 365, Protocol, Polit-Secretariat, Moscow, 8/2-1929. For a copy of this protocol, see fol. RGASPI 495/20/722, 45-46. Melnitschansky's article, "Die Kölner Tagung der Exekutive der Liga gegen Imperialismus", was published in *Inprecorr* (Nr.6, 9.Jahrgang, 18/1-1929), see fol. RGASPI 495/3/86, 184. Present at the meeting were: Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Bennet/Petrovsky, Münzenberg, Bell, Pollitt, Gusev, Chitarow, Heller, Melnitschansky, Figatner, Gerich and Heimo; RGASPI 495/3/86, 174, Vorschläge des Genossen Petrovsky [Bennet], Moscow, 8/2-1929.

⁶⁴⁵ RGASPI 495/3/86, 168-169, (Confidential) Statement regarding LAI Cologne meeting, Moscow, [endorsed 16/2-1929]. For a copy of this statement, see fol. RGASPI 495/20/722, 47-48, however, this version does not mention the date of adoption of the document.

⁶⁴⁶ RGASPI 542/1/30, 18, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 27/2-1929. It is unknown when Bridgeman received this statement from the International Secretariat.

The Arnot Connection: Evaluation of the Colonial Work and the “Colonial Conference”

In the presentation of his colonial “theses” at the Sixth International Comintern Congress, Kuusinen stated that the communist parties’ colonial work was “one of the weakest sides of Comintern activity”. From the Comintern’s inception in 1919, up until 1928, the communist parties had either chosen to ignore their colonial work completely or considered it to be a complete waste of time, despite the formation of colonial commissions as sub-departments within the parties, e.g. the Colonial Commission of the CPGB and the Colonial Committee of the PCF. According to Kuusinen, the parties’ endeavours to establish connections with colonial countries were insufficient, especially in countries which had no “strong communist party”. Thus, the parties in “the imperialist countries” – Europe and the USA – had to support the establishment of communist parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.⁶⁴⁷ Yet, this demand was both a contradiction and a utopian vision, particularly as it gave the parties the momentous task of fulfilling the objectives of the colonial “theses”. According to the biased *Outline History of the Communist International*, the relationship between the colonial question and the communist movement in Europe was one characterised by contradiction in 1928:

[...] the theses of the Sixth Congress on the colonial question contained several erroneous and contradictory propositions on the questions of the strategy and tactics of the national liberation struggle [...] The Congress required the communist parties of the *imperialist countries* [author’s italics] to establish close, regular and constant contacts with the revolutionary movement in the colonies in order to give this movement active support and practical assistance.⁶⁴⁸

Apparently, the communist parties were puzzled about how to support, or even understand, the nature of the colonial question. Towards the end of 1928, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters strode into action to find some kind of direction for the colonial work in Western Europe, focusing on the close examination of colonial work in the parties and the sympathising organisations (the LAI and the LDRN). In December, Arnot received an instruction from Kuusinen, endorsed by the Small Commission, to visit the Western European parties in order to gather intelligence on their colonial work, an objective which culminated in the effort to organise a “Colonial Conference” in the spring of 1929.

After the Sixth Comintern Congress, the Comintern apparatus in Moscow was facing a re-organisation of its organisational structure. For the International Secretariat, this implied a new set

⁶⁴⁷ “The Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries Adopted by the Sixth Comintern Congress”, taken from Degras vol.II 1960, pp.526, 537-547.

⁶⁴⁸ Sobolev (ed.) 1971, p.286.

of liaisons for the LAI at Comintern headquarters. On 24 September 1928, the Small Commission endorsed the decision to appoint Kuusinen as the LAI liaison, charging him to “revise the practical connections” (administrative and political support) of the organisation.⁶⁴⁹ Arnot had assumed Petrovsky’s position after the congress which, in practice, entailed sorting out the practical details of the colonial work, as well as taking over Heimo’s temporary position as LAI administrator. The re-organisation of the Comintern apparatus had been a process initiated on the direct instruction of the Political Secretariat in September, focusing primarily on establishing eight “Länder-Sekretariats” (*Regional Secretariats*) with the aim of strengthening contacts with and communicating directives to the communist parties. This re-organisation completely re-shuffled the structure of existing secretariats. For example, the Eastern Secretariat went from being one section to becoming three sections, having Kuusinen, Mif, Joel Schubin, the Chinese Chü Chiu-pai (“Strakhov”) and Arnot acting as secretaries. The “II. Sektion” focused primarily on the Indian question, according to the Political Secretariat, a section that Arnot found himself located in.⁶⁵⁰ For Münzenberg, it was a question of securing a personal liaison at Comintern headquarters to administer the LAI question. In December, Kuusinen appointed Arnot as Münzenberg’s contact, who “in confidentiality” informed Münzenberg that he had replaced Petrovsky as “correspondent” [liaison]. Taking the initiative to discuss the LAI with other actors in Moscow, Arnot contacted the Profintern Presidium in December and explained that the LAI was planning to introduce a new political direction at the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne in January 1929. This would mean developing its propaganda against the war threat, distributing propaganda on the colonial policy of the Comintern and establishing contacts with trade unions in both Europe and the colonial and semi-colonial countries.⁶⁵¹ However, this was a vision formulated by Arnot which the LAI and its Executive Committee had not endorsed.

Despite Arnot’s authoritative position within the CPGB, perceived as an ardent defender of “the new line”, the Central Committee of the CPGB did not appreciate his appointment at the headquarters of the Comintern in Moscow. The CPGB was, however, not in a position to either

⁶⁴⁹ Heimo and Piatnitsky were delegated to act as liaisons for the IAH at Comintern headquarters, see fol. RGASPI 495/6/16, 28-29, Protokoll Nr.7 der Sitzung der Engeren Kommission, Moscow, 24/9-1928. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Remmele, Kuusinen, Heimo and Henrikowski.

⁶⁵⁰ RGASPI 495/6/16, 30, Vorschlag an das Polit-Sekretariat für die Zusammensetzung der Länder-Sekretariat, Moscow, September, 1928. Heimo co-ordinated the re-organisation of the secretariats, an undertaking which proved difficult, forcing Heimo to concede in December to the Small Commission – “ENGGKOM” – that the complex bureaucracy of the apparatus was an impeding factor which delayed the process, see fol. RGASPI 495/6/45, 28, Letter from Heimo to the members of ENGGKOM, 19/12-1928. For the “Länder Sekretariats, see further in Adibekov & Shakhnazarova (1996, p.68).

⁶⁵¹ RGASPI 542/1/25, 78-79, (Confidential) Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 20/12-1928. On December 10, Arnot completed the draft of this letter (in English). Realising that Münzenberg had limited English skills, Arnot translated the document into German and apologised for his “bad German” (*Entschuldigung bitte meine schlechte deutsch. R.P.A.*). For the English version, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/25, 71-72; RGASPI 495/154/364, 44, Draft of letter from Arnot, Moscow, to the Presidium of the Profintern and AUCTU, December 1928.

protest or interfere in a routine involving the “interchange of personnel between headquarters and national sections”. According to the historian Andrew Thorpe, Arnot remained in Moscow for about one year, where he both attended and participated in ECCI and Profintern meetings.⁶⁵² However, Arnot achieved more than just attending meetings in Moscow; in fact, he assumed a leading position in the colonial work of the communist parties in Europe and became involved in solving the fractional struggle of the CPUSA in 1929.

Arnot’s position as a secretary at the Eastern Secretariat provided him with authority while he was evaluating the colonial work of the communist parties in Europe. The LAI and its International Secretariat were key factors in this process, which makes it logical to suggest that the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Vyacheslav Molotov and Piatnitsky, referred to the LAI as the sympathising organisation best suited to adopting the ideological implications of “the new line” in 1929. This also determined the hierarchy of relations between Kuusinen, Arnot and other leading individuals at Comintern headquarters in their discussions of the LAI, although the LAI still had to fulfil the Comintern’s instructions. This proposition still depended on the communist parties in Europe both supporting and being willing to carry out their colonial work in a routine fashion. In the beginning of 1929, the Comintern finally realised that its system of sending instructions from Moscow to the parties was insufficient, and demanded an improvement in their colonial work. On 1 January 1929, the ECCI Organisational Department (*Orgotdel*) introduced a “Plan of Work” which stated that one of the “most important tasks” for the parties was to conduct “organisational work among foreign workers, especially among the workers from the colonial and semi-colonial countries”.⁶⁵³ This was a response to the lack of interest from the parties in carrying out any of the above in 1928. Thus, in order to evaluate the “organisational work” of the parties in implementing colonial work as a daily routine, the Small Commission instructed Arnot on 29 December 1928 to “visit the Western European parties in order to discuss their colonial work and the advisability of holding a conference thereon”.⁶⁵⁴ On 30 December, Arnot left Moscow.

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⁶⁵² For Arnot’s nomination, and a discussion on why foreign communists had to work in Moscow, see Andrew Thorpe, “Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain”, in *The English Historical Review*, Vol.113, No.452 (Jun.1998), Oxford University Press, p.645.

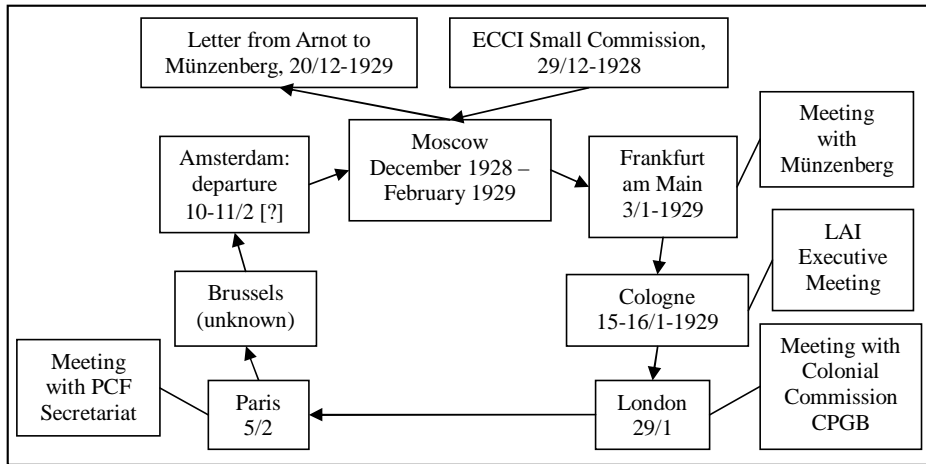
⁶⁵³ RGASPI 495/25/129, 39-43, Plan of work of the Organisational Department, December-February 1929, 1/1-1929.

⁶⁵⁴ RGASPI 495/154/406, 1-2, Proposed Colonial Conference of Western European Parties, 4/3-1929.

Inspection of the Anti-Imperialist Movement and the LAI's Colonial Work in Europe

Arnot's mission to Europe was an intense experience, taking place in different settings and cities: Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, London, Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam. In mid-February, Arnot returned to Moscow.⁶⁵⁵

Table 6.2 : Robin Page Arnot's European Journey, 20/12-1928 – 10-11/2-1929



Arnot travelled directly to Germany from Moscow. On 3 January, Arnot met with Müntzenberg in Frankfurt am Main to discuss “Liga questions”: the second international LAI congress and the idea of organising a “Colonial Conference”. Reporting in “all haste” to Kuusinen, Arnot wrote that Müntzenberg seemed worried about holding a colonial conference.⁶⁵⁶ The reasons why became obvious after Arnot had witnessed the discussions at the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne in January, an experience which made Arnot realise that the colonial question was a far more complex issue than expected and, furthermore, a matter suggesting that the LAI was an isolated entity in the European communist movement.

London: Arnot left Germany in order to attend the Tenth Party Congress of the CPGB in London on 19-22 January. According to Arnot, it was a “good congress judging by the spirit displayed by the delegates”, where he had managed to convince the Central Committee of the CPGB to accept “without demand the proposes [proposals] of the Comintern”. Yet, it seemed as though the leadership in the CPGB had trouble understanding the ramifications of “the new line”, Arnot argued. However, at one of the Central Committee’s sessions, Arnot stated that there existed no other option than to “carry out the task of [the] ideological strengthening of the Party”. In

⁶⁵⁵ Arnot told Kuusinen: “this week I leave for Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam: but I do not expect to be finished with these parties until about the 8th. So that if I were to stay for the 10th-11th C.C. meeting it would not mean a further delay of more than two or three days. But if you wish me to return, and not to wait for C.C., will you please telegraph to that effect?”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 5-7, Handwritten letter from R. Page Arnot to Otto Kuusinen in Moscow, 29/1-1929.

⁶⁵⁶ RGASPI 542/1/30, 1, [Handwritten] letter from Robin Page Arnot, Frankfurt a/M to, Kuusinen, Moscow, 3/1-1929.

Arnot's report to Kuusinen, this was based on the fact that the party must be patient and "take some time and much vigilance to weed out the Rightist tendencies that have shown themselves" after "the errors of the past years". The report more or less summarised the CPGB's teething problems in adjusting itself to "the new line", while, according to Matthew Worley, the policy change "plunged [the CPGB] ... into a period of communist civil war" lasting from September to December 1929. Aside from coercing the Central Committee into implementing the "new line", the second reason for Arnot attending the congress was to observe how the party discussed the colonial question. Apparently, "on the last day" some delegates raised the question in a passing fashion, forcing Arnot to concede that the CPGB's capacity to carry out colonial work was in a poor state. While visiting London, Arnot also observed how the LAI section was nothing more than a "mere committee", which had to improve its work in establishing connections with proletarian organisations and colonial residents. In reference to the earlier prominent position of the intellectuals within the LAI, Arnot considered that this was no longer "an important question", but, if the opportunity presented itself, "they are [to be] utilised" in the service of the LAI.⁶⁵⁷

Paris: Arnot's next stopover was Paris. Compared to the situation within both the CPGB and the British LAI Section, Arnot realised that the state of the colonial work in the PCF was even worse off. While the Colonial Commission of the CPGB and the British LAI Section had at least some contact with anti-colonial activists, in Paris the LAI section had no relations with the party, described by Arnot as being a "very sore point". Arriving in Paris, Arnot faced the covert and secretive *milieu* of the French communist movement due to the surveillance of the *Sûreté*. However, on 5 February, Arnot managed to meet the secretary of the PCF Secretariat, Pierre Semard, for a brief evaluation of its colonial work and the relations between the party and the anti-imperialist organisations in France (the LAI and the LDRN). Semard described how the repressive situation in Paris had made it "difficult" to carry out any colonial work on a regular basis. In fact, Semard's brief assessment is similar to the experiences of Ngyuen Ai Quoc/Ho Chi Minh during his Paris sojourn, working for the PCF in 1928. The PCF had an indolent attitude towards its colonial work, as William Duiker writes in his biography of Ho Chi Minh, a dilemma proven by the fact that the PCF's colonial work existed only "on paper" and not in reality. Despite the Colonial Commission of the PCF having authorised "a budget for colonial operations", no money was at anyone's disposal to develop such operations when "the box [money] was empty" Quoc/Minh observed. Thus, Quoc/Minh requested that the Eastern Secretariat instigate an

⁶⁵⁷ According to Arnot, the CPGB should continue to carry out the "task of ideological strengthening of the Party", a process that "will [...] take some time and much vigilance to weed out the right way tendencies". An observation, which corresponds with Matthew Worley's conclusion, the CPGB, was around this time "plagued by internal conflict and [...] political stupefaction", RGASPI 542/1/30, 5-7, Handwritten letter from R. Page Arnot to Otto Kuusinen in Moscow, 29/1-1929; Worley, 2002, p.116.

investigation to evaluate why the PCF seemed to have no money to organise colonial work in France, as well as demand the Colonial Commission of the PCF to “submit reports” to “other comrades on its operations and plans”. This narrative is comparable to Arnot’s experience of the situation in Paris, which also convinced him of the necessity to organise a “Colonial Conference”. Writing from Paris, Arnot told Kuusinen that “the following points became clear, one of which demands a rather speedy decision ... the Party [must] be in favour of such a Conference on Colonial questions”.⁶⁵⁸ Arnot left Europe convinced that Kuusinen had been correct in his assessment that colonial work was one of the Comintern’s weakest points. Therefore, the “Colonial Conference” would be the solution to finding a new course for the European communist parties’ colonial work. However, what was the purpose of this “Colonial Conference”?

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The “Report on the Parties”

In Moscow, Arnot began the work of analysing the intelligence from his journey; writing down his impressions in his brief “Report on the Parties”; a document which not only contained a number of opinions introduced in his letters to Kuusinen but which also described the deterioration of the colonial work in the communist parties in Europe. The initial purpose of this report was to guide the decision-making process of the Political Secretariat to endorse the “Colonial Conference”.

According to this report, the parties in France, Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands shared the stigma of not being able to carry out the simplest of tasks, e.g. finding colonial contacts, and “at the moment not much is being done”. The shortcomings of the Belgian and Dutch parties were the result of having no reliable connections with their colonies, the Congo Free State and Indonesia, where intra-party problems had brought the relations with the LAI to a standstill. The PCF only had a functional contact with the colonies, via the *Étolie Nord-Africaine* in North Africa. Hence, Arnot conceded that the impact of Senghor’s death in 1927 had been a decisive blow to the anti-colonial network in both France and beyond. As a solution to the conundrum in France, Arnot expected the recently established ECCI Negro Bureau in Moscow to assist the PCF in “re-commencing work amongst the Negroes” and “Negro sailors” in the ports of Paris, Havre, Marseilles and Bordeaux, as well as in establishing connections with the “still almost unexplored” Equatorial Africa.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/30, 10-16, [Handwritten] letter from Arnot, Paris, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 5/2-1929 (someone had removed Kuusinen’s name at the top of the letter with a pair of scissors, yet on the second page, Kuusinen is mentioned as the recipient). For Ho Chi Minh, see Duiker 2000, pp.148-150, quotes taken from fol. RGASPI 495/154/556 (no list). Doriot acted as Ho Chi Minh’s PCF contact.

⁶⁵⁹ RGASPI 495/154/364, 52-54, Report on the Parties, Arnot, February, 1929. The Political Secretariat endorsed the

The CPGB's colonial work was an inefficient and unproductive line of activity, Arnot concluded, suggesting that the CPGB pay attention to the global spread of the British Empire. For the CPGB, the party should divide its perception of the world into four sections: India; the "so-called White Dominions" [the national minority movements] in Europe, Egypt and the Near East [the Middle East]; Africa and the Caribbean "Crown Colonies"; and the semi-colonial countries in Latin America and China. This was an idea of grandiose proportions, Arnot realised, observing, "that with an extremely small party, only a tithe of this has been covered in any manner whatsoever". However, despite the breadth of the issue, the party should avoid using London, one of "the shipping centres of the world", as a connective centre in which to develop colonial work. The CPGB also had to confront the problem of having minimal contacts to important "auxiliary bodies in England", e.g. the LAI and the LRD and to "all kinds of associations of colonial races in London and [...] Christian and philanthropic [sic] agencies".⁶⁶⁰ The primary aim of Arnot's "Report on the Parties" was, however, not to introduce a solution to the current problem of colonial work; it served only as a document clearly defining the issue in preparation for the "Colonial Conference".

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The Concept of the "Colonial Conference"

The "Report on the Parties" introduced a ruthless criticism of the incompetence of the Western European communist parties. For Arnot, the "Colonial Conference" represented the only available option to solving the crisis. In turn, this required that the Eastern Secretariat narrow down the concept of the conference before even being able to introduce the idea to the Political Secretariat. What was the concept of the conference and how did Arnot intend to mobilise the Comintern apparatus in order to bring the conference into being? This is essentially a question of chronology, i.e. the "Colonial Conference" was a continual process following the logic and pressure of time, a factor which ultimately determined its outcome. According to the chronology of the "Colonial Conference", the timing of this conference coincided with two events in July 1929: the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow and the second international LAI congress:

Decision of the Small Commission regarding Arnot	29 December, 1928
Arnot's Mission to Europe	January-February
"Report on the Parties"	February
Proposal/Outline of Conference	4 March

formation of a "Negro Bureau" at the Eastern Secretariat on 12 December, 1928. The Eastern Secretariat expected "five comrades to begin with" to represent the bureau, which "later [should be] enlarged through comrades from Negro countries", see fol. RGASPI 495/18/637, 151-152, On the Session of the Polit-Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 10/12-1928.

⁶⁶⁰ RGASPI 495/154/364, 52-54, Report on the Parties, Arnot, February, 1929.

Endorsed by the Political Secretariat	14 March
First meeting of the “Commission on Colonial Conference”	19 March
Budget	20 March
Letters to communist parties	25 March
The “Magyar Thesis”	29 March
Second Meeting of the “Commission on Colonial Conference”	29 April
Decision to Postpone	25 May
The Tenth ECCI Plenum	3-19 July
The Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism, Frankfurt am Main	21-27 July

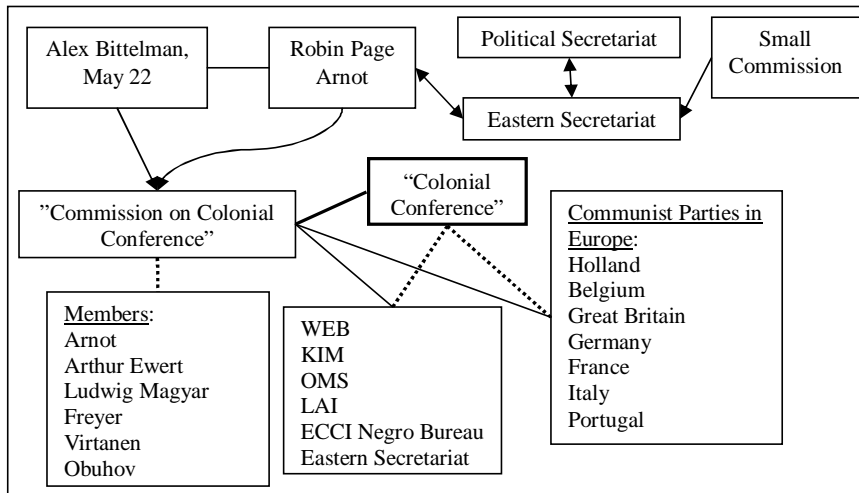
Arnot relied first and foremost on the assistance of the Eastern Secretariat to organise this “Colonial Conference”. During the initial stages of the preparatory work, the LAI was also to be involved in the conference. However, while the LAI expected to begin preparing for the second international congress at the beginning of 1929, the idea of holding the “Colonial Conference” was mooted at the same point in time, one suggestion having been made that the two events were the same. On the contrary, such a proposition does not hold any water, particularly as the “Colonial Conference” had an authoritative position over the second LAI Congress. Is it possible to determine when the preparations for the “Colonial Conference” did commence; what does the process tell us about the Comintern’s colonial work; and, finally, did the conference ever convene? On 4 March, the Eastern Secretariat presented to the Political Secretariat its fundamental concept of the “Colonial Conference”:

The Colonial Conference should have as its purpose the putting into operation of the decisions of the CI on colonial questions, more especially by means of a closer co-ordination of all colonial activities.⁶⁶¹

This required Arnot to co-ordinate individuals and departments at Comintern headquarters in Moscow to get involved in the “Colonial Conference”. The table below focuses on the structure of this preparatory work and presents the actors involved in the “Colonial Conference”:

⁶⁶¹ RGASPI 495/154/406, 1-2, [Eastern Secretariat] Proposed Colonial Conference of Western European Parties, 4/3-1929.

Table 6.3: Structure and Actors in the “Colonial Conference”, March-June 1929



The Political Secretariat’s consent was the key for Arnot and the Eastern Secretariat. After completing his general impressions of the communist parties in his “Report on the Parties”, Arnot passed on the principal aim of the “Colonial Conference” to the Political Secretariat. The conference had to focus on getting the parties to “report on past work” and be an “examination of difficulties” while pondering “future tasks and practical steps in their realisation”. Yet, the road to bringing the conference to fruition was one obstructed by structural constraints. Firstly, Arnot reflected on the fact that the parties did not seem to know how to find colonial contacts in their home countries, a defect the parties also neglected to inform the Comintern about. This pattern of ignorance had established a mentality that made it difficult to send documents, minutes and either legal or illegal leaflets on the colonial question. Secondly, the communist parties should therefore accept the active service of colonial students who were pursuing studies at the KUTV in Moscow, primarily to develop their theoretical and practical work on the colonial question in Europe. In conclusion, Arnot stated that the “Colonial Conference” represented a perfect opportunity to discuss the possibility of linking colonial work with the anti-war movement. Hence, the “Colonial Conference” should comprise a representative picture of the Comintern:

The composition of the Conference should be such as to ensure the presence of political bureau members, specialists in colonial work and colonials. On the other hand, it must be as small a conference as possible for obvious reasons. Representatives from the WEB and the Liga should also be present. The location, it is suggested, should be either Berlin or Köln [Cologne, author’s remark] and the time should, if possible, be the middle of April.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶² RGASPI 495/154/406, 1-2, Proposed Colonial Conference of Western European Parties, [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, 4/3-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 10-16, [Handwritten] Letter from Arnot, Paris, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 5/2-1929.

On 14 March, the Political Secretariat endorsed Arnot's proposal. However, on 19 March, the Eastern Secretariat declared the need to postpone the conference until the "beginning of May", and for it to convene in Berlin. The primary reason given was to ensure that delegates from the communist parties, special representatives of the Comintern, the KIM, the LAI, the WEB, the OMS and of the ECCI Negro Bureau, as well as "technical workers" would be able to make it to the conference.⁶⁶³ From a broader perspective, the "Colonial Conference" was to involve a range of actors and would, therefore, be an event highlighting the hierarchy of relations within the Comintern structure as well as questioning the idea of the Comintern purely as a monolithic body.

In order to devote attention to the preparation of the conference, the Political Secretariat endorsed the establishment of the "Commission Appointed to Prepare Conference on Colonial Work of Western European Parties", also referred to as the "Eastern Secretariat Commission on Colonial Conference" ("Commission on Colonial Conference"). Arnot acted as the leader of this commission, working together with Kuusinen's deputy at the Eastern Secretariat, the Hungarian communist Ludwig Magyar, as well as with the German communist Arthur Ewert, Freyer [first name unknown], the émigré communist from Finland and functionary at Comintern headquarters Niilo Virtanen and the KIM delegate Obuhov. On 19 March, the commission held its inaugural meeting in Moscow in order to start considering which of the European communist parties to invite. At the end of the meeting, the "Commission on Colonial Conference" resolved to wait until the reports from the parties had arrived in Moscow, documents which were expected to arrive by 31 March. The members of the "Commission on Colonial Conference" were in charge of separate questions. Administrative questions and the budget were under Virtanen's and Ewert's jurisdiction, the latter also being responsible for evaluating the incoming reports from the parties; Freyer prepared the "Agitprop" material; while Obuhov examined the colonial work in the communist youth movement. According to Virtanen's "estimated budget", completed on 20 March and passed on to the Small Commission, the cost of the "Colonial Conference" would come to \$1,956, which included the travel arrangements and "living costs" for the delegates in Berlin, as well as salaries for the "technical workers", the hire of the conference room and "other expenses". The Small Commission nevertheless concluded that the budget was too high, instructing Arnot and Ewert to revise the costs, which they did, reducing the overall cost by \$718, ending with a final estimated cost of at \$1,238.⁶⁶⁴ Even though preparations were already under way in Moscow, the reports

⁶⁶³ Although the Political Secretariat had "approved in principle" of the conference, the "Commission on Colonial Conference" and Arnot had to complete "Draft Proposals outlining the work of the Conference already submitted to the Eastern Secretariat" which both elaborated on and was "put in the shape of a proposal to go before the Political Secretariat for decision". The anticipated number of delegates at the conference was thirty-one, RGASPI 495/18/670, 3-5, [copy] Proposal from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 19/3-1929.

⁶⁶⁴ Arnot and Freyer evaluated the CPGB, Virtanen (the PCF), Ducrot (the *Communist Party of Belgium*), and Resema

from the parties had not yet arrived in Moscow. When sending out the conference invitations to the parties, Arnot took advantage of the opportunity to remind the parties to provide the Eastern Secretariat with the reports on their colonial work:

Following the visit of a member of the Eastern Secretariat [Arnot] to you and his discussion with you of the possibility of holding a conference of Western European parties on Colonial work, it has now been decided to hold such a conference [...] Reports of parties, not only on work since the VIth Congress but on all sections of work on all colonial territories hitherto not dealt with. [...] With regard to this report, we have already sent a telegram asking that the report which was already discussed with the vice-chairman of the Eastern Secretariat [Ludwig Magyar] should be despatched to us by 31 March. [...] If you can suggest other items which should come up for discussion, please put them into your report, or indicate where they should go on the Agenda outlined above. [...] The conference should not last more than three days, but its shortness will depend exactly on the extent to which all participants prepare beforehand.⁶⁶⁵

This was an obligation the “Commission on Colonial Conference” expected the communist parties to fulfil. In Moscow, however, Arnot was relying on Magyar’s theoretical expertise to adapt “the new line” to the conference.

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(the CPH), RGASPI 495/18/670, 1-2, Minutes of “Commission on Colonial Conference”, Moscow, 19/3-1929.; RGASPI 495/18/670, 1-2, Minutes of “Commission on Colonial Conference”, Moscow, 19/3-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 14, Estimated budget for [Colonial] Conference from Virtanen to the Small Commission, Moscow, 20/3-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 23, Revised budget for conference, Moscow, April/May.

⁶⁶⁵ RGASPI 495/18/670, 30-32, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Communist Party of Italy, Rome, 25/3-1929.

The “Magyar Thesis”

It is very difficult to organise the practical work in the colonies [...] the ECCI is mainly dependent in the field of practical work and application of instructions [...] on the activities, initiative and steady growth of the Communist Parties in the corresponding imperialist countries [...] must bring about proper collaboration with other colonial organisations such as the Anti-Imperialist League.

Ludwig Magyar, “The Organisation of the Colonial Work of the European Communist Parties”, 29/3-1929

Arnot realised that the “Colonial Conference” was lacking in its ideological approach. On 19 March, the “Commission on Colonial Conference” concluded that it was essential to formulate “lines of political information”, hence, to get the “thesis ... prepared by comrade Magyar”. Addressed here as “the Magyar thesis”, Magyar completed his work on 29 March, its full title being “The Organisation of the Colonial Work of the European Communist Parties”, which was more or less a testimony of how a leading official at Comintern headquarters interpreted the colonial work among the national sections after the Sixth Comintern Congress. Magyar argued that the ignorance and apparent failure of the communist parties in Europe to conduct any kind of colonial work deserved critique. Additionally, Arnot observed how “the Magyar thesis” could also guide the ideological preparations for the second LAI congress.

Aside from Arnot’s “Report on the Parties”, “the Magyar thesis” was the first critical survey of colonial work after the Sixth Comintern Congress, which also served the purpose of confirming the substance of Kuusinen’s colonial and semi-colonial theses. Apparently, Magyar referred explicitly to Kuusinen, concluding that:

The most important tasks of the Communist Parties of the imperialist countries with regard to the colonial question is: first the establishment of a direct contact between the Communist Parties and the revolutionary trade union organisations [...] The relationships existing up to now between the Communist Parties and the revolutionary movement in the respective colonial countries cannot be considered [...] as satisfactory. [...] not all of the Parties of the CI have so far grasped the great significance of regular close connections with the revolutionary movements in the colonies for the active immediate practical support of these movements. Only to the extent that the Communist Parties in the imperialist countries actually support the revolutionary movement [...] assist the struggle of [the] colonial

countries against imperialism, can their position with regard to the colonial question be accepted as truly Bolshevik. This is the criterion for their revolutionary activity in general.⁶⁶⁶ According to Magyar, the communist parties had not acted in a “truly Bolshevik” manner by having failed to establish any “direct contact” with colonial “revolutionary trade union organisations”. This breach in communist discipline warranted coercion, Magyar stated. Magyar had distinguished five fields of activity which the parties had to implement in their colonial work, the first two being to organise a liaison system to distribute political literature from Europe to the colonies and to ensure that correspondence from Europe arrived in the hands of revolutionary parties, associations, organisations and individuals in the colonies. In addition, members of European communist parties should accept their duty to travel to the colonies, acting as “emigrants” and not as “representatives” or “emissaries” of the Comintern. Once on location, the “emigrants” should blend in with the everyday life of the workers and carry out manual labour in order to establish contacts with political activists at the grass root level. The fourth field of activity focused on getting the parties to establish contacts with sailors, workers, soldiers and students from colonial countries, people living in the “big cities of the capitalist countries” and known to be eagerly wanting to get involved in colonial work. Once contact was an established fact, the communists then had to “penetrate into the ranks” of the colonial communities in the metropolitan cities with the sole purpose of exerting “Communist influence [...] among them”. Magyar concluded that this final question focused on the failure of the central committees in the communist parties to organise “routine colonial work”, a crucial question for the Comintern, which the parties had to cease ignoring. Magyar questioned why the European parties could not find any anti-colonial activists, thus intimating that the parties had to begin giving “much more attention to the activity, composition and structure of the colonial commission than it has done up to the present time”. While the colonial commission in the parties was a sub-department, primarily assigned to lead and develop colonial work, Magyar observed how the lack of education and incapacity to organise even internal discussions on the colonial question were evidence of the low level of academia in these so-called commissions. The only solution at hand for Magyar was to recommend a “ceaseless activity in the organisational field”, with the colonial commission being the centre of gravity for the parties in developing their colonial work. For example, in order to gather intelligence to facilitate the decision-making process of its central committee:

The colonial commissions in the various Parties shall be in touch with each other, arrange small conferences now and then for the co-ordination and further development of the work,

⁶⁶⁶ RGASPI 495/18/670, 22, Confidential report from Arnot, Moscow, to Magyar, Moscow, 28/4-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 49-55, Confidential resolution: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COLONIAL WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, author: Ludwig Magyar, Moscow, 29/3-1929.

etc.; furthermore, they must bring about proper collaboration with other colonial organisations such as the Anti-Imperialist League, etc.⁶⁶⁷

The administrative utopia, as formulated by Magyar, left him also contemplating that the initial purpose of the colonial commissions, to gather intelligence, was nothing but a farce, meaning, “the information received up till now [at Comintern headquarters] amounts to absolutely nothing”. For Magyar, money was a part of the solution, suggesting that “the strengthening of the work of the colonial commissions calls for still greater financial means” in order to counter the ignorance within the parties.

From a broader perspective, Magyar’s criticism is supported by other explanations. After the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, the international communist movement had to confront a series of serious developments. For example, the CPGB encountered intra-party struggles, while the CPSUSA was on the verge of devouring itself due to fractional struggles (see further below), thus, the insecure situation also affected the preparatory work for the “Colonial Conference”, with the lack of party reports largely contributing to bringing the work to a halt. The parties had received the instruction to complete and send in their reports by 31 March; however, on 26 April, Arnot had only received one report from the CPH. Apparently annoyed by their neglect and continued indifference, Arnot informed some of the individuals involved in preparing the LAI congress in Moscow, e.g. Pyotr Kitaigorodsky, “Strakhov”/Chü Chiu-pai, the French communist Henri Barbé and the Russian Joel Schubín about the parties’ malpractice.⁶⁶⁸ Yet, at the same time, Arnot told the members of the “Commission on Colonial Conference” to expect the arrival of these reports:

No Party except the Dutch Party had sent any reports in spite of repeated telegrams, but reports are now expected from the British Party within a few days and from the French Party later.⁶⁶⁹

“The Magyar thesis” was not primarily an ideological guideline for colonial work, but instead aimed to introduce a concept on how to re-construct the methods used by the parties, e.g. by gathering intelligence on the anti-colonial movement. Magyar argued that the gathering of information was an essential part of the colonial work, one which had to run smoothly in order to assist the decision-making process at Comintern headquarters in Moscow. However, Magyar conceded that “the third period” had increased the “white terror” against the international communist movement on a global scale, forcing the Comintern and its sections to organise every

⁶⁶⁷ RGASPI 495/18/670, 49-55, Confidential resolution: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COLONIAL WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, author: Ludwig Magyar, 29/3-1929.

⁶⁶⁸ See fol. RGASPI 495/18/670, 82-90, 29/4-1929.

⁶⁶⁹ For the CPH report, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/670, 93-94, Report from the Communist Party of Holland/Colonial Commission, Amsterdam, to Arnot, Moscow, 26/4-1929. Members of the Colonial Commission of the CPH were van Munster, de Visser, de Vries, Bergsma and Bykstra. Any record of how Arnot reacted remains unknown; see fol. RGASPI 495/18/670, 27-28, Minutes, second meeting of Commission on Colonial Conference, Moscow, 29/4-1929.

campaign in “a very vigorous manner”. Hence, the liaison service of the OMS was not, therefore, enough to salvage the situation in the European communist parties which, according to Magyar, mirrored the widespread indolence in the parties towards colonial work:

With regard to the establishment of [colonial] connections there is a false conception prevalent in our Parties. It is generally considered that it is the duty of the centralised OMS apparatus to establish connections everywhere and to take care of the sending of material. This is entirely false. The Parties must change their attitude with regard to this and discover for themselves ways to forward material to comrades in the colonies.⁶⁷⁰

Magyar’s criticism focused on the parties’ organisational inability not only to send out the political material and instructions to their “comrades in the colonies” but also to organise travel arrangements for party members to visit the colonies. It was not up to the OMS to supervise this line of activity; in fact, Magyar considered that it was the duty of each party to supervise this with vigilance in order to avoid the “censorship, probation and hostility” of the national security services. This organisational weakness and, in some cases, the lack of organisational work, had made the parties dependent on receiving directives from the Comintern, as well as counting on the OMS to organise every detail pertaining to colonial work. Thus, “the Magyar thesis” strove to lay the foundation for “routine colonial work” by getting the parties to “form an independent field of work”. The critical essence of this organisational incapacity in the communist parties in Europe since the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 lay in:

The carrying out of the other tasks laid down in the colonial theses [Sixth International Comintern Congress 1928] with regard to the support of the struggle of the colonial peoples against imperialism (mobilisation of the broad masses of workers in the capitalist countries against the capitalist colonial regime, struggle against the colonial policy of the Social Democracy) form, so to say, a part of the general daily work of our Parties.⁶⁷¹

According to Magyar, in order to salvage a dire situation, the parties had to act in a “vigorous manner” and, with the “greatest exactness, care and system of individual attention and personal treatment”, carry out “colonial routine work”. This would thereby contribute to strengthening the current guiding principle within the communist movement of mobilising the “broad masses” in the struggle against social democracy.⁶⁷² Arnot nonetheless perceived “the Magyar thesis” as an

⁶⁷⁰ RGASPI 495/18/670, 49-55, Confidential resolution: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COLONIAL WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, author: Ludwig Magyar, 29/3-1929.

⁶⁷¹ RGASPI 495/18/670, 49-55, Confidential resolution: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COLONIAL WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, author: Ludwig Magyar, 29/3-1929.

⁶⁷² Arnot appreciated Magyar’s critique of the European communist parties, and the formulations on how to alter and develop the colonial work, telling Magyar to rework the political interpretation on the colonial and semi-colonial countries, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/670, 49-55, Confidential resolution: THE ORGANISATION OF THE COLONIAL

ideological document which facilitated the preparatory work of the “Colonial Conference”. Moreover, the document also reflects the ideological belief, strength, commitment and obedience within the international communist movement towards interpreting the Comintern’s “new line”.

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An Uncertain Road Ahead

Preparations for the “Colonial Conference” ran parallel with the preparations for the second LAI congress in Moscow. Arnot was forced to separate these two events from each other, particularly as he was involved in both. During the initial preparatory stage of the “Colonial Conference”, Arnot considered it to be crucial to get Münzenberg to attend the conference as the LAI’s representative. For some reason, however, in March Arnot decided to delete both the LAI and Münzenberg from its agenda – but why? Is it possible that Arnot and the decision-makers in Moscow deliberately kept the LAI and Münzenberg out of the conference?

The decision to omit the LAI was a practical one. Included initially as one of the delegations at the conference, in March, according to the budget, the “Commission on Colonial Conference” had chosen to delete the LAI.⁶⁷³ Yet, this decision was not motivated by a need to cut expenses, rather, as noted by Arnot to the “Commission on Colonial Conference” on 29 April, one of the primary aims of the “Colonial Conference” was to discuss the “relations” between the delegates of the European communist parties “and the Anti-imperialist League and other bodies”. Therefore, the conference was an event which had to be convened without Münzenberg’s direct involvement. It was also a question of time and place. At the second meeting of the “Commission on Colonial Conference” in Moscow on 29 April, Arnot concluded that it was unrealistic to hold the conference in Berlin “for not more than 6/7 days in the beginning of May”, recommending to postpone the event until “June 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11”. The reason for this was two-fold: firstly, to prepare “all materials therefore to be ready by the 20th May”, and secondly, Arnot had requested that Kuusinen nominate candidates for the conference.⁶⁷⁴ The crux of the matter was that the parties were still refusing to send in their reports to Arnot and, with reference to the direct involvement of the LAI, he knew that the “Colonial Conference” was a relevant factor in the “important preparation for the Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League”.⁶⁷⁵ This explains why Arnot intentionally concealed the purpose of the “Colonial Conference” from Münzenberg. In May, however, after the sudden

WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES, author: Ludwig Magyar, 29/3-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 22, Confidential report from Eastern Secretariat/Arnot, to Magyar, April-May, 1929.

⁶⁷³ RGASPI 495/18/670, 3-5, [copy] Proposal from Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 19/3-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 14, Estimated budget for [Colonial] Conference from Virtanen to the Small Commission, Moscow, 20/3-1929.

⁶⁷⁴ RGASPI 495/18/670, 27-28, Minutes, second meeting of the Commission on Colonial Conference, Moscow, 29/4-1929.

⁶⁷⁵ RGASPI 495/18/670, 101, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the CC of CPGB, London, 25/5-1929.

disappearance of Arnot from Moscow, the preparatory work for the “Colonial Conference” was given a new direction.

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Arnot's Mysterious Disappearance

On 18 May, Arnot requested that Virtanen “ask Comrade Kuusinen” to assign Alexander Bittelman, a CPUSA member and functionary at the ECCI Anglo-American Secretariat in Moscow in 1929, as LAI liaison in Moscow for the International Secretariat in order to detach him from “his natural pre-occupation with America” and to convince him to busy himself with “Liga questions”.⁶⁷⁶ The reason why Arnot suddenly resigned from his positions as both LAI liaison and leader of the “Commission on Colonial Conference” is, initially, ambiguous. Without telling Virtanen why he had decided to abandon his work with the LAI, what was the effect of Arnot’s non-appearance at the conference? Arnot’s letter to Virtanen is the last trace of his involvement with the “Colonial Conference”, and the mystery of Arnot reveals an intricate narrative focusing on both the causes and consequences of the fractional struggle within the CPUSA in 1929.

The CPUSA was a party which, like other communist parties, found itself confused by the policy shift of the Comintern's “new line”, the result of which was the radicalisation of the CPUSA once the party had unconditionally celebrated Stalin as the undisputed leader of the Soviet Union. The impact of “the new line” on relations between the CPUSA and the Comintern is a question which has been meticulously evaluated ever since the opening of the Comintern Archive. For example, Randi Storch’s study of the Chicago foreign communist locale in 1928-35 partly supports the *Weberian* and *Draperian* “centre and periphery” paradigm, which concludes that Stalinism “did matter to the American communist movement” to such an extent that CPUSA members were required to “follow party policy”.⁶⁷⁷ Throughout the 1920s, the American communist movement had been the scene of continued “factional wars fought out within its own ranks” which, in 1929, were finally sorted out once the CPUSA was “better able to fulfil the goals laid down for it by the Comintern”.⁶⁷⁸ However, how was Arnot involved in this conflict? As noted in a letter from Arnot to “Max” [Petrovsky's pseudonym] on 14 May, the internal conflict within the CPUSA tested whether the party was capable of sorting out its internal crisis:

⁶⁷⁶ RGASPI 542/1/30, 44-45, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Virtanen, Moscow, 18/5-1929.

⁶⁷⁷ Randi Storch, “Chicago’s Foreign Language-Speaking Communists 1928-35”, in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern*, Laporte, Morgan & Worley (eds.), Palgrave MacMillan, Houndmills, 2008, pp.264-265.

⁶⁷⁸ Klehr, Haynes, & Firsov 1995, p.72.

[...] the tasks of the American Party [CPUSA] had been to mobilise against the danger of the Right and to liquidate factionalism; that these two tasks were bound up together and that they had failed; that the factional leaders were responsible.⁶⁷⁹

In fact, the solution to the problems of the CPUSA had never been in the hands of the CPUSA “factional leaders”, rather, it was a matter under the jurisdiction of the “American Commission” in Moscow. According to Edward P. Johanningsmeier’s biography of the CPUSA leader William Z. Foster, the “specially-organised ‘American Commission’” served only one purpose in 1929: to find a solution to the internal crisis within the CPUSA. The fractional struggle focused essentially on the alleged failure of the CPUSA leaders, particularly Jay Lovestone, to conform to “the new line”, as well as Lovestone’s support for Bukharin. In this respect, the Political Secretariat perceived Foster as a more suitable candidate to both lead the party and to curb the turbulence within the CPUSA leadership and, therefore, endorsed the establishment of the “American Commission” to sort out the fractional struggle. By summoning the CPUSA leadership (Foster, Lovestone, Bertram D. Wolfe and Bittelman) to Moscow, and once on location in the “Red capital”, the “American Commission”, with the active participation of Stalin, decided to settle this matter with their American comrades. Stalin assumed a leading role in guiding the discussions with the “American Commission”, asking questions and demanding answers. According to Arnot, who attended the conclusive meeting of the “American Commission”, Stalin even questioned whether the American leadership understood what it meant to be a communist:

Stalin then said that he regarded Wolfe’s [suggestion] as shameful. That a fundamental question, which even a party candidate could answer, had been put to them: will you accept the discipline of the CI and carry it through? He [Stalin] said: I would be offended if I were asked such a question and if you [Wolfe] here cannot answer it, I wonder what sort of Communist you are.⁶⁸⁰

The “American Commission” was as an instrument of coercion. One outcome of this final meeting was that the Comintern sanctioned the decision to remove Lovestone from the leadership, Lovestone later assuming the role as the symbolic representative of the “Rightist Opposition”

⁶⁷⁹ RGASPI 495/18/740, 32-33, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to “Max”/Petrovsky, Moscow, 14/5-1929.

⁶⁸⁰ Edward P. Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism. The Life of William Z. Foster*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, p.245-247. Johanningsmeier’s depiction of the “American Commission” is taken from Theodor Draper’s *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (2003), Max Eastman’s *Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch* (New York, Random House, 1964), Benjamin Gitlow, *The Whole of Their Lives* (C. Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1948) and Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik* (Chicago, Liberator Press, 1978). For Arnot’s letter to Petrovsky, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/740, 32-33, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to “Max”/Petrovsky, Moscow, 14/5-1929. Kuusinen, Bela Kun, Wolfe, Molotov, Gitlow, Pepper, Stalin, Arnot and Ford attended the final meeting of the “American Commission”. The debates of the “American Commission” had affected the members of the CPUSA members who were working at Comintern headquarters in Moscow, e.g. Arnot wrote that they had “reduced Williams to a shadow of his former self, Violet to a jibbering [sic] scarecrow and the other stenographer (Kathleen), though with a lighter task, has already been in bed for several days”.

within the party, which the Comintern would refer to as the “Lovestoneites”.⁶⁸¹ How did this CPUSA factional struggle affect the Comintern? Arnot observed how the “American question” had paralysed the Comintern apparatus in Moscow in 1929: “[T]he impossibility of getting [sic] discussions is due entirely to this American business, which is taking up everybody’s time”.⁶⁸² Thus, while the controversy nearly consumed the top strata of the CPUSA, the conflict also left the organisational structure of the Comintern in disarray.

What role did Arnot play in all of this? While it may seem as though Arnot’s decision to resign from his LAI and “Colonial Conference” duties was a rash and illogical step, he was, however, not in a position to decline the authority of the ECCI Standing Commission and Piatnitsky. On 15 May, Piatnitsky instructed the ECCI Standing Commission to give Arnot “confidential and full powers” to conduct “work in the CPUSA as the plenipotentiary representative of the ECCI with all rights as set out in Section 22 of the C.I. statutes (See Section 22 of the C.I. statutes as adopted at the VIth World Congress of the C. I.) Moscow 15th May 1929”. For Arnot, this meant leaving Moscow as soon as possible and travelling to the USA and, once on location, enforcing “the new line” on the CPUSA as ECCI plenipotentiary, responsible only to the ECCI, not to the Central Committee of the CPUSA.⁶⁸³ Later, in 1937, Arnot recalled his mission to the USA in his “Autobiographical Note”:

In May 1929 following on Presidium ECCI went to USA as representative of Comintern with responsibility for carrying out of struggle against Lovestone and Cannon groups (Right opportunists and “Left” Trotskyists) on basis of C. I. decisions. Returned to United Kingdom December 1929, participated in December Congress CPGB at which Right opportunist majority routed.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸¹ For Lovestone and “Lovestoneites” see Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, & Dan Georgakas (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1992, pp.435-437, Lazitch 1986, pp.277-278.

⁶⁸² RGASPI 495/18/740, 32-33, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to “Max”/Petrovsky, Moscow, 14/5-1929.

⁶⁸³ Arnot’s mission was administered via the ECCI Presidium and the ECCI Standing Commission, see fol. RGASPI 495/7/9, 62, Short note re. Arnot, Piatnitsky, Moscow, 15/5-1929. Section 22 in the statutes, adopted at the Sixth Comintern congress in 1928, reads: “The ECCI and its presidium have the right to send representatives to the various sections of the Communist International. Such representatives receive their instructions from the ECCI and are responsible to it for their activities. The plenipotentiaries of the ECCI have the right to participate in meetings of the central party bodies as well as of the local organisations of the sections to which they are sent. They may, however, act in opposition to the central committee of the given section at congresses and conferences of that section, if the policy of the central committee in question diverges from the instructions of the ECCI. Representatives of the ECCI are obliged in particular to supervise the execution of the decisions of the world congresses and of the ECCI. The ECCI and its presidium also have the right to send instructors to the sections of the Communist International. The powers and duties of instructors are determined by the ECCI, to whom the instructors are responsible”, see “General Rules”, taken from Degras vol.II, p.469.

⁶⁸⁴ The whereabouts of Arnot after having been nominated as ECCI plenipotentiary have remained unclear up until the present day. For example, Worley writes that Arnot’s “commitments to the Comintern” in 1929 prevented him from participating actively in the Central Committee of the CPGB. Johanningsmeier concludes on the arrival of “a Comintern agent” (“G. William”) in the USA in October 1929, who assisted with “the reorganisation of the Party in the wake of Lovestone’s expulsion”. However, whether “G. Williams” and Arnot were one and the same, remains

With Arnot's disappearance, the International Secretariat received a new liaison at Comintern headquarters: Alexander Bittelman. On 22 May, Bittelman informed Münzenberg in a letter that, "I have been placed in charge of the League work in place of Page. I shall identify myself as the comrade who, along with Page, worked with you in Amsterdam".⁶⁸⁵ For Bittelman, this appointment meant that he no longer had any authority to get involved with the "American work" and, according to the ECCI Standing Commission, this prohibited Bittelman from uttering a single word to his "American comrades" on his current work with the LAI. This assignment nevertheless granted Bittelman access further up the hierarchical structure of the Comintern, e.g. attending meetings of the ECCI Presidium and of the Political Secretariat to provide information about the LAI and the "Colonial Conference".⁶⁸⁶

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Uncertainty Confirmed

The mystery of Arnot's sudden resignations does, in a sense, characterise the ambiguous nature of the "Colonial Conference". While Arnot and the Eastern Secretariat had been the gravitational centre for the conference preparations in Moscow, Bittelman never managed to assume the same authority over the project that Arnot had had. Hence, the undertakings to realise the "Colonial Conference" only ended in unresolved illusions. Firstly, the communist parties did not send their colonial work reports (aside from the CPH) in to the Eastern Secretariat, a fact which contributed to the postponement of the Berlin conference till June. Secondly, the preparatory work was becoming a difficult project to see through. On 25 May, the "Commission on Colonial Conference" despatched a confidential letter both to the communist parties and to the leader of the WEB in Berlin "Felix" (Manuilsky's pseudonym), informing them of the decision to postpone the conference yet again. This time the conference was set for July and would to be convened in connection with the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow (3-19 July), a suitable occasion at which to discuss the colonial work, as well as to settle the question of the LAI and its second international congress:

As the colonial conference is to serve as an important preparation for the Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League, it has been decided to postpone it once more, and to hold it just before the Congress of the League [LAI], i.e. about the middle of July. In this connection, we remind you that we are still minus a report on the colonial work of your Party and proposals

unknown, see fol. RGASPI 495/198/13, 158-161, Autobiographical Note, author: R. P. Arnot, Moscow, 19/10-1937; Worley 2002, p.134, 140-142, 151 (footnote 95); Johanningsmeier 1994, p.247.

⁶⁸⁵ RGASPI 542/1/30, 47, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 22/5-1929.

⁶⁸⁶ RGASPI 495/7/9, 96-98, Protokoll N.45 der Sitzung der ständigen Kommission des Sekrt. des EKKI, Moscow, 1/6-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Barbé, Garlandi, Lebedewa, Heimo, Kirsanova and Wassiljew.

in regard to the conference. We beg of you to let us have your reports and proposals not later than the [Tenth] Plenum of the ECCI. This will give us an opportunity to discuss them with your representative during the Plenum.⁶⁸⁷

The idea to hold the “Colonial Conference” during the Tenth ECCI Plenum seemed to be an obvious solution to the problem of finding a date. However, did the “Colonial Conference” convene during the ECCI plenum in July? According to the documents relating to the plenum – protocols, transcripts and theses, there is no trace of any “Colonial Conference” nor, for that matter, is there any discussion of either the colonial question or of the LAI. Yet, a number of actors involved in the preparatory work of the “Colonial Conference” were present at the plenum, e.g. Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Josefowitsch, Ford and Bittelman.⁶⁸⁸ The Tenth ECCI Plenum is a pivotal episode further discussed in the following chapter. However, it is worth noting at this stage that several of the delegates who had attended this plenum left Moscow immediately after it had ended on 19 July, and travelled directly to Frankfurt am Main to attend the “Second International Congress against Colonialism and Imperialism”, which convened on 21 July, 1929.

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⁶⁸⁷ The Eastern Secretariat informed “Felix”/Manuilsky in Berlin that this letter had also been sent to the PCF and CP Belgium, see RGASPI 495/18/670, 100, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to WEB and “Felix” [Manuilsky], Berlin, 25/5-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 101, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the Central Committee of the CPGB, London, 25/5-1929.

⁶⁸⁸ The documents on the Tenth ECCI Plenum are filed in *fond* and *opis* RGASPI 495/168, see fol. RGASPI 495/168/151, 1-8, Lists of participants, 10th ECCI Plenum, Moscow, 3-19/7-1929.

Chapter 6. Utopia Redefined, Part II

When do you think the Congress should be held? Not, as one thinks in Spring, but later towards the end of Summer.

Robin Page Arnot to Münzenberg,
10/12-1928

The date set for the Congress (21-31 July) is approved. The question whether this gathering should be a Congress or Conference shall be decided depending upon Comrade Münzenberg's ability to give more detailed information on the representation of the various countries.

Political Secretariat to Münzenberg,
8/2-1929

The LAI had not managed to transcend from the stage of demonstration to organisation after the Brussels Congress in February 1927. In July 1928, Münzenberg concluded that the LAI's impact and results had, at best, been moderate, however, this did not prevent him from wanting to create an international anti-imperialist "echo" during the "Second International Congress against Colonialism and Imperialism" in 1929.⁶⁸⁹ According to the LAI "Statutes", the "governing body of the League shall be the International Congress, which shall meet biennially"; hence, this demanded that the International Secretariat begin the preparatory work for the congress in the beginning of 1929. The question was, however, whether the LAI was capable of convening such a congress. The decision-makers at Comintern headquarters were receptive to the above and, as Arnot told Münzenberg in December 1928, much depended on the "attitude of the League of the Indian nationalists" [Nehru and Iyengar's *Independence for India League*], the *African National Congress* (ANC) and the trade unions.⁶⁹⁰ However, Arnot had not given Münzenberg the entire picture: the LAI congress also depended upon the will and authority of the Political Secretariat. For Münzenberg, the second LAI congress had to follow his "own agenda", yet, this was a scenario the Comintern chose to confront Münzenberg with.⁶⁹¹

This chapter shares the same overarching theme as the one introduced in the previous chapter: to analyse the ideas and undertakings of the Comintern to organise, structure and control the colonial question. While the former chapter focused on the interactionist process of the "Colonial

⁶⁸⁹ Münzenberg 1928, pp.4-10.

⁶⁹⁰ RGASPI 542/1/31, 1-6, Statutes. League against Imperialism and for National Independence, International Secretariat, Berlin, 1927; RGASPI 542/1/25, 71-72, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 10/12-1928.

⁶⁹¹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 1, [Handwritten] Letter from Arnot, Frankfurt a/M, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 3/1-1929.

Conference”, this chapter focuses on how the Comintern prepared the “Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism”. Initially scheduled to convene in Paris, the International Secretariat was forced, by external causes, to re-schedule and relocate the July congress to the Zoological Gardens in Frankfurt am Main, where it opened on 21 July and ended on 27 July. The main question to answer is how and why the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters expected to create their own version of an anti-imperialist utopia? The fundamental difference between the expectations of the “Colonial Conference” and the LAI Congress was that the former strove to correct the failure among the European communist parties to carry out any colonial work, while the latter expected to fulfil the visions of the LAI and its International Secretariat, i.e. to make the leap from demonstration to becoming an international mass organisation. However, this had the reverse effect on the LAI and, instead, the second LAI congress announced the increase in and exertion of control over the International Secretariat by the Comintern. In fact, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters resolved to steer the preparations for the LAI Congress in a completely different direction than the one envisioned by the International Secretariat. The process in itself contained elements of anticipation and expectation as well as of coercion and isolation. The aim of the following narrative is two-fold: firstly, to re-construct and introduce the authoritative leaders, functionaries and departments in Moscow involved in preparing the congress and, secondly, to discuss and evaluate the methods and strategies used by the Comintern in relation to this event. Above all, the discussion will be focused on why the Comintern decided to strengthen its control over the International Secretariat during this “third period”. In conclusion, a detailed study of the Frankfurt Congress and its proceedings will analyse how the LAI was forced to undergo a change at its second international congress in 1929.

The preparatory work for the congress was commenced at the same time in 1929 as the international communist movement was facing and dealing with considerable internal turbulence. As described in the previous chapter, the CPUSA fractional struggle was preoccupying the Comintern apparatus, and consumed much of the political and administrative strength at Comintern headquarters in Moscow. The conflict was a part of the ideological confusion which had evolved after the Sixth Comintern Congress, which had left both the communist parties and the mass and sympathising organisations feeling confused about how to act. For the LAI, with its ties to a communist movement that was subjecting itself to a new and more radicalised political discourse, colonial work was an issue which faced harsh scrutiny in 1929, especially in connection with Arnot’s investigation. Additionally, a series of other incidents and episodes placed extra

burdens upon the shoulders of an already troubled international communist movement. In 1928, the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union had resolved to put an end to the NEP policy, thus, in 1929; the Soviet state was rushing towards the realisation of a rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of its society. The economic drive of the first Five-Year-Plan (1928 – 1932) resulted in drastic societal consequences, characterised by widespread famine and a large-scale repression of its population. This was a vision supported by ideological conviction and moral impetus, endorsed by the Soviet top strata, with the Soviet state authorising and carrying out the persecution of specific social groups within the Soviet Union; e.g. the wealthy peasant class (*kulaks*) was labelled as enemies of the state. The *milieu* of antagonism was also looking inwards, with Bukharin's end as an influential ideological actor within the CPSU (B) and the Comintern in 1929 being a typical example.⁶⁹²

In Germany, the scandal of the “Wittorf Affair” in September 1928, exposed internal cracks within the KPD, including accusations of corruption and fractional struggle, matters which put the spotlight on the party leader, Ernst Thälmann. However, this “affair” did not cause any clear disruption in the relations between the KPD and the CPSU (B). According to Bert Hoppe, this affair signified the start of a stricter control by the Comintern apparatus over the ZK KPD, particularly once Stalin had decided to give Thälmann his personal support. The second episode was the May Day celebration in Berlin 1929, better known as “Berlin’s Bloody May” (*Berliner Blutmai*), a violent commotion for all to see on the streets of Berlin, which sent tremors throughout the German communist movement after 31 people were killed in the riots and 1,200 confined to prison.⁶⁹³ May Day was an event traditionally arranged under the patronage of the German trade unions and the SPD, which the KPD had chosen to support; however, in 1929, the political context in Germany had assumed a different character. According to the principles of “the new line”, as noted in the instructions from the ECCI to the KPD, the party was to organise an independent demonstration on 1 May: “this year the proletarian vanguard will have to break through the barbed-wire barriers which the bourgeoisie have erected to prevent the May Day celebrations. [...] the social democrats are doing everything to stop the workers from pouring into the streets on May Day [...] this year [is] one with the task of organising the struggle on the streets”.⁶⁹⁴ On 1 May, the Berlin police responded to the KPD’s demonstration with brute force, ending in increased

⁶⁹² The rush towards industrialization and collectivization in the Soviet Union and Bukharin’s fall from grace is outlined in, e.g. Acton & Stableford 2005, pp.263-329. Priestland’s analysis (2007) illustrates the mobilization of Soviet society to correspond with the expectations meted out by Stalin and his cohorts, while Fitzpatrick’s (1999) narrative provides an understanding of everyday life in Soviet society and Paul Hagenloh’s detailed study, *Stalin’s Police. Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2009) focuses on the repressive measures carried out by Soviet state authorities.

⁶⁹³ Hoppe 2007, pp.31-33, 141-146.

⁶⁹⁴ Prior to the May Day celebrations, the Berlin police had adopted a decree prohibiting the organising of public communist meetings. The motive for this was to restrict and avoid public disturbances, Degras vol.III 1965, p.26.

antagonism from the communists. The leader of the WEB in Berlin, “Felix”/Manuilsky, published a public protest on 5 May, “Aufruf des Westeuropäischen Büros der Kommunistischen Internationale zu den Berliner Ereignissen”, a document re-edited and published in *Inprecorr* on 7 July.⁶⁹⁵ “Berliner Blutmai” did not, however, stop the KPD from convening its Twelfth Party Congress in the working-class district of Wedding in Berlin on 5-10 May. In fact, this KPD congress was the final legal meeting of its kind during the Weimar years. At the congress, the KPD declared its solidarity with the Soviet Union and with Stalin’s leadership. Gross later wrote that Münzenberg had delivered a speech in salute of Stalin as the undisputed and ardent defender of socialism, stating how the KPD expected to follow “as one together with French communists, the English communists, with the Russian revolution, [...] in its support of Stalin’s leadership”.⁶⁹⁶

For Münzenberg, 1929 was a hectic year, characterised by an increased workload and continued antagonism from the SPD. The second international LAI congress was one of many projects on Münzenberg’s agenda, with other events, e.g. the “Anti-Fascist Congress”, being political projects of a similar magnitude, in which Münzenberg collaborated together with the WEB and Manuilsky in Berlin. Before this congress, for “conspiratorial reasons” (*aus konspirativen Gründen*) the organisers circulated a rumour that the congress would be convened in Brussels, not in Berlin. The primary aim for doing this was to cause confusion amongst the European national security services and within the socialist movement. According to the report of the ECCI Information Department in Moscow, completed after the congress on 25 April, those attending the “Anti-Fascist Congress” included 234 communists, 13 social democrats, 225 trade unionists, 4 anarchists and 55 non-party individuals.⁶⁹⁷ The German social democratic movement nevertheless tried to curtail Münzenberg’s enthusiasm, particularly the SPD leader Eugene Präger, who accused the “Münzenberg Konzern” of using dubious methods to conceal the LAI’s true nature as a centre for communist activities, with Münzenberg’s LAI contacts being an obvious

⁶⁹⁵ RGASPI 499/1/14, 1-3, Aufruf des Westeuropäischen Büros der Kommunistischen Internationale zu den Berliner Ereignissen, Brüssel, den 5 Mai 1929, WEB Büro der Kommunistischen Internationale; Degras vol.III 1965, 23-27. On July 7, *Inprecorr* (No.22, p.473) published a manifesto, signed by the WEB, in response to the bloody May Day demonstrations. The WEB declared its “Solidarity with the German Workers” and accused the “social democratic Chief of Police”, Karl Zörgiebel, of having sanctioned the use of violence against the demonstration: “For several days, police gangs made brutal attacks on the working class population, they opened fire on houses without the least provocation, armoured motorcars endangered the streets, they used their rifles against the wives and mothers of the workers standing on the balconies, they pursued passers-by and brutally ill-treated them. The modern achievements of military technique; armoured cars, aeroplanes, searchlights were brought into play to restore law and order in the rebellious districts. This was the revenge of the Berlin social democrats for the loss of workers’ votes at the recent factory council elections”. For the quote above, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/18, 13-15 (copy of the article).

⁶⁹⁶ Gross 1967, p.220; Degras vol. III 1965, p.28.

⁶⁹⁷ Count Michael Karolyi, Fritz Heckert and Ledebour delivered speeches at this congress. After the congress, Münzenberg observed that the event had been a demonstration of how syndicalist, anarchist, social democratic, pacifist, democratic groups and left-wing radicals could unite into an anti-fascist movement, fol. RGASPI 495/33/203, 107, Informationsabteilung des EKKI, Bericht Nr.812, Moscow, 25/4-1929; RGASPI 495/33/203, 131-178, Report on the Anti-Fascist Congress in Berlin, Information Department of the ECCI, 27/4-1929; Degras vol.III 1965, p.23, 26.

example of this. Präger's criticism was an expression of the SPD-organised anti-communist campaign in 1929, referred to as "Gegen die Kommunisten" (*Against the Communists*) and "Gegen Moskau" (*Against Moscow*), which strove to disrupt the KPD's political arena in Germany. Münzenberg chose to give Präger an explanation, declaring that his position within the LAI was in the role of a "secretary", not as a representative for the IAH, but rather as a representative of the KPD in his capacity as M.d.R [Mitglied des Reichstag]. In conclusion, the LAI Executive had complete control over the organisation.⁶⁹⁸

It was the political impact and longevity of the Meerut Conspiracy Trial in India, however, which became the centrepiece of LAI propaganda in 1929, particularly for the British LAI Section. The Meerut trial was the result of the British colonial authorities in India deciding to arrest thirty-one leaders of the Indian labour movement in March, charged with conspiracy against the King. This trial would assume both a symbolic and a huge role in developing the activities for the anti-imperialist movement in both Europe and India. According to Milton Israel, the Meerut trial resembled a remedial response by the British mandate in the Indian Raj to "obtain maximum propaganda advantage for its anti-communist, anti-terrorist campaign" with the arrest of well-known left-wing activists, communists, trade unionists and members of the INC. What was the background leading up to these arrests? The cotton mill industry in India was experiencing an extensive and protracted strike which had lasted about six months. In March 1929, the *Millowners' Association* in Bombay and Calcutta had no other option than to appeal to the British government "to rid them of the nuisance" caused by the strike.⁶⁹⁹ Once news of the arrests had begun to circulate, Bridgeman contacted Münzenberg on 20 March, to inform him that the British LAI Section had addressed the question at a special session in London, with a decision having been made to publish a public protest in "the press" against the British authorities in India. Additionally, in India, Nehru contacted Chatto as well as Bridgeman with the request to see whether it would be possible to organise solidarity demonstrations in the German and British trade unions in support of their fellow Indian colleagues.⁷⁰⁰ Münzenberg passed on this intelligence from Bridgeman to Kuusinen, promising that the LAI aimed to establish "a large campaign" in Europe "in support of the arrested". Once the Eastern Secretariat had approved the idea and co-ordinated the details of

⁶⁹⁸ Willi Münzenberg, "Unser Konzern I", in *Der Rote Aufbau*, II. Jahrg., Berlin, Juli 1929, pp.97-107; Gross 1967, p.211; TNA PRO KV2/772, Secret information regarding W. Münzenberg, 25/9-1929.

⁶⁹⁹ Israel 1994, p.261; Spratt 1955, pp.47-58; John Saville, "The Meerut Trial, 1929-1933, in *Dictionary of Labour Biography. Volume VII*, Bellamy & Saville (eds.) Macmillan Press, London, 1984, pp.84-90. Spratt was one of the arrested.

⁷⁰⁰ RGASPI 542/1/33, 6, ("Übersetzung") Letter from R. Bridgeman, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 23/3-1929. For Nehru's letter to Chatto (June 20, 1929), see Israel (1994, p.261). According to Nehru, the "Meerut Conspiracy Trial" forced the British populace to recognise the extent of the LAI's influence in India, but the LAI propaganda had also "frightened away the timid folk of the TUC". For Nehru, the Meerut trial was a case that offered an opportunity to develop contacts with and use the LAI to create anti-colonial propaganda, contacting, for example, Bridgeman to suggest the organisation of solidarity demonstrations in London to declare its support for the Indian workers'.

the campaign with the International Secretariat, Münzenberg expected to locate the centre for the Meerut conspiracy trial campaign in London, under the leadership of Maxton and Bridgeman. In Germany, the International Secretariat intended to collect signatures from prominent left-wing intellectuals in support of the campaign.⁷⁰¹ The socio-political setting at the beginning of 1929, right up until the opening of the second LAI congress in July, was not comparable to the situation in 1926-27 and, most importantly of all; the road to the Frankfurt Congress began and ended in Moscow.

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Mobilising the Structure: Institutional and Individual Actors

The concept of the second LAI congress evolved around three particular factors: time, location and the invention of a strategy to maintain control. On 8 February, the Political Secretariat held a meeting to discuss when the LAI congress should convene, proposing to Münzenberg, who was attending the meeting in Moscow, that 21-31 July was a possible date.⁷⁰² Vague directives and opinions on behalf of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters during the initial phase of preparing the LAI Congress, contributed to the characterization of the second LAI congress as “a work in progress”. Thus, it is of the utmost relevance to delineate a series of chronological events linked to the organisation of this congress:

Enquiry from Arnot to Münzenberg	10 December 1928
Letter from Arnot to Kuusinen	16 January 1929
Approval of the Political Secretariat	8 February 1929
Meeting of the “Eastern Secretariat Commission of the LAI”	30 March 1929
First meeting of the “Commission on the LAI”	3 May 1929
Second meeting of the “Commission on the LAI”	22 May 1929
Meeting of the “Sub-committee”	5 June 1929
Third (extended) meeting of the “Commission on the LAI”	18 June 1929
Meeting of the ECCI Standing Commission	6 July 1929
Tenth ECCI Plenum, Moscow	3-19 July 1929
Meeting of the LAI Executive, Frankfurt am Main	20 July 1929
Second International Congress Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, Frankfurt am Main	21-28 July 1929

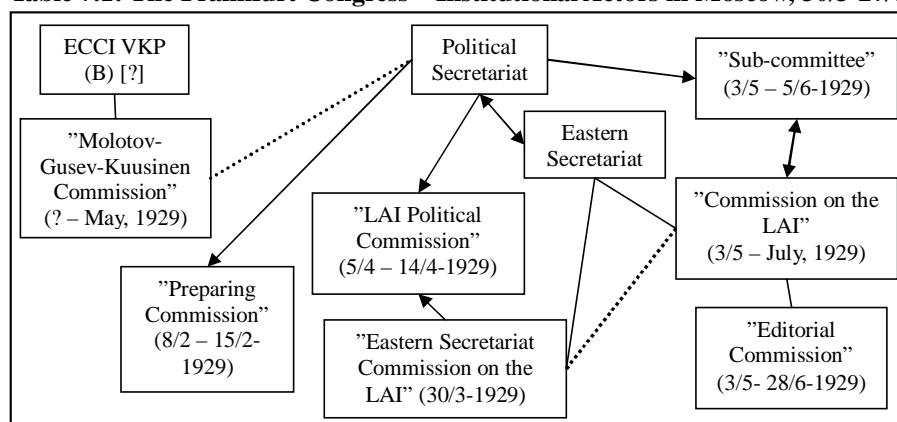
The dates above represent the chronological structure of the congress, also indicating that the preparatory work was not a static process, but rather an interactionist process focused on

⁷⁰¹ On March 20, the British LAI Section decided to release a manifesto demanding that every British labour organisation express sympathy for the Meerut prisoners, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 25-26, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 25/3-1929.

⁷⁰² RGASPI 495/3/89, 365, Protocol from a meeting of the Polit-Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 8/2-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Petrovsky, Münzenberg, Bell, Pollitt, Gusev, Chitarow, Heller, Melnitschansky, Figatner, Gerich and Heimo. For a copy of the protocol (English translation), see fol. RGASPI 495/20/722, 45-46.

developing correlating relationships. From here, we need to discover how and when the actors, individuals and departments at Comintern headquarters became involved in the preparations for the LAI congress, with a number of different commissions being established on the initiative of the Political Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow. The organisational procedure followed its own inherent logic, determined by the hierarchies of relations within the Comintern apparatus, an evaluation which focused on discerning the direction of the communications links (decisions, directives and assignments) within the structure. Additionally, this also discloses the interactionism, relations and authority between the actors from top to bottom and from bottom to top during the preparation of the second LAI congress.⁷⁰³ Below are two tables which illustrate the links and ties in this process. The first table, “The Second LAI Congress: Institutional Actors”, focuses on the hierarchical relations between various commissions and some of the secretariats within the Comintern, while the second table, “The Nerve Centre: The ‘Commission on the LAI’ and the ‘Sub-Committee’”, focuses its attention on the individual members within the commissions. The tables also mention the duration of the commissions (as far as it has been possible to do so), with arrows defining the direction of the links of communication from a hierarchical perspective. For example, the “Sub-Committee” had an authoritative position over the “Commission on the LAI”, however, the “Sub-Committee” had to carry out the directives of the Political Secretariat or the Small Commission. Dotted lines denote either an unverified tie, e.g. the link between the Political Secretariat and the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission”, or a process of transformation, e.g. the “Eastern Secretariat Commission on the LAI” and the “Commission on the LAI”,

Table 7.1: The Frankfurt Congress – Institutional Actors in Moscow, 30/3-27/6-1929



⁷⁰³ The empirical sources, documents filed in a dossier in the *fond* “Raznye komissii IKKI” (*ECCI Temporary Commissions*), consisting of protocols, drafts of resolutions and correspondence, illustrate every step of the political and organisational preparations and, above all, the fact that the preparatory work was an undertaking contrived, administered and put into practice at Comintern headquarters.

In total, six commissions and one committee assisted with the work of planning and preparing the LAI congress, at various stages along the way.⁷⁰⁴ The “Commission on the LAI”, despite being located lower down in the hierarchy, was the operative centre in the direction of the administrative and political work, e.g. the gathering of intelligence, the co-ordination of those responsible for completing the agenda and resolutions for the congress, and the budget. A dotted line between the “Eastern Secretariat Commission on the LAI” and the “Commission on the LAI” suggests a transformation, at some stage, between these two commissions. On 3 May, the Eastern Secretariat received an instruction from the Political Secretariat to establish the “Commission on the LAI” to direct the preparatory work of the congress, while the “Eastern Secretariat Commission on the LAI” was to function as a consultative, temporary commission laying down the theoretical foundation for the event in March 1929. The “Commission on the LAI” had Arnot as leader, working together with Kuusinen, Wassiljew, the German communist Arthur Ewert, the functionary of the CPSU (B) Yuriy Petrovich Figatner (1889-1937)⁷⁰⁵ and the Profintern delegate Josefovitsch. The “Sub-Committee” represented an authoritative organ over the “Commission on the LAI”, as well as functioning as its communicative link to the Political Secretariat. The primary function of the “Sub-Committee” was to assess and discuss the work carried out by both the “Commission on the LAI” and the “Editorial Commission”.⁷⁰⁶ The members of this committee were authoritative actors within the Comintern apparatus: Piatnitsky, Arnot (re-assigned in May), Melnitschansky, the Profintern delegate, Johnson, and Bittelman (as Arnot’s replacement).⁷⁰⁷

Secrecy still surrounds the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission”. On 3 January 1929, Arnot told Münzenberg to get in contact with “the commission” in Moscow if he wanted additional information on its attitude towards the LAI congress. The question is, however, whether Arnot was referring here to the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen” commission. The fact that the “Commission on the LAI” did not exist at this time does suggest that he was referring either to the “Eastern Secretariat Commission on the LAI” or to the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission”. Additionally, on May 9, Arnot mentioned the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission” in a letter to “Max” [Petrovsky], telling him that the “commission is nearly at an end”.⁷⁰⁸ However, it is also possible that this commission was devoting itself to solving the fractional struggle of the CPUSA;

⁷⁰⁴ The analysis of the protocols of the “Commission on the LAI”, the Small Commission, the Standing Commission and the Political Secretariat discloses the hierarchical position of the individuals, located either in commissions or committees.

⁷⁰⁵ “Figatner, Yuriy Petrovich”, in Schulz, Urban & Lebed (eds.), 1972, p.165.

⁷⁰⁶ The “Commission on the LAI” knew of the “Sub-Committee”, although it is plausible to assume that the committee did not inform the commission of their discussions. Furthermore, the “Editorial Commission” was a sub-section of the “Commission on the LAI”; see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 37, Minutes of the organisation sub-committee for the preparation of the LAI congress, Moscow, 5/6-1929.

⁷⁰⁷ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of meeting of Commission of the LAI, Moscow, 3/5-1929.

⁷⁰⁸ RGASPI 542/1/30, 1, (Handwritten) Letter from Robin Page Arnot, Frankfurt a/M, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 3/1-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 40, Note from R.P. Arnot, Moscow, to “Max”/Petrovsky, Moscow, 9/5-1929.

yet, at the same time, it is also possible that Molotov, Gusev and Kuusinen were assisting in formulating the ideological strategy of the LAI Congress as well as that of the “Colonial Conference”. The “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission” probably had information on the status of the colonial work within the communist movement in 1929, especially if one considers the intimate collaboration between Arnot and Kuusinen, thus, this does suggest the following assumption: that the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission” was the link to Stalin on matters relating to the LAI and its second congress, particularly if one takes into account the fact that Molotov had an informal, yet authoritative position within the Comintern in 1929, acting *incognito* as the Chairman of the Comintern after the Sixth Comintern Congress, later described as “Stalin’s lieutenant” within the ECCI. Moreover, Sergei Ivanovich Gusev (1874 – 1933, known pseudonym: Travin), was the representative of the RCP (B) [CPSU (B)] within the ECCI.⁷⁰⁹ Thus, whether or not the “Molotov-Gusev-Kuusinen Commission” ever discussed or assisted in the process of preparing the LAI Congress, it is logical to suggest that this commission was the communicative channel to Stalin on LAI matters.

The “Preparatory Commission” existed for only a week. According to the Political Secretariat’s instructions, the primary purpose of this commission was to evaluate the ideological tendency within the LAI, determine the geographical spread of the organisation in order to decide upon “tasks, necessary measures that need to be taken in preparing the congress, date of congress, resolutions and so forth”.⁷¹⁰ Kuusinen acted as leader who, together with Münzenberg, Petrovsky, Lozovsky, the KIM representative Rafael Moiseevich Khitarov, Gusev, Piatnitsky and Josefovitsch assessed the nature of the LAI.⁷¹¹ Furthermore, the “LAI Political Commission” was a plenipotentiary constellation which aimed “to enforce” the Political Secretariat’s dictates on the non-communist members of the LAI Executive, especially on the question of the congress agenda. Arnot was the leader of this commission, assisted by Münzenberg, Bittelman, Melnitschansky as well as the Polish communist and Profintern representative Vitkovsky (real name: Adam Landy-Witkowski; 1891 – 1937).⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁹ For Gusev, see Lazitch 1986, pp.160-161. For Molotov’s role in the Comintern, see Rosenfeldt 2009, p.203 and Derek Watson, *Molotov. A Biography*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p.86. Molotov became a member of the ECCI in 1926.

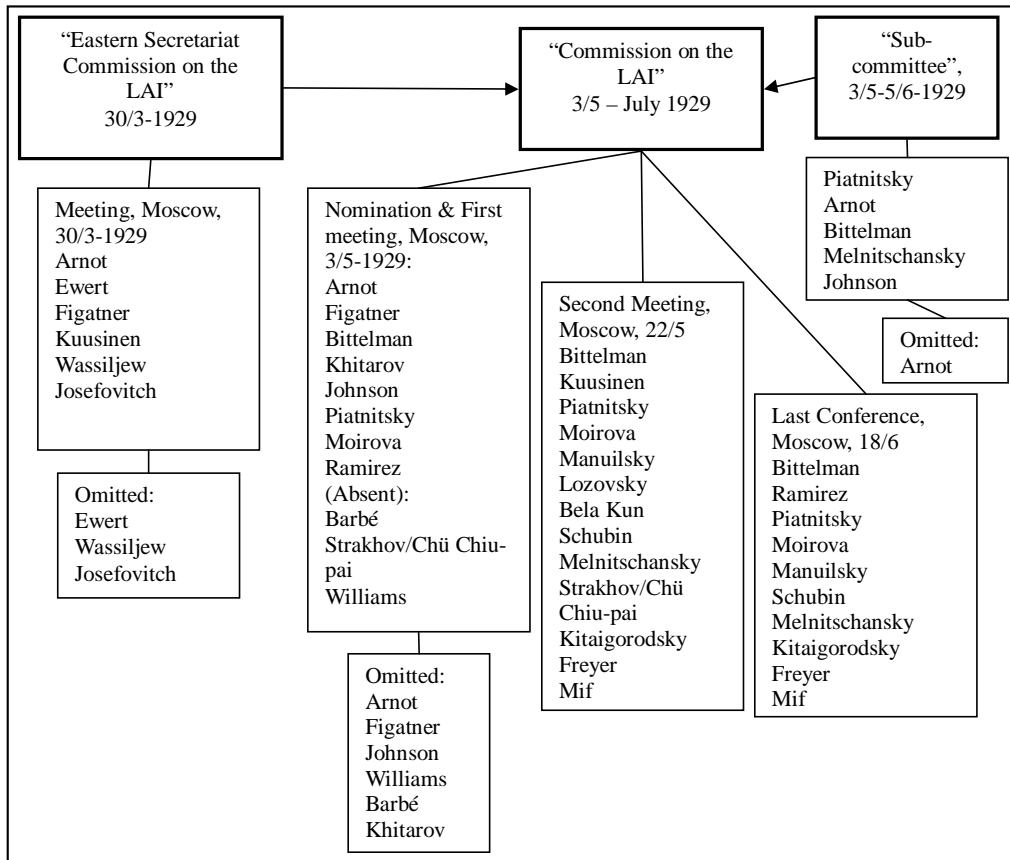
⁷¹⁰ RGASPI 495/3/86, 54, Protokoll No.22 der Sitzung des Politsekrt. am Freitag, Moscow, 8/2-1929. Present at the meeting were: Barbé, Chitarow, Ulbricht, Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Humbert-Droz, Lozovsky, Gusev, Ewert, Bela Kun, Kolarev, Moirova, Schubin, Heimo, Wassiljew, Wurm, Martinov, Mif, Münzenberg, Misiano, Stasova and Wolfe.

⁷¹¹ “Khitarov, Rafail Moiseyevich (1901 – ?)” in Schulz, Urban & Andrew I. Lebed (eds.) 1972, p.269. Ralph Talcott Fisher, Jr.’s study of the Komsomol states that Khitarov was a stern believer in enforcing the policy of “class against class” in 1929. For example, Khitarov “completely renovated” the KIM leadership in Germany, and had publicly renounced Trotsky and the United Opposition in 1928-29, Ralph Talcott Fisher, Jr., *Pattern for Soviet Youth. A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918-1954*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959, p.177.

⁷¹² RGASPI 495/20/722, 26-27, Preparations for the Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League meeting in Moscow, Polit. Secretariat, 5/4-1929.

Despite its short existence, the “Commission on the LAI” nevertheless faced a frequent interchange of its members, relying extensively on instructions from the “Sub-Committee”, comprising Arnot, Bittelman, Khitarov, Figatner, Johnson, Piatnitsky, the representative of the Russian “International Secretariat for Work Among Women” Varvara Akimovna Moirova and the Mexican communist leader Manuel Diaz Ramirez.⁷¹³

Table 7.2: The Nerve Centre: The “Commission on the LAI” and the “Sub-Committee”



Twenty-eight individuals at the headquarters of the Comintern were, at some stage, involved in preparing the LAI congress, an organisational structure focusing on factors such as obedience, dependency and the flexibility of the Comintern apparatus. For the Comintern, the second LAI congress was a pivotal event for the colonial issue within the international communist movement. The question is how and why did this come to be so? Furthermore, under what pretext did the commissions in Moscow develop a strategy to control the congress, and why did the decision-makers deliberately endorse turning the LAI congress into a scene of political controversy?

⁷¹³ “Moyrova, Varvara Akimovna (1890 – 1951)”, in Schulz, Urban & Lebed (eds.) 1972, pp.397-398.

At the International Secretariat in Berlin, the political and administrative space had become a place of restriction as a result of the increased Comintern control, particularly in relation to getting involved in preparations for the congress. Yet, in the beginning of 1929, before the preparatory work had even started in Moscow, the Eastern Secretariat still had no idea of the size and scope of either the LAI or its transcontinental network.

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Theoretical Ramifications and Practical Implications

The Political Secretariat wanted Münzenberg “to provide more detailed information on the representation [of the LAI] in various countries”. This intelligence was behind the decision to grant the LAI permission to convene either a large congress or a smaller conference. At the meeting on 8 February, Petrovsky nonetheless objected to the idea of arranging a LAI congress on 21-30 July, suggesting putting everything on hold *ad infinitum* in order to gain time to analyse the character of the global anti-imperialist movement, as well as the organisational spread of the LAI.⁷¹⁴ For Münzenberg, the instruction from the Political Secretariat meant that there was a need to establish a clear understanding of the LAI’s transcontinental contacts.

Münzenberg returned to Berlin after completing the work with the “Preparatory Commission” in Moscow and, together with Chatto, examined a document listing the affiliated or associated organisations which the International Secretariat had drawn up in December 1928.⁷¹⁵ Rather quickly Münzenberg and Chatto realised that the document was not representative nor, for that matter, was it adequate to meet the expectations of either the Eastern Secretariat or the Political Secretariat, particularly as the document did not include any contacts with national revolutionary trade unions in the colonies. Thus, by mid-February, they had completed a new document, “Kurze Übersicht über die Tätigkeit des Internationalen Sekretariats, der Sektionen und angeschlossenen Sektionen” (*A Short Outline of the Activity of the International Secretariat, the Sections and Affiliated Members*) depicting the entire scope of the LAI and its transcontinental network. According to Münzenberg and Chatto, the Eastern Secretariat should approach the report from a quantitative perspective, bearing in mind that the LAI by now had 204 “affiliated, associated and sympathising organisations” as members.⁷¹⁶ This report arrived in Moscow in March, and was the

⁷¹⁴ RGASPI 495/20/722, 22, Protocol from a meeting with the Political Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 8/2-1929; For Petrovsky’s point of view, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/86, 174, Vorschläge des Genossen Petrovsky, Moscow, 8/2-1929; RGASPI 495/18/740, 4, An den Genossen Münzenberg: Die Beschlüsse über Kolliga lauten, Moscow, Political Secretariat, February, 1929.

⁷¹⁵ RGASPI 542/1/26, 99-102, Liga gegen Imperialismus. Angeschlossene und sympathisierende Organisationen, December, 1928; RGASPI 542/1/26, 74-87.

⁷¹⁶ In December 1928, the International Secretariat completed the first draft of the list, see RGASPI 542/1/26, 99-102.

fundamental source which shaped the basic structure of the congress. From Münzenberg's perspective, the report was a statement expressly urging the decision-makers in Moscow to understand that the International Secretariat nourished the ambition to organise an impressive anti-imperialist congress. Hence, this required the Comintern to be willing to provide financial support, Münzenberg concluded. In the "temporary budget", compiled by Münzenberg and despatched to Kuusinen on 18 March, Münzenberg expected the Comintern to finance the travel expenses for colonial delegations, the printing of congress material and to fund public LAI meetings in Europe and USA prior to the congress. Additional costs were administrative costs (food, printed material, telegrams, opening ceremony and unforeseen expenses) and the establishment of an administrative apparatus (interpreters, press agency, congress secretariat and protocol bureau) in connection with the congress.⁷¹⁷

The report drawn up by Münzenberg and Chatto indicates that the LAI had connections with organisations and individuals around the world: India, Goa, Ceylon, the British Mandate in Afghanistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Persia, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, North Africa, South Africa, Mexico, the Caribbean, Latin and South America, USA, Great Britain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Soviet Russia and Switzerland. With reference to China, the LAI had not succeeded in establishing any activity; however, its contacts with India looked far more promising. The connection between Chatto and Nehru was a channel into the INC, while the *Independence for India League*, as well as the communist *Workers' and Peasants' Party*, were distributing LAI propaganda in India. LAI contacts with the Indonesian liberation movement went primarily through Hatta and the PI in Europe; however, the International Secretariat had also provided financial support to print a Malaysian version of the LAI newsletter, *Pressdienst*, in the Dutch Indies in 1929. The LAI had few but "stable relations" in the Middle East and North Africa, e.g. Soubri, the leader of the socialist-biased *Arab National Congress*, had attended the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne in January, and intended to send a delegation to the congress. Chedli, the leader of the *Étoile Nord-Africaine*, was an "active representative" of the LAI in North Africa. However, the International Secretariat was awaiting some kind of response from the Egyptian nationalist organisation, *Wafd*, to its invitation to affiliate with the LAI. Gumede and the ANC maintained steady relations with the International Secretariat after the Brussels Congress and, across the Atlantic, LAI connections in Latin America were essentially focused on Mexico, relying on the capacity of three people: Federico Bach, Rivera, and the leader of the Mexican nationalist

The revised version was finished in February 1929, see IISG, 3392.1 LAI Collection, p.128, Affiliated, Associated and Sympathising Organisations. While the introduction in these documents is the same, the February version included more organisations.

⁷¹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/30, 21, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 18/3-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 22-23, Provisorisches Budget Antiimperialistischer Weltkongress, March, 1929.

army Augustino Sandino. In “the leading imperialist countries” in Europe (France and Great Britain) and the USA, the LAI sections acted as liaison centres for the anti-imperialist movement while, at the same time, co-ordinating and developing propaganda against imperialism. In the USA, from December 1928 till January 1929, the LAI section organised public rallies in New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Washington, with a focus on a number of issues, e.g. Johnstone’s arrest in India and Italy (see previous chapter), the “treatment of 1,400 banana workers’ in Columbia, the “imperialist co-operation” of the USA and Great Britain in Latin America, the “Nicaragua-Politics” of the USA and the murder of Julio A. Mella in Mexico. In Europe, the French LAI Section was a source of trouble for the International Secretariat, a result of the severe surveillance by the *Sûreté*.⁷¹⁸ *Pressedienst* introduced additional LAI contacts on 26 March, 1929, e.g. the *Philippine Workers’ Party*, *Philippine Peasants’ Association*, the leader of the *National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association* in Great Britain Alex Gossip, the *War Veterans’ International*, the *Teachers’ International* (“Bildungsarbeiter”) and the *Religious Socialist Association*, while the Sportintern was planning to send a delegation to the congress.⁷¹⁹ On 29 December 1928, Münzenberg and Chatto contacted the Secretariat of the Sportintern in Moscow, requesting “a big delegation [...] we expect a minimum of 10 men”. On 20 February 1929, the ECCI Standing Commission endorsed this request.⁷²⁰ Sportintern was only one of many mass and sympathising organisations Münzenberg wanted to invite to the congress, along with the *Friends of Soviet Russia*, the IAH, Profintern, the KIM and the Krestintern.⁷²¹ The reason for involving these organisations was also to enable Münzenberg to use their networks. For example, Münzenberg wondered whether the general secretary of the Krestintern, Kornblum, would consider sending a delegation and, more importantly, be willing to spread the word on the LAI and its congress through the Krestintern network.⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/29, 65-71, Kurze Übersicht über die Tätigkeit des Internationalen Sekretariats der Sektionen und angeschlossenen Sektionen, Berlin, February, 1929.

⁷¹⁹ On 26 March, *Pressedienst* included the advertisement for the congress (in German): “Die Vorbereitungen zum antiimperialistischen Weltkongress (Anko). Welch großes Interesse für den Weltkongress, der im Juli in Paris stattfinden soll, vorhanden ist, beweisen die Anmeldungen der verschiedenen Organisationen, die bereits vorliegen. Sowohl aus den Kolonien wie auch aus den imperialistischen Ländern laufen Berichte von Versammlungen ein, in denen die Sendung von Delegierten beraten wurde. In letzter Zeit meldeten sich zur Teilnahme am Kongress folgende Organisationen an: Philippinische Arbeiter-Partei, Philippinischer Bauernverband, Möbelarbeiterverband Großbritanniens (N.A.F.T.A.), Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner, Internationale der Bildungsarbeiter, Rote Sportinternationale und der Verband der religiösen Sozialisten“, *Pressedienst*, Berlin, Nr. 12, 26/3-1929.

⁷²⁰ RGASPI 495/7/6, 82, (Copie-Abschrift) Letter from Münzenberg and Chatto, Berlin, to Sportintern Secretariat, Moscow, 29/12-1928; RGASPI 495/7/6, 60-62, Protokoll No.30 der ständigen Kommission des Politsekr. des. EKKI, Moscow, 20/2-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Ulbricht, Bell, Heimo, Kachan, Barbé, Lebedewa, Kirsanova and Michael E. Kreps.

⁷²¹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 22-23, Provisorisches Budget Antiimperialistischer Weltkongress, March 1929.

⁷²² Münzenberg wanted Kornblum to confirm that he had received the congress invitation and whether the Krestintern would be able to send a “large delegation” to the congress, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 1, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum, the Krestintern secretariat, Moscow, 27/2-1929; RGASPI 535/1/212, 3, Letter from Münzenberg,

LAI connections with both North Africa and South Africa were strong in comparison to the weak, almost non-existent contacts with organisations and individuals in Equatorial Africa. In an effort to solve this dilemma, Münzenberg instructed Olive Budden at the British LAI Section in London in February to listen to Arnot's advice on the African question as he had "entered into communication with [...] representatives from West Africa". Hence, it was crucial for the LAI to continue its work to ensure that the West African contacts attended the congress.⁷²³

By mid-April, the International Secretariat had a list of 250 delegates from different social, political and cultural organisations in Europe and the USA who were planning to attend the congress. Delegates from the colonies and semi-colonies, e.g. ten delegates from India, fifteen Indonesians, ten Latin American delegates and fifteen delegates from Negro organisations had declared an intention to visit the congress. On 25 April, *Pressedienst* stated:

The Second World Congress of the LAI will become the largest anti-imperialist demonstration ever [...] to manifest the genuine front struggle, uniting revolutionary workers' organisations in the capitalist countries with national revolutionary movements in the colonial and semi-colonial world [...] To expose the need to fight against Imperialism, and connect the national revolutionary struggle [...] to establish a strong national revolutionary movement.⁷²⁴

The LAI's transcontinental network was the result of individual connections administered at the International Secretariat, an undertaking under Chatto's supervision. However, shortly after Münzenberg's return from Moscow in February, Chatto informed Münzenberg that he would not be able to carry out the work demanded of him due to poor health, offering to resign as "International political secretary", a request Münzenberg nevertheless turned down. Yet, in February, Chatto left Germany in order to recover his strength, travelling to Brussels where he remained for a couple of months. What was the reason for Chatto's health problems and his sudden distress? These were essentially of a personal nature as, after Chatto had separated from his fiancée Agnes Smedley in 1928 and she had left for China in January 1929, Chatto suffered a nervous breakdown. Another factor contributing to Chatto's distress was the constant surveillance by the *Schutzpolizei* in Berlin. British security services had also sent a request to German authorities to monitor Chatto's activities in Berlin. Hence, this surveillance had forced Chatto to

Berlin to the Krestintern secretariat, Moscow, 21/3-1929; RGASPI 535/1/212, 6-7, Letter from Willi Münzenberg to Kornblum of the Krestintern in Moscow, 17/4-1929.

⁷²³ TNA KV2/1783, (Intercepted) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Budden, London, February 1929. Olive Budden was married to Robin Page Arnot; see Nigel West, *MASK: MI5's Penetration of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, Routledge, London, 2005, p.95.

⁷²⁴ *Pressedienst*, "Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus", Nr.13, 18/4-1929; *Pressedienst*, Nr. 15, 25/4-1929. Arnot also included a reference to 250 delegates in his report on the LAI Executive meeting in Amsterdam, see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of Commission of the LAI meeting, Moscow, 3/5-1929.

move to new lodgings in Berlin on a regular basis. On 23 January 1929, Chatto described his living conditions in a letter to Nehru:

My health has been causing me some anxiety [...] There are also a number of private difficulties of long standing with which I have to contend, and the fact that my position in Berlin was desperate [...] I am now living under my own name, but find that this causes me innumerable difficulties with Governments. The French have now refused to give me a visa.⁷²⁵

After Chatto had left Berlin, A. C. N. Nambiar assumed authority over the co-ordination and supervision of the activities of the “Indian Bureau” (see previous chapter). Chatto’s brief sojourn in Brussels lasted until the end of March, after which he returned to Berlin,⁷²⁶ however, he had to hide in a clandestine way in order to avoid the attention of the police.

Chatto’s temporary resignation caused confusion. As Münzenberg suspected that Chatto would be unable to carry out any work for the International Secretariat for an indefinite amount of time, the Political Secretariat had to appoint a suitable replacement, e.g. Bittelman, Emile Burns “or another candidate”. On 27 February, Münzenberg informed Kuusinen that Burns was the best candidate to assume Chatto’s position. Apparently, Münzenberg had met Burns at the International Secretariat in February and had asked him whether he would consider assisting the LAI in Berlin. For Münzenberg, Burns’ linguistic skills had convinced him that he was the most appropriate person, particularly as Burns spoke and read German, French, English and Russian fluently. Münzenberg nevertheless suggested, in order to appease the Central Committee of the CPGB, that Kuusinen should send a letter giving the impression that Münzenberg had not “simply stolen” Burns. In fact, Kuusinen should instruct the CPGB Secretariat in London that Burns’ “temporary” mission in Berlin was to assist the LAI with the preparation of its second congress.⁷²⁷

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⁷²⁵ RGASPI 542/1/30, 18, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 27/2-1929; Barooah 2003, p.254, 278, see footnote 38. This letter from Chatto to Nehru is located at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India.

⁷²⁶ According to Israel, Chatto suspected the British Government of pressuring the Belgian authorities to expel him from the country, Israel 1994, p.260.

⁷²⁷ RGASPI 542/1/30, 18, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 27/2-1929. The Colonial Commission of the CPGB approved the request to send Burns (together with his wife Eleanor) to Berlin to work at the International Secretariat on April 15. However, with Burns temporarily gone, the CPGB had to “strengthen [the] London Committee of the LAI”, nominating Nora Thomas from Hackney to act as secretary in the London office, see RGASPI 495/18/670, 97-98. In November 1932, Burns wrote his “Biography” (filed in his personal file in the Comintern Archive): “Germany (Berlin) in 1929, as one of the secretaries of the League against Imperialism (helping to organise the Frankfurt Congress of the League)”, see fol. RGASPI 495/198/11, 64-68, Biography of Emile Burns, author: Emile Burns, 11/1-1932.

The “Provisional Agenda”: Coercion and Staging the Plot

We were similarly successful with other changes. I will now take the Agenda point by point and show what the alterations are.

Arnot to the “Commission on the LAI”,
Moscow, 3/5-1929

Although Münzenberg had sent the list of LAI-affiliated organisations to the Eastern Secretariat, the preparatory work in Moscow was still up in the air. In the beginning of March, the only confirmed question was the date of the congress. For the International Secretariat, beginning the work of sending out information as well as propaganda about the congress was now top priority. Hence, the International Secretariat took the decision, under Münzenberg’s supervision, to circulate a “provisional agenda”, an unsanctioned initiative which resulted in the Eastern Secretariat accusing Münzenberg of negligence. Firstly, Münzenberg should have consulted the Eastern Secretariat prior to releasing the agenda and, secondly, the circulation of a “provisional agenda” was an ill-conceived act. Apparently, the release of the agenda placed the preparatory work under the authority of the Eastern Secretariat and, later, the “Commission on the LAI”. It was a question of control and coercion, with the decision-makers in Moscow striving to correct any behaviour which contradicted the intentions of the Comintern. This episode of the “provisional agenda” indicates that Comintern headquarters categorised its relation with the International Secretariat as secondary, with the release of the agenda precipitating the need to curtail any future, independent activity of the LAI apparatus in Berlin prior to the LAI congress. Why was this “provisional agenda” such a controversy?

The idea of a “provisional agenda” had been on the table since 1928. On 14 April 1928, the LAI Executive had endorsed the International Secretariat's proposal to locate the second LAI congress in Paris. Nevertheless, the International Secretariat had waited until September to release a circular letter⁷²⁸ informing the national sections and affiliated members (organisations, committees, individual members and sympathising *friends* [Freunde]) of this decision. The crux of the matter was that neither the Eastern Secretariat nor the Political Secretariat had approved the idea of locating the congress in Paris. When Münzenberg left Moscow in February 1929, the only thing he knew for certain was the date for the congress, while waiting to get the preparatory work under way. For the International Secretariat, the preparations had to commence at once in February and, aside from completing the list of affiliated organisations in Berlin, Chatto assisted

⁷²⁸ RGASPI 542/1/27, 16-28, Protokoll der Sitzung des Exekutiv Komitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus am 28 April 1928 nachmittags 2.30 in Brüssel; IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/66, An alle nationale Sektionen der Liga gegen Imperialismus, International Secretariat, Berlin, September, 1928.

Münzenberg in writing and beginning to send out invitations to the congress along with the “provisional agenda”. For example, the invitation and agenda reached both Kornblum, the KPD representative in the ECCI Walter Ulbricht, and the delegates of the *Chinese Labour Association* (Chinesischen Gewerkschaftsbundes) in Moscow.⁷²⁹ The leader of the *West African Farmers’ Union* (WAFU) in the Gold Coast I. K. Mensah, the South African nationalist organisation *Lekhotla la Bafo* (Sesotho for “Council of Commoners”) and its general secretary Maphutseng Lefela, as well as Carl Lindhagen also received invitations.⁷³⁰ By addressing the agenda as “provisional”, Münzenberg and Chatto had nevertheless acted with caution. Yet in the end, this was not enough to curb the irritated reaction amongst the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in Moscow. Realising that the International Secretariat had circulated a “provisional agenda”, the “Eastern Secretariat Commission on the LAI” suspected that this operation had been entirely planned by Münzenberg, requesting that the Political Secretariat “reprimand Comrade Münzenburg [sic]”:

[...] he sent out without previous consultation an agenda which opens up considerable political dangers, especially the preponderance of speakers of an anti-Communist colour (Cook, Dr. Pickens, etc.): and to warn him that any further instance of indiscipline will be more severely dealt with.⁷³¹

The public release of this “provisional agenda” literally infuriated the Eastern Secretariat, which stated that Münzenberg had shown poor political judgement in acting without permission. The Political Secretariat observed how the agenda, in general, exposed an “anti-communist colour”, thus, Münzenberg had deserved the personal warning. In April, at a meeting of the LAI Executive

⁷²⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA I 6/3/185, 10, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Ulbricht, Hotel Lux/Moscow, 14/3-1929. Ulbricht was the KPD representative in the ECCI from December 1928 to December 1929; see Mario Frank, *Walter Ulbricht. Eine deutsche Biographie*, Siedler Verlag, Berlin, 2001, p.78; RGASPI 535/1/212, 1, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum/Krestintern, Moscow, 27/2-1929; RGASPI 542/1/33, 5, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Sekretariat des Chinesischen Gewerkschaftsbundes, Moscow, 21/3-1929.

⁷³⁰ RGASPI 535/1/208, 15-16, [Original] letter from the West African Farmers’ Union/Mensah to The International Secretariat, League Against Imperialism, 24, Friedrichstrasse, Berlin SW 48, 20/3-1929. For a brief description of *Lekhotla la Bafo*, see Davidson et al. (2003). Mensah’s letter was, however, not the response the International Secretariat had expected, particularly his enquiry as to whether request the LAI could provide him with contacts to European individuals and organisations: “We shall therefore be glad if you [International Secretariat] will put us in touch with some influential individuals or group of European Gentlemen who are interested in the African and have his welfare at heart so that we may negotiate a possible understanding”, For Lindhagen’s invitation, see SCA CL Collection volume 131. The document, “Provisional Agenda”, is located in the IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/68, Einladung zur Teilnahme am 2. Anti-Imperialistischen Weltkongress der Liga gegen Imperialismus in der Zeit vom 20. Juli bis 31. Juli 1929 in Paris.

⁷³¹ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 28, Protocol der Ostsekretariatskommission zur anti-imperialistischen Liga, 30/3-1929. Present at the meeting were Arnot as leader, Ewert, Figatner, Kuusinen, Wassiljew and Josefowitsch. The copy of the protocol in RGASPI 495/20/722, 26-27 (“Preparations for the Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League, meeting in Moscow, Polit. Secretariat, 5/4-1929”) states that the Political Secretariat endorsed its decision on 5 April.

in Amsterdam, Arnot gave the warning to Münzenberg, convincing him to agree to revise the agenda with “unanimity on almost all points”.⁷³²

The Eastern Secretariat feared that the LAI congress could evolve into a political demonstration outside the direct control of the Comintern. Thus, what had the “provisional agenda” proposed which had caused the Eastern Secretariat to react with such anger? Arnot stated that the agenda made it possible for non-communist elements to “break out” in unwanted political demonstrations, which would necessitate the presence of a “number of reporters who are Communists or party sympathisers” to meticulously observe the atmosphere at the congress “in view of the possibility of a sharp struggle at the Congress”. Hence, Arnot suggested enacting a coup at the congress, more specifically to turn the event into a demonstration in support of the “struggle of the workers and peasants” in India and China, as well as getting delegates from trade unions and colonial revolutionary organisations to dominate the proceedings.⁷³³ In comparison to the agenda of the 1927 Brussels Congress, this “provisional agenda” also revealed that the International Secretariat wanted to re-enact the Brussels Congress, i.e. by nominating well-known non-communist leaders to introduce the key speeches. For example, the Chairman of the LAI, Maxton, should, together with Barbusse, open the congress and lead the introductory ceremony, while individuals such as Pickens, Baldwin and Rivera would all have leading roles. This “provisional agenda” also included a minimum number of communist delegates, competing with socialists, social democrats and nationalists to chair the topics. For example, Melnitschansky would share the trade union question with A. J. Cook and the delegate of the *South African Trade Union Congress* William H. Andrews.⁷³⁴ Hence, by even including Cook on the agenda, the International Secretariat had committed a serious mistake, particularly considering the dispute in connection with the trade union debate at the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne back in January.

⁷³² RGASPI 495/60/134a, 28, Protocol der Ostsekretariatskommission zur anti-imperialistischen Liga, 30/3-1929. For the English version, see fol. RGASPI 495/20/722, 26-27 (which has, however, deleted the names). On 2 April, Arnot edited this protocol and sent it to the Political Secretariat; RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51, Confidential report by R. P. Arnot, re. LAI Executive in Amsterdam, 13-14/4-1929.

⁷³³ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 28, Protocol der Ostsekretariatskommission zur anti-imperialistischen Liga, 30/3-1929.

⁷³⁴ The “provisional” agenda included the following topics and speakers (in parenthesis): 1. “The Unification of all Anti-Imperialist Groups and Organisations in the League against Imperialism” (Barbusse, Maxton); 2. “The All-India National Congress, the All-India Trade Union Congress and their Role in the National-Revolutionary Struggle” (no suggested speaker); 3. “The Nanking Government, the Kuomintang and their Attitude to the Anti-Imperialist Movement in China” (Madame Sun Yat-sen); 4. “The Latest Stage of the National-Revolutionary Struggle in Indochina, Indonesia and the Philippines” (no suggested speaker); 5. “The Necessity of a Joint Struggle of all Arabian Countries against Imperialism” (no suggested speaker); 6. “The Struggle of the Persian People against Imperialist Aggression” (no suggested speaker); 7. “The Struggle for the Emancipation of the Negroes in Africa and America” (Professor W. Pickens); 8. “The Struggle of Latin-America against British and North American Imperialisms” (Roger Baldwin & Diego Rivera); 9. “The Tasks of the Trade Unions in the Struggle against Imperialism” (A. J. Cook, Melnitschansky, W. H. Andrews); 10. “The Social, Political and Economic Situation of Women in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries” (Madame Duchene, Helene Stöcker); 11. “Two Years of the League against Imperialism, being a political and organisational report of the activity of the League” (Willi Münzenberg); 12. “Organisational Questions”; 13. “Miscellaneous”, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 42-42b, Invitation to the Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress (English version), February, 1929. For the German version, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 4-5b.

While the decision-makers had been waiting to begin the preparatory work for the LAI congress in Moscow, the release of this “provisional agenda” precipitated a reaction to enforce “the new line” on the LAI and the congress. In fact, the Comintern did not intend to turn the event into a euphoric demonstration, like the one held in Brussels in 1927.

The Political Secretariat consequently sanctioned the decision to establish the “LAI Political Commission”, appointing Arnot as its leader, a commission which aimed to fulfil two special purposes: on the one hand, to prepare ideological guidelines for the LAI Executive meeting in Amsterdam on 13-14 April and, on the other hand, to correct the damage done in connection with the publication of the “provisional agenda”. The “LAI Political Commission” met for the first time in Berlin, prior to departing for Amsterdam. In Berlin, Arnot told Münzenberg of the necessity to revise the agenda, especially with a focus on “the struggle of the workers and peasants in the Indian revolution”. Thus, this demanded the nomination of “speakers from the *Workers’ and Peasants’ Party*” capable of responding to Nehru should he choose to attend the congress. The congress would also be a perfect opportunity, according to Arnot, to protest against the KMT and to denounce the LSI as an “Imperialist ally”.⁷³⁵

In Amsterdam, only a few LAI Executive members managed to attend the meeting. According to Arnot, the session included Chatto, Bridgeman, Saklatvala, Hatta, Fimmen, Münzenberg, Bridgeman, Vitkovsky and Melnitschansky. Prior to the meeting, Münzenberg realised that he needed Fimmen’s moral support to carry out the directives given to him by Arnot, and he asked Fimmen to make the necessary changes to the agenda, a decision Arnot later described as having been wise as it had meant that a debate on the revised agenda had been avoided.⁷³⁶ Yet, the communists dominated the meeting in Amsterdam and, therefore, Fimmen’s performance was merely a symbolic act. Apparently, the small print of the congress details and the agenda were issues settled once the LAI Executive meeting was over, when the “LAI Political Commission” gathered for a final session, to discuss the work of solving the political, administrative and budget issues for the congress. Arnot returned to Moscow and, on 3 May, during the “Commission on the LAI”’s inaugural meeting, Arnot delivered a “general report” on the Amsterdam meeting.⁷³⁷ From Arnot’s perspective, what did he expect of this second LAI congress and, furthermore, is it possible to discern how the Comintern perceived the non-communist members in the LAI Executive after this “provisional agenda” episode?

⁷³⁵ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 28, Protocol der Ostsekretariatskommission zur anti-imperialistischen Liga, 30/3-1929.

⁷³⁶ RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51, Confidential report by R. P. Arnot, re. LAI Executive in Amsterdam, 13-14/4-1929, Moscow (3/5-1929).

⁷³⁷ RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51, Confidential report by R. P. Arnot, re. LAI Executive in Amsterdam, 13-14/4-1929, Moscow (3/5-1929); RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of Commission of the LAI meeting, Moscow, 3/5-1929.

The revision of the agenda complied with the political discourse of the *class perspective*. According to Arnot, the ideological demonstration of both the LAI and the congress was the unification of the anti-imperialist movement under the slogan “the World Situation, the War Danger and the Struggle Against Imperialism”. Thus, other pivotal questions on the agenda, e.g. China, India, USA, and the political attitude of the LAI *vis-à-vis* the social democratic movement, the LSI and the “Imperialist nations” suddenly became secondary political objectives. Arnot expected the congress to provide an overview of both the LAI’s political progression and the anti-imperialist movement since 1927, solely for the reason of making it known that the difference between the LAI that came into existence in February 1927 and the one appearing in “mid-1929” was “truly enormous”. Thus, the report on the “World Situation and the War Danger” was a statement “only a Communist” could give, Arnot argued. This also meant that other candidates in Moscow, or in Europe, had to be found to assume the positions held by non-communists in the “provisional agenda”. During this process, Arnot and the “Commission on the LAI” chose to evaluate several of the non-communist speakers. For example, it was “hard to delete Baldwin, bad though he is”, whereas it was essential to “strike out” Pickens as the leader of the session on “The Struggle for the Emancipation of the Negroes in Africa and America” and to get “Ford (Profintern) and Laguma (SA)” as replacements.⁷³⁸ Pickens was a sensitive case. William Patterson (pseudonym: “Wilson”), a member of the CPUSA, visited Moscow in 1929 and became the person who advised how the communists should approach Pickens at the congress. Working for the ECCI Negro Bureau, Patterson composed a draft of a letter, originally addressed to the International Secretariat but, in the end, passed on to Arnot in April. According to the draft, Patterson argued:

We [the ECCI Negro Bureau] sincerely believe that the League has no desire to be represented by an agent of a vacillating reformist conciliatory organisation. Yet we are aware that you have probably obligated yourselves to use Mr. Pickens.⁷³⁹

As noted above, the International Secretariat never received this letter. The question is why not. Evidently, Arnot or someone else at Comintern headquarters had classified the draft as “Sekretno”

⁷³⁸ Arnot, Bittelman and Vitkovsky stated that Münzenberg was the most suitable candidate to deliver the speech on the “world situation”, a proposition which Münzenberg did not appreciate. Thus, as a temporary solution, Arnot included Münzenberg’s name on the agenda to function as a “visible comrade”, which would give him a chance to find and suggest another candidate to the Political Secretariat. On June 18, at the final meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” in Moscow, the decision was taken to nominate Pollitt as Münzenberg’s replacement, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51, Confidential report by R. P. Arnot, re. LAI Executive in Amsterdam, 13-14/4-1929, Moscow (3/5-1929), see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, Protokoll der Kommission zur Vorbereitung des Kongresses der Antiimperialistischen Liga, Moscow, 18/6-1929.

⁷³⁹ RGASPI 495/18/664, 1-3, Draft letter to the LAI by comrade Wilson (W. Patterson), Moscow, 25/3-1929. According to information in Patterson’s personal file in the Comintern Archive, Patterson: “carried on agitational work [...] in Germany after the II Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League in Frankfurt 1930 [sic], spoke at mass demonstrations in Berlin, August 1930, with our brother German Party”, RGASPI 495/261/3072, 101-102, Strictly Confidential. William Lorenzo Patterson, Moscow, 16/4-1932.

(*Secret*) and, furthermore, Arnot had perhaps decided that the content was not suitable for Münzenberg to read. Patterson's draft was instead used for another purpose – to get “one of our strongest Negro comrades” to be “allotted an equal amount of time” as Pickens, having Ford assume a leading role in the Negro question at the congress.⁷⁴⁰

For Arnot, the removal of Cook from the agenda was a clear-cut case, informing the “Commission on the LAI” that the LAI Executive in Amsterdam “was charged to remove A.J. Cook if possible from the Agenda”. In Amsterdam, Arnot declared that “representatives of affiliated organisations should have first priority and since Cook had been present in January only by virtue of his personal position which he has since abandoned, there was no difficulty” in removing him from the agenda. However, Arnot was merely carrying out the directives issued by the Political Secretariat, meaning that for the “Commission on the LAI”, the question of appointing Melnitschansky, the French communist Gaston Monmousseau, the KPD member Heckert, and the English non-communist trade unionist Gossip to assume leadership over the trade union question had not been a difficult decision to make.⁷⁴¹ In order to emphasise the domination of the communists, the “Commission on the LAI” nominated Rajani Palme Dutt to introduce the session on the Indian independence struggle in India (“Struggle for the Independence of India”) and the Chinese communist Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai, to deliver the keynote speech on China and the KMT (“The Chinese Revolution: Struggle Against Imperialism and the Nan-King Government”). This was a question of organisation for the “Commission on the LAI”, meaning that every communist at the congress had to ensure that no delegates created any disturbance during the congress proceedings. Thus, the communist delegates nominated in the congress presidium had to evaluate anyone who expressed a wish to give a speech, or who wanted to comment on the speeches.⁷⁴²

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⁷⁴⁰ RGASPI 495/18/664, 1-3, Draft letter to the LAI by comrade Wilson (W. Patterson), Moscow, 25/3-1929.

⁷⁴¹ RGASPI 542/1/32, 49-51, Confidential report by R. P. Arnot, re. LAI Executive in Amsterdam, 13-14/4-1929, Moscow (3/5-1929).

⁷⁴² RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, (Confidential) Protocol, “Commission on the LAI”, Moscow, 18/6-1929. The delegates were given a document that explained the “Standing Orders” of the congress [see the fourth topic]: “1. The time allowed for each main speech is 45 minutes. 2. The time allowed for Commission Reports is 20 minutes. 3. The time allowed for participants in the discussion is 10 minutes. 4. *Delegates wishing to speak in the discussion must inform the Presidium of the Congress of their wish in writing* [italics by the author]. 5. Where points of Order are concerned, one speaker may speak in favour and one speaker against”, IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/73, Standing Orders, Frankfurt am Main, July 1929.

Consolidation Models

With the inauguration of the “Commission on the LAI” on 3 May, as well as having attended the LAI Executive meeting in Amsterdam in April, Arnot expected to get preparations under way. However, the conundrum was that there existed no organisational or ideological model on which to consolidate a structure for the congress, e.g. there was no congress budget, no resolutions and no definite agreement on the composition of the delegations. An extra problem was that the International Secretariat was becoming more and more excluded from what was happening in Moscow.

In May, Münzenberg began to question why nothing was happening in Moscow, requesting Kuusinen to get the Eastern Secretariat to send “a reliable Comrade” to Berlin to assist the International Secretariat with the administrative work of the congress, e.g. travel arrangements and finding accommodation for the delegations in Paris. Yet, as long as there was no decision on the congress budget, Münzenberg felt that the International Secretariat’s hands were tied. Hence, it was impossible to be certain that the LAI would reimburse the delegations travelling from Mexico and the Philippines for their journey to Europe.⁷⁴³ According to Münzenberg’s “temporary budget” presented on 18 March, the congress would cost \$20,000, an amount divided between three parties: the LAI (\$5,000), the IAH (\$5,000) and the Comintern (\$10,000).⁷⁴⁴

This “temporary budget” was one of many documents which Kuusinen, Piatnitsky and Arnot consulted in order to reach a decision on the final budget. With regard to Münzenberg’s “temporary budget”, Kuusinen chose not to respond.⁷⁴⁵ However, Münzenberg also had other preoccupations, and from 17 April until 4 May he was in Erfurt, Münzenberg’s electoral district, carrying out work for the KPD. Yet, when Münzenberg returned to Berlin, he had not still heard a word about what was happening with the congress preparations at Comintern headquarters. What was it that made Münzenberg react? Apparently, after the LAI Executive meeting in Amsterdam, Münzenberg contacted Kuusinen and Arnot, asking how the congress preparations were

⁷⁴³ The “reliable Comrade” would send congress invitations and focus on establishing contacts with “delegations” in East Asia: Indochina, Japan, Mongolia, Indonesia and Korea. Münzenberg expected the “comrade” to leave Moscow when the person was “able to come”. In a letter to Kornblum, Münzenberg presented a shrewd plan, in which the LAI would consider financing the journey for some of the peasant delegations to the congress, but that the Krestintern had to pay for their return, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 31-33, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, Kuusinen, Moscow, 17/4-1929; RGASPI 535/1/212, 6-7, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum, Krestintern, Moscow, 17/4-1929.

⁷⁴⁴ RGASPI 542/1/30, 21, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 18/3-1929. This “temporary budget” illustrates the international scope of the LAI congress, based on Münzenberg’s perspective. The representation of national and regional delegations originating from 32 countries, was calculated to cost 51,520 Marks. Münzenberg used the German Mark as the preferred currency in the budget to allocate the cost between telegrams (1,500 Marks), the printing of a congress “Bulletin” in English, German, French, Spanish and Arabic (5,000 Marks), administrative costs (14,000 Marks) and “apparatus” (translators, Press agency, congress bureau/secretariat, 9,080 Marks), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 22-23, Provisorisches Budget Antimperialistischer Weltkongress, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 18/3-1929.

⁷⁴⁵ Kuusinen was, at this moment, deeply engaged in solving the fractional struggle within the CPUSA, as well as observing how the Meerut trial campaign was progressing in Europe.

proceeding. While awaiting some kind of response, Münzenberg explained to Kuusinen that the International Secretariat had retreated into a state of muted activity. To test Kuusinen, Münzenberg threatened to tell the International Secretariat to stop its preparatory work for the congress, but also that, as long as the Comintern did not provide the LAI with any proper funding, Münzenberg could not guarantee that the delegation from South Africa would attend the event.⁷⁴⁶

On 3 May, the “Commission on the LAI” discussed the budget, deciding to pass the issue on to the “Sub-Committee”. However, Arnot realised that Münzenberg had to be calmed down, and on 9 May Arnot sent him a letter reassuring him that the “Commission on the LAI” was working on sorting out every detail for the congress in Moscow:

It was not until yesterday that we were able to have a commission [meeting] and full report of the happenings three weeks ago [LAI Executive meeting, Amsterdam, 13-14 April]. The lines we agreed upon have been accepted in general; more details have yet to be worked out in several cases. I hope this week, along with comrade Piatnitsky, that we shall get the points carried through.⁷⁴⁷

The information was as misleading as Arnot had intended it to be. Thus, Arnot avoided telling Münzenberg that the issue was far more complex than he had described. Working together with Bittelman to organise the budget for the congress, Arnot had in fact already passed the proposed costs for the event on to Piatnitsky before he informed Münzenberg that:

Yesterday before you [Piatnitsky] came in, comrade Bittelman and myself reported on the budget question, which we were charged to examine and report upon. We reported that we had made very considerable alterations [to] the budget, cutting out the European expenses but, on the other hand, adding certain colonial expenses, in order to ensure the largest possible number of delegates [from] the colonial countries.⁷⁴⁸

Arnot’s motive for not giving Münzenberg the whole picture was a question of control, especially with regard to the difficult process of reaching a decision on the budget.⁷⁴⁹ Furthermore, after Arnot’s resignation, Bittelman had assumed the role as LAI liaison, and on 22 May he notified Münzenberg that “the amount requested had been approved in principle”. However, Bittelman stated that Piatnitsky had concluded that it would be enough for “our Firm” [the Comintern] to

⁷⁴⁶ Münzenberg questioned whether Kuusinen had really understood how serious the situation in Berlin was, explaining that he could write a “whole novel” based on the complaints, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 37, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 4/5-1929.

⁷⁴⁷ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of meeting of Commission of the LAI, Moscow, 3/5-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 41, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 9/5-1929.

⁷⁴⁸ RGASPI 495/18/670, 103, (Strictly confidential) Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 9/5-1929.

Arnot reduced the budget by 8%. These documents are most likely located in the files on Piatnitsky (75 % of which remain closed to research). The content of the documents were: “World Congress Budget as revised”, “Remarks on Congress Budget”, “League Normal Budget”, “League Proposed Budget” and “Details of Delegations to World Congress”.

⁷⁴⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 44-45, Letter from Arnot, Moscow, to Virtanen, Moscow, 18/5-1929.

contribute \$5,000, while Münzenberg had to secure the additional sum of \$15,000. For example, Münzenberg could either use the LAI and the IAH's financial contacts or contact the Profintern and the IRH. Münzenberg did not approve of the endorsed budget, concluding that \$5,000 was not enough to secure the travel arrangements for the colonial delegations. However, Bittelman had anticipated Münzenberg's displeasure and therefore suggested that the International Secretariat organise a fund to raise money. In June, the International Secretariat set up the "Fond für Kolonialdelegationen" (*Fund for the Colonial Delegations*), calling for financial contributions in support of the delegations travelling to the congress.⁷⁵⁰ Whether the initiative ever managed to raise any money, remains unknown.

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Resolving the Anti-Imperialist Agenda: The Congress Resolutions

The resolutions for the LAI congress epitomise the Comintern's ideological attitude towards the colonial question. In contrast to the rush to complete the resolutions before the Brussels Congress in February 1927, the completion of the resolutions for the second LAI congress was a cautious and meticulous process in Moscow. For example, Arnot had instructed the authors to keep the resolutions "as short as possible" and to get the documents completed by 25 May.⁷⁵¹ Most importantly, these resolutions were the key to correcting the mistakes in the "provisional agenda". On 3 May, Arnot laid down the principle guidelines for the resolutions in the document, "Confidential Decision on Resolutions for the second LAI congress, Annexe (b)", an account which illustrates the political goals of the congress, based on the Comintern's "new line". According to Arnot, the following eligible candidates, who were then currently either living in or visiting Moscow, were to write the congress resolutions: Freyer and Schubin ("The Struggle for the Independence of India"), Pavel Mif and Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai ("The Chinese Revolution: The Struggle against Imperialism and the Nanking Government"), Pyotr Kitaigorodsky ("The need for a common struggle in Egypt, Syria and other Arabic countries of the Near East against Imperialism"), Johnson and Bittelman ("The Latest Stage of the National Revolutionary struggle in Indo-China, Indonesia and the Philippines"), Arnot ("The Struggle for the Emancipation of the Negroes in Africa and America special resolution or sections of this resolution should deal with East Africa and South Africa"), the ECCI Latin-American Secretariat ("The Struggle of Latin

⁷⁵⁰ Bittelman promised Münzenberg to send the "monthly payment for June [...] immediately", see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 47, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 22/5-1929. 535/1/212, 10, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum/Krestintern, Moscow, 25/5-1929; *Pressdienst des zweiten antiimperialistischen Weltkongresses*, Nr. 1, 1/6-1929.

⁷⁵¹ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of meeting of Commission of the LAI, 3/5-1929. Barbé, Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai, and Williams were not present at the meeting.

America against British and North American Imperialism”), Melnitschansky and Lozovsky (“The Tasks of the Trade Union in the Struggle against Imperialism”), Moirova (“The Social, Political and Economic Situation of Women in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial countries”), Freyer and Krestintern (“The Struggle for the Emancipation of the Peasant Masses”), Khitarov (“the Youth Resolution”) and, finally, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Bela Kun, Arnot, Bittelman and Khitarov (“the General Political Resolution”).⁷⁵²

A careful approach from a political perspective was also required when drawing up these resolutions. Arnot knew that some of these topics would be likely to cause controversy at the congress, e.g., the possible “debate [...] between the INC representatives [...] young Nehru if he comes”, and the delegate of the Indian *Workers’ and Peasants’ Party*, Rajani Palme Dutt. Thus, before Freyer and Schubin began writing their resolution on India, Arnot told them to keep in mind a possible controversy at the congress.⁷⁵³ The completion of the resolutions also indicates that the preparatory work was a “work in progress”, in which actors such as Arnot or Bittelman had to improvise along the way to reach some kind of conclusion. However, for Arnot, the crucial issue to solve was ensuring that well-known communist leaders, e.g. Palme Dutt and Pollitt, would appear as leading figures to guarantee the political aims of the congress, an objective Bittelman also strove to effect. On 19 June, Bittelman sent instructions to Burns in Berlin to contact Dutt and Pollitt “preferably by telephone”, in order to receive confirmation that they would be attending the congress. If they showed any sign of reluctance, Burns merely had to tell them both that the transcripts for the speeches had already been prepared.⁷⁵⁴

The African question – the “emancipation of the Negroes” – had been a long series of zigzags before reaching its conclusion. At first, Arnot instructed Ford and Harry Haywood to write “an account of the situation in Africa especially since the VI Congress”, with a “separate section on South Africa and Kenya”.⁷⁵⁵ However, Arnot had expected to write the congress resolution on Africa, while utilising the “account” by Ford and Haywood as “political information” at the

⁷⁵² RGASPI 495/60/134a, 35, Confidential decision on resolutions for the second LAI congress, Annexe (b), 3/5-1929. A copy of this same list (in German) does not disclose the connection between the nominations and the “Commission on the LAI”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/32, 47-48, Anhang (B) Vertraulich, Beschluss, author: Arnot, April/May, 1929. If Arnot was thinking of the “Colonial Conference” in this context is mere speculation, however, it corresponds with the fact that the “Commission on Colonial Conference” expected “all materials to be ready by the 20th of May”, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/670, 27-28, Minutes, second meeting of Commission on Colonial Conference, Moscow, 29/4-1929.

⁷⁵³ Schubin knew the Comintern’s position on India. On 25 March, *Inprecorr* published an article by Schubin which included criticism of the AIWPP Conference in Calcutta, and of Roy, see Harkishan Singh Surjeet, *History of the Communist Movement in India*, Leftword Books, 2005, p.143.

⁷⁵⁴ RGASPI 542/1/30, 75, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow to Burns/International Secretariat, Berlin, 19/6-1929. Bittelman expected to arrive in Berlin ten days prior to the congress, and instructed Pollitt and Dutt to be in Berlin “one week prior to the opening of the congress”.

⁷⁵⁵ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 35, Confidential decision on resolutions for the second LAI congress, Annexe (b), 3/5-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 78, Confidential letter from Arnot/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ford, Moscow, 29/4-1929; RGASPI 495/18/670, 79, Confidential letter from Arnot/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Haywood, Moscow, 29/4-1929.

“Colonial Conference”. This all changed once Arnot received the instruction to act as the ECCI plenipotentiary in the CPUSA in May and, as he had not yet completed his Africa resolution, the only available material on Africa at Comintern headquarters was the account by Ford and Haywood. Moreover, when Arnot left the “Commission on Colonial Conference”, the “African question” disappeared from the agenda altogether. To complete the resolution on Africa, then, the “Commission on the LAI” let the ECCI Negro Bureau (Patterson and Haywood) write and edit a new “Negro resolution”. On 27 May, Haywood and Patterson completed a first version, “The Negro World Question and the Negro Question in different countries of Africa and America” and, once Ford had edited the material, they passed on the final version to the “Commission on the LAI” on 29 May.⁷⁵⁶

The “Tasks of the Trade Union in the Struggle against Imperialism” proved to be a prolonged process. Arnot assigned Melnitschansky and Lozovsky to write the resolution but, and considering the aftermath of the trade union debate at the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne on 15-16 January 1929, the Political Secretariat was aware of the risk that the trade union question might cause a crisis at the congress. Once Melnitschansky and Lozovsky had finished their first version, the Political Secretariat reviewed the draft, only to conclude that some “false parts” still needed correction. The reason for this was that the Political Secretariat wanted to avoid, as far as possible, any criticism of the LSI. Apparently, this was a question of establishing a political image around the LAI, which focused on getting the organisation to cultivate more intimate relations with the trade union movement and to assume the position as the leader of an “aggressive struggle against imperialism”. Hence, the trade union resolution had to make it clear that the LAI would not tolerate any hostility from either the LSI or the reformist trade unions.⁷⁵⁷ Bittelman carried out the task of correcting the draft, and on 28 June, the Political Secretariat endorsed the resolution.⁷⁵⁸

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⁷⁵⁶ RGASPI 495/155/67, 15, Minutes of meeting of the ECCI Negro Bureau, Moscow, 27/5-1929; RGASPI 495/1/67, 16, Minutes of meeting of the ECCI Negro Bureau, Moscow, 29/5-1929. The draft resolution is filed in fol. RGASPI 495/155/72, 40-58.

⁷⁵⁷ RGASPI 542/1/31, 32, Message from the Political Secretariat, Moscow, to Bittelman, Moscow, 25/6-1929; RGASPI 495/20/722, 43-44, Resolution – Trade Unions and the LAI, 27/6-1929 (authors: Melnitschansky and Lozovsky); RGASPI 495/20/722, 22, Protocol, meeting of the ECCI Political Secretariat, Moscow, 8/2-1929. For a copy of the note from the Political Secretariat to Bittelman on 25 June, see fol. 495/20/722, 18.

⁷⁵⁸ RGASPI 495/3/111, 1a, Protokoll Nr.40 der Sitzung des Politsekr. des EKKI, 28/6-1929. Members of the Political Secretariat who attended this meeting were Ulbricht, Barbé, “Garlandi” (real name: Ruggero Grieco, communist from Italy), Piatnitsky, Lozovsky, Chitarow, “Strakhov”/Chü Chiu-pai and Bell. Münzenberg also attended this meeting of the Political Secretariat, where he heard Bittelman explain the basic purpose and outline of the resolutions. After the meeting, the protocol was filed in a “Sondermappe” (*Special Dossier*). However, on closer reading of “Protokoll Nr.40”, it states that the focal point for the Political Secretariat was the trade union resolution. Additionally, the dossier contains the resolutions of the ECCI Negro Bureau (French versions): “PROJET DE RESOLUTION SUR LA QUESTION NEGRE-INTERNATIONALE” (25/6-1929), and “LES COLONIES ANGLAISES – Afrique Occidentale anglaise (Sierra Leone, Côte d’Or, Gambie et Nigeria)” (26/6-1929).

Deciphering the Nature of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: The Congress Delegations

The International Secretariat wanted the second LAI congress to become an impressive anti-imperialist demonstration which would provide renewed impetus to unifying the anti-imperialist movement. In September 1928, the International Secretariat appealed to the following national sections to attend the congress: England, France, Holland, and Germany, the AAAIL, the Latin American LAI sections in Argentine, Columbia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, San Salvador, Santo Domingo and Uruguay. In reference to the affiliated organisations and collective members, the International Secretariat requested the attendance of the INC, the PI, the *Socialist Party of Persia*, *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, *Confederacion Obrera Nacional Dominicana* in Santo Domingo, the IAH, *Bildungsarbeiter Internationale*, the *International Womens' League for Peace and Freedom*, *Internationale der Kriegsoffer* and the *International Anti-Militarist Bureau*.⁷⁵⁹ For Münzenberg, the congress represented an opportunity to summon the “old guard” of the LAI – the left-wing intellectuals: Emil Ludwig, Ernst Toller, Arthur Holitscher, Alfons Paquet, Lehmann-Russbüldt, Lessing, Alfons Goldschmidt and the representative of the socialist organisation the *Freethinkers' Angelica Balabanov*.⁷⁶⁰ Yet, Balabanov's appearance at the congress was a sensitive issue. Bittelman informed Münzenberg that “comrades” Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Manuilsky, Magyar and Mif had stated that Balabanov would bring “harm” to the congress.⁷⁶¹

The “Commission on the LAI” both supervised and authorised whom to accredit as delegates to the congress. After the meetings of the “LAI Political Commission” in April, Münzenberg requested that Kuusinen, Arnot and Ford assume full responsibility for the “important and urgent” task of co-ordinating the composition of the delegations in Moscow. What was the primary reason for Münzenberg making such a request? Without Chatto at the International Secretariat, Münzenberg had lost access to a majority of the LAI's colonial contacts both in Berlin and beyond, particularly those with the Indian community. Thus, it was up to Arnot to begin the work of co-ordinating the delegations in Moscow. For example, Arnot could tell the delegate of the San Francisco-based Hindustan *Ghadr Party* Rattan Singh, who was in Moscow in 1929, to function as the leader of the Indian delegation.⁷⁶² Despite the existence of the “Indian Bureau”, during Chatto's temporary withdrawal from the International Secretariat in March and while Chatto remained in hiding in Berlin in April and May, Münzenberg did not mention the bureau in any of his correspondence to either Kuusinen, Arnot or Bittelman. Thus, it appears that A. C. N.

⁷⁵⁹ IISG LAI Collection 3392.1, 66, An alle nationalen Sektion der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Internationale Sekretariat, Berlin, September 1928.

⁷⁶⁰ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, Letter from Münzenberg & Chatto, Berlin, to Lindhagen, Stockholm, 3/6-1929.

⁷⁶¹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 72, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 11/6-1929.

⁷⁶² RGASPI 542/1/30, 31-33, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 17/4-1929.

Nambiar's control over the "Indian Bureau" created, for the time being, a separation from the International Secretariat, leaving Münzenberg without any contacts to the Indian anti-colonial movement at all. According to Bittelman, the efforts to co-ordinate the "desired" Indian delegation in Moscow had become a complicated process. The International Secretariat had, therefore, to "utilise all the connections you have to secure delegates" from worker and peasant organisations in India and, if not, Bittelman stated that there was a plausible risk that the congress would "collapse".⁷⁶³ Münzenberg, on the other hand, realised that it seemed as though the LAI had lost every connection with India, as well as with Indian anti-colonial activists in Europe.⁷⁶⁴ Yet, Chatto's temporary resignation from the International Secretariat was not the only reason for this. The restrictions and surveillance put into effect by the British security services in India, sanctioned and administered from London, also contributed to hampering the International Secretariat's connections to India in 1929. According to the minutes of the British Home Office in London on 29 February 1929, the India Office had to use every measure to prevent known members of the LAI in India from travelling to Europe by denying passports. Thus, the Home Office anticipated that this sufficient step would put an end to LAI activities in India which, in turn, would help to prevent the organisation turning into a "very nasty thing".⁷⁶⁵

At the end of May, Chatto assumed his position as "International political secretary" and attempted to mend the LAI's contacts with Indian activists. An opportunity arose at the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO) conference in Geneva on 1-15 June, an event attended by representatives from several Indian organisations e.g. the renowned leader Joshi of the *Indian Trade Union Council* (ITUC). For Münzenberg, this conference represented an opportunity to "secure the colonial character" of the LAI congress, admitting to Bittelman that it seemed as though the ILO had succeeded where the LAI had failed. Hence, Münzenberg explained that the ILO had invited leaders from trade unions in Europe, e.g. the *Amsterdam International*, to discuss the colonial question with delegates from the colonies. The conference also posed a threat to the LAI's ambitions, Münzenberg stated, forcing the International Secretariat to act to disrupt a possible collaboration between the *Amsterdam International* and Joshi, a development which would be a "long-term political blow" for the LAI. The International Secretariat first contacted Nehru and Bridgeman, calling for the rapid establishment of a protest campaign aimed against the

⁷⁶³ RGASPI 542/1/30, 47, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 22/5-1929.

⁷⁶⁴ Münzenberg informed Kornblum of the positive contacts the LAI had with the Philippines, e.g. the peasant organisation the *Confederation of Philippine Peasants*. Further, *Pressedienst* stated that the "Fourth Peasants' Congress" in Manila on May 1, an event attended by 30,000 workers and peasants, had declared its "solidarity with and greeted" the LAI, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 10, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kornblum/Krestintern, Moscow, 25/5-1929.

⁷⁶⁵ The Home Office recommended that individuals, suspected or confirmed as members of the LAI, should have the following stamp in their passports: "Not valid for India" and be prevented from undertaking "Empire-wide" travel, TNA HO 144 10693, Minutes (Home Office), 27/2-1929.

Amsterdam International in both India and England. Additionally, Münzenberg wanted to see whether it was possible for the LAI to invite and send both Joshi and the Indian delegation on a tour of the Soviet Union and Moscow in particular, before proceeding directly to the LAI congress. However, Bittelman explained that it would not be “advisable” to invite Joshi to Moscow for political reasons.⁷⁶⁶

Fimmen had notified the International Secretariat of his intention to attend the ILO conference, thus Chatto wondered whether he could function unofficially as an LAI representative at the event. Furthermore, the International Secretariat knew that the ILO was intending to address the question of forced labour at the conference. Towards the end of May, the International Secretariat completed and released the pamphlet *Memorandum on Forced Labour*, which portrayed the LAI as a political force within the anti-imperialist movement. A closer scrutiny of the pamphlet nevertheless reveals the difficulties the LAI were experiencing in adapting “the new line” of the Comintern, and in ignoring the rhetoric of the united front strategy:

The League against Imperialism, which stands for the united action of organised workers in imperialist countries with colonial workers in the struggle against international capitalism, calls upon all working class representatives of the ILO Conference to reject absolutely all proposals for the regulation of forced labour, [...] These abuses will never be abolished through the agencies of capitalism. Only the determined action of working class organisations in imperialist countries, fighting side by side with the workers of all countries and all races, can remove this danger from the standards of international labour.⁷⁶⁷

The primary aim of this pamphlet was to circulate it among the delegates at the ILO conference, an objective that required the services of an individual linked to the International Secretariat. Münzenberg and Chatto assigned this mission to Otto Schudel, the functionary at the LAI bureau in Berlin, instructing him to travel to Geneva and use Fimmen’s contacts to gain access to the conference and to its delegates.⁷⁶⁸

For Schudel and the International Secretariat, his mission to Geneva was a moderate success; however, he did manage to inform both journalists and some of the delegates about the LAI and its second congress. After arriving in Geneva, Schudel met Fimmen and told him that he wanted to

⁷⁶⁶ RGASPI 542/1/30, 56, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bittelman, Moscow, 6/6-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 72, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 11/6-1929.

⁷⁶⁷ W. Münzenberg, V. Chattophadyaya, E. Burns, “Memorandum on Forced Labour”, International Secretariat, Berlin, 1/6-1929. For the pamphlet, see IISG LAI Collection 3392.1, p.129.

⁷⁶⁸ The mission to Geneva was a rushed affair for Schudel. On 30 May, Schudel received a note informing him that Münzenberg and Chatto wanted to meet him at the Bahnhof in Berlin. On the platform, the two of them instructed Schudel on the mission before he set off straight away by train to Geneva. According to Chatto, Schudel had circulated the pamphlet at the ILO conference among “workers’ delegates and the press”, where the latter had used it as reference material to discuss forced labour, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/31, 26-27, Report by Chatto, the ILO Conference/Geneva, Berlin, June, 1929.

organise a meeting with Joshi and the Indian delegation. Fimmen managed to convince Joshi to meet “a representative of the LAI”, informing Schudel not to expect too much. As Fimmen had implicitly suggested, once Schudel had told Joshi to consider the option of attending the LAI congress and encouraging the ITUC to join the LAI, Joshi's reaction was one of irritation. Schudel informed Chatto that Joshi had stated that the ITUC would never “affiliate either to Amsterdam or to Moscow” and, “if the communists” continued to pressure him, he intended to resign from the ITUC and form “a rival organisation” in opposition against the communists. Additionally, Joshi said that the LAI should not count on Nehru's appearance at the LAI congress, as he did not intend to leave India.⁷⁶⁹ Once Bittelman learnt of Joshi's chauvinistic opinion of the LAI, he instructed Münzenberg to ensure that the money sent to India by the LAI in support of the workers' movement did not fall “into the hands [...] of Joshi and his crowd”.⁷⁷⁰

Yet, what Joshi had told Schudel merely confirmed the existing hostility within the socialist movement towards the LAI. At the ILO conference, there was a widespread antagonism towards the LAI amongst the delegates. Some of the delegates told Fimmen that the LAI was as an “instrument of M. [Moscow], financed and controlled by the communists”, functioning solely to convince the “oppressed races to be [...] used by the communist movement”.⁷⁷¹ Moreover, on 20 July, prior to the opening of the LAI congress, the LSI published its second analysis of the LAI, “The ‘League Against Imperialism’ and the Labour and Socialist International”, in *International Information*. In connection with the release of this analysis, for example, Adler contacted Brockway to inform him that the LSI was paying attention to the still existent link between the ILP and LAI, particularly to Maxton's role.⁷⁷² The LSI's second analysis had been carefully planned by Adler to be published just prior to the opening of the LAI congress on 21 July, warning every member of the LSI not to participate in the event. Nevertheless, the LSI had neither the authority nor the capacity to prohibit individuals from visiting the LAI congress, observing how Maxton would assume a decisive role in the coming event:

For Münzenberg and the Communists especially this participation of Maxton in the Congress is of the highest strategical value. Under the presidency of Maxton the purely Bolshevik

⁷⁶⁹ Fimmen realised that if he did not manage to arrange a meeting with Joshi, Schudel would do whatever it took to set up a meeting of his own. Schudel's letter was addressed as “Briefe Nr.2”, the whereabouts of “Briefe Nr.1” remain unknown, RGASPI 542/1/30, 60-63, Briefe Nr.2/ Schudel, Geneva, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 2/6-1929; RGASPI 542/1/31, 26-27, Report by Chatto, the ILO Conference/Geneva, Berlin, June, 1929.

⁷⁷⁰ RGASPI 542/1/30, 56, 72, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 11/6-1929. Bittelman referred to a strike in the metal industry in India, whereas Münzenberg had previously enquired as to whether the Profintern intended to provide the Indian workers' with money. Apparently, the Profintern seemed unwilling to do so; therefore, Münzenberg asked Kuusinen for advice on what to do, concluding that if the Profintern was considering contributing, the “sum had to be big” and transferred through existing channels of the International Secretariat. , see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 56.

⁷⁷¹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 50, Letter from Fimmen, Geneva, to Chatto, Berlin, 2/6-1929.

⁷⁷² IISG LSI Collection 1717/14, Letter from Brockway, London, to Adler, Zurich, 5/7-1929.

character of the real leadership of the “League” and of the Congress will be concealed from the Socialist workers.⁷⁷³

The LSI’s analysis concluded that Maxton certainly would have to confront a similar treatment as the one meted out to Cook, and receive “a flood of insults” from the communists as a reward for his services. In comparison to the LSI’s analysis in October 1927, their analysis in 1929 scrutinised the leadership of the LAI even more harshly. Above all, it portrayed Münzenberg as an unabashed and ruthless individual who was working in the service of Bolshevism, and who used every strategy available to convince socialists to partake in “all kinds of united front and similar manoeuvres”. According to the LSI, the LAI was only a part of the grand conspiracy of the communists, thus, the socialist movement had to understand that the organisation was an expression of the provocative and “barbarous methods” international communism implemented to establish influence.⁷⁷⁴

The undertaking to nominate delegates and assemble the delegations in Moscow followed a different rationale compared to one used by the International Secretariat. It was a meticulous process, e.g. the preparatory work in relation to the Negro delegation confirms how carefully the candidates were selected. Arnot assigned Ford to supervise the work who could, in turn, use his contacts with the Profintern and the ECCI Negro Bureau. Nevertheless, for Ford, the LAI congress represented a perfect opportunity to begin the work of preparing the “upcoming RILU [ITUCNW; International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers’] conference in July 1930”. Hence, Ford counted on getting the “Negro delegation” to “hold a preliminary conference” at the LAI congress in order to discuss the idea of organising an ITUCNW conference:

[...] the success of such a Conference depends upon the number of Negro delegates representative of Negro workers' organisations. [sic] who will attend this Congress. To give such a conference the proper political and future organisational effect, it is necessary to be assured of representatives of Negro workers from America [illegible] Africa and the West Indies as [sic] least.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷³ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “The ‘League Against Imperialism’ and the Labour and Socialist International”, in *International Information*, Zürich, Vol.VI, Nr.28, 20/7-1929, pp.300-302.

⁷⁷⁴ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “The ‘League Against Imperialism’ and the Labour and Socialist International”, in *International Information*, Zurich, Vol.VI, Nr.28, 20/7-1929, pp.300-302. On 22 July, two days after the release of the report, the “Mitteilung” of the ECCI Information Department (*Informatsionnyi otdel IKKI*), an information service for the staff working at Comintern headquarters in Moscow, included the LSI analysis, see fol. RGASPI 495/33/203, 226-228, Copy of the LSI article on LAI 20/7-1929, INFORMATIONENABTEILUNG DES EKKI, Mitteilung No. 727, Moscow, 22/7-1929.

⁷⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/30, 48, Letter from Ford/Profintern, Moscow, to the “Commission on the LAI”/Bittelman, Moscow, 31/5-1929.

This objective depended, however, on the consent of other actors. Ford informed Bittelman of the idea and, on 5 June, the “Sub-Committee” endorsed Ford’s proposal on the condition that the “informal conference” incurred “no additional expense” to the congress budget.⁷⁷⁶

The “Sub-Committee” instructed Ford on the political composition of the Negro delegation, which had to include a member of the ECCI Negro Bureau who under no circumstance should pose as a representative of the Comintern. Apparently, “the comrade must be included in the American delegation while posing as a delegate of one of the American organisations”. On 8 June, the ECCI Negro Bureau suggested Patterson as its representative, using the cover as a delegate of the ANLC,⁷⁷⁷ while Ford aimed to appear as a delegate of the Profintern, representing the “International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU”. In a letter to the International Secretariat, Ford wrote that the “coming World Congress” was of “great importance” for the anti-imperialist movement, with the LAI realising that it was one of the few “strong leaders” uniting the “struggles of colonial and oppressed peoples”. Furthermore, Ford hoped that the LAI would allow the ITUCNW to hold “small preliminary conferences”:

The coming Congress of the League offers us an opportunity to hold in connection with your Congress a one day conference of Negro trade union and worker delegates and representatives of Negro workers who shall attend the League Congress. We therefore ask your permission and co-operation in the holding of such a conference.⁷⁷⁸

The delegations from China, Japan, the Philippines, Indochina, Singapore, Java and Korea were assembled through Bittelman, consisting essentially of “colonial comrades” who were either working at Comintern headquarters or pursuing studies at the KUTV. In June, these delegations received their instructions to attend the congress.⁷⁷⁹

The “Delegationsliste” (List of Delegations) presents the colonial element at the LAI congress, a document which includes the names and nationality of every delegate, political party

⁷⁷⁶ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 37, Minutes of organisation sub-committee for the preparation of the LAI congress, 5/6-1929.

⁷⁷⁷ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 37, Minutes of organisation sub-committee for the preparation of the LAI congress, 5/6-1929; RGASPI 495/155/67, 17, Minutes of meeting of the ECCI Negro Bureau, Moscow, 8/6-1929. Present at the closed meeting of the ECCI Negro Bureau on June 8 were Bittelman, Nasanov, Ford, Patterson and Whitman (pseudonym: “Charlton”). According to the minutes, Bittelman reported “for the Small Commission of the Eastern Secretariat” [the “Commission on the LAI”]. The “Complete” list of attendance for the LAI congress include Patterson as the ANLC delegate and member of the American delegation, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 26, “Complete” [list of attendance], July 1929. Münzenberg was informed of Patterson’s nomination by Bittelman in June, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 72.

⁷⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/33, 7, Letter from the ITUCNW, Moscow, to the “Commission on the LAI” (Moscow) & Münzenberg (Berlin), 14/6-1929. Ford acted, on the one hand, as representative for the “Negro Committee of the Profintern” and, on the other hand, as delegate of the Soviet delegation, RGASPI 542/1/92, 30, “Complete” [list of attendance], July 1929.

⁷⁷⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 72, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 11/6-1929.

representatives, organisations, associations and those appearing in their capacity as individuals. This document represents a joint effort by Münzenberg, Chatto and Bittelman.⁷⁸⁰ Thus, thanks to the “Delegationsliste”, it is possible to analyse the size and political character of the colonial delegations and to verify these delegates’ locale of activity, with the latter disclosing the actual places of residence of the “colonial” representatives expected to attend the congress.

The “Delegationsliste” suggested 286 delegates from 41 countries, including “imperialist” (16), colonial and semi-colonial countries (25), regions (the Balkan, North Africa, West and East Africa), and international organisations (21). However, the actual physical residences of the colonial and semi-colonial delegates were primarily located in colonial metropolises such as Berlin, Paris and London. The second LAI congress was therefore, despite its ambition to pose as a colonial pilgrimage linking together the “imperialist nations” with the colonial world, bound within a European framework. The table below makes the following distinctions between colonial representation and physical residence to clarify this postulation:

⁷⁸⁰ The International Secretariat gathered intelligence on suitable candidates, the material then being despatched to Bittelman for further consideration who, in turn, added or deleted delegates before sending the final list to Kuusinen for approval. In June, Bittelman confirmed that he had received a lot of material (administrative documents and information on the delegations) from the International Secretariat, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 72, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Münzenberg/Berlin, [blueprint], 11/6-1929.

Table 7.3: Geographical Division and Colonial Representation Invited to the Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism 1929

Invited	Total No.:	Colonial & Semi-Colonial	Europe	USA
India	27	12	14	1
Indonesia	13	2	11	-
Mexico	2	2	-	-
Venezuela	2	-	2	-
Cuba	2	1	1	-
Bolivia	1	-	1	-
Panama	1	1	-	-
Columbia	1	1	-	-
Argentina	3	2	1	-
Brazil	2	2	-	-
Ecuador	1	1	-	-
Paraguay	1	-	1	-
Uruguay	1	-	1	-
Iraq	2	2	-	-
Egypt	1	1	-	-
Syria	5	2	3	-
Palestine	2	2	-	-
Persia	3	1	2	-
Korea	5	-	4	1
China	8	5	3	-
Japan	3	-	3	-
Indochina	2	2	-	-
Philippines	2	2	-	-
Mongolia	1	1	-	-
South Africa	4 [6]	4	-	-
North Africa	2	-	2	-
East Africa	1	-	1	-
West Africa	1	-	1	-
African Organisations outside Africa	4	-	4	-
Arab Organisations	7	-	7	-
Total:	110	46	62	2

Source: RGASPI 542/1/92, 1-16, Delegationsliste, May-June 1929

The total number of colonial delegates were 110, a criteria based on nationality. A majority of the delegates lived in Europe (62), while a fraction came from the USA (2), thus, the actual colonial representation was in the minority (46). This verifies the assumption that Europe represented the centre for anti-imperialist network(s), especially the fact that the continent had anti-colonial hubs such as Paris, London and Berlin. Furthermore, Europe provided the anti-imperialist movement with a political space in which to develop and carry out political, organisational and social activism, a prerequisite lacking in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Yet, one must also understand that the “Delegationsliste” was only a prognosis of the anticipated colonial

participation, and that it was a reflection of a vision created by the International Secretariat and the “Commission on the LAI” (Bittelman). External explanations are also equally relevant, e.g. the national surveillance carried out by the German, British and French national security services, while internal explanations shed light on the difficulties of the International Secretariat to secure money to fund the travel costs for colonial delegations. The South African delegation was an illustrative example of this.

Josiah. T. Gumede intended to represent three organisations at the congress: the ANC, the native Bantu organisation *La Bafe*, and as the leader of the South African LAI Section. Other members in the South African delegation were Andrews of the *South African Trade Union Congress* (SATUC) and two unknown delegates of the *Furniture Workers’ Association* (FWA) and the communist *Native Federation of Trade Unions* (NAFTU).⁷⁸¹ Despite the International Secretariat’s grandiose ambitions, in the end, everything depended on finance. At the end of May, Münzenberg needed a “first contribution” to guarantee the travel arrangements for the South African delegation. Eventually, Andrews ended up being the only delegate from South Africa at the congress, representing both the SATUC and the FWA.⁷⁸²

The Indian and Indonesian delegations illustrate the Eurocentric character of the anti-colonial movement. The Indian delegation consisted of 27 delegates from the INC, the AITUC, the *Workers’ and Peasants’ Party* (WPP), the *All Indian Youth League*, the London INC section, the student group *Indian Association* from Oxford, the *Central European Indian Association* and the Glasgow branch of the *India Union*. Twelve of the delegates were planning to travel from India, while fourteen lived in Europe and the *Ghadr Party* delegate Rattan Singh was in Moscow. The Indonesian delegation had 13 delegates which, compared to the Indian delegation, was more of a homogenous group, dominated by Hatta’s leadership and 10 delegates of the PI. The trade unionist Moesso, and Achmed Sukarno of the *National Party of Indonesia*, were planning to leave Indonesia for Europe.

The delegates from Middle Eastern and African countries lived mainly in European cities. The delegate from East Africa, Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta of the *Kikuyu Central Association*, lived in London, as did the delegate of the *West African Students’ Association* (WASU) Lapido Solanke. The “Delegationsliste” also referred to invited “Negro organisations outside Africa” which included Kouyaté of the LDRN, the anti-colonial journal *Courir des Noirs* and unknown representatives from Guadeloupe and the Antilles, all of whom had Paris as a base for their

⁷⁸¹ RGASPI 542/1/92, 1-16, Delegationsliste, May-June, 1929. The South African delegation belonged to the “Britisch Afrika” delegation.

⁷⁸² RGASPI 542/1/30, 37, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 4/5-1929; RGASPI 542/1/92, 29, “Complete” [list of attendance], July, 1929.

activities. The Middle Eastern delegates also had Europe as their base: the *Pan-Arab Committee* was based in Paris, while the Islamic association *Islamia* and the *Arab Association* were active in Berlin.⁷⁸³

For the “Commission on the LAI”, despite its efforts to establish organisational and ideological models for the congress, the major challenge now was how to turn theory into practice.

*

Bound for Utopia

Chatto believed that the second international congress against imperialism and colonialism would celebrate the LAI’s achievements, and link together “anti-imperialist forces all over the world”.⁷⁸⁴

A utopian vision further elaborated by Bridgeman:

Of the highest importance to that ever growing number of men and women throughout the world who are menaced either with unemployment or exploitation by reason of the growth of imperialism. It is to the working class both in the capitalist countries and in the colonial countries that anti-imperialist organisation is particularly important.⁷⁸⁵

The comprehensive aim of the second LAI congress was to demonstrate a transformation of the sympathising organisation into a mass organisation. In England and the USA, the national sections organised public events from May to July, to draw attention to the LAI congress. The British LAI Section held a “Garden Party” in London in order to raise money to finance the journey and accommodation for the delegation in Paris. This was, nevertheless, an idea concocted by the Colonial Commission of the CPGB, instructing Olive Budden to arrange meetings (referred to by the CPGB as “attempts”) for the sole purpose of raising money, explaining that the party did not intend to finance the British delegation’s journey.⁷⁸⁶ In the USA, the AAAIL organised three public demonstrations in New York, on 17 and 30 May and on 2 June, whilst on 15 June, a final large conference at Irving Plaza was held. During these meetings, the AAAIL managed to consolidate the transcontinental character of the anti-imperialist movement in the USA, e.g. nationalists and anti-colonial activists, from the West Indies, China, and East Asia, together with members of Afro-

⁷⁸³ RGASPI 542/1/92, 29, “Complete” [list of attendance], July 1929.

⁷⁸⁴ Virendranath Chattophadyaya, „Zum antiimperialistische Weltkongress“, in *Der Rote Aufbau*, II. Jahrgang, June, 1929, Berlin, 134. According to Chatto, the second LAI congress would be a good place to discuss the Indian question and the situation in the Arab countries and a good venue for the “First International LAI Youth Conference”.

⁷⁸⁵ Reginald Bridgeman, “The World Struggle Against Imperialism”, in *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, July 1929, Number 7, pp.417-424.

⁷⁸⁶ *Pressedienst*, Nr. 22, 21/6-1929, 2; RGASPI 495/60/134a, 97-98, Minutes of Colonial Committee of CPGB, 15/4-1929.

American and Asian organisations: the ANLC, the *Harlem Tenants' League*, the *Haitian Patriotic Union* and the *Chinese Students' Alliance of America*.⁷⁸⁷

In June, both the Political Secretariat and the Standing Commission wanted to examine the work being done by the “Commission on the LAI” in Moscow. Hence, the “Commission on the LAI” had to urgently complete its resolutions, confirm the key speakers and nominate the delegates of both the ECCI delegation and the congress communist fraction, material and decisions which had to be finalised before being passing on to the Standing Commission. On 18 June, the “Commission on the LAI” set about finding a solution to most of these issues at its final meeting in Moscow, a session which confirmed just how far the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters were willing to go in order to secure control over the LAI congress. Present at the meeting were Manuilsky, Schubin, Melnitschansky, Ramirez, Freyer, Moirova, Kitaigorodsky, Mif, Piatnitsky, Bittelman and Münzenberg. Bittelman acted as Chairman and presented every issue on the agenda: the congress resolutions, the report on the Krestintern⁷⁸⁸ as well as the revised agenda for the congress. Furthermore, the “Commission on the LAI” suggested Pollitt as the speaker on the international political situation and the war threat, and introduced the members of both the ECCI delegation and the congress communist fraction. Most importantly, the attitude of the communists in the Congress Presidium *vis-à-vis* the non-communists was formulated during this final session of the commission.⁷⁸⁹

Münzenberg's statement at the session implied an alteration to the original plan, informing the “Commission on the LAI” that the International Secretariat had changed the location for the congress from Paris to Frankfurt am Main for “technological reasons”. These “reasons” were that

⁷⁸⁷ The “national office” of the AAAIL was located at 799 Broadway, Room 433, New York City, FOIA 61-6065/1e All American Anti-Imperialist League, “Call for a Conference Against Imperialism and Imperialist War”, 9/6-1929 [written on invitation]; FOIA 61-6065/1e All American Anti-Imperialist League, Letter from the FBI Director to Robert F. Kelley, 17/6-1929; *Pressedienst*, Nr. 22, 21/6-1929, 2. Robert F. Kelly, Chief of Division of Eastern European Affairs in Washington, heard of the Irving Plaza conference from a “strictly confidential source”, who notified him that the “foreign office of the Soviet Government had financed the conference”. Kelly could not, however, confirm any connection between the AAAIL and the CPUSA.

⁷⁸⁸ The prospect of sending a Krestintern delegation to the congress never materialised. Once the “Commission on the LAI” had reviewed the Krestintern's demands, e.g. that the LAI had to guarantee a member of the Krestintern a permanent seat in its Executive, allow the Krestintern to use the congress to hold informal conferences and include the peasant question on the agenda, the idea was dropped. Freyer considered the peasant question an easy task to solve. By writing a resolution, together with a member of the Krestintern (“The Struggle for the Emancipation of the Peasant Masses”), which a “Russian peasant” had to present at the congress with a focus on the collectivisation process in the Soviet Union; however, the “Commission on the LAI” did not approve of the other demands. If so, the Krestintern had to contact the WEB, which in turn had to endorse the idea and assist with the preparatory work for the conference, RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of meeting of Commission of the LAI, 3/5-1929; RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929.

⁷⁸⁹ RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929. For a copy of the protocol (English version), see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 38-40. The English version contains a section (omitted in the German version), stating that Melnitschansky, Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai and Bittelman intended to leave Moscow “for Berlin not later than 3rd July”. For Bittelman's request, see fol. RGASPI 495/7/9, 96-98, Protokoll N.45 der Sitzung der ständigen Kommission des Sekr. des EKKI, Moscow, 1/6-1929. It was Arnot who had invited Münzenberg to attend the conference.

French authorities did not intend to allow the LAI to organise a congress in Paris.⁷⁹⁰ This was a major setback for the International Secretariat, forcing them to do what Arnot had warned against: “avoid if possible” Germany.⁷⁹¹ Münzenberg stated that the congress might expose “political risks”, particularly as the LAI was expecting a turnout of some 200 delegates, a majority of whom were “Socialists [...] liberals and radicals”. Rumours also suggested that within these elements there existed a plot to stage a coup in “opposition to our leadership”, with Baldwin as coup leader, Münzenberg concluded. What Münzenberg was implying found support in the sanctioned attitude and preferred *modus operandi* amongst the communists at the congress, e.g. the session of the “Commission on the LAI” stated that every communist had to use every opportunity to protest against the “staggering nature of the so-called left-wing national reformists, as well as the position of the Baldwin-Maxton elements”.⁷⁹² On 27 June, the Political Secretariat endorsed this strategy, adding that “the new General Council and the LAI Executive Committee shall be put together in such a way that a communist majority is secured”.⁷⁹³

The ECCI delegation was the key to securing “a communist majority” at the congress, consisting of delegates from the KPD, the CPGB, the PCF, the CPCh, the CPH, the KIM, the WEB, the Profintern, Münzenberg and Bittelman.⁷⁹⁴ Shrouded in secrecy, the Standing Commission evaluated and nominated the composition of the congress communist fraction on 6 July, having Piatnitsky sign the document (“written in 1 copy”), before placing it in a “Sondermappe” (*Special Dossier*). Thus, according to the Standing Commission, Ferguson (pseudonym: “Neptun”) of the WEB, Pollitt as the KIM representative, Tsiu Wito [Chü Chiu-pai’s party name] of the CPCh, Melnitschansky and Sachianov of the Profintern, Heckert as the KPD delegate, Münzenberg and Bittelman would be representing the communist fraction. Additionally,

⁷⁹⁰ The basic message of the articles instructed the delegations and individuals, who were already on their way to Paris, to change their destination. At the opening session of the congress in Frankfurt am Main on July 21, Münzenberg declared that the change of venue was a result of the French government’s erratic behaviour and desire to cause confusion within the anti-imperialist movement. Furthermore, it was not possible to hold the congress in London due to the hostility of MacDonald and the Labour government, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929; *Pressedienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr.22, Berlin, 21/6-1929; “Der Weltkongress der Liga gegen Imperialismus in Frankfurt a. M.”, in *Inprecorr*, 4/7-1929, Nr.58, 1393-1394; *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Nr.58, Frankfurt a. M., 21/7-1929, p.1519.

⁷⁹¹ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 31, (Confidential) Minutes of meeting of the Commission of the LAI, 3/5-1929.

⁷⁹² The communist sector (see further below) intended to fulfil two objectives at the congress. Firstly, the attending participants had to declare their support of the congress resolutions and, secondly, every communist delegate had to put forward arguments from “a communist point of view”, which essentially focused on the need to unite movements of a proletarian, communist or colonial revolutionary nature into a vigilant anti-imperialist movement, see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 38-40, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929.

⁷⁹³ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 55, Confidential directives from the Political Secretariat to the “Commission on the LAI”, Moscow, 27/6-1929.

⁷⁹⁴ Münzenberg expected the ECCI delegation to arrive in Berlin in “not later than 10 days” to assist with the final preparatory work, see fol. RGASPI 535/1/212, 16-18, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the “Commission on the LAI” (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929.

in Moscow other individuals received the instruction to act as ECCI deputies: Worowsky, Tschaplina, Magyar, Katayama, Haidar, Patterson and Ford. However, they were also duty bound to attend the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow in July and, therefore, would not be able to travel to Frankfurt before the plenum had ended. The ECCI delegation and the communist fraction were to guarantee that the LAI congress was turned into a demonstration in defence of the Soviet Union and a protest against the war threat, the Standing Commission concluded, something that would contribute to enforcing “the new line” on the LAI. Hence, the ECCI delegation had to gain control over the congress proceedings:

As the ECCI delegation has to control the progression of the Congress and, if a Comrade from Moscow travels to the Congress, another Comrade must immediately be ready to leave the Congress. Comrade Wassiljew is instructed to mobilise Comrades [in Moscow, author’s own remark].⁷⁹⁵

The idea was, therefore, to sustain the system of control for the duration of the congress, a prerequisite requiring the delegation and the communist fraction to hold closed and, above all, secret meetings with other communists: an undertaking which Bittelman, along with Magyar, Ferguson and Smeral (“if he is in Germany during the congress”) would supervise. According to the Standing Commission’s instructions, every deputy, as well as the members of the ECCI delegation, would have to conceal their activities in order to be able to infiltrate the delegations in Frankfurt am Main.⁷⁹⁶ This exceedingly conspiratorial behavioural scheme was nevertheless already familiar to the communists and, thus, the stage was set to impose “the new line” on the LAI.

Münzenberg returned to Berlin only to find the International Secretariat on the verge of panic. Without any money in the “congress account” and the congress about to begin, it seemed impossible to be able to finalise the administrative preparations. Münzenberg contacted Bittelman, to explain, “I will not take the responsibility of organising the congress when every possible method of securing money has failed. I am therefore forced to take an aeroplane and visit you, and convince you”.⁷⁹⁷ In the end, however, Münzenberg did not travel to Moscow; instead, the Standing Commission assisted in solving the crisis in Berlin. Was this the end of the LAI’s

⁷⁹⁵ RGASPI 495/7/10, 96, Sondermappe, streng vertraulich, Protokoll No [illegible] der Sitzung der ständigen Kommission des Sekretariats des EKKI, Moscow, 6/7-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Ulbricht, Garlandi, Kuusinen, Bittelman, Wassiljew and Heimo. The Standing Commission had, however, not yet agreed on the delegates from the CPH and PCF.

⁷⁹⁶ RGASPI 495/7/10, 96, Sondermappe, streng vertraulich, Protokoll No. [illegible] der Sitzung der ständigen Kommission des Sekretariats des EKKI, Moscow, 6/7-1929. The strategy was not a new one, but rather the ECCI delegation was merely continuing the practice adopted at, for example, the Brussels congress in 1927.

⁷⁹⁷ Münzenberg demanded that Bittelman transfer \$500 to the International Secretariat as soon as possible, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 77, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Bittelman, Moscow, 4/7-1929.

organisational and ideological preparations? Apparently, a final episode contributed to defining the political discourse of the second LAI congress: the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow in July.

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Confirming “Class against Class”: the Tenth ECCI Plenum, 3- 19 July 1929

The united front strategy, which we used to carry out from below, we have since then no longer pursued from below, but from above. We have through our tactic a stable position among the broad working masses, [and] in the mass movements of the proletariat.

Kuusinen, 16th Session, 10th ECCI Plenum, Moscow, 13/7-1929

At the 16th Session of the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow on 13 July, Kuusinen urged the delegates to understand his fear that the international communist movement was about to become an isolated political phenomenon. However, this observation was not a critique of the Comintern’s policy shift at the Sixth International Congress. Far from it, Kuusinen believed the doctrinal shift from below (“the united front”) to from above (“the new line”) had been a correct and wise decision. Above all, the new Comintern policy had improved the ties between “leading Comrades” in the national sections (the communist parties), as well as strengthened connections with the “life of the proletarian mass movement”, Kuusinen argued.⁷⁹⁸ This was an argument which, in itself, verifies Kuusinen’s ideological belief, as he delivered his reflections on the international communist movement in front of 108 delegates, representing parties and organisations from 30 countries, at the plenum.⁷⁹⁹ The peculiar and extraordinary impression left by the Tenth ECCI Plenum, is that the event served the purpose of confirming the correctness of the Comintern’s policy change, with the involved actors using the opportunity to both praise and demand obedience

⁷⁹⁸ RGASPI 495/168/120, 1-25, X Plenum, 16. Sitzung/nachmittags, Moscow, 13/7-1929.

⁷⁹⁹ The delegates were categorised as “Present Members of the ECCI”; “Absent [Members of the ECCI]”; “Present ECCI Candidates”; “Absent ECCI Candidates”; “National Representatives with Consultative Rights”; Krestintern; Profintern; IAH; KIM; IRH; ILS; and “ECCI Apparatus”. For the lists of attendance, see fol. RGASPI 495/168/151, 3-8. The number given in Kahan (1990, pp.43-44) – 108 – corresponds with the lists of attendance; however, Kahan’s summary did not include the 153 delegates who were expected to attend the plenum. This document also discloses pseudonym/real name and origin: Banderas/Stanislaw Pestkowski (Poland); Bennett/David Lipeč [Petrovsky] (USSR); Boskovic/Filip Filipovic (Yugoslavia); Chang Piao/Chang Kuo-tau (China); Ercoli/Palmiro Togliatti (Italy); Garlandi/Ruggero Grieco (Italy); Gorkic/Josip Cizinski (Yugoslavia); Ledo-Amerigo/Fernando Lacerda (Brazil); Leo/Walter Häbich (Germany); Lovera/Luigi Amadesi (Italy); Miff/Michail Firman (USSR); Tanaka/Yamamoto Kenzo (Japan); Tsju Vito/Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai (China); Vitkovsky/Adam Landy (Poland). The Tenth ECCI Plenum essentially focused on the international situation and the tasks of the Comintern; the economic struggle and the tasks of the communist parties; the international day of struggle against the imperialist war; and the expulsion of Bukharin, Benjamin Gitlow, Serra and Humbert-Droz from the ECCI Presidium, as well as Jilek, Lovestone and Spector’s expulsion from the ECCI. The colonial question was not the focus of attention according to the agenda, see Degras vol.III 1965, p.36.

to “the new line”. The phraseology of “the new line” had by now gained its credentials within the Comintern, e.g. without any exception, “the new line” endorsed the categorisation of political opponents as “social fascists”. Thus, by 1929, this harsh policy sanctioned the political agenda of “class against class”, which had begun to filter through in the Comintern in 1927-28. Hence, the above was part of the process whereby the Comintern commanded the national sections to learn and apply Bolshevization as the guiding principle for their political and organisational work. “The new line” abided by its own chronological rationale, including resentment and a radicalised attitude towards the social democratic movement. Introduced formally during the Ninth ECCI Plenum in 1928, and endorsed at the Sixth International Congress, “the new line” approach reached its zenith at the Tenth ECCI Plenum. Additionally, the plenum officially relieved Bukharin of his functions within the Comintern. For Kuusinen, however, the primary question was how to maintain and develop the antagonism of the communist movement *vis-à-vis* social democracy. According to Kuusinen’s report on “The International Situation and the next task of the C. I.”, the Comintern imposed “the obligation of all the Sections of the Communist International to intensify their fight against international Social Democracy *as the social base of capitalism* [added in handwriting by Kuusinen]”.⁸⁰⁰ This was a central argument within the rhetoric of the “class against class” policy, and, with reference to Kuusinen’s statement at the plenum, the session was the Comintern’s “watershed”, as it explicitly declared obedience towards the omnipotent influence of Stalin and also revealed the “militant agenda” of “the Third Period”. This plenum also witnessed the definitive end of democratic centralism, only to be replaced by the *milieu* and rigid structure of bureaucratic centralism within the Comintern apparatus.⁸⁰¹ Before the opening of the plenum, Manuilsky introduced the principal aim of what looks like a militant agenda:

Firm Bolshevik foundations have now been laid in that all elements which attempt to split the communist movement must suffer shipwreck [...] there can be no communist movement outside the Comintern.⁸⁰²

Despite the increased militancy of the Comintern at the plenum, which professed “firm Bolshevik foundations”, did any of the sessions address the colonial question? If so, how did the plenum conceptualise this question in the context of “class against class”? As introduced in the previous chapter, is it possible to distinguish a discussion in terms of a “Colonial Conference”, which the

⁸⁰⁰ According to Kuusinen: “[T]he Plenum of the ECCI proposes that special attention be paid to an energetic struggle [inserted by hand] against the “Left” wing of Social Democracy [inserted by hand] which retards the process of the disintegration of Social Democracy by sowing the illusion that it represents an opposition to the Social Democratic leadership whereas, in fact, it whole-heartedly supports the policy of Social Fascism”, see fol. RGASPI 495/168/14, 50-69, (English version) The International Situation and the next task of the C. I., (Report by Kuusinen, vertraulich), July, 1929.

⁸⁰¹ McDermott & Agnew 1996, pp.85-103. For the “militant agenda”, see Worley 2002, pp.119-120.

⁸⁰² Degras vol.III 1965, 36.

Eastern Secretariat was expecting to hold in connection with the ECCI Plenum? The final question addresses whether it is possible to verify how many of the delegates at the plenum also attended the second LAI congress which opened on 21 July, i.e. two days after the plenum had ended. The Tenth ECCI Plenum and the second LAI congress do not only share a chronology; apparently, the plenum determined the ideological nature of the LAI congress. Retrospectively speaking, the shift from the united front strategy to the principle of “class against class” was a contradiction in terms of the LAI’s activities, thus, it had a long-term effect on the purpose and aims of the LAI as a sympathising communist organisation. It is therefore plausible to assume that the decision-makers at the headquarters of the Comintern in Moscow deliberately deceived the LAI at the congress in 1929, driven by a motive to assess the practical implications of the “class against class” principle. Manuilsky’s conclusion on the historical heritage of the united front, delivered at the plenum, bears witness to this:

We [Comintern] never thought of the united front as a formula valid for all times and countries. There was a time when we negotiated with the Second and Two-and-a-half Internationals, with the General Council of the Trade Unions and Purcell. Now we are stronger and therefore use more aggressive methods in our struggle to win the majority of the working class.⁸⁰³

Manuilsky’s conclusion was not only a repeat of Kuusinen’s statement on the isolation of the international communist movement; it also addressed the Comintern’s criticism of the very *raison d’être* of a sympathising organisation such as the LAI. Thus, Manuilsky had expounded the theoretical platform for the communists at the LAI congress in Frankfurt am Main.

At the plenum, some delegates briefly discussed the colonial and semi-colonial question during the sessions. For example, Lozovsky argued that the Indian strike movement was a complicated issue in the context of organising proletarian support campaigns, particularly the Meerut Conspiracy Trial. Yet, in the end, Lozovsky realised that it was up to the communist parties in the “imperialist countries” to “systematically aid” the colonial freedom struggle, a remark that had been merely taken from Kuusinen’s colonial theses. According to the draft of a telegram (completed at the plenum), the primary concern for the Comintern was to protest against the “henchmen of English Imperialism” in India and, by doing so, ease the process of establishing a movement of proletarian solidarity in support of the defendants.⁸⁰⁴ Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai [“Tsiu Vito”] addressed the Indian question in similar terms and included an accusation of betrayal

⁸⁰³ Degras vol.III 1965, 37.

⁸⁰⁴ For Lozovsky, see Degras vol.III 1965, pp.62-63. Taken from *Imprecorr*, ix, 46, 979, 4/9-1929; RGASPI 495/168/148, 7, Telegramm-Entwurf. An die im Meerut-Prozess angeklagten Vertreter der indischen Arbeitern und Bauern, X Plenum ECCI, Moscow, July, 1929.

against Nehru for having deceived the revolutionary masses in India by simply posing as a leader of social democracy. This, therefore, meant that the colonial communist parties had to execute “a more intensive struggle against right-wing deviations”. It was, nevertheless, on the basis of the opinion of G. A. K. Luhani, a communist from India, that the Comintern chose to define its approach towards India at the plenum. At the plenum, Luhani performed the act of self-criticism in relation to his former ties to and support of Roy, concluding with an appraisal of Kuusinen’s colonial theses in the context of India:

The de-colonisation of India can only be the result of a “strong anti-imperialist policy” (Colonial Theses), a policy expressed in the revolutionary action of the mass of exploited under the leadership of the proletariat. [...] Roy systematically deceived the Communist International through his double political book-keeping [...] ⁸⁰⁵

There is no explicit discussion or reference to the LAI in the published and unofficial protocols of the plenum. However, interjections by Lozovsky, Luhani and Manuilsky indicate a two-fold understanding of the colonial question in the Comintern in 1929. Firstly, the Comintern’s colonial policy was following the correct ideological direction and, secondly, the attitude introduced by Manuilsky supported a frame of mind which the actors involved in preparing the “Colonial Conference” or the LAI congress in Moscow, and who later attended the LAI congress, eagerly carried out in practice.

The thematic connection between the Tenth ECCI Plenum and the second LAI congress is easy to identify for reasons other than pure ideology. The group of delegates at the plenum involved in preparing the LAI congress, and who would later travel to Frankfurt, all had a thorough understanding of the LAI. According to the list of attendance from the plenum, it is possible to discern which actors were directly connected to the LAI, the congress and the “Colonial Conference”. As noted in the categories below, my aim is to verify the extent of knowledge of “the new line” among the actors (present at the ECCI Plenum) who later travelled to the LAI congress. For example, Bittelman had been in tune with the final and critical phase of the organisational and political preparations, while Pollitt had been at the plenum and then travelled to Frankfurt to deliver a speech authored by Pavel Mif.

⁸⁰⁵ Degras vol.III 1965, p.41, 45, 49. Taken from *Inprecorr*, ix, 46, 973, 4/9-1929; RGASPI 495/168/148, 10-11, Declaration of Comrade Luhani, X Session, X Plenum ECCI, Moscow, 8/7-1929; On Luhani, see Lazitch 1986, p.282.

Table 7.4: Making the Connection: The LAI Congress and the “Colonial Conference”

1. Colonial Conference (7) – Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Bittelman, Josefowitsch, Ford, *Ewert*
2. LAI Congress (Commissions & Preparations) (19) – Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Bittelman, Bell, Kolarov, Bela Kun, Lozovsky, Molotov, Mif, Gusev, Moirova, Ulbricht, Kornblum, Ford, Chü Chiu-pai/Tsiu Wito, Wassiljew, Schubin, Petrovsky
3. Frankfurt congress (9) – Bittelman, Ford, Misiano, Monmousseau, Pollitt, Chü Chiu-pai/Tsiu Wito, *Heckert, Darsono, Dimitrov*

Note: Names in italics refer to absence at the Tenth ECCI Plenum.

Source: RGASPI 495/168/151, 1-8; RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [lists of delegations], July, 1929.

The final category, the “Frankfurt Congress”, indicates that six delegates attended both the plenum in Moscow and then later the congress, whereas three individuals who were not present in Moscow nevertheless turned up in Frankfurt. Thus, it is logical to assume that these delegates acted as apprentices of the *Manuilskyan* theme “there was a time when we negotiated”, a commitment carried out to the fullest by Ford, Pollitt and Chü Chiu-pai, while Bittelman observed how the policy of “the new line” and the communists put the envisaged strategy into practice. The Tenth ECCI Plenum was an event which set the scene for the political discussion and results of the second LAI congress; thus, it had a lasting effect on both the LAI and on the anti-imperialist movement, once the communist sector had crashed head-on with the non-communist elements in Frankfurt am Main.

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Utopia Disrupted, Frankfurt am Main, 20 – 28/7-1929

The First Congress of the LAI in Brussels worked out the *theoretical* [author's italics] programme of the League and set up the principles of the anti-imperialist struggle. The Second World Congress of the League in Frankfurt must forge the weapon to carry out the programme which has been adopted. The Frankfurt congress must help to *transform* [author's italics] the LAI from an association of loosely connected propaganda groups into a strong an active fighting mass organisation.

Letter from Chatto to Lindhagen, Frankfurt am Main, 18/7-1929⁸⁰⁶

The “Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism” convened at the Zoological Gardens in Frankfurt am Main on 21 July. Before the official opening in the congress hall, the LAI had organised an “impressive demonstration” on the streets in Frankfurt, an event described as a passionate anti-imperialist phenomenon, according to *Inprecorr*.⁸⁰⁷ However, the Frankfurt Congress was an event and tumultuous scene which witnessed the derailment of the utopian vision of turning the LAI into a mass organisation. My aim here is not to disclose or evaluate every question addressed and debated at the congress; but rather to analyse the topics which caused controversy during the congress debates. A fundamental starting point is to make it clear that the communists – referred to here as the *communist sector* – more or less reduced the non-communist delegates to passive bystanders at the congress. Above all, this perspective discloses the rationale and logic for how and why the congress spiralled out of the control of the official organiser: the International Secretariat. The focal point at the congress was the agenda and its political discourse, yet, who were the supporters and targets? The congress turned into a scene characterised by non-pluralistic debates on India, China, the role of the trade unions and the Negro question, in which the *pièce de résistance* was the pre-determined repetitive mantra in defence of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, and against the war threat. For the communist sector, the congress functioned as a forum to urge the LAI to “cleanse its ranks” of the “agents of imperialism”. After the congress, Emile Burns summarised the event in *Labour Monthly* thus: “the agenda contained one general subject – the political situation and the war danger – and a number of more limited subjects”. On 20 July, the LAI Executive gathered for a meeting in Frankfurt with

⁸⁰⁶ Chatto “welcomed” Lindhagen after he had arrived at “Pension Winkler” in Frankfurt am Main on 18 July, SCA CL Collection, volume 131, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Lindhagen, Frankfurt, 18/7-1929; SCA volume 131, “Information and Press Service – Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress. From the 20th to the 31st July 1929 in Frankfurt am Main, No. 1, English edition”, pp.1-4.

⁸⁰⁷ McMeekin erroneously concludes that the LAI was liquidated in 1929, see McMeekin 2003, p.208; *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Nr. 64, p.1519; Gross 1967, p.210.

the sole purpose of endorsing the congress agenda, concluding “[T]here can be no doubt [that] the most valuable” question was “the international situation and the war danger”.⁸⁰⁸ One of the communist sector’s fundamental aims was to target some of the non-communist delegates, addressing them in callous terms, e.g. Maxton and the ILP, or the delegate of the INC, Shivaprasad Gupta. In comparison to the 1927 Brussels Congress, an event where the communists had remained in the background in order to evaluate the reactions and behaviour of the congress crowd, the Frankfurt Congress displayed a diametrically opposed attitude. Nonetheless, the behaviour of the communist sector was not an expression of spontaneity; it had been a meticulously planned strategy, conceived with precision at Comintern headquarters and, once on location, it assumed a harsh and brutal nature. For the International Secretariat, the initial belief had been to use the Frankfurt Congress as a mobilising source to unify the anti-imperialist movement. However, the congress was convened at the moment in the history of international communism when the Comintern had resolved to show no tolerance towards its principal enemy: the socialist movement.

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A Note on the Sources: Biographies, Scholarly Interpretations and their Limitations

Recollections and scholarly interpretations of the Frankfurt Congress are scarce and, in some cases, inaccurate. Babette Gross’ biography is one of the few accounts describing the actual congress. However, Gross’ account has, therefore, assumed the character of a seminal book in the historiography of the LAI, with, for example, Imanuel Geiss’ depiction of the congress being a rehash of Gross’ narrative on how the Comintern “pushed aside” the “bourgeoisie nationalist element”. Another erroneous factor is intentional negligence. Vijay Prashad avoids mentioning the congress at all in his discussion of the LAI, only to concede that the Comintern simply strove to implement a “homogenous strategy for world revolution” without explaining either how or why. Furthermore, Gross’ narrative is, in some respects, flawed by misconceptions which have acquired a second life in Barooah and McMeekin’s biographical accounts.⁸⁰⁹ Gross wrote that Manuilsky attended the congress, where he led the ruthless attack against the socialist and colonial delegates. The crux of the matter is that Manuilsky was never in Frankfurt, but in Moscow, and, according to

⁸⁰⁸ Emile Burns, “World Congress of the League against Imperialism”, in *Labour Monthly*, Vol.11, September 1929, No.9, London, p.559-563; RGASPI 542/1/32, 52-53, Sitzung und Beschlüsse des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Frankfurt am Main, 20/7-1929. Münzenberg, Chattophadyaya, INC representative Shivaprasad Gupta, Maxton, Fimmen, Bridgeman, Saklatvala, Baldwin, Hatta, Melnitschansky, and Chedli attended the meeting. The protocol is also filed at IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/71, (copy) Sitzung und Beschlüsse des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, Frankfurt am Main, 20/7-1929.

⁸⁰⁹ Gross 1967, p.210; Geiss 1968, p.258; Prashad 2007, p.30; Barooah 2004, p.267, 281 (see footnote 103); McMeekin 2003, p.208.

the document, the “Complete” list of attendance from the congress, Gross must have simply confused Melnitschansky with Manuilsky,⁸¹⁰ particularly as the day-to-day reports of the congress, published by *Inprecorr* in July-August, did not mention Manuilsky’s name on one occasion. In fact, Manuilsky had returned to Moscow in June to assume a leading position within the Comintern after having completed his tenure as the leader of the WEB in Berlin. Thus, if Manuilsky had been in Frankfurt, his name would have appeared in these *Inprecorr* reports.

Any empirical analysis of the Frankfurt Congress is a daunting task, characterised by obstacles one has to surmount and overcome. The documents, printed commentaries and summaries of speeches, congress material, lists of attendance, correspondence and published articles do, nevertheless, provide a thorough picture of the congress.⁸¹¹ However, what do these sources tell us? In comparison to the empirical richness of the Brussels Congress, the documents connected with the Frankfurt Congress are not orderly, particularly if one compares them with the clarity of the official protocol from the Brussels Congress (*Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont*), and in light of the fact that Münzenberg seemed disinclined to write any reports at all during the congress. The closest account, in time, were the *Inprecorr* reports, however, their biased nature contributes to a lack of accuracy, a criticism which also applies to other articles on the congress in the communist and socialist press.⁸¹² Nevertheless, what has previously been a gap in the history of the LAI has achieved a fuller understanding through the narratives in the writings of Emile Burns, Bela Kun and Ludwig Magyar, in addition to the reports Münzenberg wrote after the congress, and those from Bittelman, the Eastern Secretariat, Hatta and the socialist Bjarne Braatoy, as well as Ulmen’s biography on Wittfogel.

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⁸¹⁰ Gross 1967, p.209.

⁸¹¹ The LAI Collection at the IISG contains the majority of official documents from the congress (commentaries and summaries of speeches, printed material, telegrams handed out during the congress, leaflets, a printed form to be filled in by the delegates, resolutions and the congress manifesto). The British pacifist, Oscar H. Swede (1900 – 1942), gathered a variety of documents on location, later handed over to the IISG. Two reports by the socialist Bjarne Braatoy in the LSI Collection (sent to Adler in August), recorded the atmosphere and behaviour of the congress crowd, above all that of the communist sector. Additionally, Chatto had invited Carl Lindhagen to deliver a speech (which he did) and, while on location in Frankfurt, he collected a number of documents (summaries of speeches by Pollitt, Ford, Ledebour and others and administrative information on the congress proceedings), later filed in the LAI dossier at the SCA.

⁸¹² Communist journals, or newspapers, for example, *Labour Monthly*, the IAH journal *Mahnruf*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Berlin am Morgen*, *Welt am Abend*, and *A-I-Z*, the French communist paper *Monde* and the organs of the KPD, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Die Rote Fahne*, published articles on the congress. Another biased source is the antagonism of the German pro-colonial journal, *Übersee-und Kolonialzeitung* which in an article discussed the apparent “weakness” of the LAI at the congress.

A Note on the Delegates and the Delegations

On 20 July, Chatto informed the LAI Executive that the International Secretariat was expecting 400 delegates to turn up at the congress. This is, however, a problematic figure to confirm. According to Braatoy's observation, after having participated at the congress, there were 200 delegates representing 169 organisations along with an additional 100 guests at the Zoological Gardens. Alternatively, as noted in the official material, *Information and Press Service*, released by the International Secretariat and handed over to the delegates upon arrival at the congress hall, there were 399 delegates and 2000 guests representing 124 organisations, along with 11 national LAI sections from 33 countries.⁸¹³ All of the above are clearly estimates. Rather it is from the "Complete" [list of attendance], compiled by the International Secretariat on location, that a concise understanding of the size of individual participation at the Frankfurt Congress emerges, confirming that 263 delegates from 31 countries and regions representing 99 organisations attended the congress.⁸¹⁴ Additionally, the "Complete" list discloses the political leanings of almost every delegate:

Table 7.5: Political and Colonial Representation, Frankfurt am Main, 21-27/7-1929

LAI Members	58 (22%)
Communist	88 (33%)
Non-communist	57 (22%)
Colonial Organisations	60 (23%)
Total:	263 (100%)

The communist sector dominated the congress, having the delegates located with all due caution in national delegations. Particularly within the LAI sections, the communists dominated the representation, e.g. Münzenberg, Hans Jäger, Lucie Peters, Olive Budden, Wittfogel, Saklatvala and Burns. In addition there were the non-communist members, Maxton, Bridgeman, Hatta, Fimmen and Leon Feuchtwanger. The LAI also introduced itself as a transcontinental organisation, boasting sections in Germany, England, France, Holland, USA, Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, Argentina, Uruguay and Peru. However, this list also exposed the inability of the LAI to establish itself in either Asia or Africa.

⁸¹³ RGASPI 542/1/35, 52, Sitzung und Beschlüsse des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Frankfurt am Main, 20/7-1929; IISG LSI Collection, 3050/61, Report from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zürich, 6/8-1929. Both Chatto and Münzenberg had mentioned the figure of 400 delegates prior to the congress, Willi Münzenberg, "Vor dem Antiimperialistische Weltkongress in Frankfurt", *Inprecorr*, No. 62, pp.1475-1476.; SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, "Information and Press Service. Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress", No.1 (English Edition). According to Degras, total number of delegates was 260, out of which 84 were of a "colonial" origin, Degras vol.III 1965, pp.78-79.

⁸¹⁴ The figure of 99 organisations does not, however, include the national LAI sections, instead, the sections have to be viewed as being representatives for one organisation, the LAI, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, "Complete" [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929.

Anti-colonial organisations in Europe attended the congress in droves, although the anticipated appearance of colonial delegations arriving *en route* from the colonies turned into a disappointment. The Indian, Chinese and Indonesian delegations dominated the Asian influx in Frankfurt. The Indian delegation consisted of 23 individuals, only four of whom (the INC representative Gupta and his wife, G. L. Amin and Annapamandanda) had travelled from India, whilst fourteen lived in Europe, Rattan Singh had arrived from Moscow, and Rajani Palme Dutt, who appeared as the delegate of the London-based *Workers' Welfare League of India*, lived in Brussels.⁸¹⁵ A logical explanation as to why the Indian delegation had such a predominantly European character was the sanctioned policy of British security services to restrict the approval of valid travel permits for LAI activists in India. Gupta stated at the congress that “owing to passport and other difficulties” it was impossible “to send a strong delegation” from India. The delegations from China and Indonesia had faced a similar dilemma; hence, a majority of the delegates arrived from different places in Europe, rather than from their countries of origin. The Indonesian delegation was under the control of Hatta and the PI, consisting of delegates from Switzerland and the Netherlands. The Chinese delegation had thirteen delegates and was of a more diverse character, yet not one of them had arrived from China. Six delegates lived in Moscow (Tsiu Wito/Chü Chiu-pai, the trade union delegates Li Fang and Huang Ping, Dschau Hau of the Chinese IRH section, Lo-tin-ju of the Chinese KIM section and Hansin Liau, who had briefly returned to Germany), while the others lived either in Berlin, The Hague, or Delft in the Netherlands. The Korean delegation consisted of two individuals: Sue Ring Hei of the *Korean Association* in Paris, and Kim of the Berlin-based *Association of Korean Students*. “The well-known Japanese revolutionary leader” Sen Katayama attended as the delegate of the *Communist Party of Japan*, along with two Japanese delegates from Germany, Yamada and Teido Kunizaki of the KPD auxiliary organisation the *Japanische revolutionäre Gruppe*. The places of residence for Senda of the Japanese *Anti-war Association* and Migake [?] remain unknown. Two Palestinian delegates acted as the Middle Eastern delegation – Karmi of the *Arbeiterfraktion* and Ben Saul of the “Left-section” of the *Poale Zion*, while A. Téhéransky and Alimard of the *Communist Party of Persia* represented the Persian delegation.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹⁵ The Indian delegation consisted of Chatto as LAI secretary, A. C. N. Nambiar (*Association of Indian Journalists*), the INC London section (Mazumdar, the Jussuf sisters, and Sinha), Naidu, Mirza and Saikh from the *Central European Association of Indians*, the *Indian Student Union* in Glasgow (N. N. Bose, J. J. Saha, and A. Roy) and Muhammed Iqbal Schedai of the *Indian Revolutionary Association* in Tashkent. Five individuals remain impossible to confirm: Sedhi (*Indian Trade Union*), Thoia (*Jugendliga Bombay*), Satyadev, Lal, and Dinkar (guests), RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929; SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “Letters of Greeting etc. sent to the Congress”, Frankfurt am Main, July 1929 [published and handed out at the congress]; see Callaghan (1993, p.99) for *Workers' Welfare League of India*, and Rajani Palme Dutt.

⁸¹⁶ RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929.

The Latin American delegation was a homogenous group. The International Secretariat had hoped to see eleven delegations, but ended up with seven delegations from Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Columbia, Argentine, Uruguay and Peru, consisting of sixteen individuals, out of which ten had travelled from Latin America, and six from Europe.⁸¹⁷ The African and Afro-American movement nevertheless had a widely-spread representation around the world. Andrews from South Africa; the North African Boukur of the Paris branch of the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* and Ibrahim Youssef from Egypt. Patterson was a member of the USA delegation and acted as the ANLC delegate. Other members were Henry Rosemond, who represented three organisations (the *Furriers' Union* in New York, the USA LAI Section and the *Haitian Patriotic Union*), and Pickens. Kouyaté who was the representative for West Africa as the LDRN delegate, was included in the French delegation. Jomo Kenyatta appeared as the delegate of Eastern Africa. According to the *Information and Press Service*, Kenyatta perceived the congress as an “opportunity of putting the case of my people in Kenya” to the European anti-imperialist movement.⁸¹⁸ Ford belonged to the delegation from the Soviet Union (“USSR”), and acted as a delegate of the Profintern “Negro Committee” [ITUCNW]. During the congress, Pickens openly questioned Ford and his ties to the communist movement and demanded an honest explanation of Ford’s adventures during his long-term residence in Moscow.⁸¹⁹ Braatoy observed how Ford avoided giving Pickens an answer. Additionally, Ford was the informal leader of a “Negro Delegation ... with 10 members representing 13 organisations”.⁸²⁰

How did the individual character and distribution of the communist sector come across at the congress? Firstly, a majority of the communist delegates introduced themselves as representatives

⁸¹⁷ Latin America was represented by Mexico (Hurwitz, representative of the LAI Executive and the KIM in Mexico and the Caribbean; L. G. Arzubide of the LAI Section in Mexico City), Venezuela (Alfons Goldschmidt, Pedro Brito Alfonso, and Aurelio Fortiul from the *Revolutionary Party of Venezuela*), Cuba (J. Chelala-Aquilera and J. Borges of the *Verband der kubanischen Emigranten* in Paris; Fernandez Sanchez: the Cuban LAI Section and *Trade Union Federation*), Columbia (trade unionist Ravel Mahecha, Laureano B. Cayredo of the Columbian LAI Section and *Communist Party of Columbia*), Argentina (Jose Vital Mata from the Argentinean LAI Section), Uruguay (Martinez of the *Labour Association* in Montevideo; Luis Pierre of the *Antiiperialistische Jugend*; A. Fierro from the Uruguay LAI Section), Peru (Indorio R. Perez from the Peru LAI Section and *Lateinamerikanische Studenten* in Paris; Estelle Perez as “guest”), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929.

⁸¹⁸ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, Information and Press Service. Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress, No.1 (English Edition) 1929.

⁸¹⁹ RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929; IISG Labour and Socialist International Collection, 3050/64-64b, Letter from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zürich, 13/8-1929.

⁸²⁰ Ford recognised his supervision of the Profintern “Negro Bureau” at the congress in his “Autobiography”, RGASPI 495/261/6747, 6, Autobiography by Ford, April 1932; RGASPI 495/155/77, 184-186, Report on the Negro Question of the League against Imperialism Congress, Moscow, 3/10-1929. The members of the Negro delegation were [in brackets: affiliation and nationality/race]: Ford (the ITUCNW; USA/Negro), Pickens (the NAACP, the *John Brown Memorial Association*; USA/Negro), Henry Rosemond (the *Haitian Patriotic Union*, the *Furriers' Union* in New York; USA/Negro), Garan Kouyaté (the LDRN; France/West Africa/Negro), Johnstone Kenyatta (the *Kikuyu Central Association*; Kenya East Africa/Negro), Josef de Keersmaecker (the KIM, the Colonial Commission of the *Communist Party of Belgium*; Belgium/White), Andrews (the *South African Trade Union Congress*; South Africa/White) and Ali (the CGTU; Algeria/Paris/White).

of organisations and associations, rather than as members of communist parties. However, the aim here is not to postulate on some kind of stigma based on guilt by association for the simple reason that these individuals were *communists* in belief and appearance. Rather, the purpose here is to illustrate and discuss how the communist sector controlled the congress on all levels. While some of the communist delegates have already been introduced (Ford, Patterson, Katayama, Tsiu Wito/Chü Chiu-pai and Münzenberg), an in-depth analysis will, nevertheless, illustrate the breadth and strength of this sector. For example, Melnitschansky was the leader of the Profintern delegation, supported by the Soviet delegates Timsch and Sachianova.⁸²¹ The European communist movement had an array of actors present in Frankfurt. Monmousseau and Herclet acted as delegates of the CGTU, Ferguson as a delegate of the CPGB [unofficially as a member of the WEB], Saklatvala appeared as a member of the LAI Executive, Pollitt of the *National Minority Movement* (NMM) and Dimitrov attended under the pseudonym “Helmuth” as a delegate of the *Kommunistische Balkanföderation*, de Visser of the CPH, Gabrielle Cormon of the PCF and Josef de Keermacker of the KIM section in Belgium. The communist delegates from Germany nonetheless dominated the scene at the Frankfurt Congress. For example, Flieg and Heckert attended as members of the ZK KPD, Peter Schiffer of the KPD Cologne party district, Fritz Knittel and Robert Leibrand of the KIM and Josef Dünner from the *Kommunistische Studenten Fraktion* (KOSTUFRA). In total, the German delegation consisted of 79 delegates, dominated by organisations linked to the communist movement either overtly or covertly, e.g. the IRH, the IAH, and *Sportintern*.⁸²²

The agenda for the congress, and its anticipated outcome amongst the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, was the central issue. As presented below, a review of the agenda reveals how the communist sector dominated every topic at the congress, which illustrates how the event seemed to follow a pre-destined rationale in order to comply with the Comintern’s endorsed strategy. The following chronological table outlines the congress and its agenda from 20 July to 28 July, and its key speakers (in brackets):

⁸²¹ The delegation from the Soviet Union (“USSR”) consisted of Müller (MOPR), Kossarew and Boretzky (*Russian Communist Youth Association/KIM*), William Rust, Kuno [?], Diek [?] (KIM), Alfred [?] (Profintern Youth secretariat) and Ford.

⁸²² RGASPI 542/1/92, 17-32, “Complete” [list of attendance], Frankfurt am Main, July 1929; SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress. Agenda, 1929.

Date	Activity, Agenda and Themes
20/7	LAI Youth Conference, meeting of LAI Executive
21/7	Demonstration at the Hippodrome ; opening session at Zoological Gardens
22/7	“The World Political Situation and the War Danger” (Harry Pollitt); debate on anti-imperialism and pacifism
23/7	“The Struggle for Indian Independence” (Rajani Palme Dutt); debate on the state of the anti-imperialist movement
24/7	Continued debate on India; criticism of ILP
25/7	“The Chinese Revolution: the Struggle against Imperialism and against the Nanking Government” (Strakhov/Tsiu Wito/Chü Chiu-pai); Irish question
26/7	“The Struggle for Emancipation of the Negroes in Africa and America” (Ford); the war threat against the Soviet Union; the Arab region; Indonesia; liberations movements in Europe; Indochina; North Africa; criticism of <i>Poale Zion</i> ; intellectuals
27/7	“The Work of the Trade Unions in the Struggle against Imperialism” (Melnitschansky); Latin America; “closed” ITUNWC conference; speech by Maxton
28/7	“Political and Organisational Report on the Activity of the League Organisational Report” (Münzenberg); continued debate on Melnitschansky’s speech; administrative questions and election of the LAI Executive Committee ⁸²³

⁸²³ *Inprecorr*, No.62, 64, 66-68, 1929. The official invitation introduced the running order of the congress: 1. Opening Speeches and Greetings; 2. The World Political Situation and the War Danger; 3. The Struggle for Indian Independence; 4. The Chinese Revolution: the Struggle against Imperialism and against the Nanking Government; 5. The Present Stage in the Struggle for Freedom of the Oppressed Peoples of the Pacific; 6. The Need to Co-ordinate the Struggle of all Arabian Countries against Imperialism; 7. The Struggle for Emancipation of the Negroes in Africa and America; 8. The Struggle of Latin America against British and North American Imperialism; 9. The Work of the Trade Unions in the Struggle against Imperialism; 10. The Social, Political and Economic Position of Women in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries; 11. Political and Organisational Report on the Activity of the League; 12. Report on the First International Anti-Imperialist Youth Conference; 13. Organisation Questions: a. Constitution, b. Elections; 14. Miscellaneous, SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, Second Anti-Imperialist World Congress. Agenda, 1929.

Implementing the Plot: "Cleanse the Ranks"

The League against Imperialism would have to cleanse its ranks of those vacillating and confused elements who were a source of weakness in the struggle against imperialism. The League had grown greatly in strength since its last Congress and must also strengthen its struggle against imperialism and become the most powerful instrument in the struggle of the colonial peoples.

Harry Pollitt, Frankfurt, 22/7-1929

The LAI Congress quickly turned into a scene of disputes and controversy, demonstrating the vindictiveness of the communist sector in dominating the proceedings. On 22 July, Pollitt declared the communists' current ideological platform in his speech on the war threat, emphasising the need for the LAI "to cleanse its ranks" and rid itself of "vacillating and confused elements". If one may be so bold as to state that this speech in itself was confirmation of how the LAI had begun its "turn to the left".⁸²⁴

At the opening ceremony on 21 July, Maxton welcomed the delegates at the Zoologischer Garten and delivered a short introductory speech. According to *Inprecorr*, Münzenberg then took the floor and proceeded to accuse the leader of the British *Labour Party*, Ramsey MacDonald, who had recently been elected leader of a Labour minority government in Great Britain, of having sanctioned the restriction of LAI activities within the British Empire. Münzenberg's criticism was aimed to function as a response to the fact that British authorities had refused to give the LAI a permit to organise the congress in London, as a substitute for Paris. Hence, this refusal signified how the Labour government was continuing the oppressive tradition and structures of the British Empire, a peculiarity particularly evident in India, Münzenberg stated; a theme further elaborated upon as Münzenberg attacked the former Chairman of the LAI, Lansbury, for having been a lackey in the service of the "imperialist system". *Inprecorr* observed how Münzenberg's conclusive statement had been applauded with jubilant cheers from the congress crowd, who, in turn, demanded that Maxton explain how the socialist movement intended to position itself on the question of colonialism and imperialism. Maxton retorted that he was "speaking here only as a representative of the League, not on behalf of other organisations". However, from a broader perspective, Münzenberg's speech had introduced the main thread of the congress.⁸²⁵ Thus,

⁸²⁴ Ulmen 1978, p.103. Ulmen did not, however, mention the turmoil at the congress, thus, it is likely that Wittfogel either neglected to mention or had forgotten about the nature of the event. According to Ulmen, Wittfogel attended primarily for the reason that he lived in Frankfurt am Main, and functioned as the leader of the LAI section in the city. In August 1929, Wittfogel moved to Berlin and became "intimately connected with the radical culture and intellectual life of the capital".

⁸²⁵ *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Nr. 64, p.1519-1520; The British *Labour Party* won the parliamentary

Maxton's evasive statement gave the communist sector the impetus to initiate its carefully planned strategy of attacking both the "staggering nature of the so-called left-wing national reformists and the position of the Baldwin-Maxton elements" at the congress in Frankfurt. In connection with Münzenberg's speech, and after Maxton's evasive reply, a number of communist delegates appeared on the rostrum to outline the agenda for the event. For example, Tsiu Wito/Chü protested against the brutality of both the KMT and the Nanking government, urging everyone to sing "The International", while Ferguson stated that it should be a logical step for every delegate to support the Chinese liberation struggle and demonstrate their allegiance towards the Soviet Union. The opening ceremony ended with Melnitschansky charging the LAI to begin making a distinction between "friend and foe", selecting Maxton and the ILP as its principal targets.⁸²⁶ The stage was now set for Pollitt.

"Hear, hear!": The Crisis of the Anti-Imperialist Movement and the War Threat: Pollitt's speech had a profound impact on the audience, with shouts of "hear, hear" during the "long drawn-out applause" being heard as he left the rostrum, according to the *Information and Press Service*. In his speech on the "international political situation and the war threat", the first topic on the congress agenda, Pollitt's performance determined the political discourse of the congress. What were the principal arguments in Pollitt's speech? The primary aim of his speech was to introduce and declare the necessity of defending the Soviet Union and its construction of socialism, a social experiment threatened by the war threat of "imperialist nations". Pollitt argued that the collaboration of the colonial "native bourgeoisie" and international social democracy assisted the plans of the "imperialist nations" for a military invasion of the Soviet Union. Hence, this explained why imperialism continued to plague the world after the end of the Great War, Pollitt stated. What role did the LAI play in all of this? Pollitt argued that the LAI and its support of the colonial freedom struggle constituted a strong political actor, capable of disrupting the politics of the "imperialist power bloc". Yet, the LAI was facing a crisis both in its organisation as well as in its political outlook, e.g. the LAI had commenced the work of defending the building of socialism in the Soviet Union and had established propaganda campaigns against the war threat of the "imperialist nations". As global politics had entered "the final struggle between the imperialist

elections in England on 30 May, 1929 and, for the second time since the Great War, was in power, see Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: a History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2005, pp.119-120.

⁸²⁶ RGASPI 495/60/134a, 38-40, (Confidential) Protocol, meeting of the "Commission on the LAI" (German), Moscow, 18/6-1929; *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Nr. 64, p.1520.

countries and the Soviet Union”, Pollitt declared that “no anti-imperialist could remain neutral [and] a real anti-imperialist must out of necessity support the Soviet Union”.⁸²⁷

Aside from his ideological support for the Soviet Union, Pollitt’s speech was rooted in realpolitik. In May 1929, “Chinese militarists” [the Nanking government] had intervened against Soviet military forces in a border dispute, creating a sensitive situation which culminated in July in an undeclared state of war between the two nations. For the Soviet Union, this conflict confirmed its fears of the war threat against the socialist fatherland. Hence, this required that the LAI and its congress function as a forum to mobilise the communist movement’s propaganda against the KMT, Pollitt concluded, a statement further developed by Tsiu Wito/Chü Chiu-pai in “the Congress considers an attack upon the Soviet Union as an attack upon the oppressed throughout the world”.⁸²⁸ The responses to what Pollitt had said brought forward other perspectives than just simply an increased militant support of the Soviet Union. For example, the Swedish socialist Lindhagen suggested that pacifism would be a more appropriate solution in confronting the war threat rather than a military response. According to Lindhagen, “the class struggle is not the best method with which to destroy imperialism”, a statement Pollitt repudiated as being a concept embraced by “well-meaning politicians”, a position the LAI had to avoid. Other actors in the communist sector also reacted with fiery speeches and verbal attacks against Lindhagen. Melnitschansky stated that the war threat was a real fact and that “no White soldier was going to put his foot on Soviet soil without being punished”.⁸²⁹

Pollitt continued and observed how the LAI had failed to understand the international political situation, and that, therefore, both the organisation and the anti-imperialist movement themselves had retreated into a crisis due to the “compromises” given to both Maxton and the ILP as well as Gupta and the INC, actors advocating “reformism” rather than a revolutionary approach in the colonial struggle. There was “no room” for reformists within the LAI, Pollitt stated, hence this

⁸²⁷ Sachianova from Russia supported Pollitt’s argument, demanding that the LAI pay more attention to the anti-war movement, see *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Nr. 64, p.1520; SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, Information and Press Service No. 5. Afternoon session, July 22, 1929”. Issued by the League against Imperialism (English version), p.1-3. On 22 May, Manuilsky, Lozovsky, Kuusinen, Schubin, Kitaigorodsky, Freyer and Piatnitsky discussed the question of the report on the war danger and the international situation, giving Mif the instruction to write Pollitt’s speech, as well as the resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/60/134a, 36, Minutes of meeting Commission on the LAI Congress, 22/5-1929.

⁸²⁸ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “Information and Press Service No. 5. Afternoon session, July 22, 1929”. Issued by the League against Imperialism (English version), p.1-3; The Sino-Soviet dispute in 1929 is discussed in Bruce A. Ellerman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917- 1927* (Sharpe, Armonk NY, 1997, p.282). This conflict concerned a border dispute between the Nanking government and the Soviet Union, with a focus on the railway in the borderlands. For Wito’s protest, see IISG LAI Collection 3392.1, p.79, “Summary of Comrade Tsiu WITO’s report on the Chinese Question”, Frankfurt am Main, 21/7-1929.

⁸²⁹ SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, “Information and Press Service No. 5. Afternoon session, 22 July, 1929”. Issued by the League against Imperialism (English version), 1-3; *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 23.Juli 1929, Nr.66, p.1545. Georg Ledebour described Lindhagen’s speech as “rubbish”, whereas Helene Stöcker only concluded that she was “delighted” to see the “building of socialism” in the Soviet Union.

meant that the LAI had to “cleanse its ranks”. Later, as noted in the “Congress Manifesto”, Pollitt’s demand was further expounded:

[...] the anti-imperialist forces throughout the world must wage an uncompromising struggle against the allies and agents of imperialism within the national movements. [...] fight against its agents in the labour movement, against international Social Democracy, the Amsterdam Trade Union International and, the most brazen of all – the British Labour Party [...] Each national social reformist group is trying to promote the imperialist interests of its ‘own’ bourgeoisie by demoralising the anti-imperialist front at home and in the colonies.⁸³⁰

The antagonism of the communists on the question of “reformism” was the key issue in a majority of the speeches at the congress, particularly in the performances by Pollitt, Melnitschansky and Ford. Illustrative of the above was Ford’s attack, describing the LSI and the British Labour government as being “chauvinistic”, urging the LAI to mould the anti-imperialist movement upon “the Soviet model” in order to increase the “struggle against reformism” within the colonial liberation movements. Ford later reported to the ECCI Negro Bureau that the question of “reformism” had revealed that some of the Negro delegates nourished social democratic tendencies, e.g. the South African Andrews had given “a social democratic speech”.⁸³¹

“Sources of Fire”: India and China: In the aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress, as noted in the “Congress Manifesto”: “[I]n China and in India forces are maturing for decisive battles against imperialism. The working class of China and its revolutionary organisations stand at the forefront of the national revolution leading into the liberation struggle of the oppressed peasantry and the whole working population”. For Rajani Palme Dutt, who delivered the keynote speech on India, the country was a “source of fire” which had to confront the system of imperialism and colonialism with a militant response, suggesting the Meerut conspiracy trial to be the signal for “a new war” in India. Dutt observed nevertheless that the colonial fire in India was facing two principal obstructions. Firstly, the surveillance by the British security services had succeeded in curbing the colonial struggle and, secondly, the reluctance of the INC and the *All-Indian Trade Union Council* towards affiliating with the LAI had created a problem in unifying “every anti-imperialist force” in India. Thus, as a solution to the above, or at least to the latter problem, Dutt called on the LAI to purge itself of its “weak elements”. Dutt was referring particularly to Gupta’s

⁸³⁰ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, “Information and Press Service No. 5. Afternoon session, 22 July, 1929”. Issued by the League against Imperialism (English version), 1-3; For the LAI Congress Manifesto, see IISG LAI Collection, 3392.1, p.78.

⁸³¹ *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main, 25.Juli 1929, Nr.66, p.1546; *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main, 26.Juli 1929, Nr.67, p.1565; RGASPI 495/155/77, 184-186, Report on the Negro question at the League against Imperialism Congress, Ford, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/10-1929.

attendance at the congress as the INC delegate, a typical example of a reformist actor who seemed content with accepting Dominion status rather than national independence. In Gupta's response to Dutt's accusation, he urged the congress delegates to understand the most basic fact that India was "the prey for the most violent Imperialism". Yet, the solution to achieving national independence in India was not through a revolutionary struggle, but rather along the path introduced by Gandhi.⁸³²

Gupta's statement caused the communist sector to react with disdain. According to Ibrahim Youssef, the accomplishment of revolution in India would "send a signal" to the oppressed peoples around the world, while Rattan Singh stated that the INC had failed to unify the workers and peasants into "one class conscious" movement. Huang Ping, the Chinese trade unionist, likened the INC's "betrayal" to the acts committed by the KMT prior to the April 1927 putsch. For Gupta, these fierce reactions were an unpleasant experience. In an attempt to calm the tense discussion, Gupta stated that the INC would not compromise on the question of attaining national independence, conceding nevertheless that achieving it would be a question of time and method. Thus, it was not merely enough to deploy revolutionary tactics, or accuse the British Labour government of being a "supporter of Imperialism".⁸³³ After the congress, Gupta returned to India and informed Nehru of his ordeal in Frankfurt, information that Nehru later referred to when criticising the LAI's attitude towards the INC:

The attitude adopted towards our delegate, Shivaprasad Gupta, [...] recommended to us, after his experience of that Congress, that we should not formally affiliate or associate (he did not appreciate the difference) ourselves with your League.⁸³⁴

Gupta's reaction did not come as a surprise; however, the communists' antagonism at the congress essentially contributed to damaging the International Secretariat's links to India, e.g. the relation between Chatto and Nehru.

The agitation continued as Tsiu Wito/Chü introduced the Chinese question, describing the social situation for the industry worker in China. According to Tsiu Wito/Chü, the state administered repression by both the "fascist" KMT and the Nanking government kept the Chinese industry workers in a vice. However, if the workers and peasants succeeded in unifying their

⁸³² Gupta addressed Gandhi as the "great leader", whose methods of "boycottism" and "acts of aggressive non-violence" were the real way to solve the situation in India, methods that would finally win over the "feudalists and capitalists", *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Frankfurt am Main 23.Juli 1929, Nr. 66, p.1545.

⁸³³ *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Frankfurt am Main 24.Juli 1929, Nr. 66, p.1546; *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Frankfurt am Main 26-27.Juli 1929, Nr. 67, p.1564-1565.

⁸³⁴ RGASPI 542/1/44, 51-54, Official letter from Nehru, Allahabad, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 30/1-1930.

forces, and took up arms against both the KMT “agents of Imperialism” and the Sino-Soviet conflict, it would end in favour of the freedom struggle, Tsiu Wito/Chü argued.⁸³⁵

“Tendencies Hostile to the Negro Liberation Movement” and the ITUCNW: The Negro question epitomised the strategy of the communist sector. According to the “Resolution on the Negro Question”, the Negro movement had to confront “hostile elements of reformism and Garveyism” by preparing a militant struggle to “cleanse its ranks” for the sole purpose of transferring the liberation question from “race” to “class”. At the congress, Ford was the leading actor to exploit the Negro question to the fullest.⁸³⁶ According to Ford’s speech, “the modern history of the Negro” was divided into three specific categories: the “Negro trade” and the historical traits of the slave trade, the plantation industry in the USA, and the necessity to radicalise the Negro workers. Ford’s report was “19 pages and given in full”, while some of the delegates, e.g. Bjarne Braatoy perceived Ford’s performance in Frankfurt as having been “very extreme”.⁸³⁷ How did Ford link together the “modern history of the Negro” with the LAI? Ford stated that the LAI had not understood that the Negro movement did not concern either a “native disposition” or a “racial dimension”, instead the question of “emancipating the Negro” was focused on social aspects and the class struggle rather than race. In connection with Ford’s speech, Patterson stated that the LAI had to “speed up” its organisational work in the USA and “cleanse its ranks”. The latter was a remark made against Pickens, who had questioned why Ford had made a distinction between class and race. According to Pickens, statistics indicated the difference in the economic and social progression of the Negro race in comparison to the ruling elite in the imperialist nations; hence, the Negro movement was essentially a question of race, not of class.⁸³⁸ However, Ford and Patterson’s criticism was aimed solely at demoting Pickens’ position within the LAI, a strategy formulated by Patterson in March 1929:

Link the struggle of [the Negro] masses up with the imminent danger of imperialist war, with the feverish preparation of the imperialists for an attack upon the Soviet Union and of the

⁸³⁵ *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 24.Juli, 1929, Nr.66, p.1546.

⁸³⁶ Prior to the congress, Münzenberg described Ford as a “young and active politician, in charge of organising and leading North American Negro organisations”, see Willi Münzenberg, “Die Negerfrage auf dem Antiimperialistischer Weltkongress”, *Inprecorr*, Nr. 60, 1929, pp.1442-1444.

⁸³⁷ IISG LSI Collection, 3050/64-65, Letter from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zürich, 13/8-1929. Gross later used Braatoy’s reports in her recollection of the congress. Additionally, Braatoy does not mention that Manuilsky appeared at the congress, see footnote 1 in Gross 1967, p.210.

⁸³⁸ *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 25 July 1929, Nr. 66, p.1546. Other speakers on the Negro question were Kouyaté, who discussed the “horrors” of French colonialism in West Africa; Andrews, Rosemond, Bellam and Mary Adams. Adams is also known as Williana Burroughs (Mary Adams was her party name) and she had attended the Sixth International Comintern Congress in 1928 as the CPUSA delegate, who during 1928-30 carried out “a variety of duties for the CPUSA” and visited Moscow on a frequent basis to deliver reports, see Klehr, Haynes, Firsov 1995, pp.199-200.

tremendous importance the continued existence of the Fatherland of the exploited toiling colonial masses has for them. We [the ECCI Negro Bureau] do not believe that any report Mr. Pickens might make would enhance the development of the revolutionary movement, [...] We do not feel that Mr. Pickens can draw a clear picture of the uncompromising position of the League, towards the international bandits who have raped and ravished Africa and degraded and dehumanised the Negro masses everywhere.⁸³⁹

This dispute at the congress, and its aftermath between Pickens on the one side, and Ford and Patterson on the other, was a question resolved by the ECCI Secretariat on 9 October 1929, by its endorsement of the decision to withdraw Pickens' LAI membership. Ford and Patterson had objected to Pickens' resistance towards some of the formulations in the Negro resolution, e.g. the "designation of the USSR as the fatherland of workers and oppressed peoples". According to the ECCI Secretariat's verdict, there was no room in the LAI for a person who aided "the forces of imperialism".⁸⁴⁰

Ford's major achievement in Frankfurt, however, were the two separate ITUCNW conferences held during the congress. The "Negro Delegation" invited selected delegates to attend these conferences, e.g. Saklatvala, Burns and Gupta, and discussions were focused on both how to "outline the work of the RILU [Profintern] with regards to Negro workers" and the idea to convene the first international conference of the ITUCNW in London in July 1930.⁸⁴¹ Additionally, after the congress had ended, Ford organised a trip for Kenyatta, Burroughs and Kouyaté to visit the Soviet Union and Moscow, an undertaking which Ford experienced as having been rather complicated:

I had to take care of all of the technical details in connection with bringing these comrades here from Frankfurt, arranging their travel, securing their passports in Berlin, which took a whole day, their travel, on the way, etc. I raise this question because of the extra time and

⁸³⁹ RGASPI 495/18/664, 1-3, (Secret) Draft letter to the LAI by comrade Wilson (W. Patterson), Moscow, 25/3-1929.

⁸⁴⁰ RGASPI 495/155/77, 184-186, Report on the Negro Question of the League against Imperialism Congress, Moscow, 3/10-1929; RGASPI 495/18/664, 108-112, (Confidential) Draft letter to Communist Fraction of LAI, unknown author, endorsed by ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 9/10-1929. The last part of this statement reads as follows: "Shades of Banquos' ghost. Enough! We welcome the announcement frank and open as it is. One more betrayer of the masses has proclaimed himself. The membership role of the League can know his name no longer. Farewell 'friend' Pickens".

⁸⁴¹ Bridgeman received the assignment to act as liaison for the ITUCNW in London, assisting with the preparatory work of preparing the congress. According to the report in *Imprecorr* (perhaps due to conspiratorial motives), an "international Negro workers' congress" would take place in Berlin in 1930, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/450, 50-52, Report on the Negro Question at the League Against Imperialism Congress, 91.3.X.29.242.8; RGASPI 495/155/77, 184-186, Report on the Negro Question of the League against Imperialism Congress, author: Ford, Moscow, 3/10-1929; *Imprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Frankfurt am Main 26.Juli 1929, Nr. 67, p.1565; RGASPI 534/3/450, 34, (copy) Letter from Ford, Moscow, to, unknown recipient and location, 9/10-1929. See further in Weiss (2011) and Adi (2008).

expense that was placed upon me. In the future, assistance could be given by comrades in Berlin, in matters of this nature.⁸⁴²

Consequently, the Frankfurt Congress and Kouyaté's journey to Moscow established the collaboration between the International Secretariat and the LDRN. In September 1929, the LDRN organised a German section in Berlin and located its activities in the bureau of the International Secretariat office at 24 Friedrichstraße.⁸⁴³

Confirming "Friend and Foe": The Trade Union Question and the Maxton Dispute

The "Resolution on the Trade Unions" observed how "[T]he Congress considers the affiliation of the Soviet Labour Unions, the organisation of the workers in the land of the proletarian dictatorship, to be of first-rate importance. The affiliated class trade union organisations represent the mass basis of the LAI. [...] The Congress appeals to the workers of the imperialist and colonial countries to close their ranks". The trade union question at the congress embodied the antagonism of the communist sector towards the non-communist delegates; especially the callous rhetoric against Maxton. According to Melnitschansky, Maxton had hampered the LAI's efforts to establish contacts with workers in "the imperialist and colonial countries". The sole reason for making this accusation was to create a split between the LAI and Maxton in order to topple him from his position as Chairman of the LAI. Thus, for Melnitschansky it was all about forcing the LAI to recognise the distinction between "friend and foe". Maxton epitomised the "inherent weakness" in the LAI, displaying above all else an incapacity to understand "class-oriented ideology". This had resulted in reformist actors as the INC and ILP being given political space, which had led the anti-imperialist movement "into the abyss". Braatoy witnessed Melnitschansky's performance and concluded that it had been "such a harsh speech" that, on the evening of 26 July, everyone felt as though the congress was over.⁸⁴⁴ How did Maxton respond to Melnitschansky's speech? For Maxton, he needed to find a way of making everyone grasp the fact that the LAI had only existed for two years, thus, it had "a long way to go" in tackling "one of the biggest tasks":

To produce a world of men and women free from the terror of war and the shackles of Imperialism. [...] No organisation has as yet set themselves the task of the League nor endeavoured to bring these people together.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴² RGASPI 495/155/77, 184-186, Report on the Negro Question of the League against Imperialism Congress, author: Ford, Moscow, 3/10-1929.

⁸⁴³ RGASPI 495/155/77, 404-408, Kurzer Tätigkeitsbericht der Liga zur Verteidigung der Negerrasse, author: Kouyaté, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 30/11-1930.

⁸⁴⁴ *Inprecorr*, "Der Verlauf des Kongresses", Frankfurt am Main 27.Juli 1929, Nr. 67, p.1565-1566; IISG Labour and Socialist Archives, 3050/60-61, Letter from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zürich, 6/8-1929.

⁸⁴⁵ IISG, Labour & Socialist Archives, 3050/62-63, Maxton's statement during the evening session, July 26, 1929, Frankfurt am Main.

Maxton admitted that Melnitschansky and the congress deserved an explanation on the question of “reformism”, as well as a reflection on the LAI’s demand to “cleanse its the ranks”. Firstly, the LAI was a symptom of the “world today”, an organisation aiming itself towards voluntary participation. Secondly, Maxton referred to himself as being a “revolutionary Socialist” who wanted to change a “world in political and economic bondage, affected by a political and economic mechanism, controlled by a small body of capitalist exploiters”. Thus, the question as to how to change the world was the very core of the dispute, with Maxton questioning the unrealistic illusion, introduced by the communist delegates at the congress, that a military overthrow would result in a social revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries in order to achieve national independence. According to Maxton, this was a perspective which ignored the facts of the current and existing political reality, suggesting that parliamentary activism would be a far more prosperous and constructive approach to exerting influence over the question of colonialism and imperialism. In a British context, the parliamentary arena could question the “imperialist policy” of the *Labour Party*, Maxton stated. However, for the present moment, Maxton declared that the *Labour Party* was in a minority “in a capitalist country”, thus producing the image of a party which had assumed the role as a “caretaker of Capitalism and Imperialism”.⁸⁴⁶

The German communist newspaper, *Frankfurter Nachrichten*, stated that the congress had been a “Sturm über Maxton” (Storm over Maxton).⁸⁴⁷ Is it possible to give a rational explanation for this storm? One explanation is found in the observation made by Burns about Maxton, i.e. that he “lay low and said nothing”.⁸⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the initial idea was to diminish Maxton’s importance at the congress, a strategy which had been proposed by the “Commission on the LAI” in Moscow, thus, the communist sector only had to wait for the most opportune moment. Furthermore, Maxton’s silence encapsulated the powerlessness of the non-communist delegates to respond to the attacks from the communist sector. For the communist delegates, this made it possible to increase its criticism of the ILP, the INC and the “reformists”, declaring themselves as being the only ones capable of adapting a “class-conscious” ideology.⁸⁴⁹

The communist sector’s plot was a pre-determined strategy carried out to perfection from the beginning until the end of the congress. The *Manuilskyan* theme of “there was a time when we co-

⁸⁴⁶ IISG, Labour and Socialist Archives 3050/62-63, Maxton’s statement during the evening session, 26 July, 1929, Frankfurt am Main; Emile Burns, “World Congress of the League against Imperialism”, in *Labour Monthly*, Vol.11, September 1929, No.9, London, pp.559-563.

⁸⁴⁷ Mohammad Hatta, “A Retrospective Account of the Second Congress of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence held in Frankfurt”, in *Portrait of a Patriot*, The Hague, 1972, pp.200-204. The Indonesian nationalist paper, *Indonesia Merdeka*, published the article in the autumn of 1929. On 29 July, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* presented a summary of the congress, only to conclude that the event had primarily served the interest of Soviet foreign policy, in which “the Russians” [Melnitschansky] had taken charge of leading the attacks against Maxton, IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/102.

⁸⁴⁸ Burns (1929).

⁸⁴⁹ *Imprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 27July 1929, Nr. 67, pp.1565-1566.

operated” had been a framework redefined by the communists while repeating the mantra of the war threat, in defence of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union, and getting across the message that the LAI had to “cleanse its ranks”. “Class” was the ideological scaffold upon which the communist sector created a split with the non-communist delegates at the second LAI congress, rather than focusing on the discussions of colonialism and imperialism. The Frankfurt Congress turned into an event characterised by the practical implications of the new “class against class” policy, thereby initiating a process to definitively subordinate the LAI and its International Secretariat to the Comintern. In an attempt to bring the congress to a successful close, Münzenberg managed to end the congress on a contradictory note.

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Finale

The League finds itself [...] still in the phase of organisation and preparation. The time has come to unify every movement [...] and create a storm all over the world.

Münzenberg, Frankfurt am Main, 27/7-1929

Münzenberg was the last speaker at the congress. After having introduced the congress proceedings on 21 July, Münzenberg kept himself in the background for the duration of the event, only to re-appear and summarise his impressions on 27 July. Münzenberg had, from the beginning, planned to deliver a report on organisational questions and on the geographical spread of the LAI, although, due to the turmoil at the congress, he apparently changed the focus of his speech. His decision to do this might seem like a contradiction, especially as Münzenberg was well aware of the communist sector’s intentions prior to the congress. Yet, it seems as though Münzenberg could not refrain from addressing and reminding the congress crowd of the LAI’s purpose and aim, declaring a profound pride in the fact that the LAI was the “first attempt” to create a movement which aspired “to uniting millions” and linking “the proletarian strugglers in their ‘mother countries’ with the oppressed colonies”. Hence, this was a political and social initiative which relied on its “sources of support” (the “socialists, communists, anarchists and pacifists”). For the LAI, in order to strengthen its “struggle against imperialism” and connect it with “the liberation struggle in India”, the organisation depended on the continued support of the INC, Münzenberg argued.⁸⁵⁰ This conclusion differed markedly from that of the communist sector. However, shortly after the congress, Münzenberg changed his opinion. In August, Münzenberg stated in *Inprecorr*

⁸⁵⁰ *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 27 July 1929, Nr. 67, p.1566.

that he scorned the idea that the LAI was an “arena for everyone”. What had caused Münzenberg to change his mind? Münzenberg believed that the Frankfurt Congress had been “a considerable step to the left” for the LAI, thus the organisation no longer depended on any moral support from intellectuals or “liberal women and men” in order to establish connections with “workers and peasants in the oppressed countries”.⁸⁵¹ This “turn to the left” marked a fundamental difference from the picture Münzenberg had painted at the congress. In September, another explanation emerged when Münzenberg visited Moscow and stated the following to the Political Secretariat:

One must not forget that the Frankfurt Congress took place under completely different circumstances than the Brussels Congress, and its execution was a hundred times more difficult [...]⁸⁵²

Other actors perceived the Frankfurt Congress as a general failure with respect to the LAI. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* stated that the congress had witnessed the definitive end of the “enthusiasm” (*Begeisterung*) in relation to the LAI, while Braatoy concluded that the “real congress” had taken place “behind the scenes”, with the communist delegates struggling to establish its control over the event.⁸⁵³ Hatta’s “retrospective account” also interpreted the result of the communist strategy:

At the moment – and no-one will deny this – the League finds itself in a difficult crisis. A reconciliation of opposing views did not materialise in Frankfurt. [...] The differences are too great, the *Prinzipienreiterei* has gone too far. [...] The communists regard it as their holy duty to fight the left-wing socialists and nobody would deny them this right. But to transfer this bitter fight to the League with the ensuing danger that the League will collapse, is irresponsible.⁸⁵⁴

Münzenberg’s speech was the final act at the congress, a performance which pointed towards an end of the LAI’s original aim. Bringing the congress to its formal end, the crowd applauded, a sign of its approval for the new LAI Executive: Dr. Thengdi from India as Chairman, Nehru, Hatta, Ford, Rivera, Sandino, Maxton, Bridgeman, Pollitt, Saklatvala, Hercllet, Münzenberg, Georgi Dimitrov and Melnitschansky.⁸⁵⁵

On 28 July, the congress hall at Zoologischer Garten closed its gates at 3 pm. According to Gross, Münzenberg went, along with Fimmen and other congress delegates, to the restaurant

⁸⁵¹ Willi Münzenberg, “Der Frankfurter Kongress der Liga gegen Imperialismus”, in *Inprecorr*, Nr. 68, pp.1577-1578.

⁸⁵² RGASPI 495/3/120, 72-75, Erklärung des Gen. Münzenberg, Moscow, to the Political Secretariat, Moscow, 25/9-1929.

⁸⁵³ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, “Der Weltkongress gegen Imperialismus”, 29/7-1929, see IISG LAI Collection 3392.1, p.102; IISG Labour and Socialist Archive 3050/60-61, Letter from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zürich, 6/8-1929.

⁸⁵⁴ Hatta [1929] 1972, pp.200-204.

⁸⁵⁵ RGASPI 542/1/92, 33-34, [List of proposals for the LAI Executive, presented by the *Mandatsprüfungs-kommission*] Frankfurt am Main, July 28 1929; *Inprecorr*, “Der Verlauf des Kongresses”, Frankfurt am Main 27 July 1929, Nr. 67, p.1566. Olive Budden, the leader of the “Examining Commission of the Congress” (*Mandatsprüfungs-kommission*), confirmed 257 “authorised voters” had elected a new LAI Executive. The new Chairman, Thengdi, the leader of the *All-India Trade Union Council*, had been a defendant in the Meerut conspiracy trial.

“Heyland am Römerberg”, located in the old quarter of Frankfurt am Main, with the feeling that the idea of the LAI had been “ditched”, leaving a “feeling of farewell” in the air.⁸⁵⁶

The Frankfurt Congress had witnessed a clash of ideologies. The essence of the entire congress had been the question of control. The second international LAI congress had been an event contrived from the very beginning at Comintern headquarters in Moscow, carried out *en masse* on location by the communist sector. The meticulous preparatory work done by the “Commission on the LAI” in Moscow had, consequently, restricted both Münzenberg’s and the International Secretariat’s ability to influence the organisational and ideological framework of the second LAI congress. The Frankfurt Congress marked the end of a chronological process which had begun with the *Hands off China* campaign in 1925, which had led to the inauguration of the LAI in 1927 and the International Secretariat’s efforts to create a vigorous organisation in 1927-28. The LAI’s life and purpose was, however, far from over. The end of the congress was the start of a new phase for the LAI and the International Secretariat. The central question, nevertheless, is what was left of the LAI after the Frankfurt Congress, with later erroneous interpretations of the history of the LAI having concluded that the organisation simply disappeared.⁸⁵⁷ Finally, did the Frankfurt Congress imply the end of the idea of turning the LAI into a mass organisation? The drama of the Frankfurt Congress and its aftermath marked the beginning of a rigorous pressure on the International Secretariat, a scenario which developed itself into a year of confusion which would, ultimately, transform the LAI.

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⁸⁵⁶ Gross 1967, p.210.

⁸⁵⁷ McMeekin 2003, p.208.

PART III

Chapter 7. *Anni confusionis*

My opinion is that the congress was not a powerful demonstration against imperialism and for the defence of the Soviet Union [...] but a considerable organisational improvement compared to the first congress.

Münzenberg to the Eastern Secretariat,
12/8-1929

In relation to the further organisational consolidation of the anti-imperialist movement of workers and peasants in the colonial countries, which is the main task of the League, the achievements of the II Congress must be considered insignificant.

Eastern Secretariat, Draft Resolution on
Results of the II World Congress of the
LAI, 27/8-1929

The aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress marked the beginning of a year of confusion within the LAI, characterised by uncertainty, internal commotion and the confirmation of a crisis. However, it is misleading to speak in terms of one year since the confused state of affairs at the International Secretariat, perceived here as the *Anni confusionis* – the year of confusion – lasted from August 1929 till September 1930.⁸⁵⁸ Developments in the wake of the Frankfurt Congress proved to be both tedious and difficult for both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement, and did nothing whatsoever to improve the European communist parties' colonial work. However, was this all part of a greater purpose? The aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress was characterised by numerous unresolved questions, e.g. the idea of splitting the International Secretariat into three secretariats, with representation in Berlin, Paris and London, as well as the critique against the International Secretariat for not seeming capable of understanding the full extent of the political situation in the colonial countries. More importantly, opinions suggested that the LAI had not adopted the endorsed "working methods" introduced at the Tenth ECCI Plenum.⁸⁵⁹ The criticism against the LAI and its International Secretariat came to a head when the Eastern Secretariat submitted a detailed report on the Frankfurt Congress, "Draft resolution on Results of the II World Congress of

⁸⁵⁸ A similar chronological perspective is adopted in Weitz' narrative of the KPD after the NSDAP had assumed power in 1933, coined as the *Anni terribli* for the German communist movement, see Weitz 1997, pp.280-310.

⁸⁵⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 140, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to "Sch" [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, 3/8-1929; RGASPI 542/1/33, 9, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Manuilsky, Moscow, 13/8-1929; RGASPI 495/18/740, 72-73, Letter from Heimo/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 21/8-1929.

the LAI and its direct tasks” (hereinafter: DR LAI), a document which would later function as consultative material for the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters.⁸⁶⁰ After the Frankfurt Congress, there was a sudden increase in activity and exchanges of opinion concerning the LAI at Comintern headquarters, discussions which concluded that the LAI had retreated into a crisis. Thus, the Comintern decided it was necessary to re-organise the LAI, primarily in order to get the International Secretariat to succumb to its dictates. This process took place at the same time as the European communist parties were continuing to refuse to support or even to carry out colonial work. Hence, the colonial question would prove to be (despite several attempts to correct it in 1929) a daunting task to solve during the Comintern’s “third period”.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the *anni confusionis* and its ensuing crisis at the International Secretariat. The Frankfurt Congress had resulted in a situation which forced the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters to both seriously discuss and find a way of re-organising the structure of the LAI, as well as to restore its political credibility. These discussions involved arguments about why it was essential to sustain the activities of the LAI rather than recommend a swift liquidation. However, the *anni confusionis* was a progressive process which, once it had surfaced and become an established fact, gained pace in three chronological phases. Firstly, in August and September 1929, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters discussed and evaluated how to solve the confusion that had arisen after the Frankfurt Congress. These discussions involved scrutinising the hierarchy of relations at the International Secretariat, the purpose and aim of the LAI, and the non-communist elements within the LAI Executive. At the beginning of 1930, the second phase confirmed the crisis. This also strengthened the position of the decision-makers in Moscow during the deliberations on how to solve the crisis, which in turn led to the International Secretariat not taking any independent action. Thirdly, the final phase was the trial of the LAI at Comintern headquarters in August-September 1930. The drama of this particular process included the evaluation and final assessment of the LAI, which only ended once the decision-making elite at the headquarters of the Comintern had resolved to discuss the organisational functions and ideological value of the LAI within the international communist movement. This latter act illustrates how the elite performed its own variant of self-criticism.

The LAI’s crisis reflected, in a sense, the indifference amongst the communist parties in Europe to support and to carry out “routine” colonial work. For the Comintern, the LAI was a pivotal actor in establishing colonial connections and in contributing to the development of the

⁸⁶⁰ RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft resolution on results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its direct tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929. Translations of the draft resolution (original language: Russian) to English and German versions were completed on 29 August; RGASPI 495/3/120, 1, Protokoll Nr.51 von der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 2/9-1929; RGASPI 495/7/11, 64-67, Protokoll Nr.55 von der Sitzung der Ständigen Kommission des Sekretariats des EKKI, Moscow, 4/9-1929.

colonial question. Nevertheless, in November and December of 1929, once various departments at Comintern headquarters (the ECCI Secretariat, the Political Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat) had chosen to re-examine the LAI's colonial work, despite Arnot and Bittelmann's previous evaluations in 1929, their conclusion would be one of disappointment. Apparently, the lack of enthusiasm for colonial work was an expression of the continued confusion which had manifested itself within the parties. The CPGB struggled to adapt itself to "the new line", e.g. one attempt was made to reconstitute and co-ordinate its "revolutionary leadership". In Germany, the KPD pursued its ambition to manifest itself as the only and genuine representative for the German labour movement, while at the same time encountering difficulties in both interpreting and implementing "the social fascist doctrine" in practice.⁸⁶¹ The time and energy spent understanding the doctrine drained the parties of administrative strength, which consequently meant that their colonial work was not given due attention. In December 1929, the Eastern Secretariat criticised the ZK KPD for having failed to carry out any colonial work, e.g. the LAI had not received any active support, while the KPD had neglected to establish any "systematic connection between the Comintern and ... the revolutionary movement and the communist parties in the colonies". The "Politbureau CPGB" received similar critique from the Political Secretariat, who urged the party to expose "ruthlessly, perseveringly and systematically" the "counter-revolutionary, social-imperialist and social-fascist nature of the Labour Government" on the colonial question. In order to achieve this, the CPGB was supposed to form a "united front of the British proletariat and the oppressed colonial peoples from below" in order to intensify the "struggle against the Colonial policy of British social-imperialism".⁸⁶² The Eastern Secretariat and the Political Secretariat criticised both the PCF and the CPGB for their low efficiency and inability to carry out even the simplest of tasks concerning colonial work, e.g. supporting the anti-imperialist organisations (the LAI, the LDRN). The British communist and member of the WEB, Aitken Ferguson, tried to explain to the International Secretariat the CPGB's failure to support the British LAI Section, realising that "no other section of the League" could attain the same political impact as the British. However, one could not avoid the fact that the "party takes all necessary measures to see that the Comintern line is carried through on these auxiliary bodies", while at the same time trying to establish connections with colonial immigrants and students in England, an undertaking which had apparently failed completely.⁸⁶³ Additionally, the KPD representatives within the ECCI in Moscow, Ulbricht and

⁸⁶¹ Worley 2002, p.132; Hoppe 2007, p.157.

⁸⁶² SAPMO ZPA-BA I 6/3/198, 1-3, Vertraulich. Ostsekretariat des EKKI, Moskau, an das Z. K. der KPD, Berlin, 23/12-1929; RGASPI 495/4/5, 201-205, (Confidential) On Colonial Work of the CPGB, Political Secretariat, Moscow, to the CPGB, London, 27/11-1929.

⁸⁶³ According to Ferguson, the NMM should organise "immigrants from the colonial countries in the revolutionary

Philipp Dengel, demanded that the ZK KPD find communists in Germany known to be skilful in “colonial languages”, and “register Comrades” who had colonial contacts.⁸⁶⁴

In 1929, the international communist movement was in a crisis. While the Tenth ECCI Plenum had confirmed the accuracy of the “class-against-class” policy in July, this plenum had also initiated an ideological purge and “well-orchestrated attack” against “Rightist” functionaries within the ECCI departments at Comintern headquarters. This purge sent shudders through the national sections, resulting in the parties turning inwards only to uncover internal flaws.⁸⁶⁵ This process ran parallel with the Comintern’s objective to strengthen its hierarchical structure and to increase its control over the national sections. More importantly, the establishment of the Political Commission in August/September 1929, on the suggestion of the Political Secretariat, answered the need to have a forum in which to discuss political and administrative questions of a peculiar and sensitive nature.⁸⁶⁶

In 1929-30, while the industrialisation and collectivisation drive within the Soviet Union was following its own rationale,⁸⁶⁷ other contextual explanations also contribute to elucidate the dynamics of this *anni confusionis*. According to Zara Steiner, the global restructuring and then disintegration of economic, political and social relations during the 1920s and the 1930s was “the hinge”, with the 1920s representing a decade of reconstruction, while the 1930s witnessed a decade of crisis in international relations.⁸⁶⁸ In Germany, “the hinge” saw the emergence of the NSDAP as a political actor actively opposing the KPD and the SPD, all actors striving to increase their parliamentary influence and position in the Reichstag.⁸⁶⁹ Outside Germany, the Wall Street crash in New York on 24 October 1929 had a considerable global impact, causing the Great

unions” in order to bring them closer “to the Party and necessary steps should be taken to give them a political education”. Furthermore, the LAI section in England functioned as the channel for the CPGB to get in contact with “immigrant students [...] and to bring the most revolutionary, tried and reliable elements into the Party”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/33, 49, Letter from A. F. [Aitken Ferguson/“Neptun”], London, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 17/12-1929.

⁸⁶⁴ OMS would be in charge of their political education, see SAPMO ZPA-BA I 6/3/198, 1-3, Vertraulich. Ostsekretariat des EKKI, Moskau, an das Z. K. der KPD, Berlin, 23/12-1929.

⁸⁶⁵ This forced the Standing Commission to advocate the need to establish a “Purge Commission” at Comintern headquarters (active from September 1929 to January 1930). This commission screened and purged communists suspected of nourishing deviant political views. It consisted of the following members, as noted in Peter Huber’s analysis: Ulbricht, Piatnitsky, Wassiljew and Mirov of the “Cells Bureau”, Heimo and Abramov of the OMS. 239 officials at Comintern headquarters were screened, out of which 201 were confirmed as loyal party cadres, 31 received a warning and seven were expelled from the CPSU (B), see McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.85; Peter Huber, “Structure of the Moscow Apparatus of the Comintern and decision-making”, in Rees & Thorpe (eds.) 1998, p.42.

⁸⁶⁶ The Political Secretariat appointed the members to the Political Commission, an institutional actor that functioned as a consultative sub-department to the Political Secretariat; see Adibekov & Shakhnazarova 1996, p.69.

⁸⁶⁷ Kotkin (1995); Hagenloh (2009).

⁸⁶⁸ Steiner 2005, p.635.

⁸⁶⁹ Striefler 1993, pp.48-51; Babette Gross, “German Communists’ United Front”, in *The Comintern: Historical Highlights*, Drachkovitch & Lazitch (eds.), Stanford University, Stanford, 1966, p.115. Gross wrote that while the NSDAP peaked in the German elections on September 14, 1930, the KPD focused essentially on strengthening the struggle against the SPD. According to Gross, the German communist movement pursued a “suicidal general line”.

Depression and economic recession during the 1930s. The economic collapse of Western societies provided the Soviet Union with an ideological confirmation that the Bolshevik analysis of capitalist society and its impending crisis had been correct. Thus, the societal crisis would amplify the war threat and the likelihood of an intervention by the imperialist nations in the Soviet Union, resulting in global revolution. According to Hobsbawm, the Great Depression was paradoxical for the defenders of communism, as it portrayed the Soviet Union as being “immune” to the global recession. The economic crash therefore provided the international communist movement with one of its “strongest ideological weapons”, while in Germany; the recession paved the way for a completely new political scenario.⁸⁷⁰

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Aftermath: The Onset of the *Anni confusionis*

The Frankfurt Congress left the International Secretariat shaken by its internal tremors. In August and September, all activity ceased in Berlin, while the Comintern failed to send its monthly budget. Chatto wrote to Piatnitsky to explain that the International Secretariat would be on the verge of closing down if no money arrived in the LAI account.⁸⁷¹ However, the German LAI Section did not experience complete desolation as an immediate consequence of the Frankfurt Congress. On 8 August, the local IAH branch in Hamburg assisted the German LAI Section in organising a public meeting in the Altona district – a stronghold for the German labour and communist movement – where Pickens delivered a speech on the significance and meaning of race as a factor in the anti-colonial struggle. The Hamburg police authority noted that the event was “obviously communist” since a majority of the delegates focused the discussion on “class consciousness”. When it came to mentioning the Frankfurt Congress, the meeting addressed it as being the beginning of a new and more radical phase for both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement, especially the task of unmasking the social democratic movement as an “agent of imperialism” and disposing of the “treacherous” Maxton.⁸⁷² The Frankfurt Congress and its aftermath marked the beginning of the *anni confusionis*, a period which signifies a thematic and chronological divide in the history of the LAI. However, for the International Secretariat, this

⁸⁷⁰ McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.89; Hobsbawm 1997, p.425; Brendon 2002, pp.92-95.

⁸⁷¹ Chatto declared that if the money arrived in Berlin at the end of October, he promised Piatnitsky to stop sending complaints about how the financial question was draining the International Secretariat of “energy and efficiency”. However, for the time being, the LAI had borrowed money from “neighbouring” organisations connected to the IAH which were also experiencing a shortage of funds, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/4, 44, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 12/10-1929.

⁸⁷² SAPMO ZPA-BA R8051/82/2, 462-465, 8/8-1929. The Hamburg LAI section expected to hold a public meeting on 27 August, and scheduled to appear were Eleonore Midgley from England, Goldschmidt, the Indonesian Abdur Raman, and the German Rudolf Kappe. If the meeting happened, remain unknown.

process extended beyond its sphere of influence; rather, the future of the LAI depended on the goodwill and consent of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters.

On 13 August, Bittelman informed Manuilsky that the “first draft of a resolution on the results of the 2nd Congress of the LAI” had been discussed at a meeting in Berlin, with “part of the ECCI delegation, consisting of comrades Heckert, a representative of WEB [Dimitrov or Ferguson], Bittelman, [...] comrades Burns and Chatto”. Unable to attend the meeting, Münzenberg nevertheless told the Eastern Secretariat that he regretted having missed the opportunity to discuss the political results of the congress with Bittelman.⁸⁷³ For Münzenberg, the primary aim of the congress was nevertheless not its political outcome; it was the organisational future of the LAI in Europe, a topic raised at the meeting. Apparently, Emile Burns wanted to split the International Secretariat in three divisions, thereby making it easier to develop LAI activities throughout Europe, especially in Berlin, Paris and London. Münzenberg dismissed this idea with over “a hundred reasons” and urged the Eastern Secretariat to understand that the LAI “was such a complex organisation” to control and lead. For example, the International Secretariat had to supervise and control contacts with political and colonial groups which themselves had no relations whatsoever with each other. Münzenberg argued that “the homogenous centre” of the European anti-imperialist movement was Berlin. For Burns, the scenario developed itself into an uncomfortable situation, explaining to the Eastern Secretariat that he did not want to enter into a personal confrontation with Münzenberg. Since it was “obvious that no compromise” could be reached, e.g. Burns had said that Münzenberg had threatened to “resign, and [...] fight” against “the false line”, Burns chose to leave Berlin in August.⁸⁷⁴ Münzenberg reflected further over the fact that “class against class” questioned the LAI’s very ‘raison d’être’ and aims, particularly its vital collaboration with “socialist, syndicalist and national revolutionary groups” in order to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement. However, Münzenberg’s critique did not focus on the ideological essence of “class against class”, far from it; his objective was to ensure that the International Secretariat could continue with its work to centralise the anti-imperialist movement in Berlin. Münzenberg actually believed that the Frankfurt Congress had been a “powerful demonstration against Imperialism and for the defence of the Soviet Union”, in which the LAI had demonstrated a “considerable organisational improvement” since the Brussels Congress.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ RGASPI 542/1/30, 140, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/8-1929; RGASPI 542/1/33, 9, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Manuilsky, Moscow, 13/8-1929.

⁸⁷⁴ RGASPI 542/1/30, 140, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/8-1929; RGASPI 542/1/30, 100, Letter from Burns, Berlin, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 15/8-1929. Burns intended to continue “League activity in the British section”. On August 16, he left Berlin together with his wife.

⁸⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/30, 82-84, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to “Sch” [Wi/Sch.]/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 12/8-1929.

Mauno Heimo did not agree with Münzenberg. On 21 August, Heimo sent a letter informing Münzenberg that the Political Secretariat would soon be discussing the “question regarding the Frankfurt Congress proceedings”, adding a “personal observation” on his (Münzenberg’s) “grave miscalculation” of the LAI congress. Firstly, the congress had been convened in a completely different political context than the Brussels Congress, referring to the KMT’s “betrayal” and the evident failure of the revolutionary struggle in China. Secondly, the LAI had not implemented the theoretical framework of Kuusinen’s colonial and semi-colonial theses, e.g. the congress had neither forcefully demonstrated its support of the Indian revolutionary movement nor highlighted the global radicalisation of the proletariat. Thus, Heimo questioned whether the International Secretariat was even aware of the fact that the world was rapidly heading towards revolution, hence it seemed almost as if the LAI did not understand the “working methods” endorsed by the Tenth ECCI Plenum in July.⁸⁷⁶ According to Heimo, the LAI had to “urgently adjust and find a new orientation” by replacing its invalid collaborations with “left-wing social democracy and individual figures such as Maxton and Gupta” with “new reserves of ... real anti-imperialist and revolutionary layers” within the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The question of the LAI and its future was, nevertheless, in the hands of the Political Secretariat to decide upon, Heimo concluded.⁸⁷⁷ The Political Secretariat relied, though, on Bittelman’s expertise to initiate a discussion of the LAI.

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⁸⁷⁶ Heimo’s critique of the “working methods” of the LAI was harsh, particularly considering the fact that the ECCI plenum ended on July 19 and the Frankfurt congress commenced on July 21. There was, therefore, no time to adjust the apparatus of the LAI. Some of the congress delegates had attended the Plenum, so they acted as messengers of the “working methods” advocated at the ECCI Plenum.

⁸⁷⁷ RGASPI 495/18/740, Letter from Heimo/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 21/8-1929.

[...] one will have to admit that the chief reason for the inadequate results of the II Congress and for the unsatisfactory composition of the delegations was the fact that the policy of the League had lagged behind the class processes which had taken place lately in colonies and dependencies.

“Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Immediate Tasks”, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929

Bittelman intentionally avoided any public attention at the Frankfurt Congress. The primary reason for this was so that he could observe and register both the reaction to and outcome of the strategy put into practice by the communist sector. Münzenberg also knew that Bittelman had a key position. Thus, on 3 August, Münzenberg urged the Eastern Secretariat to wait with its final decision on the LAI until he had visited Moscow in September.⁸⁷⁸ Despite this request, Bittelman proceeded to complete his consultative report (the DR LAI) after returning to Moscow, a document the Eastern Secretariat adopted on 27 August. The primary aim of this report was to provide a deeper insight into the LAI to the members of the Political Secretariat. What were the principal arguments included in the DR LAI and how had Bittelman perceived the Frankfurt Congress?

On 2 September, Bittelman introduced the DR LAI to the Political Secretariat, an analysis which more or less confirmed the correctness not only of Kuusinen’s colonial and semi-colonial theses, but also of “the Magyar thesis”. Bittelman argued that “the shortcomings” of the Frankfurt Congress could be interpreted by using Kuusinen’s perception of the fact that the “national bourgeoisie in colonial countries do not adopt a uniform attitude to imperialism [...] the commercial bourgeoisie directly serves the interests of imperialist capital” in its promotion of “national reformism”. In fact, the Frankfurt Congress had avoided any discussion of “the rapid transition of the colonial national bourgeoisie to the imperialist and counter-revolutionary camp [and] the process of differentiation in the camp of national reformism”. Much of the blame for this was, according to Bittelman, due to the incapacity of the International Secretariat to understand the colonial “class processes”. Yet, despite this critical shortcoming, the congress had:

[...] developed into an imposing demonstration against reformism, imperialism and imperialist wars, and for defence of the Soviet Union. [...] the fact that it took place at the start of the military provocations of the Nanking Government against the Soviet Union,⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/30, 140, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/8-1929.

⁸⁷⁹ Theses on the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries, adopted by the 6th Comintern Congress, 1928. Taken from

The DR LAI mirrored Bittelman's and the Eastern Secretariat's expectations of the LAI and its congress. Moreover, the document also reveals the confused understanding of the international situation amongst some of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. The DR LAI stated that the LAI congress did not "reflect a historical fact of world importance", as it likewise had not showed any "further organisational consolidation", while confirming the failure of the LAI to orient itself towards the "workers' and peasants' movements in colonies". Thus, the DR LAI avoided the fact that the LAI Congress had been a project directed from its inception, at the beginning of 1929, by the Eastern Secretariat and the "Commission on the LAI". Bittelman also argued that its political manifestation had been "inadequate",

[...] colonial countries were very inadequately represented [...] delegates from non-colonial countries predominated, trade unions were inadequately represented, and the peasantry was hardly represented at all. [...] Even if one takes into consideration police and financial reasons.⁸⁸⁰

However, Bittelman acknowledged the fact that "the tactical line" to subvert the non-communist delegates had been a successful undertaking by the communist sector, manoeuvred with care by the ECCI delegation:

[...] the delegation was confronted by the bloc of Nationalists and the Maxton group which is in the course of formation and which reflects the ever-growing tendency of national reformism establishing co-operation with social-reformism and fascism. Under these conditions, the tactical line [...] which aimed at demonstrating the united front [...] formed between the Nationalists and the Maxton group by isolating the latter, was perfectly correct.⁸⁸¹

The success of the ECCI delegation was, however, not a result due to the support of the International Secretariat. According to Bittelman, the International Secretariat had failed completely in this respect by not providing a "bureau of the [communist] fraction" to organise the work for "Communist delegates" to "canvass among non-communist delegates". This criticism against the International Secretariat's administrative shortcomings was, however, not comparable with the evaluation of the purpose and aims of the LAI in the DR LAI. The DR LAI realised that the primary purpose of the LAI was to attract individuals, organisations, associations and political parties outside of the communist movement. However, the indifferent behaviour of the non-

Degras vol.II, 1960, pp.530-548; RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Direct Immediate Tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929.

⁸⁸⁰ RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Direct Immediate Tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929.

⁸⁸¹ RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Direct Immediate Tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929.

communist LAI Executive members at the congress, e.g. Maxton, Fimmen and Hatta made Bittelman question the reasons for their involvement, ignoring the fact that the communist sector had rhetorically smashed the non-communist delegates at the congress. Receiving Bittelman's report and having examined the DR LAI, the Political Secretariat resolved to push through a structural change within the LAI. Setting the Comintern apparatus in motion in Moscow, the Political Secretariat instructed the Standing Commission to examine the individual "composition" at the International Secretariat, and to assess whether Berlin really was the most logical place for the headquarters of the LAI. These administrative measures were a part of the larger question aiming to scrutinise the entire organisational structure of the LAI. The Political Secretariat urged the Eastern Secretariat and the Organisational Department (*Orgabteilung*) to examine the level of activity within the national LAI sections, and more importantly, whether they were reliable from an ideological perspective. Once this examination was at an end, the Political Secretariat envisioned the LAI and its sections commencing the work of establishing connections with the national minority movements in Eastern Europe.⁸⁸²

The reaction to the DR LAI, and the ensuing recommendation from the Political Secretariat was, initially, favourable. However, the Standing Commission objected to the opinions expounded both in the DR LAI and by the Political Secretariat. What was the reason for their objection? The Standing Commission wanted to give Münzenberg a chance to explain himself in relation to the congress results. For Bittelman, the DR LAI marked the end of his assignment as the LAI liaison in Moscow. On 4 September, the Standing Commission approved Bittelman's application to spend a vacation at a sanatorium (location unknown), with all expenses paid.⁸⁸³

Despite the Standing Commission's objections, the Comintern apparatus' work evaluating the LAI had gained pace in Moscow. The Political Commission instructed Pavel Mif to write a "comprehensive" article on how the Comintern perceived the LAI and the Frankfurt Congress.⁸⁸⁴ The most serious question was nevertheless the evaluation of the individual "composition" of the International Secretariat. For the Political Secretariat, the Czechoslovakian communist and

⁸⁸² RGASPI 495/3/120, 1, Protokoll Nr.51 von der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 2/9-1929. Present at the meeting were: Paul Reimann, Manuilsky, Ulbricht, Strakhov/Chü Chiu-pai, Bell, Piatnitsky, Heimo, Bittelman, Wiesner, Melnitschansky, Oskar and Müller. The Political Secretariat instructed the Eastern Secretariat to work out the details on the national minority question together with the ECCI Balkan Secretariat. Furthermore, Bela Kun introduced the question at a meeting with the Political Commission on 13 September, which concluded that it was necessary to form a commission to examine the idea. The Political Secretariat endorsed Kun's proposal and authorised him to act as leader of the commission, working together with Reimann, Georgi Safarov, Voitkovitsch [?], Oscar [?], Walecki, Stepanov and a KIM delegate, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/1, 13, Protokoll Nr.5 von der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats EKKI, 13/9-1929; RGASPI 495/3/122, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.53 der Sitzung der Politsekretariats, 20/9-1929.

⁸⁸³ RGASPI 495/7/11, 64-67, Protokoll Nr.55 von der Sitzung der Ständigen Kommission des Sekretariats des EKKI, Moscow, 4/9-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Bell, Ulbricht, Heimo, Feinberg, Miff and Wassiljew.

⁸⁸⁴ RGASPI 495/4/1, 1-3, Protokoll Nr. 1 von der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats 4/9-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Manuilsky, Ulbricht, Heimo, Bell, Petrovsky, Wuletzki and Wassiljew.

Comintern emissary, Bohumil Smeral, was the most reliable candidate to assume a leading position at the International Secretariat as a secretary, guided by the motive to “strengthen the League” in Berlin. The reasons why Smeral emerged as a candidate seem to have been two-fold: firstly, Smeral would co-ordinate the day-to-day routines at the International Secretariat, write articles and visit the LAI sections in Europe. The second reason was, however, of a more subtle and ambiguous nature. Due to the apparent inconsistencies existing at the International Secretariat, a dilemma highlighted by the DR LAI, it seems as though Smeral’s primary objective would be to monitor the activity and behaviour of the other members at the International Secretariat, impressions Smeral would compile in confidential reports addressed to designated persons at the headquarters of the Comintern. This is, however, an objective which is almost impossible to verify, particularly as there does not appear to exist any clear-cut decision in print, despite much allusion to the fact that such was the case. For example, once Smeral had arrived in Berlin in November, he began the work of providing “Michail” in Moscow, a pseudonym used by Piatnitsky, reports on the International Secretariat on a regular basis.⁸⁸⁵ Furthermore, Smeral was also involved in the activities of the WEB in Berlin, an actor the DR LAI had recommended in order to “organise systematic continuous leadership ... in regard to the work of the League”.⁸⁸⁶ The Political Commission approved the proposal to nominate Smeral as a secretary of the International Secretariat on 13 September. Smeral was in Berlin in September and received the instruction to return to Moscow in order to obtain detailed information “on the work” of the LAI.⁸⁸⁷ Smeral’s appointment was accompanied by a revision of the “composition” of the “comm. [communist] fraction of the LAI”, including “comrade Münzenberg, Chatopadya [sic]” and Smeral. The Small Commission gave the final approval to Smeral’s new assignment on 28 September.⁸⁸⁸

Smeral’s appointment was, nonetheless, perceived as “an error” by Chatto. On 14 October, Chatto sent his reaction to the Small Commission, a document which reveals how one of the leading figures at the International Secretariat reacted against the dominance of the Comintern to define the political, administrative and financial business of the LAI. Additionally, Chatto wanted

⁸⁸⁵ For “Michail”/Piatnitsky, see Jefets, Jefets & Huber (eds.) 2004, p.263.

⁸⁸⁶ RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Direct Immediate Tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929.

⁸⁸⁷ According to the protocol, Smeral was in Berlin in September. The Political Secretariat approved his request to visit his family in Czechoslovakia for a week before he returned to Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/120, 1, Protokoll Nr.51 von der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 2/9-1929; RGASPI 495/4/1, 11-12, Protokoll Nr.4 von der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats EKKI, 13/9-1929. Present at the meeting were Manuilsky, Ulbricht, Piatnitsky, Heimo, Miff, Tsiu Wito/Chü Chiu-pai and Lozovsky.

⁸⁸⁸ Smeral had taken part in the discussion on the Palestinian question at a meeting of the Political Secretariat on 16 October, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/125, 29-31, Protokoll Nr.58 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 16/10-1929; RGASPI 495/4/2, 18, Protokoll Nr.8 von der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Sekrt., 28/9-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Manuilsky, Garlandi, Heimo, Reimann and Kachan. As noted in Chatto’s letter, the final discussion on Smeral in the Small Commission took place on 28 September, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 104-106.

Münzenberg to support him in his case, pleading to him, “I hope that you agree with me on this”. Why did Chatto disapprove of Smeral’s nomination as a secretary? Chatto told the members of the Small Commission (Kuusinen and Manuilsky):

Smeral has no connection whatsoever in the colonial countries. [...] We shall only be adding a superfluous, superficial politician to the Secretariat, instead of comrades with real knowledge of and connections in the colonies.⁸⁸⁹

Chatto’s verdict harshly exposed the contradictory nature of relations between the International Secretariat and the Comintern. Without passing any judgement on the Comintern’s colonial policy, Chatto nonetheless questioned how the Comintern chose to deal with the LAI question. For Chatto, Smeral’s nomination was a clear-cut decision designed only to facilitate the need to “carry out the political line of the ECCI”, while simultaneously adding to the workload of the staff in Berlin to meet the expectations of “a talent” [Smeral] for writing “manifestos and pamphlets or giving ‘Direktiven’”. The rash decision to appoint a “well-known [...] European communist” to represent the International Secretariat would cause unwanted attention from national security services, as well as increase the already existing “conflicts with national revolutionary organisations”, Chatto argued. Above all, Chatto would prefer to employ “ten colonial communists”, or a communist from “one of the imperialist countries [...] specialised in some definite group of colonial countries” to work at the International Secretariat. Chatto continued to question how the Small Commission could approve sending a person with restricted linguistic skills in the German language. Smeral could not even deal with the correspondence at the International Secretariat, particularly letters and documents in English, French and Spanish. If Smeral wanted access to any correspondence, this would therefore force someone to translate the letters, and add a “fresh burden upon our technical staff”. Chatto also reflected over the fact that Smeral’s nomination also obliged the International Secretariat to give him a monthly salary (\$150 per month), something which would drain the already meagre monthly “Comintern subvention”.⁸⁹⁰ Chatto wondered whether the nomination had been based on other reasons, rather than on the objective to “carry out the political line of the ECCI”:

There is no special employment at present for Smeral in the Comintern, and that the vacancy caused by the resignation of Burns is being used as a convenient solution of the Smeral

⁸⁸⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 104-106, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 14/10-1929. A copy of Chatto’s letter is filed in *fond* 495/4/4, 41-43 (German version), a document that does not include Chatto’s signature.

⁸⁹⁰ Chatto accepted Smeral’s appointment on one condition, he expected “in hope and belief” in the Comintern that Smeral’s “salary [would] at least [be] paid by the Comintern, if no increase was made in the subvention to the LAI”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/30, 104-106, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 14/10-1929. For Smeral’s salary in 1030, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 32. The GDP in 2009 for \$150 is equivalent to \$1,880 (1929), and \$1,930 (1930).

problem – at the cost of the efficiency of one of the most important and valuable auxiliary organisations of the Comintern.⁸⁹¹

A far more constructive solution would have been to assign Smeral as a “special representative [liaison]” for the LAI in Moscow at Comintern headquarters, to co-ordinate and “maintain speedy contacts” with the Comintern, Profintern and other mass and sympathising organisations. Did Chatto’s letter receive any response? It seems as though the decision-makers in Moscow chose to ignore his letter and, on 14 November, the Political Commission considered the matter closed, telling the LAI “kom.Fraktion” to accept and abide by the Small Commission’s decision.⁸⁹² While the Political Commission was still evaluating Chatto’s letter, Smeral had already arrived in Berlin from Moscow to assume his position as LAI secretary at the International Secretariat.⁸⁹³

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Münzenberg’s Speech for the Defence

On 22 September, Münzenberg left Berlin in the company of Chatto on a trip to Moscow, where they both remained for a couple of weeks.⁸⁹⁴ On 25 September, acting on the request of the Standing Commission, Münzenberg gave his “explanation” (*Erklärung*) to the Political Secretariat on the results and consequences of the Frankfurt Congress. Münzenberg’s speech was an act of defence, both for himself, as well as for the International Secretariat.

According to the running commentary of the “Erklärung des Gen. Münzenberg” (*Explanation by Com. Münzenberg*), recorded at the meeting in Moscow, it has been possible to retrace how Münzenberg addressed the Political Secretariat and defended his interpretation of the congress. Thus, for Münzenberg, it was a question of making a distinction between the past, present and the future of the LAI. The central issue was to refute the conclusions presented by the Eastern Secretariat in the DR LAI. According to Münzenberg, this document had been a typical example of an account crammed with “false information”, presenting a misrepresentative picture of the congress, the preparatory work and of the International Secretariat’s colonial network. For example, the DR LAI had misinterpreted the Maxton question, and left the impression that the LAI had only weak and fragile connections with national revolutionary organisations. For Münzenberg, the LAI faced a monumental task to combat the existing ignorance and indolence within the

⁸⁹¹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 104-106, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 14/10-1929.

⁸⁹² RGASPI 542/1/30, 104-106, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 14/10-1929; RGASPI 495/4/4, 26-27, Protokoll Nr.19 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariat des EKKI, 14/11-1929. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Ulbricht, Heimo, Garlandi, Guralski, Lebedewa and Sokolik.

⁸⁹³ Smeral arrived in Berlin “in the beginning of November”; see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 5-11, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 2/1-1930.

⁸⁹⁴ IISG Fritz Brupbacher Papers 4249.10/168, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Brupbacher, Zürich, 21/9-1929.

European communist parties, a perspective that Bittelman had neglected to mention in the DR LAI. This fact alone had contributed to bringing the Frankfurt Congress to its chaotic end, confirming “the difference of opinion” between the ECCI delegation and the “entrusted comrades” from the International Secretariat. The “tactical disagreements in the Comintern delegation” had therefore inflicted damage on “such an important event” yet, if the ECCI delegation had allowed the “comrades” of the LAI to attend its closed meetings, this conflict of interest would not have become an issue, Münzenberg stated. In fact, the so-called failure of the congress could be explained by external causes, especially the intervention of local “police authorities and money”, rather than the explanation given in the DR LAI, which lay the blame on the International Secretariat. Giving support to the advice given by Heimo, Münzenberg concluded that it was not advisable, or for that matter, logical to compare the Frankfurt Congress with the Brussels congress. Münzenberg’s “explanation” was a ritual of self-criticism; however, he did not concede that the organisational failures of the Frankfurt Congress could be blamed on the International Secretariat. Despite the mistakes made in Berlin, e.g. the failure to secure the attendance of leaders of the “anti-imperialist struggle in the most important colonial countries” (China and India), Münzenberg argued that the reasons for this could be found in the widespread repression administered by colonial security services in the colonies. The source of this problem could also be found in the Comintern’s refusal to guarantee the money aimed to finance the journeys of colonial delegations. Yet, this had not stopped some colonial delegates from attending the congress. Münzenberg explained that Gupta’s struggle to travel from India to Frankfurt was an exceptional example, Gupta having financed his trip with his own money. This statement from Münzenberg contradicted the Eastern Secretariat’s conclusions in the DR LAI, which had described Gupta as “a big landowner, a Right nationalist”, an observation that Münzenberg considered to be contradictory to the LAI’s view. How did Münzenberg respond to the Eastern Secretariat’s criticism and accusatory labelling of Gupta? Münzenberg believed that the LAI was an organisation with “an international reputation”, thus it was crucial to treat the few existing links to India with extra care due to the increased pressure from the British police (“Polizeischikanen”).⁸⁹⁵ Essentially, the question was how to maintain the fragile connections the International Secretariat still had to India. Another serious question raised by Münzenberg at the meeting was to protest against the idea to split the International Secretariat into three secretariats and to locate them in Berlin, Paris and London. If realised, Münzenberg stated that this would lead to the destruction of the LAI. Describing a possible scenario, Münzenberg predicted that the LAI secretariat in London would have to turn to

⁸⁹⁵ Münzenberg explained that the policing techniques of the German *Schutzpolizei* had contributed to curb the enthusiasm of the congress, for example, restrict congress delegates to arrive from other countries, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/120, 72-75, Erklärung des Gen. Münzenberg, Moscow, Political Secretariat, 25/9-1929.

illegal means due to the surveillance of British security service. Hence, if the Comintern apparatus' motive was to correct the errors of past times, Münzenberg stated that, instead of seeking a "cure-all" as outlined in the DR LAI, the issue of the LAI required more subtle and sophisticated solutions. Firstly, the Comintern had to rectify the "passive and complete indifference" of the communist parties in Europe towards supporting the LAI, and ensure an understanding within the parties that, despite the LAI posing as a "non-communist organisation", it was working exclusively in the service of communism. Secondly, Münzenberg wanted to re-define the ideological work at the International Secretariat. This implies that he already was aware of the idea to appoint Smeral as a secretary in Berlin, yet this did not restrict him from asking that the candidate had to be in the possession of an independent network with colonial activists, rather than have skills in "fractional techniques".⁸⁹⁶

Münzenberg's "explanation" is a significant episode in the history of the LAI, which reveals that a sympathising organisation such as the LAI was a both sensitive and complex issue for the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters to deal with. Münzenberg's speech for the defence also leaves us with the following suggestion: his performance is proof of the fact that Münzenberg was retreating from the daily routine work at the International Secretariat, leaving all decisions on the future of the LAI completely up to the decision-makers in Moscow.

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The "prominente Persönlichkeiten": Expulsions and Voluntary Resignations

The purging of the "prominente Persönlichkeiten" is a sad finale to the non-party nature of the LAI, defining how the policy of "class against class" was used to purge the non-communist members on the LAI Executive. After the Frankfurt Congress, there was also an ideological cleansing of the LAI. According to Hatta, this "purification process" emerged because of the chaos in Frankfurt. Smeral was the one who initiated the process in Berlin, following the distinction introduced by Melnitschansky at the Frankfurt Congress of categorising people as either "friend" or "foe" when it came to evaluating the "prominente Persönlichkeiten" (*prominent personalities*) in the LAI. A category made up of political and cultural personalities outside the communist movement, but one which had been a vital source for the LAI in establishing itself as a non-party organisation, while at the same time disguising its communist ties. Smeral's work assessing the "prominente Persönlichkeiten" also illustrates how a believer and advocate of "the new line" perceived the LAI's collaborations with radical left-wing activists, socialists, nationalists and intellectuals. Nonetheless, Smeral was not unique in being a communist content to define non-

⁸⁹⁶ RGASPI 495/3/120, 72-75, Erklärung des Gen. Münzenberg, Moscow, Political Secretariat, 25/9-1929.

communist actors in derogatory terms. For example, Heimo told Münzenberg to get “new reserves”, while Bittelman in the DR LAI concluded that it was necessary to “free the League of these elements” by severing its ties to representatives of reformist nationalist movements in the colonies (Gupta, Nehru, Hatta “and others”). Hence, a “systematic campaign” against Maxton and Fimmen would only be a natural reaction to expose their treachery, Bittelman stated. Smeral described the non-communists in vivid terms, referring to Baldwin’s ties to an “anti-communist front”, or that after the *Communist Party of Mexico* had expelled Rivera, a logical reaction was therefore to relieve him of his position on the LAI Executive. On 2 January 1930, Smeral completed his first evaluation of the LAI Executive, and passed on his results to Piatnitsky and the Eastern Secretariat:

Table 8.1: Composition of the LAI Executive Committee, January 1930

<i>Name</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Status</i>
Dr. Thengdi	India	
Huang Ping	China	
Jawaharlal Nehru	India	+
Shapurji Saklatvala	India	
Mohammad Hatta	Indonesia	+
Fuad Chimali	Syria	
J. W. Ford	Negro	
Diego Rivera	Mexico	+
Augusto Sandino	Nicaragua	+
Melnitschansky	The Soviet Union	
Georgi Dimitrov	The Balkans	
A. Herclet	France	
Willi Münzenberg	Germany	
Reginald Bridgeman	Great Britain	
James Maxton	Great Britain	+
Harry Pollitt	Great Britain	
Edo Fimmen	Holland	+

Source: RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky, Moscow, 2/1-1930

Members of the LAI Executive marked with a “+” were “soon to be, or were already on the other side of the barricade”, Smeral concluded, whereas the ones without any mark remained as trustworthy members. In the latter case, however, a majority were either loyal communists or imprisoned colonial figureheads (Thengdi). This ideological evaluation of the LAI Executive also defines the crisis within the LAI, as this “purification process” went against the ECCI Secretariat’s

directives to the International Secretariat in December 1929, which had urged the LAI to begin acting “as a broad non-party organisation ... not obliged to copy the Comintern”.⁸⁹⁷

The aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress was a phase characterised by its contradictions, which were essentially caused by the militancy of the “class against class” principle. It was therefore only a question of how long the non-communist members in the LAI Executive would endure. The focus here was now on how Maxton, Fimmen, Hatta and Nehru would respond to the International Secretariat’s criticism while, in the background, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters were expecting the International Secretariat to both shun and defame these collaborators. This “purification process” lasted for several years after 1929; however, in a majority of cases, the “prominente Persönlichkeiten” chose to resign voluntarily from the LAI. For the LAI, the purging of its non-communist members called into question the very essence of a sympathising organisation which, as in this case, existed solely to aid the Comintern’s colonial ambitions, but which also relied on the consent and the support of political and intellectual actors outside the communist movement in order to justify its existence. The other side of the coin was the defamatory rhetoric used by the International Secretariat towards the “prominente Persönlichkeiten”, a form of behaviour which tipped the scale in favour of the non-communist members leaving the LAI. Maxton proved to be the exception to the above.

James Maxton: Maxton was the political sacrifice the Eastern Secretariat expected the International Secretariat to make after the Frankfurt Congress. According to the DR LAI, Maxton had had the opportunity to express his “sincerest of sympathy” for the “anti-imperialist struggle of the colonial peoples” at the congress. Nonetheless, Bittelman concluded that Maxton’s performance had been a “serious error” which had caused “a gross distortion and infringement of the CI line”.⁸⁹⁸ For Maxton, any chance of averting the “storm” around his *persona* was now out of his hands. Münzenberg tried to reduce the criticism against Maxton, initially stating that the opinions raised at the Frankfurt Congress had been enough. However, if the Comintern commanded the LAI to “break with” Maxton, the International Secretariat would endorse the decision. Maxton was a valuable political source in England for both Münzenberg and the LAI. On 10 September, Münzenberg told Maxton in a letter about his concern that “our organisation has completely failed in its duty” to get involved in the Wailing Wall riots in Palestine. In August

⁸⁹⁷ For a discussion on sympathising organisations and the use of prominent individuals, see *Introduction*, and Stern 2007, pp.43-45; RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky, Moscow, 2/1-1930; RGASPI 495/18/740, 95-96, (Vertraulich) An das Exekutivkomitee der Antiimperialistischen Liga, the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, December, 1929. This letter was not, however, aimed to be read by the LAI Executive (see above), it was addressed to the “kom.Fraktion” at the International Secretariat.

⁸⁹⁸ RGASPI 495/20/722, 100-105, Draft Resolution on Results of the II World Congress of the LAI and its Direct Immediate Tasks, passed by the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/8-1929.

1929, the riots in Jerusalem had culminated in a violent dispute between the Jewish and Arab populations on the question of who had access rights to the last remnants of Herod's temple. Additionally, the Honorary President of the LAI, Albert Einstein, referred to this episode as being the reason to resign from his position in the LAI due to its anti-Semitic propaganda in its release of a "resolution against the Jewish population in Palestine". Hence, while the non-party character of the LAI was beginning to crumble, Münzenberg perceived Maxton as being one of the LAI's few remaining links capable of organising "strong parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions against the MacDonald Government" in order to draw attention to the Wailing Wall riots.⁸⁹⁹

Maxton's performance at the Frankfurt Congress was not the only factor contributing to this political confrontation. According to William Knox's biography of Maxton, Maxton simply refused to do what Münzenberg, Chatto and the British LAI Section expected of him, i.e. to publish the transcript of his speech at the Frankfurt Congress in the *New Leader*. Maxton apparently feared that such an act would increase the conflict between the ILP and the MacDonald government. A more rational explanation was also that Maxton had reach the end of the road in his relations with the LAI, frustrated and tired of being "bullied, harassed and pestered as to the times and methods by which he should express himself". As noted in Gordon Brown's biography of Maxton, after the Frankfurt Congress Maxton travelled to Largs in Scotland for a vacation. Once there, and beginning to hear rumours of his impending expulsion from the LAI, Maxton concluded that he was "more interested at the moment in the solution of a mystery story than half a dozen expulsions from the LAI".⁹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the attacks against Maxton continued "in the most sectarian terms", but this time under the direction of the British LAI Section rather than the International Secretariat. John Saville wrote that the section's central aim was to relieve Maxton of his duties as Chairman of the LAI – an initiative the International Secretariat had not, as yet, sanctioned. Thus, the British LAI Section had decided to act independently and, on 17 September, at a meeting in London, the section decided to expel Maxton from the LAI. Bridgeman explained the reason for this decision:

⁸⁹⁹ RGASPI 542/1/30, 82-84, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 12/8-1929; RGASPI 542/1/33, 18-21, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Maxton, London, 10/9-1929 (the draft, German version, was finished on 30 August, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/33, 11-14). For the Wailing Wall riots, see Fieldhouse 2006, p.161. On 6 September, Albert Einstein informed the International Secretariat of his immediate resignation as Honorary President of the LAI, stating that the "resolution against the Jewish population in Palestine makes it impossible for me to be connected in any way to the League." This quote was later included in Smeral's report on the Arab countries to Magyar, a document filed in the Piatnitsky dossiers, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 6-19, Bericht des Sekretariats der "Liga gegen Imperialismus" über die arabische Arbeit in der Periode von August bis Dezember 1929, Berlin, 10/1-1930. A copy of this report is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, 6-19; IISG LAI Collection 3392.1/86, Resolution über die arabischen Länder, Frankfurt am Main, 20-31/7-1929.

⁹⁰⁰ William Knox, *James Maxton*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987, pp.87-88; Gordon Brown, *Maxton*, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh, 1986, p.201.

[...] there was no doubt whatever that he [Maxton] apparently displayed no interest whatever in events of tremendous importance in colonial countries leading to the despatch of troops and warships to Palestine, with much bloodshed, thus creating the impression that he was looking for an opportunity to resign from the League.⁹⁰¹

The decision was a rash one. Most importantly, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters had not authorised the section to expel Maxton. Thus, in the beginning of 1930, the leader of the WEB in Berlin, Helmut/Dimitrov, instructed the International Secretariat to reprimand the British LAI Section for having committed an act that went against “the principles and activities of the League”.⁹⁰² What did this act of insubordination consist of? Primarily, it was a question of control. On 21 February 1930, the Colonial Commission of the CPGB wanted the International Secretariat to realise that Maxton’s unsanctioned expulsion would be used by the LSI in their propaganda to describe how the communists treated their political associates. Thus, the Maxton affair had damaged the “League as a whole”.⁹⁰³ Secondly, the unsanctioned expulsion of Maxton turned into an ideological question. For the International Secretariat, the negative effects had to be deflected by finding some kind of resolution. According to an article, “James Maxton und die Liga gegen Imperialismus”, published in *Pressedienst* on 30 May 1930, the International Secretariat declared that the British LAI Section had interfered with the jurisdiction of the LAI Executive.⁹⁰⁴ The crux of the matter is that at the time this article was published, i.e. on 30 May 1930, the LAI had no Executive.

Edo Fimmen: Bittelman stated in the DR LAI that Fimmen had intentionally concealed his support for social democracy. Nevertheless, in contrast to how the Maxton case had played itself out within the British LAI Section, the Comintern and the International Secretariat proceeded with caution in examining the LAI’s relation with Fimmen after the Frankfurt Congress. On 2 January 1930, Smeral concluded that Fimmen had begun to ignore the International Secretariat after the congress, and was apparently acting “against us”. Somehow, Smeral had managed to read a letter from Fimmen to Nehru in which he had stated that “the communist dominance in the League

⁹⁰¹ Saville concluded that Maxton’s expulsion was a “bizarre event understandable only in terms of the sectarian excesses that followed the application of the general political line of the 6th Congress of the CI [Comintern]”, Reginald Bridgeman to F. Gardner, 21/9-1929, in Bellamy & Saville (eds.) 1984, p.31.

⁹⁰² RGASPI 499/1/17, 54-55, Bericht des Sekretariats durch Münzenberg, Smeral and Chatto, WEB, Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 13/1-1930. The International Secretariat sent the letter to the British LAI Section on 3 April; see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 88-91, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the British LAI Section, London, 3/4-1930.

⁹⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/44, 59, Letter from the COLONIAL DEPARTMENT [CPGB], London, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 21/2-1930

⁹⁰⁴ RGASPI 542/1/46a, 78-81, *Pressedienst*, “James Maxton und die Liga gegen Imperialismus”, Internationales Sekretariat, Berlin, 15/5-1930. In connection with the re-launching of the LAI Executive in Berlin in 1931 (see next chapter), the Political Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat formulated the details for Maxton’s “formal expulsion”. The focal point for the LAI was to expose these so-called “agents of imperialism” (Hatta, Fimmen and Nehru), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Protocol: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-1931.

deserves no comment”.⁹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Magyar had visited Amsterdam in either November or December 1929, where he had held a “private consultation” with Fimmen to discuss why the latter had expressed discontent towards the development of the LAI. At the meeting, Magyar declared to Fimmen that there was no turning back for the LAI and, despite Fimmen still remaining as vice-deputy of the LAI, “the time has passed [for] us [communists]” to associate openly with the “left-wing” of the *Amsterdam International*. Fimmen considered that the “militancy” of “the new course” was sending the LAI off in the wrong direction. From Magyar’s perspective, this merely confirmed that Fimmen was a “corrupt Amsterdam bureaucrat [...] good for nothing”.⁹⁰⁶ Whether Fimmen’s meeting with Magyar provoked a desire to sever his ties with the LAI, remains unknown. However, on 19 February 1930, Fimmen contacted Chatto, demanding to retrieve every document (letters and circular information) mentioning his name, which the LAI bureau had on file in Berlin. If Chatto did not fulfil this request, Fimmen intended to resign with immediate effect.⁹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Fimmen waited until 27 October 1930 to send his letter of resignation from the LAI Executive to the International Secretariat. The primary reason for Fimmen’s resignation was that the LAI’s original objective – to become an international leader and spokesperson for the anti-imperialist movement – had turned into a failure of grandiose proportions. The political results after the Frankfurt Congress were nil, Fimmen stated and, worst of all, the LAI was an “illusion” about to “fade away”.⁹⁰⁸ Smeral did not know how to react after reading Fimmen’s letter, and decided to send the document on to the Eastern Secretariat for further consideration. In Moscow, the Political Commission reviewed Fimmen’s letter, instructing the Eastern Secretariat to compose a “short draft of a resolution”, while urging the International Secretariat to act vigorously by publishing articles and pamphlets in order “to ridicule” Fimmen. The Eastern Secretariat completed its resolution on 22 November, after which the ECCI Secretariat duly endorsed the document and passed it on to the Political Commission for a final review. Heimo, on the other hand, instructed the International Secretariat to publish this resolution in *Pressdienst*. What were the primary arguments against Fimmen in this resolution? Apparently, Fimmen had “sabotaged every decision of the League since the Frankfurt Congress”. By not acting as a “real supporter” of the struggle against imperialism, Fimmen was actively supporting “counter-revolutionary Zionism, this agent of British Imperialism”. These arguments were also included in the article, “Gesunde

⁹⁰⁵ For the original document, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat/Piatnitsky, Moscow, 2/1-1930. For a copy of this report, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 5-11.

⁹⁰⁶ RGASPI 542/1/44, 56, Letter from “Edwin”/Magyar, Berlin/Moscow, to the Eastern Secretariat, 6/2-1930. “Edwin”/Magyar deliberately did not reveal to Fimmen the purpose of his visit in Amsterdam – “ich sagte ihm auch nicht wo ich arbeite und was ich mache”.

⁹⁰⁷ RGASPI 542/1/44, 57, Letter from Fimmen, Amsterdam, to Chatto, Berlin, 19/2-1930. Whether Chatto ever sent these documents to Fimmen remains unknown.

⁹⁰⁸ RGASPI 542/1/44, 76, Letter from Fimmen, Amsterdam, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 27/10-1930; A copy of this letter is filed in the ECCI Secretariat’s dossier, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/863, 26.

Erscheinungen in der Liga gegen Imperialismus” (*Healthy Action in the League against Imperialism*), which was published in *Inprecorr* on 28 November.⁹⁰⁹ On 3 December, the Political Commission considered the matter to be closed, instructing the International Secretariat to send Fimmen a formal letter of expulsion from the LAI.⁹¹⁰

Mohammad Hatta: The chaos at the Frankfurt Congress had a lasting impression on Hatta. In Hatta’s “retrospective account”, published in the Indonesian nationalist newspaper *Indonesia Merdeka* in the autumn of 1929, he wondered whether the “international platform for all anti-imperialists of any political inclination” would collapse under the weight placed on its shoulders after the “purification process” which the communist “hardcore elements” within the LAI had instigated. If the motive was to purify the LAI, Hatta feared that “a new League will arise from its ruins and only the suppressed nations of coloured race could be its supporters”, without any support from the former stronghold: the anti-imperialist movement in the “imperialist countries”. This article had an “immense repercussion” on Hatta’s political life, which, as noted by Mavis Rose, made him a “target for Comintern attack”. However, there was more to this than the publication of one article. After the Frankfurt Congress, Hatta had insisted that the PI sever its ties to the Dutch LAI Section, so once Smeral became aware of his article and the above recommendation, Hatta became a *persona non grata*. From a broader perspective, Hatta had been the International Secretariat’s link to Indonesian activists in both the Netherlands and across Europe. Once Smeral and Hatta resolved to terminate this relationship, irrespective of each other’s motive, the LAI lost its Indonesian connection. For the Dutch LAI Section, the situation worsened and was one of despondency. Smeral observed how the section “barely managed to exist” after the Frankfurt Congress.⁹¹¹

Jawaharlal Nehru: Nehru left the LAI Executive on his own initiative. Nehru’s case also illustrates the level of isolation the LAI was experiencing in India. Furthermore, the narrative discloses Chatto’s radicalisation from being an Indian revolutionary to being a loyal advocate of communism. Barooah has thoroughly analysed the relationship between Chatto and Nehru;

⁹⁰⁹ RGASPI 495/4/67, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.99 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 11/11-1930; *Inprecorr*, “Proletarische Massenorganisationen. Gesunde Erscheinungen in der Liga gegen Imperialismus”, [illegible number and page], 28/11-1930, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 23-23a.

⁹¹⁰ RGASPI 495/18/863, 23, Short note from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to the ECCI Political Commission, Moscow, 22/11-1930; RGASPI 542/1/44, 82, Letter from Heimo/ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 22/10-1930; for the final discussion by the Political Kommission on Fimmen, see fol. 495/4/72, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.104 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, Moscow, 3/12-1930. Present at the meeting were Manuilsky, Piatnitsky, Weinstone, Sokolik, Heimo, Zirul, Safarov, Kutschumov, Magyar, Lozovsky, Walecki, Angaretis and Furubottn. For the resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/72, 10-12, Resolutionsentwurf des Sekretariats der Antimperialistischen Liga (Moscow), 6/12-1930. A copy of this resolution is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, 81-82.

⁹¹¹ Hatta [1929] 1972, pp.200-204; Mavis Rose, *Indonesia Free. A Political Biography of Mohammad Hatta*, Equinox Publishing, Singapore, 2010 (first published 1987), p.92; RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky, Moscow, 2/1-1930.

however, the fact that this relationship also illustrates the difficulties the LAI were experiencing in establishing its activity in India is also worth further consideration. The Frankfurt Congress had not enhanced the possibilities for the LAI to establish itself in India. As a solution to this dilemma, Chatto needed advice from Bittelman on how to proceed, only to receive the answer that he was suspicious of the political contacts the LAI had in India. Bittelman argued that it was inadvisable to continue the relations with “national reformists” (the INC), urging Chatto to establish contacts with “revolutionary trade unions and peasant organisations”. If this was done, the LAI would remain “safely in our hands”.⁹¹² Yet, after Bittelman had resigned from his assignment as liaison for the LAI in Moscow, all discussion of India abruptly ended. In October 1929, Chatto contacted Freyer [?] at the Eastern Secretariat, asking “what steps have been taken?”. However, Freyer’s reply to Chatto only confirmed the effectiveness of the hierarchy of relations at play at the International Secretariat, i.e. Münzenberg had already received “advice” on the question, therefore Chatto only had to ask him what to do.⁹¹³ Chatto concluded in December that a majority of the LAI’s former contacts in India, e.g. with the communist movement in Bombay, had disappeared.⁹¹⁴ At the beginning of 1930, Nehru represented one of its few remaining links to India.

Nehru had not witnessed the controversy and political commotion at the Frankfurt Congress. However, Nehru managed to establish an understanding of the event from other sources, e.g. from Gupta, Fimmen and Baldwin, who had referred to the LAI’s “metamorphosis”. Realising that the Frankfurt Congress had been a serious episode, not only in relation to the drastic change in the LAI’s political platform, Nehru contacted Chatto to explain that, if the LAI continued along the line of the communists, this would lead to the “collapse of the League”. Chatto had nevertheless begun to radicalise his attitude towards Nehru. In his response to Nehru, Chatto complained about Gandhi’s omnipotent influence over the INC, and blamed Nehru, as INC Chairman, for this “tragic collapse” particularly as he had endorsed the “Delhi Manifesto” in October 1929. This manifesto was, above all, a result of Gandhi’s ambition to get the INC to initiate a political collaboration with both the Liberals and other moderate political forces in India, and to achieve a political amnesty for political prisoners. The “Delhi Manifesto” did not question when or whether India would achieve dominion status; it was rather a political demonstration which focused on working out the

⁹¹² Bittelman wanted Chatto to explain in detail on his plan for India: “[...] we wish to know through whom you are planning to send the finances, and who, in your opinion, will receive the money in India and who is going to initiate the organisation of the organising committee. Certainly it will not do at all to send the money to Nehru or similar elements and have them undertake the organisation of the League section in India”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/33, 10, Letter from Bittelman, Moscow, to Chatto, Berlin, 27/8-1929.

⁹¹³ RGASPI 542/1/33, 38, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Fryer/Freier, Moscow, 16/10-1929. This letter arrived in Moscow on 18 October (stamped); RGASPI 542/1/33, 37, Short note from Fryer/Freier, Moscow, to Chatto, Berlin, 11/11-1929.

⁹¹⁴ RGASPI 542/1/44, 24-37, Bericht über die indische Arbeit des Internationalen Sekretariats der Liga gegen Imperialismus. Periode von August bis Dezember 1929, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 9/1-1930.

details for a possible constitution based on India receiving dominion status. The manifesto had been largely a reaction to a political field study of India in 1929 and its ensuing evaluation by a British government official, Lord Irwin, who advocated the opinion that dominion status was a realistic goal to achieve for the Indian independence movement. However, Nehru did not consider this to be enough and, at the INC session in Lahore in December 1929, he referred to the manifesto as being the reason for having adopted the far more radical *Purna Swaraj* Resolution, a document which demanded “complete independence” for India. This act in itself also made Nehru renounce his support of the LAI’s radical policy and of its connections with the communist movement before the INC members in Lahore. Benjamin Zachariah’s study of Nehru concludes that Nehru realised that it was “dangerous to be bound” by the communists’ methods, referring particularly to the episode of the KMT putsch in April 1927, which had proven to be so disastrous for those involved.⁹¹⁵

Chatto continued to criticise Nehru. In the end, Nehru reacted by severing both his relation with Chatto and the INC’s collaboration with the LAI. On January 30 1930, Nehru sent two letters, the first a personal letter to Chatto, and the second to the International Secretariat declaring his resignation from the LAI Executive. Nehru explained in his letter to Chatto the reason why he had decided to leave the LAI:

My dear Chatto, [...] I am afraid you are often very much misled by some of your correspondents in India. I can well understand a difference in outlook. If this difference is fundamental then co-operation is difficult. [...] In any event it does not help matters much by calling people with whom you may happen to disagree a little traitors and the like.⁹¹⁶

In his letter of resignation to the International Secretariat, Nehru introduced himself as the INC’s representative. According to Nehru, “many things that your secretariat had done appeared to us [INC] strange”, especially the hostility shown towards Gupta in Frankfurt and the “attitude to our Congress”. Nehru questioned even why he had bothered to support the LAI, a belief that in turn had made the INC question Nehru’s position. Thus, the International Secretariat’s common practice of magnifying “such criticisms does not make it any easier for us to continue our association with you or to contribute to your funds”, thus, “the sooner we separate the better”,

⁹¹⁵ Roger Baldwin lost his interest in the LAI in 1931. In a letter to Nehru, Baldwin explained that he had “just been expelled” because of his support for the INC, see Roger Baldwin to Nehru, 29/4-1931, in Nehru 1958, pp.96-97; V. Chattopadhyaya to Nehru, Berlin, 4/12-1929, in Nehru 1958, pp.79-81; Barooah 2004, pp.262-265; Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru*, Routledge, Oxon, 2004, pp.64-66.

⁹¹⁶ Nehru argued that Chatto would change his mind if “you came in personal contact with some of our most aggressive young men who pose as workers’ leaders you might change your opinion of them. Some of them undoubtedly are fine young men but some also are entirely untrustworthy”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, 50, Letter from Nehru, Allahabad, to Chatto, Berlin, 30/1-1930. Nehru’s letter is also included in Gopal 1975, p.139, and Barooah (2004, p.266).

Nehru concluded.⁹¹⁷ The International Secretariat reacted to Nehru's resignation with silence. However, Chatto experienced the situation as humiliating, asking the ECCI to allow him to reply to Nehru, a point of view supported by the ZK KPD, who told Piatnitsky that Nehru's behaviour was an intolerable act which deserved some kind of response.⁹¹⁸ However, the Political Commission advised everyone involved to remain silent and to await further instructions, while informing the International Secretariat to act cautiously in its future contacts with Nehru. Chatto ignored these instructions, however. Barooah writes that Chatto sent a letter to Nehru, asking him to show tolerance towards "mistakes simply because these happen to be pointed out by Communists". At this point, however, the split between the two of them had deepened to such a degree that they could no longer see eye to eye. The Nehru case had revealed Chatto's "fateful ideological conversion" from being a nationalist revolutionary to having communism as his only ally.⁹¹⁹

The aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress merely confirmed the complete dependence of the International Secretariat on the Comintern apparatus in Moscow. On 6 and 19 December 1929, the International Secretariat held two meetings in order to assess the situation, reaching the conclusion that activity had either slowed down or had reached a complete standstill at all levels, e.g. its

⁹¹⁷ According to Nehru, the separation was a logical step for both parties: "[I]f you feel that there is a vital difference between your viewpoint and that of the Congress then it obvious that we cannot work on a common platform [...] That would be a straightforward course and that would give both parties full freedom of action. But it is an impossible position for us to be associated with you and to be continually attacked by you", see fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, 51-54, Official letter from Nehru, Allahabad, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 30/1-1930.

⁹¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/44, 55, Decision of the International Secretariat, author: Chatto, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 2/2-1930. The Colonial Commission of the CPGB did not appreciate the suggestion to expel Nehru at once, and referred to the mistakes committed by the British LAI Section in connection with Maxton's expulsion. This differed from the opinion of the ZK KPD, which urged Piatnitsky to get the ECCI to sanction the "direct" expulsion of the "traitorous" Nehru, RGASPI 542/1/44, 59, Letter from the COLONIAL DEPARTMENT [CPGB], London, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 21/2-1930. For the ZK KPD, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 22, Vertraulich, ZK KPD, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 6/2-1930.

⁹¹⁹ Barooah 2004, p.266. In Frankfurt, Chatto described to Bjarne Braatoy that the Indian movement came "in first place", and communism was the second option, see IISG LSI Archives 3050/60-61, Letter from Braatoy, Berlin, to Adler, Zurich, 6/8-1929. Why did the Political Commission restrain Chatto? According to the Political Commission, Kuusinen should send "directives" to the International Secretariat "kom.Fraktion" (Münzenberg and Smeral), and tell them to do nothing at all. Thus, if Nehru received no response from the International Secretariat, time would be the LAI's ally. However, if the International Secretariat sent a "formal reply" to Nehru, it should contain no criticism; it would need to be focused on Nehru's "defection" from the LAI Executive. In India, Nehru was preoccupied with other issues, e.g. Gandhi's salt manufacturing campaign, and the civil disobedience movement, the latter resulting, on 14 April 1930, in Nehru's arrest and a prison sentence of six months. On 7 October 1930, Smeral discussed Nehru's arrest with Münzenberg and Chatto, only to conclude that he was tired of waiting for a decision from someone at Comintern headquarters on what to do with the Nehru question. Making an effort to solve the stalemate, Smeral wrote a draft resolution on Nehru and sent it to the Political Commission. However, the Political Commission dismissed this resolution, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/19, 1-4, Protokoll Nr.47 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 23/3-1930; RGASPI 495/4/19, 86, Confidential letter from [Kuusinen], Moscow, to Münzenberg and Smeral, Berlin, 28/3-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 108, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to Münzenberg & Chatto, Berlin, 7/10-1930. For Smeral's draft, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 109-111; Gopal 1975, pp.141-143.

connections with India and the Meerut trial campaign⁹²⁰ as well as the Negro question,⁹²¹ while internal chaos had begun to consume several of the sections (the Dutch and British sections). Unable to pay the debts (13,021 Marks) accumulated in connection with the Frankfurt Congress, Münzenberg, Chatto and Smeral had no answer to the question of how to proceed. To confirm the crisis, Hans Jäger, the secretary of the German LAI Section in Berlin, told Münzenberg that, due to the lack of finance, that section would cease activity on 1 January, 1930. Jäger needed a monthly sum of 50 Marks to finance its work.⁹²² The crisis had arrived.

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The Crisis

“My initial impression of the general situation”, as noted by Smeral on 2 January 1930, was that the crisis dealt essentially with the “very existence” of the LAI. Previous interpretations of the LAI have ignored the structural effects the Frankfurt Congress had on the International Secretariat, leading to the beginning of a dynamic period. Despite Haikal’s discerning and ground-breaking narrative on the LAI, he only conceded that, by the beginning of 1930, the organisation had lost almost every non-communist member, and that this was merely a “reflection of Comintern policy in the ‘Third Period’”. Another interpretation has been given in Matthew Worley’s evaluation of the British LAI Section, which describes a section which had voluntarily retreated into isolation due to the expulsion of former left-wing supporters, although this did not prevent the British LAI Section from continuing “to function”.⁹²³ This is a perspective which offers a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the crisis. The primary aim here is to evaluate and analyse how this crisis

⁹²⁰ The Comintern wanted to develop the Meerut campaign at the end of 1929. CPGB member, Tom Bell, suggested to the political advisor for the campaign, J. T. Murphy, that every step of the campaign had to be co-ordinated along “the lines of the Tenth ECCI Plenum”, i.e. to prepare “political questions and speeches from the prisoners”, expose “imperialist rule in India under the MacDonald Government” and connect the trial with the theme of “class suppression of all labour organisations in India”. Hence, the declarations of “international solidarity of the colonial masses with workers in the metropolitan countries” would pave way for the support of “the Soviet Union as the Workers’ fatherland”, and in defence of the Comintern, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/4, 10, Letter from Tom Bell, London, to Political Commission, Moscow, 1/11-1929. Bell’s letter was forwarded by Piatnitsky to the Political Commission, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/4, 12, Short note from the ECCI Bureau, Moscow, to the Political Commission, Moscow, 2/11-1929.

⁹²¹ The Negro question was primarily taken care of by either the ECCI Negro Bureau or the Profintern Negro Bureau in Moscow.

⁹²² RGASPI 542/1/39, 49-54, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 6/12-1929; RGASPI 542/1/39, 55-58, 55-58, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 19/12-1929.

⁹²³ Haikal 1995, p.151; Worley 2002, p.228. By 1930, the international communist movement was targetted by the uncertain development of the “class against class” policy, according to Worley (ed., 2004, p.11). Janet Patricia Little offers in her biography of French philosopher and petitioner against colonialism, Simone Weil, another approach to this complex scenario. According to Little, at the beginning of the 1930s Weil experienced the left-wing movement as being somewhat split along ideological lines, in which the LAI had “lost its impetus” due to internal dissent and a conflict between the communists and reformists, see Simone Weil & Janet Patricia Little (ed.), *Simone Weil on Colonialism: an Ethic of the Other*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2003, p.11.

affected the LAI. The general objective here is to discern how the decision-makers (individuals and departments) at Comintern headquarters negotiated in order to come up with an idea that would resolve the crisis.

Smeral's 2 January report was a vivid testimony to the LAI. In the report, Smeral recommended that Piatnitsky reflect over the need to get the Eastern Secretariat, the WEB and the communist parties in Europe to "systematically assist" the LAI.⁹²⁴ In fact, this was a conclusion which had originally been introduced by Bittelman in his DR LAI. However, while Bittelman had discussed the option of re-organisation as a solution to the inherent problems of the LAI, at the beginning of 1930, the question centred around finding motives to sustain and keep the LAI alive. At this point in time, the WEB emerged as one of the solutions to assist Smeral and the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters in gathering intelligence on the International Secretariat.⁹²⁵ Adding to its emerging paranoia, the International Secretariat suspected some of the non-communist members in the LAI Executive of plotting a coup to seize power over the anti-imperialist movement.

Smeral observed how the national sections barely existed in the "most important countries": England,⁹²⁶ France, USA, Germany and the Netherlands. This was further borne out by the facts that the sections had not organised any conferences after the Frankfurt Congress, the members refused to pay any fees, while the International Secretariat had no money with which to support the sections. Nonetheless, Smeral believed that these problems should not prevent the sections from taking their "own independent initiatives", e.g. raising money or establishing campaigns. However, "Michail"/Piatnitsky should have "no high illusions".⁹²⁷ On the other hand, Hans Jäger offered a more realistic picture of the troublesome situation in Germany: the German LAI Section was on its knees due to the constant shortage of money and having at its disposal useless political material.⁹²⁸ However, this was an internal crisis; therefore neither the International Secretariat nor the German

⁹²⁴ RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to "Freunde" ["Michail"/Piatnitsky], Moscow, 2/1-1930.

⁹²⁵ RGASPI 495/4/4, 55a, Information from the Bureau of the [ECCI] Secretariat, Moscow, to members of the Political Secretariat, Moscow, 2/11-1929. Helmut/Dimitrov was the formal leader of the WEB, supported by other European communists, e.g. Remmele, Barbé, Ferguson and Tischler.

⁹²⁶ Bridgeman wondered whether Arnot could ask the International Secretariat to send some money to the British LAI Section. Working together with A. Glyn Evans, the "organiser" in London (according to Bridgeman), the section was suffering from a constant shortage of funds, a fact that made it impossible to find new contacts, maintain old ones and organise propaganda campaigns, RGASPI 542/1/46, 6, Letter from Bridgeman and A. Glyn Evans ("organiser"), London, to Arnot, Moscow (Hotel Lux), 19/1-1930.

⁹²⁷ Smeral had noted that the International Secretariat only had 16 Marks left in its cash box at the office, however, its debts amounted to over 10,000 Marks, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 1-4, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to "Freunde" ["Michail"/Piatnitsky], Moscow, 2/1-1930.

⁹²⁸ According to Hans Jäger, *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf* had a monthly circulation of 4,000 copies in Germany, yet this was not enough to sustain activity. A minimum of 100 Marks per month would keep the section alive, supported by an additional 250 Marks to cover the travel costs for "instructors and referents" to visit the local branches. In the beginning of 1930, the German LAI Section had branches in Berlin (250 members), Frankfurt (550), Chemnitz (100), Cologne (85), Remscheid (56), Hamburg (125), Dresden (40), Hagen (36), Essen (49) and Munich (32), RGASPI 542/1/46, 13, Report on the German LAI Section, Hans Jäger, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 1930.

LAI Section publicly announced the deteriorating state of affairs. Instead, the International Secretariat announced that it was planning to organise public meetings and a series of seminars in Berlin, together with the German LAI Section, in February and March.⁹²⁹ From the *Schutzpolizei's* perspective in Berlin, however, these public announcements by the LAI were one explanation for the sudden increase of “Russian emissaries” in the city.⁹³⁰

The International Secretariat believed that the non-communist members in the LAI Executive were aiming to use the crisis to “lay their hands” on the anti-imperialist movement. Smeral referred to this so-called “initiative” as the “Independence from Moscow” group (*Unabhängigkeit von Moskau*) which was striving to cleanse the anti-imperialist movement of any communist involvement. Additionally, the International Secretariat informed the Eastern Secretariat that repeated “incidents” (without referring to any particular episode) by the “prominente Persönlichkeiten” after the Frankfurt Congress pointed towards a suspected takeover of the issue by the anti-imperialist movement. The International Secretariat then had to summon the LAI Executive to discuss organisational questions, as well as the status of the LAI in the Arab region, the recent development of the Negro question in Haiti as well as the current state of affairs in both South and East Africa.⁹³¹ The crux of the matter was that, at this point in time, there existed no functional Executive of the LAI, according to Helmut/Dimitrov. Helmut/Dimitrov also told the ECCI that the International Secretariat had to revise the LAI's ideological “programme” in order to react against the antagonism from the non-communist members. Solving the crisis was, nevertheless, the central issue, Helmut/Dimitrov stated. Thus, rather than holding a meeting with a now defunct LAI Executive, the ECCI should support the idea of organising a “Colonial

⁹²⁹ The Berlin branch of the German LAI Section intended to hold a course on “Imperialism in Different Colonial Countries” at IAH headquarters in February-March, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 2, *Welt am Abend*, no.37, 13/2-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 7, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.65, 16/3-1930.

⁹³⁰ At an LAI meeting in Berlin on 28 January, Münzenberg, Sandalino Junco from Mexico and Cavarello from Spain all gave speeches. The *Schutzpolizei* concluded that it had been a communist meeting, suspecting the event of functioning as a cover for the KPD, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 3-5, Der Polizeipräsident. Abteilung IA an den Herrn Preußischen Minister des Innern, z.Hd.des Herrn Ministerialrats Schönner, hier, Berlin, 10/2-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1001/6751, 125, Short note from *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde*, Berlin, to Herrn Geheimrat Eltester, Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 28/1-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1001/6751, 128/130, Cover and backpage, *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf. Organ der Liga gegen Imperialismus (Deutsche Sektion)*, Nr.1, III.Jahrgang, Berlin, 1/2-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1001/6751, 31, Short note from *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Eingeborenkunde*, Berlin, to Herrn Geheimrat Eltester, Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 12/3-1930.

⁹³¹ RGASPI 542/1/44, 20-23, Report from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 11/1-1930. The first political question Smeral devoted attention to at the International Secretariat was the Arab question. According to one of the first confidential reports from Smeral to Piatnitsky (completed in January), the “Arab work” of the LAI had to establish connections with “every anti-imperialist organisation and force” in the region. One personal contact was of particular value to the LAI Smeral stated: the Arab nationalist Hamdi el Hussein, who lived in Jerusalem and frequently sent reports to the International Secretariat. Additionally, the International Secretariat intended to establish a “Klub der arabischen nationalen Erweckung” in Berlin, and to publish a nationalist paper in the Arabic language, RGASPI 495/19/312, 5-19, Bericht des Sekretariats [author: Smeral] des Liga gegen Imperialismus über die arabische Arbeit in der Periode von August bis Dezember 1929, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat [?], Moscow, 10/1-1930. A copy of this report is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, 6-19.

Conference” with delegates from the European communist parties.⁹³² In another letter to the ECCI, the secretary of the WEB in Berlin, “Alarich” (pseudonym used by the German communist Richard Gyptner), declared that the primary intention with such a conference would not be to examine the colonial work in the parties, but rather it would be to establish guidelines for the future work of the International Secretariat.⁹³³

The Political Commission discussed Helmut/Dimitrov’s proposal on 13 February, concluding that the idea would be an “inappropriate” step, especially as there existed no adequate documentation on the characteristics of the LAI crisis at Comintern headquarters. Furthermore, considering the total disarray of the colonial work in the parties, the decision-makers in Moscow found it almost impossible to even have a theoretical discussion of the issue. This resulted in the Political Commission calling for an investigation of the crisis, with Mif being instructed to gather intelligence on both the LAI and on the colonial work in the parties and, in connection with the Enlarged ECCI Presidium in Moscow (8 – 28 February 1930), to hold “minor conferences” with delegates from the parties.⁹³⁴

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The Fear, and Going to Moscow: The Crisis Confirmed

We hope, despite the present political and material crisis in the League, to turn the League into an active and useful organisation [...]. We have to win time.

“Max” [Petrovsky] to Münzenberg and Smeral, 15/1-1930

“Max”/Petrovsky assured Münzenberg and Smeral that the ECCI Secretariat knew about the crisis, the major question nevertheless being the need to understand the reasons and dynamics which had caused the crisis. As part of the solution, the International Secretariat and the WEB had to send reports to the Eastern Secretariat outlining the nature of the crisis.⁹³⁵ At this point in time, the

⁹³² RGASPI 499/1/17, 54-55, Report from the WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 13/1-1930. Excerpts from the report, including the *passim* on the LAI is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/37, 2, Auszug aus dem Protokoll des WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 13/1-1930.

⁹³³ Alarich/Gyptner enclosed a number of documents in his letter to the ECCI, including one on the LAI Executive; reports on India and the Arab countries; and Chatto’s “personal” letter in response to Nehru’s defection. According to Alarich/Gyptner, if the communist parties in Europe chose to support the LAI, this would solve a majority of the organisation’s problems as well as those at the International Secretariat, RGASPI 542/1/37, 3, Protocol Betr. LAI, author: Alarich [R. Gyptner]/WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 14/1-1930.

⁹³⁴ RGASPI 495/4/14, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.42 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des EKKI, 13/2-1930. Present at the meeting were among others Piatnitsky, Heckert, Heimo, Kuusinen, Kirsanova, Manuilsky, Wassiljew, Lozovsky, Tschang-Piao, Kornblum, Mif, Rossi and Angaretis.

⁹³⁵ RGASPI 495/18/863, 12-15, Letter from ECCI Secretariat [author: “Max”/Petrovsky], Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 15/1-1930. Max/Petrovsky’s name is not included in a copy of the letter, see fol. 495/4/11, 58-60, Confidential letter to Smeral and Münzenberg from the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow, author “Max” [Petrovsky],

institutional or individual actors at Comintern headquarters had no idea of how to solve the crisis, a conundrum that spurred some in Moscow to react with a fear of losing control over the anti-imperialist movement in Europe. This also strengthened the opinion that the LAI was facing an uncertain future; hence, the Comintern had to commence a structural and ideological re-organisation of the LAI. The central question revolved around whether to either disband or to save the LAI. If the decision-makers chose the latter option, Berlin would be the ideal place for the International Secretariat, and what position would the LAI then have within the international communist movement? This crisis set in motion a critical discussion of the LAI's ideological development since the Brussels Congress in 1927; however, the Comintern apparatus' underlying motive was to confirm its administrative grip on the International Secretariat.

For Petrovsky, the Comintern's objective was clear, telling Münzenberg and Smeral to adapt the International Secretariat to the conditions determined by the crisis, and to try to "win time" in order to neutralise the "present struggle". Hence, it was a question of getting through the ordeal and "winning time", Petrovsky concluded. However, what did this "present struggle" consist of? By dividing the struggle into both "objective" and "subjective" explanations, the former concerned the successful repression in the colonies by the "imperialist nations", resulting in "weak communist parties", as well as the poor liaison between Europe and the colonies, and the lack of money, while the latter explanation focused on the reasons why it seemed impossible to carry out any constructive work, caused essentially by the passive national LAI sections and the "indifferent" behaviour of the communist parties (the PCF, the CPGB and the KPD). Due to all this, the LAI had failed to establish connections with workers and peasants in the imperialist and colonial countries, while at the same time, the "prominente Persönlichkeiten" in the LAI were plotting to form "a new league", Petrovsky stated. Despite Petrovsky's verdict on the non-communist members on the LAI Executive, he warned of the risk of transforming the LAI into a "pure, communist organisation".⁹³⁶

Petrovsky's evaluation was the first one on the LAI crisis to reach Comintern headquarters. Perceived as a prognosis, the Political Commission examined Petrovsky's opinions and resolved to instruct the Eastern Secretariat to introduce a draft for a plan on how to re-organise the LAI, a

stamped date: 21/1-1930. A third copy is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/37, 8-11, Letter from ECCI Secretariat [?], Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 15/1-1930. However, this version does not mention the author of the letter.

⁹³⁶ Petrovsky explained that it was useless to transform the LAI into a genuine cover organisation for the Comintern. A more constructive approach was to re-activate the national sections, convince the communist parties that the LAI was an important factor in the communist movement, as well as improve the administrative and financial structure, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/863, 12-15, Letter from ECCI Secretariat [author: Max/Petrovsky], Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 15/1-1930.

process which also had to include the PCF and CPGB.⁹³⁷ This called for the imminent summoning of Münzenberg and Smeral to Moscow, for the sole reason that the Political Commission wanted to hear their versions of the crisis. Upon receiving Piatnitsky's order to travel to Moscow, Smeral reacted with unease. Smeral explained to Piatnitsky that he was preoccupied with "doing work for the ECCI" in Europe, thus, a more constructive solution would be to hold a discussion of the LAI with representatives of the Profintern and the WEB in Berlin, while sending Münzenberg to Moscow.⁹³⁸ Piatnitsky turned down Smeral's request. At the same time, Piatnitsky instructed Mikhail Trilliser (1883 – 1940; also known by his Comintern *persona* Moskvin) to act as an intermediary between the secretaries at Comintern headquarters in order to co-ordinate the meeting with Münzenberg and Smeral. Furthermore, Moskvin/Trilliser was to examine the LAI question, beginning with Petrovsky's prognosis, before presenting a conclusion on why it was necessary to re-organise the LAI. Moskvin's/Trilliser's involvement indicates that the question of the LAI was a crucial issue, particularly as Moskvin/Trilliser was the head of the Soviet state security service's Foreign Department in Moscow, perceived as being "one of the founders of Soviet intelligence".⁹³⁹ However, despite the vast number of empirical sources on the LAI in the Comintern Archive, this is one of only a few explicit observations linking the LAI to the Soviet intelligence apparatus.

Moskvin/Trilliser pursued this assignment with vigilance. As noted in a short memorandum, addressed to the Eastern Secretariat, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Piatnitsky, Gusev and Molotov on 26 February 1930, Moskvin/Trilliser believed that the Eastern Secretariat could not solve the issue of re-organising the LAI on its own. In fact, the issue required the involvement of the highest authoritative level in the Comintern. Moskvin/Trilliser nevertheless admitted that the scheduled meeting between Münzenberg, Smeral and the Political Commission represented an opportunity to present the Eastern Secretariat's plan on how to re-organize the LAI.⁹⁴⁰ The Eastern Secretariat had completed the draft of a plan, "Projekt des Briefes vom Sekretariat des EKKI an das ZK der KP Frankreichs in der Frage der Umorganisation und Belebung der Arbeit der LAI" ("the re-organisation project") which, despite the signature of the ECCI Secretariat, aimed to function as consultative material in support of the decision-making process. The central issue in "the re-organisation project" was how to re-organise the LAI and its activities, and why it was necessary

⁹³⁷ RGASPI 495/4/11, 5-8, Protokoll Nr.37 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 23/1-1930.

⁹³⁸ Smeral explained to Piatnitsky that he was overburdened with work. In January, Smeral had given twelve speeches on the Five Year Plan system in the Soviet Union in Berlin, and he felt that he had no reason to travel to Moscow. Smeral stated that the issue was of a completely different nature for Münzenberg, who needed to receive instructions from the Political Commission on a coming conference of the *Friends of Soviet Union*, RGASPI 495/19/312, 23-24, Letter from Smeral [handwritten], Berlin, to "Michail"/Piatnitsky, Moscow, 7/2-1930.

⁹³⁹ Rosenfeldt vol. II, 2009, p.215, 367-368.

⁹⁴⁰ RGASPI 542/1/39, 64, Moskvin, Moscow, to unknown recipient, Moscow, 26/2-1930.

to do so. Furthermore, the document discloses how the Eastern Secretariat perceived a sympathising organisation such as the LAI during “the third period”,

If the League is to carry out its task in the present period it must base its support on workers and peasants organisations. This is the central organisational task of the League.⁹⁴¹

Prior to Münzenberg and Smeral’s arrival in Moscow, the Enlarged ECCI Presidium was convened. At one of its sessions, Manuilsky addressed the status of the national revolutionary movement in the colonies, introducing the rhetorical question: “who was to lead the peasant classes, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat?” The answer was obvious for Manuilsky, who declared that it was the task of the communist party to lead the proletariat in the colonies. The crux of the matter was that there hardly existed any operative or functional parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, e.g. the recent events in India pointed in that direction. Kuusinen admitted rather self-critically that he “feared the masses [in India] more than British Imperialism”. The reason he gave for this was that there existed no effective strategy to prevent the Indian bourgeoisie from sustaining its control over the workers’ and peasants’ movements. Due to Kuusinen’s failure to contribute to constructing such a strategy, he concluded that the recent period of Comintern activity in India had been nothing more than a “sham struggle”.⁹⁴² In comparison to the previous plenums in 1928-29, and the Sixth International Comintern congress in 1928, the Enlarged ECCI Plenum in February 1930 served the purpose of both declaring the communists’ ideological conviction and highlighting the Comintern’s vigilance in realising its advocated policy of “class against class”.

On 1 March, Münzenberg and Smeral had their meeting with the Political Commission. According to the protocol of this meeting, Smeral delivered a report on the current situation in the LAI [not filed in the dossier], and took part in the ensuing discussion on “the re-organisation project”, an issue which apparently did not involve Münzenberg. The meeting ended with the Political Commission endorsing a strategy on how to proceed, instructing Smeral to edit the “confidential decisions”, bearing in mind the “exchange of opinions” (*Meinungsaustausches*) at

⁹⁴¹ RGASPI 542/1/39, 65-76, Projekt des Briefes vom Sekretariat des EKKI an das ZK der KP Frankreichs in der Frage der Umorganisation und Belegung der Arbeit der LAI, author: Eastern Secretariat, Moscow 16/2-1930; RGASPI 495/4/16, 81-90, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat to the ZK der KP Frankreichs, 23/3-1930; RGASPI 495/4/35, 40-52, Letter from the International Secretariat [ECCI Secretariat], Moscow/Berlin, to the CC CPGB, London, [3/6-1930].

⁹⁴² The Enlarged Presidium discussed the preparations for the Fifth International Profintern Congress (scheduled to convene in Moscow, August 1930); the situation in the communist parties in Great Britain, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union; and the struggle on how to achieve communist hegemony within the national revolutionary movement. Manuilsky’s discussion on “proletarian hegemony” implied that the communist parties in Europe were strong enough to “cut the cords” with the “bourgeois class society”, thus, the communist movement was liberated from “petty-bourgeois ideology” and, therefore, could pursue an “independent class policy”; see Degras vol.III 1965, pp. 98-99. According to McDermott and Agnew, Manuilsky introduced the resolution by pure “coincidence” in connection with Stalin’s infamous article, “Dizzy with Success”, a text which called for a momentary pause in the collectivisation process in the Soviet countryside, see McDermott & Agnew 1996, p.96.

the session which had contributed to the altering of the original plan of “the re-organisation project”.⁹⁴³ According to the Political Commission, however, it would be inadvisable to dissolve the LAI for the simple reason that it would cause a political risk:

The League must not be transformed into a genuine communist organisation; it must retain and develop its broad basis as a non-party mass organisation. The liquidation of the League is therefore politically dangerous, as the left-wing social reformists and national reformists would inevitably take over the business of the Anti-Imperialist League.⁹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the Political Commission expected the LAI to ruthlessly expose “left-wing social reformists” (Maxton and Fimmen) and “national reformists” (the INC, the PI and the NAACP), while at the same time expressing its concerns about turning the organisation into “a genuine communist organisation” (*eine rein kommunistische Organisation verwandeln*). It was a mass of contradictions, calling for provisional solutions. Firstly, the International Secretariat should get “comrades” in Europe to travel to India and Indonesia to carry out missions, but only once the Political Commission had approved each candidate. This meant that Smeral had to find candidates by visiting the LAI sections in France, England and the Netherlands and, during his visit, explain the purpose and aim of the re-organisation plan. Secondly, the International Secretariat had to continue the work of supporting the establishment of LAI sections in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.⁹⁴⁵

The Eastern Secretariat stated in “the re-organisation project” that it was obvious why it was necessary to re-organise the LAI, first and foremost to get the organisation accustomed to the policy of “class against class”. Nonetheless, it “was not an easy task” to re-activate the LAI after the Frankfurt Congress, the Eastern Secretariat conceded. This involved primarily scrutinizing the nature of the LAI network, which unfortunately had already been proven to have very few remaining contacts. According to the Eastern Secretariat, “the re-organisation project” was focused essentially on why the LAI existed, i.e. to fulfil the role as Comintern intermediary in colonial and semi-colonial countries, and to either develop or support communist activism in regions that were

⁹⁴³ RGASPI 495/4/15, 1-5, Protokoll Nr.43 der Sitzung der politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 1/3-1930. Present at the meeting were Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Heckert, Manuilsky, Heimo, Smeral, Münzenberg, Jewreinov, Hopner, Mif, Chitarow, Wassiljew, Schubin, Gussew, Kopenig, Tschernin, Jefremova and Walecki. According to this protocol, Münzenberg was not involved in the discussion on the LAI, focusing rather on the *Friends of Soviet Union* and *Mezhrabpom-Film*.

⁹⁴⁴ RGASPI 495/4/15, 15-17, (Vertraulich) Beschluss der Polkommission, Moscow, 1/3-1930. For a copy of this decision, see fol. 495/20/722, 67-69.

⁹⁴⁵ The Political Secretariat instructed the WEB to distribute this letter to the European communist parties, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/15, 15-17, (Vertraulich) Beschluss der Polkommission, Moscow, 1/3-1930. A copy of this decision is filed in fol. 495/20/722, 67-69; RGASPI 495/3/154, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.78 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 6/3-1930. For the WEB, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 90, Report from the WEB, author: Helmut/Dimitrov [?], Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 15/3-1930. The Political Secretariat sent the resolution to the WEB in Berlin, which passed on the document for “reconsideration” to the International Secretariat.

generally sealed off to the international communist movement. However, as a result of the Frankfurt Congress, this latter objective was facing a critical moment. The Eastern Secretariat believed that the LAI and its “organisational work” was an imperative source of inspiration for the international communist movement:

We think it is unnecessary to emphasise that a non-party organisation such as the LAI, is an important organisation in the Third Period of Post-war capitalism. Due to its non-party character, not limited like other international communist organisations in this period of increased antagonism and with the growing liberation struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, it represents more significance than other international non-party organisations such as the IAH, the IRH, the Friends of the Soviet Union and the Anti-Fascist League.⁹⁴⁶

The Eastern Secretariat’s argument presented a concrete reason for why it was essential to keep the LAI alive. However, aside from the Eastern Secretariat explicitly declaring its support in sustaining the LAI, this quote was omitted in the final version of “the re-organisation project”, according to the letters sent to the PCF and the CPGB.⁹⁴⁷ The question is why, and for what reason? Firstly, the Eastern Secretariat had declared that the LAI was suffering from having been established during “the second period” of post-war capitalism, which had provided socialists, social democrats and intellectuals with a chance to influence and dominate the organisation. At the same time, the communist parties had chosen to ignore the fact that the LAI was not only influencing these groups in a communist direction but also represented one of the few existing channels between the Comintern and the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The Eastern Secretariat argued, above all, that the LAI was the leading agent to distribute Bolshevik propaganda around the world. In comparison to other mass and sympathising organisations of the Comintern, e.g. the IAH, the IRH, the *Friends of the Soviet Union* and the *Anti-Fascist League*, the LAI was not overtly identified as a communist organisation, the Eastern Secretariat argued. It was therefore crucial to retain the notion that the LAI was not a “genuine Communist International organisation” in order for the organisation to continue its work in public spaces, something that other Comintern organisations were not able to do.⁹⁴⁸ Whether this was the argument which caused

⁹⁴⁶ RGASPI 542/1/39, 65-76, Projekt des Briefes vom Sekretariat des EKKI an das ZK der KP Frankreichs in der Frage der Umorganisation und Belebung der Arbeit der LAI, author: Eastern Secretariat, Moscow 16/2-1930.

⁹⁴⁷ The letter to the Central Committee of the PCF was sent on March 23, while the letter to the Central Committee of the CPGB on June 3, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/16, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.44 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 8/3-1930; RGASPI 495/4/16, 81-90, Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to ZK der KP Frankreichs, Paris, 23/3-1930; RGASPI 495/4/35, 1-4, Protokoll Nr.63 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 3/6-1930; RGASPI 495/4/35, 40-52, Letter from the International Secretariat [ECCI Secretariat], Moscow/Berlin, to the CC CPGB, London, [3/6-1930].

⁹⁴⁸ Fredrik Petersson, “The League against Imperialism: The Most Valuable Organizational Tool for Bolshevik

the “exchange of opinions” at the meeting with the Political Commission remains unknown. However, one must not forget the fact that the Eastern Secretariat’s opinion concerning the LAI’s relevance within the international communist movement had been deliberately deleted.

The LAI’s spiritual awakening and organisational revival depended on establishing some kind of curative measures, the most urgent being that the communist parties had to stop ignoring their colonial work. The ECCI Secretariat received intelligence on the French LAI Section from both its secretary Herclet and from the functionary at the PCF secretariat in Paris, Gabrielle Cormon (real name: Henriette Tartavel). The disheartening information indicated that “no intellectuals wanted to remain” in the anti-imperialist movement in France, while “the LAI had ceased to exist from an organisational point of view” and was merely a figment of the imagination “printed on paper”.⁹⁴⁹ The British LAI Section was no better off, having the Political Secretariat question why the Central Committee of the CPGB had chosen to support the *Friends of the Soviet Union* rather than the LAI.⁹⁵⁰ The ECCI and the Political Secretariat considered the activities of the LAI sections in Great Britain and France as crucial because these countries were the “strongest imperialist powers”, and they would, therefore, be able to link the anti-imperialist movement in Europe with the ones existing in the French and British colonies. The ECCI Secretariat realised, however, that the PCF and CPGB had to focus on different issues in its support for the LAI sections. In France, the PCF could help the section to increase its membership ratio by instructing the IAH, the IRH, the *Friends of the Soviet Union* and the LDRN to become collective members and, secondly, by establishing connections in the trade unions and among seamen from the “black African colonies”.⁹⁵¹ In Great Britain, the section had to apply a from-below perspective, i.e. focus on colonial associations active in the universities, e.g. the *Indian Students’ Association* and the *West African Students’ Union* had branches in Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow. The CPGB could therefore contribute by assisting the section to organise curricular courses on imperialism and Marxism. The courses had to be held under the strictest of precautions,

Propaganda in the ‘Imperialist’ and Colonial World during the Interwar Era? Synopsis of a doctoral thesis”, in *The International Newsletter of Communist Studies*, Bernhard H. Bayerlein (ed.), Vol.XIII (2007), No.20, University of Mannheim, Mannheim, pp.105-110.

⁹⁴⁹ RGASPI 495/4/16, 81-90, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to ZK der KP Frankreichs, Paris, 23/3-1930. For Henriette Tartavel (1904 - ?), first a syndicalist then a communist, see Rachel Mazuy, *Croire plutôt que voir? Voyages en Russie soviétique, 1919-1939*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 2002, p.341 (see footnote 41).

⁹⁵⁰ The letter from the International Secretariat (authored in secrecy by the ECCI Secretariat) to the Central Committee of the CPGB stated the following: “We are of the opinion that the problems to which we are earnestly calling the attention of the Party leadership in this letter can be solved in a satisfactory manner only if the Polit Bureau of the Party devotes sufficient attention to them and if our fraction in the Executive of the League succeeds with the help of the Party in bringing about a definite advance in its organisational and political work”, RGASPI 495/4/35, 40-52, Letter from the International Secretariat [ECCI Secretariat], Moscow/Berlin, to the CC CPGB, London, [3/6-1930].

⁹⁵¹ The ECCI Secretariat realised, however, that it was “impossible to establish an open, legal League organisation” in the French colonies, above all in East Africa. The LAI should therefore use “covert” strategies to distribute its propaganda, and to find contacts in “clubs, associations for national liberation, or only as committees”, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/16, 81-90, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to “ZK der KP Frankreichs”, Paris, 23/3-1930.

the ECCI Secretariat argued, and the section could only engage itself with the colonial associations once “the Party has checked up on them”. Essentially an idea relying on a hierarchical agreement between the party and section, having the section co-ordinate the connections with the British colonies, but only under the direct supervision of the Central Committee of the CPGB. The question of West Africa proved, nevertheless, to be an exception to the above. According to the ECCI Secretariat, the first step there was to evaluate whether it even was worth the effort to “organise the West African organisations into a section of the League (Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Nigeria; workers’ and peasants’ organisations)”. If the idea seemed too complicated to realise, the British LAI Section had to, at least, establish “contacts through sailors” who could be used to distribute propaganda on the LAI in West Africa.⁹⁵² These propositions from the ECCI Secretariat also indicated that the International Secretariat should perfect its role as the hub for the anti-imperialist movement in Europe. However, in order to execute its original aim as a Comintern intermediary, the International Secretariat in Berlin needed to be more closely supervised by the WEB and the KPD.

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A Languishing Movement, Part I

Smeral left Moscow in March. Upon his return to Berlin, Smeral discovered that the International Secretariat was languishing. William Patterson, acting as the plenipotentiary of the Profintern Negro Bureau, also made a similar comment after visiting the International Secretariat in April, describing it as a place of “apathy and passivity”.⁹⁵³ An even more detailed description of the International Secretariat was given by the American communist, “Margaret Dean” (real name: Margaret Cowl), in a letter to Piatnitsky. After having completed a secret mission in England in the beginning of 1930 to prepare “the 5th World Congress” of the Profintern, Dean made a short stopover in Berlin before travelling to Moscow. Dean went to the International Secretariat where she met Chatto, who informed her of the steady decline of the LAI on all levels, telling her to pass on this information to Piatnitsky:

⁹⁵² RGASPI 495/4/35, 40-52, Letter from the International Secretariat [ECCI Secretariat], Moscow/Berlin, to the CC CPGB, London, [3/6-1930].

⁹⁵³ Smeral instructed Magyar to pass on this letter to Kuusinen after he had read it, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 37, (Confidential) Handwritten letter from Smeral, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 27/3-1930; RGASPI 534/4/330, 1-4, (original) letter of WW[ilson]/Patterson to Negro Bureau/Profintern, London 18 April, 1930; RGASPI 534/4/330, 20 letter from Padmore (G.P.) to ‘Dear Comrades’, 15/4-1930. First, Patterson’s reference to the “apathy” in Berlin concerned, above all, the indifference at the International Secretariat to assist with the preparatory work for the ITUCNW conference in Hamburg. Hence, Patterson wondered whether this attitude extended to the colonial question in general. The ITUCNW conference convened in Hamburg on 7 July, with Chatto appearing as an LAI delegate, see fol. RGASPI 534/4/330, 13fp+bp handwritten letter from WW [Patterson], London, to the Negro Bureau Profintern, Moscow, 24/5-1930, see Weiss (2011) and Adi (2008).

They want something to be done about the League becoming a more functioning body. Comrade Chatto said that workers in colonial countries must be placed in the League. More attention to colonial work. [...] What is needed is some organisational changes. Smeral who is receiving USD 150.00 a month in wages, really has no important work to do in the office. In his stead some workers on colonial work could be taken in. Chatto said Smeral himself says he has no work to do in the office.⁹⁵⁴

This languishing state of affairs brought to the attention of the institutional and individual actors at Comintern headquarters the need to re-organise the LAI. However, the process depended on getting the PCF and the CPGB to respond to “the re-organisation project”, leaving the International Secretariat on its own to face the consequences of the crisis.

Münzenberg knew that the question of the communist parties’ indifference towards supporting the LAI had been an issue addressed by the Political Commission. Attempting to re-approach the ZK KPD, Münzenberg declared that a majority of the difficulties linked to the activities of the LAI in Germany were due to the lack of administrative support from the party apparatus. Thus, to improve the almost non-existent relations between the LAI and the KPD, something that in turn would bolster the LAI in Germany, Münzenberg wondered whether the ZK KPD could instruct “every member” to begin showing an interest in colonial questions, as well as get other communist organisations to become collective members. Münzenberg stated that the ZK KPD could no longer continue to ignore the LAI, especially as the organisation had managed to infiltrate and influence different colonial communities in Berlin. For Paul Scholze, a secretary of the German LAI Section, the gravity of the situation had a more serious implication, informing the Eastern Secretariat that the section had reached its lowest point in Germany, where the local branches resembled “clubs” rather than large, active sections.⁹⁵⁵

Despite the crisis, Chatto still attempted to co-ordinate the anti-colonial activists in the LAI network in both Berlin and beyond. Yet, Chatto’s long-standing antagonism towards Roy reached a critical point in 1930, consuming most of his energy. After Roy’s official expulsion from the Comintern due to his alleged support of the German social democratic “Brandler organisation”, a decision endorsed by the ECCI Presidium on 11 November 1929, Roy became a *persona non*

⁹⁵⁴ RGASPI 495/19/312, 32fp/bp, Letter from Margaret Dean [Margaret Cowl, Margaret Undjus, “Krumbein”], Moscow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 6/6-1930. Dean had been a student at the ILS, conscripted during her studies to carry out clandestine missions in the service of the Profintern in between her studies. Dean’s surname was Undjus, not Cowl, as suggested in Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel’s analysis of Soviet espionage. Dean was also married to Charles Krumbein, a person involved in the Comintern’s “clandestine service” in Great Britain. Krumbein was arrested in England in 1930, where he served “six months in prison for using a false passport”, see Klerh, Haynes and Firsov (eds.) 1995, pp.42-43; Herbert Romerstein & Eric Breindel, *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America’s Traitors*, Regnery Publishing, Washington, 2000, p.526.

⁹⁵⁵ RGASPI 542/1/39, 102-103, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ZK KPD, Berlin, 20/3-1930; For Paul Scholze, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 7, Protokoll der Sekretariatsitzung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 25/5-1930.

grata. From the autumn of 1929 up until November 1930, Roy was living in Berlin under the pseudonyms “Roberto” or “Villa Garcia”, completing his book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*, before returning to India in December 1930.⁹⁵⁶ Chatto regarded Roy’s presence in Berlin as uncomfortable, telling Münzenberg that Roy used every opportunity to fraternise with Indian anti-colonial activists. Apparently, Chatto suspected that either Roy was interfering intentionally in his activities, by convincing LAI members to leave the organisation, or that he was simply stealing candidates supportive of the organisation. Because of this, Chatto urged Münzenberg to help him to curb Roy’s actions. One way to do so was to send “a warning” about Roy’s activities to the ZK KPD and the ECCI. Hence, Chatto suggested using the communist press to expose the Roy’s “adventures” in Berlin, and by so doing, this would hopefully disrupt his connections with Indian activists, as well as reveal his intimate collaboration with the “Brandlerianer”. The root of Chatto’s dismay was that Roy had evidently managed to establish some kind of contact with Indian associations in Berlin. For example, the *Indian Association* (Verein der Inder) frequently referred to Roy, particularly as one of its members, Saikh, was also living in Roy’s apartment. Furthermore, Chatto suspected that Roy had infiltrated the *Indian Students’ Central Association* in London. In addition, the secretary of this association, Sunder P. Kabadi, was a supporter of Roy, the latter having convinced the former to move to Berlin, Chatto stated. For Saklatvala, this was all particularly embarrassing, as it was he who had first introduced Kabadi to the British LAI Section, Chatto concluded. This paranoia continued as Chatto accused Clemens Dutt of having been in contact with “comrade” Rhadouri, apparently known to be closely connected to Roy. Thus, Dutt had to end this relationship, and if he refused to do so, Chatto told Münzenberg to contact the ECCI and the Central Committee of the CPGB for the sole reason of warning Dutt. In Berlin, Roy had organised a number of fairly successful political “evenings”, which included the provision of “free beer”. Chatto actually feared that if “the Roy people” continued to obstruct the activities of the LAI, it would be “necessary for the Comintern to organise a campaign in the Indian press to expose Roy before he has stirred up too much confusion”.⁹⁵⁷

The paranoia regarding Roy, and the ensuing confusion caused by the crisis, ultimately destroyed Chatto. Smeral observed how Chatto’s health was deteriorating rapidly, due to liver problems. In March, Chatto was admitted to a hospital in Berlin to receive urgent medical care.

⁹⁵⁶ RGASPI 495/213/18, 26, Auszug dem Protokoll Nr.21 der Sitzung des Präsidiums des EKKI, Moscow, 23/11-1929. Present at the meeting were Kuusinen, Chitarow, Lozovsky, Rust, Manuilsky, Purman, Piatnitsky, Bell, Katayama, Garlandi, Ulbricht, Strakhov, Kolarev, Meriko Ledo, Reimann, Musso, Bela Kun and Stalin. Piatnitsky signed the decision; Samaren Roy, *M. N. Roy: A Political Biography*, Orient Longman Limited, Hyderabad, 1997, p.85. Samaren Roy writes that Roy lived in Münzenberg’s flat, however, this is an unlikely proposition, particularly as the Comintern had categorised Roy as a *persona non grata*.

⁹⁵⁷ RGASPI 495/19/312, Letter [Abschrift] from Chatto, Berlin, to Münzenberg, [?], 24/3-1930. Saikh attended the Frankfurt Congress as the accredited delegate of the *Verein der Indier Zentraleuropas*, and *Allindische Jugendkongress*, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 23.

While this was happening, Münzenberg himself received a diagnosis of being “overworked”, while at the International Secretariat Otto Schudel notified Smeral of his resignation and of his plan to travel to Basel to work for the IAH. Nevertheless, Smeral promised the Eastern Secretariat that the International Secretariat would try its best to continue its activity.⁹⁵⁸ What kind of activity did Smeral have in mind? The Meerut Conspiracy Trial campaign had nearly ceased to exist in Germany, thus the International Secretariat wanted, in collaboration with the ZK KPD, to revive the campaign, rather than merely act as its financial supporter. For example, Smeral had provided Pollitt with an unknown amount of money to “rescue” the Meerut campaign within the British LAI Section. A second question was the “Negro Labour Congress” [ITUCNW] in July, for which Chatto had written a “European Declaration” in the name of the LAI to be delivered at the congress. Finally, the International Secretariat had sent instructions to the Central Committee of the CPUSA on how to revive its LAI section.⁹⁵⁹ For the International Secretariat, however, this only uncovered its existing flaws, with the constant lack of money limiting the LAI’s scope and opportunity to develop its activity. The ECCI Secretariat finally conceded that the International Secretariat could not do any more than was possible due to the crisis, informing the WEB that the LAI question would remain unresolved until further notice.⁹⁶⁰

The Meerut campaign was the exception to the above. Münzenberg seemed convinced that the campaign would get support from the ZK KPD, particularly as the LAI had infiltrated the Indian community in Berlin. The German LAI Section planned to organise proletarian solidarity demonstrations in Berlin, with a focus on the Meerut prisoners, with Münzenberg telling the ZK KPD that these events would summon large crowds available for the KPD to “infiltrate”.⁹⁶¹ After the May Day “struggle against imperialism” demonstration in Berlin, Münzenberg persisted with his negotiations with the ZK KPD and the WEB on the Meerut campaign. Yet, the central question

⁹⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/39, 37, (Confidential) Handwritten letter from Smeral, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 27/3-1930.

Münzenberg informed Piatnitsky of his visit to the doctor. As Münzenberg had been advised to take a leave of absence from all kinds of activity from April to June, he was not involved in the International Secretariat, see fol. RGASPI 495/19/312, 26, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to “Lieber Genosse” [Piatnitsky], Moscow, 27/3-1930. For Schudel’s resignation, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 85-87, Projekt zum Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung der LAI, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/4-1930.

⁹⁵⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 11-12, *Der koloniale Freiheitskampf*, III. Jahrgang, Nr.2, Berlin, März 1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 85-87, Projekt zum Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung der LAI, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/4-1930. The ECCI Secretariat informed the International Secretariat (“kom.Fraktion”) that Sandino had told the Central Committee of the CPUSA that he was a staunch supporter of the LAI, see fol. RGASPI 495/18/863, 18, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to the “kom.Fraktion”/LAI, Berlin, 1/4-1930.

⁹⁶⁰ RGASPI 542/1/39, 77-84, (Handwritten) Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 5/4-1930. Piatnitsky expected Smeral to write a detailed budget for the monthly expenses of the International Secretariat. According to Smeral, then, the International Secretariat needed 6,325 Marks, per month, to cover all expenses, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 134, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to unknown receiver [Piatnitsky], [Moscow], 2/5-1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 146-149, Beilage II [Budget] Berlin, author: Smeral, to [Piatnitsky], Moscow, May, 1930. For the WEB, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 105, Auszug aus dem Protokoll des WEB vom 11/4-1930. For a copy of the excerpt, see fol. RGASPI 495/155/74, 94; RGASPI 495/18/863, 16, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat to the WEB, (stamped date + copy), 25/3-1930.

⁹⁶¹ RGASPI 542/1/39, 102-103, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ZK KPD, Berlin, 20/3-1930.

for Münzenberg was to get the Political Secretariat to withdraw its decision temporarily prohibiting the International Secretariat from engaging itself in the Meerut campaign. To meet Münzenberg midway, Helmut/Dimitrov contacted the Political Secretariat to convince them to lift the ban.⁹⁶²

The chance to devote its attention to the Meerut campaign was enough to persuade the International Secretariat to introduce the idea of sending an LAI delegation from Europe to India. According to an official request sent by the International Secretariat to the Secretary of State for India in London, the composition of the delegation was presented and the purpose of the journey to India laid out:

Sir, at a special meeting of the Secretariat of the LAI to consider the situation that has arisen in India, it was resolved to send a delegation of the League to that country to report on the position there, and the following gentlemen were appointed to be members of the delegation: Reginald Bridgeman, London, J.R., London, Edo Fimmen, Amsterdam, Prof. Zdenek Nejedly, Prague, Henri Barbusse, Paris, Willi Münzenberg, M.d.R., Berlin, Georgij Dimitrov, Sofia. It is intended that the delegation should proceed to India not later than June 1st next and we should therefore be much obliged if you would be good enough to instruct the British Council in Berlin to grant the necessary visas to the above mentioned gentlemen whose passports will be duly submitted to the Consulate for this purpose by the Secretariat of the League.⁹⁶³

The British India Office in London refused to approve the necessary visas. Yet, this refusal in itself functioned as a pretext for launching anti-imperialist propaganda in Germany. For example, *Die Rote Fahne* stated that the MacDonald government's decision to refuse a delegation of the LAI to visit India illustrated the suppression of the Indian liberation struggle.⁹⁶⁴

The responses from the PCF and the CPGB on "the re-organisation project" turned into a farce. In April, Smeral wanted to visit the PCF Secretariat in Paris to see whether the party had initiated any discussion.⁹⁶⁵ However, he chose to remain in Berlin. In May, the International Secretariat

⁹⁶² RGASPI 542/1/39, 151, An das Sekretariat des ZK der KPD, Internationale Sekretariat, LAI, Berlin, May, 1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 150, Letter from the League Fraction, Berlin, to WEB, Berlin, 2/5-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 9, "Kampftag gegen Imperialismus", in *Welt am Abend*, No.91, 29/4-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 10, "Unterstützt die indische Revolution!", in *Die Rote Fahne*, 6/5-1930; RGASPI 499/1/17, 116, Auszug aus dem Protokoll des WEB [Helmut/Dimitrov], Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 7/5-1930.

⁹⁶³ RGASPI 542/1/39, 155, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Secretary of State for India, Whitehall, London, 10/5-1930. British authorities argued that this application verified the communist connotations of the LAI, where a statement such as the Meerut campaign was "no better form of propaganda [to] arouse British workers to the facts of the situation in India" spoke for itself, see TNA PRO KV2/773, Letter from unknown author, London, to Norton, London, 16/7-1930.

⁹⁶⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 15, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.128, 4/6-1930.

⁹⁶⁵ RGASPI 542/1/39, 99, Letter from unknown author, Berlin, to CC PCF, Paris, 4/4-1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 106-107, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/4-1930.

informed the WEB that Smeral could leave for Paris at any given moment to pressure the PCF. The WEB decided to assume control over the question, and sent “the re-organisation project” letter for a third time to Cormon at the PCF. Cormon was acting temporarily as the leader of colonial work in Paris after Doriot’s arrest and imprisonment. As it turned out, Cormon never replied to this letter, either to the International Secretariat or to the WEB. The situation reached such a critical point that Smeral had no other option than to contact Magyar on 4 June. According to Smeral, the PCF’s indifference, not even bothering to acknowledge receipt of the letter, was nothing short of shameful, a behaviour which made it “very difficult” to re-organise the LAI. With Doriot now out of prison, he was able to meet Smeral in Berlin in June, and tried to explain that any letters from the LAI or the WEB were no longer to be found at the PCF Secretariat in Paris. Despite Smeral informing him of the repeated attempts to send “the re-organisation project”, Doriot stated that he knew nothing about the plan.⁹⁶⁶ Whether or not Doriot had deliberately concealed any knowledge of both the letters and the plan is unknown and, despite Cormon having discussed “every question on the colonial work” with Magyar in Moscow, the Political Commission nevertheless decided to give Doriot four months in which to compile an extensive report on the French LAI Section and the anti-imperialist movement in France.⁹⁶⁷

The Central Committee of the CPGB realised it would be easier to respond during the Fifth International Profintern Congress in Moscow.⁹⁶⁸ In May, the WEB sent a draft of “the re-organisation project” to Arnot in London, who told Smeral that it would “be very useful in giving an impetus to the work”. The International Secretariat sent the final version to the Central Committee of the CPGB in June.⁹⁶⁹ While waiting to proceed with the re-organisation of the LAI, Münzenberg and Smeral decided to gather intelligence on the colonial work being done by other European communist parties, with a focus on their relations to the LAI. This depended on having the opportunity to first identify and then locate the sources of information. Thus, the most

⁹⁶⁶ RGASPI 542/1/39, 150, Letter from the League Fraction/International Secretariat, Berlin, to the WEB, Berlin, 2/5-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 7-8, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 25/5-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 1, Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to “Freunde” [Magyar], Moscow, 4/6-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 16-19, (Streng vertraulich) Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to “Liebe Freunde” (Magyar), Moscow, 5/7-1930. At a meeting in Berlin, Smeral gave Doriot information on “liaison techniques” and reliable addresses in Paris.

⁹⁶⁷ RGASPI 542/1/37, 76, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 18/6-1927 [sic: 1930]. The indifference of the PCF continued. On 3 September, 1930, however, the Political Commission reacted against the PCF, demanding that Doriot give an “explanation”, and instructing the ICC to carry out an investigation to rectify the breach of discipline in the party, RGASPI 495/4/49, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.79 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 3/9-1930.

⁹⁶⁸ RGASPI 542/1/39, 104-105, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to Pollitt, London, 10/4-1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 95-96, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 10/4-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 16-19, (Streng vertraulich) Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to “Liebe Freunde” (Magyar), Moscow, 5/7-1930.

⁹⁶⁹ RGASPI 542/1/39, 106-107, Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/4-1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 156, Letter from Arnot, London, to Smeral, Berlin, 10/5-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 20, Telegram, R. P. Arnot, London, to the Political Secretariat, Moscow, 21/6-1930.

constructive solution, according to the International Secretariat in a request to the Eastern Secretariat, was to send Smeral as an LAI delegate to the Fifth International Profintern Congress in Moscow (15 – 30 August, 1930). In Moscow, Smeral could both approach and hold informal negotiations with a selection of delegates on the re-organisation of the LAI.⁹⁷⁰ On 23 June, Magyar presented this idea to the Political Commission, which decided that it would be convenient “to invite” Smeral to the congress in order to give him a chance to meet “specific delegations” and to discuss the LAI.⁹⁷¹

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The Trial

The League question is not a question about the so-called representation, it is a question for the Comrades there [Moscow] to make use of existing possibilities to develop the League.

Münzenberg to Smeral, 22/8-1930

The League was established during the “second period” as a united front, with the intention of playing a progressive role between the national bourgeoisie in the colonies and the international revolutionary labour movement. [...] The misfortune of the League was that it started during, and is connected to, the second period, when this period was coming to an end.

Smeral to the Political Commission,
Moscow, 13/9-1930

Smeral left Berlin in July. Before arriving in Moscow in August, Smeral visited Prague to hold a couple of meetings with the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* (CPCz) to supervise and organise the *Friends of the Soviet Union* section and to give a public speech on the Five-Year-Plan system in the Soviet Union. For the Profintern, the Fifth International Congress in Moscow in August 1931 confirmed its definitive and official break with the “reformist” trade union movement, focusing instead on increasing its independence as a “revolutionary trade union opposition”. Edward Hallet Carr wrote in his study of the Comintern that Smeral “unexpectedly spoke as a delegate” of the LAI at the congress, where he declared that the organisation was “no longer ‘a fighting alliance between the national bourgeoisie of colonial countries and the masses of

⁹⁷⁰ RGASPI 542/1/37, 76, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 18/6-1927 [sic: 1930]. A copy of this letter is filed in fol. RGASPI 495/18/863, 21, Letter from the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 18/6-1930; RGASPI 495/4/38, 1-5, Protokoll Nr.67 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 17/6-1930.

⁹⁷¹ RGASPI 495/4/39, 1-4, Protokoll Nr.68 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 23/6-1930; RGASPI 542/1/37, 81, Short note from Mif, Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin, 27/6-1930.

the international proletariat’, but ‘a united revolutionary mass organisation’”.⁹⁷² While Carr interpreted Smeral’s appearance as an unexpected performance, Smeral’s presence at the congress was crucial as he was gathering intelligence on the LAI from the delegates; information Smeral needed to accumulate in order to, primarily, study how the communist movement perceived the LAI, and secondly, to write and present a report to the Political Commission detailing both why it was essential to re-organise the LAI and how it would be possible to accomplish such an undertaking. This was the LAI’s trial. Smeral’s role in this drama resembled the role of a defence lawyer. For Smeral, this required the holding of closed meetings and the organising of a smaller conference with some of the delegates. After these sessions, Smeral summarised (in most cases) his observations in reports, documents which functioned as the primary sources in completing his analysis of the LAI.⁹⁷³ The general aim of Smeral’s visit was to get the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, the Political Commission in particular, to formulate some kind of opinion on the LAI. Thus, the reference to a trial likened Smeral’s challenge to a defence of the LAI, introducing a constructive solution to the question at stake and, finally, convincing the Political Commission of the LAI’s potential utilisation in the context of the international communist movement. What did this process unveil? How did the decision-makers react to Smeral’s analysis, and what was the result of the trial?

Smeral’s activity in Moscow cannot be compared to how Arnot evaluated the colonial work in 1929. Nonetheless, one cannot refute that Smeral had similar ambitions. By this I mean that by inviting delegates known to have an opinion on colonial work, Smeral succeeded – where earlier efforts had failed – in organising a “colonial conference”. According to an invitation to some of the delegates at the Profintern congress, Smeral expressed the desire to hold a joint discussion on an issue which focused on what kind of “relations” the communist parties had to the LAI, to colonial work in general, and whether there existed any understanding on the colonial question. On this occasion, Smeral wanted to hear suggestions on necessary measures for the “strengthening or eventual establishment ... of the non-party mass organisation [LAI]” in their home countries. This invitation was a document signed by both the International Secretariat [Smeral] and the Profintern Colonial Department, and was endorsed by the Profintern Presidium on 14 August. This invitation

⁹⁷² For Smeral’s activities prior to the Profintern Congress, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 16-19, (Streng vertraulich) Report from Smeral, Berlin, to “Liebe Freunde” (Magyar), Moscow, 5/7-1930. E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1982, p.385. Carr’s reference to Smeral’s “unexpected” appearance, taken from *Protokoll des V Kongresses der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale* (1930). Smeral’s manuscript is filed in fol. RGASPI 534/1/143. 538 delegates from 60 countries attended the congress, which ended with a “pompous” celebration outside the Trade Union building in Moscow, see Tosstorff 2004, pp.670-671; *Ny Dag*, “RFI-kongressens avslutning”, 2/9-1930, 1, 8 (in English: “The Completion of the RILU Congress”).

⁹⁷³ The documents in *fond* 542/1/42 consist of reports or transcripts of Smeral’s meetings with delegates from the CPGB, the CP Austria, the CPUSA, the CP Bulgaria, the CP Hungary, the CP Greece, the CP Indonesia (Darsono), the CP Canada, Latin America, Arab region, Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

also disclosed how the LAI, Profintern and the Comintern had categorised the anti-imperialist movement on a global scale, a movement that had an active representation in eight operative parts (“a – h”):

- a. England, Ireland, France, Germany
- b. USA and Canada
- c. “small European states with legal possibilities” (Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain and Greece)
- d. “small European states with openly Fascist regimes” (the Balkans, the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Italy)
- e. Latin America
- f. India, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Australia
- g. Arab region (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and South Africa [!])
- h. the “Negro situation”.⁹⁷⁴

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The “Colonial Conference” at the Hotel Lux

Smeral had to co-ordinate the investigation on different hierarchical levels within the Comintern structure. Once the Political Commission had approved Smeral’s appearance at the Profintern congress in Moscow as the LAI representative, the Eastern Secretariat assumed responsibility over the project and worked out the details together with Smeral. This involved a discussion with Lozovsky, and with the leader of the Profintern Eastern Department (*Ostabteilung*), Lev N. Geller (known pseudonym: Leo Heller; 1887 –?). Their primary aim was to reach an agreement on who to invite from the “non-colonial” delegations to meet Smeral, and secondly, the investigation should not cause any “disturbances” at the congress. The final step for the Eastern Secretariat was to notify a range of actors at Comintern headquarters, e.g. Molotov, Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Piatnitsky, Mif, Saffarov, Wassiljew, Magyar, Lozovsky, Heller and delegates from the communist parties, of Smeral’s intention to gather intelligence on the LAI during the congress in Moscow.⁹⁷⁵

Smeral used the Hotel Lux (“Zimmer Nr.12”) as the base for his investigation. In the privacy of his own room, Smeral met and interviewed representatives, later summarizing his observations and impressions in written statements. Smeral realised that it was not sufficient to only have private and separate sessions, a conference was also needed. By inviting delegates from Italy, Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Portugal, Greece and Spain to attend a “colonial conference” at the Hotel Lux, at “1 pm in Room 37” on 1 September,

⁹⁷⁴ RGASPI 542/1/42, 2-4, An alle Delegationen des Profinternkongresses, signed: Die Koloniale Abteilung der Profintern & Internationales Sekretariat der “Liga gegen Imperialismus“ [Smeral], Moscow, 14/8-1930.

⁹⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/42, 1, Letter from Smeral, Moscow, to the Profintern Presidium, Moscow, 17/8-1930; RGASPI 542/1/42, 5, Information from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, [August 1930]. Lev N. Geller became a victim of the purges during the Great Terror; see Tosstorff, 2004, p.731.

Smeral hoped that this would be enough to achieve a thorough understanding of the issues at stake.⁹⁷⁶ The “Einladung” (Invitation) explained that the “colonial conference” was scheduled to last about one hour and would focus on assessing and determining “tangible [and] practical propositions” on the LAI. At the conference, the delegates were also asked to hand over reports to Smeral, along with the promise to either increase or establish contacts with the International Secretariat in Berlin.⁹⁷⁷

What did these meetings and reports reveal to Smeral, and what was the attitude towards the LAI among the delegates? Smeral heard that the delegates’ general understanding of the LAI was that it was a failure, with some of the delegates also taking the opportunity to criticize themselves for the incapacity of the communist parties to carry out any colonial work. Smeral gathered information (based on his personal meetings) from the CPGB (Pollitt, William Rust), the CPUSA (Earl Browder), the *Communist Party of Indonesia* (Darsono), on Latin America (Charles Gamba, and Gibarti), the Middle East (Mustafa Saadi from Palestine), Austria (Karl Toman, Gorikschoner [?]) and on Hungary from an unknown delegate. These reports indicate how the causality of internal factors (the strategy of the Comintern, structural disruptions and a lack of organisational coherency) as well as external factors (ideological confusion, mistrust and repression) explained why the LAI had not become an international mass organisation.

Pollitt and Rust were critical towards the “utopian and ... unrealistic” ideas the Eastern Secretariat had introduced in its “re-organisation project”. Taking into account the experiences and results of the colonial work in Great Britain, the CPGB considered it to be a difficult duty to formulate a coherent plan of action for the British LAI Section, despite the fact that the matter was under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Commission of the CPGB. According to Pollitt and Rust, Bridgeman was the sore point, despite him having a very influential position within the section. The CPGB preferred to see reliable, communist functionaries such as Arnot, Rathbone and Percy Glading leading the section. Nevertheless, “the most important figure” for the LAI in Great Britain was Clemens Dutt, and his relation to his brother Rajani Palme Dutt, the “specialist on the Indian question”. Pollitt and Rust concluded that despite the reliability of the above candidates, this was not enough to solve the frustration within the section. For example, the frequent complaints from

⁹⁷⁶ Any protocol from this so-called “colonial conference” has not been found.

⁹⁷⁷ The top strata in the Comintern apparatus received the “Einladung”. Some of the documents, e.g. the undated reports from the Rumanian, Greek and Hungarian delegations came from the “colonial conference”. Furthermore, Smeral was unable to bring “proper working material” from Berlin, thus, Smeral told the Political Commission that the investigation in Moscow depended on getting access to as much empirical material as possible in Moscow in order to analyse the LAI properly. The Political Commission granted Smeral an additional ten days to complete his report, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/42, 6, Einladung, Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, undated [August 1930]; RGASPI 495/4/49, 1-2, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.79 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 3/9-1930. Present at the meeting were Manuilsky, Heckert, Sokolik, Wassiljew, Zirul, Gerisch, Smeral, Lozovsky, Francon, Monmousseau, Ferrat, Stepanov, Magyar and Bela Kun.

“colonial comrades” on the direction and political work in the section caused confusion, yet the CPGB chose to “ignore” these “comrades”.⁹⁷⁸

The USA LAI Section was in a terrible situation, Browder stated, resulting primarily from Lovestone’s fractional struggle in 1929. Hence, this episode had produced a permanent, ideological imprint, creating a political space for “fascist agents” within the anti-imperialist movement. According to Browder, Baldwin’s prominence and his eager support of Lovestone had “paralysed” the section. In fact, Browder argued that the USA LAI Section had been “liquidated” after the Frankfurt Congress, leaving in its wake “only a very weak central organisation”. Browder’s criticism conveyed the idea that the issue involved more than just the present LAI crisis. Thus, this meeting offered Browder a chance to declare that in the CPUSA it was “ein Kampf zwischen uns und den Rechten” (*a struggle between us and the Right*) on the colonial question. The central question was to ensure that the CPUSA did not deviate from “the struggle of the Leftist” against the “Rightist”, with Browder promising to continue to push the party “strongly to the Left”. A suitable example of this was the Indian liberation movement in the USA, a movement, according to Browder, overcrowded with “Gandhist” followers whom Lovestone and Baldwin controlled. However, the CPUSA had been unable to respond due to the perilous state of its organisational structure, Browder concluded, conceding that in order to develop a strong communist movement in the USA, a new set of organisational conditions was required. In comparison to Europe, Browder expressed his envy of the fact that the European parties had access to an institutional actor such as the WEB. If the CPUSA had a similar actor at its disposal, it would improve the “unstable and complex” administrative and ideological work on the Latin American continent.⁹⁷⁹

The report on Latin America corroborated the LAI crisis on the American continents (North, Central and South America). After Smeral had met Charles Gamba at the congress, and prior to leaving Berlin in July, having consulted Gibarti, Smeral’s report outlined the fragile outlook for the LAI in Latin America. Firstly, the IRH (referred to as the *International Labour Defense* [ILD] in the USA and Latin America) had taken over the activities of the LAI in Mexico. Secondly, Julio A. Mella’s murder in 1929 was the event which had most destroyed the LAI’s tentative attempts to establish itself, particularly in Mexico. Thus, Gamba and Gibarti believed that in order to resurrect the activities of the LAI in Latin America, an organisational and ideological re-constitution of the

⁹⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/42, 12-14, Besprechung mit den Vertretern der englischen Partei, Pollitt and Rust, über die Liga-Fragen, Smeral, report completed in Moscow, 18/8-1930. Smeral met Pollitt and Rust on 11 August in “X” [Moscow].

⁹⁷⁹ RGASPI 542/1/42, 42-47, Besprechung über Liga-Arbeit in den Vereinigten Staaten, Earl Browder to Smeral, Moscow, [August 1930]. Bill [William F.] Dunne told Smeral to contact Ford if he wanted any information on “the Anti-Imperialist work in the Revolutionary trade unions” in the USA, see RGASPI 542/1/37, 99, Short note from Bill Dunne, Moscow, to Smeral, Moscow, 29/8-1930.

LAI was required, solely for the reason of attracting the anti-imperialist movement in the Americas (North and Latin America), although this would also call for a decentralisation of the decision-making process. This referred explicitly to finding a solution to its structural constraints, particularly the fact that both the USA LAI Section and the Latin American anti-imperialist movement had New York as their operative centre. One of the major reasons for having located the centre in New York was that not “one instructor” lasted longer “than a month ... [in the] small [Latin American] countries”, hence, it had seemed to be impossible to establish a functional centre in any of the Latin American countries. This had been a poor solution, Gibarti argued, explaining that New York was neither a practical location nor an ideological answer to the demands of the movement in Latin America. More importantly, the ordinary Latin American worker neither understood nor grasped the fundamental implications of the directives issuing from New York. The central question was, therefore, how to resuscitate the Latin American work. In comparison to Browder’s appraisal of the WEB, Gamba and Gibarti wanted to involve the International Secretariat more closely in their work assisting the activities of the LAI in Latin America.⁹⁸⁰

The reports on the Arab countries and Indonesia showed that the activity of the LAI defined itself by external factors. According to Mustafa Saadi from Palestine, the LAI had barely “survived” after being subjected to a vigorous surveillance by colonial authorities. In order to circumvent this surveillance and thereby solve the dilemma, Saadi hoped that the re-organisation would enable the LAI to pose as “another type of anti-imperialist organisation” in the Middle East. This involved above all else establishing “independent associations” in countries under the control of “the imperialist nations”, able to “exploit the differences” that existed in the bilateral relations of the French, British and Italian mandate powers. Thus, this shift in focus would increase the possibility of getting “leftist nationalists, intellectuals and semi-proletarians” to join the movement which, in turn, could convert these elements to the service of the communists.⁹⁸¹

The anti-imperialist movement in Indonesia was defined by the repression of the Dutch colonial mandate. According to Raden Darsono, the “intensification of the persecution” had culminated in the adoption of a law in 1930 prohibiting “any connection with international organisations”, a decree which had forced the *Communist Party of Indonesia* (PKI) to retreat into submission and become “very weak”, with restricted contact to the peasants’ and workers’ movements. Furthermore, the isolation of the communist movement more or less confirmed itself with the establishment of a “united front against communism” in 1930 which joined together

⁹⁸⁰ RGASPI 542/1/42, 32-34, Report on the League work in Latin America [Gamba & Gibarti], Smeral, Moscow, 21/8-1930. For Charles Gamba, see Philip Deery, “Malaya, 1948: Britain’s Asian Cold War?”, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp.29-54.

⁹⁸¹ RGASPI 542/1/42, 39, Besprechung mit Saadi (Arabischer Genosse aus Palästina), Smeral, Moscow, 20/8-1930.

“imperialists, nationalists and social democrats” and included rhetoric portraying the LAI as “an instrument of Moscow”. For Darsono, the central issue was that there existed no direct communication links from Indonesia to the International Secretariat in Berlin. Darsono told Smeral to consider the idea of organising “roundabout” communications by instructing “trustworthy Indonesians” in Europe, preferably students or members of the PI, to act as couriers from Europe to Indonesia. However, if Smeral or the Comintern did not approve, Darsono suggested using the IRH’s network, a functional channel through which to send illegal propaganda to Indonesia via the services of colonial sailors who, on a regular basis, docked in Antwerp, Amsterdam and Hamburg. However, after his meeting with Darsono, Smeral questioned whether Darsono could be trusted, stating in a conclusive remark that “Darsono is not a man of mass work”. Why was Smeral suspicious towards Darsono? According to Smeral, Darsono was a journalist, something that made him “act in an undisciplined manner” by fraternising with the “middle leaves” of the Indonesian nationalist movement, rather than with the communists.⁹⁸²

Karl Toman and Goriktschoner told Smeral that “one can do anything in Austria”, while in Hungary, the LAI had to connect the anti-imperialist movement with the work of “cultural organisations” controlled by the communists. Apparently, the anti-imperialist movement in Austria and Hungary shared the stigma of having neither a solid structure nor any reliable contacts, while the low level of academia on the colonial question within the communist movement required education on the theoretical implications of anti-imperialism. Toman and Goriktschoner nevertheless admitted that the Balkan nationalist revolutionary movement in Vienna was a vibrant element, which also had reliable connections to Berlin. For the LAI, this was a movement that deserved more attention as it would offer a passage into the Balkan countries. If the International Secretariat wanted to establish contact with Balkan nationalist revolutionaries and associations, e.g. the editor of the communist-biased journal *Balkanförderung* Dimitrije Vlachoff, or the leader of the *Albanian Committee for the Liberation of Kosovo* Fan Noli, who had also attended the Frankfurt Congress and was known to travel on regular basis between Vienna and Berlin, they had to let the *Communist Party of Austria* know about it. Smeral also received information on a third candidate, the Serb nationalist Mustafa Golubitsch, a member of the *Black Hand* (Schwarze Hand), the organisation which had, as highlighted by Toman and Goriktschoner, arranged the “Sarajevo assassination in 1914”.⁹⁸³ Aside from this reference to Golubitsch, Vlachoff and Fan Noli were, however, not new faces to the LAI.

⁹⁸² RGASPI 542/1/42, 22-25, Besprechung mit Darsono, Indonesia, report completed by Smeral, Moscow, 20/8-1930.

⁹⁸³ RGASPI 542/1/42, 10-11, Besprechung über Liga-Arbeit in Österreich (Toman and Goriktschoner), Smeral, August 1930. Karl Toman (1887 – 1945) was a leading person in the Austrian communist movement, in charge of relations between the trade unions and the CP of Austria, see Lazitch 1986, p.473. The identity of Goriktschoner is unknown.

In 1928, the Berlin Chief of Police began to investigate the original source of the Balkan communist propaganda being disseminated from Vienna, suspecting that Berlin was the original place of distribution. Despite the fact that Vienna was functioning as the centre and rallying point for Balkan nationalist activism during the inter-war years, it was not the only hub linking together the activities of the Balkan revolutionary movement. The *Balkanförderung* was using Berlin as its centre of activity, from where Vlachoff and Fan Noli were organising their operations, an arrangement which came to fruition during Fan Noli's visit to Moscow in 1928, at least according to the suspicions of the Berlin Chief of Police.⁹⁸⁴ The establishment of the association *Bund Freier Balkan* in 1929 was the result of an increasing presence of Balkan nationalist revolutionaries in Berlin. The *Bund Freier Balkan* engaged a string of well-known left-wing characters: Erwin Piscator, Ledebour, the Danish author Karin Michaelis, Barbusse, Sinclair, bishop Montgomery Brown, the author Maxim Gorki and Münzenberg. However, the Berlin Chief of Police could not verify whether the LAI, the *Balkanförderung* and the *Bund Freier Balkan* had established any connection, deciding to leave the question open for further investigation.⁹⁸⁵ In fact, the first and tentative step to establish relations between the LAI and the *Balkanförderung* was initiated on 15 April 1930, when Vlachoff wondered whether Chatto could write an article on India for inclusion in the newspaper *Balkanförderung*. In conclusion, the contact between the International Secretariat and the *Balkanförderung* had been an arrangement co-ordinated by Helmut/Dimitrov of the WEB.⁹⁸⁶

While summarising his observations from the meetings, Smeral realised that the LAI and its International Secretariat was caught in a deadlock. And, on an even more serious note, Smeral recognised that not a single delegate had approved of the LAI's political guiding principle: to focus the LAI on workers' and peasants' associations, parties and movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries. On the contrary, the reports disclosed that the LAI had to strengthen its ties to

For the Hungarian report, see RGASPI 542/1/42, 19-20, Report on the League work in Hungary, completed 4/9-1930, author: Smeral.

⁹⁸⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20697, 429, Notiz [Polizeipräsident], Berlin, 1928. According to the Berlin Chief of Police in a report on Fan Noli, dated 28 March 1928, Noli's birthplace was Ibrik Tepe in Albania, 1 January 1882, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20697, 431-433, Abteilung IA, Kriminal-Kommissar, Polizeipräsident, Berlin, 28/3-1928. For Fan Noli's participation at the Frankfurt Congress, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 25. Michael Schmidt-Neke, *Entstehung und Ausbau der Königsdiktatur in Albanien (1912-1939): Regierungsbildungen, Herrschaftsweise und Machteliten in einem jungen Balkanstaat*, Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag, München, 1987, p.189.

⁹⁸⁵ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20697, 446, Auszug aus Nr.123 der Zeitschrift "La Federation Balkanique" vom 1/11-1929, Berlin; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20697, 467-471, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I. Betrifft: "Bund Freier Balkan" and "Die Balkanförderung", Goehrke, Berlin, to the Minister of the Interior, Berlin, 21/4-1932.

⁹⁸⁶ RGASPI 539/2/432, 15-17, Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 8051/82/8, 718-724, Handwritten notes, Willi Budich, Berlin, 1-2/6-1931. For Dimitrov and the *Balkanförderung*, see Hans-Joachim Bernhard, *Georgi Dimitroff*, Urania-Verlag, Leipzig, 1982, p.145. Nissan Oren's somewhat dated, yet still discerning analysis of the attempts of the communists to establish activity in the Balkans during the inter-war years, provides a good insight into the issue, Nissan Oren, "Popular Front in the Balkans: 2. Bulgaria", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.5, No.69, Sage Publications, London, 1970, pp.69-82. Vlachoff was elected as a member of the LAI Executive in June 1931.

revolutionary trade unions, establish functional sections or support existing ones in order to make them capable of responding to a repressive societal *milieu* (Indonesia and the Middle East), while some delegates already considered the LAI to be disbanded and had used Smeral merely as a vehicle to air their discontent and political conviction.

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The Hearing

Münzenberg followed Smeral's progress from a distance in Berlin. Showing a great interest in how Smeral had managed to collect a number of different opinions on the LAI, Münzenberg was nevertheless "amazed and surprised" upon hearing of the criticisms levelled against the LAI. Münzenberg wrote to Smeral, urging him to contact Kuusinen and Magyar for the sole reason of preventing any negative comments further up in the hierarchy before introducing the report to the Political Commission. Most importantly, Smeral had to get them to ensure that the Comintern intended to continue to support the LAI financially.⁹⁸⁷ On 13 September, Smeral was scheduled to give his report, an analysis aimed to influence the Political Secretariat's final decision on the future ideological and organisational direction of the LAI. Smeral's report, "Bericht des Gen. Smeral über die Lage der 'Liga gegen Imperialismus'" (*Report of Com. Smeral on the Situation in the 'League against Imperialism'*), was both an account and an interpretation of how one of the involved actors in the LAI was experiencing not only the crisis, but also the organisation in general. For Smeral, the question at stake, aside from presenting his individual opinion, was to delineate a strategy which the Comintern could take into account when re-organising the LAI, rather than merely suggesting its dissolution as the only answer. Moreover, Smeral hoped that his report would highlight the difficulties encountered by the contradictory historical tendencies within the Comintern, especially its policy changes and how these had affected a sympathising communist organisation like the LAI.

Smeral introduced his analysis by describing how he had felt isolated at the International Secretariat after arriving in Berlin in November 1929. However, the Political Commission had to understand, above all, that the aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress, and the LAI's ensuing crisis, had strengthened relations between the individuals at the International Secretariat:

I must first of all say that for such an important meeting for the League, the other two secretaries of the League, Comrades Münzenberg and Chatto, should have been invited. [...] we as secretaries and as a group, a collective, since I started in Berlin, I did not understand

⁹⁸⁷ RGASPI 542/1/37, 98, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Smeral, Moscow, 22/8-1930.

that the League question is seen in this scope, and I have never discussed the question with them [Münzenberg, Chatto] on this level.⁹⁸⁸

“The collective leadership” at the International Secretariat is what had kept the LAI together, Smeral argued, wondering how the “League question” and its “scope” could differ so much in Berlin in comparison to the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. From Smeral’s point of view, the LAI and its “scope” was focused on its instrumental role within the international communist movement during “the third period”. Unfortunately though for the LAI, the inauguration of the organisation had coincided with the peak of the “second period” [the united front], upon which Smeral conceded that it was not logical and “wrong to apply the policy [the third period] of today to the former”. This was the essential dilemma that the LAI had to confront. “The scope” also explained the misfortunes which had befallen the LAI since 1928, especially the chaos of the Frankfurt Congress, Smeral argued. The latter had been an event, organised with the ambition to demonstrate a united front against colonialism and imperialism, where the organisers (the International Secretariat) seemed to have missed the fact that the “second period already was over”. Caught in the void between the second and third periods, the very idea of turning the organisation into “a progressive” political actor had been thrown into question, Smeral argued. Indicative of the above was the conclusion that the Comintern no longer endorsed the idea of getting the LAI to connect the “national bourgeoisie elements” in the colonies with the “prominente Persönlichkeiten” in Europe, especially the left-wing movement in Europe (socialists, social democrats, pacifists and trade unions). However, Smeral believed that the Comintern would have recognised the LAI as “a success” if more “work during the ‘second term’” had been carried out.⁹⁸⁹ This statement merely confirmed Smeral’s perception of the contradictory nature of the relations between the LAI and the Comintern since the LAI’s inception in 1927.

Which solutions did Smeral recommend in order to re-organise and keep the LAI alive? In Moscow, Smeral had re-assessed the Eastern Secretariat’s “re-organisation project”, focusing on the deleted passage which had been included in the draft version. According to Smeral, the question the Comintern needed to ask itself was whether the LAI was the only sympathising organisation within the Comintern’s network of auxiliary organisations capable of both distributing Bolshevik propaganda on a global scale and establishing contacts in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. If the LAI was given the chance to develop its organisation and activities, it had every

⁹⁸⁸ Smeral finished his report on 8 September, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/52, 12-42, Bericht des Gen. Smeral über die Lage der “Liga gegen den Imperialismus”. Für die Sitzung der Politkommission, Moscow, 13/9-1930. Two different versions of Smeral’s report have been found in the Comintern Archive dossiers: RGASPI 495/3/176, 4-17 [stenographic report], and fol. RGASPI 542/1/37, 100-133.

⁹⁸⁹ RGASPI 495/4/52, 12-42, Bericht des Gen. Smeral über die Lage der “Liga gegen den Imperialismus”. Für die Sitzung der Politkommission, Moscow, 13/9-1930.

chance of becoming “a serious organisation [...] to fulfil the important task” of establishing and supporting a safe channel for the communist movement to the colonies. This required that the decision-makers ignore the ideological guiding principle included in “the re-organisation project”: to transform the LAI into a connective point for the colonial workers’ and peasants’ movements. Hence, in order to get the LAI to assist in “the struggle [to achieve] world revolution”, the answer was to be found in a more pragmatic approach, Smeral concluded. The question was how. Smeral had taken notice of the LAI and its political discourse, suggesting a focus on the “liberation struggle in the colonial and dependent countries”, “the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat” and the defence of the “building of socialism in the USSR”. Yet, while this appeared to be merely a repetition of “class against class”, what Smeral strove to achieve was to get the LAI functional again. Thus, Smeral told the Political Commission that this would require dividing the LAI into two halves, with one covert and one overt side. This organisational restructuring would also enable the Comintern to more closely define its control over the LAI and its International Secretariat and, therefore, save the organisation from dissolving. The re-organisation of the LAI had to abide by the following principle, Smeral stated:

In almost all the colonies and dependent countries, the social structure of the population [...] represents a very important part of the active revolutionary movement. [...] In this situation, the work, the means and the apparatus of the Comintern have to be more devoted than before. [...] Certain reasons (increased and improved connections, political reasons) suggest that this work has to be done outside the USSR. This work should be done by the LAI, in part, as a *relief* [organisation; author’s remark and italics], partly as a *cover* [author’s italics] of the Comintern. [...] Although the LAI would retain full independence on the outside, in fact they would be less independent than before. As an auxiliary organ, acting as a cover, it would be connected with the Comintern much more than until now.⁹⁹⁰

The principle implied the definitive submission of the LAI and its International Secretariat to the Comintern, however, the crux of the matter was that, in 1930, the LAI had very few and fragile connections in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Smeral was aware of this dilemma, urging the Comintern to understand the necessity of contributing with active support. Particularly as the aftermath of the Frankfurt congress had more or less obliterated the LAI’s network to the colonies, an event which had “burnt these bridges” observed Smeral. This had prevented the LAI from introducing itself as a political actor opposing imperialism. According to Smeral, the option of posing as a relief organisation could solve the problem, but only if the Comintern decided to make the organisation operative again, but how? Firstly, the International Secretariat had to be certain

⁹⁹⁰ RGASPI 495/4/52, 12-42, Bericht des Gen. Smeral über die Lage der “Liga gegen den Imperialismus”. Für die Sitzung der Politkommission, Moscow, 13/9-1930.

that the monthly endorsement from the Comintern would arrive, and secondly, that instructors from Moscow visited the Berlin bureau to give political directives and assist in the practical work. Smeral stated that if the decision-makers chose to endorse this vision, the LAI would do its utmost to fulfil its aim of laying a foundation for the communist movement in the colonial world.⁹⁹¹ The question was under what kind of pretext.

The International Secretariat was a central factor in both explaining and solving the crisis. As the Frankfurt Congress had left the International Secretariat severed from its connections to anti-colonial activists in Europe, and in order to reconstruct the LAI's network, the working conditions at the bureau in Berlin had to be improved. According to Smeral, in the summer of 1930, the International Secretariat was suffering from a lack of personnel, money and people with the necessary linguistic skills (aside from Chatto). After his investigations in Moscow in August, Smeral had become convinced that the matter of solving the organisational and ideological confusion within the LAI lay entirely in the hands of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. Thus, this would realise the ambition of re-organising and transforming the LAI into two entities: to pose as a relief organisation, yet exist under the pretext of functioning as a cover for the Comintern for the sole purpose of finding reliable candidates who would be able to spread anti-imperialist and Bolshevik propaganda around the world. Having completed his report, the decision was "now in the hands" of the Political Secretariat, as noted by Smeral in a letter to Münzenberg after the session. Approached by the secretaries [unknown] of Magyar and Moskvin/Trilliser, Smeral was told that the Political Secretariat's ambition was to solve the question of the LAI in "a constructive way".⁹⁹²

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Verdict and Repentance

The members of the Political Secretariat assessed Smeral's performance and report before handing down their verdict. This was the culmination of a process which had emerged both at the 1929 Frankfurt Congress and, especially, in its aftermath. The Political Secretariat's verdict aimed to present both an answer and a solution to the crisis. This depended, however, on whether the Political Secretariat was willing to consent to the idea of transforming the LAI into a relief organisation on the one hand, while at the same time functioning as a cover for the Comintern. On 16 September, the Political Secretariat members (Magyar, Lozovsky, Manuilsky, Ford, Kuusinen and Chitarow) endorsed Smeral's report and his recommendations to link the LAI more closely "to

⁹⁹¹ RGASPI 495/4/52, 12-42, Bericht des Gen. Smeral über die Lage der "Liga gegen den Imperialismus". Für die Sitzung der Politkommission, Moscow, 13/9-1930.

⁹⁹² RGASPI 542/1/37, 134, Letter from Smeral, Moscow, to Münzenberg and Chatto, Berlin, 15/9-1930.

the Comintern” as a cover organisation and re-introduce the LAI as an organisation, this time under the guise of “relief activities”. The Political Secretariat nonetheless observed that the present challenge was to prepare and circulate a credible “political programme” outside the communist movement, containing the message that the LAI was indeed an “independent non-party organisation”. According to the Political Secretariat, Manuilsky had to compose the LAI’s revised anti-imperialist agenda. The agenda Manuilsky had in mind was a political manifesto structured around the Bolshevik conception of building socialism. Manuilsky argued that the LAI should support the message of absolute national independence for the colonies, the dismissal of armed forces, the expropriation of large estates and their equal distribution among the peasants, the disbanding of “imperialist-owned enterprises” and total independence as well as the right to assembly for workers’ and peasants’ organisations in the colonies. The Political Secretariat also contributed with a more practical solution, concluding that the International Secretariat would receive regular transactions of money and instructors from Moscow to Berlin “to guide” the transformational process. This depended on resolving a few organisational questions. In relation to the LAI and the youth question, the Political Secretariat sanctioned the KIM to both nominate a youth secretary at the International Secretariat, and finance the individual in Berlin. Moreover, in order to present its revised political agenda, the International Secretariat had to re-launch the LAI’s theoretical organ *The Anti-Imperialist Review* in the “imperialist metropolises” London, Paris and New York. The most urgent issues to solve were the agreement of a monthly budget and to ensure that the LAI started collecting missing membership fees, particularly from the Russian AUCCSLU, money which the International Secretariat could use to finance the travel arrangements for its instructors in Europe. There was, however, a level of scepticism and concern expressed by the Political Secretariat, wondering whether the LAI would ever succeed in turning itself into an international mass organisation. The most fundamental problem the LAI had to confront was the hostility from former prominent LAI Executive members (Maxton, Fimmen, Nehru and Hatta). This would most likely contribute to making it difficult to realise the leap to becoming a mass organisation; however, the Political Secretariat conceded that the LAI had every chance of establishing itself in Latin America, China, India and in “some Negro areas” in Africa.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹³ RGASPI 495/4/52, 7-9, Nach Anhören des Referates des Genossen Smeral, Political Secretariat, Moscow, 16/9-1930. The process to nominate a LAI youth secretary turned into a protracted process in Moscow. First, the KIM Executive Committee notified the Small Commission on December 14, 1929, that the candidate, Tenner, would begin his studies at the ILS, and had no intention of going to Berlin. A second candidate, Boretzky, who had received his nomination on May 1930, suddenly passed away [for reasons unknown] in Moscow prior to his departure, RGASPI 495/4/7, 21, Short note from EC KIM, Moscow, to the Small Commission, Moscow, 14/12-1929; RGASPI 495/18/863, 20, (Confidential) Letter from ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, to Smeral and Münzenberg, Berlin [stamped date] 8/6-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 26-37, Brief Nr. 1, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/10-1930. The International Secretariat should use *The Anti-Imperialist Review* to distribute Manuilsky’s theory, which, through propaganda could be “popularised” in the left-wing movement before the LAI Executive

At first glance, the protocol from the Political Secretariat's meeting on 16 September seems to indicate that it had just been a routine meeting at Comintern headquarters to discuss Smeral's report. However, reaching a verdict on the LAI was not easy. The customary procedure at meetings at Comintern headquarters was to make no records and "no stenographic reports of the speeches". Instead, a short summary was compiled and added to the protocol. According to the summary in the protocol of the meeting on 16 September, the Political Secretariat authorised the following regarding the LAI:

The EAST L.S. [Ländersekretariat] is authorised to formulate, together with Comrade Smeral, the basic guidelines for strengthening the activities of the LAI in a few short points, so that these policies can serve as a basis for a concrete plan of [action for] the League. The EAST L.S. is to hand over these guidelines to the Political Commission for review.⁹⁹⁴

Thus, according to this summary, a solution had been found to the problem. Smeral had also attended this 16 September meeting and compiled a summary ("Diskussion im Polsekretariat"), a document which illustrates just how much the members of the Political Secretariat had deliberated before giving their final verdict on the LAI. Why did Smeral write this summary? According to Smeral, the sole reason was to be able to tell Piatnitsky (unable to attend the meeting) what the Political Secretariat had discussed.⁹⁹⁵ What does this "Diskussion im Polsekretariat" disclose? Firstly, Smeral's 13 September report had initiated an internal debate on how to solve the crisis within the LAI. Secondly, the Political Secretariat conceded that the International Secretariat in Berlin had not caused the crisis, far from it; the crisis was the result of internal factors originating in Moscow in 1929 during the preparatory work for the Frankfurt Congress. This was an observation which corresponded with Manuilsky's conclusion at a Political Secretariat session in August 1930: "there are always excesses in the communist movement when sharp changes are made".⁹⁹⁶ Smeral's summary is, therefore, a crucial eyewitness account of a peculiar episode, detailing how Magyar, Lozovsky, Manuilsky, Ford, Kuusinen and Chitarow in fact resorted to using self-criticism as a way of explaining the *anni confusionis* of the LAI. In comparison to the protocol, Smeral's summary show how several of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters felt it was a complicated course of action to adapt the LAI to the policy of "class against class". This observation contradicts the general understanding of the Comintern as a rigid institution

adopted this new political direction, see fol. RGASPI 495/3/201, 395-404, Draft resolution for the Session of the Executive Committee of the LAI, June 1931, Berlin, Moscow, 26/5-1931; "The Colonies and Oppressed Nations in the Struggle for Freedom", in *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, Vol.1, September-October, 1931, No.1, International Secretariat, Berlin, pp.3-6.

⁹⁹⁴ RGASPI 495/3/176, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.92 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 16/9-1930. For Smeral as author of "Protokoll Nr. 92", see fol. RGASPI 495/155/90, 80.

⁹⁹⁵ RGASPI 542/1/40, Briefe No.2, "Fraktion der Liga", Berlin, to "Freunde" [Magyar], Moscow, 3/11-1930.

⁹⁹⁶ Taken from Worley 2004, p.11 (for Manuilsky's quote, extracted from the files of the CPGB ["Communist Archive"], see p.17, footnote 34).

merely adhering to strict doctrinal behaviour for the sole purpose of fulfilling its aim of establishing organisational coherency and control. For the LAI and its crisis, this 16 September Political Secretariat meeting was an opportunity for its members to reflect, regret and repent, without losing face.

Magyar did not appreciate how the LAI had progressed in 1930. Appearing as the sternest critic at the meeting, Magyar stated that it was “a duty” to tell the others that he had lost interest in and patience with the LAI. He was willing to give the LAI “one more chance” to become “a real mass organisation” but, should it fail once more, the organisation would have to be “liquidated”. Magyar’s statement opened up the discussion, and with everyone expected to give their opinion on the crisis, responses were received from Lozovsky, Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Chitarow and Ford. In Lozovsky’s opinion, it was “inadvisable” to liquidate the LAI, especially as the crisis had been a result of internal disputes. The firm belief amongst the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, that the Frankfurt Congress had to be turned into a forum for discussing the revolutionary trade union movement, had been a serious mistake, Lozovsky argued. This serious mistake in relation to the trade union question had, in fact, destroyed any opportunity of using the LAI as a “legal weapon ... to connect with colonial countries”, especially to send instructors from Europe to India, Africa and the USA. Lozovsky believed that responsibility for solving the crisis lay fairly and squarely in the hands of the Comintern. According to Manuilsky, liquidation was not a creative solution to the problem, as it would only force the Comintern to establish a section of the Eastern Secretariat in one of the colonial metropolises in Western Europe. This section would nevertheless fairly soon attract attention from leading antagonists such as the LSI and the national security services, Manuilsky stated. Kuusinen condemned Magyar’s sceptical attitude as not being particularly constructive. Kuusinen stated that if liquidation was the only option, the Comintern’s and Profintern’s “detour” of establishing “a new organ for the anti-imperialist” movement would consume time, energy and money. This continued as Chitarow admitted that the primary reason for letting the LAI continue its activity was that it represented one of the few auxiliary organisations which, “in a legal way”, could operate in a public setting. Thus, for the Comintern, the LAI offered a chance to influence social and political actors who would otherwise remain completely out of the reach of the communist movement.⁹⁹⁷

The central question was whether the members of the Political Secretariat could accept the fact that the Comintern had not properly supported the LAI since its inception in 1927. According to Lozovsky, the International Secretariat had received minimal assistance at every level

⁹⁹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/40, 128-130, (Beilage XIV) Diskussion im Polsekretariat, Moscow, 16/9-1930. Ford and Chitarow did not deliver any lengthy statements in comparison to the others taking part at the meeting. Instead, they both supported the opinions expressed by Manuilsky, Lozovsky and Kuusinen.

(administrative and financial); therefore, it was an illogical proposition to blame the LAI for the crisis, concluding, “we all have a share in the guilt”. Manuilsky did not agree, however, and despite the crisis being an “established fact”, there existed no clear solution to the LAI question. Kuusinen told everyone present at the meeting that they had to understand that the demands placed on the shoulders of the LAI and its International Secretariat had been too much to cope with. Appearing as the moderating force at the session, Kuusinen stated that the crisis was a result of the indifference amongst the communist parties and the revolutionary trade unions to support the LAI, which had resulted in the LAI retreating into a state of isolation. Kuusinen admitted quite frankly that the crisis had also emanated from the endorsed attitude by the Comintern:

We thought they [the LAI] could be established as a mass organisation with large reformist trade unions, and we have criticised them for the fact that the work was not achieved quickly enough. Maybe that was possible 5 years ago. Since then, this has been impossible. In this matter, one cannot blame the lack of energy.⁹⁹⁸

These reflections and this level of self-criticism were an indication of the Political Secretariat’s position on the LAI question and the crisis: that this was an issue entirely in the hands of the Comintern to solve. Kuusinen’s conclusive remark was the Political Secretariat’s verdict on Smeral’s analysis, which proposed the necessary transformation of the LAI:

I tend to think thus that the League should not in fact formally be a joint body of the Comintern and Profintern for mass revolutionary agitation in the field of the anti-imperialist struggle. [...] We will not publicly say that it is our institution. We must consciously [use it] as a united front instrument [to connect with] the petite bourgeoisie and workers elements not yet ripe but considered necessary for communism.⁹⁹⁹

This verdict by the Political Secretariat provided both an answer and solution to the crisis. Most importantly, the verdict also authorised the LAI to retreat from the Comintern’s endorsed “new line” policy, and to return to its original purpose i.e. functioning as a united front. Thus, by returning to the role of acting as an “intermediary” for the Comintern, Kuusinen and the Political Secretariat wished that the LAI would still be able to secure elements “not yet ripe” for communism. Was this even a plausible proposition as the *anni confusionis* was coming to its end?

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⁹⁹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/40, 128-130, (Beilage XIV) Diskussion im Polsekretariat, Moscow, 16/9-1930.

⁹⁹⁹ RGASPI 542/1/40, 128-130, (Beilage XIV) Diskussion im Polsekretariat, Moscow, 16/9-1930.

Chapter 8. One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

The LAI is an international organisation of the Comintern. [...] The work of the League is similar to the work of the Comintern, whose actions usually run parallel with the League.

Der Reichsminister des Innern.
I A.2065/20.8, Berlin 20/8-1930

The situation has worsened since the aid [money] granted to us by our other friends [Comintern] does not come regularly [...] we are sitting here in an office and looking at each other, unable to do anything. [...] We have not paid the rent, [...] The anti-imperialist work of the International Secretariat can and should be extended, but the means to do so, especially if the union dues [AUCCSLU] are not paid, have to be found outside the current budget. Smeral left Moscow with the impression that all major colleagues (Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Lozovsky, Wassiljew, Chitarow and the Eastern Secretariat) were in agreement.

The International Secretariat, Berlin, to
the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 2/1-
1931

The LAI crisis in 1930 led to the re-birth of the organisation.¹⁰⁰⁰ With the Political Secretariat's consent and its realisation that "class against class" was of no use to the LAI, the organisation returned to its united front strategy as a result of the crisis. The *anni confusionis* had shattered the LAI's anti-imperialist agenda and structure, while the irresolute decisions from and the behaviour at Comintern headquarters had forced the organisation to make a detour from its original aim of acting as an intermediary between the anti-colonial movement and the international communist movement. Granted the right to return to its united front strategy, the LAI was able to take a big step forward. However, the LAI was in such a perilous state after the ordeals and repercussions of the Frankfurt Congress, that by 1930, the organisation had been pushed two steps backwards.¹⁰⁰¹ As Smeral had emphasised in his report to the Political Commission, it was of the utmost importance to strengthen the ties between the International Secretariat and the Comintern, only then could the LAI resume its activity. Despite the acts of self-criticism from several of the members at the Political Secretariat in September, the outcome of Smeral's investigation was the

¹⁰⁰⁰ The term *rebirth* refers to "spiritual rebirth" and "resurrection from the dead"; see Davies 1996, p.471.

¹⁰⁰¹ The allusion to "one step forward, two steps back" is taken from Lenin; however, its contextual framework is not related to Lenin's critique of the Russian Social Democratic Party and its crisis in 1904. A situation which had emerged at the second party congress, in connection with the dispute between the "majority" (Bolsheviks) and the "minority" (Mensheviks), see V. I. Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (The Crisis in Our Party)*, taken from Lenin, *Collected Works Volume 7*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp.203-425. Lenin's statement was published in May 1904.

transformation of the LAI into a relief organisation, whereas Kuusinen's verdict had confirmed that the LAI was nothing more than a cover for the activities of the Comintern. Thus, the International Secretariat was facing an enormous challenge, involving adjustments to both internal and external factors. With the return to its united front strategy, this in turn attracted attention from the German national security services (the Mdi and the *Auswärtige Amt*), institutional actors which decided to increase their vigilance in order to confirm the LAI's communist ties and composition. Moreover, despite the Political Secretariat's verdict, the *anni confusionis* had had a lasting effect on the International Secretariat. The crisis had left the International Secretariat with the momentous task of re-constructing the LAI in a German socio-political *milieu* in a highly volatile state, characterised by violent confrontations between the extreme Left (the communists) and the extreme Right (the NSDAP) on the streets in Berlin.¹⁰⁰²

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how the International Secretariat adjusted and adapted itself to meet the demands and outcome of the crisis. While "class against class" had been the ideological principle during the *anni confusionis* (1929-30), a policy which had contributed immensely to destroying the LAI, by 1930 the organisation was an isolated and fragile structure. The following narrative covers the chronological period from October 1930 to December 1931. This period covers the re-birth of the LAI, although events and episodes occurring after the *anni confusionis* would continue to marginalise the LAI. Thus, this chapter has defined a number of thematic questions on which the International Secretariat focused in order to re-activate anti-imperialist activism.

This was the nadir of Münzenberg's involvement in the LAI, as he was now focusing on other matters, particularly the commencement of preparations for the tenth anniversary of the IAH in 1931.¹⁰⁰³ The International Secretariat "kom.Fraktion" (Münzenberg, Smeral, Chatto and the Turkish communist and Comintern emissary Bekar Ferdi, see further below) concluded in October 1930 that Münzenberg had to at least visit the International Secretariat two or three times per month.¹⁰⁰⁴ Another serious question was the increased pressure on the LAI due to the collaboration between the British and German national security services. Towards the end of 1929, the British Metropolitan Police (Special Branch) in London had asked the German ambassador, van Scherpenberg, to assist the British "Passport Control Officer" in Berlin. The British Special

¹⁰⁰² For the German context, see Hoppe (2007); Striefler (1993); Schlögel (1998).

¹⁰⁰³ The IAH celebrated its tenth anniversary at the eighth international IAH congress in Berlin on 9 – 15 October, 1931, see Willi Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, 1921-1931*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin, 1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 9/I 6/7/24-29, 8. Weltkongress der Internationalen Arbeiter-Hilfe in Berlin, 9-15/10-1932.

¹⁰⁰⁴ RGASPI 542/1/40, 26-37, (Vertraulich) Brief Nr. 1, Liga gegen Imperialismus "kom.Fraktion", Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/10-1930.

Branch's primary motive was to strengthen the "existing police liaison" in order to gain access to intelligence on the "visits of British communists to the KPD, the WEB and other Communist or semi-Communist centres in Berlin", mentioning, for example, that the activities of Münzenberg, Chatto and the LAI were of particular interest. Van Scherpenberg passed on this proposal to the German Minister of the Interior (MdI), Albert Grzesinski, in Berlin, who instructed the officials at the department to increase their surveillance of the German communist movement both in Berlin and across the country.¹⁰⁰⁵ In 1930, the MdI accelerated its pace in accumulating intelligence on the variety and character of the radical political scene in Germany. With reference to the communist movement in Berlin, the MdI particularly wanted to confirm the whereabouts of the increased number of foreign communists in the city. The MdI's focus was also in line with the expressed requests of other governmental agencies in Berlin: to unmask the city as the "Bolshevik headquarters in Western Europe". In this context, the LAI was referred to, as noted in an article in the Dutch newspaper *Politik Economisch Weekblad* ("Die deutsche Gefahr", published on 9 July 1930) as a vital actor co-ordinating the operations of the international communist movement in Berlin. Brückner, an official at the MdI, read the article and notified the *Auswärtige Amt* of the urgency in strengthening the surveillance of dubious organisations and associations in order to maintain "public order" in the Weimar capital.¹⁰⁰⁶ One way of doing this was to limit the amount of public space available for political activism. On 13 August 1930, the Berlin District School Board, along with a school deputation, authorised a ban prohibiting "extremist political organisations" from using the school's premises to hold meetings or other kinds of activities. This ban included the LAI, the *Friends of the Soviet Union*, the *Association of Proletarian Writers*, the

¹⁰⁰⁵ TNA KV4/110, 1a, Letter from Liddell, Metropolitan Police, Special Branch, London, to Valentine Vivian, London, 21/2-1930; TNA KV4/110, 6a, Letter from Liddell, Metropolitan Police, Special Branch, London, to Valentine Vivian, London, 7/3-1930; TNA KV4/110, 15a, Letter from Liddell, Metropolitan Police, Special Branch, London, to Valentine Vivian, London, 28/10-1930.

¹⁰⁰⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 138-139, Übersetzung des Artikels aus "Politik Economisch Weekblad" (*Die deutsche Gefahr*), Nr.41 vom 9.7.30 (Seite 352); SAPMO-BA ZPA R1001/6751, 141, Letter from Brückner/Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, to Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 15/8-1930. The RMdI concluded, after having reviewed the MdI report on the communist connections of the LAI, that the LAI was an international organisation ("auxiliary arm of the Comintern"), which supported and broadcast a similar political message as the KPD. For example, the MdI pointed to the ties of the LAI with the Profintern, and to the fact that Münzenberg acted as its official representative in Germany, as confirmation of the organisation's communist connections. The MdI recommended the continued monitoring of the following aspects of the LAI: its attempts to carry out political education among "the widest circles about the nature of colonial policy and its effect on suppressed and oppressed peoples"; the organisation of protest campaigns against "violent colonial imperialism"; the nature of its "solidarity actions and practical assistance to affected peoples"; the content of the "intellectual organ" [*The Anti-Imperialist Review*]; its contacts with anti-colonial activists "struggling for their freedom" in the colonies and "the exploited classes of other countries"; and to start a register of "periodical events" which had an international character and included the physical participation of "colonial peoples" alongside international "progressive organisations", see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 19, Der Reichsminister des Innern. IA.2065/20.8, Berlin 20/8-1930.

IAH, the KIM and the IRH. It was also a decision which indicated a political leaning towards organisations linked to the Nazi movement.¹⁰⁰⁷

The German authorities' hostile attitude towards the communist movement contributed to turning the streets of Berlin into a political scene during the autumn and winter of 1930. This nevertheless suited the LAI's return to its united front strategy. The International Secretariat, together with the German LAI Section and the *Chinese Student Association* (Klub Chinesischer Studenten), organised a public celebration at the *Piscator-Bühne* in honour of the memory of Sun-Yat-sen, and held a demonstration in support of "Sowjetkanton-Sowjetchina!" at which both Münzenberg and Karl August Wittfogel delivered speeches. This was part of a larger Chinese campaign in Berlin, which reached its climax on 16 December at a public rally "in defence of the Soviet Union and Soviet China". According to the real organiser of the campaign, the WEB, the main purpose of the demonstration had been to publish and distribute propaganda against the global "conspiracy to organise an intervention against the USSR". The WEB chose to use the LAI as the most suitable cover behind which to organise public meetings and to act as the formal leader of the campaign. For the WEB, this campaign was an opportunity to assess whether the LAI could distribute propaganda against the "war threat against the Soviet Union" and "in the defence of the Soviet Union", and whether it would create any positive reaction. The campaign also provided the LAI with a chance to distribute "League-signed leaflets" and to invite "if possible, non-communist" speakers to declare their support for the LAI. Additionally, the campaign celebrated the joining of political forces between the IRH and the LAI, who declared their joint aim to assist each other as "relief organisations".¹⁰⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁰⁷ According to a decree adopted on 25 June 1930, the MdI did not allow any official of the police force in Berlin to be a member of the KPD or the NSDAP, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 20, IAN 2165g/19.8.30, Berlin, 25/8-1930. According to His-Huey Liang's study of the Berlin security police (*Schutzpolizei*; Schupo), the police gravitated "dangerously towards an attitude of passive neutrality" towards the NSDAP during its challenge for power in the Weimar Republic in 1927-30, see His-Huey Liang, "The Berlin Police and the Weimar Republic", in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, Sage Publications, London, 1969:4, pp.169-170.

¹⁰⁰⁸ The meeting at Piscator Bühne began at "11.30 am", at the same time as the demonstration at the Wallner-Theater, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 26, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.288, 10/12-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 27, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.290, 12/12-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 32, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.294, 17/12-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 30, Short note, re. *MOPR*, December 1930. For the WEB and China, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 238-239, Projekt des Protokolls über die Sitzung des Sekretariates der Liga gemeinsam mit dem Vertreter WW, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 20/11-1930; Steiner 2005, p.711.

The Return to a United Front

The LAI is a broad, non-party organisation which aims to unite every fighting force against imperialism. The claim that the LAI is a Communist organisation, or a tool of party politics, is a deliberate falsehood which the imperialists spread in order to monitor the followers of the League.

Inprecorr, “Gesunde Erscheinungen in der Liga gegen Imperialismus”, 28/11-1930

Correcting the errors of the past was easier said than done. The International Secretariat knew that the Comintern had given its consent to letting the LAI return to using the united front strategy as a means of strengthening the organisation. However, once Smeral had arrived from Moscow, the challenge was to re-introduce the conception of the LAI as a “broad, non-party organisation”. Smeral fairly quickly admitted that this would increase the pressure on the LAI, particularly as the Comintern also expected the organisation to pose as a relief organisation, while really acting as a cover for the Comintern. The International Secretariat nonetheless promised the ECCI that “the time has come” to act as the uncompromising, revolutionary non-party organisation Manuilsky had once envisioned.¹⁰⁰⁹ This all depended, however, on the tripartite interactionism between the International Secretariat, the Eastern Secretariat and the WEB’s meticulous supervision in Berlin.

Improving relations between the International Secretariat and Comintern headquarters was primarily a question of assessing the capacity of administrative functions and the inclusion of individuals. In a similar way to Smeral’s appointment as LAI secretary after the Frankfurt Congress, the Political Commission instructed Bekar Ferdi to leave Moscow and travel to Berlin. Once in Berlin, Ferdi was to use the International Secretariat as the base for his operations in Europe. However, Ferdi’s connection to the LAI differed in one important aspect from Smeral’s, with Ferdi focusing entirely on covert missions as an LAI emissary in order to visit the LAI sections in Europe. What united the two of them was their relationship to the WEB. Magyar recommended that the Political Commission authorise the decision to send Ferdi to Berlin as a way of seeing through the transformation of the LAI. Before Ferdi departed from Moscow, Magyar held a private session with Piatnitsky and Kuusinen, at which the three men decided that Ferdi should visit and analyse the European LAI sections, deliver directives and send regular reports to the Eastern Secretariat on how the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement were

¹⁰⁰⁹ RGASPI 542/1/44, 95-96, (Confidential) Report from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, October 1930.

progressing.¹⁰¹⁰ As noted in “Brief Nr. 1” [an insignia indicating the beginning of a new phase for the International Secretariat], Ferdi arrived in Berlin in October 1930.

These regular reports from the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” to the Eastern Secretariat were a crucial element in improving relations. Nevertheless, the “kom.Fraktion” argued that, despite the new confidence being invested in the LAI, the organisation’s few connections to the colonies was a “big embarrassment”. While Ferdi’s arrival had been a constructive solution by providing “useful assistance on the general political line” as well as his linguistic skills in the French language, the International Secretariat was by no means willing (or able) to pay Ferdi’s salary of 600 Marks per month. This was a confirmation of the incongruous relations between the International Secretariat and the Comintern, characterised by a continued lack of understanding of the actual situation in Berlin. Yet, the focal point of interest in the aftermath of the *anni confusionis* was to see whether the LAI could introduce a credible anti-imperialist agenda, which was expected to create a reaction across broad political layers. Thus, it was crucial for the International Secretariat to re-launch the LAI journal, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, in order to circulate and use it as a means to outline the new agenda. This depended not only on knowing that the Comintern would give its “systematic support” but also on receiving support from the communist “solar system”, i.e. the Profintern, KIM, Krestintern, the national communist parties and the revolutionary trade unions. In this “Brief Nr.1”, the International Secretariat made a sketch of the potential geographical spread of the LAI, a concept which relied on the Eastern Secretariat’s endorsement:

It is necessary to send a man working for the League to Africa (Negro areas) and one to the Arab region. As for India, you [the Eastern Secretariat] need to quickly identify the line for the local League work, since the last meeting with you it has not been clear what is to be done (opinion of Comrade Kuusinen). Perhaps it is necessary to have a man there too. The Chinese work can only be done by the party [CP China] and you.¹⁰¹¹

The principal consequence of the *anni confusionis* was the complete submission of the International Secretariat to the Comintern apparatus. Hence, in order to realise its return to the

¹⁰¹⁰ RGASPI 495/4/48, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.78 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 28/9-1930. Present at the meeting were Heckert, Manuilsky, Piatnitsky, Zirul, Wassiljew, Gerisch, Magyar, Scholdack and Lenzner. For Kuusinen and Piatnitsky, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/3, 40-41, Protokoll Nr.12 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 21/10-1929. Ferdi’s covert missions in Europe from November 1928 till September 1932 are not mentioned in the “Chronology”, filed in Ferdi’s personal file in the Comintern Archive. One of Ferdi’s principal activities was to find communists of Turkish origin, evaluate the candidates and send them to Moscow for further education at the KUTV, see fol. RGASPI 495/266/38, 1, Chronology, Bekar Ferdi, Moscow, undated; RGASPI 495/4/14, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.42 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des EKKI, 13/2-1930.

¹⁰¹¹ The “Brief Nr. 1” was made out in three copies: the Eastern Secretariat, Münzenberg’s own copy and the last one “destroyed”. After the letter had arrived in Moscow, additional copies of the report were printed and distributed to the Political Commission, Meissner [?], Kitaigorodsky (KIM), and Lozovsky, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 26-37, Brief Nr. 1, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/10-1930.

strategy of the united front, the International Secretariat had to begin by re-constructing its network in Berlin and beyond.

Symptomatic of the above, the International Secretariat held a number of closed conferences with several “Negro friends” in Berlin in October (see further below). However, the re-introduction of the LAI depended primarily on accumulating intelligence and finding new and reliable connections as well as on deciding a tactic which countered imperialist policy, e.g. the pro-colonial propaganda in Germany.¹⁰¹² In his role as leader of the WEB, Helmut/Dimitrov informed Smeral that “soon a plan” from the ECCI, containing political and administrative directives from the Political Secretariat, will be given by the WEB to the International Secretariat.¹⁰¹³ The crisis had deepened the structural dependency of the International Secretariat on the Comintern at every level. For example, Smeral requested permission from Piatnitsky [“Michail”] to travel to Austria and Czechoslovakia, where he intended to act as a representative of the *Friends of the Soviet Union* and to “deliver a series of lectures on the Moscow process” against the wrecking of Soviet industry carried out by the subversive “Industrial Party”. However, this idea had been introduced by Münzenberg.¹⁰¹⁴ Piatnitsky had endorsed the idea but, once on location in Austria, Smeral’s mission quickly collapsed. In Vienna on 7 December, after Smeral had finished giving his lecture, the Austrian police arrested him and charged Smeral with advocating “communist subversive ideas”. Escorted to the Czechoslovakian border, Smeral was deported with immediate effect.¹⁰¹⁵

The anti-colonial community in Berlin experienced an increased pressure from the national security services in November-December 1930. Colonial residents, known to be attending public LAI meetings, were either being targeted by the RKÜöO or arrested on the spot by the *Schutzpolizei*. These actions made it difficult for the International Secretariat to convince colonial activists to publicly support the LAI:

¹⁰¹² The “kom.Fraktion” at the International Secretariat informed the Eastern Secretariat that the pro-colonial propaganda in Germany had a stronghold in “the Hansa cities” (Bremen and Hamburg). Hence, the LAI had to use these ports and the ships coming into these ports to distribute its anti-imperialist propaganda. With roughly 50 ships arriving into Hamburg harbour each day, the potential was enormous, the “kom.Fraktion” stated, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 56-61, Beilage Nr-2 Briefe Nr.1, Deutsche Kolonialpropaganda, International Sekretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, October, 1930. The appendix arrived in Moscow on 22 October.

¹⁰¹³ RGASPI 542/1/37, 267, Auszug aus dem Prot. d. WEB, Nr.157, Berlin, to Ost-Ländersekretariat, Moscow, 26/11-1930. This extract is also filed in fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 261. For Neptun/Ferguson’s note to Magyar, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/37, 277, Auszug aus dem Prot. des WEB Nr.154, to, Magyar, Moscow, 20/11-1930. A copy of this note is filed in fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 237. The WEB reported on the following travel routes for its members in November: Neptun/Ferguson (England and Ireland), Magnus/Gyptner (Sweden, Norway and Denmark), while Helmut/Dimitrov planned to meet the Political Bureau of the *Communist Party of Austria* in Vienna, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/17, 262, Feststellung der Tätigkeit in der nächsten Woche, WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 27/11-1930.

¹⁰¹⁴ RGASPI 495/19/312, 46fp/bp, (Original, handwritten) Letter from Smeral, Berlin, to “Michail”/Piatnitsky, Moscow, 3/12-1930. For the trial against the “Industrial Party”, see Acton & Stableford 2005, pp.343-344.

¹⁰¹⁵ RGASPI 542/1/40, 133-137, Brief No.3, LAI, International Secretariat, Berlin, to, the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/12-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 139, Abschrift. Bundes-Polizeidirektion Wien, 7/12-1930.

Although they were released again, most colonial residents fear that their residence permit may be revoked and that they could be deported. This creates great difficulties for us, in particular when it comes to deciding upon speakers for public meetings.¹⁰¹⁶

The International Secretariat had to consider the possibility that the anti-colonial movement in Berlin was losing its influence on the political scene. Thus, the expectation initially introduced by Magyar, to “aim a programmatic declaration” at every member and organisation affiliated to the LAI to continue to give their support, had to be fulfilled. However, without a strong “League secretariat”, despite the inclusion of Ferdi, this was an impossible proposition. In Moscow, Magyar had decided to retract his former critical attitude of the LAI, instead urging the Political Commission to understand that the KIM had to send a secretary to lead the youth question in Berlin. This also involved getting a “Negro secretary” to lead the African question at the International Secretariat, and two steno-typists to assist with the daily administrative routines. Magyar believed that in order to get the LAI to demonstrate its revised agenda, LAI emissaries had to travel to Africa and to the Middle East, while a “Continental Committee” should be established in Montevideo.¹⁰¹⁷ The Political Commission approved Magyar’s proposal, even though it depended on all current obstacles impeding the realisation of this vision being first cleared away. Hence, the Eastern Secretariat had to present a budget for every cost and, if it was not capable of doing this, it would have to postpone the plan *ad infinitum*.¹⁰¹⁸

The uncertainty surrounding the LAI’s new political direction and transformed character reached a peak while Ferdi was visiting the LAI sections in Paris, Amsterdam, and Brussels in December 1930. Apparently, the relationship between the International Secretariat and the sections was in an amorphous state after the crisis. Ferdi had hoped to meet and hold creative sessions with representatives of the communist parties and the sections; however, once on location, Ferdi observed how the French section had barely managed to resurrect itself, the Dutch LAI Section “existed only on paper”, while in Belgium the “the League’s address” was no longer functional. Stunned by the fact that both the *Communist Party of Belgium* and the mass organisations were “weak”, Ferdi was annoyed by the fact that Rajani Palme Dutt had not even bothered to respond to his request to meet him in Brussels before he (Ferdinand) was due to return to Berlin.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁶ The police had arrested Chinese and Japanese activists (no names mentioned), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 133-137, Brief No.3, LAI, International Secretariat, Berlin, to, the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/12-1930.

¹⁰¹⁷ RGASPI 495/4/75, 12-13, Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to the Political Commission, Moscow, 7/12-1930. A copy of Magyar’s letter (unsigned), which purportedly refers to the International Secretariat as being the author, is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/44, RGASPI 542/1/44, 97-98, (Confidential) Letter from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 7/12-1930. Codovilla and Condreas were to nominate the liaison in Montevideo.

¹⁰¹⁸ RGASPI 495/4/75, 1-6, Protokoll Nr.107 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 23/12-1930.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ferdi’s letter arrived in Berlin on 16 December and was forwarded to Moscow in January (arrived 16 January,

At the beginning of 1931, the WEB expressed its intention to reinforce the work of Bolshevizing the West European communist movement. According to the “Arbeitsplan” of the WEB, one crucial aspect was to increase the supervision of the “international auxiliary [cover] organisations” for the sole purpose of “re-activating” the “international struggle in defence of the Soviet Union [and] against the war threat” in organisations such as the Krestintern, Sportintern, the *Friends of the Soviet Union* and the LAI.¹⁰²⁰

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No Light in Sight

Resurrecting the LAI’s activities to its former glories proved to be a complicated undertaking for the International Secretariat. Despite the WEB’s aim to “re-activate” the “international auxiliary organisations”, this did not involve solving practical issues. On 9 January 1931, the “kom.Fraktion” informed the Eastern Secretariat that they had no money to pay the monthly rent for the office or to buy stamps to send out circulars on the “anti-imperialist struggle on India”. As the Comintern’s monthly allocation had not arrived in time, the “kom.Fraktion” concluded that the only thing left to do was to sit around at the office and “look at each other”. The “kom.Fraktion” wondered whether “our major colleagues” (Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Lozovsky, Chitarow and the Eastern Secretariat) had already forgotten the promise they had given to Smeral in September to secure money from the Profintern and the KIM, and for the sum to be made available to the International Secretariat in Berlin.¹⁰²¹ Due to its financial “difficulties”, as declared in the *Pressedienst*, the International Secretariat informed “the members of the League” that at the current moment, the LAI had a very, fragile organisational structure, calling out to every “cadre who knows about the colonial question” to begin acting in an altruistic fashion, above all to engage in voluntary work without expecting to receive any money for their services (organising public meetings and political rallies).¹⁰²² Aside from the altruistic tone of the statement, it was also a plea confirming one of the lowest points in the history of the LAI, caused primarily by the consequences of the crisis.

1931). The “kom.Fraktion” reported on Ferdi’s mission to Paris, Amsterdam and Belgium in “Brief No.3”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 138, Letter from Ferdi, Paris, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 11/12-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 133-137, Brief No.3, LAI, International Secretariat, Berlin, to, the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 22/12-1930. For Ferdi’s report, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 1-9, Bericht des Genossen Ferdi über seine Reise, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 5/1-1931. For the report on the French LAI Section, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 10-21. For Ferdi’s opinion on how the Belgian LAI Section should be re-organised, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 2-3, Einige Vorschläge zur Organisierung der antiimperialistischen Arbeit in Belgien, Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 5/1-1931

¹⁰²⁰ RGASPI 499/1/34, 5-6, (Vertraulich) Arbeitsplan, WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 2/1/1931.

¹⁰²¹ RGASPI 542/1/51, 1-2, Letter from Smeral, Chatto, Ferdi, Münzenberg (“kom.Fraktion”), Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 9/1-1931.

¹⁰²² RGASPI 542/1/46a, 34, *Pressedienst* Nr. 1 der Deutschen Sektion der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, 1931.

The only issue resolved at Comintern headquarters was the nomination of an LAI youth secretary. In Moscow, the Executive of the KIM appointed “Comrade Miller” (see further below), an individual who “mastered the necessary languages and could be used safely for League operations”. The reaction from the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” to “Miller” was two-fold: firstly, relieved to finally have a youth secretary, the “kom.Fraktion” nonetheless questioned why the International Secretariat had to pay “Miller’s” monthly salary, particularly as Chitarow had promised Smeral that the KIM would pay for the LAI’s youth secretary. The suggestion that the LAI would have to pay for his salary was an “ill-conceived and frivolous” proposition, the “kom.Fraktion” concluded.¹⁰²³

Who was “Miller” and did this person ever arrive in Berlin? “Miller” was the pseudonym of the half-Danish, half-Japanese Hans Peter Thøgersen. In February 1931, Thøgersen had “just arrived a few days ago” *en route* from Moscow to Berlin. According to Thøgersen’s correspondence to the KIM secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat after assuming his position at the International Secretariat, he identified himself by his communist party name “York”. On 9 March 1931, MI5 observed that York/Thøgersen was acting as the “representative of the Youth Section of the LAI”, was in charge of the Negro question in the USA and also administered organisational and financial issues at the International Secretariat.¹⁰²⁴ York/Thøgersen was nonetheless not one of those “prominent in the League” in comparison to the core (Münzenberg, Smeral and Ferdi), and very few traces reveal any detailed information about his activities in Berlin. Yet, York/Thøgersen was, upon his arrival in Berlin, already familiar with the activities of the LAI. In 1927-28, York/Thøgersen had pursued studies at the *International Lenin School* in Moscow. Under the personal tutelage of Borodin, Lozovsky and Roy, in June 1928 York/Thøgersen was sent on his first international mission as a “messenger” on Far Eastern questions – an assignment he carried out at the International Secretariat in Berlin.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²³ RGASPI 542/1/51, 1-2, Letter from Smeral, Chatto, Ferdi, Münzenberg (“kom.Fraktion”), Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 9/1-1931.

¹⁰²⁴ Firstly, any reference or mention of “Miller” in the correspondence between the LAI/International Secretariat and the Comintern does not occur after his nomination. Secondly, this does not imply that it is impossible to discern “Miller’s” identity. Rather, it shows how the Comintern put into practice its system of pseudonyms. In February, York/Thøgersen was in charge of the youth question at the International Secretariat. On 20 March, at an “anti-imperialist youth conference” in Berlin, he publicly introduced himself as the leader of the LAI youth section, TNA PRO KV2 1056, (Secret) Report on Hans P. Thøgersen from L. M. [?], Berlin, to D.A.C.S.B., London, 9/3-1931; TNA PRO KV2/1056, Thøgersen, Hans Peter, 1/6-1933. For York/Thøgersen’s arrival in Berlin, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 26c, Report from York/Thøgersen, Berlin, to unknown, February 1931 [stamped: 9/2-1931].

¹⁰²⁵ TNA PRO KV2/1056, Biography, Hans Peter Thøgersen, August 1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 36, *Die junge Garde*, No.26, 20/3-1931. York/Thøgersen informed Chatto of his “special education” at the ILS, which had a file that contained “my first and fuller biography together with recommendations from Comrades Borodin, Lozovsky, Vilde and Fortunatoff ... These were written and deposited with them during Winter 1927”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/56, 2, Letter from “Hans” [York/Thøgersen], Berlin to Chatto, Moscow, 21/1-1932.

Upon arrival in Berlin, York/Thögensen's primary aim was to begin organising the LAI youth section. Approaching the student community in Berlin, especially the contacts in the KOSTUFRA network, York/Thögensen prepared and organised conferences and public meetings, a collaboration which peaked at the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin (30 May - 2 June 1931) with the convening of the "Berlin Anti-Imperialist Youth Conference" at the "Pharussäle" at 142 Müllerstraße. The speakers at this conference were the secretary of the British LAI youth section T. Green, the Indian S. Tagore, the German LDRN section representative Joseph Bilé from Cameroon, the Indonesian Raden Mas Soewardi Suryaningrat (better known as Ki Hajar Dewantara) and Münzenberg.¹⁰²⁶

York/Thögensen's assignment at the International Secretariat also served another purpose, which, not unlike those of Ferdi and Smeral, concerned sending confidential reports to the Eastern Secretariat on the state of affairs at the International Secretariat, an activity kept secret from the other members. In one of York/Thögensen's first reports, he concluded that since the crisis of the Frankfurt Congress, "the method of work generally is not a very energetic one". Thus, this partly explained why the International Secretariat apparently had so much difficulty in establishing connections to the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and partly corroborated Ferdi's conclusion that one could even question whether the LAI had any existing and functional sections in the "imperialist countries" at all. York/Thögensen focused essentially first on understanding the dynamics at the International Secretariat, and then began scrutinising the inner functions of the bureau in Berlin. On 14 February 1931, he concluded that the LAI was on the verge of disintegrating:

Many of the organisations and groups [inserted by hand: in the colonies] have simply stopped communicating with us. The contact that has been maintained with the organisations and sections affiliated to the LAI has been essentially thru [sic] circular letters. [...] As far as a plan of work is concerned for the LAI, there is none, neither is there a division of work amongst the secretaries. [...] Some work, of course, is being developed, as for example in England and Australia; but looking through all our correspondence of the last several months with these countries, we can see that the Secretariat has not been a constructive and stimulating force for these developments.¹⁰²⁷

In addition to York/Thögensen's negative prognosis, the International Secretariat depended exclusively on Chatto who, in contrast to the lack of interest Münzenberg was showing in the LAI

¹⁰²⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA R134/70/269, 411-413, Reichskonferenz des RFS (28.2-3.3.1931); SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 48, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.208, 24/5-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 50, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.209, 27/5-1931; RGASPI 542/1/51, 77, Antimperialistische Jugendkündgebung, Jugendkomitée d. Liga gegen Imperialismus. Deutsche Sektion, 30/5-1931.

¹⁰²⁷ RGASPI 542/1/39, 26a, Letter from "York" [Thögensen], Berlin, to unknown [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, 14/2-1930 [1931].

by only taking part “in certain important meetings” to discuss financial matters, alone represented the dynamism of the organisation:

The shipping of material for which great possibilities exist has been organised on a personal basis (through Chatto). As a matter of fact practically the entire organisational [inserted in handwriting] work that is being done [is being carried out] by Chatto, who also has all the contacts thru [sic] which we ship material and is the only one who knows what the various addresses which we have in the office mean.¹⁰²⁸

At the start of 1931, the LAI was a mere shadow of its former self. York/Thögensen observed how Smeral and Ferdi occupied themselves with “writing long letters to M” [Piatnitsky], or were away on missions in Europe. Because of this, and if Chatto was sick or unable to carry out any activity at the bureau, the International Secretariat was completely abandoned. This poor conduct made York/Thögensen concede that the International Secretariat was in a precarious situation, telling the Eastern Secretariat to initiate a commission in Moscow in order to “systematise the work” in Berlin. For the International Secretariat, this proposal had a two-edged implication: firstly, it implied the beginning of the end for Chatto (see further below), and secondly, the systematisation of the work suggested a strengthening of ties to other communist organisations. Thus, rather than depending on Chatto’s expertise, York/Thögensen preferred to see the “shipping of material into the colonies” going through the channel of the recently established *International of Seamen and Harbour Workers* (ISH), an auxiliary organisation within the Profintern network, established in 1930.¹⁰²⁹ York/Thögensen also emphasised the need to rectify the financial wastage at the International Secretariat, especially as “three quarters of the budget” was being spent on wages. A decisive step, if the Eastern Secretariat approved the idea, would be to send an “authoritative comrade” from Moscow to Berlin to re-organise the LAI apparatus and, while on location, assist in developing the LAI’s propaganda campaigns, York/Thögensen concluded. This involved, for example, the strengthening of the International Secretariat’s work to organise the “international anti-imperialist campaign [...] in connection with the Imperialist Exhibition” in Paris in 1931.¹⁰³⁰

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¹⁰²⁸ RGASPI 542/1/39, 26a, Letter from “York” [Thögensen], Berlin, to unknown [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, 14/2-1930 [1931]. Illustrative of the above, Ford instructed Padmore to distribute the organ of the ITUCNW, *The Negro Worker*, through the channels used by the LAI, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/668, 41, Letter from Ford, Berlin, to Padmore, Negro Bureau RILU, Moscow, 7/2-1931.

¹⁰²⁹ The ISH aimed to “appear as a sovereign, self-governing organisation”. According to the biased memoir of Jan Valtin, Dimitrov instructed him to begin working at the ISH Secretariat in Hamburg in August 1931, see Jan Valtin (Richard Julius Herman Krebs), *Out of the Night*, Alliance Book Corporation, New York, 1941, p.272. For a more balanced account and analysis of the ISH, see Weiss (2011).

¹⁰³⁰ York/Thögensen concluded, “[T]his will require the mobilisation of the Comintern and the various parties”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 26a, Letter from “York” [Thögensen], Berlin, to unknown [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, 14/2-1930 [1931].

The “Anti-Imperialist Exhibition” in Paris

The “International Colonial Exhibition” in Paris was a bizarre event, characterised by its nationalism. According to Klaus Schüle’s study, this exhibition was a “peculiar and totally contradictory” event which exposed France’s colonial arrogance. The French government had issued invitations to former and current “imperialist powers” to participate in the exhibition. However, France did not convince either the British Empire, Germany or Spain to even bother attending, although Italy, Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands did eagerly participate. The exhibition opened in May 1931 and was visited by 40 million people during the event. The ambiance of the whole affair, and its initial ambition of projecting the civilising mission of France in the colonies as something positive, acting for the well-being of humanity, was nevertheless contradicted by a common understanding in the international press that the Paris exhibition was an “abnormal event”. This exhibition offered an opportunity for the LAI to organise an anti-imperialist campaign, with the German communist Alfred Kurella directing the activities of the PCF in organising an “anti-imperialist exhibition” in Paris.¹⁰³¹ This is not the whole picture and, despite the fact that Kurella played a role in preparing the so-called anti-imperialist exhibition as a response to the “International Colonial Exhibition”, other actors played a more decisive role, particularly the International Secretariat and the PCF, undertakings which were supervised by the Comintern in Moscow.

As soon as news of the “International Colonial Exhibition” began to circulate in Europe in 1930, the International Secretariat suggested to the Eastern Secretariat to consider the idea of creating a protest campaign against the exhibition. On 11 November 1930, Wassiljew presented this idea and convinced the Political Commission to endorse the idea of allowing the International Secretariat, together with the PCF, to instigate a campaign to “exploit the Colonial Exhibition”. To co-ordinate the work between the LAI and the PCF, Ferdi was to function as the liaison.¹⁰³² While this merely confirmed a bureaucratic procedure, the challenge was to raise awareness of the anti-imperialist campaign and its focus against the exhibition in Paris. For example, Ferdi visited the PCF Secretariat in December to introduce and co-ordinate this work, while on 23 January 1932, Münzenberg and Chatto published an appeal to “all anti-imperialist organisations, individuals, newspaper Editors, Publishers and Photographers”. This appeal highlighted the need for assistance

¹⁰³¹ Klaus Schüle, *Paris. Die kulturelle Konstruktion der französischen Metropole: Alltag, mentaler Raum und sozialkulturelles Feld in der Stadt und der Vorstadt*, Leske + Budrich Verlag, Opladen, 2003, pp.157-159; Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, “Historical Culture in a (Post-)Colonial Context. The Genesis of National Identification Figures in Francophone Western Africa”, in *Identities: Time, Difference and Boundaries*, Heidrun Frieze (ed.), Berghahn Books, Oxford, 2002, pp.206-208. France had a tradition of organising colonial exhibitions; similar events had been convened in Marseille 1907 and in 1922.

¹⁰³² RGASPI 495/4/67, 1-3, Protokoll Nr.99 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 11/11-1930. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Heckert, Manuilsky, Wassiljew, Magyar and Bittelman.

in either organising or supporting the LAI's public demonstrations against "the economic and political power" of imperialist states. According to Münzenberg and Chatto, these demonstrations aimed to fulfil a two-fold purpose: on the one hand, to introduce the opinion that the LAI was "the only international organisation" in support of the "struggle of the oppressed masses of the colonial countries" and, on the other hand, to use the demonstrations as an opportunity to announce the need to organise an "Anti-Imperialist Exhibition" in Paris. This appeal therefore required "the vanguard" of the anti-imperialist movement to send anti-colonial propaganda (photographs, statistical material, published and unpublished reports) to the International Secretariat, material the LAI intended to use against the "International Colonial Exhibition" and which could be expected to constitute the basis for the anti-imperialist exhibition in Paris.¹⁰³³

This appeal was enthusiastically received. Albert Moreau, an AAAIL member in New York, told Chatto, "his colonial friends [...] welcomed the idea", while the secretary of the *South African Trades and Labour Council*, Andrews, promised to support the anti-imperialist exhibition by providing Chatto with "useful" anti-colonial propaganda. Andrews also told Chatto, "child marriages are not customary with South African natives", describing how the living conditions in the country were a result of "malnutrition owing to poverty, insanitary surroundings, ignorance and vice". Chatto thanked Andrews for "the good material on South Africa", which could be used in different campaigns.¹⁰³⁴

While propaganda proved easy enough for the International Secretariat to solve, the central question was how to co-ordinate the preparatory work. Ferdi informed the WEB in March of his intention to travel to Paris "not later than on 25 March", and that he would remain in the city for one month to complete the preparations for the exhibition with the French LAI Section and the PCF secretariat. According to Ferdi, the primary aim of the anti-imperialist exhibition was to turn it into a big campaign against "British imperialism". Thus, in connection with the opening of the "International Colonial Exhibition" in May, the LAI aimed to celebrate the "Anti-Imperialist Week" in the colonial metropolises around the world. To co-ordinate the propaganda for the

¹⁰³³ IISG LAI Collection, 3392.1, p.140, Circular letter, International Secretariat, signed by Münzenberg and Chattophadyaya, Berlin, 23/1-1931. Münzenberg and Chatto introduced the idea of turning the "anti-imperialist exhibition" into a permanent "International Anti-Imperialist Museum" in Berlin. A copy of the circular (German version) is filed in fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 15-18. York/Thögersen requested that all "anti-imperialist youth organisations, individuals, editors and publishers of youth literature and photographers" send documents on the "anti-imperialist youth issue" in February, to be included in the exhibition, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/51, 8-10. For a copy of York/Thögersen's circular letter, see IISG LAI Collection, 3392.1, p.140.

¹⁰³⁴ RGASPI 542/1/48, 48, Letter from Albert Moreau/AAAIL, New York, to Chatto, Berlin, 18/2-1931; IISG LAI Collection, 3392.1, p.140, Letter from Andrews, Johannesburg, to the Joint Secretaries/LAI, Berlin, 7/3-1931; Letter from Andrews, Johannesburg, to Chatto, Berlin, 25/3-1931; Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Andrews, Johannesburg, 14/4-1931; Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Andrews, Johannesburg, 15/4-1931. The pamphlet [title unknown], which Andrews referred to, had been issued by the *Joint Council of European and Natives* in Johannesburg. Grateful for having received the material, Chatto promised Andrews to use it in the campaigns of the LAI, e.g. in connection with the international conference on African children in Geneva, 22-25 June 1931, organised by the *League of Nations*.

“week”, the International Secretariat had sent out instructions to the *A-I-Z* and the editors of the *Inprecorr* to publish articles, while Ferdi aimed to conclude his negotiations with the Central Committee of the PCF. During these negotiations, the WEB kept its eye on the PCF, particularly to see whether the party and its secretariat were carrying out the ECCI’s instructions to give the International Secretariat and the French LAI Section their full assistance in completing the preparatory work.¹⁰³⁵

The original aim of the anti-imperialist exhibition gradually became one of disappointment for the LAI. Quite suddenly, Ferdi had to abort his mission as liaison, as he was required to travel to Moscow instead of to Paris in April. When the “imperialist exhibition” opened in Paris, the International Secretariat could only stand by and watch how the “the lack of any assistance” from the Central Committee of the PCF to support the fragile French LAI Section contributed to turning the anti-imperialist exhibition into a complete mess. Unable to open the exhibition as planned in May, the International Secretariat described the PCF’s conduct as “an immense mass deception” against the anti-imperialist movement.¹⁰³⁶ Despite the organisational disaster caused by the PCF, the French LAI Section opened the anti-imperialist exhibition in Paris in August. This was not, however, thanks to any assistance from the PCF, but rather the Soviet consulate in Paris had given the LAI an “exhibition stand” in “the Soviet pavilion”, from where the section could present statistical material, photographs and documents to illustrate the “horrors of exploitative and suppressive colonialism”.¹⁰³⁷

The organisational adventure of the “anti-imperialist exhibition” was also an expression and consequence of the return to the LAI’s united front strategy. For the International Secretariat, however, this episode confirmed that the return to former glories was going to be more complex than expected. In an attempt to realise its objective of functioning as a cover for the Comintern, the International Secretariat adjusted its organisational apparatus to perfect itself as the hub of the anti-imperialist movement.

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¹⁰³⁵ RGASPI 542/1/47, 15, Gemeinsame Besprechung mit dem Sekretariat der Liga, WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, received by “Inza” [?], Moscow, 11/3-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 55-57, Brief Nr.12, Internationale Sekretariat/Fraktion, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 25/3-1931.

¹⁰³⁶ RGASPI 542/1/46a, 35-36, Zur Pariser Kolonial-Ausstellung (Pressedienst, Nr.2); RGASPI 542/1/53, 24-29, Ein ungeheurer Massenbetrug – Die Kolonial-Ausstellung in Paris, [unknown], to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, [undated].

¹⁰³⁷ “Die Anti-Imperialistische Kolonialausstellung” in *Informationsdienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, No.2, Berlin, 2/9-1931, p.14. For the Anti-Imperialist Exhibition, see further in Stephen Fein’s forthcoming doctoral thesis on the subject.

Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement

The *anni confusionis* had left the LAI unable to orchestrate any massive propaganda campaigns. Despite the turbulence of the Frankfurt Congress and its aftermath, leading to the “purification” of the “prominente Persönlichkeiten” on the LAI Executive, as well as the undesired exposure of the LAI as a “front organisation” of the Comintern, in 1930 the International Secretariat still nourished the ambition of establishing contacts with representatives of the anti-colonial movement. For Chatto, the crisis had represented an opportunity to transform the LAI from the ardent anti-imperialist voice it had once set out to be, into an organisation preferring to establish reliable connections with anti-colonial activists. This essentially involved the idea of perfecting the LAI as the hub of the anti-imperialist movement in Berlin and beyond. An undertaking which meant that Chatto was expected to evaluate the ideological leanings and reliability of the candidates (“desirable elements”) and, after consulting with the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow, sending the candidates in a new direction. Colonial students in European cities, or colonial seamen arriving in the vital European ports (Hamburg, Rotterdam, Marseille and Liverpool), were considered by the LAI to be valuable targets to aid in the distribution of anti-imperialist propaganda, to carry out anti-imperialist activity in the colonies or to undergo political education in Moscow. The ISH persistently targeted colonial seamen, with both Weiss’ and Adi’s studies proving that neither the African anti-colonial hub in Europe nor the transatlantic links of the anti-imperialist activists (represented by the ISH) to the USA, tracing back to Africa, ever corresponded with the aims and activities espoused by the International Secretariat. My aim here is therefore two-fold: firstly, to disclose the efforts of both Chatto and the International Secretariat in realising the idea of turning the LAI into the hub; and secondly, to explain why this endeavour became more or less a failure, an aspect which involves a discussion of Chatto’s fate within the international communist movement. The core at the International Secretariat carefully monitored Chatto’s activity, e.g. Smeral provided Piatnitsky [“Michail”] and Magyar with information on how Chatto’s work was progressing. The LAI and its ambition to become the hub also involves solving a few of the mysteries in its “lost history”, particularly in relation to shedding some light on several of the actors who have previously been kept in the dark, while others continue to exist as illusions.

This crisis made the International Secretariat act cautiously in its contacts with the anti-colonial movement, elements which the “kom.Fraktion” viewed as “political material” rather than as individuals or organisations. This was a definition introduced by the “kom.Fraktion” in its “Letter No.2” to the Eastern Secretariat on 3 November 1930, after having arranged and held five informal conferences in Berlin (13-14 and 18 October) with “Negro friends”: the Gambian E. F.

Small, Frank Macaulay from Nigeria, Joseph Bilé and Garan Kouyaté. The “kom.Fraktion” observed that the “political material” needed a “patient and serious” treatment:

They will show you [enclosed reports to the Eastern Secretariat] the political level, the psychology and to a certain extent the character of these two friends. [...] Our general impression is that both of them can be used, at least we shall try to establish connections with the students through them and subsequently with other elements in the country. But we must wait and see how far they will be active at home and what resistance they will have to overcome.¹⁰³⁸

To evaluate the “character” of these “friends” was a difficult process. The “kom.Fraktion” urged Piatnitsky to understand that it was not easy to “get deeply into their soul in the course of a hurried conversation”.¹⁰³⁹ The African question continued to haunt the LAI, which, in comparison to India, China and the Latin American continent, remained a blank page. It did not matter that the LAI had a connection with the Profintern section, the ITUCNW, the International Secretariat wanted to establish independent LAI sections on the African continent, especially in West Africa. Bilé (“Morris”) was the key for Münzenberg in this respect, and was perceived to be the most suitable candidate to stimulate and lead anti-imperialist activity in West Africa. Nonetheless, this required sending Bilé to Moscow to undergo a proper ideological education at the KUTV, a decision dependent upon the benevolence of the ZK KPD. Münzenberg explained to the ZK KPD that one merely had to review Bilé’s understanding of the anti-imperialist movement and the colonial ambitions of the Comintern and, above all, his longevity as secretary of the German LAI Section and in the German LDRN section, as well as being a member of the PCF, to understand that he was the best candidate. However, Münzenberg did not manage to convince Smeral that Bilé was a sincere and devoted anti-imperialist, with Smeral telling Flieg that he opposed the idea of sending Bilé to Moscow to study at the KUTV.¹⁰⁴⁰ The Bilé question was not an isolated episode, it was

¹⁰³⁸ On 13 October, Smeral went to Kiel to meet Small, Macaulay, Bilé and Kouyaté, and escorted the company to Berlin, where they held five closed meetings with members of the International Secretariat (Smeral, Chatto, Leitner, Hussun and Cantor). Münzenberg attended the final meeting on 18 October. The sessions focused, for example, on whether the LAI could establish sections in Nigeria and Gambia, see fol. RGASPI 495/155/90, 78-81, (Confidential) Letter No.2, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/40,69-72, Briefe No.2, Fraktion der Liga, to “Liebe Freunde“ [Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky], Moscow, 3/11-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 77-89, Protokoll der Sitzung des Internationalen Sekretariats mit den Negerfreunden, Berlin, 14/10-1930; RGASPI 542/1/40, 102-103, Die letzte Sitzung mit den Negerfreunden beim Genossen Münzenberg, Berlin, 18/10-1930. For an analysis of these meetings, see Weiss (2011).

¹⁰³⁹ RGASPI 542/1/40, 68, Telegram from Fraktion der LAI, Berlin, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 6/11-1930. The accumulated material from the meetings with the “Negerfreunden” (protocols, and miscellaneous documents) was sent to Piatnitsky on 11 November.

¹⁰⁴⁰ The idea of sending Bilé to the KUTV in Moscow became a long, drawn-out affair, due to a personal conflict with another fellow African in Berlin, Wilhelm Munumi, as well as the ZK KPD’s hesitancy towards sanctioning the proposal. Additionally, Smeral’s remark that Bilé longed to return to Cameroon and his family contributed to the situation, above all the statement that Bilé’s “abilities are limited and he could be of little use”, see SAPMO-BA ZPA I 2/5/33, 121, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to the ZK KPD Secretariat, Berlin, 28/10-1930; SAPMO-BA ZPA I

characteristic of the relations between the International Secretariat and the African anti-colonial movement in Berlin. For both Kouyaté and the German LDRN section, the incapacity of the International Secretariat to support the LDRN with administrative assistance and money was nothing more than a bluff, contradicting an agreement entered into in 1929. On 30 September 1930, Kouyaté informed the Profintern secretariat in Moscow that the International Secretariat's crisis was also having a perpetual effect on the LDRN's work in Germany. As a solution to its inherently weak relationship to the LAI, Kouyaté wanted instead to connect the LDRN network to the IRH and the KPD, a move which would entail a definitive separation from the International Secretariat. The International Secretariat had no intention of letting Kouyaté's criticism pass by without any response, informing the Eastern Secretariat that they did not understand why Kouyaté seemed "displeased and disappointed".¹⁰⁴¹

Two reasons explain why the International Secretariat found it difficult to confirm a fixed trajectory for the LAI in Africa: the first was the repression and monitoring of colonial authorities which contributed immensely to limiting the spread of anti-imperialist propaganda; and the second involved the internal difficulties which contributed to destroying the LAI's possibilities to develop the African question, particularly as it seemed problematic to even reach a decision on how to proceed. For the International Secretariat, the primary aim of the October conferences with its "Negro friends" was to observe, learn and to capitalise on the observations of these meetings, which, in turn, would result in an African strategy for the LAI. As noted in the draft, "Der anti-imperialistische Kampf des westafrikanische Volkes" (*The anti-imperialist struggle of the West African Peoples*), this document presented the International Secretariat's plans and strategies in an attempt to attract the attention of the peasants in West Africa. This document was sent to the Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky on 6 November, 1930. However, in its most modest form, this draft was merely a re-appraisal of how to build socialism in Africa, a narrative taken from the process of collectivization in the Soviet Union:

The objective of the LAI in each colony is not only to reveal to the masses the true nature and the terrible results of the entire system, imperialist plunder and oppression [...] but to determine the political and economic objectives of the oppressed masses and to take all necessary steps for the organisational leadership of the struggle [...] The League supports all

2/5/33, 122, Letter from W. Munumi re. Joseph Bilé, Berlin, to the KPD, Berlin, 22/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 166, Short note re. Bilé, International Secretariat, Berlin, to unknown receiver, Moscow, 2/11-1931; RGASPI 495/155/90, 78-81, (Confidential) Letter No.2, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/11-1931. See further in Weiss (2011) and Adi (2008) on Bilé.

¹⁰⁴¹ RGASPI 495/155/87, 404-408, Kurzer Tätigkeitsbericht der Liga zur Verteidigung der Negerrasse, Deutsche Section, Kouyaté, Berlin, to the Profintern Secretariat, Moscow, 30/9-1930; RGASPI 495/155/90, 78-81, (Confidential) Letter No.2, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 3/11-1931; Weiss (2011); Aitken (2008).

sections of the peasants who are interested in the struggle against imperialism, [and] supports and encourages the movement for the formation of farmer co-operatives and associations as organs of the struggle against imperialism.¹⁰⁴²

Justifying the societal transformation of the Soviet Union was not, however, an approach that worked in the interest of the LAI in this context. In February 1931, Magyar visited the International Secretariat and examined the draft before returning to Moscow to attend a meeting with the Political Commission in March. During this session of the Political Commission, Magyar concluded that the idea of establishing LAI sections in West Africa was hardly realisable. The only option for the International Secretariat was to instruct the British LAI Section to co-operate with the NMM on the African question, particularly by distributing “anti-imperialist leaflets to West African seamen touching at British ports”.¹⁰⁴³

Hence, the road to establishing the LAI as a political actor in Africa itself came to a dead end in 1931. Another field of activity was to establish contacts with anti-colonial activists from Africa who were living in Germany and England. However, this undertaking turned into an operation burdened by quarrels. On 16 January 1931, Chatto explained in a letter to Macaulay in London, that the International Secretariat would not “send money to you when you demand it”, and wondered why he did not focus on finding colonial students who were members of the *Negro Welfare Association* in London. Apparently, this was an arrangement which had been agreed upon during the October conferences in Berlin, when Chatto had instructed Macaulay to evaluate candidates of interest and “their fitness for study”, and to inform Chatto of “their occupation, their age, their social status (i.e. whether they were a worker, student etc.)”. Macaulay seemed to have taken it for granted that the International Secretariat would, consequently, send money to London on a regular basis. Chatto consequently accused Macaulay of negligence, and questioned why he had promised the students in London that they could travel to Berlin to undergo political education without consulting the International Secretariat.¹⁰⁴⁴ The LAI never turned into an influential actor either developing or supervising anti-imperialist activism in Africa; instead, the African question remained in the hands of the Profintern and the ITUCNW, supervised by the networks of Ford and Padmore in both Europe and the USA.

¹⁰⁴² RGASPI 542/1/40, 90-93, (Draft) Resolution: Der anti-imperialistische Kampf des westafrikanische Volkes, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat and Piatnitsky, November, 1930. The draft arrived in Moscow on 10 November 1930.

¹⁰⁴³ RGASPI 542/1/47, 10-11, Proposals relative to the activity of the Anti-imperialist League in West Africa [L. Magyar], Berlin, 15/2-1931; RGASPI 495/4/94, 42, Information re. LAI from Magyar, Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the Political Commission, Moscow, 6/3-1931.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Chatto believed Macaulay could “do some work in your country [Nigeria] otherwise we should not have entered into any connections with you”, TNA PRO KV2/1056, (Intercepted) Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Macaulay, London, 16/1-1931. Chatto was a leading actor in selecting and assessing the students. According to Ford, Chatto was “well informed” on this arrangement, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/669, 93-101, Report to the European Secretariat of the RILU on Activities of the ITUCNW at Hamburg, author: Ford [arrived in Moscow 21/2-1931].

Perhimpunan Indonesia was a vital actor for the LAI. In connection with Ferdi's visit to the Netherlands in December 1930, Ferdi met Abdul Manaff and wondered whether it would be possible to strengthen contacts between the LAI and the PI, as well as whether he could find "young people" (students and workers) suitable to undergo political education in Berlin. After returning to Berlin, Ferdi informed Magyar that Manaff seemed to be a reliable person who belonged to "the radical side" of the PI. The reason why Ferdi described Manaff in such confidential terms was that a fraction inside the PI had staged a successful "coup" against the leader "H" [?] and appointed the Indian communist Abdul Madjid (pseudonyms: Aziz, Hafiz) as the new leader of the PI in the Netherlands. This was also the result of the fraction having acted upon Ferdi's instructions. With this internal putsch in the PI, Manaff nevertheless conceded that it had not improved contacts between Europe and the revolutionary movement in Indonesia; on the contrary, the "opportunities to work" for the PKI were extremely limited after the party had been declared illegal in 1930. The LAI and its International Secretariat therefore represented one of the few existing connections for the PI to use.¹⁰⁴⁵ In order to establish some kind of collaboration, Manaff went to Berlin in January 1931 and had a meeting with Chatto and Ferdi at the International Secretariat. Despite Chatto and Ferdi concluding that Manaff was an honest character, the chance of re-introducing the LAI in the Netherlands had become a far-fetched illusion. The primary reasons for this were that the PI had become a shadow of its former self, having only 80 active members, and that both the repression by the Dutch security services and the established antagonism from the socialist movement within the country made any activity there extremely difficult. Nevertheless, Manaff was still a source of information for the International Secretariat on the progress of the Indonesian nationalist movement in Europe. For example, Manaff told the International Secretariat that Sukarno was living in Paris, an individual the LAI had to approach, especially as he showed a leaning towards communism after having studied Marxism and was known to fraternise in communist circles in Paris.¹⁰⁴⁶

In Moscow, the Eastern Secretariat made efforts to realise the LAI's aims in the Far East. Since Magyar was the proclaimed expert on the Chinese question at Comintern headquarters, in November 1930 the Eastern Secretariat introduced the idea of establishing a Far Eastern subsection of the LAI, the *Far Eastern Secretariat of the Anti-Imperialist League* (FESAIL). The FESAIL was to function as an independent actor, without any explicit connections either to the Far Eastern Profintern branch or to the ECCI department (the *Far Eastern Bureau*). The FESAIL's

¹⁰⁴⁵ Abdul Manaff was also familiar with the activities at the International Secretariat in Berlin, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 1, Letter from Abdul Manaff, Amsterdam [?], to Lieber Freund/Eastern Secretariat/Magyar, Moscow [?], 3/1-1931.

¹⁰⁴⁶ RGASPI 542/1/49, 29-38, Report (Ferdinand and Chatto) Vertreter der neuen Leitung der indonesischen Organisation "Peripoenan" [sic], Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 19/1-1931.

primary aim was to co-ordinate the operations of the LAI in the Far East and, above all, to assist the International Secretariat in either maintaining or establishing contacts with the anti-imperialist movements in China, Korea, Indochina, Formosa, Malacca, Siam, Java, Indonesia and Japan. From the outset, the FESAIL was to assume a two-faced Janus character in order to avoid the prohibitive measures of the colonial powers in the Far East. Meaning, while publicly introducing the FESAIL as a relief organisation based on the fundamental principles of “international solidarity”, in reality the FESAIL would have to adhere to the duties imposed on it as a cover organisation for the Comintern in order to ensure a safe passage to the Far Eastern countries. Despite its grand ambitions, the result of this FESAIL initiative would be nothing more than a theoretical sketch, leaving no visible or practical imprint whatsoever.¹⁰⁴⁷

While the FESAIL initiative petered out on its own in Moscow, the International Secretariat had a few reliable contacts to the Far Eastern national revolutionary movement. In Japan, the leader of the Japanese LAI Section in Tokyo, J. Kunigattis, provided Chatto with intelligence on the movement. For example, in November 1930, Kunigattis provided information that the Japanese communist journal, *Central Review*, condoned the views of deviationist anti-imperialist policies in an article authored under the pseudonym “Tseuno Yonekawa”. Kunigattis had contacted Chatto to receive advice on “strategy and tactics” in order to respond to this article.¹⁰⁴⁸ In Berlin, the contacts of the International Secretariat to the Far Eastern community were limited but functional. Teido Kunizaki (“A. Kon”; “Kohn”), a Japanese communist in Berlin and a member of the KPD, began to work at the International Secretariat in 1930, in charge of the Far Eastern anti-imperialist propaganda. By translating documents from German into Japanese, Kunizaki was a valuable and “accurate worker” at the International Secretariat, according to Ferdi. Kunizaki’s knowledge of the political leanings of the Far Eastern national revolutionary movement and the current political situation in the Far East, contributed immensely to setting up the LAI’s propaganda campaigns against the military conflict between China and Japan in 1931 (the Manchurian crisis and the Ruegg case in China; see further next chapter). Kunizaki, the architect behind the propaganda against “Japanese imperialism”, also organised the distribution of material to the LAI sections and co-ordinated several “demonstrations of colonial students” in Berlin. On 27 November 1931, for example, Kunizaki organised a public demonstration against “Der

¹⁰⁴⁷ The Eastern Secretariat argued that the primary reason for establishing the FESAIL was as a response to the initiative taken by the CPCh and the Chinese KIM section to form the *Eastern Anti-Imperialist League*. Thus, the FESAIL was to function as “an authorised [LAI] section”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/37, 248-250, Plan of Work of the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Anti-Imperialist League, the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, November 1930. For the FEB and the ECCI, see Alexander M. Grigoriev, “The Far Eastern Bureau of the ECCI in China, 1929-1931”, in Leutner, Felber, Titarenko & Grigoriev (eds.) 2002, pp.156-165, and for the Profintern FEB, see Fowler 2007, p.64.

¹⁰⁴⁸ This letter included an enclosed article by Tseuno Yonekawa, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 182-192, Tsuneo Yonekawa, “Die Probleme der Entfaltung der antiimperialistischen Front“, *Central Review*, November 1930; RGASPI 542/1/39, 163, Letter from J. Kunigattis [?], Tokyo [?], to Chattophadyaya, Berlin, 14/11-1930.

Einbruch der japanischen Imperialisten in die Mandschurei” in the name of the LAI.¹⁰⁴⁹ Kunizaki, driven by a belief that his contribution to the anti-imperialist movement in Berlin and beyond would result in a change, lived quite a similar life to the ones experienced by Chatto and Hansin Liao in Berlin. While the city was initially perceived as a haven, it was also a situation defined by sparse living conditions and a continual harassment from the authorities in Berlin. As Kunizaki was not one of the prominent actors at the International Secretariat, he left few imprints in the LAI annals.

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Curricular Activity as Conscriptio to Communism

As far as the work in Berlin is concerned, the few Comrades and sympathisers we have here in the Indian colony have to participate more actively in the work. [...] KOSTUFRA wanted to take steps to organise a course with the attendance of mostly foreign students. Despite several meetings, nothing has come of it.

Chatto to Münzenberg, Berlin, 24/3-1930

In 1930, the central question for Chatto was to focus the efforts of the International Secretariat on establishing connections with anti-colonial activists. This required, above all, scrutinising the “political material” in a methodical evaluation before determining who was eligible to receive political education. This curricular activity was the essence of Chatto’s idea of utilising the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau” under the pretext of organising discussions on Marxism and the colonial question, with the true purpose of these courses being a conscription to communism. The *anni confusionis* had increasingly altered Chatto’s egocentric network, with a majority of his former contacts either being out of reach or having voluntarily disassociated themselves (Hatta and Nehru) from the LAI, leaving in their wake a re-defined network. However, the “Indian Bureau” and Nambiar were still crucial in sustaining Chatto’s activities, while the

¹⁰⁴⁹ Kunizaki’s first contact with the LAI was at the Frankfurt Congress in 1929, which he attended as the delegate of the *Japanische revolutionäre Gruppe in Deutschland*. Additionally, Kunizaki’s contact with the *Communist Party of Japan* was a result of his contact with Katayama. Kunizaki worked at the International Secretariat until August 1932. On 3 September, 1932, Kunizaki left Germany after Prussian authorities refused to renew his residence permit and travelled to Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 495/205/4516, 1, (Biography) Teido Kunizaki (A. Kon), Kommission. Moscow, 25/7-1936; RGASPI 495/205/4516, 15-16, Betr. Teido Kunizaki, ZK KPD, Berlin, January, 1933; Fowler 2007, p.89. For the Manchurian crisis, see Steiner 2005, pp.637-638. For the demonstration on 27 November 1931, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 169, Short note from “kom.Fraktion” Liga, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 6/11-1931, and SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 71, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.207, 27/11-1931 and, finally, Kunizaki’s deportation is mentioned in RGASPI 534/8/222, 27, Fragebogen: Teido Kunizaki, 9/6-1932.

LAI's contact with Bridgeman in London was also still intact. These two factors were essential to the idea of getting the LAI's curricular activity off the ground in 1930.¹⁰⁵⁰

The *anni confusionis* had also provided Chatto with organisational space in which to introduce the idea of curricular activity as a strategy to finding "desirable elements". Chatto realised, however, that previous attempts to organise such activity had received neither any attention nor any support from the ZK KPD in Germany, informing Münzenberg that the KPD had to understand that "this work is useful, particularly given the weakness of our colonial parties".¹⁰⁵¹ For this reason, Chatto believed that curricular activity would aid the dysfunctional anti-imperialist movement in the colonies. Hence, by carefully selecting candidates and providing them with a political education in Berlin, and in some cases with further study in Moscow, Chatto claimed that this would preserve the continuance of anti-imperialist propaganda in colonial areas suffering from repression, lack of communication or a disorganised communist party. The colonial metropolises in Europe were the key for Chatto, intersections containing a majority of the candidates ripe for influence and for receiving a political education under the tutelage of the International Secretariat. In due course, Chatto wanted to either transfer these tutored individuals to colonial and semi-colonial countries or send them to Moscow for further political education.

The case of the Indian communist and Chatto's friend, Pandurang S. Khankhoji, illustrates this strategy clearly. On 31 January 1931, the leading member of the *Communist Party of Mexico*, Manuel Diaz Ramirez, explained in a letter to Chatto that "our work is almost illegal, and our apparatus is very weak". Thus, it was a difficult task to co-ordinate the activities of foreign anti-colonial activists in Mexico. Ramirez noted that "the Indian emigrant" and party member Khankhoji, who was working as an agronomist in Mexico, wanted to return to India. Chatto wanted Khankhoji to "come to Berlin for consultation before going home". Since Khankhoji was an expert on "the agrarian question", as Chatto notified the Eastern Secretariat, perhaps he could be "useful for the Party if he returns [to India] after a consultation here and in Moscow".¹⁰⁵² Whether Khankhoji ever went to Berlin and visited Chatto remains unknown. However, on 24

¹⁰⁵⁰ Bridgeman asked Chatto whether he had heard a rumor initiated by one of Gandhi's friends in London, Reginald Reynolds, referring to the "execution of some Indian in Moscow not long ago – said to have been followers of M. N. Roy". This had aroused interest within the Indian community in London, wondering whether this was true, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 46, Letter from Bridgeman, London, to Chatto, Berlin, 4/2-1931.

¹⁰⁵¹ RGASPI 495/19/312, 29-31, Letter from Chatto, Berlin, to Münzenberg, [?], 24/3-1930.

¹⁰⁵² Ramirez described the inefficiency of the Mexican LAI Section to Chatto: "[...] this side of our work is not in very good shape; not only on account of the situation but also because it has been neglected by our friends in spite of the fact that there is a good field for it among the masses and that they would like to do it; it is only a matter of the proper elements to take charge of it and these elements are very scarce here. The too many tasks our Party has and so very little cadres to do the work impede a great deal the League work, as we do not have anymore – and do not want them either – some petty bourgeois intellectual (students) elements which were before engaged in this work, there are only very restricted exceptions", see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 43, Letter from Ramirez in Mexico to Chatto, 30/1-1931. For P. S. Khankhoji's relation to Chatto, see RGASPI 495/213/186, 223 and Kaye 1971, p.169 (document "June No.54 [deposit]").

September 1931, Ferdi wrote to the Eastern Secretariat, informing them that Khankhoji intended to travel to Kabul in October to replace Rattan Singh as the representative of the Hindustan *Ghadr Party*. Additionally, the WEB told the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” that Khankhoji was a “trustworthy comrade”, who had been of “good service” to the Mexican party. It is therefore likely that Khankhoji met Chatto in Berlin at some point in 1931, before arriving in Moscow in September.¹⁰⁵³

Chatto completed his report, “Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin”, on 5 November 1930, a document which presented the essence of the curricular activity the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau” planned to organise. This report, which illustrates how Chatto described a “small group under our influence” in Berlin, is also an account located and filed in different places and archival collections.¹⁰⁵⁴ For Chatto, these “courses” were a crucial project, while others looked upon this line of activity with suspicion, particularly how Chatto was dealing with the candidates who seemed inclined towards communism in Germany and England. “M” [“Michail”/Piatnitsky] expected Smeral to act vigilantly in his examination of how Chatto’s relations with the colonial students were progressing:

Please indicate how the case is with the Indian students in England who joined a course in the principles of communism. [...] Have you managed to organise any communist education of the young Indian nationalists, about whom Chatto wrote? We have no commitments towards the participants in these courses. [...] If any materials are needed, please write. Best regards, M.¹⁰⁵⁵

Piatnitsky decided to contact Smeral after having read Chatto’s report in November. Yet, already in August 1929, after the Frankfurt Congress, Chatto had been pondering the idea of developing curricular activity. Hence, it is logical to assume that Piatnitsky wanted to know how the contacts

¹⁰⁵³ The discussion of Khankhoji’s eventual visit to Moscow depended wholly on the information from the WEB, which implied that the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” knew that Rattan Singh was to act as a protector if he went to Moscow, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 148-150, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 24/9-1931; RGASPI 542/1/54, 94-95, Letter from WEB, Berlin, “an die kom.Fraktion des Sekretariats der “Antiimperialistischen Liga”, Berlin, 16/10-1931.

¹⁰⁵⁴ The original report was sent to Moscow on 5 November (whether it was addressed to Piatnitsky remains unknown), arrived on 6 November and was later filed in the dossiers of the Piatnitsky secretariat. A copy was filed in the LAI *fond*, while a third version of the document (a transcript) was retrieved by the Berlin *Schutzpolizei* during a police raid of the International Secretariat on 21 December, 1931 (see further next chapter). A fourth copy has been located in P. C. Joshi’s archive, deposited at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (section: “Archives on Contemporary History”), see IISG “P. C. Joshi’s Archives, Catalogue, volume 7” (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Archives on Contemporary History), p.96, LAI: IML: ZPA: BERLIN: KURSE FÜR KOLONIALE STUDENTEN IN BERLIN, Course for Colonial Students in Berlin: Report by Chatto & Nambiar (Photocopy in German bound); For the Comintern Archive, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, and the original RGASPI 495/19/312, 38-42. Examination of these two versions discloses no alterations between the original and the copy. For the extracted copy, SAPMO-BA ZPA R1501/20200, 111-115, Abschrift IAN 2165 m/9.3. Aus dem Material, das bei der Liga gegen Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, Berlin, Friedrichstr.24, gefunden wurde. The extracted version does not, however, mention the date of completion (5 November 1930).

¹⁰⁵⁵ RGAPI 495/19/312, 37, (Vertraulich) Letter from M. [Piatnitsky], Moscow, to Smeral, Berlin, 14/10-1930.

with anti-colonial activists in Berlin were developing over time. Apparently, “several Oxford students” of Indian origin had attended the Frankfurt Congress, before travelling to Berlin where they had met Chatto at the International Secretariat, who had observed their inclination towards the “Communist Party”. To capitalise on the moment, Chatto wanted the “Indian Bureau” to organise “a four-week holiday course [in the summer of 1930] on Marxism with special reference to the colonial revolution” in Berlin. However, the snags and hitches in pulling this off proved to be too difficult to overcome. Expecting to hold the course in August 1930, and for it to be given in English, Chatto engaged Wittfogel and Josef Lenz, the leader of the KPD Agitpropabteilung in Berlin, as teachers because of their English linguistic skills. However, Chatto also needed tutors proficient in English. Chatto asked Mens [?], “a youth comrade from America” who was living in Berlin, to contact the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow, and see whether they could send “a couple of teachers” from Moscow to Berlin to give a few lectures. While still attempting to piece this all together, the students from Oxford arrived in Berlin in July. However, as Chatto was waiting for a decision from the ZK KPD on when the course could begin, and as Mens had failed to secure any teachers from Moscow, Chatto was unable to tell the Oxford students what was happening and the students simply left Berlin and “went off in different directions for the holidays” after having heard nothing from Chatto.¹⁰⁵⁶ For Chatto, the “Indian student colony” in Berlin was a decimated clique due to the recent political disputes, a group dominated by “the Roy agents, Tagore, ex-C. P. members such as Gupta, and British spies”. Consequently, Chatto stated that the “Indian Bureau” needed to expand its activities at the universities in Great Britain and put the word out that academic courses on the colonial question were being arranged in Berlin.¹⁰⁵⁷

In the latter half of 1930, Chatto and Nambiar were planning to arrange three separate courses in Berlin. In October, Wittfogel had already held the first course on “the agrarian question” in the colonies, while the second course, “Agrar Politik”, began on 11 November and followed a similar theme, with Wittfogel in charge of the seminars at the “Deutsche Hochschule für Politik”. The final course, the “Tuesday evening course of 16 lectures” on imperialism, was scheduled to be held in December under the tutorship of Hermann Duncker from the MASCH (Marxistische Arbeiterschulung; Marxist Workers’ Education) in Berlin. Chatto stated that the courses being organised by the “Indian Bureau” fulfilled a two-fold objective: firstly, to “influence Indian

¹⁰⁵⁶ RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin, author: Chatto, Berlin, 5/11-1930. The Indian students that wanted to attend a course, and had visited the Frankfurt congress in 1929 were Mazumdar, the Jussuf sisters, Sinha, and the delegates of the *Indian Student Association* in Glasgow (N. N. Bose, J. J. Saha, and A. Roy), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 23. For Josef Lenz, see Hoppe 2007, p.21, 213, and, Worley 2002, p.10. Lenz was an ardent defender of the “class against class” policy in the KPD, for example, Lenz stated that the Bolshevik delegation in the KPD, despite its small size, had “the greatest of influence” in party questions.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The curricular activity was also a strategy that served the purpose to avoid the ban, issued by the Berlin board of school, which prohibited political parties or organisations to hold political meetings in the school premises.

students” and to get “Indian newcomers” from England to speak the German language, an undertaking supported by the “German comrades of the KOSTUFRA” who were also helping to find “suitable communist students” at German universities (Berlin, Munich, Leipzig and Frankfurt am Main); and secondly, these courses confirmed that the “Indian Bureau” was an “extremely useful ... centre for recruiting students”.¹⁰⁵⁸

This curricular activity attracted not only the attention of Indian students and activists but also that of individuals from Africa and the Arab region (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Persia). How did Chatto evaluate “the political material” and what were his general impressions? His primary aim was to assess whether the candidates could be of any use to the LAI. Chatto concluded that six students had participated in “the preliminary course”, five from India plus the Palestinian Alaeddin, a member of the national revolutionary group under the leadership of Hamdi el Hussein in Palestine. In relation to the Indian students, Chatto observed how they were all of different political persuasions. For example, Ghosh was studying in London and, once back in India, expected to open a publishing house in Calcutta. This was of particular relevance to the LAI, Chatto argued, especially as Ghosh was planning to publish “important revolutionary books”. However, due to the fact that Ghosh’s father was “a titled Government servant”, he had to conceal his sympathies to the LAI. Chatto nonetheless conceded that he did “not expect much from him”, but was rather providing Ghosh with a chance to “acquaintance himself with our literature”, and perhaps, in the future, he could be of service to the LAI in India. The second student was Sengupta, an electrical engineer by profession and a “member of a terrorist-inclined group”. According to Chatto, he was a “sincere and serious” person who could be of good service to the anti-imperialist movement in India. Khosla, the third student, who was from Lahore and allegedly a member of the Indian “terrorist movement”, made “a good impression” on Chatto. However, Chatto also questioned several of the students. Yagnik, a member of the *Bombay Congress Committee*, had “acquired a clear working knowledge of communist theory” from the course, although Chatto became suspicious of both his ties to the Indian bourgeois press and of his “real intentions” for having taken the course, particularly as Yagnik wrote articles for the sole purpose of earning money. Chatto nonetheless observed that Yagnik spoke Gujrati, so he could be of use to “translate certain [LAI] pamphlets”. Sinha was a student with “a few illusions” who had attended the Frankfurt Congress in 1929. According to Chatto, these illusions were expected to disappear “during the course of discussions”, especially as he had a “very good and intimate knowledge of the condition of the peasantry and the peasant movement” in India.¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin, author: Chatto, Berlin, 5/11-1930.

¹⁰⁵⁹ RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin, author: Chatto, Berlin, 5/11-1930.

The course on “Agrar Politik” based itself on Wittfogel’s expertise of the China question, and was attended by students from the Arab region, Africa and India. M. J. S. Naidu, Chatto’s nephew, aside from working on-and-off at both the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau”, was one of the students on the course. Naidu was not, however, given any special treatment, described by Chatto as a “sympathiser but one who is very confused and needs education”. Other students represented a more valuable source for Chatto, e.g. the journalist and devoted “Pan-Islamist”, Hajj Muhammad Jalabi, the “most active and intelligent of the Arabs” in Berlin. Chatto considered it worthwhile to make use of Jalabi’s expertise in order to complete his “own ideas” of both Islam and the Arab nationalist movement. The Egyptian Ibrahim Youssef could also be of great service to the LAI. Working as a journalist in Berlin, Chatto observed that Youssef had published a number of articles in the name of the LAI in the Middle Eastern national revolutionary press. Chatto concluded, however, that several of the course participants were either unreliable or vague about their intentions. For example, the “student of history at the [Humboldt] university”, Abdur Rauf Malik, was a “sincere fellow with Gandhist illusions”, while Abdul Alim, a “nationalist of the Gandhi school”, had only begun to acquaint himself with “communist literature under our influence”. Chatto wanted “to win” Alim over, but only if he acted “seriously and reliably”. The course also offered a chance for Chatto to establish closer relations with the Iraqi liberation movement. In this regard, the London-based Iraqi diplomat Muzahim Beg Ali Pachachi, who was also the leader of the Iraqi *Nationalist Party*, had informed Chatto that “a group of students” from Iraq were planning to visit Berlin and would remain there for a longer period. This visit, Chatto explained to the Eastern Secretariat (and Piatnitsky), was an opportunity to first establish contact and then to “maintain influence among them”. However, it was essential to prevent the Iraqi students from listening to Jalabi’s Pan-Islamic visions, Chatto stated. In the end, however, the aims of this curricular activity were essentially covert. Firstly, the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau” hoped that the courses would set up a viable channel to the anti-imperialist movement, with the LAI expecting to assume the role as the administrative hub, and with Chatto’s evaluation of the students (the political material”) receiving a final verdict of either acceptance or refusal. Secondly, after Chatto’s evaluation of the “political material”, if the student was deemed to be a trustworthy candidate, the person would be invited to a closed meeting at the International Secretariat with Chatto and other “Oriental comrades” (Ferdinand and Nambiar). If the individual managed to convince one of the “Oriental comrades” (Ferdinand), the candidate was approved to undergo further political education in Moscow at one of the Comintern’s educational facilities (KUTV).¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁶⁰ RGASPI 542/1/40, 119-123, Courses for Colonial Students in Berlin, author: Chatto, Berlin, 5/11-1930.

The complexity, impact and ramifications of this curricular activity organised by Chatto and Nambiar are, initially, hard to understand, particularly in relation to the fundamental aims of the courses. For Chatto, the courses constituted more than just an educational opportunity, they functioned essentially as an opportunity to see whether any of the students could be of service to the communist and anti-imperialist movement. Secondly, while the courses conveyed the impression of providing a broad understanding of the colonial question, in fact the courses were a political strategy endorsed by the ZK KPD and the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. Their principal motive was to get the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau” to find “recruits” for communism. These courses also introduced an opportunity for the LAI to set up different channels to colonial and semi-colonial countries; either by convincing the students to act as couriers or to carry out missions in their home countries (distributing anti-imperialist propaganda, delivering directives or money). As a historical narrative, however, these covert results remain a hazy blur and are, therefore, very difficult to analyse. In conclusion, the range of colonial courses proves that the International Secretariat existed in a relatively limited political space in Berlin, and the courses also contributed to increasing Chatto’s workload. They likewise strengthened Chatto’s position at the International Secretariat after the crisis, which, in turn, created a skewed distribution of responsibility, power and knowledge of the extent of the LAI network, again in Chatto’s favour.

By February 1931, York/Thögensen was arguing that the International Secretariat was in a critical condition due to its mismanagement, caused primarily by its incapacity to delegate work. This was a criticism levelled against the extent of Chatto’s influence. Since Chatto both controlled and supervised the LAI’s valuable contacts at the International Secretariat, York/Thögensen called for a change in the hierarchical structure, arguing that it was not logical to let Chatto act as “International Secretary” and, at the same time, lead its administrative work. As a kind of “cure-all”, York/Thögensen told the Eastern Secretariat that the International Secretariat only needed two secretaries (York/Thögensen and Chatto), while Münzenberg, in charge of finances and playing a crucial role within the German communist movement, had to be drawn “into the work more closely”. Initially, there was no sign of any reaction to York/Thögensen’s criticism at Comintern headquarters. Yet, at some level, it is possible that it contributed in some way to what was about to happen to Chatto in 1931. The question is why. According to York/Thögensen, the International Secretariat was still suffering from the crisis, evidenced by its rigid and hierarchical structure. Thus, the Eastern Secretariat had to consider establishing an investigative commission in Moscow to “discuss the situation”, focusing on Chatto’s dominance and his ability to carry out all the duties demanded of him in Berlin. This recommendation principally questioned Chatto’s position at the

International Secretariat, above all his knowledge of every contact within the LAI network, a source of information York/Thögensen and Ferdi wanted to get their hands on. The question at hand for the Eastern Secretariat was to “decide whether Chatto and Smeral, either or both, should return” to Moscow, and to get an “authoritative comrade” to assist the International Secretariat with its political work.¹⁰⁶¹ Was there any immediate reaction to York/Thögensen’s proposal?

In April 1931, the Political Commission discussed the “accusations against Comrade Shattopadhyaya [sic]”, yet these discussions were not necessarily a reaction to York/Thögensen’s criticisms. According to “the strictly confidential” protocol, the Political Commission decided to transfer the question to the International Control Commission (the internal supervisory organ of the Comintern in Moscow; the ICC), without making any further reference to the nature of the accusation.¹⁰⁶² The ensuing investigation nevertheless required the summoning of Chatto to Moscow to face the indictment. In June, Magyar visited Berlin in connection with the reconstitution of the LAI Executive, and instructed Chatto to travel to Moscow. On 23 June 1931, Magyar (“A. B.”) informed Kuusinen in a report that Chatto “was ready to leave” Berlin after having received “the order” from the ECCI.¹⁰⁶³ However, Chatto remained in Berlin in July and August. During this period, Chatto carried out “technical matters” under Magyar’s instruction after having been prohibited from getting involved in the daily routine work at the International Secretariat, and having been deprived of his authoritative position as “International Secretary”. For example, Chatto was instructed to translate manuscripts from German into English aimed for publication in the re-launched LAI organ, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*. Chatto was also no longer a member of the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” which, in August, received a firm request from Magyar that Chatto “was expected” in Moscow. The primary reason why Chatto had not yet left Berlin was explained in a telegram from Chatto to a “Clarence Miller” [?] at the *Hotel Lux* in Moscow. According to Chatto, he had been “bedridden [for] ten days” due to “severe kidney trouble”. Once he had recuperated, Chatto expected to leave Berlin and “arrive Friday or Saturday” in Moscow.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁶¹ York/Thögensen observed that Ferdi was “in agreement with the essence of these proposals”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/39, 26a, Letter from “York” [Thögensen], Berlin, to unknown [Eastern Secretariat ?], Moscow, 14/2-1930 [1931].

¹⁰⁶² RGASPI 495/4/101, 2, (Streng vertraulich! Für SONDERMAPPE!) Protokoll Nr.134 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 20/4-1931. On 23 May, the Political Commission endorsed the “new” International Secretariat in Berlin: Ferdi, York/Thögensen, Münzenberg, Smeral and a colonial representative. Thus, this marked the end of Chatto’s position as “International Secretary”, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/109, 6-7, (Streng vertraulich! Für Sondermappe!) Protokoll Nr.142 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI, 23/5-1931. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Knorin, Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Heimo, Arnot, Magyar and Miff. The ICC’s main objective was to observe communist discipline amongst the members – sections and individuals – of the Comintern, see further in Huber 1995, pp.28-37.

¹⁰⁶³ RGASPI 542/1/48, 110-115, Letter from “A. B.” [Magyar], Berlin, to Kuusinen, Moscow, 23/6-1931; RGASPI 459/213/186, 7-8, Biographical notes: Chatto, ICC, Moscow, 4/9-1936.

¹⁰⁶⁴ RGASPI 542/1/48, 136, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Berlin/Moscow, to Kommfraktion des Sekretariats

Is it possible to determine the actual accusation against Chatto? Firstly, however, we need to re-assess Barooah's interpretation of why Chatto chose to leave Berlin, an erroneous conclusion which contradicts the empirical sources (the protocols of both the Political Commission and the ICC and Chatto's personal file in the Comintern Archive). According to Barooah, Chatto had "no other option" than to escape from Berlin in August 1931, after the International Secretariat had been transferred to Paris [!]. Prohibited to enter France, and due to the *Schutzpolizei's* increased surveillance of Chatto, his only option left was Moscow, after having received personal advice from Dimitrov, Barooah concludes. Certainly, Dimitrov and the Soviet ambassador in Berlin assisted in organising Chatto's journey to Moscow; however, Barooah's conclusion as to why Chatto left Berlin is based on misconceptions.¹⁰⁶⁵ Most importantly, the decision had never been in Chatto's hands, mainly because the case against him was based on "political dishonesty" and, therefore, this matter had been authorised at various hierarchical levels at Comintern headquarters. The central issue was that someone in the Comintern, for unknown reasons, was questioning Chatto's involvement in the *Indian Committee*, an association in Germany which had supported the Indian national liberation movement during the Great War and which the German government provided with money in order to create and stimulate anti-British propaganda in India. Chatto arrived in Moscow in August or September 1931 and began to write down a history of his life as a national revolutionary in his so-called "Autobiography". In this document, Chatto performed an act of self-criticism by apologising for "my failures", and referred to his ideological conversion to communism. On 15 October, Chatto handed over his "Autobiography" to the ICC, in which he declared:

My work in the League against Imperialism is known, as well as my failures. Even in this respect I should like to add that I scrupulously carried out at each stage the policy laid down by the Fraction, and I believe that my colleagues will bear me out when I claim that the greater part of the work of building up the connections of the League was done by me. During the last two years I was not allowed the scope that I had previously had, because comrades [Smeral; Ferdi] were appointed to take charge who had not the least idea of such work, and whose policy was bound to lead to the stagnation of the League. I regret that I have been removed from the League Secretariat without having had a chance of explaining the real position there or of organising the work in the way in which I could have done so. [...]

[...] In the course of my political activities during the last 25 years there is one period which

LAI, July, 1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 186, Telegram, sender: Chatto, to Clarence Miller [?], Hotel Lux, Moscow, August, 1931. Ferdi explained that the reason why Chatto not yet had left Berlin was not due to reluctance, but rather, "he feels sick, he hopes to depart in the next few days". See fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 147, Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/8-1931.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Barooah 2004, pp.283-285.

has been the subject of suspicion and criticism and, as the true facts regarding my life and development are not generally known, this suspicion has naturally caused a number of comrades to withhold from me the confidence to which I am entitled. That period was deuring [sic] the years 1914-1918, when I, along with all Indians living abroad, co-operated with the Kaiser's government. In order to understand the nature of that co-operation it is necessary to go through the documents, as far as they have been preserved, [...] But I feel that as I was not then a Communist or even a Social Democrat [during the Great War] as my relations with the Government were not individual but collective, and as I liquidated those connections at the earliest possible moment, these facts should be regarded as extenuating circumstances. [...] I ask the I.K.K. therefore to examine by statement and the documents of the Indian Committee, and to pass final judgement on my war activities, in order to free me from the suspicion and mistrust that some comrades, wrongly and unfortunately, entertain against me.¹⁰⁶⁶

This charge against Chatto had a lasting effect on his life as a political refugee in the Soviet Union. During the purge of the Comintern apparatus at the time of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union in 1937, Chatto was sentenced to death on 2 September by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Charged with having been a German spy on Soviet soil, Chatto was executed by firing squad in Moscow once the verdict had been handed down.¹⁰⁶⁷

The case against Chatto symbolises a decisive turning point in the history of the LAI. Despite the attempts of York/Thögersen and Ferdi to gain access to every contact that had been cultivated and administered by Chatto, once Chatto had left Berlin, the LAI and the International Secretariat

¹⁰⁶⁶ RGASPI 495/213/186, 215-228, Autobiography by Chatto, Moscow, to the ICC, Moscow, 15/10-1931.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Barooah plays down Chatto's anxiety at being accused of "political dishonesty", instead, he refers to the biased memoir of Chatto's widow, Lidiya Karunovskaya, written in 1970, a narrative which implies that Chatto was far more concerned about his "alleged involvement" in the murder of the British diplomat Curzon Wylie in London in 1909. Chatto's own explanation, according to his "Autobiography" tells, however, a completely different story: "[I]n 1909 I openly advocated [this] political assassination and defended Dhingra, who shot Sir Curzon Wylie in London in July of that year, I was elected a member of the Maharashtra secret society, the *Abhinava Bharat*, and was appointed one of the three representatives in Europe for the purpose of (a) organising the Indians abroad for the movement, (b) obtaining contacts with European anarchists to get training in explosives and (c) supplying the organisations in Bombay and Bengal with revolvers etc.", see RGASPI 495/213/186, 215-228, Autobiography by Chatto, Moscow, to the ICC, Moscow, 15/10-1931; Barooah 2004, p.320-321. Chatto was rehabilitated during the thaw of 1956 in the Soviet Union after Karunovskaya's plea to clear his name. The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR concluded on 28 April, 1956, that the verdict against Chatto "was lifted", and "the case against him was withdrawn because of the lack of evidence of a crime". On 22 March, 1958, Karunovskaya received a death certificate indicating that Chatto had died on 6 April, 1943. Similar erroneous information on Chatto's demise is found in Subodh Roy's essay, included in Cecil Kaye's documentary collection, which states that Chatto "passed away in January 1941", Kaye 1971, p.337. Documents on Chatto's rehabilitation are located in the P. C. Joshi Archive, deposited at the Jawaharlal Nehru University/Archives on Contemporary History [not consulted by the author], see IISG in Amsterdam – "P. C. Joshi's Archives, Catalogue, volume 7", section "V. Chattophadyaya His Activities (In Part)". Sobhanlal Gupta's analysis of Indian communism includes a fair though short account of Chatto's years in the Soviet Union, see Gupta 2006, pp.271-272, 274, 306.

lost one of its vital components, one which had been essential in maintaining the links within its anti-imperialist network.

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Revival (or Decline?)

To some degree the International Secretariat managed to revive the LAI as a cover organisation for the Comintern. From a political perspective, however, the organisation was not credible, particularly as the LAI had no Executive and no General Council, a consequence of the “purification” process in 1930. In the beginning of 1931, this dilemma troubled the International Secretariat, especially as it contributed to the LAI being depicted as a dysfunctional body. The International Secretariat told Magyar “that it is possible and necessary” to hold an LAI Executive meeting in order to “renew” the legal continuity of the LAI, a session that would have to decide upon anti-imperialist “propaganda, organisational and tactical issues”.¹⁰⁶⁸

It was a question of revival or decline for the International Secretariat. To revise the political agenda and, above all, to revive the LAI on an organisational basis, the International Secretariat expected a reconstituted Executive to resurrect its activities. The preparations for the LAI Executive in 1931 also confirmed the Comintern’s governance *vis-à-vis* the International Secretariat. Correspondence, protocols and drafts of resolutions reveal that the Eastern Secretariat and other actors at Comintern headquarters controlled every stage of this LAI Executive meeting, in which the WEB acted as both the receiver and executor of its instructions. For the International Secretariat, the resurrection of the LAI Executive confirmed its status as a bystander.

To propose new members to the LAI Executive was a complex task. Magyar stated that it was essential to avoid introducing an Executive which more or less continued the understanding of the LAI being a communist organisation. In February, however, as Magyar and the International Secretariat were looking into this issue, the list of proposed candidates confirmed its communist bias: Bridgeman, Pollitt, Saklatvala, Clemens Dutt, Hercllet, the French communist Mireille Gaillard (later employed at the *Inprecorr* bureau in Berlin in 1932), Ford, Helmut/Dimitrov, Witcheff, Huang Ping, Arthur Abolin as the AUCCSLU delegate,¹⁰⁶⁹ Magyar of the Eastern Secretariat, IRH delegate Louis de Visser, a representative from the PI (“Manaff or Abdul Madjid”), Münzenberg, Chatto, Smeral and Ferdi. When it came to the former “prominente

¹⁰⁶⁸ RGASPI 542/1/48, 26-28, Report from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat [delivered in person by Magyar], Moscow, 12/2-1931.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Serafima Gopner, a communist from Ukraine (1880 – 1966) and member of the ECCI Secretariat, was instructed on 23 May by the Political Commission to contact Arthur Abolin in Moscow and to instruct him to act as the delegate of the AUCCSLU at the LAI Executive, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/109, 6-7, (Streng vertraulich! Für Sondermappe!) Protokoll Nr.142 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI, 23/5-1931.

Persönlichkeiten”, Magyar instructed the International Secretariat to send an invitation to Nehru since he officially remained a member of the LAI Executive. However, Magyar conceded, “he would not come”. If so, the International Secretariat should establish “an international campaign” against “the betrayal” of Nehru, Fimmen, Maxton and Hatta as a means of “reviving the League” as well as “utilising the differences between the imperialists”. It all boiled down to a question of money in the initial stages, however. In March, as Magyar travelled back to Moscow, “the financial burden” at the International Secretariat was the central issue to be sorted out in order to guarantee that the delegates would be able to attend the LAI Executive. According to Magyar, the Political Commission needed to endorse the sum of 2,200 Marks in order to cover their travelling expenses.¹⁰⁷⁰

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Deliberations at the Centre

On 8 March, Magyar introduced the idea of resurrecting the Executive of the LAI at a session with the Political Commission. However, Magyar concluded that under no circumstance was the LAI Executive meeting to convene at the same time as the Eleventh ECCI Plenum (scheduled for 26 March – 11 April in Moscow). The Political Commission observed that this session would offer a chance for the International Secretariat to realise the need to establish a new focus for the LAI, especially the question of the national revolutionary movement in Europe, represented by organisations and associations in the Balkans, Ukraine and in Alsace-Lorraine. This proposition clashed with Magyar’s vision of the LAI Executive. Magyar had expected the meeting to function as a forum to discuss the “development of the liberation movement in the colonies” after the Frankfurt Congress, a report on the International Secretariat and to elect both a new LAI Executive and General Council.¹⁰⁷¹ The primary reason why the Political Commission wanted the LAI to take on the European national minority movement was an initiative inspired by the apprehensive political situation in Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 1930s. Eastern Europe was paralysed by chronic instability which, after the adoption of the Locarno Treaty in 1925, had only increased, resulting in the Eastern Polish borderlands, for example, being a scene of sporadic violent

¹⁰⁷⁰ Magyar confirmed the sum of 2,200 Marks in his report to the Political Commission on 8 March. The expected cost for the delegates were: Bridgeman (300), Pollitt (270), Saklatvala (270), Clemens Dutt (270), Hercllet (180), Gaillard (180), Ford (100), Witcheff (“if released from prison in time”, 400), de Visser (180), the delegate of the PI (180), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 26-28, Report from the International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat [delivered in person by Magyar], Moscow, 12/2-1931.

¹⁰⁷¹ RGASPI 542/1/47, 12-14, [Russian original] (Secret) Report from Magyar, Moscow, to the Political Commission, Moscow, 6/3-1931 (delivered on 8 March 1931). For a copy of this report (German version), see fol. RGASPI 495/4/94, 42. For the meeting of the Political Commission, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/94, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.126 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats EKKI, 8/3-1931. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Pieck, Knorin, Magyar and Kun. This meeting re-introduced the discussion of the LAI and of the national minority movement in Europe, a topic introduced by Bela Kun in September, 1929 (see *Anni Confusionis*).

outbursts, while the growth of nationalism in the Balkan countries had reached new unparalleled heights. With the rise of nationalism as a political stimulus, as well as the criticism of the *League of Nations'* failure to implement the theory of national self-determination in practice, the national minority movement was gaining in both strength and size.¹⁰⁷² Yet, when the International Secretariat heard of the idea to focus the LAI on establishing contacts with the minority movement, the Eastern Secretariat received a less than confident response:

We are not prepared to handle this question of national minorities in Europe seriously and in detail. We need help to develop a good resolution, and this may call for a recommendation, perhaps from Bridgeman.¹⁰⁷³

The question of the national minority movement in Europe as a topic had, however, already been examined by the International Secretariat in January 1931. Smeral had investigated whether the LAI would be able to establish sections in Eastern Europe. For example, together with the Polish communist and member of the ECCI Presidium, Julian Lenski, Smeral had assessed the prospects of "setting up" a section in Poland and, if successful, repeating the operation in Bulgaria. Smeral and Lenski stated that the structural shape of the section had to be "a small committee" which, at a later date, could be transformed into a section. However, due to the extensive repression against the communist movement in both Poland and Bulgaria, Smeral and Lenski concluded that it would be futile to attempt to realise this proposal.¹⁰⁷⁴ The idea of getting the LAI to pay attention to the national minority movement did not, however, disappear. While the International Secretariat "kom.Fraktion" observed the question as being "politically important", it also noted that for the Political Commission to even suggest that the LAI should introduce a "serious, objective and exhaustive resolution" was an illogical proposition. This was an issue entirely under the jurisdiction of the Comintern, and it needed to be decided upon before the LAI Executive meeting.¹⁰⁷⁵

Magyar's primary challenge was to set up an LAI Executive which would be able to convince the European left-wing movement that the LAI was a non-party organisation. After reviewing the list of invited guests, Magyar concluded that "very few independents" [non-communist delegates] had been included. Realising that two of the focal points at the meeting of the LAI Executive would be the expelling of several of the non-communist members on the Executive and the protest

¹⁰⁷² Steiner 2005, pp.627-630.

¹⁰⁷³ RGASPI 542/1/44, 101-103, International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, March/April 1931.

¹⁰⁷⁴ RGASPI 542/1/49, 4-5, Letter from Smeral/Internationale Sekretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 16/1-1931; RGASPI 542/1/49, 9-10, Letter from Smeral/International Secretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat/Magyar, Moscow, 16/1-1931.

¹⁰⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/48, 55-57, Brief Nr.12, Internationale Sekretariat/Fraktion, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 25/3-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 51, Zirkularbrief Nr. 10, Fraktion der "Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 14/3-1931.

against “the Imperialist system”, Magyar understood that this session would confirm the understanding of the LAI as a forum for “only Communists” and as a cover for the activities of the Comintern.¹⁰⁷⁶ For this reason, Magyar challenged the Political Commission to solve the “question of the programme and the tactics” of the LAI during the Eleventh ECCI Plenum, and to summon both Münzenberg and Ferdi to Moscow.¹⁰⁷⁷

The “kom.Fraktion” explained to Magyar that the LAI could no longer invite “neutral persons”. Compared to its first year of activity in Berlin, 1927, by 1931 the socio-political situation in Germany had completely changed. Attempting to grasp why the LAI had become a reclusive organisation, the “kom.Fraktion” admitted that the purging of the LAI after the Frankfurt Congress had made it “hard to find here and in the immediate vicinity” anyone willing to “be associated with” the LAI.¹⁰⁷⁸ Berlin, once the haven for the anti-colonial movement was, at the beginning of the 1930s, turning into a hostile scene for political activism. The LAI and its International Secretariat found itself caught in the middle, having to confront the political battles between both the Nazi and communist movements, while continually adapting itself to combat the daily repression of the *Schutzpolizei*.

On 13 April, Münzenberg and Ferdi attended the Political Commission session in Moscow. The “strictly confidential” discussion made it very clear that everyone had to understand the need for thorough preparations prior to the meeting of the LAI Executive, and for it to convene at the end of May. The Political Commission stated that this would provide Magyar and the Eastern Secretariat with enough time to complete the resolutions and agenda, assigning Kuusinen to examine the drafts, leaving the question of Nehru’s expulsion in the hands of Münzenberg and Ferdi.¹⁰⁷⁹

The preparatory work for the resurrection of the LAI Executive was positive proof of how the International Secretariat was obediently following the dictates of the Comintern. After completing the material for the session in Moscow, Magyar sent the documents, e.g. the agenda and the definite date (30 May – 2 June), to the International Secretariat. According to the agenda, the LAI

¹⁰⁷⁶ RGASPI 495/4/94, 42, An die Politkommission über die Anti-imp.Liga, Magyar, Moscow, to the Political Commission, Moscow, 6/3-1931.

¹⁰⁷⁷ The Eleventh ECCI Plenum focused primarily on two topics: reports on the communist parties and the “crisis of capitalism” (Manuilsky together with Thälmann, Lenski and Cemodanov as co-reporters), and the war threat and the fear of a military intervention in the Soviet Union, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/94, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.126 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats EKKI, 8/3-1931; Kahan 1990, p.28.

¹⁰⁷⁸ RGASPI 542/1/48, 55-57, Brief Nr.12, Internationale Sekretariat/Fraktion, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 25/3-1931.

¹⁰⁷⁹ RGASPI 495/4/99, 1-4, Protokoll Nr.131 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI am 13/4-1931. Present at the meeting were: Pieck, Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Knorin, Heimo, Dimitrov, Kun, Münzenberg, Magyar, Safarov and Ferdi; RGASPI 495/4/99, 5, (Streng vertraulich. Für Sondermappe) Protokoll Nr.131 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI am 13/4-1931. After the meeting, Piatnitsky summoned Münzenberg, Ferdi and Magyar to a closed session in his office. Any record of this discussion remains unknown. However, prior to the session, Piatnitsky wondered whether the sum of 2,200 Marks would be enough to cover the costs, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/99, 8.

Executive meeting would focus on discussing a report by the International Secretariat, the development of national LAI sections, the nature of the anti-imperialist youth movement and the question of unifying the “anti-imperialist struggle” with the European national minority movement. Magyar estimated that forty-one delegates had received an invitation and recommended that the International Secretariat invite Maxton, Hatta, Fimmen and Nehru, despite there being “little hope” of them attending the session in Berlin. Magyar instructed the International Secretariat to notify every delegate that they were expected to deliver a report at the meeting although, in order to avoid any unwanted debate, each delegate had to send a draft of his/her report to the International Secretariat “a few days before the meeting”.¹⁰⁸⁰ To complete the preparations, Magyar accelerated the “completion of all questions” at the end of May, e.g. the resolutions on the political and national minority questions.¹⁰⁸¹ On 23 May, the Political Commission urged the Eastern Secretariat to present its resolutions on both “the Session of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Imperialist League” and “the national liberation movement of the oppressed European peoples”. For Kuusinen, the LAI’s revised political agenda was a source of inspiration in defining the Comintern’s policy on the national question. Kuusinen believed that the LAI was capable of influencing and manoeuvring the European national minority movement(s) and, on 6 June, at the ECCI Presidium session in Moscow, Kuusinen presented his ideas on the question of “National Oppression in Europe”, stating that he believed the LAI could play a pivotal role:

The Anti-Imperialist League ... on behalf of the national revolutionary organisations of the whole world energetically protests against the existing revolting oppression of millions of the masses of oppressed nationalities, primarily in Poland, Rumania, Yugo-Slavia, Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, Italy, but also in Spain, France (Alsace-Lorraine), Great Britain (Ireland) [...] There could not be a crueller satire on the freedom of peoples which was promised in the Versailles Treaty than the practice which is adopted by the Versailles system of imperialism. The Anti-Imperialist League resolves to carry on a struggle against the whole of this system of imperialist plunder and mass destruction, against all forms of national oppression and inequality of rights, for the purpose of winning complete freedom for the oppressed peoples.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁸⁰ RGASPI 542/1/48, 95-96, Antrag zur Sitzung des Sekretariates über die Exekutive der Liga gegen Imperialismus [Eastern Secretariat], Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 4/5-1931 [arrived in Berlin 6/5-1931].

¹⁰⁸¹ RGASPI 542/1/48, 99, Brief Nr.12, Fraktion im Ligasekretariat, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat/Magyar, Moscow, 12/5-1931.

¹⁰⁸² RGASPI 495/4/109, 1-5, Protokoll Nr.142 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI, 23/5-1931.

Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Knorin, Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Heimo, Arnot, Magyar and Miff; For Kuusinen’s speech, see fol. RGASPI 495/2/180, 129-132, (Confidential) Material on the Report of Comrade Kuusinen at the Session of the Presidium of the ECCI, Moscow, 6/6-1931.

This idea nonetheless merely confirmed Kuusinen's appraisal of "the example of the Soviet Union" and its role in saving the movement from "national oppression" on "the basis of the Soviet system". In fact, the idea paraphrased the resolution, "Zur nationalen Befreiungsbewegung der unterdrückten Völker Europas" which the LAI Executive had endorsed in Berlin on 2 June (a resolution had been completed on 27 May and the political resolution on 26 May).¹⁰⁸³ Magyar had adhered strictly to the policy of "class against class" during the process of completing the resolution which, in turn, had exposed the LAI's communist ties. As noted in the political resolution, for example, the LAI should show no tolerance towards its former alliances, especially the former non-communist members of the LAI Executive. This also implied an increase in the struggle against its principal enemies: the LSI and the *Amsterdam International*:

All the bloodhounds are unleashed by the imperialists against revolutionary anti-imperialist liberation movements. [...] The leaders of the II [LSI] and Amsterdam International are in the forefront of the fight against the oppressed peoples. MacDonald's Labour Government fights against the Indian liberation movement [...] A most despicable role is played by the so-called left Social Democrats, Messrs. Maxton and Fimmen [...] Mr. Fimmen deserted the Anti-Imperialist League. Likewise, Mr. Maxton shamelessly supported the manoeuvres of British Imperialism [...] The so-called left socialists, the Jabaralal Neru [sic] and Bose, have played a particularly despicable role. [...] Neru, who, has become the agent of British imperialism.¹⁰⁸⁴

The rhetoric of "class against class" was used to confirm that the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement had "reached a new and higher stage":

The intensification of all antagonisms and the seriousness of the situation makes it the imperative duty of the Anti-Imperialist League to increase its struggle and strengthen its organisation.¹⁰⁸⁵

Was the resurrection of the LAI Executive in Berlin the step which confirmed "a new and higher stage" for the activities of the LAI?

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¹⁰⁸³ RGASPI 495/3/201, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.109 der Sitzung des Politsekretariats EKKI, Moscow, 28/5-1931. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Weinstone, Manuilsky, Arnot, Gutmann, Bratkowski, Kuusinen, Lozovsky, Knorin, Codovilla and Worowsky. For the resolutions see fol. RGASPI 495/3/201, 395-404, Draft resolution for the Session of the Executive Committee of the LAI, June 1931, Berlin, Moscow, 26/5-1931; RGASPI 495/3/201, 412-415, (Vertraulich) Zur nationalen Befreiungsbewegung der unterdrückten Völker Europas, Moscow, 27/5-1931. Another resolution, presented and adopted during the LAI Executive meeting, was the "Resolution über den Terror in den Kolonien und Halbkolonien", see fol. RGASPI 539/2/432, 13.

¹⁰⁸⁴ RGASPI 495/3/201, 395-404, Draft resolution for the Session of the Executive Committee of the LAI, June 1931, Berlin, Moscow, 26/5-1931.

¹⁰⁸⁵ RGASPI 495/3/201, 395-404, Draft resolution for the Session of the Executive Committee of the LAI, June 1931, Berlin, Moscow, 26/5-1931.

*Resurrection and the Road to Sectarianism: The LAI Executive Meeting, Berlin, 31 May –
2 June 1931*

I would like to collectively draw your attention to the following. The preparation of the meeting was very poor. Even the necessary measures to ensure the participation of the major imperialist countries were not taken. [...] the reports and discussion left little concrete for the future work of the League.

Helmut/Dimitrov to the ECCI, 8/6-1931

On Sunday 31 May, at 3 pm, at an unknown location in Berlin, Münzenberg opened the meeting of the LAI Executive. Münzenberg's "nearly three-hour long speech" was an outline of the history of the LAI which concluded that the mistakes committed by the organisation was a dilemma explained essentially by the betrayal of "opportunists" such as Maxton, Nehru, Fimmen and Hatta.¹⁰⁸⁶ Forty-six delegates attended this LAI Executive meeting. Fourteen of these delegates represented both "the imperialist world" and the mass organisations (the AUCCSLU, the IAH, the IRH, the Profintern and the International Secretariat), and there were fourteen representatives from "the colonies", e.g. Bridgeman, Percy Glading, van Münster, Dimitrov, Vlachoff and Popov from Macedonia. I, Valnitsky from Poland and the Ukrainian nationalist Petruschewitsch, the KPD representative Lenz, the IAH functionary Paul Scholze, Wittfogel, Hans Jäger, Ford, Kouyaté, the IAH delegate Otto Katz, Kunizaki, Saklatvala, Tagore, Abdul Madjid of the PI, Willi Budich of the IRH, Ferdi, Chatto, Smeral and York/Thögersen were all present. The International Secretariat had also invited journalists from the German and foreign communist press, e.g. *Inprecorr*, TASS, *Die Rote Fahne*, *Berlin am Morgen* and *Welt am Abend*. Nonetheless, Ferdi made note of the fact after the meeting that not a single, colonial delegate had arrived directly from the colonies, a troublesome fact which exposed the incapacity of the International Secretariat to secure money to cover travel expenses.¹⁰⁸⁷ Some of the articles published after the meeting, e.g. "Die Kolonial-Unterdrückten tagen" in *Welt am Abend* (which included a picture of Ford, Münzenberg and Kouyaté standing side-by-side, a picture actually taken at the Frankfurt Congress in 1929) described how the new Executive of the LAI celebrated the resurrected body of the LAI. *Inprecorr* published an article authored by the Arab communist and member of the *Wafd*, Mahmud Husni al-

¹⁰⁸⁶ The article, "James Maxton und die Liga gegen Imperialismus", published in *Pressedienst*, 15 May, defined the official attitude of the LAI and its new Executive on Maxton: "Under these circumstances there is no doubt that Maxton has violated his solemn promises [...], his systematic silence has supported the pro-imperialist actions of the *Independent Labour Party*, and he has not strengthened the campaign against the imperialist terror of the MacDonald government in the British colonies", see fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Protocol: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/46a, 78-81, *Pressedienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr.9, Internationales Sekretariat, Berlin, 15/5-1931.

¹⁰⁸⁷ RGASPI 542/1/49, 281-287, Bericht des Bureaus der Fraktion der Exekutivsitung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, author: Ferdi, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1931.

‘Arabi (signed ‘C. Husny’), which declared that the LAI had entered a “new period of development” by leaving behind its “inhibitions and looseness in activity” almost like a historic relic. The LAI was now characterised by its “systematic revolutionary mass activism” due to its revised and “distinct political line”.¹⁰⁸⁸

The LAI Executive meeting was expected to signal a new beginning for the LAI. By the end of it, however, the organisation had been exposed as one which had reached the end of its road as a political actor. For Münzenberg, the session proved, nonetheless, that “our theories and ideology are so good that they are alive and at work”, yet this was nothing more than shallow talk. The reconstitution of the LAI Executive in 1931 and this meeting in Berlin (the last one ever to take place) was the fork in the road announcing the onset of sectarianism. The LAI’s sectarian behaviour strengthened its narrow-minded and open obedience towards communism as well as towards the Comintern’s “class against class” policy, as it likewise contributed to distancing the LAI from the political scene both in Berlin and beyond.

Helmut/Dimitrov concluded after the session had ended that the preparatory work done at the International Secretariat for this LAI Executive meeting had been “very poor”. This was based on the fact that very few delegates of the European communist parties from “the major imperialist countries” had bothered to attend, while its report on the European question and the national minority movement remained a blank page due to the “absence of representatives” from Alsace-Lorraine, Flanders, Catalonia and the Basque province. According to Helmut/Dimitrov, this epitomised the inherent and “very weakness of the League”, where the “neglect of work in this area” in the European communist parties (“the PCF and its attitude is directly scandalous”) was destroying any attempt to revive the LAI. If this continued, Helmut/Dimitrov argued, it would be difficult for the LAI to “influence and give new impetus to the national revolutionary movement in Europe”. Ferdi believed that despite the organisational shortcomings, the session had proven the possibility of organising the LAI along a “more systematic” line; an argument also raised by Münzenberg and Heckert in their report to the Secretariat of the IRH in Moscow, which had concluded that the LAI Executive meeting was the end of “disharmony”, caused by “compromises or open alliances” with unreliable “persons and groups” (the ILP, Maxton, Nehru, Gupta, Hatta and Fimmen). Impressions of the meeting continued as Magyar observed that the session had exposed “no particular differences”, while the personal intervention of the WEB, particularly that

¹⁰⁸⁸ “Die Kolonial-Unterdrückten tagen!“, *Welt am Abend*, Berlin, 4/6-1931; “Gegen koloniale Unterdrückung. Tagung der Exekutive der ‚Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit‘“, *Inprecorr*, No.55, 9/6-1931; “Vor einer neuen Entwicklungsperiode der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit“, von C. Husny, *Inprecorr*, No.60, 23/6-1931. For the articles above, see also SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 55-58a. For Mahmud Husni al-‘Arabi, see Joel Beinin & Zachary Lockman, *Workers’ on the Nile. Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1998, p.194. Husni al-‘Arabi left Egypt for Europe in the summer of 1930, as local authorities were harassing him due to his political activism.

of its leader Helmut/Dimitrov, on “the question of oppressed peoples” had saved the event from ending in disarray.¹⁰⁸⁹ However, are the arguments introduced above a fair account of the event? According to the verbatim record of the LAI Executive meeting,¹⁰⁹⁰ several of the actors had commented on the uncertainty within the LAI and the sections. This verbatim record also indicates that Münzenberg, Ferdi, Smeral and Ford were in control of the session, whereas others present e.g. Bridgeman, Jäger, Scholze, Kouyaté and Chatto stated that both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement were in a precarious position.

While Münzenberg had introduced the historical dimension of the LAI, Smeral outlined the new political agenda of the LAI: the revolutionary national minority movement in Europe. Apologising for the “extensive resolution”, Smeral nonetheless focused essentially on attacking the LSI and the *Amsterdam International*, rather than on explaining the principal aim of getting the LAI to approach the national minority movement. Later, Smeral’s report was edited and published as an article, “Der Kampf um eine vernünftige Organisation der Welt”, in the July issue of *Der Rote Aufbau*. In this article, Smeral claimed that twenty-one European countries persistently oppressed national minorities as a result of the Versailles Peace Treaty, nations which received eager support from the “imperialist policy” of the *League of Nations*. Smeral’s performance in Berlin and his ensuing article were nothing more than a salute to the Soviet Union and its “national organisation”, declaring that it was “the only country in the world in which all nationalities are equal”. This was merely a repetition of the Comintern’s policy on the national question, which would again be re-stated by Kuusinen at the ECCI Presidium session in Moscow on 6 June.¹⁰⁹¹

Ford’s report on the Negro question ended with the conclusion that the LAI had to recognise that “the blacks are an important factor in the struggle against imperialism”. While this was nothing more than a rhetorical act, Kouyaté’s disheartening report made Ford react. Kouyaté stated that the French LAI Section was a complete mess, while the structural setting in Berlin prevented

¹⁰⁸⁹ Helmut/Dimitrov reported to the ECCI that the representative of the PCF, Gadyar, had arrived on 4 June, just in time to attend the final meeting of the “fraction bureau”. The “fraction bureau” was an instrument used to control the LAI Executive meeting and consisted of Helmut/Dimitrov (WEB), Lenz (KPD), Magyar (Eastern Secretariat), Ferdi and Münzenberg, see fol. RGASPI 499/1/33, 44, (Confidential) Letter from “Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 8/6-1931 and Ferdi’s report, RGASPI 542/1/49, 281-287, Bericht des Bureaus der Fraktion der Exekutiv-sitzung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, author: Ferdi, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1931; RGASPI 539/2/432, 7, Bericht über die Sitzung des Exekutiv-Komitees der anti-imperialistischen Liga, Münzenberg & Heckert, Berlin, to the IRH Secretariat, Moscow, June 1931 [arrived in Moscow 23/6-1931]; RGASPI 542/1/48, 110-115, (Confidential) Report from “A. B.” [Magyar], Berlin, to Kuusinen/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/6-1931.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Put on record by the secretary [unknown] at the unknown location for the meeting in Berlin.

¹⁰⁹¹ RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931. Smeral concluded in *Der Rote Aufbau* that the following twenty-one European countries acted as oppressive “hosts” against national minorities (marked out on a map): Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Iceland, Estonia, Germany, France, Greece, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Sweden, Spain, South Slovenia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. According to Smeral, the LSI and the *Amsterdam International* represented the “tools of the MacDonald government”, see Bohumír Smeral, “Der Kampf um eine vernünftige Organisation der Welt”, in *Der Rote Aufbau*, Berlin, 15. Juli 1931, IV. Jahrg. Heft 11, pp.504-509.

the German LDRN from carrying out any kind of activity. The LDRN's predicament troubled Ford, urging Kouyaté to work "more energetically", although Ford conceded that it was difficult to achieve any results as Kouyaté was completely alone in Berlin.¹⁰⁹²

Paul Scholze, the IAH delegate, tried to explain the IAH's current relations with the LAI, while admitting that the IAH's "organisational weakness" in the colonies was entirely due to its lack of contacts. Apparently, Scholze intentionally avoided mentioning the historic tie between the IAH and the LAI; yet the IAH had supported the LAI financially from the beginning. However, this had not helped to strengthen the network of the IAH outside Europe. Scholze admitted that the IAH was experiencing the present moment as difficult as, like the LAI, the IAH had lost several collaborations to "different organisations". Later in 1931, however, an appraisal of the relations between the LAI and the IAH appeared in the IAH's book *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*, which had allegedly been written by Münzenberg and the Czechoslovakian communist, Otto Katz. Furthermore, *Solidarität* had been released in connection with the Tenth Anniversary of the IAH in 1931, and presented a picture which differed in many respects from Scholze's report. For example, the IAH's support had (rightfully) secured the establishment of the LAI in 1927, with Münzenberg stating that it had been an initiative which illustrated the IAH's moral stimulus as both a defender and a protector of proletarian solidarity, e.g. by organising solidarity campaigns in support of the Chinese and Indian national revolutionary struggles.¹⁰⁹³ Münzenberg's depiction contrasted with Scholze's evaluation of the IAH and its relation to the LAI. Thus, while Münzenberg argued that the IAH had given the LAI its moral support from the beginning, he neglected to mention that the LAI was also the result of the IAH's administrative and financial support.

Bridgeman kept his report on the British LAI Section short, concluding that Maxton's "treachery" had inflicted "great difficulties ... to overcome" for the section. This particularly concerned the official ban, sanctioned by the *Labour Party*, prohibiting any member of the social democratic movement in Great Britain from joining the LAI. After the LAI Executive meeting, Bridgeman returned to London and to the despondency of the section. In August, Bridgeman accused the International Secretariat "of overlooking the fact that we have no staff and very little money", and questioned how the International Secretariat even had the nerve to urge the section to

¹⁰⁹² RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931. Ford was only able to attend the meeting for a short while, and left in all haste, according to the keeper of the minutes, concluding that he seemed "stressed about something" during his "much reduced" speech, see further in Weiss (2011).

¹⁰⁹³ RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931; Münzenberg 1931, pp.331-334. The LAI organised public demonstrations in Berlin, Hamburg, Remscheid, Cannstatt bei Stuttgart, Leipzig, Erfurt, Worms and Vienna. 50,000 people attended the meeting in Hamburg, where the leader of the KPD, Thälmann, delivered a speech, joined by Bilé on the rostrum, *A-I-Z*, Jahrgang. X, No. 26, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin, p.522.

distribute both its special issue of the *A-I-Z*, “Leben und Kampf der Schwarzen Rasse” (published in the summer of 1931) and *The Anti-Imperialist Review* at the expense of the section. Apparently, the International Secretariat demanded that the British LAI Section buy 800 copies of *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, thus Bridgeman wondered whether the LAI “centre” in Berlin realised that the situation in London had reached a critical level:

Do not overestimate our ability to assist you. We will do all we can, but as I have already said we have not got any staff or any resources, and can only therefore do one thing at a time. I regret this weak state of affairs, but the suggestions which you have made with regard to the distribution of the Review indicate that you have got an entirely incorrect idea as to our position.¹⁰⁹⁴

The Secretary of the German LAI Section, Hans Jäger, described a section in a confused and weak state concluding that, in comparison to “former organisational standards”, the LAI barely existed in the country. Jäger argued that the failure of the section was a result of the political situation in Germany, where the “double battle” against “the reformists and then against the fascists”, as well as the surveillance by the security services, was consuming a lot of energy. Yet, this struggle was also suffering from the constant lack of resources (“no money for posters or events”), leaving the section reduced to a passive behaviour, capable only of organising small anti-imperialist demonstrations in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, Essen and Remscheid. Jäger concluded that both the aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress and the “purification process” had caused immense damage to the section, especially with the loss of intellectuals, pacifists, socialists and other non-party activists, and yet, the section wanted “to make everything work and would not fall short compared to the other sections”.¹⁰⁹⁵

At this LAI Executive meeting, Chatto introduced himself as the LAI representative on the Indian question. Since this was Chatto’s final performance on behalf of the LAI (which he did not disclose at the meeting), his report was an act of self-criticism on the errors of past times, especially on the failure to establish a vigorous anti-imperialist movement in India. Chatto stated

¹⁰⁹⁴ RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931; RGASPI 542/1/52, 26, Letter from Bridgeman, London, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 26/8-1931. For the special issue on the “Black race”, see *A-I-Z*, “Sondernummer: Leben und Kampf der Schwarzen Rasse”, Jahrgang X., Nr. 26, Berlin, Neuer Deutscher Verlag (1931). Heinrich Stahr concluded that the “Sondernummer” was one of the few existing examples highlighting the situation of the Black race in the USA (Stahr, 2004, pp.394-398). The “Sondernummer” included an article by Ford (“Die schwarze Rasse stöszt zür Roten Front”) as well as other articles which gave an account of the “slaves of the white master” (*Sklaven der weissen Herren*) and the “cheapest hands of the world”, in which the latter phrase referred to the systematic use of child labour in Africa. This special issue was a joint effort by Münzenberg and Padmore, based on the writings of Scott Nearing in *Black America*. Padmore had provided an IAH functionary in Moscow (who had “only one arm”) with Nearing’s book, who in turn passed it on to Münzenberg, who used the book as inspiration to design the “Sondernummer”. On 3 March, 1932, Padmore asked Gross to tell Münzenberg that he wanted his book back, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/753, 155, Letter from Padmore, Hamburg, to Gross, Berlin, 3/3-1932.

¹⁰⁹⁵ RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931.

that “much had been done” since the Frankfurt Congress, however the LAI’s reaction to the Nehru’s “betrayal” had been a disappointment. For Chatto, the LAI’s hesitancy in responding with conviction and the reluctance to foment a strong, political campaign against Nehru had damaged the organisation. Chatto regretted having trusted Nehru, a person who had “capitulated to Gandhi ... over and over again”, urging the delegates at the meeting to understand that his (Chatto’s) sole objective had been to establish the LAI in India, an aim which depended on establishing “personal connections” from Europe to India. Chatto’s final statement was a musing over the above, as well as a reflection on the work to continue developing the LAI’s activities in Berlin and England:

More Indian companions have to participate in the work of the League, and to create closer work with the British section. Berlin is always referred to as a section of Moscow. Now this is not true. Berlin offers a direct and undisturbed connection with the colonies. 2 million Indians live outside India as labourers. The English ports are a very busy traffic of Indians. This has to be approached in some way, also the large numbers of West Indian students [in England].¹⁰⁹⁶

This would be Chatto’s epitaph and legacy at the International Secretariat. Nevertheless, during this LAI Executive meeting, Münzenberg avoided mentioning in his report on “organisational questions” the fact that Chatto was about to leave Berlin, stating only that “important personal changes are to be made after some employees resign”. According to the verbatim record, Münzenberg concluded that the change in personnel was part of a re-structuring of the LAI in 1931, referring to the LAI as “in essence, [...] a committee built upon no organisational foundation” unable to execute “substantial work”. How did Münzenberg define “work” in this context? Münzenberg argued that the LAI was a leading actor in a number of international propaganda campaigns (the Meerut trial and the well-known Sacco and Vanzetti case in the USA), and was a pivotal actor in protesting against the “imperialist agents”: the LSI and the *Amsterdam International*. While this meeting of the LAI Executive in Berlin aimed to revive the LAI as a “non-party organisation”, Münzenberg stated that the organisation did not depend on either the consent or the participation of the “leaders of social democracy”. Thus, the meeting in Berlin symbolised the re-birth of “valuable political and ideological ideas”, Münzenberg stated:

The LAI is reflected in its organisational [...] strength, its actual influence is not reflected. We actually have more, [...] stronger influence than we realise. [...] Our theories and ideologies are so good that they live and work, even without organisations to distribute and process them, they exist. The most important result of our conference is the alliance between

¹⁰⁹⁶ RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931.

the LAI and the organisations of national minorities and, through this alliance, the League shall become a world organisation.¹⁰⁹⁷

To give substance to the vision of developing the LAI into a “world organisation”, the delegates approved the following seventeen members to constitute the LAI Executive:

Table 9.1: The LAI Executive Committee, June 1931

Member	Country, or, Region
Münzenberg (general secretary)	Germany
Robert Dunn	USA
Abdul Madjid	Indonesia [India]
Hamdi el Husseini	Middle East
Chandra Chatterjee	India
[?] Petruschewitsch	West Ukraine; part of Poland
Alex Gossip	England
[?] Pavlov	Hungary [imprisoned in Sofia]
Reginald Bridgeman	England
Harry Pollitt	England (NMM)
Shapurji Saklatvala	India
A. Herclet	France
Augustino Sandino	Latin America
Georgi Dimitrov/Helmut	Balkan
John Ford	Negroes; USA
G. Melnitschansky	The Soviet Union
Huan Ping	China ¹⁰⁹⁸

A new set of members to the LAI General Council was also appointed at the Berlin meeting: Anastasov from Macedonia, the Indian Gopal Basak (one of the accused in the Meerut trial), the Albanian Boschi Lano, Jim Larkin Jr. from Ireland, A. Mesta from the Thracian region, the South African A. Nzula and Padmore.¹⁰⁹⁹ As one of its first acts, the LAI Executive endorsed a revised

¹⁰⁹⁷ Münzenberg wanted to increase LAI activity on all levels, e.g. the representatives of national minority organisations should be guaranteed a seat on the LAI Executive; organise a congress on the European national minority question; strengthen the youth work; re-launch *The Anti-Imperialist Review*; and develop “mass work” in Germany and England, see fol. RGASPI 539/2/432, 7, Bericht über die Sitzung des Exekutiv-Komitees der anti-imperialistischen Liga, Münzenberg & Heckert, Berlin, to the IRH Secretariat, Moscow, June 1931 [arrived in Moscow 23/6-1931]; RGASPI 542/1/49, 123-209, Verbatim record: LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931.

¹⁰⁹⁸ SAPMO BA-ZPA R 8051/82/8, 718-724, Handwritten notes, Willi Budich, Berlin, 1-2/6-1931.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Only Lano attended this LAI Executive meeting. The official report (an edited version of the unofficial protocol and Münzenberg and Heckert’s report), had deleted the names of well-known communists who had participated at the meeting, e.g. Ford, Dimitrov, Melnitschansky, Pollitt and Münzenberg, only to include the names of Robert Dunn, Abdul Madjid, Hamdi el Husseini, Chatterjee, Petruschewitsch, Vlachoff, Saadi from Arabia and Rattan Singh of the *Ghadr Party*, see fol. RGASPI 539/2/432, 15-17, Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit, Berlin, 31/5-2/6-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R 8051/82/8, 718-724, Handwritten notes, Willi

political programme for the LAI, an agenda which Manuilsky had presented during a discussion of the end of the crisis in September 1930 (see previous chapter). The LAI Executive also instructed the International Secretariat to improve its work in order to turn the LAI into “a world organisation”. This request focused, above all, on strengthening its propaganda and the “enormous importance of the liberation struggle of oppressed nations” as well as the unification of “every revolutionary workers’, peasant and national revolutionary organisations in the colonial countries” as a measure to protect communications running from Europe to both the Middle East and the Negro liberation movements in Africa and Latin America.¹¹⁰⁰ The resurrection of the LAI Executive in Berlin exposed the fact that the LAI was a cover organisation in the service of the Comintern (“a communist front organisation”). In conclusion, this LAI Executive meeting also exposed the International Secretariat as a centre about to implode due to its shattered structure and sectarian tendencies. Thus, the resurrection of the LAI Executive marked the arrival of sectarianism.

*

A Stagnant Movement

Ferdi argued that the resurrection of the LAI Executive had put an end to the “illegal character” of the LAI. The challenge now though was how the International Secretariat should realise the revival of the LAI as a non-political actor. Firstly, the International Secretariat intended to distribute information on the LAI Executive meeting to the sections and, secondly, “the working masses” had to be convinced to support the new line. However, the brief moment of euphoria at the International Secretariat vanished rather quickly, replaced by a feeling of apprehension and stagnation. Magyar remained in Berlin after the LAI Executive meeting only to remark that if the LAI did not resume its activity, the organisation would miss the opportunity to do so. In Helmut/Dimitrov’s opinion, the issue was of a more pragmatic nature, informing the ECCI that the International Secretariat had to first become “operational” before being able to capitalise on the

Budich, Berlin, 1-2/6-1931; SCA, CL Collection, volume 131, Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit, Berlin [June 1931].

¹¹⁰⁰ According to an article, “A Decisive Stage in the Development of the League against Imperialism”, authored by Ferdi (signed “F”, translated from French to English by Chatto), and published in *The Anti-Imperialist Review* in September 1931, the LAI had a new, political direction: “The LAI came into being at a time when the domination of the national bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist movements of national liberation had attained its zenith. [...] the last session of the Executive Committee accomplished a task which had been left too long in suspense. It finally liquidated the abnormal situation which resulted from the formal presence in its midst of elements not in accord with its essential principles. [...] gave the League a definitely revolutionary political line and that it imposed the obligation on all its members of fighting effectively for the complete independence of the colonies, the semi-colonies and the countries containing oppressed national minorities, insincere elements continued to remain within its ranks [Nehru, Maxton, Fimmen, Hattal]”, “F” [Ferdi], “A Decisive Stage in the Development of the League against Imperialism”, in *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, September-October, 1931, pp.15-24.

“big opportunity” to establish a “partisan fighting alliance of the liberation movements of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the nationally oppressed in Europe and the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry in the imperialist countries”.¹¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, the International Secretariat was also suffering from the pressure of having to undergo a re-organisation on the individual level. While the LAI Executive meeting celebrated the idea of resuming a “higher level” of activity, in reality the International Secretariat was embarking upon its most sombre period, defined by a sectarianism which raged across the international communist movement during 1931.

Despite Münzenberg’s lively performance at the LAI Executive meeting, in fact the gulf between him and the LAI was, at this point in time, enormous. For Helmut/Dimitrov, this friction caused enormous irritation, telling the ECCI to order Münzenberg to cease acting indifferently and to contribute more actively to the work of the LAI, despite the fact that “he has many other works” which consumed Münzenberg’s energy and attention, especially the preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the IAH (scheduled to convene in Berlin on 9-15/10-1931).¹¹⁰² With Chatto having lost his authoritative position at the International Secretariat, and without Münzenberg’s patronage, no other individual seemed capable of assuming responsibility at the International Secretariat. According to both Helmut/Dimitrov and Magyar, the capacity of the other remaining members was at its best limited. Ferdi was “a good comrade” but a “poor organiser” who had no “political initiative whatsoever”, while “York”/Thögensen was an “active and agile” person, yet unable to fill the gap left by Chatto. The stagnant atmosphere only increased when Smeral declared that he wanted to resign from the International Secretariat (see further below). Thus, the Eastern Secretariat instructed Ferdi to take care of the curricular activity for a short period so that the International Secretariat did not completely lose control. On 18 August, Ferdi concluded that the summer “course for eight Indian students” in Berlin had given “the impression that they have benefitted” from it.¹¹⁰³ However, the first step of the individual re-organisation at the International Secretariat was introduced on 16 July, when Magyar informed the Political Commission in

¹¹⁰¹ Ferdi informed the Eastern Secretariat that the resolutions had been published in a pamphlet (German and English versions) in June, and preparations for “a French and Arabic edition” were on the way, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/49, 281-287, Bericht des Bureaus der Fraktion der Exekutivitzung der Liga gegen Imperialismus, author: Ferdi, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1931, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 128; RGASPI 542/1/48, 110-115, (Confidential) Report from “A. B.” [Magyar], Berlin, to Kuusinen/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/6-1931; RGASPI 499/1/33, 44, (Confidential) Letter from “Helmut”/Dimitrov, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 8/6-1931.

¹¹⁰² RGASPI 499/1/33, 44, (Confidential) Letter from “Helmut”/Dimitrov, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 8/6-1931; RGASPI 495/30/715, 7-10, “Resolution zum Bericht des Genossen Muenzenberg ueber die Arbeit der IAH in der Beratung der Agitprop des EKKF”, 17/6-1931.

¹¹⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/48, 128; RGASPI 542/1/48, 110-115, (Confidential) Report from “A. B.” [Magyar], Berlin, to Kuusinen/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/6-1931; RGASPI 499/1/33, 44, (Confidential) Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, 8/6-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 147, Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/8-1931.

Moscow of the “new” International Secretariat: CPGB member Clemens Dutt, Ferdi, York/Thögersen and the Polish communist Joseph Berger (“Bob”, “Boris”).¹¹⁰⁴

Clemens Dutt assumed Chatto’s position as “International Political Secretary” at the International Secretariat and became responsible for its curricular activity. In August 1931, Dutt arrived in Berlin and held a course on “the Basis of the Action Program for the Communist Party of India”. The process to confirm Dutt as Chatto’s replacement turned into a vitriolic procedure, characterised by its defamation. Magyar had in fact nominated Robin Page Arnot as the most desired candidate to take over Chatto’s position at the International Secretariat. However, Arnot had other obligations which prevented him from assuming the position. Clemens Dutt was the second preferred candidate who, according to Magyar, was “a person without any initiative”, incapable of carrying out either “organisational or political” work. Yet, Magyar acknowledged that Dutt was “a man of words” because of his professional background as a publicist and journalist. With no other suitable candidate to be found (J. T. Murphy was briefly mentioned as a third candidate), Magyar accepted the fact and sent an instruction to Dutt to resign as editor at the publishing house Markus Lawrence (Ltd.) in London and to travel to Berlin in August. In August, the Political Commission notified the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” that Dutt was the “colonial member at the Secretariat”.¹¹⁰⁵

In July 1931, Smeral declared his intention of not wanting to continue as a secretary of the LAI. Unwilling to carry out the assignments demanded of him, Magyar and Helmut/Dimitrov realised that the Smeral question required an urgent solution. Why did Smeral want to leave the LAI and Berlin? Apparently, already prior to the LAI Executive meeting, the Political Commission had discussed that Smeral wanted “another candidate” to replace him in Berlin.¹¹⁰⁶ However, in

¹¹⁰⁴ RGASPI 495/4/122, 25, (Secret) Short note [in Russian] regarding the LAI, 16/7-1931. Joseph Berger, born in Cracow in 1904, emigrated to Palestine in 1920, and founder of the *Communist Party of Palestine*. In the latter half of the 1920s, Berger underwent political education in Moscow (ILS or KUTV), later to assume a position as an emissary of the Comintern (known pseudonym: “Barzilai”). Berger arrived in Berlin on 1 October, 1931, Lazitch 1986, p.23; RGASPI 542/1/48, 155, Short note from Berger, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, 6/10-1931.

¹¹⁰⁵ The Political Commission instructed the Central Committee of the CPGB to find another “Comrade” as a replacement for Dutt at the publishing house. According to Ferdi, the nomination of Dutt had apparently caused disorder within the CPGB leadership. Yet, the Political Commission remained unconvinced as to whether Ferdi’s statement was accurate, telling him that it did not matter if Dutt, or J. T. Murphy were poor organisers, Dutt was “only half an Indian”, but he could speak and write in German, something Murphy was unable to do. In fact, the Political Commission suspected that “some English Comrades just want to get rid of Murphy”, RGASPI 495/4/124, 1-2, Protokoll Nr.161 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 27/7-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 136, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Berlin/Moscow, to “kom.Fraktion” [Münzenberg, Ferdi, York] des Sekretariats LAI, July, 1931. For Murphy discussion, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 142-143, (Confidential) Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the LAI Secretariat, Berlin, 31/7-1931; RGASPI 495/154/783, 15, Letter from Pol.Comm., Moscow, to Ferdi, Berlin, 12/8-1931.

¹¹⁰⁶ RGASPI 542/1/48, 110-115, (Confidential) Report from “A. B.” [Magyar], Berlin, to Kuusinen/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 23/6-1931; RGASPI 499/1/33, 44, (Confidential) Letter from “Helmut”/Dimitrov, Berlin, to ECCI, Moscow, 8/6-1931; RGASPI 495/4/109, 6-7, (Streng vertraulich! Für Sondermappe!) Protokoll Nr.142 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. EKKI, 23/5-1931; RGASPI 495/4/119, 7-8, (Streng vertraulich! Für Sondermappe!) Protokoll Nr.152 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 3/7-1931.

comparison to the case against Chatto, the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters showed a lenient attitude towards Smeral. If Smeral left the LAI, the main challenge for the Comintern would be to find a new assignment for him within the hierarchy. Smeral expressed an irrevocable desire to resign and, prior to departing for his vacation in July, Smeral told the “kom.Fraktion” that he did not know whether he would return to the International Secretariat.¹¹⁰⁷ Smeral had grown tired of being in Berlin and hoped to find a new direction within the international communist movement. While spending the summer holidays with his family in Czechoslovakia, Smeral assisted the CPCz in Prague during the municipal electoral campaign. “In early October” Smeral expected that Ferdi would have some information “on his fate”, before even considering whether he would return to Berlin. Thus, on 13 October, the Political Commission decided to transfer the “Smeral question” to the party in Prague. In the meantime, the WEB notified the “kom.Fraktion” that the Smeral question would soon “be determined”.¹¹⁰⁸ Rumour had it that the Political Commission had sent Smeral an instruction on 23 October to return to Moscow for a meeting with the General Council of the Profintern, although, in the end, this meeting never took place. In fact, Smeral left Berlin sometime in November or December 1931 and travelled to Czechoslovakia instead of returning to Moscow. In Prague, Smeral delivered a couple of lectures in the beginning of 1932 on the progression of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. On 15 April 1932, the Political Commission discussed a request from Münzenberg, proposing that Smeral assume the leadership of the Czechoslovakian IAH section.¹¹⁰⁹ In conclusion, Smeral’s departure from the International Secretariat also witnessed the end of the “old guard” at the LAI bureau in Berlin. In the second half of 1931, the International Secretariat had a new set of devotees.

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¹¹⁰⁷ Magyar explained that due to the fact that “almost all employees are on leave” on summer holidays, the work at Comintern headquarters had come to a halt, and nothing could be done until the Political Secretariat had evaluated this question. This left Smeral with no other option than to remain in Berlin, RGASPI 542/1/48, 128, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 8/7-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 136, Letter from Magyar, Berlin/Moscow, to Kommfraktion des Sekretariats LAI, July, 1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 140-141, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 31/7-1931.

¹¹⁰⁸ RGASPI 542/1/48, 148-150, Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 24/9-1931. A copy of this report was sent to the Political Secretariat, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 160-163; RGASPI 495/4/145, 1-3, Protokoll Nr. 187 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr am 13/10-1931. Berger wondered whether the Eastern Secretariat could speed up its work on reaching a decision on Smeral, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 155, Short note from Berger, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, 6/10-1931; RGASPI 542/1/54, 94-95, Letter from WEB, Berlin, “an die Kommfraktion des Sekretariats der “Antiimperialistischen Liga”, Berlin, 16/10-1931.

¹¹⁰⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1507/279, 86, (Abschrift, Berlin den 19. August 1932) Betrifft: Durchsuchung der Räume der ‘Liga gegen den Imperialismus’, Bezug: Berichte vom 31/12-1931, Der Polizeipräsident, Berlin; RGASPI 495/272/3640, 1-2, Certificate: Anketa Bohumír Smeral, Moscow, [undated]; RGASPI 495/4/183, 1-5, Protokoll Nr. 236 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr am 15/4-1932. However, the Political Commission decided to transfer the question entirely to the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*. In 1934, Smeral left Berlin and travelled with Vasil Kolarov to Outer Mongolia as Comintern emissaries to assist with the work of the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of Mongolia*, see Lazitch 1986, p.434.

“Why We Appear”

The International Secretariat attempted to act as the LAI’s spokesperson after the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin. In order to do so, the LAI organ, *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, was re-launched in September 1931. As noted in the introductory note, the International Secretariat stated that the reason “why we appear” was to function as the focal point of the international anti-imperialist movement. Hence, the moment had arrived to extend and intensify its “activities to a corresponding degree” and, with the release of *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, each member of the LAI had a theoretical manual on how to develop and strengthen the anti-imperialist movement. The International Secretariat believed that this Review represented a communicative channel for the LAI. Above all, the journal was “a weapon” to “rally the forces” in the propaganda against the Versailles peace treaty in support of the colonial struggle, and to advocate a re-constitution of Europe’s borders on the principle of national self-determination.¹¹¹⁰

The publication of *The Anti-Imperialist Review* was one of the few undertakings the International Secretariat succeeded in realising after the LAI Executive meeting in 1931. According to Ferdi, the review had been “edited ... perfectly”.¹¹¹¹ The curricular activity continued to represent a central source from which the International Secretariat could find “political material” in Europe, however, the primary question was either to develop or support a number of propaganda campaigns in 1931. For example, in the second half of 1931, the International Secretariat devoted itself to developing a campaign in connection with the Manchurian crisis. In September, the WEB released a statement declaring “in defence of the Soviet Union and the Chinese revolution” and against the “Japanese offensive”. This statement set out the initiation of a support campaign under the supervision of the LAI in Berlin. However, the WEB was in total control of this campaign, with Ferdi performing his role as liaison, and Kunizaki acting as an advisor.¹¹¹² Another question was the Scottsboro case in the USA, a campaign which quickly assumed the character of a global protest movement. The case centred on a legal action involving nine young Afro-American males, who had been arrested on 25 March 1931, charged with having raped two white young females. For the communist movement in the USA, the Scottsboro case was one of the major propagandist exercises during the 1930s, registering the services and support of the CPUSA and the IRH [better known as the *International Labour Defence* in the USA; ILD]. In Europe, the LAI was part of the communist machinery supporting

¹¹¹⁰ International Secretariat, “Why we Appear”, in *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, Vol. 1 September-October 1931, No. 1, Berlin, pp.3-8.

¹¹¹¹ RGASPI 542/1/48, 128, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 8/7-1931.

¹¹¹² RGASPI 542/1/48, 148-150, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, 24/9-1931. For the joint protest, see Degras, “Appeal by the West European Bureau of the ECCI and the European Secretariat of the RILU on the Japanese Invasion of Manchuria”, vol. III, 1965, pp.176-179. Taken from *Inprecorr*, xi, 93, p.2080, 29/9-1931.

the IRH campaign, e.g. by distributing material to the left-wing press and publishing articles. For example, on 4 July 1931, *Inprecorr* published an article by the International LAI Youth secretariat [York/Thögersen], “Erkämpft Leben und Freiheit der acht [sic] jungen Neger”, declaring its solidarity in support of the defendants.¹¹¹³ The question at this point in time was, however, whether the International Secretariat was on the verge of collapsing due to its sectarian tendencies. Moreover, the Chief of Police suspected that the International Secretariat represented a vital hub for the international communist movement, especially channelling intelligence back and forth to Moscow, an activity supported by a global network of communist agents.¹¹¹⁴

Ferdi emphasised that the International Secretariat had to carry out some kind of regular activity after the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin. Yet, with Chatto about to leave, and Smeral refusing to work at the bureau in Berlin, the International Secretariat lacked personnel. Nonetheless, on 8 July, Ferdi informed Magyar that a Hungarian communist, Leitner, had arrived in Berlin in June. According to Ferdi, Leitner was a “good revolutionary ... very capable” in the colonial question and “the Negro question”, and had proficient linguistic skills in English, German and French. In fact, Ferdi concluded that Leitner seemed overqualified to work at the International Secretariat, wondering whether the Eastern Secretariat could ask Piatnitsky if there was a position for Leitner in the OMS in Moscow (“let him come to you and give him a job that matches his skills”). While Magyar concluded that Leitner could become a leader of “the ECCI translation services apparatus” in Moscow, Ferdi, on the other hand, had to send additional documents on Leitner before the Comintern could authorise him to travel to Moscow.¹¹¹⁵

On the question of the “oppressed national minorities in Europe”, Ferdi told the Eastern Secretariat that work was “progressing”. This particularly concerned the distribution of information (“circular letters”) to national minority organisations in Europe.¹¹¹⁶ Münzenberg’s

¹¹¹³ Walter T. Howard (ed.), *Black Communists Speak on Scottsboro. A Documentary History*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2007, pp.1-21; Miller, Pennybacker and Rosenhaft (2001). Prominent and “important Party leaders of color” (William Patterson, Harry Haywood, Ford, Cyril Briggs, B. D. Amis, Padmore, and Eugene Gordon) were involved in this protest campaign; SAPMO-BA ZPA R1501/20200, 62, “Erkämpft Leben und Freiheit der acht jungen Neger”, *Inprecorr*, No.71, 4/7-1931.

¹¹¹⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 68, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung IA., Berlin, an Herrn R. R. von Lengriesser, 12/8-1931.

¹¹¹⁵ Leitner escaped from Hungary in 1931, leaving his wife behind who, in turn, ended up in a prison in Budapest. Known to the others within the “Hungarian mafia” in the Comintern, for example, Gyula Alpári and Magyar, Leitner was an entrusted “Comrade”, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 128, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 8/7-1931. For Magyar’s reply, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 142-143, (Confidential) Letter from the Eastern Secretariat [Magyar], Moscow, to the LAI Secretariat, Berlin, 31/7-1931. Leitner was not, however, assigned as a translator. Instead, he remained in Berlin throughout 1931 and became seriously ill in December. An arrangement was made to send him to Moscow “in the care of MOPR [IRH]”, once he was “strong enough to undertake the voyage”, RGASPI 542/1/56, 2, Letter from “Hans” [York/Thögersen], Berlin, to Chatto, Moscow, 21/1-1932.

¹¹¹⁶ In the summer of 1931, the International Secretariat published petitions and public manifestos against both the “counter-revolutionary terror in China” and the “arming of the Zionists of Palestine by British imperialism”, RGASPI 542/1/48, 137-138, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 25/7-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 147, Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 18/8-1931.

opinion and expectations of the new line were of a more modest character, telling Magyar: "I await with great interest the decisions signalled by you in the matter of the league. This is urgently needed since the International Secretariat currently is not very productive".¹¹¹⁷ As part of the solution in resolving the difficulties at the International Secretariat, caused most likely by Chatto's sudden fall from grace and the arrival of Clemens Dutt in Berlin, the Eastern Secretariat promised the "kom.Fraktion" to appoint a permanent liaison for the LAI at Comintern headquarters.¹¹¹⁸ Working conditions at the International Secretariat did not improve, however, especially after the ECCI appointed Ferdi as its emissary to the *Communist Party of Turkey*. This assignment required Ferdi to travel frequently to Turkey to hold meetings and to organise the party's ideological and organisational work. Other members of the International Secretariat were becoming anxious and started to question whether it would ever be possible to get the work up and running again.¹¹¹⁹

The major problem for the International Secretariat and the "new line" was its lack of reliable contacts to the national minority movement. It did not help that the propaganda emanating from the International Secretariat highlighted this problem, e.g. *Informationsdienst* (an LAI publication) included articles on the political situation in Eastern Europe, the "struggle of the Belorussian peasant"; the Ukrainian minority and its relation to the Polish state; the Basque nationalist movement; and the Flemish independence movement in Belgium. The results of this propaganda, and whether this undertaking increased the number of International Secretariat contacts, are complex questions to evaluate. The visit by the representative of the *Irish Republican Party*, Peadar O'Donell [sic], to the International Secretariat, which focused on how to re-organise the Irish LAI Section in September 1931, is perhaps illustrative of the assumption that the propaganda did indeed have some kind of effect. After returning to Ireland, Peadar O'Donell organised a public LAI meeting in Dublin in December 1931 against the extension of the Bill "to protect public security", an event attended by "a thousand strong crowd of workers".¹¹²⁰

The WEB monitored whether or not the International Secretariat was managing to put the "new line" into practice, however, it fairly quickly lost patience with how the work was progressing.

¹¹¹⁷ RGASPI 542/1/48, 139, Short note from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 25/7-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 136, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Berlin/Moscow, to Kommfraktion des Sekretariats LAI, July, 1931.

¹¹¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/48, 140-141, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 31/7-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 142-143, (Confidential) Letter from the Eastern Secretariat [Magyar], Moscow, to International Secretariat LAI, Berlin, 31/7-1931. Curiously, Magyar thanked Münzenberg for having sent a pair of shoes to him in Moscow, expressing that "you have made a man completely happy".

¹¹¹⁹ This decision did not mean that Ferdi was about to resign from the International Secretariat, far from it, it merely added depth to his mission as a Comintern agent in Europe, above all to strengthen the national minority question, see fol. RGASPI 495/154/783, 12-14, Information re. Ferdi (streng vertraulich), Moscow, 3/8-1931.

¹¹²⁰ RGASPI 542/1/48, 148-150, Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 24/9-1931; *Informationsdienst der Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängigkeit*, Internationales Sekretariat, No.2, Berlin, 2/9-1931, pp.12-13; RA SE/RA/420640.02, Del 6, EK der IRH Agitprop, Information über Irland, December, 1931.

Helmut/Dimitrov told the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” to let the WEB use the LAI’s European network in order to get the work heading in a new direction. In November, the WEB additionally provided the “kom.Fraktion” with a “sanctioned version” of a resolution on “oppressed nationalities” in Europe, along with the instruction to circulate this resolution to all LAI sections and to all organisations associated with the LAI. The perceived success of these WEB interventions was confirmed in a report by Helmut/Dimitrov to the ECCI: “I enjoy how the work on the oppressed nations and national minorities in Europe is progressing in the League”.¹¹²¹ The WEB’s active intervention to correct the work of the International Secretariat on the national minority question confirmed the LAI’s inability to adjust itself to the “new line” and to find new contacts. The issue of the national minority movements reduced the LAI to being nothing more than a distributor of propaganda, focusing on letter-writing campaigns, publishing articles and despatching resolutions. For example, on 8 December 1931, the LAI Executive published a protest in *Inprecorr* against the oppression and persecution of national minorities in Poland.¹¹²² This strategy continued in 1932, with articles being published in the *Informationsbulletin* on the “oppressed national minorities” in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, the Balkan region, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, reports which included criticism of the *League of Nations* and its treatment of the national minority question in Europe.¹¹²³

In 1931-32, the International Secretariat also organised public demonstrations, special seminars and introduced the idea of organising an “international conference of oppressed nations and national minorities”. While the former activities were supported by the MASCH in Berlin, which provided a location for the LAI to give a lecture on the “heroic Balkan struggle” on 19 August, 1932,¹¹²⁴ the idea of an international conference was a test of faith involving a whole host of actors. An unknown representative of the IRH, who was either living in or was on a mission to Berlin, informed “Hertha” – the pseudonym for the Russian Elena Stasova, one of the leaders at

¹¹²¹ RGASPI 542/1/48, 169, Short note from kom.Fraktion Liga, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 6/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 176, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, 7/11-1931.

¹¹²² SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 72, *Inprecorr*, “Protest der ‘Liga gegen Imperialismus’”, No.49, 8/12-1931. The political situation in the eastern Polish borderlands, particularly the tense relations between the Polish and Ukrainian populaces, characterised by the nationalist struggle of the Ukrainian liberation movement, came to a head with the Polish drive for power and its revanchist ambitions. During the first years of the 1930s, this situation deteriorated even further. With the formation of the OUN (*Orhanizatsiia Ukrainskykh Natsionalistiv; Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists*) in 1929, the Polish state was now facing a violent opponent. In addition, the national minority question in Poland was a source of discontent that troubled not just Poland, but also its relations with neighbouring nations and the *League of Nations*, see further in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust. Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson, 1998, pp.177-178, and Steiner (2005).

¹¹²³ The LAI accused the *League of Nations* of merely seeking “reconciliation and national reformism” rather than promoting national self-determination, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 126-129, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nummer 11, März 1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 136-139, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nummer 13, Mai 1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 145a, “Gegen nationale und koloniale Unterdrückung. Zum Achten Kongress der nationalen Minderheiten in Wien“, *Inprecorr*, No.25, 28/6-1932.

¹¹²⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 159, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.192, 17/8-1932.

IRH headquarters in Moscow – that Willi Budich and Heckert had met the “kom.Fraktion” in October. The primary aim of the session had been to convince the LAI to do “joint work” with the IRH and, that if they did so, this would be “of great help for our movement [the IRH] in the colonies and semi-colonies”. Apparently, these negotiations succeeded to some degree. In May 1932, the IRH organ, the *MOPR*, announced in an article, “Die IRH und die antiimperialistische Liga”, the unification of the IRH and the LAI in the “struggle against imperialist war and the war threat against the Soviet Union” and in “defence of the Soviet Union”. A fundamental prerequisite for this collaboration was, nevertheless, a mutual consensus on how best to arrange the international conference. Firstly, the interactionism between the LAI and the IRH focused essentially on an interchange of services in order to cultivate political activism on a global scale. For the LAI, this meant helping the IRH to establish sections or committees in South Africa, India, and Indonesia, with the IRH network in Latin America being at the service of the LAI. Secondly, to celebrate this “joint work”, Ferdi, Berger and Münzenberg discussed with Budich and Heckert in Berlin in October 1931 the plan to organise an “international conference of oppressed nations and national minorities”. However, this meeting generated no definite answers¹¹²⁵ and remained unresolved until January 1933. During the visit of “Falkner” [?], a Comintern emissary, the members of the International Secretariat raised the question of the conference. Once “Falkner” had returned to Moscow, he/she informed the ECCI Secretariat of the International Secretariat’s request to prepare and hold a conference of “oppressed nations and national minorities”, but only on the condition that the Comintern granted the budget of 2,000 Marks.¹¹²⁶ On 27 January 1933, Kuusinen assessed the idea of this conference and convinced the Political Commission to endorse the decision to let the LAI arrange “a conference of European national minorities ... in 3-4 months”.¹¹²⁷ However, with the Nazi regime’s ascendancy to power in Germany on 30 January 1933, the idea of and momentum for this conference evaporated.

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The Decline of Curricular Activity

When Clemens Dutt arrived in Berlin in August 1932, curricular activity at the International Secretariat entered its final phase. Internal constraints, caused by the structural changes to the

¹¹²⁵ RGASPI 539/2/425/1, Letter from unknown author, Berlin, to “Hertha” [E. Stasova], Moscow, 1/11-1931. Other people attending these meetings at the International Secretariat were Padmore, Bilé and Luis Carlos Prestes from Brazil (a “Communist agitator” according to the notes of the MdI), see fol. RGASPI 534/3/668, 120-121, Report from Padmore, Hamburg, to Otto Huiswood, Moscow, 16/11-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 161, IAN 2165 p/7.9. Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, 20/9-1932.

¹¹²⁶ RGASPI 542/1/58, 1, Letter from Falkner, Moscow, to “Anna/Aina” [?], Moscow, 11/1-1933.

¹¹²⁷ RGASPI 495/4/228, 5-6, (Streng vertraulich) PROTOKOLL (B) Nr.291 der Sitzung der Politikkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/1-1933.

International Secretariat apparatus, as well as the consequences of the global recession, increased both the radicalism and the political extremism of the Weimar Republic and contributed to putting the LAI's nerve centre in a political gridlock. The social and economic situation was undermining the International Secretariat; however, the Eastern Secretariat did not consider this to be sufficient grounds on which to grant a rapid influx of money to sustain its curricular activity. Magyar told Münzenberg that "despite the crisis ... the best and most correct method to raise money" was to organise proletarian solidarity "collections" in Paris and Berlin.¹¹²⁸

Its curricular activity represented an opportunity for the International Secretariat to find devoted anti-colonial activists in Europe. As Chatto had been forced to leave Berlin, the responsibility for evaluating the "political material" fell on Ferdi's shoulders, a process which involved developing a technique to circumvent the surveillance of the French and German national security services. This left Dutt in charge of the courses, which were essentially focused on the Indian student community in Berlin, while Ferdi travelled to Paris to assess the anti-colonial movement and, in some cases, invite "desirable elements" to attend the courses in Berlin. However, the combination of a constant lack of money and the vigilance of the *Sûreté* in Paris, made it difficult to get the candidates to leave Paris and to cross the French-German border. This created a breach in the work to fulfil the original aim of the courses: to provide the educational units in Moscow (the ILS and the KUTV) with students. Despite Ferdi's French hiccup, Dutt continued to hold the courses for colonial students in Berlin, attended primarily by individuals who were either living in Germany, or had arrived from England. The KOSTUFRA helped Dutt to "entice young people" at German universities to take the LAI's colonial courses in Berlin. In addition, the International Secretariat instructed the KOSTUFRA to send information, if they found any promising candidates, to the leader of the local branch of the LAI, intelligence later passed on to Ferdi. This facilitated Ferdi's work of assessing the candidates, particularly in determining whether the person(s) were reliable enough to take the course. If a candidate gained Ferdi's trust, he/she could travel to Moscow and enrol for political education at either the KUTV or the ILS. The case of the Indian student Narain is illustrative of this process. In Clemens Dutt's opinion, Narain was a reliable and ardent person, suitable for political education at KUTV. Yet, Ferdi questioned Narain's intentions and wanted to do "a new inquiry about him" after having discovered "several inconsistencies in his statements", telling the Eastern Secretariat the following about Narain:

¹¹²⁸ RGASPI 542/1/48, 144, (Confidential) Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 1/8-1931.

In general, this young man seems to have a healthy mentality, which indicates a small glimmer of adventure if he receives a good education, he is probably capable of being a good, but mediocre, revolutionary fighter.¹¹²⁹

In the end, Piatnitsky approved Dutt's proposal to send Narain to Moscow; however, whether he ever arrived in Moscow remains unknown. Ferdi's continual efforts to find students in Paris came to nothing as he "came back empty-handed" to Berlin.¹¹³⁰ Why did Ferdi's attempt to find candidates in Paris fail? The "kom.Fraktion" stated that the central problem was the misunderstanding between the International Secretariat and the Central Committee of the PCF in Paris, with the latter refusing to respond to any communications or to provide any support. The Eastern Secretariat was able to draw its own conclusion since "we have not in the last three months received a single reply to our numerous letters and suggestions" to the PCF, the International Secretariat explained.¹¹³¹

The second half of 1931 confirmed the dependency of the International Secretariat on the Eastern Secretariat at all levels, with the curricular activity being no exception. The courses had also veered away from the original vision once outlined by Chatto: to provide a fundamental understanding of the Marxist-Leninist perception of the colonial question and imperialism, and to find recruits for communism. Under Dutt and Ferdi's leadership, these courses primarily functioned as a channel for finding "revolutionary fighters". Yet, at same moment, the International Secretariat was not alone in wanting to find students inclined towards anti-colonialism. In Hamburg, Padmore and Kouyaté were working together to send African students to Moscow for political education at the KUTV, an operation they co-ordinated through both the International Secretariat and the Eastern Secretariat.¹¹³²

¹¹²⁹ RGASPI 542/1/48, 148-150, (Confidential) Report from Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 24/9-1931. The Political Secretariat received a copy of this report, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 160-163.

¹¹³⁰ On 2 December, the "kom.Fraktion Liga", in a letter to the Eastern Secretariat, questioned whether a decision on Narain and other candidates would arrive in Berlin. The decision did not come immediately, however. On 12 December, an unknown source in Moscow (Piatnitsky ?) sent information to the International Secretariat, stating that "we don't object to N. [Narain] coming to us if our Friend Fr. [Ferd] agrees to it", while on 13 January, 1932, Piatnitsky authorised the decision to send Narain. Whether he ever travelled to Moscow remains unknown, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/48, 177, Short note from "kom.Fraktion Liga", Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 11/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 181, Short note from "kom.Fraktion-Liga", Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, 2/12-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 187, Note from unknown source, Berlin or Moscow, to the LAI, Berlin, 31/12-1931; RGASPI 542/1/54, 21, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 13/1-1932.

¹¹³¹ RGASPI 542/1/48, 154, Letter from "Komfraktion Liga", Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 4/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48, 169, Letter from "Komfraktion Liga", Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 6/11-1931.

¹¹³² Kouyaté organised a journey to Moscow and the KUTV for two African students [unknown] in November 1931. As a confirmation of the arrangements, Berger and Ferdi received a note from the Eastern Secretariat that "two Negro people" would soon arrive in Moscow. This line of work pressured Padmore, who complained about the ordeals of getting the proper support from the KPD. The organisational procedure Padmore had to confront in his contacts with the KPD was a structure defined by a rigorous bureaucracy administered by the secretary of the ZK KPD in Berlin, the Lithuanian Max Ziese, whose "attitude" according to Padmore was "simply objectionable", see fol. RGASPI 534/3/668, 120-121, Report from Padmore, Hamburg, to Otto Huiswood, Moscow, 16/11-1931; RGASPI 542/1/48,

Sectarianism determined the character of the International Secretariat after the resurrection of the LAI Executive at the meeting in Berlin in May-June 1931. Fear and paranoia led to exclusion becoming a common practice, with both believers and anti-colonial activists being described as either trustworthy or untrustworthy. However, in reality, sectarianism was consuming the International Secretariat, with its case against Chatto and its suspicious behavior *vis-à-vis* “the political material”, both symptoms of the worsening situation. For Chatto, it was not enough to have been an active member and believer in the anti-imperialist vision since 1926. No longer belonging to the inner core – a structure now reserved for Münzenberg, Smeral and Ferdi – and having to face the charge of having committed “political dishonesty”, Chatto was reduced to a shadow of his former self at the International Secretariat. For the International Secretariat in December 1931, it was no longer a question of “why we appear”, but rather the actors in Berlin were suddenly confronted with the question of “whether we appear at all”.

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183, Short note from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Berger and Ferdi, Berlin, December 1931. For relations between Padmore and Ziese, see further in Weiss (2011).

Chapter 9. Nadir

At about 11 am the door-bell rang.

York/Thögensen, Berlin, to Chatto,
Moscow, 21/1-1932

The non-party League is in fact a communist organisation ... [which] administers an extensive network of men of confidence [*Vertrauensmännernetz*] scattered over the whole Earth.

Superintendent Sattler, Berlin, 24/12-19

For us [the Eastern Secretariat] it was an incredibly painful surprise that the police were able to find in the League office documents not intended to fall into the hands of the police. You [Ferd] write that the raid was a “disaster”. Concerning the current conditions in Germany, you should have been prepared that not one, but several house searches are being carried out. [...] We recommend Comrades quite categorically to immediately destroy our letters and telegrams after reading.

The Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ferd,
Berlin, 19/1-1932

The *Schutzpolizei* and the political police (IA) raided and ransacked the International Secretariat at 24 Friedrichstraße on 21 December, 1931. Leaving the heart of the LAI shattered and exposed, the incalculable consequences of this raid marked the beginning of the LAI’s nadir, defined in terms of illegality, external pressure, frailty, decline and depression. For the International Secretariat, whilst the former problems of the LAI had primarily been a question of combating internal clashes, this raid marked the beginning of the lowest point thus far in the history of the LAI. Once the consequences of the raid had become apparent, no further political space would be made available for the LAI in either Berlin or beyond. York/Thögensen contacted Chatto in Moscow (who was then awaiting the ICC’s verdict), to describe the raid in detail. After ringing the bell to the bureau of the International Secretariat, “22 bulls” from the *Schutzpolizei* and the political police (IA) stormed in, remained there for eight hours (11 am to 7 pm) and confiscated “all correspondence, printed matter, Cardex, accounting books, etc.”. York concluded that the police had “messed up the place, collected every scrap of paper or written matter which looked suspicious”. Every person visiting the bureau, members and individuals (sixteen in total) were arrested and hauled off to the IA for interrogation: Ferd, Clemens Dutt, Berger (“Bob”), the Polish communist Valnitsky,

Kunizaki, York/Thögensen, Ella Windmüller, and Frieda Schiff, “Petigura”, “Vigdor”, “a Bulgarian Comrade” and “Odette”. At IA headquarters, the police officers subjected everyone to a body search before being cross-examined, and released each person after having first signed a written statement. Berger was the only one not released, charged with possessing “a false passport”. Transferred to the Moabit prison in Berlin, Berger received a minor sentence and spent a couple of months in prison and, when he was released, he had to leave Germany. To provide Berger with legal service, Münzenberg assigned a lawyer, “Dr. Apfel”, at the expense of the International Secretariat. It was a decision not appreciated by several of the International Secretariat members. According to York/Thögensen, this lawyer was a “money-grabber” who cost “a pretty penny!”, while concluding that the humiliation and disorder caused by the raid had shaken the International Secretariat to its very core:

The “raid” has naturally retarded us to a great extent in carrying on our work. In fact, we only received our correspondence-files, Cardex, etc., the other day. Many documents (62 in number, according to the IA statement) are still with the CID authorities. Clemens, Valnitsky, Ella, Odette, Frieda and I are regularly in the Office while Ferdi avoids coming now-a-days (of course, we have arranged to meet him from time to time). All in all, the Office is rather “dead” just now. [...] This state of affairs cannot continue any longer. It is very harmful, to say the least. Why! We haven’t as yet been able even to organise an open protest meeting!¹¹³³

Before the raid, the International Secretariat had been suffering from an inherent weakness; however, the consequences of the raid hinted at the possible closure of the International Secretariat in Berlin or, in the words of York/Thögensen: “the Office is rather ‘dead’ just now”. What were the initial effects of this raid, and how did this episode affect the International Secretariat?

The raid resulted in unwanted and unexpected exposure for the LAI in Germany. A dilemma not helped by the more deeply divisive political *milieu* in Berlin, characterised by actual violent battles between the communist and Nazi movements. According to Eric D. Weitz, 1932 was the year the Weimar Republic was “governed by a presidential dictatorship” which held two Reichstag elections, two presidential elections and had three consecutive Reich chancellors. In Berlin, the streets were dominated by a continual presence of police authority, a major factor interpreted as conservative and rather supportive of the Rightist political movement. Furthermore, as Sace Elder observes in a study of the police in Weimar Berlin after 1930, the police became “increasingly engaged in policing subversive political groups”. Exercising its influence over many aspects of everyday life in Berlin, the probationary techniques of the policy authority – surveillance and

¹¹³³ RGASPI 542/1/56, 2, Letter from “Hans” [York/Thögensen], Berlin, to Chatto, Moscow, 21/1-1932. Articles in the German communist press also mentioned the figure of sixteen arrested individuals.

infiltration – cracked down on radical and subversive political movements. This strategy succeeded in reaching all the way into the inner sanctums of both the LAI and the anti-imperialist movement. Nevertheless, the raid had had different effects on those involved. According to York/Thögersen, despite Berger’s confinement to prison, he was “lively and active” while Clemens Dutt acted “medium” and was in “a bad state of health and frame of mind” and Ferdi was “as usual phlegmatic”.¹¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the MdI analysed the evidence collected from the raid (the confiscated documents), material which confirmed their suspicion that the LAI was both by its nature and its structure a cover organisation for the Comintern, used to foment and support the activities of both the international communist movement and the KPD. Moreover, the raid on the International Secretariat was a practical expression of the attempt by German authorities to suppress the left-wing movement in Germany. On 23 December, the Hamburg police stormed the bureau of the *International Seaman’s Club* (Internationalen Seemannsclub), a cover and location for activities linked to both the ITUCNW and the Profintern. The police literally tore the club apart and confiscated propaganda material, brochures, magazines and documents. For Padmore, this episode was a humiliating experience, telling York/Thögersen that “since the affair we have been completely isolated from each other [...]. For heaven’s sake, break the silence, for you are the only friend with whom we have any connection”.¹¹³⁵

The MdI and the *Auswärtige Amt* initially focused their attention on classifying and identifying the documents confiscated from the International Secretariat and, secondly, on analysing and verifying whether the LAI was a communist organisation sponsored by and part of an international network. Nonetheless, the independent act of the *Schutzpolizei* to raid the International Secretariat had provided the MdI and the *Auswärtige Amt* with sufficient evidence on the LAI. The question is, however, why did the raid take place when it did? According to the Berlin Chief of Police, the *Schutzpolizei* decided to act swiftly in order to confirm their inkling that “the bureau of the LAI” was a haven “for foreigners and foreign Communist refugees in the possession of not orderly passports”, and that the International Secretariat stored derogatory publications against the Weimar Republic.¹¹³⁶

¹¹³⁴ Weitz 2007, pp.122-123; Sace Elder, “Murder, Denunciation and Criminal Policing in Weimar Berlin”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 41 (3), Sage Publications, London, 2006, p.404, 406; RGASPI 542/1/56, 2, Letter from “Hans” [York/Thögersen], Berlin, to Chatto, Moscow, 21/1-1932.

¹¹³⁵ See Weiss (2011); Aitken (2008). See also the dated and biased article by Rüger 5/1967, pp.782-797. For Padmore’s letter, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/754, 25, Letter from Padmore, Hamburg, to Hans T. [York/Thögersen], Berlin, 7/1-1932. Padmore ended the letter by sending “best New Year wishes to Elly [Ella Windmüller] and yourself”.

¹¹³⁶ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 76, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I [Abschrift], Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 31/12-1932. The MdI received Sattler’s report on 12 January, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 75, Schönner, Berlin, an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, 12/1-1932. The MdI Intelligence Department informed the Prussian Minister of the MdI of the raid on 24 December, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 74, Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, an den Herrn Preußischen MdI, Berlin, 24/12-1931.

The MdI completed a brief analysis of the LAI in January: a report distributed from Berlin to the provinces (*Landesregierungen*), while intelligence on the raid reached, for example, MI5 in London who kept minutiae on the raid of the LAI bureau.¹¹³⁷ The raid provided the German security services with access to and an in-depth understanding of the communist movement in the Weimar Republic, above all of the organisational structure and network of “Red Berlin”, which confirmed that the city functioned as a “Comintern village”. The documents at the International Secretariat had also disclosed a number of ties the LAI had to other subversive actors within the communist movement, but they also finally ended the illusion of the LAI being a non-party organisation. For example, correspondence between the International Secretariat and the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of Belgium* included directives and plans for future activities, while cash receipts from the ZK KPD cashier [Max Ziese] proved the regular flow of money back and forth between the LAI and the KPD.¹¹³⁸ Several documents also proved the “close contacts” between the International Secretariat and the WEB. The raid provided the Berlin Chief of Police with intelligence suggesting the presence of an actor called the WEB in Berlin, and its close links to the Comintern. Before the raid, the WEB had been perceived as a shadowy actor and just one of many actors on the communist subversive scene, however, the raid led the authorities to an understanding suggesting that the WEB was the institutional actor manoeuvring and controlling the West European communist movement. Consequently, if Berlin was the operative centre for the international communist movement outside the Soviet Union, this threatened the very foundation of German society, the Berlin Chief of Police concluded.¹¹³⁹ According to the Assistant Police

¹¹³⁷ Information on the LAI went to every regional agency in Germany. According to the document “Nachrichtenstellen der Landesregierung” (*Information Agencies of the National Provinces*), 18 districts and provinces received in-depth intelligence on the LAI: 1. Preußische Minister des Innern [crossed over in the document]; 2. Bayerisches Ministerium des Innern, München; 3. Polizeidirektion München; 4. Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth in Nürnberg; 5. Sächs. Ministerium des Innern Dresden-N, Königs Ufer 2; 6. Württembergisches Ministerium des Innern; 7. Polizeipräsidium Stuttgart; 8. Badisches Landespolizeiamt in Karlsruhe; 9. Thüringisches Ministerium des Innern, Weimar; 10. Hessisches Polizeiamt Darmstadt; 11. Mecklenburg-Schwerinsches Ministerium des Innern, Schwerin; 12. Kriminalabteilung der Staatspolizei Neustrelitz; 13. Polizeipräsidium Braunschweig; 14. Oldenburgisches Staatsministerium Oldenburg; 15. Anhaltisches Staatsministerium Dessau; 16. Polizeidirektion, (Z. St.), Polizeihaus, Zimmer 450, Bremen; 17. Polizeibehörde, Hamburg; 18. Polizeiamt Lübeck, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 162, Nachrichtenstellen der Landesregierungen (In Doppelumschalge zu versenden), [compiled by:] Der Preußische Minister des Innern, 18/1-1932. Additionally, the raid had raised an interest in the LAI among foreign intelligence services, for example, MI5, which now gained access to information on individuals who worked at the International Secretariat. Intelligence added to the existing files on Gibarti and York/Thögensen, TNA PRO KV 2 1056 Information on H. P. THOGERSEN, taken from the Raid of the LAI Office in Berlin and given by German authorities [undated 1932]. For Gibarti, see TNA PRO KV 2 1401, Relating to Gibarti, Louis Otto. REPORT ON DOCUMENTS SEIZED IN RAID ON LAI OFFICES IN BERLIN.

¹¹³⁸ The Assistant Police Commissioner, Sattler, argued that evidence such as the articles in *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, and the finding of a Rotafix machine, which the International Secretariat used in order to print and distribute self-made pamphlets, were enough to confirm the subversive character of the LAI, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 77-80, Bericht, Hilfskriminalkommissar Sattler, Berlin, 24/12-1931.

¹¹³⁹ The Berlin Chief of Police suspected that the WEB was running a courier service between “Russia and the West European Communist parties and organisations” and was an actor that controlled every “organisation affiliated to the Comintern” in Germany. The documents from the raid provided an opportunity to initiate an analysis of the

Commissioner Sattler, the LAI wields authority over “an extensive network of men of confidence scattered over the whole Earth”,¹¹⁴⁰ while on 14 March 1932, the MdI concluded that:

[...] there can be no doubt that the LAI in Berlin is a central point for international communist propaganda work, in particular for the anti-war work. [...] it appears that the League, which claims to be a non-party organisation, in reality constitutes a communist organisation, which operates in almost all countries of the world in sections, a kind of work that simultaneously strives to influence the oppressed towards communism. The League maintains an extensive, scattered network of agents all over the world, who report [back on] all transactions of a political nature to the General [International] Secretariat in Berlin.¹¹⁴¹

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Public Reactions

The German communist press covered the raid extensively. As a social institution in Germany and Berlin, the press had a decisive role in magnifying incidents or episodes of a political character.¹¹⁴² For Münzenberg, therefore, the raid offered an opportunity to instruct both the IAH's media apparatus and his own Neuer Deutscher Verlag to set up a support campaign and to protest against the German authorities' treatment of the LAI and its International Secretariat. The first reaction to “the “police action” appeared on 22 December 1931, in both Münzenberg's *Welt am Abend* and in the KPD newspaper *Die Rote Fahne*, with the latter accusing the police of doing the dirty work of foreign governments. The reason why the press portrayed the police as being puppets in the service of foreign policy interests was a response to the protests linked to the nature of the LAI and its Manchurian campaign. According to *Welt am Abend*, the Japanese government experienced the LAI and its “colonial exploitation” as “an eyesore”. Thus, by shifting the focus from the raid to discussing Japan and its foreign policy, the German communist press hoped to use the opportunity to create propaganda against Japanese imperialism. This was in fact an initiative feverishly sponsored by the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow. In the aftermath of the raid, the Eastern Secretariat instructed the International Secretariat to develop the question of whether “Japanese

communist conspiracy and its network in Germany. According to a letter from the International Secretariat to the WEB, the contact between the LAI and the ZK KPD was evident: “To the ZK KPD, 6.10.31. The enclosed [letter] was handed over to the WEB. Since it is addressed to the German party, we pass it on to you after we have taken notice of it [the content]. We leave it to you to make use of it in a way you feel it right to do. With greetings. International Secretariat“. However, the Berlin Chief of Police was not able to decipher some of the individuals linked directly to the WEB, e.g. the identity behind the pseudonym “Helmut” remained a mystery. At this moment, Dimitrov was in Moscow, and he returned to Germany in June 1932, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 120-122, Der Polizeipräsident/ Goehrke, Der Preußischer Minister des Innern, an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, 18/3-1932. For Dimitrov's whereabouts, see “Zeittafel”, in Bernhard, 1982, p.194.

¹¹⁴⁰ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 77-80, Bericht, Hilfskriminalkommissar Sattler, Berlin, 24/12-1931.

¹¹⁴¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 116, Herrn Oberregierungsrat Erbe, Berlin, 14/3-1932.

¹¹⁴² Elder 2006, p.409.

provocation had played a role”, a strategy set in motion after having read Kunizaki’s report to the Eastern Secretariat.¹¹⁴³

Articles on the ransacking of the International Secretariat poured out of the mouths of the *Münzenbergian* press apparatus. On 23 December, *Welt am Abend* published an article by Münzenberg, in which he introduced himself and Chatto (!) as the general secretaries of the LAI. In this article, Münzenberg criticised the social democratic newspaper, *Vorwärts*, for having used the raid as a pretext to “denounce” the LAI, and repudiated its claim that the LAI was “illegal and secret”. Münzenberg argued that the “public character” of the LAI had commenced in 1927, while the LAI in 1931 was “a broad, legal world organisation”, represented by German citizens at the International Secretariat. Münzenberg protested against the claim made in *Vorwärts* that the confiscation of forged passports found in the hands of “the foreigners ... Bulgarians, Poles and Czechs” at the International Secretariat, sufficiently proved the fact that the LAI was a genuine communist front organisation. *Vorwärts* had highlighted the fact that “one person” [Berger] had intentionally concealed his identity by signing the interrogation statement with a false name, describing this as a shameful and deceitful act.¹¹⁴⁴ The LAI’s support campaign gained pace in January 1932, as Münzenberg’s “old guard” of prominent intellectuals declared their support for the LAI. Theodor Lessing expressed sympathy towards the higher purpose of “the Anti-Imperialist League” in *Welt am Abend*, while Ledebour referred to the “freedom of assembly” and the rights of the LAI to react and respond to the use of coercive policies by the authorities. In the end, however, the campaign slowly fizzled out. On 18 January 1932, *Welt am Abend* published its final pronouncement, “Für die Antiimperialistische Liga”, signed by Lessing, Otto Corbach, Goldschmidt, the secretary of the German IAH section Georg Dünninghaus, Lehmann-Russbüldt, Armin T. Wegner, the representative of the *Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit* Magda Hopstock-Hut, Wittfogel, Ledebour and Münzenberg.¹¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁴³ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 83, “Polizei gegen Antiimperialistischen Liga“, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.298, 22/12-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 73, “Polizeiaktion gegen die ‚Liga gegen den Imperialismus‘“, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.215, 22/12-1931; RGASPI 542/1/54, 21, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 13/1-1932.

¹¹⁴⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 86, “Die Aktion gegen die Antiimperialistische Liga“, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.299, 23/12-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 84, “Polizeiaktion gegen Münzenberg-Liga“, *Vorwärts*, No.599, 23/12-1931. The Eastern Secretariat was concerned about Berger, asking the International Secretariat whether he was going to remain in prison and, if so, what had happened in connection with the raid, and whether everything was being done to get him out of prison, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/54, 21. For other articles on the raid, see *Die Rote Fahne*, and *Inprecorr*, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 82, “Heraus mit den verhafteten Anti-imperialisten“, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.236, 23/12-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 85, *Inprecorr*, “Polizeiaktion gegen die Liga gegen Imperialismus“, No.51, 23/12-1931; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 87, “Die Polizeiaktion gegen die Antiimperialistische Liga“, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.237, 24/12-1931.

¹¹⁴⁵ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 88, “Für die antiimperialistische Liga“, von Professor Dr. Theodor Lessing (Hannover), *Die Welt am Abend*, No.6, 8/1-1932; SAPMO-ZPA BA R/1501/20200, 89, “Freiheit der Antiimperialistische Liga. Ein Appell von Georg Ledebour“, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.9, 12/1-1932; SAPMO-ZPA BA R/1501/20200, 91, “Für die Antiimperialistische Liga. Protesterklärung“, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.14, 18/1-1932.

A Languishing Movement, Part II

The chain of events after the raid confirmed the nadir of the International Secretariat in Berlin. The episode not only brought unwanted attention to the activities of the International Secretariat but, most importantly, it also damaged the structural relations between both the LAI and the Comintern and those between the LAI and other actors within the communist movement. While Comintern headquarters had a detached understanding of the actual consequences, the International Secretariat in Berlin, haphazardly thrown into a languishing state, was reduced to existing in a clandestine setting. In comparison to the languishing state of affairs during the *anni confusionis* of 1930, this was a far worse situation, particularly as it appeared as though the International Secretariat had reached a dead-end. Still on its knees after the effects of the raid, the LAI also found itself overtaken by other operations run by the Comintern apparatus, especially the Anti-War Congress in Amsterdam on 27-29 August 1932, which inspired the establishment of the anti-war movement (the *Amsterdam/Pleyel movement*). For Münzenberg, the anti-war question was the re-invention of the machine in terms of utilising his skills as instigator and organiser of sympathising organisations and committees. The anti-war campaign also witnessed the return of Gibarti as Münzenberg's intermediary to both assist with and prepare the anti-war congress.

The Eastern Secretariat could not initially understand the effects and damage the raid had inflicted on the International Secretariat. In one of the first communications from the Eastern Secretariat after the raid on 11 January 1932, the letter included no reference whatsoever to what had happened in Berlin. On the contrary, the Eastern Secretariat demanded that the International Secretariat contribute with \$800 to financing a journey for Sukarno from Indonesia to Europe. The reason why Sukarno wanted to visit Europe was to leave Indonesia after his release from prison in Java on 31 December 1931, expecting to use the LAI as a way out.¹¹⁴⁶ The detached understanding at Comintern headquarters continued when the Political Commission ordered the International Secretariat to include an article written by Georgi Safarov, "Nationale Revolutionen in den Kolonien", in its next issue of *The Anti-Imperialist Review*.¹¹⁴⁷ The central question at this stage,

¹¹⁴⁶ It was estimated that Sukarno's journey from Java to Europe would cost \$2,000. However, Sukarno did not leave Java in 1932, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/54, 18a, "An die Liga", Note from Boris (?)/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 11/1-1932; Mrázek 1994, pp.87-89.

¹¹⁴⁷ RGASPI 542/1/54, 24, (Confidential) Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ferdi, Berlin, 28/1-1932; RGASPI 495/4/161, 1-7, Protokoll (A) Nr.206 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, Moscow, 31/1-1932. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Knorin, Pieck, Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Wassiljew, Gerisch, Codovilla, Miff and Magyar.

however, was whether the International Secretariat would ever be capable of publishing this journal again?

Another question was troubling the Comintern, however: the fact that the *Schutzpolizei* and the IA had got their hands on Ferdi's documents, material which exposed the covert and highly secret organisational *modus operandi* of the LAI, as well as the identities of several Comintern agents. The Political Commission also feared that these documents would curtail Ferdi's work as both an ECCI plenipotentiary and as liaison for the *Communist Party of Turkey*. Therefore, and despite the fact that Ferdi managed to avoid imprisonment, the Political Commission transferred the "conspiracy against Ferdi" to the ICC for further investigation. The major aim for doing so was to assess whether the "damage", caused initially by Ferdi by letting sensitive documents fall into the wrong hands, constituted a serious breach in discipline.¹¹⁴⁸ The Eastern Secretariat did not approve of Ferdi's mistake and accused him of acting irresponsibly because he had not destroyed sensitive documents after reading them. This careless act had affected other individuals. The German communist and Comintern agent, Grete Wilde (party name: Erna Mertens; 1904–1943/44?), explained in a letter to the OMS in Moscow in January 1932, that Ferdi's arrest was a "very uncomfortable" incident as it put her mission in Turkey at risk, especially as the seized documents included "some very important addresses" in Turkey.¹¹⁴⁹

Ferdi had not followed the protocol every Comintern emissary, plenipotentiary, instructor or agent on a mission outside the Soviet Union had to adhere to. On 19 January 1932, the Eastern Secretariat reminded him that, "we recommend Comrades quite categorically to immediately destroy our letters and telegrams after reading". Aside from its criticism of Ferdi's negligent behaviour, the Eastern Secretariat wondered when the International Secretariat could resume activity despite the chaos caused by the raid. The central question was if and when the International Secretariat could begin developing "an independent field of activity", according to the Eastern Secretariat. The latter request did concern political activity, it was a remark made

¹¹⁴⁸ RGASPI 495/4/163, 1-3, Protokoll (A) Nr.208 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 9/1-1932. Present at the meeting were Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Pieck, Knorin, Gerisch, Wassiljew, Thorez, Kun, Angaretis, Codovilla, Miff, Williams and Safarov.

¹¹⁴⁹ RGASPI 495/266/38, 160, (Streng vertraulich), Auszug aus dem Brief aus Konstantinopel von Grete Wilde, OMS, Moscow, January, 1932 [arrived in Moscow 19/1-1932]. The accusation against Ferdi was a serious one, the Eastern Secretariat stated. On 19 January, the Eastern Secretariat asked in a letter to Ferdi whether Wilde/Merten's interpretation was correct, and whether "a series of letters and addresses" had been "found" during the raid. If so, this could result in the arrest of "people in Turkey". In order to position himself, Ferdi explained to the secretary of the ICC, the Lithuanian communist Zigmās Angaretis (real name: Aleksa; 1882 – 1940) that the German authorities had not made "any statement to the Turkish embassy", and that the seized documents were "entirely legal matters: correspondence and information to sections, general opinions, manifestos and press material" and not, as Wilde had stated, ciphered letters. Additionally, Ferdi claimed to have contacted the OMS apparatus in Berlin, as well as sent a warning to the "Turkish comrades" in Constantinople on 23 December, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/54, 23, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ferdi, Berlin, 19/1-1932; RGASPI 495/266/38, 168, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to Angaretis, ICC, Moscow, 3/3-1932 [arrived in Moscow 7/3-1932].

against both the inability of the International Secretariat to take its own “initiatives” and its dependency on consulting the Eastern Secretariat on “every question”. However, the Eastern Secretariat did admit that the situation in Berlin was serious. Ferdi should therefore make every effort to take the step “to go temporarily into illegality” and for a brief period, shut down all communications with Moscow after having sent “a detailed report on the house search”.¹¹⁵⁰ This period of illegality ended in March 1932. After abandoning the bureau at 24 Friedrichstraße, the International Secretariat re-located itself in an office at 13 Hedemannstraße.¹¹⁵¹

Both prior to and after the raid, Münzenberg had, apart from his press campaign, disassociated himself from the International Secretariat. In February 1932, Münzenberg used the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the LAI to re-introduce the LAI and to raise awareness of the anti-imperialist movement in Germany. In a number of articles, Münzenberg outlined the history of the LAI in relation to the recent series of events, all written using the Comintern’s endorsed policy. As noted in the articles (“Fünf Jahre Antiimperialistische Liga” in *Welt am Abend*, “Fünf Jahre anti-imperialistischer Kampf” in *Der Rote Aufbau* and “Fünf Jahre Liga” in *Pressedienst*), Münzenberg concluded that the LAI aimed to continue with “its gaze from the left”. This referred explicitly to condemning the behaviour of former “reformist” members (Lansbury, Maxton and Nehru), which had contributed to bringing the LAI down and had prevented the organisation from “earning the trust of workers and peasants in the colonies”.¹¹⁵² Münzenberg wanted to re-define the reasons why the LAI had found it so difficult to generate activity. Thus, the answer was not to be found in the repression by governmental agencies in Germany, but in the contempt displayed by the LAI’s adversaries. The celebration of the LAI’s fifth anniversary passed by unnoticed, particularly as the International Secretariat had momentarily gone underground and consequently lost all contact with the anti-colonial community in Berlin. Apparently, anti-colonial activists began to experience Berlin as a location curtailed by the coercion of the *Schutzpolizei* and, at the same time, the LAI as an organisation was perceived with distrust within the German communist movement.¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁵⁰ RGASPI 542/1/54, 21, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, 13/1-1932; RGASPI 542/1/54, 23, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ferdi, Berlin, 19/1-1932. For an introduction to the “conspiratorial environment” and the destruction of sensitive documents, see Rosenfeldt vol.2, 2009, p.179.

¹¹⁵¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA 1507/279, 79-93, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I, Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 19/8-1932; RGASPI 542/1/54, 23, Letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Ferdi, Berlin, 19/1-1932. In March 1932, the International Secretariat announced in the *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus* (No.11) its new office at 13 Hedemannstraße, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 126-129. The SA (Sturmabteilung) had an office (“Gaubüro”) at Hedemannstraße, address unknown, Striefler 1993, p.365.

¹¹⁵² SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 94, “Blick von links. Fünf Jahre Antiimperialistische Liga”, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.39, 16/2-1932; Willi Münzenberg, “Fünf Jahre anti-imperialistischer Kampf”, in *Der Rote Aufbau*, Berlin, 1. Mai 1932, V. Jahrg. Heft 9, pp.387-390; RGASPI 542/1/46a, 37-39, “Fünf Jahre Liga”, *Pressedienst*, Nr. 3 (Der deutschen Sektion der Liga), Berlin.

¹¹⁵³ For example, the Chief of Police had examined the document “Kurse für koloniale Studenten in Berlin”, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 105-106, Der Polizeipräsident, Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 24/2-1932;

In the beginning of 1932, local police authorities in Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen increased their pressure against foreign elements in Germany, particularly against those suspected of carrying out subversive, political activism.¹¹⁵⁴ The case of the Indian journalist, Ayi Ganpat Tendulkar, further illustrates how the International Secretariat had to answer to the paranoia developing within the KPD. In April 1932, the *Schutzpolizei* decided to monitor the activities of Tendulkar in Berlin more closely, particularly his contacts with the International Secretariat, which led to the internal question of Tendulkar within the German communist movement exposing paranoia as an accepted frame of mind not only within the KOSTUFRA, but also within both the International Secretariat “kom.Fraktion” and the ZK KPD. The International Secretariat knew that Tendulkar had, with the support of “English money”, established the pro-Hindustan committee, *Sobhan*. By using the boarding-house at 41 Ansbacherstraße as the base for this committee, Tendulkar was primarily aiming to assist Asians who were either visiting or living in Berlin. The International Secretariat wanted to approach Tendulkar and the *Sobhan* committee, however the KOSTUFRA considered this to be a bad idea due to Tendulkar’s connections with other suspicious German communists. For example, the medical student and member of the KOSTUFRA, Katja Klapper (“Katja”, 18/12-1906-?), had a reputation within KPD circles for her eager and enthusiastic participation at organised party events. However, in April 1932, a rumour started to circulate which implied that Klapper could not be trusted. Since Klapper frequently visited the boarding house of the *Sobhan* committee, the KOSTUFRA told the International Secretariat not to trust the “prattling” Klapper. The reason for this was as follows. According to the KOSTUFRA, Klapper had applied for a visa at the Soviet consulate in Berlin in January 1932, stating that she wanted to travel to Moscow to pursue her medical studies to become a nurse. The KOSTUFRA stated, however, that this did not correspond with intelligence from several Chinese communists in Berlin, suggesting that Klapper was an agent in the service of the Chinese embassy who had infiltrated the Asian student community. Consequently, the International Secretariat had to understand that “under no circumstances” should they give their support to Klapper to realise her objective of pursuing studies in Moscow. After having examined the KOSTUFRA documents, the International Secretariat passed on this material to the ZK KPD for further consideration.¹¹⁵⁵

SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 111-115, Aus dem Material, das bei der Liga gegen den Imperialismus und koloniale Unterdrückung, Berlin Friedrichstr.24, gefunden wurde).

¹¹⁵⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 125, Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Häntzschel, Berlin, an die Polizeibehörde Hamburg und die Polizeidirektion Bremen, 6/4-1932.

¹¹⁵⁵ SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 1 I 2/5/14, 282, Betr. Inder [Maschinenschrift, Durchschlag], ZK KPD, Berlin, 19/4-1932. Tendulkar returned to India (year unknown) as an avid nationalist and convinced anti-communist. In 1964, the *Bombay Provincial Congress Committee* published a pamphlet authored by Tendulkar, *Nation Betrayed? A Case Against Communists: their Own Evidence*, an analysis of the conduct of the *Communist Party of India* in times of war, Overstreet & Windmiller, 1959, p.580. For Klapper, see SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 1 I 2/5/14, 283, Sekretariat an die Reichsfractionsleitung der Kommunisten in der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Berlin, an ZK KPD, Berlin, 22/4-1932;

The raid also brought the International Secretariat's curricular activity to a sudden halt. This left the International Secretariat with the only option of functioning as a channel for propaganda campaigns in 1932, all of which were essentially centred on the question of the war threat and in defence of the Soviet Union. One exception to this was the LAI's solidarity campaign in support of Hilaire Noulens and his wife (real names: Yakov Rudnik and Tatyana Moiseenko, better known as the Ruegg case). On 15 June 1931, Chinese authorities arrested the Noulens in Shanghai charging them with having carried out clandestine activities in the service of the Soviet foreign apartment. This involved, for example, utilising covert methods to maintain a hub for the communist movement in the Far East by linking together the activities of the Profintern *Shanghai Bureau* (TOSS; branch of the *Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat*), the *ECCI Far Eastern Bureau* (FEB) and the LAI. These arrests inspired Münzenberg to get the IAH apparatus to set up proletarian solidarity campaigns across Western Europe declaring their support for the Ruegg couple, an initiative which depended on using the IAH and the LAI networks.¹¹⁵⁶ While the International Secretariat published articles in *Informationsbulletin*, *Welt am Abend* urged the KMT "in the name of millions of workers and thousands of intellectuals" to release the Ruegg couple.¹¹⁵⁷ In connection with the Ruegg campaign, and perhaps inspired by a long-held interest in China, Münzenberg suddenly wanted to travel to Shanghai in the company of Barbusse, an idea which nevertheless required the consent of the Political Commission in Moscow. Whether Münzenberg expected to use the Ruegg campaign as a cover for IAH activities in China remains unknown. Moreover, as Münzenberg explained to the Political Commission, the journey would serve the purpose of raising money and organising "demonstrations of solidarity" in support of the Chinese workers. Bela Kun notified Münzenberg that the Political Commission had turned down the idea, telling him that the IAH could carry out that kind of work in Germany by organising "a day of solidarity" in Berlin and that the occasion could be used to raise money.¹¹⁵⁸

and, SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 1 I 2/5/14, 284, Betr. Anfrage Katharina Klapper (genannt Katja), KOSTUFRA, Berlin, an ZK KPD, Berlin, April 1932.

¹¹⁵⁶ Frederick S. Litten writes in his research note "The Noulens Affair" (1994), that the campaign was "orchestrated" by Münzenberg in August 1931 using, for example, the *Inprecorr* as a channel to distribute articles and propaganda. A representative of the IRH [unknown] was critical though towards Münzenberg, wondering whether the campaign would turn into a personal operation under Münzenberg's leadership, rather than in support of the work of the committee, "Zentrales Verteidigungskomitee zur Rettung Rueggs", Frederick S. Litten, "The Noulens Affair", (Research Note) in *The China Quarterly*, No. 138 (Jun. 1994), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.492-512. For an in-depth presentation of the PPTUS office in Shanghai and the FEB, see Fowler 2007, p.64, 86. This criticism from the unknown IRH representative is mentioned in RGASPI 539/2/425, 1, Original letter (typed) from unknown IRH representative, Berlin, to "Hertha" [Elena Stasova], Moscow, 1/11-1931; Gross 1967, p.235.

¹¹⁵⁷ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 154-158, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nummer 18, Juli 1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 146, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.159, 9/7-1932.

¹¹⁵⁸ RGASPI 495/4/182, 8-9 Protokoll (B) Nr. 234, 9/4-1932; RGASPI 495/4/186, 5 Protokoll (B) 27/4-1932. Moscow "started an operation" in May 1932 to save the Ruegg couple from the death sentence. However, in connection with the release of the Ruegg couple on 27 August, 1937, rumors began to circulate about the drama behind the scenes. According to Litten, the most fragrant rumour was that Richard Sorge, the Soviet master spy in the Far East, had been

The British LAI Section highlighted the Ruegg case at its “Second Annual Conference” at Friars Hall in London on 21-22 May, 1932. According to its official report, the section had convinced James Maxton to raise the question in a debate in the House of Commons. Whether the section was also the source behind Maxton’s initiative to highlight the Ruegg case during a parliamentary debate in London on 23 February is, however, unknown. In fact, Anthony Eden [not Sir John Simon as mentioned in the Second Annual Conference report], the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, blocked Maxton’s attempt to confront the British government on the question regarding the “treatment by the Chinese authorities of Mr. and Mrs. Ruegg”. Eden told Maxton that the Ruegg case was not a question for the British to solve; it was entirely a matter under the jurisdiction of the “extra-Settlement authorities” in Shanghai.¹¹⁵⁹ The *pièce de résistance* for the British LAI Section were the Meerut campaign and the support for the Chinese liberation struggle, propaganda campaigns which frequently found their way out onto the streets of London in 1932. The section arranged, for example, together with the British ILD section [the British IRH section] an anti-war “monster demonstration” at Trafalgar Square on 20 February with the slogan: “Hands off China, withdrawal of troops and warships, a free Soviet China!”, while a second event in March commemorated the “Third Anniversary of the Imprisonment of the Meerut Prisoners”. Bridgeman was at the centre organising and distributing press material on the campaigns to the left-wing and bourgeois press in Great Britain, documents which called for the organisation of “demonstrations, meetings and processions” in support of the Indian independence movement using the slogan: “Down with imperialism!”¹¹⁶⁰

Somehow, the International Secretariat adapted itself to the complex reality caused by the raid. As the Manchurian campaign ran its course in Germany, *Welt am Abend* announced that the “General Secretary of the LAI” Münzenberg planned to deliver a speech on the “predatory war of the Japanese imperialist” in connection with the celebration of the “Fifth Anniversary of the LAI” at a public rally at “Pharussälen” in Berlin on 16 February.¹¹⁶¹ Apparently, the LAI and the anti-Japanese campaign constituted only part of a larger scheme that was about to emerge in 1932. For Münzenberg, the rally at “Pharussälen” aimed to re-introduce the LAI’s anti-Japanese propaganda by connecting the Manchurian crisis with the war threat against the Soviet Union. If the strategy

in Shanghai in 1932, provided with \$20,000 from the Comintern with which to guarantee the release of the couple. This was nevertheless only hearsay, Litten states (1994, pp.497-498).

¹¹⁵⁹ RGASPI 495/100/875, 7-28, Report of 2nd Annual Conference of LAI’s British Section, held 21st-22nd May 1932, Friars Hall London. For Maxton’s question and Eden’s reply in the House of Commons, see: < <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/search/ruegg?decade=1930s> >.

¹¹⁶⁰ RGASPI 495/100/875, 1-3, Hon. Sec. R. Bridgeman, Press material concerning the 3rd Anniversary of the Imprisonment of the Meerut Prisoners, published by the British LAI Section, London, 20/3-1932; RGASPI 495/100/875, 7-28. For the demonstrations, see fol. RGASPI 495/100/875, “War on China! Monster Demonstration”, Trafalgar Square, London, 14/2-1932; RGASPI 495/100/875, “London Workers! Your Help is Needed! Meerut Sunday-March 20”, Trafalgar Square, London, 20/3-1932.

¹¹⁶¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 92, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.38, 15/2-1932.

worked out as planned, Münzenberg pondered the idea of arranging an “international congress against the war” sometime in 1932. The campaign called for a strengthening of the structural foundations of the LAI in order to amplify its anti-war propaganda. On 20 February, Münzenberg sent a letter to Fritz Brupbacher in Zurich, requesting him to give his opinion on “Japanese imperialism”, and asking him whether he would sign a petition in the name of the LAI in support of Mme Sun Yat-sen’s protest against the threat of a “Japanese invasion” of Shanghai.¹¹⁶² The anti-war theme was an idea further outlined in a letter from the “kom.Fraktion Liga” to the Central Committee of the CPUSA on 25 February, describing the anti-war campaign as a potential field of activity in which to develop the LAI despite “the organisational weakness of most of our sections”:

The International Secretariat of the LAI is conducting a wide campaign against the war in the Far East. It has called upon its national sections to develop extensive activity in this connection and it has provided them with detailed instructions on the tasks which they must undertake.¹¹⁶³

The political situation in the Far East was a discourse that would be the opportunity to “draw the masses into the movement”, yet, ultimately, it would again be a question of turning theory into practice for the International Secretariat. For example, the Central Committee of the CPUSA had to stir up fervour on the anti-war question within the anti-imperialist movement, while at the same time “exercising a close control over the work of those comrades who are charged with dealing with the activity of the League section”.¹¹⁶⁴

The idea of connecting the Manchurian campaign with the anti-war propaganda also brought Gibarti back to Berlin. After having performed his role as liaison for both the IAH and Münzenberg in the USA since 1929, by 1932 Europe was Gibarti’s operative field as an agent of the Comintern. MI5 noted in its “summary of traces” that Gibarti had been in Paris in February and travelled to Berlin in April to begin some kind of activity in “a committee”.¹¹⁶⁵ What kind of “committee” was MI5 referring to, and what were its functions and aims? Münzenberg sent a strictly confidential proposal on 30 March from Berlin to the Political Commission with the idea of arranging “an international congress of struggle against war” in Geneva. As a crucial part of his plan, Münzenberg wanted to assemble a “preparatory committee” to lead the work up until the formal opening of the “international anti-war congress”. Scheduled for 28 July, Münzenberg

¹¹⁶² IISG 4249.10/189, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to F. Brupbacher, Zürich, 20/2-1932.

¹¹⁶³ RGASPI 542/1/56, 3-4, Letter from the “Komfraktion Liga”, Berlin, to the CPUSA, New York, 25/2-1932.

¹¹⁶⁴ Perhaps this instruction was a reference to Earl Browder’s criticism of the incapacity and unreliability of the USA LAI Section in 1930 (see *Anni Confusionis*), see fol. RGASPI 542/1/56, 3-4, Letter from the “Komfraktion Liga”, Berlin, to the CPUSA, New York, 25/2-1932.

¹¹⁶⁵ Gibarti arrived in Berlin in February and was contacted by Padmore in Hamburg, who wondered whether the IAH could circulate some of its propaganda to Negro workers, see TNA PRO KV2/1401, Summary of MI5 traces up to January 1933 – Gibarti, Louis; and RGASPI 534/3/754, 105, Letter from Padmore, Hamburg, to L. Gibarti/Central Committee I.W.R [IAH], Berlin, 14/2-1932.

argued that the congress aimed to pay homage to “the day of the Sarajevo murders” in 1914. Gibarti’s role in the committee, according to Münzenberg, was to assume a leading position and to act as Münzenberg’s right-hand-man in directing the preparatory work. In fact, the idea was a blueprint of Gibarti’s functions during the preparations for the Brussels Congress in 1926-27.¹¹⁶⁶ Thus, in the context of the anti-war movement, the LAI was the forerunner in uniting the question of the Manchurian campaign with the anti-war question, an idea which later evolved into the *Amsterdam-Pleyel movement*.

What role did the International Secretariat play in all of this? The International Secretariat played a central role, above all in evaluating whether the anti-war issue was managing to attract any attention and whether the idea could be sustained for more than a month in Germany. Münzenberg had prepared his idea thoroughly before contacting the Political Commission on 30 March. On 3 March, the International Secretariat, together with the IAH Berlin-Brandenburg district, had organised an “international demonstration” against “the threat of world war” at the “Sportpalats” in Berlin. The invited speakers nevertheless revealed the rally to be overtly communist: the PCF member Marcel Cachin, the pacifist and member of the CPGB and IAH Isabel Brown, Nakanome Otsuka from Japan, Chuang Tang from China, the KPD delegate Albert Kuntz and Münzenberg. Moreover, the entrance ticket (“eintrittspreis 40 Pfennig”) declared that it was a demonstration “against the predatory Japanese war, in defence of the Soviet Union, against the Hindenburg-Hitler-Front and in support of the red workers’ candidate Thälmann!”.¹¹⁶⁷ This demonstration at the “Sportpalats” was an operation co-ordinated by the International Secretariat, along with the active assistance of the national LAI sections. According to Ferdi in a report to the Eastern Secretariat, the sections had received the instruction to organise demonstrations of “protests against Japanese imperialism [and] in defence of the Soviet Union” on the very same day as the “Sportpalats” rally. From a broader perspective, the “massive rally” of the LAI and IAH on 3 March also reflected the increasingly heated political scene in Weimar Berlin. The demonstration was such a success that it attracted widespread attention across Germany and encouraged the International Secretariat to organise similar events in Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg and Upper

¹¹⁶⁶ RGASPI 543/1/17, 2-3, (Streng vertraulich) Vorschlag zur Organisierung eines internationalen Kampfkongress gegen den Krieg, Münzenberg, Berlin, to Political Commission, Moscow, 30/3-1932. According to E. H Carr, the WEB organized on instructions from the Political Commission a conference for European communist party representatives (Thälmann, Pieck, Thorez, Monmousseau, Pollitt, and Lenski) in Berlin on 30-31 March, solely for the reason to “plan a campaign against imperialist war” (1982, p.387). If so, and perhaps the meeting was the inspiration Münzenberg needed to compile a proposal on the anti-war question.

¹¹⁶⁷ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 100, “Weltkrieg droht!”, *Die Rote Fahne*, No.45, 1/3-1932. For the ticket of entrance, see fol. RGASPI 543/1/17, 320b, Eintrittskarte zur Internationalen Kundgebung gegen den Krieg, Sportpalast, Berlin, 3/3-1932.

Silesia.¹¹⁶⁸ The International Secretariat was, however, unable to carry the weight of the entire anti-war campaign on its own shoulders. Due to the political pressures caused by the daily political struggle in Germany, as well as the prohibitive measures of the German authorities, the LAI wanted to establish a closer co-operation with the IAH in order to develop this campaign. The first step was to send out invitations to the various demonstrations or conferences. Clemens Dutt told Padmore in Hamburg of the “absolute necessity” of coming to Berlin and participating in an “International Conference against Imperialist War” on 20 March.¹¹⁶⁹ However, things took a turn for the worse with regard to this conference. As the political extremism and literal violence on the streets in Berlin reached new heights in 1932, due to the clashes between the military branch of the KPD (*Roter Frontkämpfer Bund*, RFB) and the brown-shirted vanguard of the NSDAP (*Sturmabteilung*, SA), in March the MdI adopted its “Emergency Decree” (*Notverordnung*). This decree was intended to bring an end to the political chaos, above all to curtail the political campaigns of both the communists and the Nazis. This strict governmental policy contributed therefore to bringing the propaganda work at the International Secretariat to a sudden end. However, the German communist movement believed that the “Emergency Decree” was only an unforeseen obstacle to overcome on the road to achieving political victory in Germany, as noted by the historian, Christian Striefler. The practical implications of the decree were, however, somewhat more difficult. For the International Secretariat, the only option left was to postpone the conference *ad infinitum* which, according to a short notice in *Welt am Abend* on 17 March, meant that “new invitations are going to be sent to every organisation”.¹¹⁷⁰

The primary goal now for Münzenberg was to organise the international anti-war congress in Geneva. As the anti-war issue had proven to be a successful undertaking for both the LAI and the International Secretariat, especially as the issue indicated that it was perhaps still possible to revive the LAI after the raid, the cancellation of the “International Conference against Imperialist War” in Berlin was a huge disappointment with broader implications. While the LAI had assumed the symbolic role as instigator and defender of the anti-war campaign in Germany at the beginning of 1932, once Münzenberg started mooted the idea of holding the anti-war congress in Geneva, the International Secretariat found itself obsolete. The initial enthusiasm for both the anti-war issue and the International Secretariat’s grand plans were initiatives more or less brought to a premature

¹¹⁶⁸ RGASPI 542/1/54, 31-34, Die internationale Kampagne der Liga gegen Imperialismus, author: Ferdi, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, [stamped:] 16/3-1932.

¹¹⁶⁹ RGASPI 534/3/754, 169, Letter from the LAI (Clemens Dutt), Berlin, to Padmore, Hamburg, 15/3-1932.

¹¹⁷⁰ Striefler 1993, p.365. For the cancellation and postponement, see fol. RGASPI 534/3/754, 175, Letter from Clemens Dutt, Berlin, to Padmore, Hamburg, 21/3-1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 119, “Liga gegen Imperialismus”, *Die Welt am Abend*, No.65, 17/3-1932.

end with the publication on 15 March of Clemens Dutt's article, "Die imperialistischen Kriegstreiber und der antiimperialistische Kampf", in *Der Rote Aufbau*.¹¹⁷¹

By April, the International Secretariat no longer had any direct involvement in either the further planning of the anti-war campaign or the international anti-war congress. Alone at the bureau as "the other people have fallen ill", Ferdi told Kuusinen that the LAI was still experiencing the paralysing indifference of the European communist parties. Ferdi contacted Magyar in an attempt to explain the precarious situation in Berlin, telling him that every member at the International Secretariat felt that the situation was extremely depressing. Ferdi conceded that hardly any money seemed to exist to fund anti-imperialist activity, although he suspected the ZK KPD of intentionally not providing the LAI with the money set aside for its activities. To correct Ferdi's suspicions about the money issue, Freier at the Eastern Secretariat explained that the International Secretariat had received its "full share for January and February".¹¹⁷²

In March, Joseph Berger was released from Moabit prison. However, Berger did not intend to leave Berlin, even after realising that the crisis amongst the staff at the International Secretariat had reached a critical level. York/Thögensen wanted to return to the ILS in Moscow to resume his studies. In November 1931, York/Thögensen had sent an application to the Eastern Secretariat, although the dramatic series of events in December had disrupted everything. As the ILS had avoided giving York/Thögensen a definite answer, Berger tried to help by asking an unknown contact in Moscow when York/Thögensen would get a "decision on his departure".¹¹⁷³ Did York/Thögensen leave Berlin in 1932 and what was the outcome of his application to the ILS? The following observations only confirm York/Thögensen's obscure fate. In May 1932, MI5 received intelligence on York/Thögensen suggesting that he intended to "leave Berlin shortly for Moscow *en route* to the Far East" on a mission for the Comintern. However, in August, MI5 observed that York/Thögensen had "not yet left Berlin for Moscow". The reason why MI5 was monitoring the whereabouts of York/Thögensen in 1932 was to confirm whether the following rumour was correct: "in League circles rumours ... that it had been proposed in Moscow to establish a new Asiatic section of the League with headquarters probably in China, to carry on the necessary work in China, Korea, Indo-China and, possibly, India; and it had been hinted that Hans THOGERSEN

¹¹⁷¹ Clemens Dutt, "Die imperialistischen Kriegstreiber und der antiimperialistische Kampf", in *Der Rote Aufbau*, Berlin, 15. März 1932, V. Jahrg. Heft 6, pp.249-255. *Labour Monthly* translated Dutt's article and published it in its April issue, see Clemens Dutt, "The Imperialist War-Makers and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle", in *Labour Monthly*, Volume 14, April 1932, Number 4, pp.208-216.

¹¹⁷² RGASPI 542/1/54, 36, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, [stamped:] 14/3-1932. For the money issue and personnel issues, see brief note from Freier to Ferdi, fol. RGASPI 542/1/54, 37, Letter from FR [Freier], Moscow, to F [Ferd], Berlin, 15/3-1932.

¹¹⁷³ RGASPI 542/1/54, 38a, Note from B[Berger], Berlin, to unknown recipient, Moscow, 23/3-1932; RGASPI 542/1/56, 2, Letter from "Hans" [York/Thögensen], Berlin, to Chatto, Moscow, 21/1-1932.

might be sent to China to take charge”.¹¹⁷⁴ In retrospect, however, with the social disorder in China and with the setbacks of the Comintern caused by the Ruegg affair, an “Asiatic section” of the LAI was an illogical proposal in 1932.

The primary reason why York/Thögensen hoped to leave Germany was the German authorities’ increasingly rigid control of foreigners’ residence permits. This bureaucratic procedure had had a negative impact on the individuals at the International Secretariat. While the Berlin police authority (I.A. section) denied having renewed Kunizaki’s residence permit, Clemens Dutt received an “expulsion order” in April,¹¹⁷⁵ forcing the latter to go underground in Berlin. Consequently, York/Thögensen most likely also received notification from the authorities of his imminent expulsion from Germany. Hence, it is possible that the I.A.’s decision not to renew existing permits was a sanctioned strategy, related to the Mdi’s on-going investigation of the LAI and its International Secretariat. For Dutt, therefore, the only option left (aside from leaving Berlin and Germany) was to adopt a clandestine lifestyle, hiding in safe houses and living with the constant threat of immediate deportation. The last trace of York/Thögensen in Berlin was as editor of the October issue of the *Informationsbulletin*.¹¹⁷⁶

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Predicting the End, and Its Solution

The internal decline at the International Secretariat was an established fact in relation to its individual setbacks. As the communist parties in Europe continued to act indifferently towards the LAI, and while the political situation in Weimar Germany was worsening by the day, there was no turning back. Valnitsky at the International Secretariat observed how the unwillingness of the ZK KPD to provide any administrative support had contributed to isolating the LAI within the European communist movement:

[...] the political hegemony of the Communist Party [in Europe] is now in every country so huge and great that any initiative [...] from the International Secretariat of the LAI, which is

¹¹⁷⁴ MI5 knew that York/Thögensen was “on very intimate terms” with Ella Windmüller, the steno-typist at the International Secretariat who, in turn, was married to another functionary at the office, Benno Windmüller. Furthermore, MI5 had a fair description of the interior at 13 Hedemannstraße, an office that consisted of “three or four rooms on the first floor, one of which is usually occupied” by York/Thögensen, TNA PRO KV2/1056, Biography of Hans Peter Thogersen; TNA PRO KV2/1056, EXTRACT, International Secretariat of the LAI, 8/8-1932. Any trace of York/Thögensen’s personal file in the Comintern Archive remains missing. However, if one exists, it most likely contains information on whether or not his application to the ILS was eventually approved.

¹¹⁷⁵ RGASPI 542/1/54, 72-73, Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Boris [Berger], Berlin, 27/4-1932.

¹¹⁷⁶ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus - Sondernummer*, Herausgegeben vom Internationalen Sekretariat, Nr. 20a, September 1932; *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Herausgegeben vom Internationalen Sekretariat, Nr. 22, Oktober 1932.

only carried out on our own [initiative], in the future and without the active support from the parties, will have no success.¹¹⁷⁷

Valnitsky's criticism of the omnipotent position of the communist parties and their relations towards the sympathising organisations highlighted one of the fundamental problems within the international communist movement during the inter-war years. For the LAI, the turning point came when the parties refused to adhere to or even to acknowledge the directives emanating from Comintern headquarters to support the organisation. In 1932, the responses to such commands were nil. The LAI's isolation in Berlin forced the Eastern Secretariat to begin reassessing the future of the International Secretariat in April-May. The central issue for the Eastern Secretariat was the decentralisation of the International Secretariat apparatus in Berlin, and then the relocation of the "centre" of the LAI to another European city. With Kunizaki, Dutt and (probably) York/Thögersen having had their residence permits revoked and most likely about to be expelled from Germany, this would leave only Ferdi at the International Secretariat. Magyar was determined to find a solution and used Berger, who had managed to avoid the attention of the *Schutzpolizei*, as his liaison in Berlin. In April, Magyar notified Berger that the most logical step was to "decentralise the central apparatus of the League" in Berlin. At the same time as the organisational structure was being dismantled, the LAI's political agenda was also being substantially modified. Ferdi notified the "Genossen" at the WEB in Berlin that the International Secretariat was incapable of keeping up the momentum on the issue of the European national minority movement. In Moscow, Magyar concluded that it was just a matter of time before the entire LAI apparatus in Berlin collapsed. Yet, for as long as the authorities allowed the activities of the International Secretariat, the "centre" had to remain in Berlin, Magyar argued. If relocation of "the centre" was the only option left, however, Magyar wanted to split the International Secretariat into two parts. In Berlin, the LAI would have an "illegal secretariat" with Münzenberg as general secretary, working together with a "German Comrade", while a legal secretariat in London would be governed by Clemens Dutt.¹¹⁷⁸ Magyar, Safarov and Mif re-assessed this issue on 27 May and convinced the Political Commission to endorse the idea of transferring the International Secretariat to Paris if the situation in Berlin worsened to such a degree that it was impossible to carry out any organisational or political work. The Political Commission added that the decision was irrevocable for the staff at the International Secretariat, who under no circumstances would be able to demand a renegotiation. Magyar added that this decision depended on the consent of the Colonial Commissions of both the PCF and of the CPGB to support the LAI. This solution indicated the

¹¹⁷⁷ RGASPI 542/1/54, 54-55, Report by Valnitski, Berlin, to the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 14/4-1932.

¹¹⁷⁸ RGASPI 499/1/37, 19-20, Letter from Ferdi, Berlin, to "Genossen"/WEB, Berlin, 15/4-1932; RGASPI 542/1/54, 72-73, Letter from Magyar, Moscow, to Boris [Berger], Berlin, 27/4-1932.

definitive partition of the International Secretariat, just as it also confirmed the artificial existence of “the centre” in Berlin if the LAI was formally declared an illegal organisation in Germany. The Political Commission recommended reducing the LAI apparatus to a minimum, keeping one “responsible comrade” [York/Thögersen] to “continue the work of the *Informationsbulletin*” in Berlin.¹¹⁷⁹ Freier at the Eastern Secretariat informed Ferdi and Berger in a letter dated 2 June that the Political Secretariat had authorised Magyar’s plan, expecting the International Secretariat to give their “attitude to the decision”. According to Freier, Ferdi and Berger had to understand that the decision was a response to the low level of efficiency and capacity “at the secretariat”. Thus, the decentralisation of the International Secretariat would be put “into effect at the proper moment” if the LAI was banned in Germany.¹¹⁸⁰

The discussion of the LAI at Comintern headquarters was part of a broader context: the prediction of the possible collapse of the German communist movement in 1932. If this happened, the movement would have to resort to clandestine activity. Discussions of a similar nature were also taking place outside Moscow. On 20 July, Dimitrov met the PCF representative, Jacques Duclos, and the leader of the KPD, Thälmann, at the WEB’s *rendezvous* (the “Bayerhof” restaurant) in Berlin, to assess the “extremely serious” situation in Germany. For Münzenberg, who, according to Gross, had become an anxious and nervous man, the results of the Reichstag Elections on 31 July, was a crucial moment for the German communist movement.¹¹⁸¹ The KPD was caught in the middle. Obligated to follow the Comintern’s strategy, which urged the KPD to continue its antagonism against the SPD in order to establish a power balance in relation to the NSDAP, the party seemed incapable of acting independently and, therefore, suffered the consequences. According to Hermann Weber, this was an indication of the “conversion” (*Wandlung*) within the KPD where its “uncompromising attitude towards the Weimar Republic” and social democracy brought the party precariously close, from time to time, to the extreme right.¹¹⁸² In the summer of 1932, the political scene in Berlin was about to self-destruct, whereas in Amsterdam, the Anti-War Congress emerged as a refreshing contrast to the radicalism and extremism on display in the Weimar Republic.

¹¹⁷⁹ RGASPI 495/4/191, 8, Protokoll (B) Nr.244 der Sitzung der Polit. Kommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 27/5-1932.

¹¹⁸⁰ RGASPI 542/1/54, 80, Letter from Freier/Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to the International Secretariat, Berlin, [stamped:] 2/6-1932.

¹¹⁸¹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 227-229, Betrifft: Westeuropäisches Büro der kommunistischen Internationale (WEB), Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, an die Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, 14/2-1933; Donscho Daskalow, “Georgi Dimitroff als Theoretiker und Schöpfer der Einheitsfront und der Macht der Volksdemokratie”, in *Georgi Dimitroff*, Bernhard (ed.), Urania Verlag, Leipzig, 1982, p.62; Gross 1967, p.242. In the July 31 elections, the NSDAP polled in at 37,3 %, the KPD 14,3 %, and SPD 21,6 %, see Hoppe 2007, p.315; Degras vol.III, 1965, p.217.

¹¹⁸² Hoppe 2007, p.303; Weber 1969, pp.241-242.

Prologue to the End

The Amsterdam Anti-War Congress, held on 27-29 August, was Münzenberg's major organisational achievement in 1932. For the LAI, however, the congress confirmed the organisation as a political bystander within the anti-war movement. During the congress, the *Schutzpolizei* supposedly ransacked the International Secretariat at Hedemannstraße. However, the relative lack of documents usually linked to such a raid, makes it difficult to verify whether the *Schutzpolizei* ever carried out the raid. According to Barooah, this episode also witnessed the definitive closing down of the "LAI building" in Berlin. A scrutiny of Barooah's rather ambiguous conclusion shows that it is based on a single account, "Betrifft: Durchsuchung der Räume der 'Liga gegen den Imperialismus'",¹¹⁸³ a report signed by the Berlin Chief of Police and despatched to the MdI on 19 August. Any additional reports on the raid have gone missing, if they indeed ever existed. In Barooah's defence, however, the Berlin Chief of Police appears to have gained access to new intelligence on the LAI in August, information which disclosed the international connections of the International Secretariat. While the December raid in 1931 had exposed the LAI as a cover organisation for the Comintern, even if a second raid did take place in August 1932, it did not lead to the definitive closing down of the International Secretariat, as Barooah suggests. The August report is, nonetheless, very detailed in that it describes the functions and activities of various actors connected to the LAI, e.g. Münzenberg, Smeral, Chatto, Gibarti and Ferdi. Furthermore, the report analyses the constitution of the LAI Executive and the General Council as well as the contacts between the International Secretariat and both the national LAI sections and other communist mass and sympathising organisations (Krestintern, the *International of Proletarian Freethinkers*, the IAH, the IRH and KOSTUFRA). According to the Berlin Chief of Police:

[...] the material provided with proper evidence that the League is a communist organisation. The suspicion that it is in connection with illegal organisations, has come true. [...] The League is anxious not to abandon its Communist character [...] The League has tried to capture many people and organisations for its own purposes [...] The material also verifies that the League is a department of the Comintern.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁸³ Barooah 2005, p.283, 309.

¹¹⁸⁴ The Berlin Chief of Police sent this report to the MdI, recommending it as being wise to limit the political space of the LAI in Germany, thus, circular information had to be issued to *Auswärtige Amt*, the Ministry of Defence and the German police districts. This circular information, which the RMDI compiled and distributed in September, announced its conclusion on the LAI: "[...] the League is a communist organisation, [and maintains] the closest relations with illegal communist organisations [...] even in the realm of illegal work (Intelligence, military intelligence service)", SAPMO-BA ZPA 1507/279, 79-93, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I, Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern,

Hence, on the question of the second raid, the only reference was the seized “card index ... in August” by the *Schutzpolizei*. The Berlin Chief of Police stated that with this “card index”, the German police finally had the information needed to expose the international extent of the LAI network. According to this report, the LAI was a communist organisation in control of an extensive network linking together individuals and organisations around the world and supervising particular “men of confidence”.¹¹⁸⁵ Within the network, the LAI sections functioned as a “means of transmission” for the International Secretariat in Europe, USA, Latin America, India, Japan, China and Africa, obliged to provide the “men of confidence” with material support. This arrangement also had a reverse function, where the sections were to channel intelligence to the International Secretariat, information which was then passed on to Comintern headquarters in Moscow. In August, the Berlin Chief of Police had to face the fact that, aside from the LAI being an actor in the possession of an international network, Berlin was the nerve centre for the international communist movement. In relation to the above, the *Schutzpolizei* received the instruction to continue monitoring the contacts between the International Secretariat and IAH headquarters; however, the Chief of Police noted: “the International Secretariat [...] seems recently not satisfied with the direction of the work”.¹¹⁸⁶

The Amsterdam Anti-War Congress was an event which confronted the political scene in Europe, while at the same time briefly strengthening the German communist movement against the “terror of the National Socialists against communists and socialists”.¹¹⁸⁷ The anti-war congress was, however, never meant to be a response to the Nazi movement in Germany; its primary aim was to discuss the international crisis caused by the effects of the global recession, a socio-political mixture which could lead to the coming of a new world war. At first scheduled to convene in Geneva on 28 July 1932, the congress location was moved to Amsterdam after the Swiss

Berlin, 19/8-1932; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1507/279, 78, (Circular information) Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, 20/9-1932. A copy of this circular is filed in SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 161.

¹¹⁸⁵ The “men of confidence” were required to send reports “every 14 days” on how their missions were progressing, enclose “newspaper clippings and photographs”, and write an account of the socio-political situation. The Berlin Chief of Police used these reports to confirm the assumption that the LAI agents were carrying out their missions either legally or by using illegal methods. For example, if police authorities in a country had a “very strict” attitude, the agent should use “sympathising travellers” as a method for its courier service, preferably seamen. For the LAI, noted the Chief of Police, the establishment of a safe route from Europe to India was an essential goal. According to a seized document, “Fragebogen”, the LAI recommended that their agents enter India via trade routes (sea and land), and the railway, see SAPMO-BA ZPA 1507/279, 79-93, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I, Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 19/8-1932.

¹¹⁸⁶ The Berlin Chief of Police highlighted the close and intimate collaboration that existed between the LAI and the IAH. For example, the organisations assisted each other in establishing themselves around the world, a strategy that depended on mutual understanding. If the LAI assisted the IAH to establish sections in the colonies as well as provided the IAH apparatus with contacts to the European national minority movement (intelligence, addresses, contacts and translation of documents “into local languages”), the IAH had to let the LAI use its propaganda apparatus and assist the LAI with organising campaigns and public meetings, SAPMO-BA ZPA 1507/279, 79-93, Der Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I, Berlin, an den Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 19/8-1932.

¹¹⁸⁷ Gross 1967, p.242; Striefler 1993, pp.355-372; Hoppe 2007, p.296.

government refused to give the organisers (“Komitee zur Einberufung des internationalen Kongresses gegen den Krieg”) permission to hold it. Dimitrov had also advised a change of location.¹¹⁸⁸

Dimitrov and the WEB assumed a leading role in preparing the congress. For Münzenberg, this shift in authority was a disappointment, especially since he had convinced the Political Commission to give him the mandate to organise a congress “on a broad basis”, involving “proletarian mass organisations and leading public figures (writers, scientists, artists)”. In May, however, the WEB notified the ZK KPD that they had taken control of the preparations.¹¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Gibarti remained a key figure for Münzenberg and, before being expelled from Germany in July on the explicit orders of the MdL,¹¹⁹⁰ was the true architect of the “Komitee zur Einberufung des internationalen Kongresses gegen den Krieg”. The committee consisted of the members Maxim Gorki, Barbusse, Albert Einstein, Mme Sun-Yat Sen, Upton Sinclair, Theodor Dreiser, Romain Rolland, Helene Stöcker, Sen Katayama, Marcel Cachin, Saklatvala, Thälmann, Münzenberg, Clara Zetkin, Pollitt and Stasova.¹¹⁹¹ Gibarti’s primary focus was to assess the political character and reliability of the members in the committee, describing Romain Rolland, for example, as an uncertain person:

The biggest difficulty with Romain Rolland, despite him having a very strong sympathy for the Communist Party, is that he believes that you can invite “all parties” to a conference. He is totally politically naïve and has only vague ideas about tactics and strategy, which should be followed in the preparation of the Congress.¹¹⁹²

Albert Einstein’s participation in the committee was a result of Barbusse’s efforts to convince him to come. In a letter from Einstein to Barbusse, his belief in the idealism and utopianism of the anti-war issue appears: “I see that you have a great goal in mind, [...] in that endeavour I would like to participate as best as I can”. Furthermore, as rightfully observed by Carr, both Barbusse and

¹¹⁸⁸ Carr 1982, p.390; Daskalow 1982, p.62.

¹¹⁸⁹ RGASPI 543/1/17, 4-6, Betrifft Internationalen Kampfkongress gegen den Krieg, Political Commission, Moscow, April 1932; RGASPI 543/1/17, 21-22, (Vertraulich) Instructions from the WEB, Berlin, to ZK KPD, Berlin, 14/5-1932. The Amsterdam Anti-War Congress in 1932 is a topic that needs additional research and evaluation, above all its links to the second congress, the Pleyel Congress in Paris in July 1933, and that the *Amsterdam/Pleyel* movement was one of the first public reactions against Hitler and the Nazi regime in 1933. One of the few available studies is E. H. Carr (1982) and David James Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement*, Transaction Publishers, Rutgers, (2003).

¹¹⁹⁰ TNA PRO KV2/1401, Summary of MI5 traces up to January 1932 – Gibarti, Louis. Intercepted letter from Münzenberg to the British IAH Section, London, 26/7-1932.

¹¹⁹¹ RGASPI 543/1/17, 14, Komitee zur Einberufung des internationalen Kongresses gegen den Krieg auf den 28. – 30. Juli 1932 nach Genf, undated, year: 1932.

¹¹⁹² RGASPI 543/1/17, 133-135, (Streng vertraulich) Auszug aus einem Berichte Gibartis über die letzten Entwicklung im Internationalen Initiativkomitee, Berlin, June 1932. See Stern (2007) on how the communists perceived (and used) intellectuals for their own purposes.

Rolland symbolised a source of inspiration in the context of the anti-war congress,¹¹⁹³ although neither of them were ever the actual organisers of the congress.

The Amsterdam Anti-War Congress was a major achievement for the international communist movement. Attending the congress were 2,165 delegates from 27 countries, represented by 1,865 workers, 290 social democrats and 830 communists. Dimitrov acted in the background as the leader of the “communist fraction” which comprised Heckert, Hans Kippenberger, Münzenberg, Gottwald, Pollitt and Marty. This “communist fraction” had two objectives to fulfil in Amsterdam: on the one hand, “the pursuit of a unified Marxist line in the fight against the war threat” and, on the other, to establish a permanent anti-war movement. This was a vision that turned into reality and, in the aftermath of the congress, Helmut/Dimitrov kept feeding the ECCI with reports on how the work with the anti-war “mass movement” was progressing.¹¹⁹⁴ The Amsterdam Congress was the beginning of the anti-war movement in Europe, although the movement did not manage to gain any momentum until the “Salle Pleyel” Congress in Paris on 4-6 June, 1933. In Paris, the congress aptly re-labelled itself as a “peace movement” under the title, *Committee against Fascist Terror*, which essentially was a response to the deeds being committed by the Nazi regime in Germany in 1933. According to *Rundschau* (the successor to the *Inprecorr*), the congress at the “Salle Pleyel” was attended by more than 3,000 delegates, representing three million workers. In addition, the congress witnessed the inauguration of the *Amsterdam/Pleyel movement*.¹¹⁹⁵

At what level did the LAI contribute to the Amsterdam Congress and did the event serve any other purpose? Aside from the symbolic declaration of “brotherly greetings” from the LAI to the congress in its support of the struggle to achieve “national liberation from the Imperialist yoke”,¹¹⁹⁶ the congress functioned as a cover for the International Secretariat to hold a closed conference (“Interne Konferenz der Vertreter der Ligasektionen”) for its members. The meeting had been an operation carefully planned by the WEB before the congress. According to the draft

¹¹⁹³ RGASPI 543/1/17, 11, (Abschrift) Letter from A. Einstein, Berlin, Henri Barbusse, Aumont par Senlis (Oise), 26/4-1932; Carr 1982, p.387.

¹¹⁹⁴ For number of participants, see Carr 1982, p.390, and the biased Anti-Comintern publication, Adolf Ehrh (Hg.), *Der Weltbolschewismus. Ein internationales Gemeinschaftswerk über die bolschewistische Wühlarbeit und die Umsturzversuche der Komintern in allen Ländern*, Anti-Komintern, Berlin, (1936). Ehrh’s book contains several pictures from the congress. The article “Der Amsterdamer Kongress. Eine gewaltige Kundgebung gegen den Imperialistischen Kriege”, published in (Sondernummer) *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus* (Nummer 20a, September 1932) provides a summary of the congress. On the composition and the aims of the “communist fraction”, see fol. RGASPI 543/1/17, 280-281, Vorschläge an die Politkommission, Moscow, WEB, Berlin, August 1932; Daskalow 1982, p.62; Hans-Joachim Bernhard, “Georgi Dimitroff – ein treuer Freund der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung und Mitgestalter ihres revolutionären Kampfes”, in *Georgi Dimitroff*, Bernhard (ed.), Urania-Verlag, Leipzig, 1982, p.156; “Zeittafel”, Bernhard (ed.), 1982, p.194. For official documents (printed speeches, congress material, pamphlets, newspaper articles), see IISG “World Congress Against the Imperialist War Collection 3390.2”, consulted by the author in 2010.

¹¹⁹⁵ Carr 1982, p.392-393; Gross 1967, p.270.

¹¹⁹⁶ SCA CL Collection, volume 131, “Manifest des Internationalen Sekretariats der Liga gegen Imperialismus auf dem Weltkongress gegen den Imperialistischen Krieg”, (Sondernummer) *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr. 20a, September 1932.

on how to proceed, (“Der Antikriegskongress und die Antiimperialistische Liga. Plan – Entwurf”), the “Interne Konferenz” of the LAI was to address two particular questions. Firstly, the anti-war congress was the occasion for the LAI to alter its political agenda, above all to unify the anti-imperialist movement and the anti-war movement into one. While it may seem as though this was a question motivated by an ideological impetus, this was, in fact, never the case. The WEB’s primary aim was to make use of the LAI’s transcontinental network to spread the word about the anti-war congress and, thereby, facilitate the process of establishing “where possible [...] anti-war committees” in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Secondly, the “Interne Konferenz” could be a forum for the International Secretariat to play down the difficult situation in Berlin. The representatives of the International Secretariat should under no circumstance indicate the decline in activity in Berlin, the WEB stated, but rather explain that their primary focus for the moment was “the publication of literature in the languages of the colonial peoples and oppressed nationalities”.¹¹⁹⁷

In Amsterdam, the “Interne Konferenz” reassessed the status in the national sections in the USA, Great Britain, Ireland, Spain and Palestine. The major conclusion drawn from this session was to increase anti-imperialist activity, while continuing to perceive the International Secretariat as “the centre” for the LAI. Bridgeman attended the meeting and declared that the surveillance and coercion of “the colonial element” in London by the British police made it extremely difficult to maintain any kind of activity in England. This observation only verified, however, the fragile organisational structure of the LAI on an international scale. Moreover, the Amsterdam session was a definite dividing line in the history of the LAI, especially as this was the last time the organisation ever held a conference. Despite the decision to “improve general operations” by unifying the movement with the anti-war question, the “Interne Konferenz” confirmed that the LAI was caught in an ideological and organisational deadlock.¹¹⁹⁸ In an attempt to reinvigorate its revised political agenda in October, the International Secretariat despatched a circular letter to every “section and affiliated organisation” stating that the LAI campaigns (the Meerut conspiracy trial,¹¹⁹⁹ the Scottsboro trial and Ruegg case) were of a peripheral interest. The LAI and the anti-imperialist movement aimed instead to give its fullest support to the Amsterdam anti-war campaign, a statement that also obliged every section to give its moral support in defence of the

¹¹⁹⁷ RGASPI 543/1/17, 296-297, Der Antikriegskongress und die Antiimperialistische Liga, WEB, Berlin, July 1932.

¹¹⁹⁸ SCA CL Collection volume 131, “Interne Konferenz der Vertreter der Ligasektionen”, (Sondernummer) *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nr. 20a, September 1932.

¹¹⁹⁹ The German IRH Section administered the Meerut conspiracy trial campaign in Germany. On 11 November, the section declared that the LAI and the Profintern aimed to “unify their forces” to strengthen the campaign, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/320, 3-5, 3-5, Rettet die Gefangenen von Meerut! Mitteilung Nr. B/137., Berlin, 2/11-1932.

Soviet Union against the “imperialist war threat”.¹²⁰⁰ The Amsterdam anti-war campaign usurped the International Secretariat’s role. Reduced to functioning merely as a supplier and distributor of anti-war propaganda, and ignoring their existing anti-imperialist campaigns, Ferdi and Clemens Dutt asked Dimitrov at a meeting in Berlin on 30 January 1933, why it seemed as though the anti-war question had “unconsciously” sidelined the LAI. Irritated about hearing the complaint, Dimitrov told Ferdi and Clemens Dutt to “remove this false attitude” and to rather focus on getting the International Secretariat and “the main League sections” up and running again.¹²⁰¹

Between 1 September 1932 and 30 January 1933, a decisive period in the history of Weimar Germany, the struggle of the German communist movement came to an end. On 1 September 1932, the *Schutzpolizei* stormed and ransacked IAH headquarters in Berlin, seizing every document on the Amsterdam Anti-War Congress. On this occasion, Münzenberg was in Moscow attending the Twelfth ECCI Plenum (27 August – 15 September 1932). At this plenum, the delegates evaluated reports on both the international situation and the tasks of the sections, the Far Eastern conflict and the continued “struggle against imperialist war and the anti-Soviet intervention”. The ECCI Plenum concluded that, in the “event of a new world war”, Germany would become “one of the main centres of the most heated and most intense world imperialist conflicts”. This statement did not, however refer to the on-going struggle for power between the KPD and NSDAP, but rather the ECCI Plenum meant that the colonial ambitions of the Weimar Republic was a symptom of the current war threat against the Soviet Union. This was a conclusion illustrating the somewhat detached understanding at Comintern headquarters of the political struggle in Germany. It was decided at this ECCI Plenum that it was an obligation for the national communist parties to “apply with the greatest persistence and energy the Comintern’s decisions on the question of the struggle against imperialist war and intervention”.¹²⁰²

In an attempt to put the Comintern’s dictates into practice, on 12 December the International Secretariat and the German IRH Section organised a public demonstration in Berlin against “imperialist war and intervention” and to celebrate an “international day of struggle against colonialism” to remember the “Canton Commune” in 1927.¹²⁰³ This demonstration aimed to show an increase of public communist activity in Berlin, particularly to counteract the campaigns of the

¹²⁰⁰ RGASPI 542/1/55, Rundschreiben an alle Sektionen und angeschlossenen Organisationen der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Internationale Sekretariat, Berlin, 27/10-1932.

¹²⁰¹ RGASPI 542/1/59, 29, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow [?], 6/2-1933.

¹²⁰² For the raid on IAH headquarters and Münzenberg, see Gross 1967, p.243. For the Twelfth ECCI Plenum, see Degras vol.III, 1965, p.208, 223-224.

¹²⁰³ RGASPI 542/1/55, Rundschreiben an alle Sektionen und angeschlossenen Organisationen der Liga gegen Imperialismus, Internationale Sekretariat, Berlin, 27/10-1932. *Informationsbulletin* (No.25, November) published information on the “day of struggle against Colonialism”, an account the MdI used as reference material to monitor the activities of the LAI, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/320, 87-90, Reichskommissar – Report – Betrifft: RHD – Winterhilfskampagne – Internationaler Kampftag am 12. Dezember d.Js., Berlin, 19/11-1932.

Nazi movement. The German IRH Section stated in a report that public agitation was a source of inspiration to continue political activity in Germany:

Due to the deepening of class divisions, the intensification of terror on a national and international scale, the number of national and international campaigns in recent months [...] has greatly increased.¹²⁰⁴

At the beginning of 1933, the German communist movement was clinging to life by its fingernails. For the International Secretariat, this was a moment defined by political forces beyond their control.

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¹²⁰⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R 1507/321, 137-141, Bericht über die Kampagnen von Anfang Juli bis Ende Oktober 1932.

Chapter 10. Collapse and Ruin

[...] the League has shown once again that good opportunities for mass work are present; however, there is a great lack of understanding of how to exploit these opportunities in the direct leadership [International Secretariat]. [...] A terrible political impotence at the very moment when the imperialists and their agents develop almost everywhere very active business. [...] There is also the matter of the International Secretariat that has to be considered. Even without the current worsening situation in Germany, it seems to me that Paris is the temporary place for such an international body. [...] we must change as soon as possible the current unacceptable situation in the League.

Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to Magyar,
Berlin, 6/2-1933

On 30 January 1933, Hitler became the Reich Chancellor of Germany after the Reichstag election, a victorious undertaking by the NSDAP. On the night of 27 February, the Reichstag Fire in Berlin bore witness to the symbolic end of the Weimar Republic. As the flames ravaged the building, the disaster of the moment presaged a nation on the verge of entering a period of unchartered political territory. In the ruins of the burnt-out Reichstag, the Berlin police found and arrested the confused Dutch communist Marius van der Lubbe. Accused of having started the fire, Lubbe received the death sentence; however, the political discourse surrounding the fire is of a peculiar nature. For Hitler and the NSDAP, the primary aim was to confirm whether the fire had been a conspiracy organised by the communists. With the arrest of Dimitrov and his Bulgarian companions, Vassil Tanev and Blagoi Popov, at the “Bayerhof” in Berlin on 9 March, the NSDAP found both the pretext and the actors with which to corroborate the above. The German police discovered that Dimitrov had a false passport, made out in the name of “Rudolf Hediger”, thus, while this was the cause for his arrest, the entire process culminated in the monumental Leipzig trial in 1933. Dimitrov was acquitted after making a grandiose concluding speech at the trial in December, an act celebrated by the international communist movement and contributing to establishing the myth of Dimitrov as the figurehead in the struggle against fascism.¹²⁰⁵

¹²⁰⁵ Georgi Dimitroff, “Skriftlig inläga till polisens rannsaktionsmyndigheter”, in *Dokument, brev och anteckningar från Leipzigprocessen*, Fram förlag, Stockholm, 1936, p.13; Markus Wien, “Georgi Dimitrov: Three Manifestations of His Cult”, in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships. Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, Apor, Behrends, Jones and Rees (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, pp.194-208; Marin Pundeff, “Dimitrov at Leipzig: Was There a Deal?”, in *Slavic Review*, Vol.45, No.3 (autumn, 1986), The American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, pp.545-549. For a biased interpretation, see Jakob Rosner, “Zum Kampf Georgi Dimitroffs in Leipzig gegen

The NSDAP's ascendancy to power confirmed the end of activity for the LAI and its International Secretariat in Berlin. The historiography covering the final few dramatic months of the Weimar Republic in 1933, e.g. the debated views of conservative historian Ernst Nolte, has primarily interpreted the NSDAP's coming to power in terms of intrigue and crime. However, this supposition does not provide a fair account from a broader contextual perspective. Nolte argues, as noted in his book *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917-1945*, that the NSDAP's huge social and political impact in 1933, particularly Hitler's nomination as Reich chancellor on 30 January, was an epochal event explaining why the Weimar Republic ended.¹²⁰⁶ Eric D. Weitz gives a more concise interpretation of the political impact of the first few months of 1933, referring to it as the beginning of the *Anni terribili* for the KPD, as the "establishment of the Nazi regime" resulted in the "immediate and massive repression of German communism". The KPD had, however, not just stood by and watched the NSDAP and Hitler come to power on 30 January. On 25 January, the KPD had, together with several other communist organisations, arranged a public demonstration in Berlin, drawing 130,000 participants. In January, however, the WEB was still channelling the detached understanding of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, sending out the instruction to "the most important parties" in Europe to avoid establishing collaboration with the social democratic movement even if the Nazi regime banned the KPD in Germany.¹²⁰⁷ The socio-political reality in Germany was, however, by then somewhat different, with the systematic use of violence by the militant forces of the NSDAP (the SA and the SS), assisted by the gullible *Schutzpolizei*, against the German communist movement, ending in personal suffering and "haphazardly plunging" the movement "into illegality". On the night of 27 February, nearly four thousand KPD members in Prussia ended up in prison, and were later transferred to concentration camps.¹²⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Comintern headquarters in Moscow observed how the KPD, one of its most important sections, was facing extinction. In February and March, the socio-political chaos in Germany resulted in the emigration of German communists and other nationalities to the Soviet

den Faschismus", in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, Leipzig, 2/1962, pp.358-370. For a concise biography of Blagoi Popov, see Chase 2002, p.490.

¹²⁰⁶ Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917-1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus*, Herbig, München, 1997, p.56. For an assessment of the historiographical debate which erupted after the release of *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg*, see, for example, Daniel Schönplug, "Histoires croisées: Francois Furet, Ernst Nolte and a Comparative History of Totalitarian Movements", in *European History Quarterly*, April 2007, vol.37, no.2, Sage Publications, London, pp.265-290. For a concise description of the post-war development of German historiography, see David E. Barclay & Eric D. Weitz, "Introduction", in *Between Reform and Revolution*, Barclay & Weitz (eds.), 1998, pp.13-18.

¹²⁰⁷ RGASPI 499/1/38, 2, Information from the WEB, Berlin, an die wichtigste Parteien, 19/1-1933. The ECCI appealed to "the workers of all countries" to protest against the "establishment of the openly Fascist dictatorship in Germany", a statement released in the communist press in April 1933. Taken from *Labour Monthly*, Vol.15, April 1933, No.4, London, pp.267-269.

¹²⁰⁸ Weitz 1997, p.280. Towards the end of 1933, the Nazi regime had imprisoned between sixty and one hundred thousand communists, according to the historian Horst Duhnke's calculation in *Die KPD von 1933 bis 1945*, Cologne, 1972, p.104; Epstein 2003, p.45; Bernhard 1982, p.63; McMeekin 2003, p.258.

Union. As the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters acted more or less indifferently both prior to and after the NSDAP had come to power, this is a period in the history of international communism which has caused substantial scholarly debate, above all whether Stalin's lenient policy towards the NSDAP and Hitler contributed to paving the way for the Nazi movement. This was the perspective presented in historian Robert C. Tucker's study on Stalinism, however, it merely corroborates a prejudiced understanding of Soviet foreign policy as having been dogmatic during the inter-war years, McDermott and Agnew argue. A more nuanced understanding of the KPD and its physical destruction in February 1933 is to see it instead not just as the end of the party; this epochal event also dealt the Comintern itself a fatal blow. However, the Comintern did not react immediately to the literal decimation of the German communist movement. This critical turning point, created by the autocratic rise to power of the German national socialist movement in 1933 and its support for the fascist movement in Europe, was the incentive for the communist movement to initiate a move towards the Popular Front doctrine against fascism, a doctrine the Comintern endorsed at the Seventh (and final) International Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1935.¹²⁰⁹

The year 1933 was the *ruination* of the German communist movement. The NSDAP's impact on the societal and political *milieu* in Germany also had a lasting imprint on the communist movement's organisational structure and its network(s), as the Nazi regime succeeded to radically re-shape German society. But how did it do this? By going "a long way towards destroying the solidarities built" on the ideological and practical experiences of "class", the Nazi movement won over the loyalty of the German working class as it shifted attention towards the "bonds of nation and race".¹²¹⁰ Nazi repression against subversive communist organisations had increased during 1932, while in January and February 1933 its coercive policies reached their climax. For the colonial groups in Germany, e.g. the Indian community, this was the end for both students and political émigrés, with a majority ending up in German prisons before deportation, as in the cases of A. C. N. Nambiar and M. J. S. Naidu.¹²¹¹ "Red Berlin"/the "Comintern village" became just a

¹²⁰⁹ Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism. Essays in Historical Interpretation*, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1977; Vatlin 2009, p.192; Hoppe (2007); McDermott & Agnew 1996, pp.116-119; Heinrich August Winkler, "Choosing the Lesser Evil: The German Social Democrats and the Fall of the Weimar Republic, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.25, Sage Publications, London, 1990, pp.205-227; Jonathan Haslam, "The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front 1934-1935, in *The Historical Journal*, Vol.22, No.3 (Sep., 1979), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.673-691.

¹²¹⁰ This meant the structural destruction and ruin of the left-wing movement in Germany (communist, socialist and social democratic movements). For example, the NSDAP sanctioned the prohibition of both the social democratic newspaper, *Vorwärts*, and the communist *Die Rote Fahne*, while at the same time hindering KPD activities in Berlin. On 7 February, the ZK KPD held its last meeting in Berlin and, on 23 February, the headquarters of the KPD ("Karl-Liebknecht-Haus") was ransacked, searched and closed by the police, see Hoppe 2007, p.323; Weitz 1997, p.281.

¹²¹¹ Israel 1994, p.275. Weiss' study (2011) includes a brief description of how George Padmore escaped from Germany to England in January 1933.

memory as the suppression of both subversive and dissident political and social movements gained strength on all levels after 30 January. On 2 February, with the appointment of Hermann Göring as Reichsminister of the MdI, the ministry issued a decree prohibiting the KPD and other communist organisations from holding public demonstrations both in Berlin and across Germany. However, this was only the beginning of things to come. On 4 February, the NSDAP endorsed the emergency decree, “Schutze des deutschen Volkes!” (Protect the German People!) which, according to *Angriff*, the Nazi party newspaper, demanded that the German authorities stop the “blood plague” being organised by the “Foreign legions” of Moscow (KPD). For the Nazi regime, this decree also functioned as an incentive to gain total political and administrative control, as well as provided governmental agencies with the impetus to control the press and to end the freedom of assembly.¹²¹² All these measures contributed to physically abolishing the political space(s) for German communism in Berlin. In February, the KPD headquarters in Berlin, “Karl-Liebknecht-Haus”, was ransacked. The “well-known bureau of Willi Münzenberg [IAH headquarters]” at 48 Wilhelmstraße was also closed down.¹²¹³ The International Secretariat also fell victim to this enhanced suppression, yet, unlike the KPD and the IAH, the “centre” of the LAI managed to remain in operation until the end, i.e. until the Reichstag Fire on 27 February.

The aim of this chapter is to focus on why the International Secretariat realised that it not was possible to stay in Berlin, choosing instead to transfer its bureau to Paris. Is it possible to give an account of the International Secretariat’s final moments? Was there any wish to continue LAI activity in Germany? Despite everything that was happening in Berlin, and prior to its move to Paris, the International Secretariat still managed to prepare and carry out some level of anti-imperialist activism in a *milieu* defined by activism, anger, hope and despair.

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Continuation of Campaigns

The International Secretariat did not become complacent in January 1933. The decline of the LAI throughout 1932 had, however, reduced it to a shadow of its former self, capable only of prolonging activity through propaganda campaigns. This propaganda focused essentially on supporting the conclusive work of the British LAI Section in connection with the end of the Meerut trial, and to initiating a letter-writing campaign to protest against the arrest in China of

¹²¹² Striefler 1993, p.376-378. The NSDAP endorsed this decree as a response to the murder of the SA leader, Zauritz, in Berlin on 30 January. The German communist, Maikowski, was arrested and charged with the crime, and became a symbol for the struggling communist movement.

¹²¹³ SAPMO-BA ZPA R1501/20200, 227-229, Betreff: Westeuropäisches Büro der kommunistischen Internationale (WEB), Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, an die Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, Berlin, 14/2-1933; Rosenfeldt, vol.2, 2009, p.285.

Huang Ping, the Chinese trade unionist and LAI Executive member. These two campaigns indicate that, despite the increased pressure on the LAI in Germany, particularly its repression by both the *Schutzpolizei* and the MdI, the International Secretariat still had a functional transcontinental network.

In the beginning of 1933, the communist movement in Europe realised that Germany would soon face a socio-political change. As early as in October 1932, Helmut/Dimitrov informed Wilhem Knorin (1890 – 1939) in Moscow of the WEB's initiative to establish a "Revisionskommission für die Massenorganisationen". The primary aim of this commission was to evaluate the complex political situation of the mass and sympathising organisations in Europe. In this context, Helmut/Dimitrov concluded that Germany was of particular interest since the movement there was experiencing the "aggravating circumstances" as troublesome. The WEB planned to use the symbolic authority of this "Revisionskommission" to send instructors across Europe to examine the "auxiliary bodies" of the Comintern: the IRH, the *Friends of the Soviet Union*, Sportintern, Krestintern, the LAI and the IAH. In December, the WEB intended to carry out a thorough inspection of the German communist movement.¹²¹⁴ Is it possible to outline the results of this "Revisionskommission", or did the initiative fizzle out? From a chronological perspective, another episode may help to explain what happened: the "Essener Konferenz". The WEB organised this "extremely illegal" conference on 30 December 1932, for representatives of the European communist parties (the KPD, the PCF, the CPCz, the *Communist Party of Belgium*, the *Communist Party of Austria* and the *Communist Party of Poland*, while the *Communist Party of Italy* and the CPGB were unable to participate). According to the German communist, Walter Gollmick (1900 – 1945), for "conspiratorial reasons" the conference took place either in Remscheid or outside the small town of Sauerland in Germany. Whether the question of the communist mass and sympathising organisations in Europe was a topic addressed at the conference remains unknown. At the conference, the WEB focused apparently on one issue only, the enforcement of Comintern directives on the parties, urging the need to establish and "conduct a strong campaign against the Versailles Treaty to take the wind out of the sails of the NSDAP". If successful, this would establish a "fighting alliance between the German-French working class".¹²¹⁵ Yet, prior to the "Essener Konferenz", Helmut/Dimitrov had suggested a different

¹²¹⁴ RGASPI 499/1/37a, 11, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to "Freunde"/Knorin, Moscow, 3/10-1932; RGASPI 499/1/37a, 13, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to "Freunde"/Knorin, Moscow, 3/10-1932; RGASPI 499/1/37a, 14, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to "Freunde"/Knorin, Moscow, 19/10-1932.

¹²¹⁵ This reference to "conspiratorial reasons" was a statement given by Gollmick during an interrogation by the SS in Hamburg on 23 July, 1943, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/58/3833a, 58-60, II A I-158/43. Walter Gollmick, Westeuropäisches Büro (Web), Hamburg, 23/6-1943. Dimitrov informed the ECCI in the autumn of 1932 of the "fractional failures" of the "ultra left-wing" within the KPD which were causing disorder and hindering the ZK KPD from carrying out "Leninist work". According to the report on Gollmick's interrogation, the small city of Sauerland was the location for

solution in order to unify the socialist and communist movements in Germany against the NSDAP. In a letter to the Political Commission in October, Helmut/Dimitrov urged the Commission to understand the fact that organised public demonstrations in Germany had the potential to counteract the Nazi movement. However, this would require creating an alliance, referring explicitly to the united front strategy. For Helmut/Dimitrov, it was important to unify the communist, socialist, social democrat and Christian movements into a front, controlled by the communists, under the slogan: “Come with us! Fight with us against fascism ... Create a Red Front under the Leadership of the Com. Party [KPD]”.¹²¹⁶ The Political Commission ignored Helmut/Dimitrov’s proposal and, even if the “Revisionskommission” ever carried out any of its intended work, its results were insignificant. The primary aim of the “Essener Konferenz” was to enforce the policy of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters on the European communist parties. Obviously, this aim flew in the face of the harsh political reality the communist movement in Europe had to struggle against at the end of 1932. Thus, in the beginning of 1933, this was a movement characterised by internal inconsistencies. The Comintern seemed to act with indifference to the KPD crisis, particularly when the “world party” commanded its German section to continue to be suspicious of the German labour movement, even if they declared their support for the communists. The Comintern also criticised the KPD leadership for having failed to take advantage of the opportunity to realise revolution in Germany in December 1932. According to Hermann Weber’s illustrative appraisal of this dilemma, these were “the burdensome consequences of Stalinization”.¹²¹⁷

In the beginning of 1933, reduced to being a pawn in the internal contradictions both between the Comintern and the KPD and in the political game in general in Germany, as well as being crippled by its own organisational weakness, the International Secretariat focused completely on propaganda campaigns. With the arrest of Huang Ping on the orders of the Tientsin Committee of the KMT in Peiping, China, on 4 January 1933, the International Secretariat assisted with the efforts of both the IAH and other actors in the global labour movement to establish a massive protest campaign.¹²¹⁸ According to *Welt am Abend* on 6 January, the International Secretariat of the

this conference, while Bernhard (1982, p.156, 194) writes that it was convened in Remscheid. Carr (1982, p.393) suggested that it took place “somewhere in the Ruhr area of Germany”. The Gestapo arrested Gollmick in Copenhagen in 1941 and transferred him to Hamburg, where the SS pressured him to give information on the German communist movement. As the Nazi regime was beginning to crumble towards the end of World War II, Gollmick committed suicide on 15 February, 1945, see Weber & Herbst 2004, pp.257-258.

¹²¹⁶ RGASPI 499/1/37a, 20-25, Letter from Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to the Political Commission, Moscow, October 1932.

¹²¹⁷ Hoppe 2007, pp.320-321; Weber 2008, p.26.

¹²¹⁸ RGASPI 542/1/59, 2, (Confidential) Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to General Ma, Li-Du, Sun Bin-Wen, Nanking, 21/1-1933; for Huang Ping, see Daniel Y. K. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labour Movement. A Study of Deng Zhongxia (1894-1933)*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1997, p.94; for Ping’s

LAI had acted swiftly to establish an “international rescue campaign”,¹²¹⁹ a campaign utilising the transcontinental networks of both the LAI and the IAH. On 10 January, an unknown correspondent in New York and IAH liaison in the USA, sent information to Münzenberg that the Huang Ping campaign had unified the USA LAI Section, the IAH, the IRH, the TUUL and “friends” [CPUSA] behind Münzenberg’s “plan of action”. What did this plan entail? Firstly, that the networks of the IRH [ILD] and the IAH should administer the Huang Ping campaign in the USA. Secondly, that by sending a delegation to visit a number of governmental agencies in Washington, Huang Ping’s “solidarity rescue campaign” would receive public exposure, particularly the demand to support the “immediate release of Ping”. This unknown liaison promised Münzenberg that the final aim was to organise a series of public demonstrations in New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco in the near future. Apparently, this liaison had travelled to Washington to discuss the Huang Ping case with several Chinese scholars, and had met Theodor Dreiser (who was also connected to the anti-war campaign), who had published a couple of articles on the campaign in the American labour press. “The hardest thing” for the liaison though was to “raise the money for the telegram” to Münzenberg, especially as “each word cost 88 cents”, thus, the liaison had had “to work for an entire day” to get the money needed.¹²²⁰

On 25 January, Münzenberg contacted Magyar assuring him that he would do everything possible to intensify the Huang Ping campaign, e.g. the International Secretariat had established a connection in Washington, “Borah”, who could exert pressure on the USA government. The question is, however, who was “Borah”? One plausible candidate was the Republican Senator William E. Borah, the Chairman of the Senate of Foreign Relations Committee. As noted in Benjamin R. Beede’s study of US foreign policy in the years 1898-1934, Borah was strongly against the USA’s “imperialist policy”.¹²²¹ Towards the end of January, however, a rumour suggested that the KMT had executed Ping. If so, and in order to respond to “the atrocious act”, the Political Commission instructed the Eastern Secretariat to write a statement and send it to the

attendance at the Frankfurt Congress in July 1929, elected as LAI General Council member, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/92, 28, 33.

¹²¹⁹ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 215, *Welt am Abend*, No.5, 6/1-1933.

¹²²⁰ RGASPI 542/1/59, 5, Letter from unknown writer [name deleted with scissors], New York, to Münzenberg in Berlin, 10/1-1933. According to Epstein’s study, communists were “willing, indeed eager, to sacrifice their time, energy, work and relationships for the communist cause”, Epstein 2003, p.42. The unknown representative was not Gibarti. On 11 January, MI5 intercepted a telegram sent to Gibarti in Berlin, a document which mentioned that the “movement [had] started”. Whether this related to the Ping campaign was not disclosed, see TNA PRO KV2/1401, Positions, which are known to have been held by Dobos as Louis Gibarti in united front organisations, Summary of M.I.5 traces up to January 1933.

¹²²¹ RGASPI 542/1/59, 7, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Magyar/ECCI, Moscow, 25/1-1933; Benjamin R. Beede, *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions, 1898-1934*, Taylor & Francis, London, 1994, p.444, 504. Borah’s stance against the “imperialist policy” of the USA was in connection to the idea of building a canal in Nicaragua in 1932.

International Secretariat “in case his murder is confirmed”.¹²²² In the meantime, Münzenberg asked whether Maxton would consider getting the ILP to support the Ping campaign. Maxton stated that he remembered Ping as a person who had “a fine working-class outlook” and he promised Münzenberg that the ILP eagerly supported the imminent release of Ping.¹²²³ It was nevertheless through Bridgeman that Münzenberg heard “of the safety” of Ping, as Bridgeman had received the information from the Chinese chargé D’Affaires in London.¹²²⁴ The KMT released Ping on 24 January, although whether this decision was a reaction to the pressure caused by the LAI’s rescue campaign is unknown. Nonetheless, the global protest campaign had drawn unwanted attention to the KMT and the Nanking government. According to Fowler, the Huang Ping campaign had unified the anti-colonial movement as “the activists began to experience some success in mobilising a broad constituency” among Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, American workers’ and the “so-called liberal elements”.¹²²⁵ Spreading information in Europe about Ping’s release from prison seems to have been a slow process, however. Barbusse tried to co-ordinate a campaign with the Swiss communist Jean Vincent (who had also been involved in the Ruegg campaign) to pressure the Chinese delegation at the *League of Nations* in Geneva. To put an end to the unceasing flow of protest telegrams, the ambassador of the delegation, Yen, sent a note to Vincent on 1 February, stating that Ping was a free man after having made “a confession to the authorities” and becoming a “state witness”. Barbusse informed Münzenberg about what had happened, yet, still perhaps not willing to trust Ambassador Yen’s statement, Münzenberg questioned whether “Huang Ping was alive and is he free” in an article in *Inprecorr* on 12 February. Ping was alive and managed to escape from the KMT. After the Second World War, Ping re-surfaced as a member of the CPCh.¹²²⁶

¹²²² RGASPI 495/4/228, 1-4, Protokoll (A) Nr.291 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/1-1933. Present at the meeting were Manuilsky, Heckert, Knorin, Gusev, Lozovsky, Gerisch, Eisenberger, Kolarov and Magyar.

¹²²³ RGASPI 542/1/59, 11, Letter from Maxton, London [he used a sheet of paper with the insignia “House of Commons”], to Münzenberg, Berlin, 24/1-1933. Münzenberg passed on Maxton’s letter to Magyar on 27 January; see fol. RGASPI 542/1/59, 10, Letter from Münzenberg, Berlin, to Magyar, Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, 27/1-1933.

¹²²⁴ The British LAI Section organised a demonstration outside the Chinese embassy in London on 28 January, an event Münzenberg informed Magyar about, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/59, 14, Letter from Bridgeman, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 24/1-1933; RGASPI 542/1/59, 27, Letter from Münzenberg, location unknown, to Magyar, Moscow, 5/2-1933.

¹²²⁵ Fowler 2007, p.168.

¹²²⁶ RGASPI 542/1/59, 26, Letter from the Chinese Delegation, League of Nations, Geneva, to Jean Vincent, Geneva, 1/2-1933. The secretary of the Chinese delegation kindly asked Vincent to inform Barbusse and “your other friends” of Ping’s release, and to stop sending petitions. Münzenberg sent a copy of Vincent’s letter to Magyar on 5 February, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/59, 26. For Jean Vincent, see Huber 1995, p.456. Other sources on the nature of the Ping campaign are, for example, SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 230, Willi Münzenberg, “Lebt Huanping und ist er frei?”, *Inprecorr*, No.21, 14/2-1933. For the further development of the Huang Ping campaign and its aftermath in relation to Bridgeman and Münzenberg, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/58, 27, (Handwritten) Letter from Bridgeman, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 29/5-1933; RGASPI 542/1/58, 25, (Excerpt) Letter from Münzenberg, Paris, to the ECCI Secretariat, Moscow, 31/5-1933.

The end of the Meerut trial in January was the LAI's second propaganda campaign. For the International Secretariat, the process essentially involved providing assistance to the British LAI Section and to Bridgeman. On 16 January, the accused received the "incredibly harsh" verdict from the Judge, R. L. Yorke, condemning them either to transportation for life or to imprisonment for between four to twelve years.¹²²⁷ One of the accused, Philip Spratt, stated some time afterwards that the portrayal of the trial within the international communist movement had been a "contrast with the facts" and the entire episode had been a pretext for the Comintern to distribute propaganda.¹²²⁸ However, while Spratt had his reasons for questioning the results of the Meerut campaign, he also ignored the involvement and belief invested in the campaign by some of the actors, especially Bridgeman.

Since the beginning of the Meerut campaign in 1929, Bridgeman kept feeding Münzenberg and the International Secretariat with information on how the work was progressing. In January 1933, despite the official declaration of the verdicts, this was not the end of Bridgeman's commitment to supporting the Meerut prisoners. Bridgeman told Münzenberg of his idea to establish a *Special Meerut Release Committee* in order to protest against the verdicts of the trial. By adopting the theme of "proletarian solidarity" to raise awareness, the committee should act in the vein of a typical "trade union" and focus its activities on collecting money to give the prisoners moral support, Bridgeman stated. The political stimulus for the committee was to continue utilising the international network which had been built up as a result of the Meerut campaign, according to Bridgeman, and, if this did not happen, it would be a huge mistake on behalf of the British LAI Section to lose contact with these "numerous persons and organisations".¹²²⁹ Bridgeman had authored a letter of invitation to join the committee which he sent to Münzenberg for further reconsideration. Bridgeman's primary aim was "to approach as many people as possible":

For some time past, the LAI has set itself to carry on the agitation among the British workers for the release of the Meerut prisoners, and has undertaken the task of raising money for the Defence Fund. So far approximately £750 has been sent to the accused since March 1929.

¹²²⁷ Bellamy & Saville (eds.), "The Meerut Trial, 1929-1933", Volume VII, 1984, p.89.

¹²²⁸ Spratt wrote that "the proceedings, which were in any case largely formal, became such a bore that not one of the accused, so far as I remember, tried to follow them. We read, talked or slept in the dock, or when allowed spent the day in the garden of the house which was used as the court", while describing the "lighter moments in jail" filled with playing various games, exercise, composing light verse and singing songs. At the end of the process, and after receiving a sentence of twelve years' imprisonment (reduced to two years), Spratt became depressed, see Spratt 1955, pp.49, 52, 57-58.

¹²²⁹ Bridgeman told Münzenberg that he was in "telegraphic contact" with the prisoners in India, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/59, 12, Letter from R. Bridgeman, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 14/1-1933; RGASPI 542/1/59, 14, Letter from Bridgeman, London, to Münzenberg, Berlin, 24/1-1933.

This sum sinks into insignificance when we compare it with the £124,000 spent by the Government.¹²³⁰

“Proletarian solidarity” was the moral incentive for the *Special Meerut Release Committee*. Moreover, the committee strove to highlight fundamental questions of elementary social and political rights for the Indian working class, e.g. the right to organise themselves in trade unions and in political organisations.¹²³¹ While Bridgeman conceptualised the idea of the committee, the only thing Münzenberg could contribute with at this stage, however, was to pass on the information from London to the Eastern Secretariat in Moscow.¹²³² The *Special Meerut Release Committee* managed to maintain the political drive of the Meerut conspiracy trial campaign. Over a period of six months, the committee collected £1,000 and established an active collaboration with the *National Council of Labour* in London, which resulted in the publication of a pamphlet demanding that the British government change the prison terms for the defendants. On 24 July 1933, the High Court in Allahabad reduced the sentences in favour of the imprisoned individuals.¹²³³

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¹²³⁰ RGASPI 542/1/59, 15, Letter of invitation from the British LAI Section, author Bridgeman, January 1933. The CPGB member active in the LAI section in London, Percy Glading, fronted the committee.

¹²³¹ RGASPI 542/1/59, 15, Letter of invitation from the British LAI Section, author Bridgeman, January 1933. The committee had planned to hold its first meeting in London on 26 January, at 8 pm, at the London District Office of the *Amalgamate Engineering Union*, at 39 Doughty Street.

¹²³² The Political Commission endorsed the idea of the Eastern Secretariat organising “a specific Meerut day”, under the direction of the LAI in Europe. However, due to the unforeseen series of events in Germany, particularly the Reichstag Fire, this plan was suddenly cancelled. The only reaction from the LAI was a written protest, published in the February issue of the *Informationsbulletin* (printed in Paris in March), see fol. RGASPI 495/4/228, 1-4, Protokoll (A) Nr.291 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/1-1933. For the article, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501-20200, 220-225, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nummer 2, Februar 1933.

¹²³³ Bellamy & Saville (eds.), “The Meerut Trial, 1929-1933”, Volume VII, 1984, p.89.

Organisation No More

On the day Hitler took over the government in Berlin, there was a meeting of the Enlarged [International] Secretariat, [...] The extremely important decisions taken at this meeting concerned the political and organisational work of the International Secretariat [...] due to the changes made in the bureau because the situation in Germany had made it objectively impossible [to continue].

Allo Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris,
1/4-1933

A terrible political impotence is present now.

Helmut/Dimitrov, Berlin, to Magyar,
Moscow, 6/2-1933

If there is one particular moment in the decline of the LAI – day, month and year – 30 January 1933 is its decisive turning point. In the history of the Weimar Republic, this date refers to Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor, while for the International Secretariat, this date refers to the last meeting ever to take place at its bureau at 13 Hedemannstraße. After this meeting, everyone knew that the game was up. The irrevocable decision to transfer the International Secretariat from Berlin to Paris had made this perfectly clear to everyone. The dismantling of the International Secretariat was an operation determined by how to put into practice the directives given from one person to another in February and March. With the literal dispersal of the International Secretariat out of Berlin, this process marks the definitive disintegration of the anti-imperialist movement in Germany during the inter-war years. Additionally, it also reveals the different reactions amongst the actors.¹²³⁴

While the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor on 30 January is a chronological fixture in the history of Germany during the inter-war years, the socio-political consequences of the Reichstag Fire on 27 February witnessed the painful end of the Weimar Republic.¹²³⁵ Moreover, with the arrest of Dimitrov in Berlin on 9 March, this was a signal for the communists remaining

¹²³⁴ Based on to two accounts, one a report from the German communist Allo Bayer "Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern.Sekretariats der Liga ab 30.Januar 1933" and the other Helmut/Dimitrov's report to Magyar on 6 February, documenting the dramatic and planned end of the International Secretariat in Berlin.

¹²³⁵ The scholarly debate on causality, intent, and the question of guilt as to who had started the fire is still raging. The principal question is whether it was an act committed by a disillusioned individual, or whether it was a conspiracy organised by the NSDAP and Hitler, or the KPD. Criminological investigations, scholarly interpretations, and general discussions have yielded the same conclusion, that the fire was not a put-up job organised by the NSDAP. See further in Fritz Tobias groundbreaking analysis *Der Reichstagsbrand: Legende und Wirklichkeit*, Grote, Rastatt/Baden, 1962, p.28; Martin Moll, "Zur Historikerkontroverse um den Reichstagsbrand", in *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, Verlag NDZ, Berlin, 2003/I, Januar, pp.177-183; Erwin Eckert & Emil Fuchs, *Blick in den Abgrund. Das Ende der Weimarer Republik im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Berichte und Interpretationen*, Pahl-Rugenstein, Bonn (2002).

in the city to escape and leave Germany. In the period from 30 January to 27 February, the German security services focused their attention on gathering intelligence on the German communist movement. The raids on the headquarters of both the KPD and the IAH in February provided the MdI with a rich cache of documents on the organisational network of the German communist movement. It was logical for the International Secretariat to blame the Reichstag Fire for its liquidation and transfer to Paris. Yet, this overstates the consequences of the Reichstag Fire and conceals the fact that the NSDAP's electoral victory on 30 January simply enabled the International Secretariat to implement earlier than planned the Political Secretariat's decision in June 1932 (see previous chapter) to remove the nerve centre of the LAI from Berlin to Paris.

The Eastern Secretariat partly contributed to supporting the International Secretariat in its efforts to mobilise the campaign for Huang Ping and to influence the Meerut verdicts in January. Also in January, Berger returned from Berlin to Moscow to assist Magyar in setting up a plan on how to re-organise the International Secretariat. On 27 January, Piatnitsky summoned Magyar and Berger to a "closed session" in his office to listen to the plan. They agreed that it was crucial to keep Münzenberg as the General Secretary of the LAI, above all for him to function as the liaison between the "kom.Fraktion Liga" and the ECCI in Moscow. This was primarily because Clemens Dutt and Ferdi would be leaving Berlin at any moment and returning to Moscow. The Comintern had already made plans for Clemens Dutt. Michael E. Kreps (1895 – 1937), the leader of the publishing department at Comintern headquarters, had proposed that the Political Commission invite Clemens Dutt to Moscow and, if he accepted, he would be given a position in the publishing department. Ferdi's future was less clear. He only knew that he had to leave Berlin for Moscow at a given signal. Magyar and Berger focused essentially on the International Secretariat's "technical apparatus", telling Piatnitsky that "1-2 Comrades" had to remain in charge in Berlin for as long as possible. The first candidate was Allo Bayer, who would replace York/Thögersen as the editor of the *Informationsbulletin*, while the second candidate was Wittfogel, designated to act as the editor of *The Anti-Imperialist Review*. Bayer and Wittfogel would also take care of the daily routine work at the bureau. To confirm the re-organisation of the International Secretariat, Magyar and Berger expected to present this plan at an extended "plenary session" at the International Secretariat in Berlin sometime "over the next 14 days" in February.¹²³⁶ However, due to the series of events in

¹²³⁶ Magyar and Berger presented the re-organisation plan at a "closed session" in Piatnitsky's office ("11 Uhr Vormittag") at Comintern headquarters, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/228, 80, Tagesordnung, 27/1-1933. For Kreps' request, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/228, 1-4, Protokoll (A) Nr.291 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/1-1933. Manuisky authorised Clemens Dutt's journey to Moscow. For a biography of Kreps, see Huber 1995, p.431; for this protocol, which includes the "strictly confidential" plan of reorganisation, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/228, 5-6, (Streng vertraulich) PROTOKOLL (B) Nr.291 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des

Berlin on 30 January, Magyar and Berger's original intention had to be drastically altered. Instead, it was Helmut/Dimitrov who emerged as the messenger to enforce the Political Commission's decision to re-organise and dismantle the International Secretariat.

On 14 February, *Inprecorr* published the article "Gegen nationale und koloniale Unterdrückung. Eine wichtige Sitzung des Erweiterten Internationalen Sekretariats der LAI", which gives the impression that the International Secretariat had held a meeting on that very same day in Berlin. This was a deliberate deception, however. Apparently, the so-called "extended plenary session" (*die erweiterte Sitzung*) was carried out in all haste at 13 Hedemannstraße on 30 January, after Helmut/Dimitrov had summoned Clemens Dutt, Ferdi and Bayer for "the last meeting of the International Secretariat". At this meeting, Helmut/Dimitrov talked about how to secure the International Secretariat's future political and organisational activities as well as criticised "the centre" for its inability to develop any sustainable work. While the *Inprecorr* article depicted the LAI as an active and vigorous organisation, this article was based on the draft of a resolution authored by the WEB ("Entwurf einer politischen Resolution über die Kriegslage im Fernen Osten und die Aufgaben der anti-imperialistischen Organisationen") which supported the anti-war campaign in its protests against "Japanese imperialism" in the Far East. According to this article, the LAI was one of the few "real, revolutionary organisations" in Germany which, in comparison to the treachery of social democracy and the reformist trade unions, strove to continue the struggle against imperialism.¹²³⁷ This depiction was nonetheless an erroneous recapitulation of what had really happened at the last meeting of the International Secretariat on 30 January. Helmut/Dimitrov stated in his report to Magyar that he had criticised the members of the International Secretariat for their "lack of understanding" in how to exploit "good opportunities" to create anti-imperialist "mass work", a dilemma mainly "prevalent in the leadership of the LAI". The "terrible political impotence" at the International Secretariat and its inability to carry out organisational work, explained why the "promotion and support of the movement in the colonies and in areas of national oppressed minorities in Europe" had been a complete failure, Helmut/Dimitrov argued. While briefly touching upon the "raging" political situation in Germany, Helmut/Dimitrov concluded that the fate of the International Secretariat depended on realising other factors:

EKKI, 27/1-1933; For Allo Bayer as editor of the *Informationsbulletin*, see SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501,20200, 220-225, *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus*, Nummer 2, Februar 1933.

¹²³⁷ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 231, "Gegen nationale und koloniale Unterdrückung. Eine wichtige Sitzung des Erweiterten Internationalen Sekretariats der LAI" (Against National and Colonial Oppression. An Important Meeting of the Enlarged International Secretariat of the LAI), in *Inprecorr*, No. 21, 14/2-1933 [published around the date suggested by Magyar and Berger]; RGASPI 499/1/37, 27-36, Entwurf einer politischen Resolution über die Kriegslage im Fernen Osten und die Aufgaben der anti-imperialistischen Organisationen, WEB, Berlin, to the ECCI, Moscow, [stamped date: 14/2-1933].

I have concluded that the current line, as it is, even with the best will cannot do that [develop mass anti-imperialist work]. [...] a workable International Secretariat, a living centre capable of taking the initiative, suggestions, to help and control the implementation of directives in the sections, establish new contacts, take the initiative for the establishment of new sections (Belgium for example), make a political stand against current imperialist policy and colonial oppression, organise a series of campaigns aimed against imperialist activity and provide the sections with appropriate material, organise international anti-imperialist propaganda, to promote and take advantage of the possibilities [in the political work], the current [International] Secretariat is not suitable. An immediate change is absolutely necessary according to me.¹²³⁸

According to Helmut/Dimitrov, the International Secretariat was a defunct leader of the LAI, unable either to carry out the obligations required of it, to subsist on its own strength or, most importantly, to realise the Comintern's colonial work. Thus, the only logical solution at hand was to "temporarily" relocate the International Secretariat to Paris. This would preserve the original aim of the LAI acting as a Comintern intermediary to the colonies. Helmut/Dimitrov argued that this was a crucial question for the ECCI to consider, especially as the LAI constituted one of the few communist organisations which had established contacts with "reformist unions, social democratic parties, petite bourgeoisie circles and among intellectuals". However, Helmut/Dimitrov left the matter of transferring the International Secretariat to Paris in the hands of Magyar, concluding that it was still possible to create a vigorous anti-imperialist movement despite the "movement still being far away [...] we must change the current unacceptable situation in the League as soon as possible".¹²³⁹

Helmut/Dimitrov did not, however, inform Magyar that several of the members had already begun to dismantle and liquidate the International Secretariat after this meeting. In March, after Bayer had escaped from Berlin and arrived in Paris, he completed a report on every stage in the process, and passed it on to Magyar. According to Bayer, the operation had begun with a scattering of personnel:

Immediately after the meeting, the secretaries Ferdi and Dutt were recalled [to Moscow]. A short time later, the Hitler government made it impossible to conduct any useful work. Willi M. [Münzenberg] disappeared shortly thereafter.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁸ RGASPI 542/1/59, 29, Letter from "Helmut"/Dimitrov, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 6/2-1933.

¹²³⁹ RGASPI 542/1/59, 29, Letter from "Helmut"/Dimitrov, Berlin, to Magyar, Moscow, 6/2-1933.

¹²⁴⁰ RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern. Sekretariats der Liga ab 30. Januar 1933, author: A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933. Bayer handed over the report in person to Magyar in Paris on 6 April. Enclosed with the report was a short note from Bayer, stating that the report was a "valuable" piece of information, which described the precarious situation of the International Secretariat. Thus, Magyar had to dispatch

Dutt and Ferdi arrived safely in Moscow.¹²⁴¹ Magyar had a meeting with Ferdi at Comintern headquarters to receive additional information on the last meeting at the International Secretariat [any report of this meeting remains missing]. After listening to Ferdi's evaluation, and having examined Helmut/Dimitrov's report, Magyar told Münzenberg that the recent activities at the International Secretariat had been "weak and trivial in nature", while it seemed "obvious" that the LAI sections were incapable of carrying out "real work".¹²⁴²

The question is nevertheless whether Münzenberg even took the time to reflect upon Magyar's criticism. Concerned about the situation in Berlin, Münzenberg virtually "disappeared" in Berlin after the NSDAP came to power on 30 January. Gross wrote that Münzenberg never went back to his apartment, hiding "anonymously in a room" somewhere in the western part of Berlin.¹²⁴³

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Liquidation

The liquidation of the International Secretariat was an undertaking fraught with mistakes from the start, characterised by a hesitancy that corresponded to the harsh realities imposed on the German communist movement in February.¹²⁴⁴ At the last meeting of the International Secretariat on 30 January, Helmut/Dimitrov had instructed Bayer to work alone at the bureau and to dismantle the bureau. Nonetheless, Bayer had "to wait for a few days for your [Magyar] instructions", a decision which delayed the process of transferring sensitive documents at the International Secretariat to Paris. Bayer concluded that Helmut/Dimitrov's advice had hampered the securing of a safe transfer of "every document, correspondence and archive" to Paris, especially as the *Schutzpolizei* and the SA raided and temporarily closed down the International Secretariat in the beginning of February.

the report as soon as possible "to our friends [Comintern] in order to ensure that we as soon as possible get an answer" on the future of the International Secretariat in Paris, see fol. RGASPI 542/1/60, 38, Short note from A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 6/4-1933.

¹²⁴¹ RGASPI 495/198/1140, 29-30, Lebenslauf Clemens Palme Dutt, author: Clemens Palme Dutt, year: 1933. At the end of 1933, Krebs contacted Müller at the OMS in Moscow to inform him of the strictly confidential decision of the Comintern Cadre Department to send Clemens Dutt to London on a two-month mission [purpose unknown]. Müller had to ensure that the "visa is not granted on the passport, but on a separate sheet", see fol. RGASPI 495/198/1140, 26, Streng vertraulich, Krebs, Moscow, to Müller, OMS, Moscow, 7/12-1933.

¹²⁴² RGASPI 542/1/58, 17, Confidential letter from the Eastern Secretariat, Moscow, to Münzenberg, unknown location, Germany, 17/2-1933. This letter did not contain any further information on Ferdi after his arrival in Moscow. Nonetheless, Ferdi remained in Moscow where he worked at the Eastern Secretariat in 1933. On 3 January 1934, the Political Commission discussed Ferdi and resolved, due to his networks in Turkey and the Balkans, to give him a position in the ECCI Balkan "Länder Sekretariat" and to appoint him a standing member in the Collegium of the Eastern Secretariat, RGASPI 495/266/38, 108, Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr.352 der Sitzung der Politkommission des PS, des EKKI vom 3.1.1934, Moscow [signed: Knorin].

¹²⁴³ On 22 February, Gross sent a letter to Fritz Brupbacher informing him of her intentions to visit Zürich on 27 February, and asking whether they could meet for a short meeting at the railway station, Gross 1967, p.244; IISG 4249.10/194, Letter from Gross, Berlin, to F. Brupbacher, Zürich, 22/2-1933.

¹²⁴⁴ SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 227-229, Betreff: Westeuropäische Büro des Kommunistischen Internationale (WEB), Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, an die Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, 14/2-1933.

The MdI had also prohibited the printing and publication of both the *Informationsbulletin* and *The Anti-Imperialist Review* in Germany. Apparently, the vindictiveness of both the *Schutzpolizei* and armed forces of the SA had destroyed every printed copy of the February issue of the *Informationsbulletin* at the printing house. Realising that the situation in Berlin would not improve, Bayer informed some of the LAI sections of the impending threat. On 13 February, Bridgeman received a letter from the International Secretariat containing the directive to use the address “Walter Gabbeh, 14 Ahrweilerstr. Berlin” if he wanted to correspond with the International Secretariat and, at any cost, to avoid “the old one”. Despite Helmut/Dimitrov’s bad advice, Bayer managed to send “most of the important correspondence as well as the addresses and other materials to Paris”.¹²⁴⁵ Did Bayer’s consignment of documents ever arrive in Paris? Is it plausible that the documents were captured at the German-French border? And if the documents did arrive in Paris, who was the receiver and where did the material end up? These are all questions which, sadly, remain unresolved. Nevertheless, a plausible scenario is that the consignment was confiscated somewhere *en route* to Paris. According to a remark made by Münzenberg to “Franz” [?] on 3 March, the failure of getting the “last consignment” from Germany to France – whether this concerned the consignment of LAI documents was not disclosed – was an “unforgivable” loss which had caused enormous damage.¹²⁴⁶

The eerie setting in Berlin in February was “the road to silence” for the German communist movement, determined by the successful purging and shutting down of the movement by the state security services. This process received the assistance of a network of gullible informants in the service of the *Schutzpolizei*, with the raids against the headquarters of both the KPD and the IAH confirming that the WEB had been the driving force behind the “activity of the communists” in both Berlin and across Europe. Furthermore, the MdI observed that in connection with the closing down of the IAH headquarters on 14 February that:

On the same occasion, the office of the German LAI Section, also located at 48 Wilhelmstraße, was no longer to be found there. This could not be determined until now.¹²⁴⁷

¹²⁴⁵ MI5 intercepted the letter to Bridgeman, a document which contained the following information: “[T]here is definite evidence that owing to the advent of the Hitler regime, this address is to be used as a cover for the correspondence of the League against Imperialism”, TNA KV5/135, Register No. O.F.6/10, Minute Sheet No., 13/2-1933; RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern. Sekretariats der Liga ab 30. Januar 1933, author: A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933.

¹²⁴⁶ RGASPI 542/1/58, 21, Letter from Münzenberg, unknown location [France], to “Franz”, 3/3-1933 [stamped: 8/4-1933]. Evaluation of the fonds in the *Archives Nationales* (Fontainebleau, Paris) and the *Archives nationales du monde du travail* has not provided any further clue as to whether the documents ever arrived in Paris, see:

< <http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/> >.

¹²⁴⁷ Gross 1965, pp.244-245; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 227-229, Betreff: Westeuropäische Büro des Kommunistischen Internationale (WEB), Nachrichtensammelstelle im Reichsministerium des Innern, Berlin, an die Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, 14/2-1933. For an in-depth interpretation of the network of informants in Germany, see Claire M. Hall, “An Army of Spies? The Gestapo Spy Network 1933-45”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*,

However, despite the raid of the International Secretariat at 13 Hedemannstraße in February, this was not the definitive end of the bureau. Bayer, alone at the International Secretariat, experienced the desolate and obscure atmosphere of the Weimar capital while being preoccupied with liquidating the International Secretariat. On 9 March, Bayer had no other option than to escape in all haste from Berlin.

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Fire, Dismantling and Escape

At 21.14 pm on 27 February, an alarm sounded across Berlin, declaring that the Reichstag was on fire. Due to the chaos caused by the fire, Hitler and the Nazi regime ordered the SA and the Prussian police to arrest well-known communist leaders. Münzenberg's name was on its most wanted list, yet on 27 February, he was attending a KPD party meeting in Langenselbold in the outskirts of Frankfurt am Main and managed to avoid arrest.¹²⁴⁸ On 28 February, the national radio in Germany broadcast the warrant for Münzenberg's arrest, accusing him of having committed high treason and, on 1 March, the *Deutsches Kriminalpolizeiblatt* published a picture of Münzenberg.¹²⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Bayer was waiting for further instructions on how to proceed in Berlin, although "after hearing that Helmut had been arrested", this was the code to abandon the International Secretariat and to escape from Berlin and Germany.¹²⁵⁰ However, as logical as Bayer's decision to leave Berlin may appear, the liquidation of the International Secretariat was not dramatic. Far from

2009:44, Sage Publications, London, pp.247-265. Hall writes that the "reliability of an informer was very important", which forced the Gestapo to question whether intelligence from a source was accurate or not.

¹²⁴⁸ Münzenberg did not stay at a hotel during his visit, instead Münzenberg's driver Emil was in charge of the arrangements, Gross 1967, p.246; Wessel (1991).

¹²⁴⁹ On March 5, the Nazi paper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, released the article, "Pestherd des kommunistischen Untermenschentums", which included a photograph of the "fleeing Münzenberg" (next to van der Lubbe), Gross 1967, p.257. Tony Le Tissier's topographical study of Berlin contains the official Nazi regime press release after the Reichstag Fire, a document which announced the German nation's aim to protect the "people and the State": "The burning of the Reichstag was intended to be the signal for a bloody uprising and civil war. Large-scale pillaging in Berlin was planned for as early as four o'clock in the morning on Tuesday. It has been determined that starting today throughout Germany acts of terrorism were to begin against prominent individuals, against private property, against the lives and safety of the peaceful population and general civil war was to be unleashed. [...] Warrants have been issued for the arrest of two leading Communist Reichstag deputies on grounds of urgent suspicion. The other deputies and functionaries of the Communist Party are being taken into protective custody. Communist newspapers, magazines, leaflets and posters are banned for four months throughout Prussia. For two weeks all newspapers, magazines, leaflets and posters of the Social Democratic Party are banned", Tony Le Tissier, *Berlin then and now*, Battle of Britain Prints, London, 1992, p.46, see also Alan Bullock, *Hitler: a study in tyranny*, Pelican Books, London, 1962 (first published in 1952), p.263, and for Münzenberg, see Martin Schumacher (ed.), *M.d.R. Die Reichstagsabgeordneten der Weimarer Republik in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus Politische Verfolgung, Emigration und Ausbürgerung 1933-1945*, Düsseldorf, 1991, p.405.

¹²⁵⁰ RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern. Sekretariats der Liga ab 30. Januar 1933, author: A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933. For a dramatic narrative of the consequences and immediate series of events after the Reichstag Fire, see G. L. Ulmen's biography of Wittfogel, which outlines in great detail Wittfogel's struggle to avoid arrest, his unfortunate incarceration and, finally, his deportation from Germany (1978, pp.157-169).

it, the dispersal of the “centre” had been a meticulously-planned process. From Berlin, Bayer arranged for the destroyed February issue of the *Informationsbulletin* to be re-printed in Paris which, in the name of the International Secretariat, included one of the first public protests against the “openly Fascist dictatorship in Germany ... [and the] new German Imperialism”.¹²⁵¹ However, the psychological pressure on Bayer in Berlin had been a trying and nerve-racking experience. According to Münzenberg, Bayer had been working alone at the bureau for almost four weeks, a task which had almost driven him insane.¹²⁵² Nevertheless, Bayer had managed to carry out the work of dismantling the International Secretariat, re-routing the LAI propaganda apparatus to Paris, securing a liaison between Paris and Germany and eradicating all traces of individual activity at the bureau.

Bayer left Berlin on 10 March, the day after Dimitrov’s arrest. Before his departure, Bayer had a last meeting with some “German friends”, who promised Bayer that they would continue LAI activity and distribute anti-imperialist propaganda in Germany. However, Bayer realised after arriving in Paris that this promise would most likely never become a reality. The symbolic end of the International Secretariat was an act carried out by Bayer as he divided between the members at the International Secretariat whatever amount of money was left at the bureau. Recording the balance, noting that “overdue debts had been not paid”, Bayer burned all remaining books and documents at the bureau.¹²⁵³

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Empty Place

The International Secretariat, once both the cradle and intersection of the anti-imperialist movement in Berlin as well as the hub and junction of “particular bundles of activity”, was dismantled and abandoned in March 1933. This last act was a result of external factors characterised by the socio-political setting in Berlin, which effectively ended the idea of an anti-imperialist movement in Germany during the inter-war years. On 16 March, the Berlin Chief of Police concluded, after several officers of the Kreuzberg-Tempelhof police district had entered and searched the International Secretariat at 13 Hedemansstraße, that the “facilities of the League

¹²⁵¹ RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern. Sekretariats der Liga ab 30. Januar 1933, author: A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933; *Informationsbulletin der Liga gegen Imperialismus* (Herausgegeben vom Internationalen Sekretariat, Paris, 57, rue Charlot), 2 Jahrgang, Nummer 3, Ende Februar.

¹²⁵² RGASPI 542/1/58, 21, Letter from Münzenberg, France (unknown location) to “Franz” [?], unknown location [Moscow?], 3/3-1933 [stamped: 8/4-1933].

¹²⁵³ RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Bericht über Lage und Tätigkeit des Intern. Sekretariats der Liga ab 30. Januar 1933, author: A. Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933.

against Imperialism” were empty.¹²⁵⁴ The items confiscated from the bureau by the “Polizeiamt Kreuzberg-Tempelhof” were typical of the kinds of material and furniture usually found in an office. These objects were recorded in an inventory list (a document which signals the definitive end of the International Secretariat in Berlin). In 1925, the IAH had been developing its anti-colonial project under the guise of a philanthropic agenda which, in 1927, realised its objective of establishing the LAI in Brussels; however, in 1933, “the centre” of the LAI reflected the abrupt end of the colonial question in the histories of both the LAI and the Comintern in Berlin.

The bureau at 13 Hedemannstraße was located on the first floor in the building and consisted of four separate rooms. The entrance hall and the first room had shelves, tables, a typewriter table, a number of chairs and a litter bin, an electric “hanging lamp”, a newspaper holder, typing and writing materials, and curtains. The second room, which faced the street and had a blind at the window, contained document cabinets, chairs, a punch holder, electric lamps, transcript and newspaper holders, a clothes hanger and curtains. The third room had an office desk and typewriter tables (no typewriters were left, only the tables), a clothes hanger and a telephone, a filing cabinet and a card index with four empty compartments, a window cabinet, a hanging electrical lamp, empty baskets and curtains. The last room had a diplomat’s desk, typewriter tables, chairs, electric lamps and a standard lamp, a document stand, a filing cabinet, a shelf and a clothes hanger, empty litter bins, various writing materials, inkwells and net curtains. The *Schutzpolizei* observed that a number of newspapers, books, empty folders and files were scattered in “all of the rooms”.¹²⁵⁵

One year later, on 9 March 1934, the Prussian Ministry of Finance made the entry that the furniture and office material confiscated from the International Secretariat of the LAI had been used to furnish the rooms at SS headquarters at 8 Prince Albrechtstraße¹²⁵⁶ – almost an inverted poetic justice.

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¹²⁵⁴ Fowler 2007, p.5; Weitz 1997, p.6; SAPMO-BA ZPA R/1501/20200, 234, Polizeipräsident, Berlin, Aus Lagebericht, 16/3-1933.

¹²⁵⁵ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA_PK) Rep. 151, IA, Nr.8350, 99-100, Abschrift: Polizeiamt Kreuzberg-Tempelhof SW 29, Berlin, 4/5-1933.

¹²⁵⁶ GStA_PK Rep. 151, Nr.8350, 102, Der Preußische Finanzminister; Berlin, 9/3-1934.

Chapter 11. Postscript: The LAI in Exile – Paris 1933 and London 1933-37 – A New Beginning ... and the End...

In March 1933, the International Secretariat was just a memory, while for Münzenberg and Gross, this was the beginning of a new phase. After escaping from Germany and the crumbling Weimar Republic by crossing the German-French border by car in the beginning of March, the two of them arrived in Paris. In a letter from Gross to Paulete Brubacher in Zurich, Münzenberg wrote, “we are still alive and quite safe” and that Paris was like coming to “a new world”.¹²⁵⁷ In March and April, Paris was a hectic and confused scene with the arrival of German émigré communists, with the French capital emerging as a haven in which the German communist movement could resume its activity. With the transference of the LAI and its International Secretariat to its exile in Paris, once Bayer had arrived in Paris in March, he concluded that, in order to re-construct the structural basis of the organisation from top to bottom, “large sums of money” would be required. Bayer wanted Münzenberg’s opinion on the matter, only to receive the recommendation that a far more constructive solution would be to locate the International Secretariat permanently in Brussels. Perhaps Münzenberg came up with this idea after understanding that the “Paris friends” (Central Committee of the PCF) showed no interest in supporting the LAI.¹²⁵⁸ Exile in Paris was the definite turning point for the LAI, therefore, is it possible to distinguish any organisational initiatives by the LAI in Paris; and what character did the discussion of the LAI assume at Comintern headquarters concerning the future of the International Secretariat?

The interest amongst the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters to re-construct the International Secretariat apparatus in Paris gradually ebbed away. Magyar went on a short trip to Paris in March to observe the turmoil amid the German communist émigré community, only to return to Moscow at the end of the month. At a meeting of the Political Commission, Magyar challenged the attending members to come up with a solution in order to revive the activities of the International Secretariat in Paris. According to Magyar, the International Secretariat was at this stage much reduced; a more constructive solution would, therefore, be to transfer the LAI apparatus to London. If so, the Political Commission had to sanction “Comrade” Bridgeman to assume the role as the official leader, and convince Münzenberg to remain on as General Secretary.¹²⁵⁹ Magyar most likely met Münzenberg in Paris, only to realise that he appeared to be

¹²⁵⁷ Gross 1967, pp.246-250; IISG 4249.10/194, Letter from Gross, Berlin, to Fritz Brubacher, Zürich, 22/2-1933; IISG 4249.10/195, Letter from Gross, Paris, to Paulette Brubacher, Zürich, 29/4-1933.

¹²⁵⁸ RGASPI 542/1/60, 37, Letter sent by Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 29/3-1933 [stamped date: 23/6-1933]; RGASPI 542/1/60, 39-49, Report from Bayer, Paris, to Magyar, Paris, 1/4-1933.

¹²⁵⁹ The Political Commission suggested, if it were possible, to transfer a majority of the colonial work carried out by the International Secretariat in Berlin to the French IRH section, and to get the work re-started by using the contacts of

preoccupied with more urgent matters rather than dealing with the LAI. At this point in time, Münzenberg's primary focus was on the anti-fascist campaign, better known as the *World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism*, a campaign which culminated in the convening of the anti-war conference at the "Salle Pleyel" in Paris on 4-6 June, 1933. Furthermore, Münzenberg furnished propaganda against the Nazi regime by co-ordinating the publication of the renowned *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag* in 1933.¹²⁶⁰ Magyar's recommendation to the Political Commission in April also contradicts Saville's otherwise discerning analysis of the British LAI Section, in which he concludes that the International Secretariat quite simply "was handed over" to Bridgeman at "the end of 1933".¹²⁶¹ However, the matter involved an in-depth discussion at Comintern headquarters, with a number of actors (Münzenberg, Magyar, Piatnitsky, Saklatvala and Pollitt) being engaged to examine whether Bridgeman was the most suitable candidate to assume the leadership of the LAI.

Münzenberg's lack of interest in the LAI determined whether it would be possible to reconstruct and develop the activities of the LAI in Paris. In June 1933, Münzenberg travelled to Moscow in the company of Gross and, once there, used the opportunity to declare his opinion on the LAI. In a letter to Magyar, Münzenberg explained that the trying social conditions in Paris made it difficult for the LAI to develop any kind of activity. This letter is also the document of a resigned *persona* remembering past glories, where Berlin had provided Münzenberg with a political and organisational scene in which to establish propaganda campaigns. For Münzenberg, the result of having been forced to escape from Germany, while attempting to re-adapt himself to the situation in Paris, a city offering only a fraction of the number of former possibilities, it was no longer possible to carry out the work the Comintern demanded of him. According to Münzenberg, it was even impossible to "find the suitable word" to describe his loss of engagement, or to present any kind of solution, especially as the Comintern did not send "any

the Colonial Commission of the PCF as an "intermediary" to the colonies. Yet, the Political Commission realised that this would be an insecure arrangement, considering that "for the moment" there existed "extremely limited channels of contact with the colonies", see fol. RGASPI 495/4/242, 6-7, Protokoll (B) Nr.308 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 27/4-1933; RGASPI 495/4/242, 1-5, Protokoll (A) Nr.308 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/4-1933; RGASPI 495/4/242, 175-183, Confidential resolution on the colonial work of the French Section of the IRH, adopted by the Political Commission, 7/5-1933.

¹²⁶⁰ The "Salle-Pleyel" Congress was attended by more than 3,000 delegates according to *Rundschau*, which described the congress as a propagandist feat: "[T]he international advance of Fascism announces an immediate transition to imperialist war [...] Fascism is an international danger for the workers of all countries". For the preparations for the second congress, see fol. RGASPI 495/100/931, 1-2, Official letter from the European Workers' Anti-Fascist Congress, 28/3-1933; RGASPI 495/100/931, 4, Note from the German Relief Committee, 4/4-1933. See also Carr 1982, pp.392-393; Gross 1967, pp.270-272; McMeekin 2003, p.264. For Münzenberg's work on the Brown Book, SAPMO-BA ZPA RY 9/I 6/7, 18, Letter from Münzenberg, Paris, to Knorin, Smoliansky, Kuusinen, Moscow, 13/5-1933; and, World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*, Gollancz, London, 1933.

¹²⁶¹ Saville referred to the "Report of the International Secretariat for 1934", a document that mentions how difficult Bridgeman was finding it to re-activate the LAI, Saville vol.VII 1984, p.45; RGASPI 542/1/61, 1-43, Report from Bridgeman, London, to Saklatvala CPGB, 1934 [arrived in Moscow 10/3-1935].

notification, information and assistance” on how to solve the question. Consequently, Münzenberg argued that the only solution for him was to resign from the LAI:

[...] if we are finished and I was formally released from any connection with the L. [LAI],
[...] The time is past when I could give newspapers a number of instructions to do this and that.¹²⁶²

On 15 June, Magyar notified the Political Commission of Münzenberg’s wish to resign from the LAI, thus, it was essential to decide whether the International Secretariat should be transferred from Paris to London. If the Political Commission endorsed this plan, Magyar argued that this would require the “central apparatus” of the LAI in London being guaranteed a monthly allowance of \$220, and the sections of the LAI in France, England, Belgium and the Netherlands being guaranteed \$205 per month.¹²⁶³ The decision-makers at Comintern headquarters were, however, reluctant to let go of Münzenberg as the General Secretary of the LAI. Münzenberg could not cope with the situation of not receiving a definite answer. On 20 August, Münzenberg sent Piatnitsky a short note, including his desire to sever his ties to the LAI:

Dear Comrade P. [Piatnitsky]. After my proposal to move the headquarters and secretariat of the Anti-Imperialist League to London, I ask to be relieved from my former work in the League and to no longer be cited as secretary of the League. With party greetings / W. Münzenberg¹²⁶⁴

This short note was Münzenberg’s final act in the history of the LAI. The Political Commission granted Münzenberg’s wish and, on 27 August 1933, terminated his position as General Secretary. After this Political Commission session, Piatnitsky summoned Magyar and Bela Kun for a closed discussion in his office at Comintern headquarters at 11am. In Piatnitsky’s office, the three of them worked out the details of how to transfer the International Secretariat from Paris to London and to appoint Bridgeman as the new leader of the LAI.¹²⁶⁵

The history of the LAI “at the end of 1933”, and up until its formal end in 1937, is a question that deserves a thorough re-assessment. This question involves, aside from its chronological delineation (1933-37), an examination of the individual relationships after the transfer of the International Secretariat to London, e.g. the complex relationship between Münzenberg and Bridgeman. Münzenberg believed that Bridgeman was a capable and effective person to lead the

¹²⁶² RGASPI 542/1/59, 45, Letter from Münzenberg, Moscow, to Magyar, Moscow, 8/6-1933. For the journey to Moscow, see Gross 1967, p.272. This quote is also included in Haikal (1995, p.152).

¹²⁶³ RGASPI 495/4/250, 15-16, Protokoll (B) Nr.318 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr.EKKI, 15/6-1933. Magyar continued the LAI discussion at 11am in Piatnitsky’s office, see fol. RGASPI 495/4/250, 47, Running order of topics, Piatnitsky’s office, Moscow, 15/6-1933.

¹²⁶⁴ RGASPI 495/4/260, 72, Short note from Münzenberg, Moscow, to Piatnitsky, Moscow, 20/8-1933.

¹²⁶⁵ RGASPI 495/4/258, 1-4, Protokoll (A) Nr.331 der Sitzung der Politkommission des Pol.Sekr. des EKKI, 27/8-1933; RGASPI 495/4/258, 12, Tagesordnung, 27/8-1933.

LAI's public campaigns in England in 1933 (the Huang Ping campaign and to bring the Meerut trial campaign to a conclusive and constructive end). Yet Münzenberg also seems to have been a bit skeptical towards Bridgeman. According to MI5, the CPGB member, Percy Glading, stated that Münzenberg had made "great efforts ... to get rid of Bridgeman from the LAI" because his political inclination was not "extreme enough and he has always refused to become a Communist".¹²⁶⁶

Despite the fact that Bridgeman assumed the role as the official leader of the LAI, in reality, in fact, he was in the minority. The International Secretariat of the LAI in London was dominated by communist members such as Pollitt, Saklatvala and Glading. However, Bridgeman considered the LAI's connections with the communist movement to be secondary. According to J. Ayodele Langley's interview with Bridgeman on 20 April 1967, he "made it clear" that he still believed that the LAI "was not a Communist front organisation". Bridgeman nevertheless found the task of reconstructing the LAI, after having been appointed as its leader in October 1933, as insurmountable. The only document sent to Bridgeman from Paris (or Moscow) was "a list of addresses which was not up to date and so of little value"; therefore, the only option was to "reconstitute the work of the League from the beginning".¹²⁶⁷

From November 1933 until the beginning of 1937, the LAI remained active in England, before deciding to formally dissolve itself and replacing it with the *Colonial Information Bureau* (CIB), a socialist association which publicly renounced the former communist ties of the anti-imperialist movement. The CIB did not, however, disavow the historic impact of the LAI, and initiated a nostalgic narrative of the LAI:

Since its foundation in 1927 the League against Imperialism has done consistent work in connection with the different aspects of the colonial struggle; but it is essential that we should advance from the position of a small group of people interested in the colonial struggle, seriously restricted in their activities because of their association with a 'banned organisation', and activate the working class organisations and peace societies, ...¹²⁶⁸

The LAI existed from 1927 until 1937. The establishment of the LAI in Brussels had been followed by a process which attempted to link together the anti-colonial movements in both Berlin and beyond, which, in 1927-33, witnessed both the rise and fall of the anti-imperialist movement

¹²⁶⁶ RGASPI 542/1/59, 45, Letter from Münzenberg, Moscow, to Magyar, Moscow, 8/6-1933; TNA KV5/135, 50, Personal M/12, League against Imperialism, 25/8-1933. The rest of the quote reads as follows: "Willi Muntzenberg [sic] has three times 'requested' him to leave the Movement, but Bridgeman has refused. Bridgeman has rather a large personal following in this country and, as he also has independent means, he is a very difficult person to get rid of".

¹²⁶⁷ RGASPI 542/1/61, 1-43, Report from Bridgeman, London, to Saklatvala CPGB, 1934 [arriving in Moscow on 10 March 1935]; Langley 1973, p.310 (see footnote 70). Much of Langley's interpretation of the LAI was based on his interview with Bridgeman in Middlesex, England, on 20 April, 1967.

¹²⁶⁸ Saville vol.VII 1984, pp.45-46.

in Berlin. Its “successor” in London, 1933-37, offers the logical possibility of seeing these two topics as separate historical accounts, particularly if one considers the differing socio-political contexts in London and Berlin. However, what unifies the narratives of these “two” LAI organisations is the organisational connection of both of them to the structure and network(s) of the Comintern. The history of the LAI is one which remains firmly rooted within the context of international communism, as it is also a history which explains itself as a source of inspiration for the decolonisation process in the colonial and semi-colonial countries after World War II.

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Conclusion

The history of the LAI is not ambiguous. Far from it, the history of the LAI is a narrative characterised not only by tragedy, failure, self-deception, control, resignation and dejection, but also by commitment, eagerness, anticipation, self-sacrifice and euphoria. The visionaries and utopian dreamers who believed in the LAI, particularly the actors at the International Secretariat, journeyed through the political and social landscape of the 1920s, characterised by its hope and possibilities, with the first years of the 1930s forcing them to realise that everything had been a dream. The euphoria of the Brussels Congress and the establishment of the LAI in 1927 fulfilled the Comintern's objective of having an international anti-imperialist organisation at its disposal. Despite the feeling of a spiritual bond and the expressions of collective joy in 1927, the momentum of the Brussels Congress contrasts starkly with the collapse of the anti-imperialist vision in 1933. Furthermore, the disintegration of a sympathising communist organisation belongs to this discussion, with the argument that the Comintern was a grandiose failure due to its dissolution in 1943, a theory inspired by the understanding that the world party never accomplished what it set out to do at the beginning: to create a world of communism. However, this raises a few questions. Is it logical to assume that either the physical discontinuity of the Comintern in 1943, the liquidation of the International Secretariat in Berlin 1933 or the formal dissolution of the LAI in 1937, signified the definitive end of what these movements represented? The history of the LAI is a "lost history" which contains a variety of dynamic aspects. The above analysis has striven to disclose perspectives which existed and took place both from below and from above, located in hierarchical structure(s), thus, the history of the LAI is a story enacted both in horizontal and vertical dimensions. By combining the impact of both internal and external factors with the effects of decisive events, the drama of the LAI emerged in the heyday of the inter-war years; decisive events which both contributed to and shaped, and ultimately confirmed the end of the LAI.

On 30 August 1945, just thirteen days after Indonesia had finally won its independence (on 17 August 1945) from both the Dutch and Japanese imperialists, after more than 300 years of Dutch colonial rule, with Sukarno and Hatta having been the main leaders of the Indonesian independence movement and Sukarno being proclaimed the first President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mohammad Hatta sent "a personal message to my old comrades wherever they may be". According to Hatta, the memories of his life in Europe and his "many friends there" had made him reflect upon the leaders of movements and "those champions of humanitarianism" who had rallied against colonialism and imperialism, concluding that the 1927 Brussels Congress had been

a conference of “world importance”.¹²⁶⁹ In 1945, however, the leaders and “champions of humanitarianism” connected to the LAI had either died in mysterious circumstances (Münzenberg) or had fallen victim to an ideology they had defended and believed in (communism). One cannot summarise and conclude the history of the LAI without taking the above into account. As Karl Schlögel rightfully observes in his study of the terror and dreams in Moscow in 1937, the normal approach for an author in the epilogue is to recapitulate the main contentions which have emerged during the analysis, before summarising and reaching a conclusion. When it comes to the tragedy of the LAI, it is relevant to emphasise two aspects similar to the ones raised by Schlögel, aspects explicitly linked to the historical connection of the state-sanctioned violence against the Russian population during the Great Terror in 1937, and to the history of international communism.¹²⁷⁰

Firstly, a majority of the visionaries and utopian dreamers involved in the LAI at some ideological, organisational or individual level faced a brutal end during the Terror and purging of Soviet society during the 1930s. These were individuals who had given the whole of their lives to creating utopia and defending an ideology, only to finally witness the end of utopia. After 1933, Moscow became the capital and symbolic haven for communist émigrés, particularly for those from Germany. A majority of the actors connected to the LAI did not live to see the end of the Second World War in 1945 but, even worse, many did not even live to see the war begin in 1939, while the fates of some of them are still not known today. Münzenberg was found dead in France in 1940; Chatto was executed in Moscow in 1937; Teido Kunizaki most likely disappeared into the GULAG penal system sometime during the 1930s, probably after the ICC in Moscow had refused to transfer his KPD membership to the CPSU (B) due to his “bourgeois background”; Hansin Liau died in 1964, shortly after arriving back in China after having served a sentence in the GULAG together with his wife; and Hans Thögersen (“York”; 1902 – ?) vanished without trace in January 1933. In Moscow, a majority of the actors at Comintern headquarters, who at some level had had a role in the LAI, suffered a tragic end and were executed during the Great Terror in 1937-38: Heimo (1937); Magyar (1937); Petrovsky (1937); Melnitschansky (1937); Piatnitsky (1938); Mif (1938); and Bukharin (1938).¹²⁷¹

Secondly, the ascendancy of the NSDAP as the leading power in Germany on 30 January 1933, resulting in the chaotic and somewhat anticipated end of the Weimar Republic in February-March, was also the end for the LAI and the International Secretariat in Berlin. This also announced in the

¹²⁶⁹ “A personal message to my old comrades wherever they may be”, in Hatta 1972, p.504. For Indonesia’s independence, see Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1200*, (Third Edition), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001, pp.261-264.

¹²⁷⁰ Karl Schlögel, *Terror och dröm – Moskva år 1937* (original title: *Terror und Traum – Moskau 1937*; 2008), Natur & Kultur, Stockholm, 2011, p.654.

¹²⁷¹ See further in Chase (2002); Hermann Weber & Dietrich Staritz (Hrsg.), *Kommunisten verfolgen Kommunisten*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1993; Arch Getty & Naumov (2010).

most violent terms the end of the German communist movement, and laid the foundation for a new political and social *milieu* in Germany. However, the development of German society after 1933 was a period overshadowed by the inhumane and devastating consequences of the Second World War. Consequently, the impact of the 1930s contributed to the end of the history of the LAI in both a national and international context. In the post-war societies of the Cold War, the LAI, as both a topic and a phenomena, was either consigned to the dustbin of history, exposed to the politics of biography or had become an object of nostalgia. The understanding of the LAI was a topic included in many discussions and assessments which attempted to make a distinction between “good and bad” history, often within an ideological framework, while in Bandung in 1955, the LAI emerged as a fond memory and nostalgic point of reference for the leaders of the decolonisation movement. These factors shed some light on why the topic of the LAI, one of the first protesters against the system of colonialism and imperialism in the twentieth century, has been perceived as being ambiguous. The issue is, however, far more complex.

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Success and Failure

The Brussels Congress and the establishment of the LAI in 1927 were unexpected successes for the IAH, the LACO, for Münzenberg and for the Comintern. The dynamic message of its anti-imperialist agenda, as presented in Brussels, showed the Comintern the possibilities of producing a political message which attracted attention to the colonial question from outside the international communist movement. Once Münzenberg, with Gibarti’s help, had managed to transfer the LAI’s inaugural congress to Brussels – one of the “hearts of imperialism” in Europe – Münzenberg’s position as the leading organiser of communist propaganda and covert activities of the Comintern in Europe was confirmed. To the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, the LAI suddenly appeared as the solution to establishing a channel for communism to the colonial and semi-colonial countries. In Brussels, disparate political camps – socialists, social democrats, trade unionists, nationalists, pacifists and radical elements – all united around a common aim: the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. However, the central issue for Münzenberg and the Comintern was that the establishment of the LAI signified the essence of the united front strategy which, according to the vision outlined by Kuusinen in 1926, aimed to create a “Solar System” to realise the building of a world of communism. For Münzenberg, the Brussels Congress was the opportunity to merge the LAI with already existing anti-colonial committees and campaigns established by the IAH apparatus in Berlin which, through the active leadership of the

International Secretariat in Berlin, expected to turn the LAI into one of the most vociferous critics of the policies of the *League of Nations*.

The LAI was a success for the simple reason that it provided some of the anti-colonial activists, who later re-surfaced as leaders of liberation movements in their home countries, e.g. Hatta, M. J. S. Naidu and Nehru, with a life-long experience and knowledge of organising. For example, the necessary steps to work out and structure propaganda campaigns, schedule activities, work out budgets and to organise public meetings.¹²⁷² The LAI was a success because it mobilised the euphoria amongst the visionaries and utopian dreamers in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. For a brief moment, the LAI succeeded in living up to its vision of actually posing as a non-party organisation, a crucial factor enabling actors holding different political points of view to stand on the same political platform around a common cause. However, once the Comintern resolved to correct the ideological agenda and organisational structure of the LAI after its inception in 1927, this created a scenario which ultimately established a dividing line between its communist and its non-communist members.

The impact of the LAI on the anti-colonial movement left a lasting imprint. Culminating in the Bandung conference in 1955, the LAI's heritage was one of inspiration which, according to Sukarno, was a "result of sacrifices", which had ultimately ended in the understanding that "[N]ow we are free, sovereign and independent. We are again masters in our own house. We do not need to go to other continents to confer".¹²⁷³ Both the Bandung Conference and the Brussels Congress are chronological fixtures in the historiography of decolonization, in which the LAI plays a key role in the subaltern understanding of global history, a perspective which stands in stark contrast to the perception of Empire as an idea and its global dominance. On the other hand, it is curious to point out the conviction that the LAI engendered amongst some of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters. For example, the institutional liaison of the International Secretariat in Moscow, the Eastern Secretariat, argued in 1930 that the LAI was by far the most important sympathising communist organisation among the Comintern's "auxiliary organisations". The reason why the Eastern Secretariat considered the LAI to be a pivotal actor for the international communist movement was its role as a distributor of Bolshevik propaganda in colonial and semi-colonial countries, as well as the fact of it having established contact with individuals inclined towards communism. From a broader perspective, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that the LAI led the way in inspiring and maintaining anti-imperialist networks of a transcontinental character during the inter-war years. Its success in doing this drew attention to the LAI from actors who, on the one

¹²⁷² See further on the legacy, experience, and organisation inside of mass organisations in Kasza 1995, pp.183-188.

¹²⁷³ Opening Speech by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno, at the Asian – African Conference (Bandung, 17th – 24th April, 1955).

hand, defended and believed in the LAI as a political actor, and those who, on the other hand, condemned the activities of the LAI. Free to act on the basis of being a “focus-centered” organisation, the LAI took measures to rally against the system of colonialism and imperialism. However, this is also what contributed to the LAI’s downfall. Once the Comintern, the LAI’s parent body and financial supporter, decided to take a more active part in the decision-making process and, ultimately, subject every aspect of its activism to its own standards and rhetoric, the outcome was an unwanted exposure which played into the hands of the LAI’s main antagonists: the LSI and the national security services.

In the end, the LAI was a failure. The primary explanation for this is that the LAI did not realise its ambition of becoming an international anti-imperialist organisation. However, this simplified generalisation deserves a more thorough and rational explanation. By seeking an answer in internal and external factors, one can explain why the LAI headed off in a different direction than the one originally intended. Crucial to the above was the establishment of a hierarchy of relations at the International Secretariat, an internal factor which determined its relations to Comintern headquarters in Moscow, with the latter following its own set of hierarchical structure(s) in order to guide and supervise the activities of the LAI in Berlin. Control and the struggle for power were dominant features throughout the history of the LAI. Fuelled by a desire to attain a prestigious position among the central actors in the hierarchy, the core at the International Secretariat conspicuously separated itself from the believers. What were the principal reasons for doing this? The fundamental difference was ideology. Hence, the core represented a structural factor reserved for individuals considered to be reliable and genuine communists, whereas the believers, in spite of their desire to both contribute to and develop the political work of the International Secretariat, had a different political or social background, e.g. as nationalists or socialists. This conclusion is based on the characters, behaviours and fates of some of the individuals engaged at the International Secretariat. The relationship between Münzenberg and Chatto is illustrative of the above. Whilst reaching a mutual understanding in the context of anti-imperialism, once Chatto had received the order to leave Berlin in 1931 and was then instructed to resign from his post as “International Secretary” of the LAI, Münzenberg made no effort to change this decision. The second case is Hansin Liao’s experience of how the core separated itself from the believers, a hierarchy of relations which ultimately led him to chastise himself as an “oppressed colonial slave of the LAI”. It was rather the omnipotent core of individuals who were either deemed to be trustworthy and reliable, e.g. Münzenberg, or were authorised by the Comintern to travel from Moscow to Berlin and be located at the International Secretariat, e.g. Smeral and Ferdi, which

earned the respect and prestige the believers were seeking. A product of ideology, and established for the sole purpose of acting as an “intermediary between the Comintern and nationalist movements in the colonies”, the LAI faced the challenge of having to combat ideological ambitions within its organisational structure. Communism was an ideology expecting to “build bridges” to the colonial countries, which, according to the maxim introduced by Stalin in 1918, was an aphorism used by the LAI as a pretext and a guiding principle for its activities. However, the LAI failed in its endeavour to construct viable and functional “bridges” to the colonies. Consequently, the question is why did the LAI and its International Secretariat take the route they did?

The time-line of the LAI and the International Secretariat followed a course initially set in motion and determined by internal constraints, which ultimately came to its end due to external events. In 1925, the anti-colonial project was a product of the philanthropic agenda the IAH was sponsoring, an initiative which gained momentum with the successful establishment of propaganda campaigns such as *Hands off China* and the *Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee*. For Münzenberg, the outcome of the *Hands off China* campaign was the impetus used to convince the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters of the necessity to keep supporting the activities of the IAH as a proletarian solidarity mass organisation. With the success of the *Hands off China* campaign, the rhetoric of anti-colonialism as espoused and supported by the IAH created a reaction outside the communist movement, especially amongst anti-colonial activists in Berlin and Europe. Making the most of this opportunity, Münzenberg proposed to the Comintern the idea of allowing the IAH organise an international congress against colonialism and imperialism. However, the Indian communist Manabendra Nath Roy was the key who, after analysing the achievements of the IAH’s colonial work, and in connection with the establishment of the LACO in February 1926, suggested to the Comintern that they should endorse the idea of creating “a permanent organisation to support the liberation movement in the colonies”. Hence, the hitherto general understanding of the LAI, that it was a product of Münzenberg and the IAH, is an erroneous assumption. In fact, the establishment of the LAI as an organisation was never a priority for Münzenberg. Münzenberg’s primary focus was to organise an international anti-imperialist congress in Brussels, in 1927, and to turn this event into a grandiose demonstration of anti-imperialist propaganda, as well as finding candidates suitable for communist influence. The euphoric reaction to the Brussels Congress nevertheless caught Münzenberg off guard, with Münzenberg conceding that it would be foolish to ignore the establishment of the LAI as an organisation. Hence, neither Münzenberg, the IAH nor the Comintern could disregard the magnitude of this event. However, the ensuing work to co-ordinate the organisational structure of

the LAI after the Brussels Congress developed into a conflict between the International Secretariat and the Comintern, which in turn added anxiety to a relationship which was already under pressure. Efforts to find solutions to practical questions (personnel, money) were provisional from the outset: e.g. the International Secretariat being located within the headquarters of the IAH in Berlin; or the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters not swiftly solving the crucial question of funding for the LAI; as well as intentionally delaying the despatch of directives to the International Secretariat. Meanwhile, Münzenberg's primary concern was to get Piatnitsky to reimburse the IAH for the expenses spent on the congress. Thus, the LAI missed its opportunity to take full advantage of the euphoria and momentum generated by the Brussels Congress for the sole reason that the decision-makers in Moscow chose not to react to the extent, functionality and intentions of the LAI until June 1927. By then, however, the interest in the ethos of the organisation had begun to fade among the visionaries. At the same time, the LAI's antagonists (the LSI, and the German, British and French security services) were increasing their efforts to understand and verify their suspicion that the LAI was indeed a communist organisation. Due to the above, in the period from February till June 1927, the LAI and the Comintern missed their chance to establish a vigorous international anti-imperialist organisation, as they had hoped and intended. In retrospect, and in order to avoid a deterministic understanding of the history of the LAI, the organisation remained in existence despite experiencing a downward spiral after June 1927, a process which included suffering the humiliation of its transfer from Berlin to Paris in March 1933, and finally its definitive dissolution in Great Britain under Bridgeman's supervision in 1937.

The International Secretariat was an institutional actor subjected to the dictates of the Comintern. These constraints and obligations were, however, a prerequisite set in place to allow the International Secretariat to exist, so therefore this was a logical arrangement based on a mutual understanding. Yet, the process ran in one direction only. The Comintern issued either directives or political instructions to the International Secretariat which were aimed at maintaining activity as long as the LAI continued to fulfil and comply with the expectations of Moscow. A symptom of the hierarchy of relations at play, the system depended on the co-operation and administrative services of Münzenberg and/or the Comintern emissaries (Smeral, Ferdi and Clemens Dutt). For the Comintern, maintaining control was crucial and it was prepared to use every available means to ensure that the International Secretariat carried out its decisions. This was a structural relationship, which gained in strength over time, defined by the policy changes within the Comintern. The shift from the united front strategy to "the new line" in 1928, and with the confirmation of the "correctness" of class against class in 1929, signified a drastic "turn to the left"

within the communist movement. After 1928, the LAI was literally heading towards an uncertain future, one characterised by alienation and internal chaos. It is nevertheless through the words expressed by one of the actors involved (Smeral) that one discovers the internal dilemma which the LAI had to confront. In connection with the *anni confusionis* and the LAI's trial in 1930, Smeral informed the top-strata of the Comintern apparatus in Moscow that the LAI's misfortune was the fact that the organisation had come into existence while the united front strategy was still the Comintern's endorsed policy. The radicalism and isolationism of "the new line" ignored the instrumental use of the sympathising communist organisations as a cover for the operations of the Comintern. For the LAI, the policy change from the united front strategy to "the new line" hampered its every attempt to become an international organisation, producing instead a confused and hostile relationship to the political, social and cultural groups, and individuals connected to the LAI. In addition, how was the LAI going to behave in public, and present its political message?

Internal hostility and fear grew because of this policy shift in 1928: a doctrine advocated by the Comintern and which the prominent leaders of the national communist parties fervently supported. This in turn stimulated a frame of mind more aptly described as paranoia, with the communists devoting a great deal of time, energy and attention to making a distinction between "friend and foe". At the "Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism" in Frankfurt am Main in July 1929, the hostility from the communist elements put the LAI to the test. While the Brussels Congress in 1927 had been a scene of euphoria, the Frankfurt Congress was the exact opposite, leaving the LAI gasping for air before the organisation began to devour itself from the inside. As a result of all this, the aftermath of the Frankfurt Congress – the *anni confusionis* – not only purged the LAI from an organisational and ideological perspective, but the "prominente Persönlichkeiten" (Nehru, Maxton, Fimmen and Hatta) themselves became either victims or resigned individuals during the "purification" process. A process which focused exclusively on preserving the dictum once envisaged and endorsed by the Comintern in 1926: to preserve control and for the LAI "to remain in our hands", a frame of mind fervently advocated by Münzenberg, Katayama, Smeral and Magyar. It did not matter that the pragmatism of the communists contributed to ending to the LAI's utopianism and, ultimately, bringing the organisation to its knees. The reason for this was based on suspicion and distrust, a mentality the Bolsheviks endorsed for the sole reason of getting the international communist movement to implement a conspiratorial behaviour as a moral impetus for its activities.

After the 1927 Brussels Congress, the International Secretariat was unable to capitalise on the euphoria of the event and, rather than linking together the anti-colonial movement, represented by organisations, associations, committees and individuals, into a broad anti-imperialist movement,

the International Secretariat was dependent upon egocentric networks. The LAI was in fact never a broad, unified organisation on an international basis. This becomes evident when one compares the opinions of fear and suspicion expressed by the national security services to the internal discussions at both the International Secretariat and within the Comintern on the geographical ramifications of the LAI. The German security service took notice of the international network of the “men of confidence” connected to the International Secretariat which was, in retrospect an exaggeration. In reality, the LAI network was made up of a fairly limited number of individuals sensitive to both internal and external pressures, and to coercion. The central issue is nevertheless that the initial indecisiveness, as well as the subsequent policy shifts and sudden changes in attitude among the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters, traumatised the International Secretariat, and, in turn, also affected the organisational structure of the LAI. Due to the radicalism of “the new line” in 1928, the adoption of the class-against-class policy in 1929 and the consequences of the *anni confusionis* in 1930, once the decision-makers in Moscow had finally admitted that mistakes had been made, it was too late to use the LAI as an “intermediary” to “build bridges” to colonial and semi-colonial countries. By 1931, there was no road back to the united front strategy.

The LAI was an expression of the communist vision. It was also an organisation representative of the enthusiasm and anticipation of the inter-war years to create a better and more just world. The international events preceding the inception of the LAI in 1927 also contributed to defining the objectives of the organisation. The key event had been the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 and its aftermath. After the end of the Great War in 1918, and in connection with the poor treatment and ignorance of the colonial question among the leaders of the victorious powers during the Peace Conference (despite disturbances in the colonies throughout 1919), the end result was that the “Wilsonian moment” gradually evaporated. This contributed to radicalising the anti-colonial movement which, in some instances found an ideological haven in the internationalism expressed by the Bolshevik regime in Soviet Russia after its establishment in 1917, a relationship which came to fruition after the symbolic formation of the Comintern in 1919. Expecting to act as the leading spokesperson in support of the anti-colonial movement, the LAI was an institutional actor both intertwined with and subjected to the endorsed ideology and administrative directives of the Comintern. While these factors set the boundaries for the International Secretariat, the socio-political situation in Germany provided the political backdrop. After 1929, in connection with the crash of the global economy and the ensuing recession, the Weimar Republic was a political scene which, at the beginning of the 1930s, had turned into a political battlefield between forces of the

extreme Left (the Communists) and the extreme Right (the Nazis) on the streets in Berlin. For the LAI and the International Secretariat, further subjected to the crisis of the *anni confusionis* and on the brink of self-destruction, external factors gave them their final death blow. In 1930, German authorities (the RKÜöO, *Auswärtige Amt*, MdI and the *Schutzpolizei* in Berlin) descended upon the International Secretariat and, as a result of the raid on 21 December 1931, exposed the communist nature of the LAI. Furthermore, the security services in Germany were collaborating with other national security services, particularly the British, to uncover the activities of the LAI. With the NSDAP competing with the KPD for political power in Germany in 1932, some of the decision-makers at Comintern headquarters conceded that the only available solution was to disband the International Secretariat *en masse* and to re-locate its activities to Paris. In January and February 1933, after the Nazi regime's ascendancy to power in Germany, this period witnessed the humiliating defeat of the KPD and symbolised the end of the German communist movement. Was it even logical or, for that matter, possible for the LAI and its International Secretariat to remain in Berlin during this period? By 1933, the LAI was a mere vision and shadow of its former self. Thus, a more justified and fair understanding of the LAI at the beginning of the NSDAP's period of omnipotent influence is to conclude that the LAI's aim to act as the hub for the anti-imperialist movement had come to an end. However, the idea sponsored by the LAI – the struggle against colonialism and imperialism – was a belief which persisted amongst the visionaries and utopian dreamers, despite the contradictions and complications taking place at “the centre”, i.e. at the International Secretariat in Berlin.

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Towards an Understanding of the LAI

Is it possible to achieve an understanding of the LAI? This thesis and its analysis have aimed to question, through the study of primary sources linked either directly or indirectly to the LAI, the conclusions drawn by previous research and, above all, to discuss and reveal the dynamics and activities of a sympathising communist organisation. What is the primary reason for evaluating the LAI from such a methodological approach? This approach has assisted the analytical process in reaching an understanding as to why the Comintern endorsed the decision to establish the LAI, and how the Comintern supported the LAI's work. Furthermore, this approach confronts the relative scarcity of previous research on the LAI. One of the fundamental results of this study is having revealed how difficult the actors found it to create an anti-imperialist utopia, a conundrum which also confirms the utopianism of communism, i.e. that the LAI was an expression of communism and belonged to the complex ideological and administrative system of international communism,

represented by the Comintern. A two-fold dimension kept the LAI together: firstly, the LAI wanted to create a public platform against the system of colonialism and imperialism and, secondly, it belonged to a movement wanting to spread communism on a global scale. This required and depended upon the active participation of convinced individuals, while at the same time, the entire process was, however, an undertaking manoeuvred by the communists in the background. Stripped of its communist ties, the LAI would have resembled a business enterprise or a religious clique, restricted by its incapacity to act due to a weak financial structure, while confronting ambitions of power within its hierarchy. The LAI was one of several sympathising communist organisations connected to the Comintern's network, e.g. the *Friends of the Soviet Union*, the *Anti-Fascist League*, the *International of Revolutionary Writers*, the *International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* and the *Amsterdam-Pleyel Anti-War movement*. However, the LAI also provided a political platform for several of these sympathising organisations, particularly the emergence of both the anti-war movement in 1932 and the ITUCNW in 1929. While all of the above organisations had their own distinctive features and political agendas, they nevertheless all shared the same stigma of dissolution during the societal darkness of the 1930s. A comparative approach may help to create an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and interactionism of the sympathising communist organisations of the Comintern. Therefore, the following proposal is that the organisational activity which took place in these organisations was an interactionist process, e.g. the mandatory attendance of delegates from other sympathising organisations at congresses and conferences organised by a communist organisation, the publication and distribution of political material, the interchange of personnel, financial assistance and joint preparatory work to organise public demonstrations. Furthermore, the sympathising organisation was an institution within the communist movement where individuals could share inspiration and experiences, but it was also an arena representing either an inclusive or exclusive institution for its members.

Critical assessments and analytical research of the many activities of the LAI may yet produce fruitful and insightful knowledge of the international communist movement during the inter-war years, e.g. by evaluating how the LAI presented itself in a public context. Through the publications released by the International Secretariat and the public campaigns organised by LAI, a plausible approach would be to adopt either a discursive or a comparative analysis. Points of departure which may strengthen the assumption that the LAI could, in some way, be seen as a forerunner to the letter-writing campaigns initiated by *Amnesty International* in the 1960s or the environment-awareness campaigns organised by *Greenpeace*. This postulation addresses in turn the question of reaching a deeper and historical understanding of the behaviour and activities amongst the interest groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which emerged in the post-war society after

the Second World War. Another question is the radical youth movement in both Germany and beyond during the inter-war years, and how the LAI strove to portray itself as a source of inspiration for youth. For example, the “Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism” in Frankfurt am Main acted as the host for a LAI youth conference on 20 July 1929, which essentially discussed how to mobilise youth to rally in support of the anti-imperialist movement. This episode in Frankfurt may contribute to better understanding the reception of the LAI and its political message, but it also illustrates the youthful bliss of belonging to a movement based on humanitarian ideals.

If we are seeking quantitative results by measuring in degrees of success, e.g. by the number of registered members, geographical spread and long-lasting continuity, the answer is relatively disheartening. It is rather through a qualitative perspective that it is possible to interpret and understand the LAI. By analysing the dynamics and character of the institutional and individual networks connected to the LAI, a history emerges depicting the spread of anti-imperialism both as an idea and as a practice. This qualitative focus is, in its essence, a narrative of the interactionism and relations that existed both within and between the LAI, the national sections, the International Secretariat and the Comintern. In conclusion, this also explains why the LAI turned into an illusion of utopia. Despite the initiative of the IAH, Münzenberg and the Comintern to establish the LAI, its very structure contributed to its downfall on the political arena and, consequently, the LAI was never able to capitalise on the euphoria of the 1927 Brussels Congress. A majority of the undertakings invested in the LAI by Comintern headquarters (administrative and political work) concerned, above all, the question of formulating theoretical concepts for *if* and *possibilities*, rather than choosing to understand the harsh realities taking place in Berlin or, for that matter, anywhere else outside the Soviet Union. While some people have interpreted the LAI as being either ambiguous or a mere mouthpiece for Soviet foreign policy, these erroneous assessments ignore the fact that the LAI did function as a source of experience and inspiration for both anti-colonial activists and the anti-colonial movement. It is almost as if the liquidation of the International Secretariat in Berlin 1933, its conclusive end in London 1937 and the communist overtones of the LAI, have defined the historical understanding of the LAI. As a consequence of this, the LAI as a topic has been perceived as a “lost” history, remembered either in critical terms or as a nostalgic memory.

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We must return to walk in the city, or to be more precise, in two cities. Brussels, the capital of the Belgian kingdom, was, towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a place of conferences, a tradition which is still maintained to this day, being the heart of the European Union. According to a map of Brussels from the 1930s, squashed in between the sheer size of the Palace of Justice and the Royal Palace, walking along the rue de la Regence, one finds the medieval Palais d'Egmont. The political intersection and “bundles of activity” which occurred here on 10-14 February 1927, were specifically chosen to declare a symbolic demonstration against colonialism and imperialism, which in turn aimed to fulfil the desires and anticipations of the visionaries and utopian dreamers. The inauguration of the LAI at the 1927 Brussels Congress, in one of the “hearts of imperialism”, was designed to confront both the system and the idea of Empire as a global determinant. The second city, Berlin (“Red Berlin”), was, in a sense, the direct opposite of Brussels, as Germany was no longer an imperial power. However, for the LAI, Berlin was the most logical place in which to concentrate its activities. The combination of radicalism, liberalism, conservatism, socialism and communism, social and political expressions on display for everyone to see, was a *milieu* that stimulated the growth of an anti-imperialist movement supported by the LAI, as it would likewise contribute to its downfall. To walk around Berlin during the years of the Weimar Republic, with the magnitude of movements colouring everyday life must have been a remarkable scene. For the LAI and the International Secretariat, however, theirs was a history enacted in a narrow geographical space, housed in crowded bureaux in a few blocks of the pulsating heart of the city. The history of the LAI was a tragic one, leaving many with a sense of unfulfilled hopes and dreams, particularly those of the collective joys of belonging and euphoria, which ultimately exposed the true essence of the LAI: a mere vision.

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Appendix I: Chronology: 1925 – 1933

1925

Hands off China campaign, June

Against the Cruelties in Syria Committee, December

1926

Founding conference of the League against Colonial Oppression (LACO) in Berlin: “Rathauskeller” conference, 10 February

Meeting of the LACO Executive, Berlin, 13 September

1927

“First Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism” in Brussels, 10-14 February

LAI Executive meeting, Amsterdam, 28-29 March

LAI Executive meeting, Cologne, 20-21 August

LAI General Council, Brussels, 9-11 December

1928

LAI Executive meeting, Brussels, 28-29 April

LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 18-19 August

1929

LAI Executive meeting, Cologne, 15-16 January

LAI Executive meeting, Amsterdam, 13-14 April

LAI Executive meeting, Frankfurt am Main, 20 July

“Second Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism”, Frankfurt am Main, 21-28 July

1930

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1931

LAI Executive meeting, Berlin, 31 May – 2 June

1932

“Interne Konferenz” of the LAI at the Amsterdam Anti-War Conference, August

1933

Last meeting of the International Secretariat, Berlin, 30 January

Reichstag Fire, 27 February

Re-located to Paris, March – August

The International Secretariat transferred to London, September

Appendix II: Dramatis personae

Adler, Friedrich (1879 – 1960). Born in Vienna; historian and journalist by trade, became active in the *Social Democratic Party of Austria* in 1911. Involved in the anti-war and pacifist movements during the Great War; secretary of the “Two and a half” International 1921-1923; secretary of the LSI 1923-1939; member of the LACO Executive 1926.

Arnot, Robin Page (1890 – 1986; “Jack Cade”). CPGB member; secretary of the LDR in 1920; left the LDR in 1928. Attended the Sixth Comintern Congress 1928, remained in Moscow as CPGB representative and worked as Deputy Head at the Eastern Secretariat, elected as member of the “Ost-Länder-Sekretariat II Sektion” [India] in 1928. Leader of the work to organise the “Colonial Conference” and examine the colonial work among the West European communist parties in 1929. Prepared the second LAI congress and was Münzenberg’s liaison on LAI questions. Travelled to the USA as ECCI plenipotentiary in May 1929, returned to England in December 1929.

Bach, Federico (1897 – 1978; real name: Fritz Sulzbacher). Journalist by trade; engaged in the KIM in Berlin in 1922; IAH functionary 1923-1925; LACO secretary in Berlin in 1926. Travelled to Mexico on an LAI mission in 1927; delegate of the IRH Executive in Mexico in 1928. Bach resigned from the KPD and broke with the German communist movement in 1929. Worked as a professor at Mexico University, remained and died in Mexico.

Bayer, Allo (? – ?). German communist, IAH functionary. Representative of the Central Committee of the IAH in Paris October 1928 – December 1930; worked at the International Secretariat in Berlin and Paris January 1933 – August 1933.

Berger, Joseph (1904 – ?, “Bob”). Communist from Poland; co-founder of the *Communist Party of Palestine* in 1920; went to Moscow in 1924. Assigned to work at the International Secretariat in 1931; arrested by the *Schutzpolizei* on 21 December, 1931. Remained in Berlin after being released in 1932 and returned to Moscow in January 1933, given a position in the Eastern Secretariat.

Bilé, Joseph Ekwe (1892 – 1959; “Morris”). Anti-colonial activist from Cameroon. Co-founder of the Berlin LDRN section in September 1929; performed work for the International Secretariat, considered by Münzenberg as the leading expert on West Africa in Berlin. Attended the founding conference of the ITUCNW in July 1930.

Bittelman, Alexander (1890 – 1982; “Alex”). Born in Russia and emigrated to the USA. Member of the Executive Committee of the *Communist Party of America* in 1919. Visited Moscow in 1922; involved in fractional disputes within the American party. Member of the CPUSA Politburo, but

relieved of this position in May 1929, instructed to act as Münzenberg's liaison, organise the "Colonial Conference" and to supervise the preparations for the second LAI congress in Moscow. Resigned as LAI liaison in September 1929; travelled to India on a mission. Moved to the USA after the Second World War, arrested and sentenced to prison for five years during the McCarthy era, released in 1957.

Bridgeman, Reginald Francis Orlando (1884 – 1968). Pursued a diplomatic career, promoted in 1920 as Counsellor of Embassy, appointed to the British Legation at Teheran. This experience made Bridgeman turn towards socialism and anti-imperialism, and became acquainted with Soviet diplomats. Dismissed in 1922 and, after a trip to India, Bridgeman returned to England in 1923. One of the co-founders of the British LACO Section in 1926, Bridgeman attended the Brussels Congress and was nominated as a deputy member on the LAI Executive. Perceived by Münzenberg as the key figure within the British LAI Section, Bridgeman remained in the section and was in charge of, for example, the propaganda campaign in support of the defendants in the Meerut Conspiracy Trial. Assumed the leadership of the LAI and the International Secretariat in September 1933, and continued in this position until 1937, taking the decisions both to disband the LAI and to establish the CIB.

Brockway, A. Fenner (1888 – 1988). Involved in the *Fabian Society*, prominent leader in the ILP. Attended the 1927 Brussels Congress, elected as member of the LAI General Council. Assisted in founding the "provisional" British LAI Section in 1927. Main opposing voice against Adler in discussions of the LAI within the LSI; acted temporarily as LAI chairman after Lansbury had resigned, left the LAI in 1927.

Bukharin, Nikolai (1888 – 1938). Well-known communist persona from Russia; one of Lenin's closest collaborators and theoretician in the history of Bolshevism and international communism. During the years 1919-28 held a prominent position within the Comintern; replaced Grigori Zinoviev as chairman in 1926; due to factional disputes and the struggle for power, ousted by Stalin in 1928-29. Assisted Münzenberg in promoting the idea of the Brussels Congress, e.g. co-authored the article "Für eine Kolonialkonferenz". Arrested in Moscow in 1937, was as one of the defendants in the third show trial, executed in Moscow in 1938.

Chattophadyaya, Virendranath (1880 – 1937; "Hussein", Chatto). Indian nationalist and leader of the anti-British movement in Europe during the Great War. Lived in Stockholm 1917-21 but, after having been denied an extension of his residence permit, re-located to Berlin. Given a function at the LACO secretariat in 1926, Chatto assisted with the preparations for the Brussels Congress. Appointed as LAI "International Secretary" in 1928, a position he held until June 1931.

Due to allegations raised in Moscow by the Political Commission and the ICC, Chatto travelled to Moscow in August/September 1931. Executed during the Great Terror in 1937.

Chiu-pai, Chü (1899 – 1935; “Strakhov”; “Tsiu Wito”). Born in China; travelled to Soviet Russia in 1920 as a journalist. Instructor and interpreter for Chinese students at KUTV. Member of the Central Committee of the CPCh in 1922. Lived in Moscow 1928-30; Chiu-pai attended the Tenth ECCI Plenum and assisted with the preparations for the second LAI congress, which he also attended. Held leading posts in the ECCI before returning to China in 1934. Arrested and executed by KMT troops in 1935.

Codovilla, Vittorio (1894 – 1970; “Victorio”). Born in Italy, moved to Argentina in 1912. Member of the Communist Party of Argentina in 1921. Held a position in the Eastern Secretariat 1926, assisted with the work to prepare the Brussels Congress. Visited the International Secretariat in Berlin in October 1927. Performed sanctioned ECCI missions in Latin America during the 1930s, passed away in Moscow in 1970.

Cowl, Margaret (? – ?; “Margaret Dean”). Communist from the USA, also known as Margaret Undjus, and wife of veteran CPUSA leader Charles Krumbein. Given a position within the Profintern, visited the International Secretariat in 1930 after having completed a Profintern mission in England.

Dimitrov, Georgi (1882 – 1949; “Helmut”). Communist from Bulgaria; joined the *Communist Party of Bulgaria* after its establishment after the Great War; accused and sentenced to death in his absence for having performed terrorist acts in Sofia in 1923. Secretary of the *Balkanförderation* in 1926; appointed as the leader of the WEB in Berlin 1929-33. Key figure co-ordinating the activities of the International Secretariat from 1930 to 1933. Arrested in Berlin on 9 March 1933, accused by the NSDAP of having organised the Reichstag Fire. Dimitrov was the leading figure in the infamous Leipzig Trial. Acquitted of all charges, Dimitrov travelled to Moscow and, during the Seventh Comintern Congress (July – August 1935), was appointed as General Secretary of the Comintern.

Dutt, Clemens Palme (1893 – 1974). Rajani Palme Dutt’s elder brother; researcher in Bristol 1919-1922; founding member of the CPGB. Secretary of the International Section of LRD in London 1922-23; editor of the “Russian Information and Review” published by ARCOS, London, 1923-25; editor of the “Masses of India”, published in Paris, and engaged in the Indian Party’s work 1925-28. Attended the Sixth International Comintern Congress as Indian Party delegate with a consultative voice. Worked for the Colonial Commission of the CPGB; publications editor of Markus Lawrence Ltd, in 1930-31. “International secretary” at the International Secretariat August 1931 – January 1933. Left Berlin and returned to Moscow in January/February 1933.

Dutt, Rajani Palme (1896 – 1974). The well-known British communist and leading spokesperson for the Indian communist movement. Joined the CPGB in 1920; founded the *Labour Monthly* in 1921. Acted as theoretical adviser in the Comintern on the colonial question and was involved in, for example, the ICBu and the LAI. Lived in Brussels for most of his life.

Ferdi, Bekar (1890 – ?; real name: Mechnet Schafik). Born in Macedonia, the leading spokesperson for the *Communist Party of Turkey* in the 1920s. Attended the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, elected as ECCI member. From 1928 to 1932 acted as a Comintern agent, e.g. as secretary of the LAI at the International Secretariat 1930-33, and as plenipotentiary of the ECCI in the Turkish Party 1931-33. Escaped together with Clemens Dutt from Berlin in January/February 1933. Given a position at the Balkan Länder-Sekretariat 1934, member of the ICC in 1935 and, in 1946, worked at the Soviet news agency TASS.

Fimmen, Eduard “Edo” (1881 – 1942). Born in the Netherlands, engaged in the trade union movement, Fimmen was a leader in the *International Transport Workers’ Federation*, also known as the *Amsterdam International*. As one of Münzenberg’s friends, involved in the establishment of the “Auslandskomitee zur Organisierung der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Russland” in 1921. Attended the 1927 Brussels congress, elected as vice deputy chairman; member of the LAI Executive 1927-1930; and left the LAI voluntarily in 1930. Fimmen passed away in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1942.

Flieg, Leopold (1893 – 1939; “Leo”). Engaged in the German socialist youth movement in 1908; active in the Spartacus group, and founding member of the KPD. Münzenberg’s friend and assisted in establishing the KIM in 1919. Flieg was entrusted with the illegal apparatus of the KPD, was the “grey emissary” in the relations with Piatnitsky and the OMS. Executed in Moscow in 1939, rehabilitated posthumously in 1957.

Ford, James W. (1893 – 1957). Prominent figure in the Negro question and trade union activist; member of the WPA in 1925; member of the Profintern Executive Bureau 1928; prepared the ITUCNW and the Hamburg Congress in 1930. Attended the LAI Executive meeting in Cologne, 15-16 January 1929; the second LAI congress in Frankfurt am Main 21-27 July 1929, where he was elected member of the LAI Executive as representative of the “Negro race”; attended the LAI Executive meeting in Berlin 30/5-2/6-1931.

Gibarti, Louis (1895 – 1967; real name: Laszlo Dobos. Known pseudonyms: “Otto”, “Kaminski”, “Feliks Gasbarra”, “Karl Feller”). Hungarian communist, journalist by trade. Emigrated to Germany in 1921/22. LACO secretary and Münzenberg’s right-hand-man in preparing the Brussels Congress. Resigned abruptly from his position in the LAI in 1928, but re-appeared as LAI representative (International Secretariat) in the USA in 1929; involved in anti-

fascist and anti-war campaigns (“Amsterdam Anti-War Congress”, 1932), as well as the Spanish Civil War. Attempted to gain a position at UNESCO after the Second World War.

Gillies, William (1884 – 1958). Secretary of the International Department of the *Labour Party*; worked closely with the secretary of the LSI, Friedrich Adler, to monitor the European left-wing movement. In 1933, published a critical analysis, *The Communist Solar System*, on communist mass and “front” organisations.

Gomez, Manuel (1895 – 1989; real name: Charles Shipman; “Frank Seaman”, “Jesús Ramírez”). Born in the USA, frequently travelled to Mexico where, in 1919, he met Roy and Mikhail Borodin. After attending the Second Comintern Congress in 1920 and returning to the USA, assumed the name Manuel Gomez. Key figure in developing colonial work in the USA as founding leader of the AAAIL in 1925. Attended the Brussels Congress and nominated as LAI General Council member. Expelled from the CPUSA in 1929.

Gross, Babette (1898 – 1990; “Ruplie Berta”). Münzenberg’s companion and partner; editor at Neuer Deutscher Verlag; carried out missions to England in the service of the International Secretariat. Escaped together with Münzenberg in 1933 to Paris. After the German invasion of France in 1940, Gross fled to Portugal from where she departed on a ship to the USA and ended up in Mexico. Returned to West Germany in 1949.

Gumede, Josiah Tshangana (1867 – 1947). Founder and chairman of the ANC 1927-30. Attended the 1927 Brussels Congress and travelled through Germany and the Soviet Union together with Jimmy La Guma the same year. Invited to the second LAI congress, but was prevented from leaving South Africa due to a lack of finance. Expelled from the ANC in 1930 because of his ties to and sympathy towards the *Communist Party of South Africa*.

Gyptner, Richard (1901 – 1972; “Alarich”, “Magnus”). German communist and KIM representative in the ZK KPD in 1920. Travelled to Moscow in 1922 and was appointed KIM secretary in the West European Secretariat in Berlin in 1923. From the end of 1928 to February 1933, Gyptner acted as WEB secretary and worked together with Georgi Dimitrov in Berlin. Via Scandinavia and France, where he acted as IAH secretary 1933-35, Gyptner emigrated to Moscow, acting as Dimitrov’s personal secretary.

Hatta, Mohammad (1902 – 1980). Prominent and distinguished leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement in the inter-war years. Hatta lived in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and later, Locarno, Switzerland, acting as leader of the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*, from which he resigned in 1929. Attended the 1927 Brussels Congress, nominated as member of the LAI Executive and acted Chatto’s liaison. After attending the second LAI congress, Hatta expressed criticism and was

expelled from the LAI. Returning to Indonesia in 1932, Hatta established an active collaboration with Achmed Sukarno.

Heimo, Mauno (1894 – 1937; “Lindberg”). Communist from Finland, emigrated to Soviet Russia in 1920, holding an influential position within the Comintern apparatus as head of various chancellery offices. Associated with Kuusinen, Heimo also acted as Münzenberg’s liaison during preparations for the Brussels congress in 1927, and again in 1928. Executed in Moscow in 1937.

Johnstone, Jack W. (1880 – 1942; “Jack”, “Jack Godfrey”, “Jack Courtland”, “John Johnstone”). Member of the WPA. Appointed as LAI emissary to India in 1928, where he was arrested and deported. Given a position at the ECCI Caribbean Bureau in Moscow 1931.

Jäger, Hans (1899 – 1975). Born in Berlin; a member of the KPD in 1920; carrying out functionary services. Member of the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt am Main and leader of the Marx-Engels Verlages. Secretary of the LACO (“Süd-deutsche Sektion”) in 1926; secretary and leader of the German LAI Section in Berlin 1927-32. Escaped from Germany to Prague and emigrated to Moscow for a short period. Abandoned his KPD membership in 1935, expelled from the Comintern on the recommendation of the ICC. Moved to London, where Jäger lived for the rest of his life.

Katayama, Sen (1859 – 1933; real name: Yasutaro Yabuki; “Yavki”, “Kiyoda”). Japanese communist who spent most of his life outside Japan, e.g. in the USA and the Soviet Union. Attended the Brussels Congress as the secret leader of the ECCI delegation; leader of the ECCI delegation at the LAI General Council in Brussels 1927; member of the ECCI delegation at the second LAI congress in 1929; participated at the Amsterdam Anti-War congress in 1932. Passed away in Moscow in 1933.

Khankhoji, Pandurang S. (? – ?; pseudonym: “Aga Khan”). National revolutionary and communist from India; visited Moscow in 1921 in the company of Chatto; travelled to Mexico, where he remained during the 1920s, and joined the *Communist Party of Mexico*. Visited Berlin in 1930, then Moscow, and ended up in Kabul as representative of the Hindustan communist organisation, the *Ghadr Party*.

Kunizaki, Teido (1894 – ?; pseudonyms: “A. Kon”, “Kohn”). Engaged in the Japanese workers’ and peasants’ movements 1924-1926. Emigrated from Japan to Berlin as a student in 1926. Joined the KPD in 1928; leader of the Marxist study group *Japanische Sprachgruppe der KPD*; carried out work in the Wilmersdorf district party cell. Given a position at the International Secretariat 1930-1932; expelled from Germany in August 1932; arrived in Moscow in September 1932. Most likely suppressed, fate unknown.

Jalabi, Hajj Muhammad (? – ?). Pan-Arab movement advocate of Persian origin and lived in Berlin. Attended the inaugural meeting of the LACO at the “Rathauskeller” in Berlin on 10 February, 1926.

Kouyaté, Garan Tiemoko (1892 – 1942). Communist of Malian origin, lived in France. PCF member and leader of the LDRN in Paris. Attended the second LAI congress in Frankfurt am Main in 1929, elected as member of the LAI General Council. Visited Moscow after the congress, returned to Berlin and founded the Berlin LDRN section together with Joseph Bilé (see above). Attended the Fifth Profintern Congress as delegate of the ITUCNW. Expelled from the Profintern, the ITUCNW and the PCF in 1933. Executed by the Nazis in France.

Kuusinen, Otto Wilgelmovich (known pseudonyms: “Kuku”, “Alfons”, “Jansen”; 1881 – 1964). Earned a PhD in History in 1905; entered the social democratic movement in 1905, acted as leader 1911-1917; co-founder of the *Communist Party of Finland* in 1918 before escaping from Finland. Participated at the foundation of the Comintern in March 1919, held various positions within the Comintern apparatus 1919-1943. Responsible for the “Solar System” theory, acted as Münzenberg’s liaison on LAI questions, and was the Head of the Eastern Secretariat.

Lansbury, George (1859 – 1940). Prominent leader within the British socialist movement; member of the *Social Democratic Federation*, the ILP, and the *Labour Party*; pacifist, and editor of the *Daily Herald*. Attended the Brussels Congress, elected as Chairman of the LAI; cashier of the British LAI Section; resigned from his position in the LAI in June 1927.

Liau, Hansin (? – 1964; Liao Khuan’sin, Liau Gunzin, Liao Gongxing, Liao Huanxing). Chinese emigrant, nationalist, member of the KMT and member of the CPCh in 1922. His CPCh membership was transferred to the KPD in 1923. Given a position by the Hungarian communist Jenö (Eugen) Varga in the economic institute, the “Vargabüro”, in Berlin 1925-27. Attended the Brussels Congress as delegate of the Central Executive Committee of the KMT, and given a seat on the LAI Executive. Appointed in 1927 by Münzenberg as the leader of the *Chinese National Agency* in Berlin; functionary/secretary at the International Secretariat 1927-28. After a personal dispute with Münzenberg and Gibarti, Liau emigrated together with his wife, Dora Liau-Dombrowski, to Moscow in December 1928. Attended the second LAI congress in 1929, and had his KPD membership transferred to the CPSU (B) in 1929. Accused and acquitted of political dishonesty by the Chinese communist émigré group in Berlin in 1929. Sentenced together with his wife to the GULAG penal system; released in the first years of the 1960s, moved to China in 1964, passed away the same year.

Magyar, Ludwig (1891 – 1937; real name, Lajos Milgorf). Communist of Hungarian origin; member of the *Communist Party of Hungary* 1919, went to Moscow in 1922 after an exchange of

political prisoners. Acted as Comintern official in China in the mid 1920s, and later given a position within the ECCI apparatus. As Deputy Head in the Eastern Secretariat, Magyar co-ordinated a majority of the questions connected to the LAI (“the Magyar Thesis”) and visited Berlin, Amsterdam and Paris to assess progress and to give instructions. In 1934, he was accused and performed an act of self-criticism during the “Magyar case”. Executed in 1937.

Manuilsky, Dmitri Zajarovich (1883 – 1959; “Felix”, “Numa”, “Mefodij”, “Thomas Bezrabortny”, “Beruzzi”, “Ivanov”, “Samuely”, “Pellicano”, “Kirsch”, “Serednjak”, “Foma”, “Robert”, “Paul”, “Stefan Dolicki”, “Petrov”, “Marmor”, “Mayor”). Communist veteran from Ukraine and member of the *Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party*; in exile in France 1907-1917 and expelled in 1919. One of the leading decision-makers at Comintern headquarters: member of the Small Commission, the Political Commission, the ECCI Presidium, the ECCI Secretariat, the Organisational Department. Provided Münzenberg with guidelines on the anti-colonial project in 1925-1926. Acted as leader of the WEB in Berlin 1928-29; formulated the “new agenda” for the LAI in 1931.

Mattar, Achmed Hassan (? – ?). Anti-colonial activist from the Sudan; arrived in Berlin 1925/26. Attended the inaugural conference of the LACO in Berlin on 10 February, 1926. Journalist by trade, with relations to the Rif region, Mattar was the IAH connection to the nationalist *Klub der Zaglulisten* (“Zaglulist Club”) in Berlin. Mattar frequently travelled between Tangiers and Berlin. Expelled from Germany in 1927 on the direct orders of the RKÜöO.

Melnitschansky, Grigorij Natnovic (1886 – 1937). Communist from Ukraine; member of the *Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party* in 1902; emigrated in 1910 to the USA; worked as journalist and published articles in the Russian socialist paper *Novyj mir*. Returned to Russia together with Trotsky after the October Bolshevik coup in 1917. Involved in the Russian trade union movement and given a position within the Profintern as a functionary. Melnitschansky carried out international missions in 1928; attended the LAI Executive in Cologne 1929, and the second LAI congress in Frankfurt am Main, appointed as LAI Executive member. Executed in Moscow in 1937.

Misiano, Francesco (1884 – 1936). Communist from Italy; in charge of the IAH’s film production (*Mezhrabpom-Film*) at IAH headquarters in Moscow. Assisted Münzenberg in co-ordinating the *Hands off China* campaign in 1925. Attended the Tenth ECCI Plenum in Moscow in 1929. Died in August 1936 due to illness.

Maxton, James (1885 – 1946). Born in Scotland; distinguished leader of the ILP; and opposed the militancy of the Great War. Attended the LAI General Council in Brussels, December 1927, and was later appointed as chairman of the LAI replacing Lansbury. Participated at every LAI

Executive meeting up until the second LAI congress in 1929. After the Frankfurt am Main Congress, ousted from his position as Chairman on the initiative of the British LAI Section, remained in contact with Münzenberg.

Müller, Kurt (? – ?). German communist and functionary at IAH headquarters in Moscow. Münzenberg's liaison in developing the IAH's colonial work in 1925-26. Visited Beijing in 1925 to assess the work of the IAH. Fate unknown.

Münzenberg, Willi (1889 – 1940; “Herfurt”, “Albert Schneider”, “A. Sonnenburg”, “Studzinsky”, “Berg”). German communist who, at an early age, was involved in the socialist and pacifist movements. Emigrated during the Great War to Switzerland, where he met Lenin and other prominent characters in the Zimmerwald Left; after the war, one of the leading figures to found the *Communist Youth International* (KIM) in 1919. In connection with the Third International Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1921, Lenin instructed Münzenberg to establish the forerunner of the IAH, the “Auslandskomitees zur Organisierung der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Russland”. Münzenberg and the IAH were the entrepreneurial force behind a range of committees, associations and sympathising communist organisations during the inter-war years, which epitomised Kuusinen's vision of the communist “Solar System”. As the architect of the anti-colonial project and the LAI, Münzenberg held the position as its secretary 1927-33. In August 1933, he was formally released from his obligations to the LAI. The LAI's exile in Paris added to his isolation. His last visit to Moscow took place in 1936; and in 1938, the KPD revoked his membership, while the Comintern categorised him as *persona non grata*. Confined to a concentration camp in France after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, and in connection with the German invasion of France in 1940, Münzenberg fled, only to be found dead later the same year.

Naidu, M. Jayasurya S. (? – ?). The son of “the Nightingale of India”, Sarojini Naidu, and Chatto's nephew. Lived in Berlin as a student and worked at the International Secretariat and the “Indian Bureau” 1928-1933. Arrested and expelled from Germany in 1933.

Nambiar, A. C. N. (? – ?). Nationalist activist, émigré from India, and Chatto's personal friend. In 1923, he left London and moved to Berlin, where Nambiar and Chatto organised the Indian anti-colonial movement. Journalist by trade, Nambiar was a correspondent of the pro-nationalist agency *Free Press of India*, and member of the *All India Congress Committee* (AICC). Attended the inaugural “Rathauskeller” conference of the LACO in 1926; the Brussels Congress as delegate of the “Verband Indischer Journalisten in Europa”; and, together with Chatto, formed the “Indian Bureau” in 1929. Arrested and expelled from Germany in 1933. Appointed by Nehru after the Second World War as Ambassador of India in West Germany.

Nehru, Jawaharlal (1889 – 1964). Leader of the Indian national liberation movement in the inter-war years, protégé of Gandhi, India's first Prime Minister in 1947. Visited Germany in 1926 together with his wife Kamala, and was involved in preparing the Brussels Congress. Attended the Brussels Congress as accredited delegate of the INC; appointed as LAI Executive member (1927-30). Formed the *Independence for India League* in 1928, a radical outgrowth of the INC, shaped on the agenda of the LAI. Supported Chatto and Nambiar in establishing the "Indian Bureau" in 1929, and left the LAI in 1930. Attended the Bandung Conference in 1955.

Padmore, George (1903 – 1959; real name: Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse; "Hamilton"). Born in Trinidad; communist, and later, leader of the Pan-Africanist movement. Guided the work in preparing the First International Congress of Negro Workers in Hamburg in July 1930, and head of the ITUCNW. Assisted Münzenberg in preparing the African question in *A-I-Z* in 1931. Studied at the KUTV in 1932; deported from Germany in 1933. Expelled from the ITUCNW, the Profintern and the Comintern in 1934.

Patterson, William Lorenzo (1891 – 1980; "William Wilson"). Communist from the USA; studied at the KUTV 1927-31; member of the ECCI Negro Bureau. Attended the second LAI congress as "Negro" trade union delegate.

Petrovsky, David Alexandrovich (1886 – 1937; real name: David Lipetz; "A. J. Bennet", "Humboldt", "Max", "Max Breguer", "David Goldfarb", "Isolde"). Communist from Russia, held various positions within the Comintern apparatus; head of Agitprop Department, ECCI emissary to the CPGB. Assisted Münzenberg in preparing the political material for the Brussels Congress in Berlin in January-February 1927. Assessed the work of the British LAI Section in London 1927-28. Demoted from his position after the "decolonisation" debate at the Sixth Comintern Congress. Carried out covert missions in Europe in 1929 as WEB representative. Married to British communist Rose Cohen. Executed in Moscow in 1937.

Piatnitsky, Osip (1882 – 1938; real name: Iosif Aranovich Tarshis; "Freitag", "Michail", "Sonntag"). Given a position within the Comintern in 1921. Operative head for the Department for International Communications (OMS) and the administrative key figure in co-ordinating the activities of the Comintern. Evaluated and authorised, for example, the budget and personnel questions of the LAI. Removed from the Comintern apparatus in 1935, arrested in Moscow 1937 and executed, after brutal interrogations and torture, in 1938.

Ping, Huang (? – ?). Communist from China and KMT member; Ping travelled to Moscow in 1924 to study Russian; returned to Hong Kong in 1925 as CPCh delegate. Returned to Moscow where he remained until 1927, engaged in the Chinese trade union movement. Attended the second LAI congress in 1929, given a seat on the LAI Executive (1929-33). Arrested by the KMT in

China in 1933 and the subject of an international campaign organised partly by the IAH, which partly contributed to his release. Appeared in the CPCh after the Second World War.

Pollitt, Harry (1890 – 1960). British communist, joined the CPGB in 1920, attended the inaugural conference of the Profintern in Moscow in 1921. Attended the Brussels Congress as delegate of the *National Minority Movement*, given a position in the LAI General Council; attended the second LAI congress, again as delegate of the NMM, given a seat on the LAI Executive (1929-31). Assisted Smeral's work in co-ordinating the re-organisation of the British LAI Section in 1930.

Roy, Manabendra Nath (1887 – 1954; real name: Narendranath Bjattacharya; “Robert Allen”, “Roberto Allen y Villagarcía”, “García”, “Richards”, “C. A. Martín”, “Dr. Mahmud”, “Manuel Méndez”, “Dr. Banerji”, “Roberts”). Communist from India, attended the Second Comintern Congress in 1920 as delegate of the *Communist Party of Mexico*. Involved in a debate with Lenin on the colonial question at this congress. Appointed as leader of the ICBu in Paris in 1924. Held various positions within the Comintern apparatus during the 1920s; 'guided' the preparatory work in Moscow for the Brussels Congress via different commissions, acting as Münzenberg's liaison. In 1929, accused of “rightist deviations” and expelled from the Comintern. Lived in Berlin for a brief moment before returning to India where he was arrested.

Saklatvala, Shapurji (1874 – 1936). Communist from England of Indian origin; linked to the IAH's activities and colonial work in 1925-26. Member of the LACO Executive Committee and established, together with Bridgeman, the British LACO Section in December 1926. Unable to attend the Brussels Congress due to his visit to India, Saklatvala was given a seat in the LAI General Council. Attended several of the LAI Executive meetings; and at the second LAI congress in Frankfurt am Main, participated as “member of the LAI Executive”. Key figure in co-ordinating LAI work in India and the Meerut Conspiracy Trial campaign in England.

Schudel, Otto (1902 – 1979). Communist from Switzerland and IAH functionary given a post at the International Secretariat after the 1927 Brussels Congress. Schudel resigned from the LAI in 1930, and left for Basel to work in the press organ *Rundschau* (successor of *Inprecorr*). Carried out an LAI mission to Geneva in 1929 to convince delegates, who were attending the ILO Congress, to attend the second LAI congress.

Senghor, Lamine (1889 – 1927). Born in the French colony of Senegal, Senghor (no relation to poet Léopold Sédar Senghor), he was conscripted to French military service during the Great War. In the war, Senghor contracted a serious health problem. As an ardent defender of the social rights of the black race and as an anti-colonial activist, Senghor co-founded the *La Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre* (CDNR), and was also a member of the PCF. Attended the Brussels Congress in 1927, and given a seat on the LAI Executive. After factional disputes within the CDNR, Senghor

resigned and formed, together with Kouyaté, the radical organisation LDRN. Due to sickness (tuberculosis), Senghor passed away on 25 November, 1927.

Smeral, Bohumil (1880 – 1941). Communist from Czechoslovakia; involved at an early age in the socialist movement; moved to the left during the Great War; and was the leader of the *Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* after its foundation in 1921. Held various positions within the Comintern apparatus, e.g. the Organisational Department and, in 1929, instructed to act as secretary of the International Secretariat, as well as the WEB. In charge of the Arab question in the LAI, Smeral also monitored the work of the International Secretariat and supervised its re-organisation in 1930. Smeral left his position in 1931; remained in Czechoslovakia 1931-32; departed for Mongolia in 1934 and was nominated as member of the ICC in 1935. In 1941, Smeral passed away due to sickness in Moscow.

Thøgersen, Hans Peter (1902 – ?; “York”, ”Miller”; “Hans Tiergen”). Danish father and a Japanese mother; no relation to Danish communist leader Thøger Thøgersen. Studied at the ILS in 1928 and worked at the International Secretariat in 1928 on Far Eastern questions. Returned to Berlin as “York” in 1931, in charge of the LAI Youth Secretariat; disappeared in January 1933.

Trilliser, Mikhail (1883 – 1940; “Moskvin”). Communist from Russia; in charge of the “red terror” in Siberia during the Civil War and involved with the Soviet state security services from 1921. Head of the Foreign Department from 1922 and founder of the Soviet intelligence apparatus. Acted as intermediary between the secretaries at Comintern headquarters in 1930 during the preparations to re-organise the LAI.

Windmüller, Ella (? – ?). German communist; steno-typist at the International Secretariat, 1927-1932; fate unknown.

Wittfogel, Karl August (1896 – 1988). Sinologist and German communist during the inter-war years; involved and employed at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main. Requested to assist with the work to complete the political resolution for the Brussels Congress, Wittfogel attended the Brussels Congress off the record; involved at various stages in the work of the LAI in Germany, e.g. attended the second LAI congress as leader of the LAI branch in Frankfurt am Main. Appointed by Chatto to take care of the LAI’s curricular activity in Berlin 1930-31; and in charge of *The Anti-Imperialist Review* in 1932-33. Arrested by German authorities after attempting to escape from the country in connection with the Reichstag Fire in 1933; confined to a concentration camp from which he was released in 1934. From England, Wittfogel departed for the USA. In 1939, the Central Committee of the CPUSA, via the direct orders of the Comintern Cadre Department, revoked Wittfogel’s communist membership on the grounds that he “was not worthy

of being a member of the Party”. After the Second World War, Wittfogel became a committed and fervent anti-communist.

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Fredrik Petersson

“We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers”

Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism,
and the Comintern, 1925 – 1933

On 10 February 1927, the “First International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism” in Brussels marked the establishment of the anti-imperialist organisation, the League against Imperialism and for National Independence (LAI, 1927-37). The complex preparations for the congress were though initiated already in 1925 by Willi Münzenberg, a German communist and General Secretary of the communist mass organisation, Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH, 1921-35), together with the Communist International (Comintern, 1919-43). Berlin was the centre for the LAI and its International Secretariat (1927-33), a city serving the intentions of the communists to find colonial émigré activists in the Weimar capital, acting as representatives for the anti-colonial movement in Europe after the Great War. With the ascendancy to power of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) on 30 January 1933, the LAI reached an abrupt, but nonetheless, expected end in Berlin. This doctoral thesis examines the role, purpose and functions of a sympathising communist organization (LAI): to act as an intermediary for the Comintern to the colonies. The analysis evaluates the structure and activities of the LAI, and by doing so, establish a complex understanding on one of the most influential communist organisations during the interwar period, which, despite its short existence, assumed a nostalgic reference and historical bond for anti-colonial movements during the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism after the Second World War, e.g. the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Fredrik Petersson’s study, based on archives in Moscow, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, and Stockholm, uncovers why the Comintern established and supported the LAI and its anti-imperialist agenda, disclosing a complicated undertaking, characterised by conflict and the internal struggle for power, involving structural constraints and individual ambitions defined by communist ideology and strategy.