

# The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity

Kasper Braskin

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Willi Münzenberg in Weimar Germany



*Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements*

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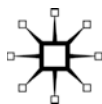
# **The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity**

**Willi Münzenberg in Weimar Germany**

Kasper Braskén

*Postdoctoral Researcher, Åbo Akademi University*

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# Series Editors' Preface

Around the world, social movements have become legitimate, yet contested, actors in local, national and global politics and civil society, yet we still know relatively little about their longer histories and the trajectories of their development. Our series reacts to what can be described as a recent boom in the history of social movements. We can observe a development from the crisis of labour history in the 1980s to the boom in research on social movements in the 2000s. The rise of historical interests in the development of civil society and the role of strong civil societies as well as non-governmental organisations in stabilising democratically constituted polities have strengthened the interest in social movements as a constituent element of civil societies.

In different parts of the world, social movements continue to have a strong influence on contemporary politics. In Latin America, trade unions, labour parties and various left-of-centre civil society organisations have succeeded in supporting left-of-centre governments. In Europe, peace movements, ecological movements and alliances intent on campaigning against poverty and racial discrimination and discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation have been able to set important political agendas for decades. In other parts of the world, including Africa, India and South East Asia, social movements have played a significant role in various forms of community building and community politics. The contemporary political relevance of social movements has undoubtedly contributed to a growing historical interest in the topic.

Contemporary historians are not only beginning to historicise these relatively recent political developments; they are also trying to relate them to a longer history of social movements, including traditional labour organisations, such as working-class parties and trade unions. In the longue durée, we recognise that social movements are by no means a recent phenomena and are not even an exclusively modern phenomena, although we realise that the onset of modernity emanating from Europe and North America across the wider world from the eighteenth century onwards marks an important departure point for the development of civil societies and social movements.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the dominance of national history over all other forms of history writing led to a thorough nationalisation of the historical sciences. Hence social movements have been

examined traditionally within the framework of the nation state. Only during the past two decades have historians begun to question the validity of such methodological nationalism and to explore the development of social movements in comparative, connective and transnational perspective taking into account processes of transfer, reception and adaptation. Whilst our book series does not preclude work that is still being carried out within national frameworks (for, clearly, there is a place for such studies, given the historical importance of the nation state in history), it hopes to encourage comparative and transnational histories on social movements.

At the same time as historians have begun to research the history of those movements, a number of social theorists, from Jürgen Habermas to Pierre Bourdieu and from Slavoj Žižek to Alain Badiou as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to Miguel Abensour, to name but a few, have attempted to provide philosophical-cum-theoretical frameworks in which to place and contextualise the development of social movements. History has arguably been the most empirical of all the social and human sciences, but it will be necessary for historians to explore further to what extent these social theories can be helpful in guiding and framing the empirical work of the historian in making sense of the historical development of social movements. Hence the current series is also hoping to make a contribution to the ongoing dialogue between social theory and the history of social movements.

This series seeks to promote innovative historical research on the history of social movements in the modern period since around 1750. We bring together conceptually informed studies that analyse labour movements, new social movements and other forms of protest from early modernity to the present. With this series, we seek to revive, within the context of historiographical developments since the 1970s, a conversation between historians on the one hand and sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists on the other.

Unlike most of the concepts and theories developed by social scientists, we do not see social movements as directly linked, a priori, to processes of social and cultural change and therefore do not adhere to a view that distinguishes between old (labour) and new (middle-class) social movements. Instead, we want to establish the concept 'social movement' as a heuristic device that allows historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to investigate social and political protests in novel settings. Our aim is to historicise notions of social and political activism in order to highlight different notions of political and social protest on both left and right.

Hence, we conceive of 'social movements' in the broadest possible sense, encompassing social formations that lie between formal organisations and mere protest events. But we also include processes of social and cultural change more generally in our understanding of social movements: this goes back to nineteenth-century understandings of 'social movement' as processes of social and cultural change more generally. We also offer a home for studies that systematically explore the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in which social movements can emerge. We are especially interested in transnational and global perspectives on the history of social movements, and in studies that engage critically and creatively with political, social and sociological theories in order to make historically grounded arguments about social movements. In short, this series seeks to offer innovative historical work on social movements, while also helping to historicise the concept of 'social movement'. It also hopes to revitalise the conversation between historians and historical sociologists in analysing what Charles Tilly has called the 'dynamics of contention'.

*The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity* is the first comprehensive study of the Communist front organisation *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (International Workers' Relief, IAH) from 1921 to 1933. Its brand of international solidarity is firmly set within the world of transnational international Communism, although the organisation has a strong German tinge to it, being founded and run in Germany by one of the most fascinating figures of international Communism of the interwar period, Willi Münzenberg. There is currently, in Germany at least, a renaissance of scholarship on Münzenberg, as he was a central player in international communism who was neither recognised by the Social Democratic nor by the Communist historiography post-1945, for he was suspect to Social Democrats as a Communist but he was also persona non grata among Communists because of his late break with Stalin and the Stalinist Soviet Union. This study puts Münzenberg back centre-stage in a wider history of Communist internationalism in the interwar period.

The concept of 'solidarity' is key to this study, and the various chapters of this book explore the manifold dimensions of solidarity and its relationship to other terms and concepts, including humanitarianism, charity, brotherhood and others more. Practical relief work was the most important strategy pursued by the IAH during its various campaigns that are all analysed in detail in the subsequent pages. However, such practical welfare work was always tinged with symbolism, for it was not just the practical relief that was foregrounded but also visions of a different and

more just society. Hence Brasken's study on the IAH is right in paying due attention to the emotive language of the organisation. It was visible from the outset, as the IAH came into being as a desperate attempt to help the young Soviet Union to fend off hunger and starvation that threatened the very survival of the communist state. And later, when the practical help turned to Germany itself, in the midst of economic depression and hyperinflation the emotive language of solidarity, social justice and the diverse notions of a better life and world yet to come (and symbolised by the motherland of the revolution, the Soviet Union) were always foregrounded by the IAH.

*The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity* also draws attention to the broadening and radicalisation of the IAH's work, both in geographical terms where it moved from the Soviet Union and Germany to the Far East and politically, as it began to engage directly in the support of strike activities to further workers' rights. From the mid-1920s onwards, it began to put its activities firmly in the context of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle, always emphasising the commonalities of class and downplaying the differences of race. It also became involved in the struggle against war, linking its analysis of capitalism to theories about war being an outcome of the greed and expansionary nature of capitalist regimes. Towards the end of the Weimar Republic it also engaged heavily in the struggle against National Socialism seeking to build on its networks of international solidarity to draw attention to the dangers of National Socialism and to battle it more effectively.

One of the proliferating turns of recent years in the history of historical writing has been the visual turn and it is gratifying to see that Brasken also pays due attention to the rich visual material produced by the IAH in an attempt to develop its own visual culture in the pursuit of international solidarity. It included visions of the new woman, as women were often portrayed as fighting and working women, equal to men in the overall desire to bring about the new society of the future. Children and youth were also often addressed pictorially, and once again it is the aspect of struggle and active involvement rather than passive endurance of violence and want that is emphasised by the IAH's imaginary.

Finally, this volume also pays due attention to the organisational world of the IAH, its organisation through both individual and collective membership, its organisation of festivals, street demonstrations and solidarity campaigns. Its congresses are analysed and its cultural productions in the form of films and theatre plays are highlighted. It draws the reader into the lost world of interwar Communist internationalism and shows

him or her how fascinating this transnational and potentially global world could be, for the vision of a more just and better world inspired a diversity of campaigns all based on notions of international solidarity.

Stefan Berger  
*Ruhr-University Bochum*

Holger Nehring  
*University of Stirling*

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Without all of the generous support and friendly advice of these individuals and institutions, this book would certainly have remained unwritten. Needless to say, the remaining faults in the text are entirely my own.

# List of Abbreviations

ADGB	Allgemeiner deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (the General Federation of German Trade Unions)
AIZ	<i>Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung</i> (The Workers' Pictorial Newspaper)
Antifa	Anti-Fascist Action
ARA	American Relief Administration
<i>Arbeiterhilfe</i>	Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (also: Auslandskomitee für Rußlandhilfe der Kommunistischen Internationale; Auslandskomitee zur Organisierung der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Russland; Industrie- und Handelsaktiengesellschaft Internationale Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjetrußland; Bund der Freunde der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe) (In English: the International Workers' Relief)
ARSO	Arbeitsgemeinschaft sozialpolitischer Organisationen
BArch	Bundesarchiv (the Federal Archives of Germany)
BArch R	Bundesarchiv, Reichsarchiv (Department German Reich (Department R))
BStU	Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (The Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records)
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
Comintern	Communist (Third) International
CP	Communist Party
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei (the German Democratic Party)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (GDR, the German Democratic Republic)
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei (the German National People's Party: Nationalist)
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei (the German People's Party)
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Communist International
GARF	Russian Federation State Archives



GDR	German Democratic Republic (DDR)
GStA PK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation)
IAH	<i>see</i> Arbeiterhilfe
ICC	International Control Commission
Ifa	Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions (the 'Amsterdam International')
IISH	International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam
IML	Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRA	<i>see</i> IRH
IRH	Internationale Rote Hilfe (IRA, International Red Aid)
KAPD	Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (Communist Workers' Party of Germany)
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security), foreign intelligence and domestic security agency of the Soviet Union
KJVD	Kommunistischer Jugendverband Deutschlands (Young Communist League of Germany)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party) (NB! called the Vereinigte Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, VKPD, 1921–1922)
Krestintern	Red Peasant International
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin
LAI	League Against Imperialism
LSI	Labour and Socialist International (i.e. Second International)
MdR	Member of the Reichstag
Mezhrabpom	Russian acronym of the <i>Arbeiterhilfe</i>
MOPR	Russian acronym of the IRH
Narkomindel	People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NKVD	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (the National Socialist German Workers' Party; National Socialist; Nazis)

OBI	United Information Bureau
OMS	Department of International Communication
Orgbüro	Organisational Bureau (of the KPD or the Comintern)
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (the French Communist Party)
Politbüro	Political Bureau (of the KPD or the Comintern)
Profintern	Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale (RGI); Red International of Labour Unions (RILU)
RCP (B)	Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
RdI	Reichsministerium des Innern (Reich Ministry of the Interior)
RF	Die Rote Fahne (The Red Flag)
RFB	Rote Frontkämpferbund (Red Front Fighters' League)
RGASPI	Russian State Archives of Social and Political History
RGI	<i>see</i> Profintern
RGO	Rote Gewerkschafts Opposition (the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition)
RGVA	Russian State Military Archives
RHD	Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (The German Red Aid)
RILU	<i>see</i> Profintern
RÜöO	Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung (State Councillor for the Supervision of Public Order)
SA	Sturm Abteilung (Nazi storm troopers)
SAPMO	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (the Socialist Unity Party)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (the Social Democratic Party; Social Democrats)
Sportintern	Red Sport International
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (the Independent Social Democratic Party)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Soviet Union)
VKPD	<i>see</i> KPD
VOKS	All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad
WaA	<i>Die Welt Am Abend</i> (The World This Evening)
WEB	West European Bureau
WES	West European Secretariat
ZK	Zentralkomitee (Central Committee, e.g. of Communist Party) <i>Series Editors' Preface</i> <i>Series Editors' Preface</i>

# 1

## Introduction

As dusk was falling over Berlin on a midsummer's evening in 1931, a trumpet fanfare was heard filling the night air. Tens of thousands of people had gathered to celebrate the annual International Solidarity Day organised by the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*, and the grand finale was about to begin. Suddenly a great fireworks display commenced, and a massive symbol of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was illuminated. A thundering cannonade then echoed through the grounds, and the enthusiasm of the crowd allegedly knew no limits: a spontaneous joint singing of the *Internationale* broke out, and simultaneously a great blaze of red light started to illuminate the Berlin night sky, symbolising the bright future of the working class.<sup>1</sup>

It was one of the numerous dazzling spectacles of transnational solidarity that were arranged by the legendary German communist, anti-militarist and propagandist Wilhelm "Willi" Münzenberg (1889–1940), who was the principal leader of the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (International Workers' Relief, hereafter referred to as the *Arbeiterhilfe*).<sup>2</sup> He had, from the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s inception in 1921 until its destruction in Germany in 1933, allegedly had "everything in his hands"<sup>3</sup> when it came to issues pertaining to the organisation. Although this is not a biographical study of Münzenberg, one of its central aims is to reveal Münzenberg's often forgotten, but influential role in the shaping of transnational solidarity movements during the interwar era. One could argue that Münzenberg's political biography as the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s leader follows, in a significant way, the historical development of transnational solidarity during the interwar period. Already during the early 1930s, both Münzenberg and others even claimed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the "embodiment" or "the organisational expression of international solidarity" which had

shouldered the gigantic task of spreading the idea of international solidarity after the First World War. It was subsequently argued that its creation and history represented a revival of international solidarity as it had never previously been conceived in history. The main issue of this study is thus to investigate how the *Arbeiterhilfe* under Münzenberg's leadership actually envisaged, organised and brought to life cultures, movements and celebrations of transnational solidarities in Weimar Germany.

The *Arbeiterhilfe* had its international headquarters in Berlin which functioned as the base, one could argue, for some of the period's most spectacular solidarity campaigns. The *Arbeiterhilfe* initiated a broad spectrum of solidarity ventures including famine and hunger relief; strike support; a social political programme for workers' children and women; and launched campaigns against war, imperialism and fascism. As a part of its cultural work the *Arbeiterhilfe* produced proletarian films both in Moscow and Berlin and brought Soviet films such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1926) to Germany and the world. The *Arbeiterhilfe* also created an impressive red media empire that published amongst others Kurt Tucholsky's *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (1929) and the main illustrated newspaper of the Left in Germany, the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ) featuring John Heartfield's photomontages; and it built an extensive international organisation which was supported at different times by artists such as Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz and Heinrich Zille; intellectuals and socialists such as Albert Einstein, Bernhard Shaw, Anatole France, Heinrich Mann, Arthur Koestler, Jon Dos Passos, Romain Rolland, Clara Zetkin, Maxim Gorky and Henri Barbusse; as well as by tens of thousands of German communist and non-communist workers. Characteristically, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities were built upon the concept of international solidarity which was never restricted to a European solidarity. Instead it specifically promoted the idea of an international solidarity which extended from West to East and from North to South. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* various ventures were linked by an overarching theme consisting of the idea and practice of international solidarity, and it is this specific aspect of the organisation that is at the heart of this study.

Through *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity campaigns, it encouraged workers to 'think globally' and to make them realise that, just as major strikes in neighbouring countries were inextricably linked with their own future prospects, so too were the far-off struggles in the colonies. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* history was also integrally connected with the rise of the first global anti-imperialist movement, the *League Against*

*Imperialism* (LAI) which under the leadership of Münzenberg secured the support of some of the future leaders in the Third World, including Jawaharlal Nehru (India) and Achmed Sukarno (Indonesia).<sup>4</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* network connected all parts of the world as *Arbeiterhilfe* bureaus were established on all six continents in countries such as China, Japan, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico, the USA, Canada; and most European nations including Germany, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Austria. The German section of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was, however, the strongest of them all and one of the few areas where the *Arbeiterhilfe* was successful in forming the organisation into a so-called above-party mass organisation. The establishment and history of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* global network forms in this study a significant role, although the main empirical results are placed in the context of Weimar Germany.

Throughout the book, the changing and complex character of international solidarity that in modern terminology is better conceptualised as a form of transnational solidarity, will be analysed. How was the concept of workers' international solidarity provided with meaning through the creation of a vivid language, visualisation and the practices of solidarity? How were the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of solidarity created and changed in relation to the Communist International (Comintern) and the Soviet Union's policies? As will be demonstrated, most prior studies on solidarity have focused on the sociological and philosophical aspects of this idea, whereas very few have investigated the contextual expressions, representations and articulations of international solidarity. Furthermore, studies on international communism have not focused on the issue of international solidarity from such a perspective.

Through the analysis of a number of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* major solidarity campaigns, this study will not only present a new history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg but also contribute to a new history of international solidarity in interwar Europe. The subsequent narrative and analysis of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* history is both chronologically and thematically structured. All of the chapters thematically share the same basic questions concerning the formation of a transnational solidarity community; for example, the questions of inclusion and exclusion; the construction of 'the other'; and the relationship between international solidarity and concepts such as charity, philanthropy, humanitarianism, brotherhood, sisterhood and internationalism.

The history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* is consequently perceived as being integrally connected to the historical understanding of the experiences, mentalities and outlooks of the 'morbid' interwar period. In essence,

it forms a study of how transnational unity and imaginaries can be constructed beyond borders and national frameworks. But likewise it is a study of the vast number of contentions and difficulties that any such endeavour might entail.

### **Resurrecting a 'hidden history'**

The history of the interwar period has until recently been largely characterised by methodological nationalism as most studies on the period have either focused on individual states or the international relations between governments. As Laqua (2011) has argued, the vitality of interwar internationalism has frequently been underestimated. There has indeed been a historical tradition in which international institutions have been written out of the study of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

The current study highlights the significance of international organisations being the focal point of any study of the transnational history of the twentieth century. In the words of Iriye (2013) if international history deals with relations amongst nations as sovereign entities, then transnational history focuses instead on cross-national connections and on non-state actors such as international organisations.<sup>6</sup> Transnational history has stressed the significance of abandoning methodological nationalism in favour of studying the "entanglements of people, ideas, technologies and economies with cultural, political and social movements". As this study also shows, the focus on the transnational does not imply that state borders or nations would fall outside the scope of any such analysis. On the contrary, the transnational history presented here is written within the specific context of Weimar Germany. In this case, Germany provides a necessary limitation as the historical context would be lost if additional countries were included. The nation provides, therefore, the context in which the transnational can be studied in depth.<sup>7</sup>

The transnational focus on non-state actors or international organisations is problematic when studying the era before 1945. The actual term for "non-governmental organisations" did not exist before the adoption of the United Nations Charter in 1945, and the general use of the term NGO was not established until the 1980s. However, as amongst others Reinalda (2009) has shown, international organisations have a long history, which is often traced back to 1815 and the Congress of Vienna. The organisations established there were not non-governmental organisations, but most often so-called IGOs or intergovernmental organisations. There were of course much older 'transnational citizens networks' formed across Europe and America into private associations and societies

against issues such as slavery or poverty. It seems, therefore, that international organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* represented in essence something completely new. In a sense, it resembled organisationally the *International Red Cross* and several other humanitarian organisations created mainly during or immediately after the First World War, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was created as an international *relief* organisation. In stark contrast to humanitarian initiatives, however, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was a strong opponent to charity and philanthropy, and advocated instead a class-based international solidarity. In this spirit the *Arbeiterhilfe* was even described as the “Red Cross of the international working class” in 1924. As Willetts (2011) shows, the definition of what should be accepted as “non-governmental” organisations is in reality far from clear. As the term NGO is so strongly connected to the UN system, one could describe the pre-1945 *non-governmental* international organisations simply as transnational actors or transnational civil society organisations.<sup>8</sup>

### What was the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*?

A number of labels and typologies have been applied to classify organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe*. During the interwar period, it was defined by German government agencies both as a subsidiary organisation of the communist movement (*Nebenorganisation/Unterorganisation*) and as a communist aid organisation (*Hilfsorganisation*). The national socialist ‘research’ on the communist movement classified the *Arbeiterhilfe* as both a united front organisation (*Einheitsfront-organisation*) and a subsidiary international (*Nebeninternationale*).<sup>9</sup> Again in 1926, the Comintern classified the *Arbeiterhilfe* as part of the system of communist organisations which functioned as “sympathising mass organisation for special purposes”. The special purpose of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was to function as an international solidarity organisation on a global scale. In its own publications, the *Arbeiterhilfe* itself used a number of different labels, including “relief organisation of the working class”, “world organisation of proletarian solidarity”, or “above-party mass organisation”.<sup>10</sup>

However, previous research has primarily classified the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a front organisation due to its origins in and close connections to the Comintern. The concept of a front organisation has been an integral part of the totalitarian perspective developed by Hannah Arendt (1951) who highlights that the most striking new organisational device of totalitarian movements before their coming to power was the front organisation which represented a new form of “totalitarian organisation”.<sup>11</sup> Looking back, it was first during and after the Second World War that US scholars and state institutions began to utilise the concept of communist front

organisations. Fronts were defined as organisations delivering communism in disguise so that “well-meaning people who normally would not participate in openly communist-led activities can be drawn into them”.<sup>12</sup> Here, it was assumed that normal people would only support communism if lured by others. The fear of ideological ‘contagion’ was especially obvious in Cold War America, where for example the Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, dedicated a whole chapter to communist front organisations in his book on American communism in 1958.<sup>13</sup>

Curiously, advocates of the front organisation perspective have since 1945 utilised the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a prime example of a front organisation. The only problem is that the very fundament of a front organisation is that it should not have any outward connection with Moscow or with communism. This is, without any doubt, inaccurate and largely anachronistic in relation to the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>14</sup> One only has to be reminded of the facts that Münzenberg, as the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s General Secretary, was a renown communist and Member of the *Reichstag* in Germany (1924–1933); the *Arbeiterhilfe* proudly proclaimed that the organisation had been founded on the initiative of Lenin himself; and finally, that it throughout the period openly supported both the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties (CPs). As Mally (2007) notes in an attempt to introduce a post-Cold War analysis of an interwar front organisation (albeit still calling it a front!) one did not have to be a genius to identify the organisations' open support of communism and the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> It seems therefore more likely that organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* made it possible for people already sympathising with radical ideas such as transnational solidarity to find a cultural expression for their beliefs, without forcing them to become actual members of the CP. There is a clear analytical difference between ‘luring (innocent) people to communism’, and providing already sympathising people the opportunity to engage themselves for the cause in cultural events, celebrations and protest campaigns.

During the Cold War, the interest in the West for the history and usage of “psycho-political warfare” generated an interest in the ‘origins’ of the communist front organisations. In these early studies, Münzenberg was in fact highlighted as the prime “architect of the front organisations”. In James D. Atkinson's *The Politics of Struggle* (1966) the *Arbeiterhilfe* is defined as “the prototype for all the hundreds and hundreds of front organisations that have been set in motion by the Soviet Union, Communist China, Castro's Cuba and other Communist nations” from 1921 to the 1960s. In a report to the US Senate on the techniques of Soviet propa-



ganda (1965), the “famous German Communist” Münzenberg is also described as “one of the geniuses of political warfare”.<sup>16</sup>

In these presentations, Münzenberg is best known as the “godfather” of the communist fronts and it has been claimed that Münzenberg scornfully labelled them as “Innocents’ Clubs” which were irresistible to progressive intellectuals, who were also sarcastically referred to as “fellow travellers”.<sup>17</sup> Münzenberg was also later described by his life partner Babette Gross as the “patron saint” of fellow travellers, and he is revered in a recent history of the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) as being the “great virtuoso of Soviet front organisations”. Wilford (2008) clearly endorses the Cold War definition of Münzenberg’s organisations as being devoted to an “undeniably benign cause, [...] whose real purpose was to defend and to spread the Bolshevik Revolution”.<sup>18</sup> Again, it is assumed that radicalism is something external delivered to the politically innocent, whereas the social context as a distinct force for radicalisation is overlooked.

Furthermore, without any hint of criticism of the front organisation perspective, McMeekin (2003) vigorously claims in his controversial Münzenberg biography that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was a significant front organisation which by the beginning of the 1930s had turned into an “unabashed” servant of Stalin’s foreign policy needs. The *Arbeiterhilfe* is, in this version, a fabulous propaganda machinery only explained and understood from the perspective of the Kremlin and a world revolutionary offensive. McMeekin’s concern with worker solidarity is thus limited to the use of solidarity as a weapon for “spreading moral blindness”.<sup>19</sup>

It is perhaps an easy task to extend the perspectives of the Cold War era to our days, not least as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was irrefutably in close connection with both the communist movement and the Comintern. However, if one also seeks to analyse the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s cultural, political and social activities as being part of the German interwar context, it is argued here that the organisation cannot only be perceived from a totalitarian viewpoint as a puppet of Moscow providing propaganda for the Soviet Union’s conspiratorial aims.<sup>20</sup> If it is maintained, as the front organisation perspective irrefutably does, that the radical Left solely defined international solidarity as an instrument of Soviet politics, then it seems that the national contexts beyond the Soviet Union are irretrievably lost. As Hermann Weber has recently highlighted, it must not be forgotten that the German radical Left of the 1920s still stood firmly in the traditions of socialist thought based on the struggle for social

justice and international solidarity which had been accentuated by the devastating experiences of the First World War.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, as one of the most prominent Russian scholars on the history of the Comintern, Alexander Vatlin, has recently stated, it would be a great over-simplification to reduce the history of the German, or of any national communist movement, to only consisting of orders, emissaries and gold from Moscow.<sup>22</sup> Equally, any research that disregards the increasing Bolshevik control and the *Bolshevisation* or *Stalinisation* of the CPs and organisations during the interwar period must, unquestionably, be distorted.<sup>23</sup>

It seems beyond doubt that the Cold War era front organisation perspective represents a one-sided analytical category that is not open to interpretation but which contains a pre-conceived understanding 'from above', or if you like, 'from Moscow' that states that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity was merely a weapon skilfully utilised by the Soviet Union. From this viewpoint, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* expressions of solidarity were only pure political propaganda, void of any 'real' solidarity. A black and white dichotomy is constructed between the innocent, but ultimately false, message of solidarity and the actual 'menacing' communist propaganda hidden behind it.<sup>24</sup>

If the *Arbeiterhilfe* is to be defined simply as a communist front organisation, it would represent and *recreate* a black and white dichotomy of the past, and purely in the context of Soviet foreign policy. The idea of this study is instead to open up a whole spectrum of past meanings and understandings that enables a deeper analysis of the various uses and articulations of international solidarity. The main question of my study will thus investigate how solidarity has been expressed and articulated through the *Arbeiterhilfe* – starting with the communist leaders in both Moscow and Berlin as well as the leaders and functionaries of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, and including the ordinary people who came out onto the streets of Weimar Germany in support of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity. International solidarity can then not only be perceived as a weapon and as a means to an end, but also as a cultural value, emotion, identity, a sense of belonging, and even an aim in of itself.

The front organisation perspective is hence 'laid to rest', and instead a spectrum arises: a spectrum of solidarity representing a multitude of parallel and multidimensional meanings that otherwise would be omitted in the black and white interpretations. Just as a degree of conspiracy and secrecy was a part of this history, so were actual stories of people engaging themselves for solidarity. There must be a difference

between what it did in practice and what the leaders of the Comintern perceived its mission to be.

It is here argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe* instead should be included in the history of early international *non*-governmental civil society organisations which had unparalleled prospects to develop new transnational identifications and social ties for global (albeit not universal) solidarity. It could consequently be suggested that the *Arbeiterhilfe* in several ways could be perceived as a predecessor to several post-1945 NGOs.<sup>25</sup> Modern NGOs have often been described as the ‘conscience of the world’; constituting an important critical mass, exposing injustices, providing assistance to the world’s poor and highlighting the fates of political prisoners. The somewhat heroic aura surrounding the NGOs must be viewed critically as they have always functioned in close collaboration with various state institutions.<sup>26</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* was likewise integrally connected to the Soviet Union through the Comintern and was thus strongly influenced by the shifting sands within the international communist movement and Soviet foreign politics. In this story the dependence of both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg on Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union is necessarily of supreme importance but, as I will suggest, a new history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its message of international solidarity can only be achieved if it is linked ‘from below’ to the traditions of worker solidarity in the historical context of Weimar Germany. International solidarity was not, after all, invented in Moscow.

### **The post-war crisis of the interwar period**

The First World War gave rise to an array of international institutions and movements which tried to provide an international and transnational answer to the failures of the world order which had caused total war. In 1919, international cooperation was not only imagined in Woodrow Wilson’s *League of Nations*, but also from the perspective of class-based internationalism and international solidarity in the Comintern. During the final years prior to the First World War, international solidarity had been elevated to the principal concept and idea of the labour movement. The primary transnational labour organisation of the period, the Second International, called repeatedly for international labour solidarity against war but, as it was unable to gain sufficient support in the midst of the patriotic fervour, it stood powerless as the European armies quickly mobilised in the summer of 1914. The prevailing idea was not one of international solidarity, but one of patriotism and the defence of the Fatherland.<sup>27</sup>

The years of war and social turmoil that followed were no less than ruinous for the unity of the international labour movement. The Third, or communist, International was founded in 1919 on the belief that a new International had to follow the Second International as it had beyond redemption 'betrayed' the idea of international solidarity. The Comintern was, however, devised as an International solely accessible to the 'conscious' part of the working class, and did not attempt to include all the parties of the Left. It was an organisation with a very restricted membership and it can, therefore, not be argued that its establishment represented a significant return to the idea of international solidarity in Europe.<sup>28</sup> The deplorable state of international working-class solidarity was emphasised by the fact that not even the previous flagship of international solidarity, the Second International, embraced the concept of solidarity when it was re-established in 1920. Sensationally, the institution which had originally been perceived as the primary forum for the workers of the world even failed to mention solidarity in its new statutes.<sup>29</sup> However, as this study will demonstrate, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* was established in 1921, it specifically articulated international solidarity as its guiding principle which was defined as being all-inclusive for the working class, labour parties, Internationals and for the sympathisers of the working class. However, this was never an unproblematic or uncontested undertaking, as the issue of international solidarity produced a significant number of political, practical and ideological controversies which continued to cause bitter conflicts, especially between the social democrats and communists.

The *Arbeiterhilfe* was brought to life in the summer of 1921 when Soviet Russia had been hit by a disastrous famine crisis which proved to be the most devastating tragedy to hit Europe after the First World War. It was a relief organisation created in the hour of an extraordinary crisis, one of many crises which became the hallmarks of the so-called morbid interwar age, typically characterised as an era defined by general anxiety, doubt and fear. Several scholars have attempted to break through the perceived 'pessimistic orthodoxy', but as Overy (2010) concludes, the prevailing discourses of the interwar period remain infused with pessimism, increasing uncertainty and insecurity.<sup>30</sup> Typically, the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), which is the essential backdrop to this study, has been merely perceived as a period explaining the rise of the Third Reich and the coming of the Second World War.

The prevailing 'vanishing points' in German history have been the years 1933 and 1945, and Winkler (2006) has even suggested that the question of how Hitler was able to come to power is the most important

question of modern, if not of all, German history.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to this perspective, this current study will not primarily analyse the Weimar Republic as part of an interwar period or a period merely explaining the rise of the Third Reich, but as a *post-war* period whose defining experiences were the First World War, the 1917 Bolshevik October Revolution, the failed 1918 German November Revolution and the subsequent social turmoil and civil war. The First World War had undoubtedly engendered a severe apprehension regarding the future of Western civilisation and made it possible for a number of utopian aspirations to be successfully developed on both the political Right and Left producing bold new promises of a re-shaped world order.<sup>32</sup>

### Introducing Willi Münzenberg

The then young socialist Münzenberg belonged to the generation which had experienced the collapse of international solidarity in 1914 and was confronted with the madness of total war. Münzenberg, born in Erfurt, Germany in 1889, carried out his political work mainly from Switzerland, where he moved in the summer of 1909 at 20 years old. He soon became a leading figure within the socialist youth movement and in 1915 he was elected the International Secretary of a bureau for international socialist youth organisations, later to become the Youth International.<sup>33</sup> In September 1915, Münzenberg resolved to join the Zimmerwald Left which had formed around Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In the Youth International's official publication, entitled the *Jugend-Internationale*, articles by leading communists such as Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and Radek were published. Already before the renown anti-militarist Zimmerwald Conference was held on 5–8 September 1915, Lenin and Münzenberg had frequented a discussion club in Zürich which marked the beginning of their long-lasting cooperation. When Lenin moved to Zürich in February 1916, they continued to meet frequently either at Lenin and Krupskaya's apartment or at Münzenberg's residence.<sup>34</sup>

However, when Lenin and the other Bolsheviks left Zürich on 9 April 1917 by train heading first to Berlin and then continuing on via Saßnitz and Trelleborg to Petrograd, Münzenberg was unable to accompany his comrades due to his German citizenship. It is assumed that Münzenberg was not willing to risk entering Germany as he could have been either forced into conscription or arrested by the German authorities. Münzenberg was left behind on the platform at Zürich railway station, perhaps reflecting on the last words uttered by Karl Radek expressing the fateful conditions of their journey: "in six months they would either be ministers, or hanged".<sup>35</sup>

In Zürich, Münzenberg continued to carry out the work of the Youth International, but the Swiss authorities regarded him as an increasingly dangerous anti-militarist agitator. He was consequently imprisoned on 19 November 1917 and, although he was released on bail in April 1918, he was interned anew in May. Finally, on 10 November 1918, Münzenberg was expelled from Switzerland and escorted to the German border.<sup>36</sup> When Münzenberg entered Germany, the country was in a state of complete upheaval, if not revolution. In early November 1918, the sailors and soldiers of Kiel had mutinied, signalling the beginning of the German "November Revolution", which reached Berlin on 9 November. It was a process that would soon lead to the fall of the *Second German Reich* (Empire) and pave the way for the first German parliamentary democracy, the Weimar Republic. In Germany, Münzenberg joined the *Spartacus Union* which, along with other radical groups, was transformed into the German Communist Party (KPD) on 30 December 1918. In Stuttgart, he joined the circle of the eminent German radical Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), who would later also become deeply involved in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* affairs. The critical situation in Germany led to continued radicalism, culminating in the Left-wing uprising in January 1919. This rising was, however, poorly organised and was quickly put down by government forces. As a result, all Left-wing radicals were brutally suppressed by Right-wing forces in Germany which, amongst other things, led to the execution of the KPD's two most prominent front figures, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Münzenberg was also arrested in Stuttgart as a result of his involvement in this uprising. Due to his imprisonment, Münzenberg was absent from the Comintern's inauguration congress although he had been one of the few Germans specifically invited to Moscow.<sup>37</sup>

After his release five months later, Münzenberg settled in Berlin where he resumed his work for the Youth International which, on 20–26 November 1919, was transformed into the Communist Youth International (*Kommunistischesii Internatsional Molodezhi*, KIM).<sup>38</sup> Up until the summer of 1921, the KIM had been based in Berlin where, under Münzenberg's leadership, it enjoyed a fairly high degree of political independence and functioned as the main platform for the active international revolutionary youth. The KIM convened its own congress in Moscow on 14 July 1921, at the same time as the Comintern's Third World Congress. However, in reality, the major issues of the youth movement had already been settled by the leaders of the Comintern, and the KIM's congress was, ultimately, a mere postscript. The radical youth movement, as it had been built up by Münzenberg, was coming to an end. At the congress, the KIM just like the Comintern overall, was persuaded

to halt its 'revolutionary offensive' and instead concentrate on building mass support for the CPs. Münzenberg had been a strong advocate of an independent revolutionary youth movement, but apparently he was then persuaded by Lenin, during private conversations in Moscow, to abandon the KIM's autonomous aspirations. As a consequence, Münzenberg was not re-elected as the KIM's Secretary, and was only formally appointed as a member of its Executive. In reality, a new leadership was installed which was loyal to the Comintern's policies and which willingly accepted the KIM's new role. Evidently, there was an "anti-Münzenberg attitude among the Russians".<sup>39</sup> Münzenberg later claimed in a private letter that his separation from the KIM had been a result of the Comintern chairman's, Grigory Zinoviev, political and personal persecution against both him and the KIM.<sup>40</sup> This criticism was, however, never made public and in Münzenberg's memoirs, published in 1930, he simply states that he was unable to continue his work for the KIM due to a new urgent mission allegedly assigned to him personally by Lenin.<sup>41</sup>

Although Münzenberg lost the KIM, in his role as the principal leader of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international headquarters in Berlin, he became a significant actor in charge of a major transnational movement in the name of both international solidarity and international communism. Münzenberg thus remained heavily engaged throughout the 1920s and 1930s in the activities of both the international and the German radical Left, which evidently for him represented the remedy for the failures of modern Western society. One could consequently imagine that, as Münzenberg had reached prominent positions within the communist movement, it should have secured him a prominent place in the history of the movement. The contrary was, however, the case.

### **Suppressed, neglected, forgotten**

Despite the *Arbeiterhilfe's* major role as a transnational solidarity organisation, its comprehensive history has remained unwritten. As much as past research is of interest to any scholar, so must the conspicuous silence surrounding a research topic be scrutinised. As happened with so many others of Münzenberg's generation, after decades of struggle for the communist movement, he became disillusioned by developments within the Soviet Union. During the second half of the 1930s, Münzenberg gradually veered away from Stalin's dictatorship, and he would consequently be excluded from both the German CP and the Comintern in 1938–1939. Münzenberg had become an unwanted prominent figure within the communist movement, and subsequently Georgi Dimitrov, who was the General Secretary of the Comintern at the time,

noted in his secret diaries a private conversation he had had with Stalin regarding Münzenberg. Stalin had allegedly exclaimed that Münzenberg was a Trotskyist and that, once Münzenberg had again been lured to Moscow, Stalin gave his assurances that they would arrest him.<sup>42</sup> Luckily for Münzenberg, he never returned to Russia after 1936, where he would certainly have been arrested along with several of his closest colleagues and comrades. Münzenberg's refusal to travel to Moscow and his growing political independence in Paris, after the forced relocation of the *Arbeiterhilfe* from Berlin to Paris in 1933, hence transformed one of Moscow's most trusted comrades into a genuine threat to the unity of the German and international communist movement. This fact seems irrefutable as in the autumn of 1938 Wilhelm Pieck, who at the time was the leading figure within the KPD, stressed in his private notes: "The main threat is not Trotskyism, but Münzenberg".<sup>43</sup> Remarkably, even though the struggle against Trotskyism had, since March 1937, been elevated into one of the primary missions of the international communist movement, it was Münzenberg who was in fact its main threat behind closed doors.<sup>44</sup> As shown by secret files from the East German Stasi archives, the alleged crime of belonging to the so-called Trotskyist splinter group "Neumann-Remmele-Münzenberg" would be used later in 1939 by the Soviet courts as incriminating evidence resulting first in imprisonment and then in a death sentence.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, in June 1939, the extended process against Münzenberg came to its inevitable conclusion when he was publicly ousted as a traitor by his former comrades.<sup>46</sup> As for so many other communists and socialists, the final straw that extinguished the light of the Soviet Union forever in their minds was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact signed in August 1939, and the Soviet Union's military offensive against Finland in November of the same year. The 'traitor and renegade' Münzenberg then made clear his dissent to his former comrades when he dramatically proclaimed on the front page of his newspaper *Die Zukunft (The Future)*: "The traitor, Stalin, is You".<sup>47</sup> Less than one year later, Münzenberg died in mysterious circumstances.<sup>48</sup> In a sense, Münzenberg's demise represented the inglorious end of the 'classical era' of working-class internationalism (1830–1940) as, along with Münzenberg's remains, two decades of his struggle for international solidarity, communism and anti-fascism were to die with him. His death coincided with what van Holthoon and van der Linden (1988) have defined as the year when international solidarity, as it had been conceived and understood since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, came to an abrupt end.<sup>49</sup>



After Münzenberg's official break with both the Soviet Union, the Comintern and the KPD, his name had become anathema in the Soviet world of international communism, as it would later become in the post-war German Democratic Republic (GDR). However, it was not only Münzenberg's name that was banished to the forgotten annals of history, but also the history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* itself, which became systematically omitted from the GDR's records. Traditionally, the idea of 'blank pages' in the history of German communism has pertained to individuals, seldom to whole organisations. As I will argue, the *Arbeiterhilfe*, and particularly Münzenberg's role in it, had become so politically sensitive in the post-1945 context that the only way to deal with it in the GDR was by complete silence, as a kind of wasteland best forgotten, as their history would de-legitimise the GDR's leadership.<sup>50</sup>

The only major book on Münzenberg was published by his life partner Babett Gross in 1967, but no comprehensive account of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was ever published. Further, the Eastern bloc had control over the bulk of the primary sources which, after the Second World War, were safely stashed away in the East German and Soviet archives, classified as being top secret. Thus, only after the fall of communism in both Eastern Europe and Russia was it possible to write a new history of the radical Left, yet the history of the most significant transnational solidarity organisation of the interwar period, the *Arbeiterhilfe*, until today seems to remain hidden in the shadows of the East German memory politic.<sup>51</sup>

The source material utilised in this study consists mainly of documents made accessible in Moscow and Berlin as a consequence of the 'archive revolution' enabled by the fall of communism in Europe and Russia. The Russian part of the material consists of documents produced by and for the communist movement, including the *Arbeiterhilfe's* own central archive consisting of 50,000 pages. The German material has been collected besides from the former archives of the KPD and its successor, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), from the extensive collections of the German interwar state institutions, including police and state security archives.

## **The problem of solidarity**

### **Bringing back the context**

It has been argued that the social landscape of Weimar Germany was to a profound extent divided into several political sub-cultures and social milieus which were generally very antagonistic and hostile towards each

other.<sup>52</sup> A central theory regarding the working-class culture in Germany has been based on Roth's (1963) interpretation of imperial Germany's social democratic workers as creators of a tightly-knit class-conscious sub-culture. This resulted, supposedly, in a negative integration, with the social democratic organisations creating a separate world, isolated from the dominant society.<sup>53</sup> A prevailing consensus within the research has stated that the height of the social democratic workers' collective organisation (*Vereinskultur*) was achieved during the *Second German Reich*. Consequently, the Weimar Republic has been described as a time of disintegration and demise for the social democratic 'world of organisations'; a demise that is most often attributed to the rise of the national socialists who completely destroyed what was left of the social democratic organisations in 1933. If the end of the Weimar Republic represented a significant turning point in the history of the workers' culture, so too did the very creation of Weimar Germany.<sup>54</sup> In 1918, German social democracy reached a level of political power it had previously only dreamed of. Although in its official programmes it upheld the notion of an oppositional working-class party, in reality it became the official party par excellence of the Weimar Republic.<sup>55</sup>

It has consequently been argued that the social democratic organisations in imperial Germany were founded on a counter-cultural basis but that with the establishment of the Weimar Republic, this incentive to uphold counter-cultural workers' organisations diminished. Wunderer (1980) has subsequently argued that the social democratic organisations in the Weimar Republic in fact de-politicised themselves. He argues that they were transformed from counter-cultural movements into organisations for social integration and, through an increasing collaboration with bourgeois organisations, they slowly distanced themselves from their previously strong class-based roots.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, several researchers have assumed that the social democratic workers' culture of Germany in the mid-1920s already contained the seeds of its disintegration. Wunderer critically emphasises a crucial difference which the social democratic leadership at the time emphasised, namely the clear distinction between leisure time and politics. For the social democratic cultural organisations of the Weimar period, politics was a no-go area, exclusively reserved for the Social Democratic Party. What the cultural organisations engaged themselves in did not concern the party and their leisure activities, supposedly restricted to apolitical activities, were often completely ignored.<sup>57</sup>

Mallmann's (1996) social history of the CP in Weimar Germany launched one of the most heated debates on the character of the

interwar communist movement since the fall of communism in Europe. Mallmann's study rests heavily on the analytical categorisation of social milieus, and he argues vividly that a specific "Left-wing proletarian milieu" was established during the Weimar Republic. This milieu was supposedly a social base, independent from the directives and tactical turns forwarded by the vanguard of the KPD and the Comintern, and instead formed a milieu where social democrats and communists co-existed and shared the common proletarian traditions of the pre-war era.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, as Wirsching (1997) has noted, Mallmann focuses his study on the CP and not on the cultural and mass organisations of the workers' movement, which weakens his argumentation. According to Wirsching, the only area where a united proletarian milieu could have been formed was in the socialist cultural and mass organisations which did not require party membership. This, however, was practically impossible in the organisations founded by the social democrats, where communists were instructed to form cells and fractions. Later, after the introduction of the Comintern's class-against-class policy directed against the social democrats in 1928–1929, the communists within these social democratic organisations were explicitly ordered to split their organisations and to form parallel communist organisations under communist leadership. Wirsching notes, however, that the situation was partially different for the mass and cultural organisations founded by the communist movement. These mass organisations in Germany included the *Rote Frontkämpferbund* (*Red Front Fighters' League*), the *Rote Hilfe* (*International Red Aid* (MOPR) and the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>59</sup> While the first two organisations were very much dominated by communists, the case of the *Arbeiterhilfe* remains a potential question mark, and a forum where socialists, social democrats and communists could possibly have found common ground. As this study will show, however, the *Arbeiterhilfe* on many levels lost its role as a common ground for both social democrats and communists in 1924 when the SPD leadership declared that membership in the *Arbeiterhilfe* was forbidden for party members, although it remained as a forum for 'unorganised' workers and communists.

Weitz (1997) has in line with Wunderer argued that in the Weimar Republic it was primarily the communists who upheld the counter-cultural socialist tradition which highlighted the labour movement's struggle against oppression in the name of working-class solidarity.<sup>60</sup> Weitz convincingly demonstrates how a specific communist 'political culture' emerged during the 1920s. In the process, the KPD created political and social identities amongst workers which stressed loyalty to

the Soviet Union, a strong commitment to communism and the significance of class, struggle and solidarity. Clearly, both the social democratic and the CPs tried to forge their own *separate* identities with their own interpretations of socialism and political programmes. However, as Mallmann (1999) rightly points out, there were also a degree of *common* futures and a *common* language inherent in the heritage of nineteenth-century socialism and in the Marxist ideas of class struggle, socialism and the establishment of a classless society and the notion of international working-class solidarity.<sup>61</sup> Following on from this argument, we need to delve more deeply into the shared but also highly contested concept of international solidarity.

### Perspectives on solidarity

Ever since 1945, the term 'solidarity' has been utilised excessively by social democratic and Christian parties, in governmental statutes, in the European Union and in all kinds of organisations and societies. Stjernø (2005) argues in his seminal study on solidarity in Europe that the idea of solidarity has, consequently, during the process, been re-defined and re-modelled into a modern social democratic idea of solidarity based on "ethics, feelings of reciprocal responsibility, recognition of interdependence, or the feeling of belonging together". Solidarity today is hence not primarily understood as an expression of class interests as it was primarily understood before the Second World War, but as a significant concept which ideally includes the whole of humanity, uniting people around the globe in transnational cooperation.<sup>62</sup>

Over the past centuries, the concept of social solidarity has described a broad repertoire of phenomena beginning from simply "giving to a beggar to organised worker solidarity, from offering help to our neighbour to walking in a silent march, from doing volunteer work to global networking".<sup>63</sup> A modern definition of solidarity could be described as "the willingness to share resources to support people in their struggles or [those] in need of aid".<sup>64</sup> Simply put, the idea of solidarity has carried and still carries today a multitude of meanings and understandings which require further clarification. The original political concept of solidarity had its origins in the French Revolution and the concept of *fraternité*. The term 'brotherhood' was the predecessor of 'solidarity' which implied the feeling of political community and sameness. It was not, however, only the bourgeois who employed the concept of brotherhood, but was from the beginning of the nineteenth century also used in the context of brotherhood between workers. Accordingly, the first

significant trade union in Germany was entitled the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Verbrüderung* (*German Workers' Brotherhood*).<sup>65</sup>

However, Karl Marx allegedly strove to prevent the use of the term brotherhood in the vocabulary of the labour movement, especially after the failed revolutions of 1848. Most importantly, the terms 'brother' and 'brotherhood' were absent from the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. Instead, Marx developed a distinct theory of working-class solidarity, but he still rarely used the term 'solidarity' in his writings. The Swedish historian Sven-Eric Liedman has concluded that the term 'solidarity' was not employed by Marx until the foundation of the *First International* (the *International Working Men's Association*) in 1864. Apparently, there was a logical reason for this delay: namely that while 'solidarity' had previously defined the unity of the whole nation, Marx was employing the term to represent a newly discovered unity within the working class, an international working-class solidarity which questioned the primacy of national unity.<sup>66</sup>

Steinar Stjernø's study constitutes the only comprehensive study of the history of solidarity as an idea in Europe. One of the most pivotal elements of Stjernø's analysis is his argument that during the last decades of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, three distinct interpretations of solidarity were developed by socialist theorists.<sup>67</sup> In order to understand different articulations of international solidarity during the interwar period, it is essential to trace its conceptual and ideological evolution that most certainly affected the *Arbeiterhilfe's* conceptualisations of international solidarity.

The first interpretation of solidarity is defined as a 'classical Marxist class solidarity' which is described with synonyms such as brotherhood, class unity and internationalism.<sup>68</sup> This interpretation was then further developed by the German social democrat Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) who, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, provided the works of Marx and Engels with an authoritative interpretation. Together with August Bebel (1840–1913) and Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), they formulated the SPD's 1891 Erfurt programme which then advocated a specific 'social democratic' idea of solidarity. Significantly, though, the term 'solidarity' was not used in this programme. Kautsky described solidarity as being a general concept implying a feeling of togetherness and community that is created between workers when they realise their shared interests. This solidarity was defined by Kautsky as a force that not only included the workers in local, regional or national contexts, but also formed an international force that crossed the borders of

nations. One of the most significant elements of Kautsky's later work was that he introduced the *term* 'solidarity' as a cornerstone of Marxist theory. Kautsky also widened the concept to include people outside the working class.<sup>69</sup>

The third and most controversial interpretation of solidarity was then formulated by the radical Left. Controversially, Stjernø states that official Marxism-Leninism avoided using the term 'solidarity' completely, and that Marxism-Leninism did not develop any new discourse on solidarity prior to the Second World War.<sup>70</sup> This study of the *Arbeiterhilfe* will, however, provide a completely revised picture of the communist articulations of 'solidarity' during the interwar period. Quite contrary to Stjernø's conclusions, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of international solidarity were, for example, not at all restricted to the conscious part of the working class, but especially directed to the 'unorganised' masses. In addition, its articulation of solidarity was not 'very restricted' in its inclusiveness, on the contrary it was open to all workers and sympathisers of the world irrespective of party affiliation.

Stjernø highlights the fact that Lenin was more concerned with excluding groups and establishing discipline instead of concentrating on issues which united the Left. Although the foundation of the Comintern in 1919 was proclaimed as a significant expression of international solidarity, Stjernø has rightly pointed out the fact that the Comintern's actual programme only referred once to the idea of solidarity in a passage referring to the brotherhood of all peoples and that during the Comintern's Second World Congress in 1920 there were no references at all either to solidarity or to synonymous concepts in either its theses, its resolutions or in Lenin's speeches. It has therefore been argued that the leaders of the Comintern in principle had by this stage abandoned the idea of solidarity and instead emphasised the importance of forming a strong unity and discipline within the new revolutionary framework. It has been suggested that in a situation when most European workers supported social democracy, "communists may have felt it difficult to write or talk about working-class solidarity".<sup>71</sup> This may have been true for the early years of the Comintern, but as this study will show, after the summer of 1921 international solidarity was powerfully (re)introduced by the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg in Germany and the world.

Mainly on the basis of Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), where he famously stated that genuine solidarity cannot be achieved in a capitalist society, only in a communist one, and the posthumously published work of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), Stjernø

defines a 'Marxist-Leninist' interpretation of solidarity. It is defined as being a solidarity deliberately confined to the "conscious part of the working class", based on a "very strong" collective orientation and a "very restricted" inclusiveness which explicitly suppresses individual autonomy.<sup>72</sup> It has thus been suggested that the main differences between the so-called Marxist-Leninist and the social democratic interpretation of solidarity was that the latter strove to broaden the concept of solidarity – to make it more inclusive – while Lenin and his followers stressed the importance of a pure working class solidarity, making it very restrictive.<sup>73</sup>

The only exception noted by Stjernø concerns the Comintern's engagement in the relations between the working classes of Europe and the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Significantly, however, and contrary to what this study will show, Stjernø claims that the term 'solidarity' was not used in such contexts. Issues associated with the Soviet Union's foreign policy, for example the colonial question, necessarily involved the interests of the Soviet state. It has consequently been argued that it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between the Marxist-Leninist form of international solidarity on the one hand and loyalty to the Soviet Union on the other.<sup>74</sup>

There has been an extensive debate on the nature of communist international solidarity and its connection with the Soviet Union. From a Soviet point of view, the instrumental usage of international solidarity was a political necessity. After all, Stalin concluded in 1927 that "[a]n internationalist is one who, unreservedly, without hesitation, without conditions, is ready to defend the Soviet Union".<sup>75</sup> Such statements have only strengthened the view, also upheld by the front organisation perspective, that solidarity in relation to communists was not 'real', it was in fact not solidarity at all, but a form of loyalty to Bolshevik Russia. The origins of this transformation from solidarity into loyalty is most often traced to the doctrine of "socialism in one country" through which Stalin changed the international working class project into one securing Soviet state power, and changed international solidarity into a sworn allegiance to the Soviet Union. Here, internationalism was never a principle but merely an ideological tool.<sup>76</sup>

Especially amongst Western scholars, Stalin's statements have been linked to the transformation of the Comintern from a revolutionary international into an international organisation, strictly in line with the Soviet Union's foreign policy needs. Within this field of study, there has been a special focus on the Comintern's complex structures, hierarchies and the history of increasing domination by the Russian Bolsheviks

and Stalin, or the so-called *Bolshevisation* or *Stalinisation* of the world communist movement. The communist chain of command was thus headed by Stalin and was closely overseen by the Comintern leadership who allegedly executed "complete control" of the CPs around the world. However, in a significant contribution to the history of interwar communism, Weber (2007) emphasises that when 'world communism' was created, it was not yet either a monolithic or a strictly organised movement. The majority of the CPs' members and functionaries were advocates of the traditions of socialism and had not yet been transformed into communist cadres.<sup>77</sup>

After the opening of the GDR and Soviet Union archives, great progress has been made in the field of research concerning communism as a *Herrschaftssystem* (system of rule), a communist system in charge of state power which all around the world led to massive repressions. However, as Weber points out, there is still a shortage of research analysing communism as a radical social movement. Further, a sufficient distinction between solidarity in communist states like Soviet Russia and solidarity as it was articulated and practised in radical social movements in non-communist countries has not sufficiently been made. As Weber states, communism as a social movement was based on the idea of making a "better world", and was, therefore, an offshoot of the classic workers' movement founded in the nineteenth century. In essence, communism was an answer to a social question, and a product of the madness resulting from the First World War. Communism carried with it a strong element of utopia and the belief in rapidly ending social misery. However, already from the Russian Revolution onwards, a predicament developed as the social reality in Soviet Russia turned out to be flawed by terror and repression, instead of being the supreme example of a workers' paradise. Yet, although the realities of the dictatorship in Soviet Russia became known around the world, communism as a radical social movement continued to attract supporters. According to Weber, after the fall of communism, mono-causal answers have been provided to complex issues, and black and white pictures of the past have been painted. Weber declares that at some point, the time for a historicisation of communism will come which in Weber's mind will be free of prejudice, black and white dichotomies and emotions as well as of apologetics. This historicisation can naturally not imply the belittlement or silencing of the terror and crimes but, according to Weber, historicisation is the only way to understand how the communist movement through history continued to attract followers despite the ongoing terror and reality in communist states.<sup>78</sup> Here, the historicisation of the



communist concept of solidarity is defined as one of the most significant answers to the questions posed above.

### Solidarity and identity

To understand how and why the *Arbeiterhilfe* developed its message of solidarity as it did, the problematic question must be asked: Why are people attracted to the idea of solidarity and what kind of emotional and rational reasons could motivate people to join forces, or to sympathise with certain specific groups of solidarity? As the previous section focused on the concept of solidarity in socialist and communist writings, the following section will approach solidarity as a social phenomena, theorising on the dynamics of social solidarity. Significantly, the role of emotions in the analysis of solidarity has remained largely untouched, although sociologists have suggested that “collective feelings” constitute the very glue of solidarity. In fact, there have been recent efforts to bring emotions back into the study of social movements. The main argument of this approach is simply that strongly felt emotions (also) matter due to their motivating role.<sup>79</sup> What people actually felt is beyond the reach of history, but what is possible to study is how the *Arbeiterhilfe*, through its publications for example, built upon a sense of fear of the ‘imperialist’, ‘capitalist’ and ‘other’ whom the *Arbeiterhilfe* presented as the objects of fear, and as a significant ‘they’ that the working class could and should unite against.

Looking analytically at the inner dynamics of social solidarity, it has been suggested that people primarily show solidarity towards those whose history, convictions and interests they share, while others are not included. However, no human solidarity is simply based on the fact that a fellow human being, or a ‘brother’ is in need. All solidarity is motivated by some human connection and is strongest towards those who are portrayed as ‘we’ or are identified as a part of ‘us’.<sup>80</sup>

Solidarity is generally distinguished from philanthropy through the analysis of we-groups. If philanthropy is based on charity and mercy to those who are suffering hardship, solidarity is described as a process or feeling *between* those suffering hardship or oppression who join forces to protect their common interests. Those who provide charity are not a part of this ‘we-group’ of the oppressed, but in the context of the class struggle may perhaps even be described as good-hearted representatives of the ‘other’, for example representatives of the upper classes. However, as Bayertz (1998) points out, the we-groups can vary as much as the common interests. Furthermore, if solidarity is only understood as a struggle for common interests, solidarity could simply be understood

as a means to achieve these interests. This instrumental perspective is deficient in several ways. As Bayertz states, every rational person must understand that showing solidarity does not only include the potential gains, but also includes the concrete costs of engagement counted in time, effort and risk. If a person was only striving to achieve the gains of the struggle, the rational choice would be to ignore the struggle and let others carry the weight and costs of it, while later enjoying the fruits of the action. The group has a common interest in achieving common goals, but the participants have no common interest in bearing the costs of the struggle.<sup>81</sup>

When solidarity is elevated to the centre of this study, it opens up the possibility of bringing to light the spectrum of motives which expressed solidarities have had throughout history. When it is made clear that solidarity is more than just a weapon of politics, which suggests that solidarity is something external inflicted upon a group of people, there is a sociological tradition which describes solidarity as being something residing within the self that is strongly coupled with altruism. This spectrum of solidarity, as described by Komter, indicates that people's motives lie scattered along an imaginary scale of altruism:

[1] from selflessly wanting to contribute to the well-being of other people, without any expectations of return, [2] to reciprocally exchanging help or helping as a compensation for being helped oneself, [3] to keeping a sharp eye on whether the debt balance is not pending too much to one side. [4] You are helping other people, knowing that you will be helped in return.<sup>82</sup>

Feelings of solidarity can, in other words, be understood on a scale moving from the self to a complete identification with others. The most narrow category is that of self interest, but the self is rarely completely isolated and shares most often some kind of identification with a group that shares some common interests. Solidarity clearly has several aims. Some people want to realise personal interests that are dependent upon a relationship with other people. For others, solidarity may be about gaining strength and power for a conflict with adversaries or simply be founded upon the wish to be part of a community with fellow human beings. Even a feeling of interdependence can function as a foundation for solidarity. Solidarity with others can also be based on political or religious affiliations. The other end of the scale constitutes a universal category which Stjernø describes as an altruism embracing all of humanity. Most importantly, each of these stages along the continuum from 'I' to

'all' have their own objectives and boundaries that prescribe who should be included or excluded from the expressed solidarity. Thus any investigation into social solidarity does not only include the relationship between 'I' and 'we', but also between 'we' and 'they'. The basic point to be made is that almost every kind of solidarity entails the elements of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>83</sup> This constitutes a central aspect of my subsequent analysis.

The realisation of the inclusive and exclusive character of social solidarity makes it clear that a not too rosy image of solidarity can be maintained as in order to achieve a number of common goals, the element of struggle is an imminent part of solidarity as the solidarity unity is often challenged by rival groups promoting their own goals and interests. This engagement against an adversary makes the negative aspects of solidarity also an integral part of the struggle. Solidarity includes, therefore, the element of conflict and, as Bayertz has highlighted, solidarity within groups should primarily be understood as a solidarity of struggle, (a *Kampfsolidarität*).<sup>84</sup> How is then difference or similarity made meaningful, worth sacrifices and emotional commitment, or how is the notion of 'they' effectively constructed, menacing enough to struggle against? A Marxist perspective would argue for an economic and structural formation of 'we-groups' based on class – but what about workers firstly identifying themselves as a part of a national solidarity, as for example Germans, or workers identifying themselves with fascism and thus placing them in direct opposition to the socialist conception of a transnational workers' community?

It is suggested here that the theoretical discussion of international solidarity must be integrally connected to the study of nationalism. As Föllmer (2005) emphasises, recent research on nationalism inspired by a cultural historical approach has in a significant way emphasised the role of nationalist movements, discourses and symbols for the formation of national identity and solidarity.<sup>85</sup> However, although most researchers on nationalism agree that national identity consists of the continuous reproduction of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions, it remains highly unclear who in reality is doing the reproduction and who decides what a nation's heritage comprises. Parallel to the idea of nationalism, the idea of class consciousness was developed during the nineteenth century stressing that social classes can fully exist only if developed to "full class consciousness".<sup>86</sup> How was this consciousness supposed to be brought about? The larger community of workers was indeed an imagined community-in-construction in the spirit of Benedict Anderson, as most of the members in the community could never

know the other people included. As in the case of nationalism which invented nations where they previously did not exist, so Marxism also invented class consciousness and international solidarity where it previously could not be found. The question is naturally not of false or unreal communities, but of how a community is being imagined.<sup>87</sup>

In an effort to analyse the formation of solidarity communities, Scholz (2008) defines a form of 'political solidarity' that arises in response to situations of injustice and oppression. As news of these injustices are spread, individuals make a conscious commitment to join forces with others to engage in struggle. Thus, it is this shared commitment to a cause that creates the bond of solidarity. Two distinctive aspects of this political solidarity are that it arises in opposition to atrocities and that it is striving for social change. However, in Scholz's model, political solidarity is based on the commitment to fight against oppression and not on the *shared* experience of being oppressed. In this respect, it differs from the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of solidarity which were based on the idea of uniting workers around the world, all of whom supposedly shared the experience of oppression under capitalism.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, a commitment to the struggle was a prerequisite for everyone involved in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign work. Although Scholz's model does not seem to apply to the workers themselves, her model of political solidarity could be used to analyse the intellectuals, academics and other luminaries who supported the *Arbeiterhilfe* during solidarity campaigns. They were clearly not a part of the oppressed groups, but they seem to have believed in a political solidarity that was striving for social change and which would end the oppression.

A method to study the creation of a group identities, is to look at the 'new mass politics' that was developed from the nineteenth century onwards which in Germany was combined with romanticism. This development gave prominence to symbols, myths, public festivals and rites which became significant ingredients in the German drama of politics. Most often 'identity politics' has been combined with the construction of the nation state, but as Mosse (1975) shows, these elements can also be analysed in the context of both the workers' movement and the construction of an international solidarity community.<sup>89</sup> Many studies have claimed that it was the national socialists (the Nazis) who 'invented' the use of aesthetics in mass politics during festivities and mass events. More recently, this image of national socialist supremacy in the field of mass politics during the Weimar Republic has been challenged by studies focusing on mass events commissioned by the Republic and in studies of the political cultures of the republican parties.<sup>90</sup> These

observations have directed attention to the fragmented political culture within the Weimar Republic, and especially to the culture of radicalism that was developed by the CP in Germany. Here, it would be immensely important to include organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* in any such analysis.<sup>91</sup>

The rising role of the mass media during the 1920s seems especially important in this context. In a comprehensive study, Baringhorst (1998) investigates the possibility of creating solidarity through modern mass media. Baringhorst highlights the production of social solidarity through the construction of symbols spread through 'a new type of public communication'. The prerequisite for international solidarity is that information about faraway atrocities is spread swiftly. Without news agencies and media involvement, the possible need for solidarity remains largely unknown. Here a special interest lies in the organisation of solidarity campaigns which are analysed through texts and visual representations of solidarity. In many cases it is precisely the campaign work which creates, mobilises and awakens international solidarity through the development of symbols, logos, illustrations and documentary pictures. Of the utmost importance is Baringhorst's emphasis on including both images and texts in all analyses. Persuasive campaigns are almost never constructed solely on text or image content alone, but combine the use of strong images and equally appealing slogans and solutions. Most importantly, appeals for solidarity are not described as being merely an instrumental means to raise material assistance, but play a pivotal role in the wider struggle over opinion and competition between rival symbols.<sup>92</sup>

Significantly, political art became one of the central pillars in the Bolshevik's efforts to mobilise the Russian population. After only one year in power, the Bolsheviks had created a propaganda apparatus that was producing significant new symbols, rituals and images which introduced 'class' as the pillar of social and political solidarity.<sup>93</sup>

Political campaigns have the natural aim to mobilise the public for a specific cause or political goal. However, in the case of solidarity campaigns, they could also be presented as a form of "social marketing". The combination of social issues and marketing was only established in Germany during the last quarter of the twentieth century, although the idea of social marketing had already been established in the USA during the 1960s. The question "why can't you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?" was apparently raised there as early as in 1952. For the interwar period, the central question remains unclear, namely what kind of visual strategies were used to create solidarity

between an existing we-group (for example the German workers) and far-off victims of oppression and injustice?<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the role of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was that of an active intermediary, who in many cases stood in front of great challenges in order to 'sell' its message of international solidarity. What made this even more challenging was that the international solidarity being conceptualised was not supposed to be limited to symbolical manifestations, but expected the realisation of practical, material support to those in hardship and need.

In order to achieve this it is here argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was, through its campaign work and cultural activities, attempting to create a comprehensive 'culture of international solidarity' in Weimar Germany. This culture of solidarity emphasises the significance of both old and new traditions of solidarity being created and renegotiated within the working class.<sup>95</sup> In this sense the *Arbeiterhilfe* re-articulated the socialist counter culture of the nineteenth century, but at the same time it was trying to introduce new elements to this culture, such as the role and significance of revolutionary Russia for the transnational workers' community, but above all to convince the workers of the world of the powerful force of solidarity and of the significance of mutuality based on their intertwined history and destiny as a part of the same transnational we-group. It was international solidarity that was supposed to 'free the world'.

# 2

## Awakening International Solidarity, 1921

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how international solidarity was articulated in the context of the famine in Soviet Russia in 1921. The chapter will, firstly, establish the origins of the Comintern's famine relief initiative which resulted in the establishment of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a workers' relief organisation for Soviet Russia. Secondly, the chapter will analyse how the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg attempted to 'awaken' a strong, unified international solidarity movement amongst the German workers. What were the *Arbeiterhilfe's* initial motives and how was its mission constructed through its articulations of solidarity? Who was included in this solidarity and what was its objective? How was international solidarity understood in relation to philanthropy and humanitarianism?

### **Famine in Soviet Russia!**

#### **Disclosing the disaster: Soviet Russia calls for assistance**

The Russian Volga region was vulnerable to droughts and frosts and had already experienced a poor harvest in 1920. Previous famines in the region had been partially overcome thanks to emergency stocks of grain but, after years of civil war and revolutionary turmoil, the old peasant economy was in ruins. In the summer of 1921, Soviet Russia stood in front of an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe that would lead to the death of two million people in the Volga region caused by the famine and raging typhus and cholera epidemics.<sup>1</sup>

It took, however, until the summer of 1921 before either the existence or the scope of the famine was officially admitted. Finally, on 26 June 1921, it was announced in the Russian newspaper *Pravda* that a horrific

famine had stricken the Volga countryside. However, it was not until 2 August 1921 that Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Georgi Chicherin, sent an official appeal for assistance to the heads of all governments.<sup>2</sup>

More than a month before the governmental – and politically embarrassing – plea for help to the Western, capitalist states, the Russian author Maxim Gorky had started devising, with the support of Lenin, the *All-Russian Public Committee to Help the Hungry* that included a number of Russian non-communist intellectuals, cultural figures and prominent Soviet officials. Consequently, during the following days, Gorky drafted and despatched an appeal 'To All Honest People' of the world to send bread and medicine to the starving Russian people. On 13 July, the appeal was received by the Norwegian explorer and humanitarian Fridtjov Nansen (1861–1930) and during the coming weeks the appeal found its way into the Western press and governments.<sup>3</sup>

On 22 July, Gorky's appeal reached the US Minister of Trade, and future president, Herbert Hoover (1874–1964) who the following day answered on behalf of the *American Relief Administration* (ARA) that they were prepared to initiate a relief campaign in Russia. Since 1917, Hoover had been in charge of the US Food Administration which, on the orders of Woodrow Wilson, had been transformed in 1918 into an agency for the relief and reconstruction of Europe. The motives behind Hoover's response remain unclear, but it appears that the ARA's mission was ultimately founded on the belief that famine relief in itself would help the Russians 'to come to their senses' and, once recovered from hunger, to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. Furthermore, Hoover motivated the relief campaign in the US Congress with the argument that it would be of service to American farmers as they would be able to get rid of their surplus harvest.<sup>4</sup> The Bolsheviks were extremely worried that foreign powers would make political demands on Soviet Russia under the pretext of humanitarianism. Anxiously, it was concluded that the minds of the peasants could be turned with phrases like "Look, here is bread and grain. Chase the Bolsheviks to the devil, and you will have enough to eat and live".<sup>5</sup> The Cheka even suspected that the ARA was concealing a sizeable food reserve in Vienna so that "in the event of a coup [it] could provide immediate support to the White government".<sup>6</sup>

Negotiations were held in Riga between the representatives of the ARA and the Soviet authorities, and an agreement was finally reached on 20 August. It was the beginning of a massive two-year famine relief campaign which, by the summer of 1922, was providing for over ten million people per day.<sup>7</sup> Because of the agreement with the ARA, Lenin



decided to dissolve Gorky's *Public Committee* and to send the Cheka in to make arrests and to expel all of its members, except Gorky and the Russian author V. G. Korolenko, from Moscow.<sup>8</sup> On the Soviet side the only remaining official famine committee was called the *Famine Relief Commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee*, which was headed by Lev (Leo) Kamenev.<sup>9</sup>

What often is forgotten is that at the same time that Gorky had sent his appeal to the world, a completely different initiative was developing in Moscow which was not based on philanthropy or humanitarianism, but on the idea of international solidarity.

### **Enter Münzenberg: a mission in Moscow**

Despite the critical development in Russia, the Comintern convened as planned for its Third World Congress in Moscow between 22 June and 12 July 1921. Münzenberg had visited Moscow for the first time in 1920 for the Second World Congress as a representative of the Youth International.<sup>10</sup> In a curious twist of fate, Münzenberg and hundreds of the world's revolutionaries were gathering in Soviet Russia in 1921 as news and rumours of the catastrophic famine were starting to spread both nationally and internationally.<sup>11</sup>

In Moscow, Münzenberg had learned from Lenin that he had no hopes for any famine relief from the capitalist nations, and that the only assistance Lenin expected would come from the international proletariat.<sup>12</sup> Although Stjernø suggests that Lenin was not concerned with solidarity in his writings, this does not necessarily imply that the concept of international solidarity did not constitute a central pillar in his political thinking.<sup>13</sup> In an 'Appeal to the International Proletariat' published on 2 August 1921, Lenin wrote bluntly: "We need help. The Soviet Republic of Workers and Peasants expects this help from the working people, the industrial workers and the small farmers. [...] Those who have suffered from capitalist suppression all their lives will understand the position of the workers and peasants of Russia, they will grasp or, guided by the instinct of working and exploited people, will sense the need to help the Soviet Republic [...]"<sup>14</sup> Although Lenin did not use the term 'solidarity', this appeal emphasises his belief in the existence of an international solidarity between the workers of the world that in the hour of a true crisis, could be powerfully awakened. He was clearly calling for international solidarity – not international humanitarianism.

Since 1921 the motive for the founding of the *Arbeiterhilfe* has remained a highly controversial question. McMeekin (2003) argues that Münzenberg's mission was to organise a "famine whitewash campaign",

the aim of which was to distract attention from the ARA's relief campaign. McMeekin's stance supports the idea that the creation of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was from its inception based on propaganda rather than relief. However, as I will show below, the first plans to establish a workers' famine relief in the West were articulated several weeks before Hoover sent his initial response to Gorky's appeal, leaving McMeekin's statement chronologically incorrect.<sup>15</sup>

A letter from Münzenberg to the Comintern's chairman, Zinoviev, written on 3 July 1921 in Moscow, reveals that Münzenberg had already been entrusted by then with the mission to organise the workers' relief in the West. According to the initial plan described in the letter, Münzenberg was to leave Moscow on that very day to do a tour of Europe to organise the campaign. Münzenberg was supposed to first stop on 10 July in Berlin, thereafter he would travel to Prague, Vienna and Rome, before heading back to Moscow via Berlin. Münzenberg stayed however in Moscow and it seems that he entrusted the German communist Wilhelm Koenen (1886–1963) to initially prepare the campaign in Berlin.<sup>16</sup> The unpublished protocols of the Small Bureau<sup>17</sup> of the *Executive Committee of the Communist International* (ECCI) show that on 19 July 1921 the first official deliberations for establishing a Comintern relief committee for the starving were held.<sup>18</sup>

Zinoviev sent on 23 July 1921 a top secret letter to the Comintern's clandestine *West European Secretariat* (WES) in Berlin informing it of the grave situation in Russia. This letter also signified a definite turning point in the Comintern's history. Since the establishment of the Comintern in 1919, the Western world had been overwhelmed by radicalism, but now, in the summer of 1921, Zinoviev concluded that the revolutionary enthusiasm amongst the workers was slowly being replaced by apathy and exhaustion. The Comintern was no longer an organisation of immediate action. The first and serious trial of the world proletariat was to rescue no less than 20 million Russian brothers from the claws of hunger. According to Zinoviev, the famine created circumstances in which those who had the means to provide the hungry with food, could also win over the allegiance of the Russian people. Zinoviev stressed that the workers of the West had to be made aware of what kind of damaging effect the fall of Soviet Russia would have on the world revolution: They had to realise the consequences if the "world bourgeois" was allowed to be victorious. The workers of Russia were waiting for help and the Central Committee (CC) of the Comintern regarded it as the absolute duty of the "proletariat of the West" to reach out with assistance.<sup>19</sup>

When the next ECCI meeting was held on 27 July, Gorky had just the previous day received Hoover's first response expressing the ARA's willingness to send food, clothing and medical supplies to Russia *if* an official request was sent from the Soviet government.<sup>20</sup> At the ECCI's meeting, the Polish revolutionary Karl Radek suggested that a specific relief organisation should be put in charge of the work abroad which would allow the Comintern greater freedom of action in foreign countries. Radek's suggestion constituted the first official mention of what would soon become the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin.<sup>21</sup> However, in order to explain why the Comintern as a revolutionary international should engage in famine relief, Radek presented the campaign as an opportunity to also open doors to the capitalist states which would otherwise have remained closed. It was during this meeting on 27 July 1921 that Münzenberg officially received the mission that would define the better part of his life. Zinoviev then officially proposed that Münzenberg should be in charge of the famine relief campaign as Münzenberg now had "more free time" than the other comrades. Münzenberg had indeed only a few days previously been 'released' from his position as the leader of the KIM.<sup>22</sup>

The next day, on 28 July 1921, Münzenberg sent a letter to Lenin in which he eagerly informed his comrade of the mission he had been entrusted with. Münzenberg wrote:

Yesterday I received an order from the Executive Committee which I find inspiring and the accomplishment of which I have made part of my life's work. The order concerns the organisation and joint leadership of the large-scale campaign for the starving in Russia which the Executive Committee has resolved to carry out. I immediately prepared a plan for the technical and organisational implementation, which I will submit to Comrade Kamenev at noon today. The most important aspect of the whole issue is that action will be immediate, [...].<sup>23</sup>

In an early outline of the famine relief campaign, clear political, practical and organisational directives were articulated. Most significantly, it was declared that the campaign should be led from the viewpoint of "practical international solidarity" and generate a feeling of sympathy amongst the masses for Soviet Russia.<sup>24</sup> Every detail of the campaign seems to have been planned – from the mass publication of brochures to securing daily visibility for the campaign in the communist press.<sup>25</sup>

On 1 August 1921, the Small Bureau of the ECCI convened for its last meeting before Münzenberg left for Berlin. It was decided that in order to develop and organise the commencing campaign, the work in Berlin was to be led by Münzenberg, "comrade Thomas" and a representative of the *German Communist Party* (KPD).<sup>26</sup> The real name of comrade Thomas was Jacob Reich (1886–1956), a Polish socialist who had made contact with Lenin's circle in Switzerland during the First World War. In 1921, Reich was none other than the Comintern's main man in the Western European countries as the leader of the clandestine WES, which had its headquarters in Berlin. Reich had been the ECCI's permanent representative in Western Europe since 1919 and, in principle, had the power to implement the Comintern's will in Germany. The main purpose of the WES was to function as a liaison centre between Berlin and Moscow and to secure money transfers from Moscow to the European communist parties (CPs), organisations and publishing houses, and was thus a natural supporter of the communists' activities in Germany.<sup>27</sup> In other words Münzenberg had from the very beginning the closest possible connection to the Comintern's apparatus in Germany and had reported and worked throughout the campaign in close collaboration with the Comintern leaders in Moscow and Berlin.

## **Launching international solidarity in the West**

### **A contested endeavour**

When Münzenberg commenced his work in Berlin in August 1921, several weeks had passed since the world had been made aware of the famine. Thus, long before Münzenberg's arrival in Berlin, immediate responses to the news of the famine had started to surface. On 23 July the KPD had already published an unsuccessful proposal to the Left-wing *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands* (KAPD), the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD), the *Independent Social Democratic Party* (USPD) and the *General Federation of German Trade Unions* (ADGB) for a joint famine relief campaign. The KPD's premature efforts were turned down by the other parties within a week, leaving the KPD the only supporter of a joint workers' relief.<sup>28</sup>

The news of the famine was on the lips of all of the socialist parties and organisations in Europe. On 3 August, for example, the *Swedish Social Democratic Party* suggested to the Second International, which in 1921 was known as the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) with its bureau in London, that a campaign for the starving should be

commenced. On the same day, the *Dutch Social Democratic Labour Party* asked the secretary of the LSI in London, Ramsay MacDonald, to ensure that the LSI “immediately take measures for an international action to help famine of Russia”.<sup>29</sup> The LSI then urged its member parties to take action for the Russian famine stating that “[...] our socialist principles as well as our humanity urge us to help”, to try in a sense to motivate the action through both solidarity and charity.<sup>30</sup> There was, however, general scepticism about the very idea of a separate workers’ relief.

A representative of the Red Cross stated, for example, at a famine relief meeting in Berlin on 3 August, that true famine relief could only be achieved if it encompassed the whole German nation. Curiously, the Red Cross emphasised the significance of initiating a relief campaign for Russia, but first only as a measure against a cholera epidemic which could spread from Russia to Germany and, only secondly, because the German nation could not stand aside while the whole cultural world was engaged in the struggle against the famine.<sup>31</sup>

The German authorities were closely monitoring the increasingly unstable situation in Soviet Russia. The authorities were particularly concerned about the recurring rumours that, due to the famine crisis, the Comintern itself was being moved to Berlin. This speculation gained strength by reports of an ever increasing flood of Russian agents, agitators and high-ranking Soviet commissars to Germany.<sup>32</sup> On 5 August, the German police were informed of a secret memo that the KPD had apparently received from Russia. In this memo, it was claimed that about 100 officials from Soviet Russia were on their way to Berlin to organise the Russian famine relief. The German security services’ concerns were heightened further by the apparent shift in Soviet Russia’s intelligence tactics which placed more emphasis on the Soviet trade delegations in Western Europe being used to secretly bring in ‘Bolshevik propaganda’ and ‘agitators’ under the pretext of international trade.<sup>33</sup> This shift was a consequence of a Russo-German trade agreement signed on 6 May 1921 which provided extra-territorial rights to members of the Russian trade delegation.<sup>34</sup> At the time Berlin represented Soviet Russia’s doorway to the rest of the world, and it established a number of bureaus and offices for various purposes all around the city. Hundreds of thousands of Russian émigrés had also arrived in Europe through Berlin after the First World War, some only staying a while, while others stayed and became a part of the lively cultural and political life of Russian Berlin.<sup>35</sup> The foundation of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin enhanced even further these intense transnational entanglements between Germany and Russia.

Lastly, on 12 August the *Arbeiterhilfe* was provisionally inaugurated in Berlin as the *Auslandskomitee zur Organisierung der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Rußland* (Foreign Committee for the Organising of Workers' Relief for the Starving in Russia).<sup>36</sup> At this initial stage, the provisional *Arbeiterhilfe* consisted of an all-communist leadership including Münzenberg, Wilhelm Koenen, Clara Zetkin, Adolf Hoffmann and an unnamed Russian living illegally in Germany, perhaps meaning Jakob Reich of the WES.<sup>37</sup> Upon Münzenberg's arrival in Berlin, 10 or 11 August, he discovered to his dismay that there had been some fault in the communication channels between Moscow and Berlin. For example, a manifesto on the famine relief with a corresponding supplement which had been sent before his departure from Moscow had not yet reached Berlin. Even Reich at the WES complained to Moscow on 19 and 25 August, that not a scrap of material for the *Arbeiterhilfe* had arrived in Berlin.<sup>38</sup> Under such conditions, the notion of direct and immediate 'control' by the Comintern over Münzenberg in Berlin is highly doubtful. Control was only possible in hindsight and allowed a great deal of partially forced independence to Münzenberg when launching the campaign.

### **Münzenberg in German and international negotiations**

The first major effort to bring about an international united relief effort took place on 14 August in Berlin when Münzenberg and Koenen had a meeting with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), also known as the Amsterdam International. This meeting represented a devastating start both for the *Arbeiterhilfe* and for Münzenberg personally. While Münzenberg was still making his way from Moscow to Berlin, the IFTU had decided to convene an international conference in Berlin in order to discuss the Russian famine on 13 and 14 August at the trade union house in Berlin.<sup>39</sup>

By the time Münzenberg and Koenen had their meeting with the IFTU's two General Secretaries Edo Fimmen (1881–1941) and Jan Oudegeest (1870–1950) and the IFTU's two Vice-Presidents Léon Jouhaux (1879–1954) and Corneel Mertens (1880–1951), the IFTU had already committed to its own relief plan. It had decided to initiate a vast international campaign for the famine in Russia and to organise the sending of their aid through the Red Cross. These resolutions were prominently printed on the cover of *Vorwärts* the following day.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, a meeting between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IFTU did take place at the luxurious Hotel Baltic at 120/121 Invalidenstraße, located next to the *Stettiner Bahnhof*. Münzenberg introduced himself

to those assembled as the representative of the Soviet government's *Famine Relief Commission* in Western Europe which, together with the Comintern, had decided to set up an international proletarian organisation for famine relief.<sup>41</sup>

Münzenberg assured the IFTU that the provisionally founded *Arbeiterhilfe* had an all-communist leadership only for the time being and that a new international leadership consisting of representatives of all political parties, trade unions and internationals would be elected as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* new leadership as soon as possible. Münzenberg hoped that the IFTU would call an international conference for all unions, parties and internationals in order to form an international united workers' famine relief committee. This central committee would then organise, lead and control the campaign and decide how the money raised was to be spent. However, Münzenberg's scheme fell flat. Oudegeest replied immediately that the IFTU was unwilling to collaborate with other political parties, the Second International (LSI), the Vienna International or the Comintern. A collaboration in the form of Münzenberg's envisaged united committee was simply out of the question for the IFTU, although Oudegeest noted provocatively that they would naturally welcome donations from all of these organisations to the IFTU's own famine relief campaign.<sup>42</sup>

Koenen elaborated further on the nature of the campaign and explained to the IFTU that the communists envisaged the formation of a very broad famine relief committee which would include all representatives of the Left in a "true proletarian solidarity demonstration" for Soviet Russia. Fimmen was clearly very reluctant to collaborate with the communists as, in his opinion, they had in most cases only denounced the IFTU as being a traitor to the working class. He concluded that a kind of united front would perhaps look good outwardly, but what would then happen behind the scenes was a totally different matter. In a bitterly ironic tone, Fimmen asked Münzenberg and Koenen why the communists had earlier sabotaged the international proletarian missions headed by the IFTU in Austria and Hungary yet now, when it concerned Soviet Russia, the communists readily turned to the IFTU? The principal problem was a lack of trust. As Oudegeest ultimately stated, even if the IFTU did agree to cooperate, any agreement had to be based on a mutual understanding. Further even if the IFTU did come to such an understanding with Münzenberg and Koenen, what were the guarantees that others such as Zinoviev, the chairman of the Comintern; Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs or Lozovsky, the secretary-general of the *Red International of Labour Unions* (Profintern) would honour any

such understanding or agreement? The tense meeting at the Hotel Baltic broke up without any result.<sup>43</sup>

The deadlock was most clearly marked in a later press report in which the IFTU expressed its hopes that its own relief campaign would present itself as “proof of proletarian solidarity” to Zinoviev and the Comintern. “No better answer can be given to the Communist International than to put to shame their dispicable [sic] mistrust by contributing liberally to the relief fund of the Amsterdam International”.<sup>44</sup> Thus, due to Münzenberg’s late arrival in Berlin, his call for unification and centralisation of the workers’ international relief could be presented in *Vorwärts* as an attempt to split the international relief campaign now headed by the IFTU. *Vorwärts* shed doubt on Münzenberg’s initiative and stressed to its readers that any money flows to the “purely communist committee” would be impossible to monitor, and it suspected that it was most likely that any funds collected by the communists would never reach Soviet Russia but would in fact be used as a “relief mission” for the bankrupt KPD.<sup>45</sup> In the next day’s issue of *Vorwärts* the onslaught against Münzenberg continued:

The Communist Party still does not want to understand that aid to Russia is not a Party issue. [...] We want very much to help the Russians, despite all differences of political conviction, but we do not want the German workers’ money to take that problematical detour via Communist Party accounts. [...] [The communists] try to organise the class struggle against typhoid fever and cholera. What nonsense. We can only repeat that German workers will play no part in such stupidities.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, *Vorwärts* was actively using Gorky’s initial appeal and the involvement of the Red Cross in Russia against Münzenberg’s *Arbeiterhilfe* and the communists who, according to *Vorwärts*, wanted to be more Leninist than Lenin himself in their “class war against epidemics”. On the social democratic side there was no will to cooperate, only a will to ridicule the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s international solidarity efforts by eroding the aspect of class and class solidarity which distinguished the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s solidarity campaign from the humanitarian initiatives.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, if the famine had taken place in any other country in the world, the social democrats would unquestionably have been right but, as the famine was taking place in a country which claimed to be the first workers’ republic heading the world revolution against world capitalism, it becomes difficult to disregard the underlying politics of the famine relief and the issue of class. It



was perhaps the first time in history that international humanitarianism and international class politics had been linked to such a degree and occupied such a prominent place in the public debate.

Münzenberg summarised the deadlocked situation in the *Rote Fahne* on 19 August, stating that the non-communists were unwilling to distribute their famine relief funds through a committee that was mainly represented by communists and, equally, the communist organisations were unwilling to hand over their funds to organisations without communist representation in the administration.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the IFTU's refusal to cooperate, Münzenberg sent an invitation to the LSI in London for an international famine relief conference scheduled for 30 August in Berlin. It was circulated amongst the members of the LSI's Executive for discussion and on 18 August Ramsay MacDonald initially accepted Münzenberg's invitation and suggested to the co-chairman of the SPD, Otto Wels (1873–1939), that he would represent the LSI at the meeting in Berlin. MacDonald was clearly at this point not aware of the acrimonious debates on famine relief taking place in Germany.<sup>49</sup>

Wels, known to harbour a strong antipathy towards radicals and communists, advised strongly against MacDonald's idea and suggested instead that the LSI should cooperate with the Red Cross.<sup>50</sup> Wels stressed that it was not in the LSI's interests to collaborate with the *Arbeiterhilfe* as, in his opinion, Münzenberg was simply heading a "communist manoeuvre to bring the relief work under communist control". Wels explained to MacDonald: "Our experience in Germany has been of the worst kind. The name of the Secretary, Münzenberg, in itself would be sufficient to make us refuse co-operation".<sup>51</sup>

Both MacDonald and Troelstra within the LSI's Executive were in favour of sending a representative to the meeting, but the LSI's stance was eventually sealed as the Swedish and German social democrats opposed relief efforts on a "political basis" and rejected the presence of the LSI in Berlin "in very strong terms".<sup>52</sup> A historic conference with the representatives of the LSI and the Comintern was closer than ever.

The international conference scheduled for the three internationals and the two trade union internationals on 30 August never took place, as only the Comintern and the Profintern had 'replied' to Münzenberg's call.<sup>53</sup> An international conference was instead organised on 12 September. Under Münzenberg's leadership, representatives from England, France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland gathered in Berlin. The sorry conclusion of this conference was, however, that almost nowhere had the

*Arbeiterhilfe* managed by them to establish united front committees with other labour organisations. Instead separate and partially competing fundraising committees had been organised.<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, the Comintern admitted that its attempt to build a united front consisting of all workers' organisations had failed. The aim of the Comintern's famine relief initiative was instead redirected to unite workers "over the heads of the central organisations and parties", reminiscent of its later tactic of forming a united front 'from below'.<sup>55</sup>

Münzenberg was, however, reluctant to abandon the idea of a united relief effort by all of the internationals. Despite the Comintern's decisions in September to abandon the idea of a collaboration with the other Internationals, Münzenberg sent a letter on 10 October to Ramsay MacDonald in London. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Münzenberg did not once refer to the idea of solidarity in his letter. Instead, Münzenberg wrote that "all those who love their fellow men should immediately combine to exert all their strength in organising a giant relief action".<sup>56</sup> He continued emphatically:

The latest news from Russia makes it almost certain that millions will die, the only question being the possibility of lessening as far as possible the number of victims. On purely humanitarian grounds, it is therefore the duty of all of us to delay no longer, to hesitate no longer, to place no further trust in help from governments or capitalists, but to immediately, with all our strength, organise a direct, non-political relief campaign for Russia.<sup>57</sup>

Curiously, Münzenberg called here for a united workers' relief based on humanitarianism, but which was to be carried by the working class. He further declared to MacDonald that "politics should not a moment divide us" and he was especially hopeful that British workers could be engaged in the famine relief campaign as, unlike the central European workers, they were financially capable of assisting. Münzenberg concluded that he was certain that "[i]n this work of mercy" he trusted that they would choose to cooperate with the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>58</sup> However, MacDonald once again rejected Münzenberg's offer and chose to forward British aid through the IFTU.<sup>59</sup>

The disappointing efforts to form a united front with the German and international socialist organisations soon resulted in an organisational change within the Comintern's famine relief apparatus. The provisional leadership that had only been meant to be in charge until the merger with other organisations in a joint committee was now installed

as the permanent leadership of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, a new central commission for the relief campaign was set up which officially comprised two departments: one based in Berlin and the other in Moscow. In Berlin, the commission was headed by Chairwoman Clara Zetkin, Vice-Chairman Walter Stöcker and Secretary Münzenberg. In addition, Ernst Reuter-Friesland (1889–1953), Koenen and one other unnamed representative of the KPD were elected as members of the Berlin commission. It was added that the Berlin commission had wide-ranging authority to act on behalf of Moscow.<sup>61</sup> The Berlin office, headed by Münzenberg, was in effect provided with a relatively free hand on the condition that Münzenberg continuously reported to Moscow. Powers and authority were transferred to Münzenberg's Berlin commission which was now, along with both the national CPs and the Profintern, responsible for the creation of national relief committees.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the central committees of all CPs were informed that it was Münzenberg's office in Berlin that was in charge of the entire campaign in the Western world.<sup>63</sup>

### **Solidarity from artists and intellectuals**

One of the most significant ways to mobilise popular support for the famine relief campaign was to secure the support of sympathising intellectuals and artists. On 19 August 1921, just two days after the founding of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s German national section, the *Deutsche Künstlerhilfe* (*German Artists' Relief*) was established in Berlin. It constituted Münzenberg's first attempt to win support for the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s campaign through the active support of artists and intellectuals. All artists, irrespective of their political party affiliations, were encouraged to put their works on display for the benefit of the starving in Russia. The *Künstlerhilfe* was headed by Käthe Kollwitz, Arthur Holitscher, Georg Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde and Max Barthel.<sup>64</sup>

On 29 August 1921, the *Arbeiterhilfe* published its first famine relief appeal which was supplemented with a list of well-known supporters of the *Arbeiterhilfe* from the world of politics, art and science. The German supporters included amongst others Albert Einstein, Georg Grosz, Käthe Kollwitz, Theodor Liebknecht (USPD), and Alfons Paquet.<sup>65</sup> Both Arthur Holitscher and Käthe Kollwitz were active in mobilising support amongst the artists and intellectuals. It was Holitscher who had, on 16 August 1921, asked Albert Einstein for permission to use his name in support of the campaign. In Holitscher's letter to Einstein he explained that they were looking for well-known people both within and outside the KPD who had a "communist mind-set". Holitscher distinguished their

initiative from that of the Red Cross which, according to Holitscher, was only concerned with assisting the Russian people, whereas the communist initiative also wanted to support Soviet Russia itself. Einstein initially agreed to lend his name to the *Arbeiterhilfe* but, in early September, requested that his name be removed from the list of supporters as he had been warned of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* political character by a "competent" socialist acquaintance. Münzenberg agreed to Einstein's request and removed his name from the list of supporters.<sup>66</sup> Einstein would, however, return as a supporter of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* "Hunger in Germany" campaign launched in 1923. Other international supporters included on 29 August 1921 the Danish author Andersen Nexø (1869–1954); the mayor of Stockholm, Karl Lindhagen (1860–1946); the British author Bernhard Shaw (1856–1950); the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1921, Anatole France (1844–1924); the French communist author Henri Barbusse (1873–1935); the Swiss scientist and sexologist Prof. Auguste Forel (1848–1931); the Swiss poet Otto Volkart (1880–1960); and the Austrian Marxist sociologist Dr. Carl Grünberg (1861–1940).<sup>67</sup>

Although the *Vorwärts* opposed the *Arbeiterhilfe*, it published an appeal by the *Künstlerhilfe* on 10 October. It was aimed at all "artists and intellectuals" calling for the support of all authors, artists, scientists and intellectuals. Erwin Piscator, who was later a pioneering force in the development of political theatre in Germany, had by then been elected the secretary of the *Künstlerhilfe*. Piscator had, since 1918, been involved in the Berlin Dada group which included the artists Georg Grosz and John Heartfield, both of whom were to become significant cultural figures in the history of the interwar period.<sup>68</sup> Piscator later wrote that the *Künstlerhilfe's* aim had from the beginning been to raise awareness for the Russian famine relief amongst the German bourgeois, artists, scholars and authors. However, according to Piscator, the bourgeois was quickly fatigued by the famine news from Russia and more or less lost all interest in the matter. The *Künstlerhilfe* also experienced problems with the artists, many of whom were exceedingly difficult to win over to the cause of unpaid relief work.<sup>69</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* also managed to involve the artist Heinrich Vogeler (1872–1942), who also provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with original drawings which were then duplicated and signed by the artists.<sup>70</sup> Prior to the First World War, Vogeler had been one of the leading German artists of the Jugend style. He had been a volunteer in the German army in 1914, but had turned against the war in 1917. After having sent an appeal for peace to the German *Kaiser* in 1918, he had been detained in a mental institution. In 1921, Vogeler was not a member of the KPD but was active

in various revolutionary proletarian cultural organisations in Berlin.<sup>71</sup> In a sense, Vogeler exemplified a typical sympathiser who despite his belief in international solidarity and support of revolutionary Russia was unwilling to carry the party membership book.

One of the major campaign materials produced by the *Arbeiterhilfe* was an illustrated booklet presenting artwork by Georg Grosz and Käthe Kollwitz; poems and songs translated by Max Barthel; and an assortment of texts by Maxim Gorky, Arthur Holitscher, Franz Jung, Arthur Ramson, John Reed, Alfons Paquet and Lenin. For example Grosz was, at that time, a member of the KPD, although he soon resigned after having visited Soviet Russia in 1922 as he came to oppose every form of dictatorship.<sup>72</sup>

One of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* greatest successes was that Käthe Kollwitz agreed to produce an original lithograph as a campaign poster.<sup>73</sup> On 12 September, Kollwitz wrote in her diary that she was “working with the communists” against the famine in Soviet Russia. She noted contently that she had produced a poster of a falling man who was surrounded by helping hands that were reaching out towards him. “It is good – Thank God!” Kollwitz concluded in her diary.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, it became one of Kollwitz’s most famous lithographs. In a later autobiographical text, Kollwitz explained again that, in the beginning of the 1920s, she was more attracted to the communists than to the social democrats. However, Kollwitz had turned down an invitation to become a member of the KPD, apparently because of her objections towards the KPD’s tactics.<sup>75</sup>

## Initial articulations of international solidarity

The last part of the chapter will analyse the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of solidarity. We will first look at how the *Arbeiterhilfe* constructed ‘the other’ in relation to international workers’ solidarity and humanitarianism. Second, we will analyse the role of ‘spontaneity’ and emotional responses to the famine victims and Soviet Russia, including the role of women as carriers of the transnational solidarity community. Lastly, the character of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign is analysed through the comparison of symbolical solidarity and practical, material assistance.

### Inclusion and exclusion – solidarity or humanitarianism?

A central element in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of international solidarity was the creation of a significant other in the shape of world

imperialism that was prepared to abuse the crisis in Russia in order to bring the Bolshevik revolution to its end. The realisation of this scandalous 'fact' was expected to ignite a raging fire in the hearts of all communists, of all proletarian revolutionaries and of all honest workers, and to convince them of the necessity to sacrifice all they had left, to give their last strength to the campaign to save Soviet Russia from destruction, to form a united 'we' of the workers of the world.<sup>76</sup> The message of international solidarity was, therefore, on the one side constructed on the basis of a 'we', which included all workers, men and women of the world irrespective of their political stance as well as the 'workers' republic': Soviet Russia. The other side of the message was constructed on the basis of an antagonist 'they', which included 'capitalists', 'imperialists' and the 'bourgeois governments' of the world.<sup>77</sup>

In a letter sent on 21 September to the leaders of the CPs in the West, the communists were explicitly instructed by Münzenberg to construct a narrative of a possible "imperialist intervention" in connection with the famine in Soviet Russia in order to motivate the masses to sacrifice their time and energy for Russia. If the workers erroneously believed that their sacrifices were unnecessary and sufficient relief was already being provided by the Western governments, it would have devastating consequences for the workers' relief initiative.<sup>78</sup>

Here the boundaries of solidarity were not in any way clearly drawn between the communists and other workers but were based on a broad class unity, a workers' international solidarity. The initial articulations of solidarity seem to be at odds with the definition provided by Stjernø (2005). As discussed earlier, Stjernø defines the Marxist-Leninist concept of solidarity as being confined to the "conscious part of the working class", based on a "very strong" collective orientation and a "very restricted" inclusiveness. Looking at both the *Arbeiterhilfe's* and the Comintern's first solidarity appeals in 1921, it seems that either the communist movement was not utilising a communist concept of solidarity, or alternatively, that the interwar communist concept of solidarity is in need of a significant redefinition on the basis of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>79</sup> In their appeals, party affiliation seems to be insignificant, whereas the important factor is the common working class' sense of belonging and shared experience of oppression. It is thereby shown that there was not only one established Marxist-Leninist concept of solidarity during the interwar period, but that several parallel ideas on international solidarity were articulated by the communist movement which since then have been overlooked and suppressed by the victorious interpretation endorsed by Stalin.

In an effort to mobilise support in Germany, the Russians were described as 'brothers' who were in urgent need of the workers' international solidarity; brothers with whom the German workers could identify themselves as they too had also only recently survived war, hunger and agony.<sup>80</sup> Already in the first draft appeal formulated by Münzenberg on 30 July 1921, Soviet Russia's long struggle and great suffering in the name of the whole international proletariat was emphasised. It dramatically proclaimed:

Proletarians of the world! Do not forget the blood of the Russian workers and peasants that was spilt for you! Do not forget the starvation that the Russian people have suffered for three long years for the common cause of the world proletariat! Do not forget that the counter-revolutionary attacks against Soviet Russia are attacks against you! [...] The time has come when we shall see who carries the word of international proletarian solidarity in their hearts and for whom it is truth and action! [...] <sup>81</sup>

Most significantly, this message of international solidarity emphasised its reciprocal quality: the Russian workers had allegedly been unselfishly fighting for the common causes of the international proletariat. Now the time had come to bring international solidarity to life in both Europe and the world through the common action of the workers.

A slightly amended version of this appeal added that it was well-known that the workers of the world did not live with a huge surplus of bread. Nevertheless, the Comintern expressed conviction that when there was sorrow within the family of the workers, then even the most distant workers would assist to a higher degree than the rich, who would probably merely succumb to philanthropy.<sup>82</sup> Hence a clear line was drawn between the workers' unconditional solidarity on the one hand and capitalist philanthropy on the other. As Bayertz (1998) points out, solidarity implies equality between the parts involved, a distinct element of reciprocity between the giver and the receiver which is absent in the case of charity. This element of reciprocity implies an expectation of assistance in times of hardship and oppression, and if the suffering are deprived of aid, this means that the code of solidarity has been broken. In a sense the line between charity and solidarity is clear, but on the other hand it becomes highly problematic when one is urged to show solidarity towards victims of natural calamities or famine victims. Bayertz suggests, therefore, that the term 'solidarity' should be restricted to cases when material or symbolic assistance is given to people fighting

for their rights against oppression, but not in cases of natural catastrophes.<sup>83</sup> As the analysis of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign for Soviet Russia shows, it was the explicit politicising of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* relief activities and the famine itself that turned its campaign into a significant case where the term 'solidarity' could be used towards famine victims, without completely erasing the distinction between charity and solidarity.

Despite the ARA's relief operation in Russia, no governmental relief operations were organised by England or France. Their lack of assistance for Soviet Russia was contrasted by Münzenberg with the solidarity of class brothers who, in his view, proved the accuracy of the old proverb stating that in the end it was only the poor who truly had the ability to assist other poor people. Only members in the transnational community of oppressed peoples could really fathom what it meant to be a part of this solidarity community.<sup>84</sup>

In Münzenberg's opinion, the dream of idealist philanthropists such as Fridtjov Nansen to organise a vast famine relief campaign through the bourgeois countries was finally laid to rest as the *League of Nations* had decided against any famine relief initiative at all. Indeed, Nansen had addressed the second assembly of the *League* earlier in September and requested that £30 million be allocated for famine relief as he believed that no private charity or independent organisation could remedy the enormous crisis on its own. Nansen's pleas had been answered with suspicion and even with hostility by those who perceived the famine more as a divine intervention against the Bolsheviks than as a humanitarian crisis worth international action. According to Walters' (1967) and Scott (1974), Nansen's appeals were evaded by the postponement of the issue to a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Allies in October, which then resulted in the *League's* refusal to offer Soviet Russia any relief. It was in this context that Münzenberg highlighted the despicable stance of the bourgeois nations which had invested billions of dollars on the Western military intervention during the Russian Civil War. Due to the European powers' unwillingness to assist the starving, it became rather easy to depict them as an evil 'other', and enhanced the role of the workers in a common struggle against injustice and oppression. Münzenberg explicitly emphasised that the workers should aid the famine victims with their "deepest, purest feeling of solidarity".<sup>85</sup> It was an international solidarity perceived to be purer and more authentic, expressed within the transnational 'we-group' based on reciprocity. In stark contrast, humanitarianism and charity were presented as a flimsy mask that would soon reveal the true countenance of the



'other'. Even Lenin believed that only workers' international solidarity came without strings to Soviet Russia.<sup>86</sup> From this perspective, humanitarianism could become a lethal weapon of the 'other' and in a sense the perspective represented a kind of communist version of the front organisation perspective, where 'innocent' humanitarianism allegedly concealed the disguised delivery of the counter-revolutionary forces and white terror.

### A passionate workers' solidarity?

One of the most central building blocks of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign was the element of spontaneity amongst the world's workers. Workers were supposedly not only spontaneous in their expressions of solidarity, but also spontaneous in their readiness to sacrifice their own livelihoods in the name of solidarity. The *Arbeiterhilfe* described on 19 August the character of this heroism:

Hundreds of thousands of workers, who barely earn enough themselves to live, have sacrificed part of their meagre income, frequently even their entire earnings for a day. Others work overtime for days or even weeks and donate the proceeds or products of this work to the relief campaign. Others contribute clothes, shoes and utensils from what little they have. Women bring their only jewellery. Children empty their savings boxes.<sup>87</sup>

In a subsequent appeal signed by Münzenberg, he expressed his conviction that the feeling of solidarity would motivate the whole working class to action once they realised that their brothers, made of the same flesh and blood, were facing a ghastly death in Russia. It was this realisation which had, according to Münzenberg ignited the spontaneous solidarity already expressed amongst the workers. Münzenberg further described the feeling of solidarity as being something instinctive, and he was certain that the masses would instinctively feel that the question of hunger was intimately connected with the future existence of Soviet Russia. Münzenberg thereafter articulated one of his main arguments regarding worker solidarity: irrespective of how high the spontaneous waves of solidarity were amongst the masses, they would never lead to true success until this spontaneous solidarity was centrally organised and realised.<sup>88</sup> Workers' solidarity was perceived as instinctive and passionate, but if this was to be translated into actual practical assistance, an international intermediary in the form of an international relief organisation was needed.

News of the devastating crisis in Soviet Russia apparently inspired a passionate local engagement in the name of international solidarity. A party member from Hamburg, Gustav Gundelach (1888–1962), recollected later how he and his wife made room in their apartment so that working-class women could sew clothes for the famine victims. Evidently, both women of the party and politically non-committed women gave their time to provide the *Arbeiterhilfe* with clothes.<sup>89</sup> The sewing room (*Nähstube*) was a distinct female space of international solidarity that was created during the *Arbeiterhilfe's* 1921 campaign. Such rooms provided the opportunity for women to transform old clothes into new garments. In the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin*, one sewing room of this kind is described as a space where allegedly enthusiastic working-class women could make a contribution of their own. The sewing room was described with warmth and, although everyone realised that these products were only a small contribution to the vast needs of Soviet Russia, it was highlighted that every single piece of clothing would still protect one shivering body from the cold, and every item of children's clothing would be met with jubilation. Naturally, the aim of such places was not only to sew but also to make the sewing room a place for a united front for the famine in Russia: to make women realise that Soviet Russia needed them and that they indeed also needed Soviet Russia.<sup>90</sup>

Gundelach recalled later the enchanting day when the Russian comrade Käthe Pohl visited Hamburg and saw the ready piles of children's and babies' clothes made by the local women. Tears had rolled down her cheeks as she had emotionally clasped their hands and warmly exclaimed how the mothers in St. Petersburg would be filled with joy at the sight of these packages.<sup>91</sup> Was this perhaps the heart and essence of the practical workers' international solidarity which for so long has been lost when analysing the *Arbeiterhilfe* from the front organisation perspective? To express one's solidarity in practical terms to others suffering misery seems to be an essential aspect of international solidarity which is hereby brought back into the fold of historical analysis. This human aspect, in the form of a fundamental social solidarity, must be included as a central part of the 'spectrum' of solidarity and the analysis of international solidarity campaigns. Solidarity was not just a weapon, but something that inspired passionate engagement with those suffering hardship, hunger or oppression.

The women's contribution to this practical solidarity work was substantial, and allegedly the German working-class women eagerly expressed their solidarity during the autumn of 1921. In the communist press it was even declared that not even the fiercest anti-Bolshevik propaganda could suppress the "dormant feeling of solidarity within the

proletariat".<sup>92</sup> This dormant feeling of solidarity was perceived as being an innate part of every worker and was just waiting to be awakened by an honest cry for solidarity. Here, solidarity was not only perceived as something that was created through struggle, but was also defined as a slumbering ever-present force, only waiting to be empowered, to be activated in the hour of crisis. In essence, this became the *Arbeiterhilfe's* core mission: to turn international solidarity into an active force.

Although the documentation shows that in many cases it was the women who were engaged in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work in Germany, this view is not supported by its illustrations. In one of the first illustrations published in the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin*, its message of solidarity is in fact provided with clearly gender-specific roles. The two illustrations below were printed next to each other, although independently, without any corresponding article. As the illustrations show, the misery and despair in Soviet Russia is portrayed through the image of a frail woman who is not even able to take care of her own child, symbolising the most abject level of destitution.

The second picture (*Die Hilfe* (The Assistance)) illustrates how active international solidarity between Soviet Russia and the workers of the West was carried out by able-bodied men who grasped each other's hands over the heads of a group of baffled capitalists. International solidarity is here most clearly illustrated as a form of international, class-based brotherhood.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, one could suggest that, although most of the written reports and stories of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* practical solidarity work emphasised the efforts of women as the constructors of practical international solidarity, the stereotypical image of international solidarity was male-centred and provided a picture of solidarity as the domain of active, strong men who were assisting weaker women. Notably, these two illustrations not only prove the absence of women when constructing solidarity, but also show the absence of Russian men in the famine-stricken area, perhaps elevating the need for European men to engage in active solidarity work. The basic roles expressed in these two illustrations remained in principle in place until the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign work in the mid-1920s, when working-class women were lastly turned into active agents of international solidarity, also in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* visual representations.

### **Solidarity for the children of Russia**

The plight of the children in Russia was a critical aspect of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign and, moreover, it provided a specific, emotionally charged character to the campaign. Their plight became a dominant

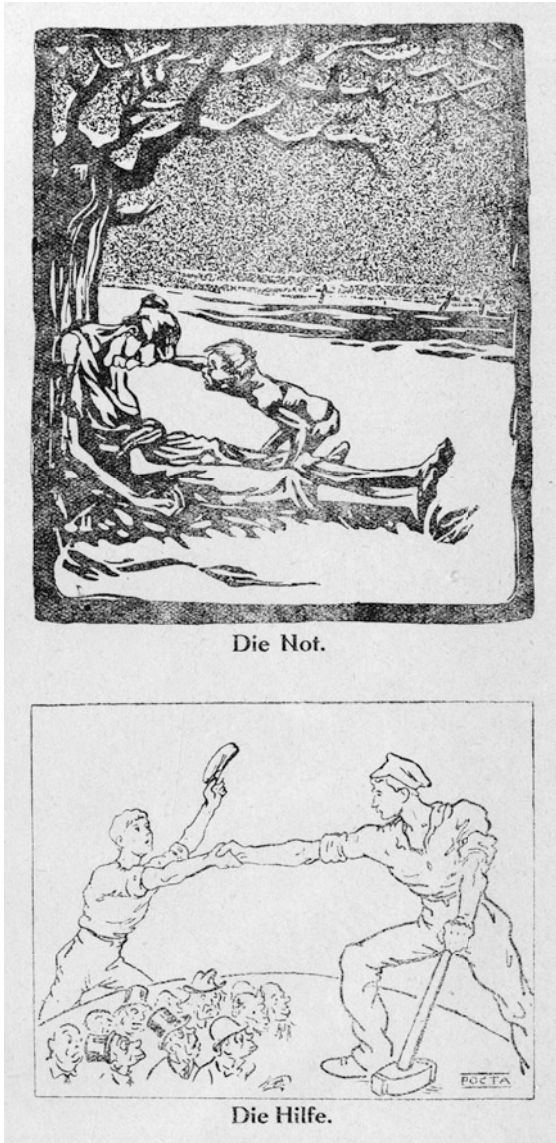


Figure 2.1 'Die Not (The Need)' – 'Die Hilfe (The Assistance)' (1921)

Source: *Bulletin des Auslandskomitees zur Organisation der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Rußland* 35 (29.12.1921).

theme in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publications and it was emphasised that during a famine it was the children who were the first to suffer.<sup>94</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* also used its *Bulletin* to report examples of solidarity already carried out by ordinary German workers. One of these stories tells of a barefoot boy who came to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* German office with a package under his arm. There he asked if this was the place where one could give things to the Russian children? The boy then offered his old shirt and hat that he had outgrown as well as a sewing kit that he had bought as he had heard from his father that such things were needed in Russia. According to the story, the boy had also hidden a stack of decals in the pocket of his old shirt. The representatives of the *Arbeiterhilfe* had left the decals in the pocket as a gift from a German brother, waiting to be discovered by another joyful "small Russian proletarian". The boy's actions were presented as another example of proletarian assistance, as a kind of illustration of the proletarian repertoires of solidarity, which clearly also aimed to inspire and motivate others to give.<sup>95</sup>

A special characteristic of the campaign was that working-class children were urged to actively help the children of Soviet Russia. In this spirit, the *Arbeiterhilfe* engaged a number of 'communist' children's groups in order to collect funds in Germany. The Soviet government also provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with a property in Chelyabinsk (Tscheljabinsk) in the Ural mountains, close to the present-day Russian border with Kazakhstan, which could cater about 200 children. This would become the Karl Liebknecht–Rosa Luxemburg orphanage, which was the first of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian orphanages.<sup>96</sup>

However, as Münzenberg stated during a closed conference in Berlin on 5 December, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* main duty was to provide food to Russia's starving people irrespective of their age. Thus, in Münzenberg's view, the setting up of the children's homes and the special fundraising for them was more of a "propagandist-agitational" issue. Zetkin expressed how "opportunistic" she regarded this issue to be and, as there was significant popular interest to support such ventures, why not develop it further? Through fundraising especially earmarked for Soviet Russian children, they would be able to attract donations which would otherwise not have come their way for general hunger relief.<sup>97</sup>

Significantly, when the *Arbeiterhilfe's* first orphanage was opened in Soviet Russia, it was presented as being a relief mission of a completely different character than those realised by "bourgeois charity," as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* objective was not to buy the cheapest provisions for as many as possible. The "brotherly solidarity" of the German workers could only give the best to their Russian brothers, it was stressed.<sup>98</sup> In a

confidential report on the Chelyabinsk orphanage, this was also one of the reasons why its capacity was limited to 200 and not, for example, 400 children. According to Zetkin, the aim was to give these 200 children the best possible care and to assure their well-being over a longer time frame, instead of temporarily feeding as many children as possible but whose future destinies would remain unknown. As predicted, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian orphanages produced some impressive propaganda for the *Arbeiterhilfe*, although the real conditions at the Chelyabinsk orphanage were initially deplorable and, according to Zetkin, it took, nearly a year before the orphanage was running as originally planned, with not only the feeding of the children secured but also an ideologically 'proper' communist education being offered to the children.<sup>99</sup>

The establishment of the first orphanage in Russia marked the beginning of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* long-lasting work with workers' children, and throughout 1922–1923 the *Arbeiterhilfe* either managed or financed a number of orphanages with such names as "Proletarian Solidarity" (Kasan) "John Reed" (Samara), "Lenin" (Saratov), "Klara Zetkin" (Moscow) and "Comintern" (Saratov).<sup>100</sup>

### **A symbolic gift or material assistance?**

The last part of the chapter analyses the aims and results of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign. Was it 'only' about providing symbolic support or was it actually about practical solidarity though material assistance? It seems that both sides were regarded paramount for the *Arbeiterhilfe*. However, several limitations of the practical, material outcome were already realised from the very beginning of the campaign. In areas such as the Balkans, the Baltic States, Finland or Poland (all bordering Soviet Russia), very limited material assistance was to be expected. Even in Central Europe, including Germany, it was estimated that the political gains would outweigh the material side of the campaign mainly due to the high levels of unemployment, the millions of part-time workers and the thousands of refugees and prisoners. The only areas where there was a high probability of gaining substantial material assistance were assessed to be England, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy to a certain extent and America.<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, as police reports from Germany show, to engage in practical international solidarity through fundraising for the famine victims was not for example tolerated by the German government, and the people engaged in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* practical fundraising were not spared from police persecution. For example, two women making door-to-door visits and collecting money on the streets were arrested in Berlin, and

their fundraising lists were confiscated by the *Schutzpolizei* (Schupo). Apparently, similar incidents occurred in various parts of Berlin and throughout Germany during the autumn of 1921.<sup>102</sup> Although the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fundraising events in Cologne had, according to secret police observations, "no outwardly political character", eight people were arrested on the grounds that they were collecting money without official permission. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* claim to be raising funds for famine relief was rejected due to several articles that were published in the communist press, which in the eyes of the authorities in Cologne revealed the basic, political motivation behind the campaign. In the police's view, this proved that the money raised was not going to be spent on famine relief but on a political campaign for communism. Apparently, fundraising in the name of humanitarianism was permitted, but not in the name of international solidarity.<sup>103</sup>

Zinoviev emphasised during Comintern sessions in Moscow that they were appealing for aid specifically from the workers and, although the workers in general did not possess significant resources to support the campaign, he concluded that "every [German] mark from a worker carried more political weight than half a million from the bourgeoisie".<sup>104</sup> For Zinoviev workers' donations were not measured in their monetary value, but in their symbolic meaning. One can conclude that Zinoviev's argumentation concurs with Komter's (2005) theory on solidarity and the power of the gift. It is not so much a question of the monetary value of a gift but far more of its symbolical meaning and expression. Thus, the act of giving a gift created the basis of a reciprocal international solidarity and, in this sense, one of the central political goals of the campaign was to unite the workers of Germany and the world with Soviet Russia. International solidarity was a means of forming a common identification, a transnational unity of the workers who were all perceived as fighting for their common good.<sup>105</sup>

Although the symbolic aspect of the relief campaign was highlighted by Zinoviev, this aspect of the campaign was downplayed in the ECCI's communications to the CPs. In the political sphere, symbolism was essential, but in the sphere of concrete famine relief, symbolical assistance was worthless. The famine victims required food, not symbolical phrases. In order to overcome this predicament, the ECCI informed the CPs on 26 September 1921 that Soviet Russia was indeed in urgent need of material assistance.<sup>106</sup> The ECCI's criticism was stern: the CPs were not spending enough energy on the campaign and were not making sufficient organisational arrangements for the cause. This lack of commitment was attributed to the parties' poor awareness of both

the consequences of the famine and the possible consequences of the bourgeois aid. Likewise, it was thought somewhat embarrassing for the Comintern to note that both the LSI and the Vienna International were at this point raising more funds than the Comintern's own relief campaign. Most notably, the Comintern criticised some of its sections for their misconception that the famine relief campaign was purely a propaganda campaign for Soviet Russia and strove merely to offer symbolic expressions of solidarity to the victims of the famine. This conception was thereby explicitly deemed to be completely erroneous (*vollkommen irrig*). Soviet Russia, it was highlighted, needed every available material assistance.<sup>107</sup>

Münzenberg emphasised at a closed communist meeting in Berlin on 5 December that there was no contradiction between the political significance of the campaign and the practical fundraising. For example the IFTU, Münzenberg claimed, drew attention to every grain of corn collected for Russia in its propaganda. If the *Arbeiterhilfe* could report higher fundraising results than the IFTU, then the IFTU would attempt to collect even more to surpass the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Hence the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s fundraising had a significant impact on the overall results of the famine relief.<sup>108</sup>

The organising of a famine relief campaign only calling for symbolical assistance would have made no sense as the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s campaign did not constitute a great propaganda triumph for Soviet Russia, as others have suggested.<sup>109</sup> As the renown famine relief poster by D. S. Moor illustrated, it was indeed not a glorious moment for Soviet Russia. Significantly, the image depicting a helpless character struggling for his very life illustrated not only a desperate famine victim, but likewise represented an image of Soviet Russia itself in a desperate state, pitifully calling for aid.<sup>110</sup>

As in the poster produced by D. S. Moor, Käthe Kollwitz's lithograph produced for the *Arbeiterhilfe* depicting Russia as a desperate falling man reproduced a similar devastating image of Soviet Russia. The desperation does not, however, seem as total in Kollwitz's version. The famine victim in Moor's poster stands alone calling out for assistance. In Kollwitz's vision, the presence of international solidarity and aid is clearly felt. Hope is present. Helping hands are reaching towards the falling man and consequently also towards Russia itself. Only rapid assistance can save him from the final black-out. Kollwitz was effectively reproducing the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s will not only to help the famine victims, but also to rescue Soviet Russia from destruction. It was a profound artistic visualisation of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s international solidarity campaign which clearly distinguished it from the humanitarian initiatives. In this vision, providing





Figure 2.2 Käthe Kollwitz, 'Helft Russland (Help Russia)' (1921)

Source: Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne/VG-Bild-Kunst.

immediate relief to the famine victims meant the same as saving Soviet Russia. Aid through the *Arbeiterhilfe* represented a dual articulation of practical relief and symbolical support to revolutionary Russia.

Despite the desperate calls for solidarity articulated by the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the results were in late September described in an internal circular as being “extremely weak” (äusserst gering).<sup>111</sup> The tone was, however, completely different in an internal ECCI circular dated late November. The ECCI reported that the Comintern’s famine relief campaign had started to show some promising results. The Profintern had collected 50 million German marks and had prospects of reaching 100 million, and the amount collected directly through CPs and relief committees had, by 7 November, reached over 100 million marks. The *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin had by then shipped ten consignments of goods consisting of three million kilogrammes of foodstuffs. It was claimed that 50,000 people were from now onwards being fed daily by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Soviet Russia. Evidently inspired by its increasing success, the ECCI planned to spread the campaign further to North and South America, Argentina, Australia, South Africa and Japan.<sup>112</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* had by late January 1922 raised a total of 200 million German marks and sent 30 shipments of goods to Russia consisting of over 13,000 tonnes of foodstuffs, tools and machines. As a comparison, Münzenberg pointed out that the IFTU, with over 24 million members, had during the same period collected ‘only’ 50 million German marks and had sent only one shipment of goods to Russia consisting of 1,000 tonnes.<sup>113</sup> In a final report on the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s famine relief presented to the Comintern on 21 November 1922, Münzenberg claimed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had internationally collected goods, money and material assets amounting to \$ US 2.5 million. In total, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had transported 30,000 tonnes of provisions and aid material to Russia, Münzenberg calculated.<sup>114</sup>

In comparison to the ARA, the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s relief measures were indeed modest as the ARA was the one organisation providing the principal assistance in the famine area.<sup>115</sup> For Münzenberg and the *Arbeiterhilfe* it was of outmost importance to show that their calls for solidarity actually led to material assistance. In fact, it was the reports on fundraising results that in Münzenberg’s mind were manifest proof of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s success in awakening the international solidarity of the working class. The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s fundraising results enabled Münzenberg to claim in March 1922 in Moscow that it was an transnational solidarity movement unheard of in the history of the workers’ movement. The *Arbeiterhilfe* had, according to Münzenberg, in just a six months’ period turned into a “powerful, international campaign encompassing the whole world”.<sup>116</sup>

However, keeping workers interested in its famine relief campaign proved to be a major challenge as, after several months of fundraising

and campaign work, German workers evidently lost interest in the campaign. Münzenberg stated in a confidential letter to Karl Radek in January 1922 that the famine relief campaign in Germany had, in reality, come to a total standstill. Münzenberg did not, however, blame the workers for being uninterested in the famine but accused the KPD of having completely withdrawn its support for the campaign.<sup>117</sup>

In conclusion, by the beginning of 1922, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had managed to create a provisional international organisation for international solidarity. Münzenberg and his team in Berlin had, in collaboration with the ECCI in Moscow, managed to engage the national CPs of the world in their campaign. However, without the Comintern's original global network of radicals, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* efforts to form transnational solidarity networks would certainly not have been as impressive. The famine in Soviet Russia had presented a unique opportunity to unite the whole workers' movement around a common cause but, as this chapter has shown, despite the urgency of the crisis, no such unity was centrally established. The initial awakening of international solidarity was thus not realised in practice as broadly as Münzenberg had envisioned it, although there had been actual attempts to form, on both a national and an international level, a united front between the labour parties and the internationals, a significant fact which has not been highlighted in detail in the previous research.

This chapter has further developed an initial analysis of international solidarity as it came to life in the context of famine relief. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, although the cooperation between the parties ultimately failed, the *Arbeiterhilfe* seems to have reached beyond the KPD's base and attracted a broad support base of working-class men, women and children, and artists and intellectuals for the starving. However, from the perspective of Soviet Russia and the Comintern a distinct disadvantage of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity campaign was that it produced a tragic image of the 'workers' paradise' in Soviet Russia. When, in the beginning of 1922, the domestic situation in Soviet Russia began to be more stabilised, thanks largely to the ARA's massive relief work, the *Arbeiterhilfe* came to make a significant volte-face in its articulations of international solidarity: from a message of desperation to one of a new programme of reconstruction.

# 3

## Reimagining International Solidarity, 1922–1923

Between December 1921 and January 1922, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity was slowly being reimagined. This can most powerfully be illustrated in two consecutive issues of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* pictorial newspaper *Sowjet-Russland im Bild*. The cover of the issue published on 20 December 1921 depicts the then prevailing torment in the Russian famine area and simultaneously confirms the tragic and weak state of Soviet Russia. This image conveys the same desperate cry for assistance as the two famine relief posters by D. S. Moor and Käthe Kollwitz presented earlier in Chapter 2. However, in the following issue of *Sowjet-Russland im Bild*, published on 20 January 1922, the signs of devastation were removed and instead replaced with a message of recovery and hope. Soviet Russia had been saved from destruction and was now in urgent need of a revitalisation of its industry, trade and culture. This gigantic task provided the impetus for the *Arbeiterhilfe's* launch of a new international solidarity campaign which was labelled 'productive assistance' (*produktive Wirtschaftshilfe*).

The first part of this chapter deals with the launch and development of the new campaign. The second part analyses the *Arbeiterhilfe's* efforts to sell its reimagined message of international solidarity to the German workers. The last part will look at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* cultural work and its efforts to reimagine a positive image of Soviet Russia as a natural part of the 'we-group' of the transnational workers' community.

### Towards 'productive assistance'

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* 'productive assistance' initiative was a vast operation which remained the organisation's main campaign until the summer of 1923. Today, one might ask what the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance

initiative has to do with the history of international solidarity? It is here maintained that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance initiative illuminates a forgotten strand of international solidarity. As Lev Kamenev stated in 1922, productive assistance was simply a new form of international solidarity directed towards Soviet Russia. Just as the workers of Germany had been prepared to share their bread with the Russians, it was presented as being a natural continuation of their solidarity work to assist Soviet Russia in its “economic-technical destitution”.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was engaged through international solidarity in the “building of socialism”, but what did this mean in reality? According to Fitzpatrick (2008), the Bolsheviks clearly believed that building socialism was the same as forwarding economic development and modernisation. Building socialism was, in other words, the same as transforming Russia into a modern industrial society. The reasoning behind this programme was that the Bolsheviks had ‘prematurely’ taken power in industrially backward Russia and not in an industrially developed country such as Germany or Britain. Therefore, the Bolsheviks had a duty to do the job of the capitalists and to fundamentally transform Russia. As Fitzpatrick notes, the first six years of Bolshevik power had not brought industrialisation, but had taken the Russian economy back to the levels of the previous century. After the Russian Civil War, European Russia was actually less urbanised than it had been in 1897, and half the Russian industrial working class had returned to the countryside. The idea of building socialism was integrally linked with Stalin’s idea of constructing socialism in one country, which emphasised the priority of Soviet Russia’s national modernisation over maintaining the international revolution as its main objective. Fitzpatrick argues that when Stalin embraced the ‘socialism in one country’ policy in 1924, it was supposed to show to the world that the Bolsheviks did not require a European revolution in order to be successful, as they “did not need the good-will of foreigners – whether revolutionaries or capitalists – to build Soviet power”.<sup>2</sup> However, the situation was completely different in 1922 and the role attributed to the workers in the West for the modernisation of Soviet Russia has remained largely unscrutinised.

### **Building socialism through international solidarity**

During its campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe* organised two major international congresses in Berlin, and it started publishing a monthly journal called the *Rote Aufbau: Monatschrift der proletarischen Wirtschaftshilfe für Sowjetrußland* (*Red Construction. Monthly Journal on the Proletarian Economic Aid to Soviet Russia*). In addition to actually taking over local industries

in the famine area and other parts of Soviet Russia, the *Arbeiterhilfe* initiated an international "workers' loan" and organised fundraising events in the West in order to send tools, machines and tractors to Soviet Russia. As in the previous chapter, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* work in Russia will not be the main focus of this analysis, rather my focus will be on how the *Arbeiterhilfe* tried to activate international solidarity in Germany for the building of socialism in Soviet Russia.

Clara Zetkin, who was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* chairwoman, stated as early as 5 December 1921 during discussions in Berlin that the aim of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign should also be concerned with securing the financial and cultural reconstruction of a new strong, revolutionary cultural base in Soviet Russia. Through such a campaign, Zetkin argued, the *Arbeiterhilfe* would be able to pressure the Western governments to establish financial relations with Soviet Russia and, even more importantly, to force these countries to grant much needed credits to Soviet Russia.<sup>3</sup> It seemed that, although the main objective of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign was altered from saving to building, one basic idea of radical working class solidarity remained the same, namely that the destiny of Soviet Russia was integrally connected to the fate of the workers of the world.

On 22 December 1921, Münzenberg reported to Lenin on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* turn towards new missions:

More and more we are beginning to turn the campaign into a large-scale political campaign in favour of Soviet Russia, i.e. the recognition of the Soviet government and the unrestricted provision of long-term commercial loans etc. Following the new position adopted by the English government, the mood among social democratic organisations is also beginning to improve considerably.<sup>4</sup>

As Steiner (2007) shows, significant steps had evidently been taken in December 1921 as, in the West, it was generally acknowledged that the recovery of post-war Europe was dependent upon the exploitation of Soviet Russia's vast resources. In Soviet Russia the urgent need for foreign capital, development and trade to save the country from an even deeper economic disaster led to the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP). To the dismay of several leading Bolsheviks, Lenin argued that only by attracting Western investors could Soviet industrialisation be accelerated.<sup>5</sup>

As in pre-revolutionary Russia, it became evident that Soviet Russia was dependent on both foreign capital and foreign technical skill for its industrial development.<sup>6</sup> A major breakthrough for Soviet Russia was the signing of the Rapallo Treaty on 10 April 1922 with Germany,

although this remained Soviet Russia's only fixed link to the capitalist West until 1924. It was not until February 1924 that the British offered *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Union – soon followed by Italy, Austria, Greece, Norway, Sweden and, later, in October 1924, by France – that diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Western Europe were normalised. The problem for the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s was that Germany alone could not provide enough capital and investment required for Russian industrialisation.<sup>7</sup>

It seems that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* turn towards productive assistance was significantly influenced by Fridtjov Nansen and the speech he gave at the *League of Nations* in Geneva on 12 November 1921. "Could the fields be ploughed when the animals were dead?", Nansen had asked rhetorically? According to Nansen, the only remedy was to equip the Russians with motorised ploughs and with people with the right know-how. When the *Arbeiterhilfe* published a new fundraising appeal in *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* on 20 January 1922, it specifically appealed for machines and for motorised ploughs in particular.<sup>8</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* January *Bulletin* 1922, it was acknowledged that sending trucks and tractors was almost as important as sending provisions to Russia. Using the Russian railway network, it was only possible to reach a limited number of people and, as the number of horses in the famine area had dramatically decreased, vast areas were left beyond the reach of grain shipments.<sup>9</sup>

Münzenberg stated that "all relief organisations active in Russia" had repeatedly stressed the need to send means of transportation as well as agricultural machines to Soviet Russia.<sup>10</sup> However, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* developed its campaign, a clear difference between the *Arbeiterhilfe's* and the capitalists' motives emerged. The *Arbeiterhilfe* stressed that, although both capitalists and workers were providing Soviet Russia with machines, only the workers were sending their machines out of solidarity with their "Russian brothers". The capitalists again sent machines to make a profit and to prevent the "development of communism".<sup>11</sup>

Münzenberg was rather realistic with regard to the Western European working class' capacity to provide assistance. Misery prevailed in post-war Europe as well. As long as there were no socialist republics in the West, the only way to resurrect the Soviet economy was through the re-establishment of financial relations with the Western powers. In order to achieve this, the workers mission was to pressurise their governments into re-establishing international trade between Soviet Russia and the West.<sup>12</sup> Hence, quite contrary to McMeekin's recent proposition that the aim of the campaign was to "camouflage" the role of foreign capitalists in Russia, one objective of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign was in fact to

persuade the Western governments to recommence trading with and investing in Russia.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Comintern Secretariat was not initially convinced about the *Arbeiterhilfe's* plans, and expressed to Münzenberg that it had "the greatest concerns" (grösste Bedenken) regarding the use of famine relief money to buy tools and machines for the factories in the famine area. Instead, Münzenberg was warned by the Secretariat against using the money on anything else but relief work for the starving: The Secretariat told Münzenberg in confidence that they were of the opinion that the amounts accumulated through fundraising were not allowed to be used on anything other than on alleviating the famine. Indeed, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) Secretariat fretted, what would happen if their enemies were to be informed of such a use of our famine relief funds? Moreover, the many critics of the campaign argued, initially, that the means available to the international proletariat had in the first place been insufficient to alleviate the famine and were even less sufficient to assist in the rebuilding of the Soviet economy.<sup>14</sup>

The political importance of this campaign was clearly defined and emphasised by Münzenberg in order to convince the radical revolutionaries on 1 March 1922 in Moscow. Münzenberg stressed that the objective of the new campaign was to achieve a maximum amount of support from the international working class, to apply pressure on the Western governments, to create a united workers' front and to mobilise all of the power of the workers to assist Soviet Russia during its financial crisis. Münzenberg estimated that the *Arbeiterhilfe* could raise as much as \$US 10 million during 1922. In addition to the material side of the campaign, Münzenberg stressed its political value: if the campaign was successful, it could further unite and connect the workers of the West with Soviet Russia. The enlarged ECCI meeting finally gave its seal of approval to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* new productive assistance programme.<sup>15</sup> This proves, however, Münzenberg's independent status in Berlin as he in fact had already launched the productive assistance campaign in January, long before the official approval from the Comintern.

## **Campaigning for Soviet Russia's economic reconstruction**

### **Tools, machines and tractors as symbols of solidarity**

How, then, was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* reimagined message of international solidarity as productive assistance effectively conveyed to the German public?



One of the first practical manifestations of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* reimagined message of solidarity was the organisation of an international fundraising Week of Tools (*internationale Werkzeugesammelwoche*), held on 1–7 May 1922. With this initiative, the *Arbeiterhilfe* aimed to both deliver the collected tools to Russian workers and to use the tools as exchange goods in order to purchase food. All tools were welcome: hammers, axes, carpenter's planes, knives, tongs, even the smallest nails were asked for. In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* circular to the German workers, it was declared that every hammer that was donated forged the construction of the socialist economy; every nail played its part in the vast socialist construction.<sup>16</sup>

In Germany, the workers were encouraged to mobilise themselves for the cause despite their own financial hardship. It was defined as their immediate duty to assist “our Russian brothers and sisters” in their prolonged despair.<sup>17</sup> After this fundraising week, the *Arbeiterhilfe* proclaimed that the campaign had not only been supported by communists, but also by other workers and even within bourgeois circles. According to a report, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to collect hundreds of boxes with tools, weighing between 500 and 600 kilogrammes, which had been sent to Stettin from where the goods were being shipped to Russia.<sup>18</sup> Already by mid-February, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had actually managed to get a hold of two motorised ploughs, one called “*Arbeiterhilfe*” and the other “*Dritte Internationale (the Third International)*” which, along with several vans, were to be sent to Russia with the next shipment from Stettin.<sup>19</sup>

The financial capacity of the German working class was, however, very limited when it came to realising this idea of productive assistance. Thus the *Arbeiterhilfe* urged all workers to mobilise their most valuable asset, their labour.<sup>20</sup> Together, if each and every one contributed a day's pay, they could raise millions, it was argued, and hence a way was provided to empower the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity.<sup>21</sup>

In order to inspire workers to participate in the campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin* presented a story of machine factory workers in Sürtha am Rein. As reported, the local workers had suggested building an ice machine for a hospital in the famine area. This idea was then forwarded to the local communist factory fraction which raised the suggestion at the factory workers' general meeting. During the meeting, the proposal was, however, challenged by some workers as the additional work required to build such a machine would breach the newly won eight-hour working day. The workers voted on the matter and, with an overwhelming majority of 700 for and 20 against, they decided in favour of the construction of the ice machine. The *Arbeiterhilfe* declared

the decision to be a true sign of their class consciousness, and the story was effectively used as a source of inspiration for other workers in Germany.<sup>22</sup>

The official launch of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance initiative took place at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* World Congress, held on 5–11 July 1922 in Berlin that gathered over 100 guests from 15 countries.<sup>23</sup> It was proclaimed that for the friends of Soviet Russia, it should not be difficult to understand that Russia could not be only assisted with bread.<sup>24</sup> In this spirit, the June 1922 issue of *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* declared productive assistance to be nothing less than “the salvation of Soviet Russia.”<sup>25</sup>

The central message of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* congress in Berlin was that, irrespective of how “honest or spontaneous” the will of the workers’ of the world was to assist Soviet Russia’s economic recovery, it would prove impossible if they remained unorganised. Only through a national and international organisation could any practical assistance be achieved. Two fields of activity were earmarked. On the one hand, the *Arbeiterhilfe* would import the required production means to Russia, including equipment, machines and raw materials. On the other hand, the *Arbeiterhilfe* would invest and rebuild companies and enterprises in Soviet Russia. The slogan for the new campaign was epitomised in the call not to give for Soviet Russia’s immediate needs, as previously, but for those of the future (*gebt nicht für den Augenblick, sondern für die Zukunft*).<sup>26</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin* that was published on the opening day of the congress, Münzenberg expressed his conviction that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the only organisation in the world that could pursue this idea of productive assistance. The communist parties (CPs) were simply too preoccupied with their daily duties to manage such a “financial solidarity campaign”. The capitalists again were only interested in “plundering and colonising Russia”.<sup>27</sup> Here, the very concept of solidarity was interwoven with the existence of Soviet Russia – it had, in fact, become a permanent new ingredient in the communist articulations of solidarity.<sup>28</sup>

After the Berlin Congress, on 15 July, Münzenberg expressed his confidence in and hopes for the continuation of the campaign. Münzenberg had received support from the Soviet government’s representatives, Georgi Chicherin and Alexander Eiduck in Berlin who had officially confirmed to Münzenberg the significance of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* current work for Soviet Russia. In Münzenberg’s opinion, the only trouble looming on the horizon was the Russian organisational side of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, and he supported the idea of an immediate Soviet governmental revision of the whole Russian *Arbeiterhilfe* as soon as possible.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign was perhaps also jeopardised by Münzenberg's complete exhaustion due to the debacle with Franz Jung in Moscow, whose mismanagement threatened to turn the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian ventures into a veritable disaster. Zetkin had reported on a meeting in Moscow with Jung at which Jung had allegedly presented a "completely false" picture of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* views and methods. In a rare moment of weakness, Münzenberg continued in a private letter:

Since August 1921 I have been working continuously, almost all day and all night, dragging heavy loads with practically no support of any kind. I was in Moscow alone four times and, despite this absence of several months, I conducted the entire business in Berlin, organised three conferences, etc. I am so tired I could fall down. But the certainty that my work is saving thousands of people and providing real practical help to Russia in a very small way keeps me on my feet and allows me to persevere, despite fatigue and illness.<sup>29</sup>

Most of the preserved material on Münzenberg and the *Arbeiterhilfe* rarely, if ever, reveals any personal motivations, merely illuminating organisational issues. Apparently, what was driving Münzenberg was the fact that his work was providing real practical assistance to Soviet Russia – not that he was producing good propaganda. As Münzenberg suspected in his letter, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* organisation in Soviet Russia was in a state of chaos, largely due to the complete disorganisation and catastrophic mismanagement of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Soviet Russian enterprises by people such as Franz Jung. This was the main issue that would ultimately lead to the collapse of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance programme in late 1923. Before the collapse of this initiative, however, Münzenberg was able to claim several important propagandist victories, such as the workers' loan to Soviet Russia.

### **Solidarity in the form of a workers' loan**

One of the most intriguing decisions made during the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Third World Congress in Berlin was the idea of organising an international workers' loan. It appears that the idea had first been formulated by the Italian communist Nicolo Bombacci, who had suggested to Lenin on 10 August 1921 that an international workers' loan could be organised in order to raise funds for Soviet Russia.<sup>30</sup> The proposal had even been officially discussed during an ECCI meeting on 14 September 1921. Zinoviev had then embraced the idea and had presented it as a central component of the Comintern's famine relief campaign.<sup>31</sup>

The many organisational difficulties were not resolved until a final decision to issue the workers' bonds was made at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Third World Congress in Berlin. The workers' bond issue was to be managed by the *Industrie- und Handels-Aktien-Gesellschaft: Internationale Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjet-Rußland (Aufbau)* (Industrial and Trade Stock Company: International Workers' Relief for Soviet Russia) which was placed under the control of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Executive Committee headed by Münzenberg. Although the final form of the workers' bonds was still unclear, it was decided on 11 July 1922 that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Aufbau section would be the official bond distributor and that they would be jointly guaranteed by both the Aufbau and the Soviet government. According to the proposal, the incoming resources would be reserved for the active reconstruction of the Soviet Russian economy and were to be invested in close collaboration with Soviet Russia's financial institutions. It was not, however, expected that individual workers would buy the bonds. The main market for these workers' bonds consisted of the trade unions, cooperatives and other public bodies.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, on 13 September 1922, the Council of People's Commissariats (Sovnarkom) guaranteed the workers' loan. The *Aufbau* was officially registered in the Berlin trade register on 22 September 1922. The bonds entitled "*Erste Internationale Arbeiter-Anleihe (First International Workers' Bonds)*" could finally be issued and were put into international circulation in October the same year.<sup>33</sup> In the press, the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed that the workers' loan should only be perceived as being a first step towards establishing an international workers' world bank. For as long as most of the world lived under capitalist rule, it was argued, banks would be a necessity. But who if not the capitalists benefitted from the savings made by individual workers and labour organisations? Now, thanks to the establishment of Soviet Russia, it was finally possible to use the workers' money for the benefit of the working class. This analogy was further expanded to include the rebuilding of Soviet Russia. The *Arbeiterhilfe* asked rhetorically, was it not ultimately the workers' savings that enabled the capitalists to invest in the Russian market? Why, then, give the money first to the capitalists, who then invested it in Soviet Russia, when there was the possibility of investing directly in Soviet Russia's reconstruction through the *Arbeiterhilfe's* workers' loan?<sup>34</sup> This fundamental reasoning was even printed on the bonds, where it was stated that the workers' loan furthered the reconstruction of industry in the famine areas.<sup>35</sup> In total, the *Aufbau* issued bonds worth \$US 1 million.<sup>36</sup>

Despite hopeful proclamations by the *Arbeiterhilfe*, it appears that the workers' loan was received with general scepticism by the German workers. For example, the social democratic *Hamburger Echo* published an article with the sensational title "The World Revolution Takes a Loan." The most devastating criticism claimed that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* funds were in reality being spent by Soviet officials, the Red Army and the Cheka. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was quick, however, to remind the social democrats of the German war bonds that they had so warmly endorsed during the First World War which, in 1922, were worthless. The *Arbeiterhilfe* maintained that a loan guaranteed by Soviet Russia was as good as any loan guaranteed by the Weimar Republic.<sup>37</sup>

Several of the *German Communist Party* (KPD)'s Central Committee members already felt in February 1923 that the workers' loan campaign should be immediately halted. During such dire economic times in Germany, it was assessed that there was little chance of achieving much with the campaign.<sup>38</sup> Looking at the financial side of the campaign, the KPD was most probably correct in its assessment. In Germany the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed, between 15 June 1922 and 31 April 1923, to sell only \$US 442.91 out of a total emission of \$US 13,299.83. Clearly the escalating inflation in Germany ruined all efforts to sell these bonds.<sup>39</sup> However, Münzenberg was convinced that, despite the financial result of the workers' loan scheme, the campaign still had a significant propagandist and political value in Germany.<sup>40</sup> In the end, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to sell bonds in the USA and Europe for a total of \$US 35,000.<sup>41</sup>

### From zenith to dissolution

The productive assistance programme underwent a vast expansion after the summer of 1922. On the one hand, it was acknowledged that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was working according to capitalist methods, striving after profit and surplus value. However, the *Aufbau* defined itself in its statutes as a non-profit company, as its (potential) earnings were destined to stimulate the Soviet economy.<sup>42</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* had for example taken control over a fishery in Volgograd (Zarizyn) which was being rebuilt with the help of a loan from the Soviet government. Münzenberg explained the logic of investing in such enterprises: the *Arbeiterhilfe* could transport large quantities of fish from Volgograd to Tver where it would be exchanged for flour which would then be delivered to the famine areas in Samara and Saratov. Thus, Münzenberg argued, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not only providing food for the famine victims but was at the same time rebuilding the local economy and helping the local population to help themselves.<sup>43</sup>

By August 1922, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was involved in a number of companies and enterprises in Russia. In the Kazan area, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed three estates (Sowjetgüter) with a total of three tractors and one diesel motor being in operation. In Chelyabinsk, just East of the Ural mountains, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was in charge of the "Pinajewo" estate where one tractor was in operation. In the Urals, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was coordinating the work of 19 American workers who had arrived with 20 tractors from the USA. In Petrograd the *Arbeiterhilfe* controlled a number of companies, and in Moscow the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed a shoe factory, an estate outside the city, an ambulance service (*Ambulatorium*) offering free treatment to the unemployed as well as several other enterprises. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was also in charge of a canteen and a club for workers in Moscow, where they could eat cheaply, spend their free time with foreign workers, read newspapers and books and listen to good music.<sup>44</sup>

Münzenberg returned to Soviet Russia for the Comintern's Fourth World Congress, held between 5 November and 5 December 1922 in Petrograd and Moscow.<sup>45</sup> After several meetings in various commissions, Münzenberg presented his final proposal regarding the continuation of the productive assistance programme on 5 December 1922. It was unanimously accepted by the Comintern.<sup>46</sup> In a direct response to Münzenberg's reports in Moscow, Lenin sent a personal letter to Münzenberg in which he praised the *Arbeiterhilfe's* initiatives. Lenin wrote:

The international workers' famine relief campaign has helped Soviet Russia in an outstanding way to overcome the dark days of the famine in recent years and to drive back hunger. Now we have to heal the wounds left by the famine; above all, to care for the many thousands of orphaned children and to build up agriculture and industry in the famine regions which have been severely impaired as a result of the famine. [...]

The economic relief campaign of the International Workers' Relief for Soviet Russia, which has begun so successfully, must be powerfully fostered by workers all over the world. Apart from continuing strong political pressure on the governments of the non-communist countries with the demand for the recognition of the Soviet government, a broad economic relief campaign by the world proletariat provides, today, the best practical support for Soviet Russia in its difficult economic struggle against the imperialistic companies and the best way to support the establishment of a socialist economy.<sup>47</sup>

The productive assistance programme's promising start would, however, soon turn sour. Despite Münzenberg's hopes of practically assisting the rebuilding of the Soviet economy, the people sent to Soviet Russia turned out to be primarily idealists. As one Russian official concluded, the foreign workers sent by the *Arbeiterhilfe* were of little practical use and only accomplished "stupidities" (dummheiten).<sup>48</sup> Even worse, the German communist Hugo Eberlein (1887–1941) reported after a visit to Moscow that it was rumoured that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* shipments of clothes and provisions to Petrograd were being sold on the black market to pay the wages of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* local employees instead of being sent to the famine victims. In Moscow again, several of those employed by the *Arbeiterhilfe* had checked in at the *Hotel Lux* although they had not been able to pay their bills. They had instead suggested payment in the form of provisions meant for the starving, or had simply demanded that the *Arbeiterhilfe* cover the costs with famine relief money.<sup>49</sup> Münzenberg was evidently not fully aware of the details of these improper goings-on and immediately requested a closer investigation of the matter.<sup>50</sup> When a revision of the Russian department of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was initiated by the Comintern in 1923, a multitude of problems surfaced. According to the Comintern's final report, complete chaos reigned at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* offices in both Petrograd and Moscow in the areas of accounting and leadership. It was especially the accounts at Moscow headquarters that were "below all criticism".<sup>51</sup> This extensive revision led, towards the end of 1923, to the dismantling of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian enterprises and the definitive end of the productive assistance programme.<sup>52</sup> Officially, the order to "dissolve" the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian relief organisation was approved by the Presidium of the ECCI on 10 November 1923. Thereafter the *Arbeiterhilfe* would only have a small office at 3 First Tverskaya Yamskaya in Central Moscow.<sup>53</sup>

Before the end, Münzenberg organised the *Arbeiterhilfe's* "World Conference for Productive Assistance and Reconstruction in Russia" (Weltkonferenz für Wirtschaftshilfe und Wiederaufbau in Russland) at the *Reichstag* in Berlin on 17 June 1923. According to Münzenberg, this conference had found a broader and more extensive audience. Although this conference would symbolise the last major call for productive assistance by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Weimar Germany, it turned out to be a spectacular affair. According to the *Arbeiterhilfe* Executive's report to the Comintern, 18 countries had been represented at the conference.<sup>54</sup>

However, Münzenberg was perhaps preempting the coming end of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance when he wrote to the Comintern on 21 June 1923 that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was in the middle of a reorganisation

during which the existing organisation was being divided into two sections: a “politic-propagandist-cultural” section on the one hand and a “financial-commercial section” on the other.<sup>55</sup> This reorganisation of the *Arbeiterhilfe* into two separate sections, or even organisations, initially caused some confusion amongst the representatives of both the Soviet state institutions and the Comintern. Münzenberg explained for example to Krestinski, the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, that whereas the Aufbau had handled the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s financial enterprises in Soviet Russia and the workers' loan had been placed under the control of the Soviet government, the “Komitee Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (Committee International Workers' Relief)” was an organ of the Comintern and had specific political, cultural and propagandist missions.<sup>56</sup>

In the following, a closer analysis of the early development of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s so-called “politic-propagandist-cultural” section is provided. This was also the section of the *Arbeiterhilfe* that would survive and vastly expand after 1923 into a broad international solidarity organisation.

### **On the cultural front**

Compared to the initial relief campaign of 1921, the campaign for reconstructing Soviet Russia was accompanied by strong political and cultural work that was integrally connected to the reimagining of the early image of Soviet Russia in the West (1922–1923). Studies on early Soviet cultural diplomacy have focused mainly on the role of Western intellectuals, often sarcastically referred to as “fellow-travellers”, who travelled to Soviet Russia and wrote positive reports on the revolution back in the West. David-Fox (2012) provides the first comprehensive analysis of Soviet attitudes towards the West in the context of cultural diplomacy during the interwar period. The main focus of this early cultural diplomacy has, however, been on the *All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad*, known by its Russian acronym VOKS, which was founded in April 1925, or on its less well-known predecessor in the field of cultivating cultural ties with the West, the *United Information Bureau* (OBI), which was founded in December 1923. The key figure on the Soviet side of this cultural diplomacy was Trotsky's sister, Olga Kameneva. She was the leader of the OBI which was known to its foreign visitors as the “Kameneva Institute” and which was based at the *Metropol Hotel* in Moscow. She was also the leader of the VOKS until 1933.<sup>57</sup>

Before the founding of the OBI, however, Kameneva had also been heavily involved in the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s activities. Thus, one could argue



that Soviet Russia's encounters with the Western world through the *Arbeiterhilfe* also helped to shape Soviet Russia's early cultural diplomacy. As David-Fox notes, both Kameneva and Münzenberg concentrated their energies on image-shaping initiatives, although Kameneva was more concerned with the invitation and reception of foreigners in Moscow, whereas Münzenberg was mainly preoccupied with finding well-known supporters of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* pro-Soviet initiatives in the context of its international solidarity campaigns in the West. Furthermore, Kameneva's OBI was a Soviet governmental institution whereas the *Arbeiterhilfe's* cultural-political section was affiliated to the Comintern.<sup>58</sup>

The aim of this section is to further analyse the role of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as an early image-shaping organisation for Soviet Russia in Germany. How did the *Arbeiterhilfe* expand its activities into the realm of cultural diplomacy or, to be more precise, how did it construct in Weimar Germany a culture of international solidarity with Soviet Russia playing the most prominent role?

### Reconstructing the image of Soviet Russia

In many ways, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance programme attempted to restore and remodel a new image of Soviet Russia as a country rising from the ashes. Hence, the aim was now not to spread critical reports, but to elaborate on the positive sides of Soviet Russia's reconstruction and to defend the actions of the Soviet government. This propaganda work was integrally connected with the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity. After all, how could one nurture feelings of solidarity for Soviet Russia, if the object of its solidarity and its actions was not identified as being righteous and worthy?

An invaluable new medium for convincing the public of the West of the "rising workers' paradise" in Russia was the mass publication of pictures and illustrations. In early 1922, Münzenberg acknowledged that the Bolsheviks had been very successful with their utilisation of images in their propaganda, which included cinema, slides, posters, pictorial newspapers as well as both photograph and art exhibitions. Münzenberg pointed out that in Soviet Russia the Bolsheviks had been forced to utilise image-based propaganda as the majority of the Russian workers and peasants were still illiterate. However, Münzenberg argued that the same methods of propaganda could be used just as successfully and effectively on the literate sections of the population as well.<sup>59</sup>

Münzenberg praised the Soviet regime's ability to convey their message much more effectively and with much more emotion through the use of powerful illustrations, than it was possible to do through "cold and

unemotional" printed words. In Germany, images had, according to Münzenberg, not been utilised to a significant degree and almost all party newspapers and journals were published without any illustrations of any kind. A special committee had been set up by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Russia with the specific mission of providing the pictures that the *Arbeiterhilfe* published in *Sowjet-Rußland im Bild*, the "first communist pictorial newspaper". Münzenberg was, however, disappointed with the reception of this pictorial newspaper amongst the CP functionaries. They had evidently perceived it as yet another publication for the communists although, in Münzenberg's opinion, it had been formulated both in content and in form mainly to appeal to the non-communist masses. As Münzenberg stated, everyone knows how difficult it is to spread newspapers and leaflets to "indifferent and unorganised" workers and if, against all odds, they bought a copy, it remained, according to Münzenberg, highly uncertain whether they ever actually read the publication. Thus, Münzenberg played his ace: if the newspapers directed to the masses were primarily illustrated products, then it could almost be guaranteed that the illustrations would be viewed and their message effectively conveyed. Pictures and illustrations, Münzenberg argued, could be made into one of the most powerful weapons in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign work.<sup>60</sup>

It signalled the beginning of an unprecedented revolution in illustrated products which would result in the visionary and historically-renown *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*.<sup>61</sup> The paper was, however, fully dependent upon images being sent from Moscow and, particularly in the beginning, there were severe delays. Münzenberg complained to the Comintern Secretariat in January 1922 that he had not received urgently needed photos from Moscow. The idea of a pictorial newspaper was clever indeed and was well received, Münzenberg stated that the success would have been so much greater if the Comintern had actually provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with new photographs. Instead, Münzenberg continued, a recent supplement to *Vorwärts* had included an illustrated report on the new electric train line between Moscow and St. Petersburg, whereas the *Arbeiterhilfe* was stuck with publishing old photographs from 1918–1919.<sup>62</sup>

Münzenberg reminded the Comintern that the German communist press hardly reached anyone beyond its communist readership. For example, the KPD's newspaper, *Rote Fahne*, had just over 30,000 subscribers, whereas the Comintern's journal *Kommunistische Internationale* had a maximum print run of 10,000 copies per issue. Now, Münzenberg argued, *Sowjet-Rußland im Bild*, allegedly the only pictorial

newspaper that could reach a mass readership in Germany, was being effectively sabotaged by the Comintern.<sup>63</sup> Münzenberg even complained to Lenin on 4 February 1922 that although the readership of the journal was increasing, and thus constituted a success for the movement, no pictures had arrived from Moscow (“Bilder habe ich leider bis heute nicht erhalten”).<sup>64</sup>

Despite the difficulties in receiving new photographs and achieving satisfactory printing results, by the summer of 1922, the print run of *Sowjet-Rußland im Bild* had rapidly increased to 60,000 copies per issue. In October 1922, the name of the newspaper was changed to *Sichel und Hammer*. In January 1923, Münzenberg could report to the Comintern that the print run of the pictorial newspaper had increased to 150,000 copies and by February 1923 its print run had increased to 250,000 copies.<sup>65</sup>

How was this unprecedented increase in readership then used to strengthen the image of Soviet Russia, or related to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity? The *Arbeiterhilfe's* defence of the Soviet government's confiscation of church treasures serves as an excellent example of the potential of illustrations to articulate the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity. In February 1922, the Soviet government announced that the ample treasures of the church in Soviet Russia were to be confiscated. This action was officially justified on the basis of the state's urgent need for revenue which could in turn be used to rescue hundreds of thousands who would otherwise die from starvation.<sup>66</sup> Lenin stated in a letter to the Politburo on 19 March 1922 that it was “precisely now and only now, when in the starving regions people are eating human flesh, and hundreds if not thousands of corpses are littering the roads, that we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of church valuables with the most savage and merciless energy”.<sup>67</sup>

In this context a drawing by D. S. Moor was published in the *Arbeiterhilfe's Sowjet-Rußland im Bild* in 1922 showing a starving famine victim pleading to a lavishly dressed patriarch. It presented a clearly justified message of solidarity at the same time as it justified the actions of Soviet Russia. In a simple illustration, the adversarial stance of the church was powerfully presented, clearly defining it as a significant ‘other’.

The caption to the illustration proclaims: The famine victim pleads to the patriarch: “Give away the chalice, sell the gold – buy bread!” The patriarch then answers: “It is impossible for me to give away the chalice. You see, even you will need it in a moment when I give you the last rites

and lead you to the heavens". Instead of reaching towards the famine victim, and thus symbolically towards Soviet Russia and the world proletariat, the church is formed into an adversarial 'they' effectively excluded from the 'we' which forms the basis of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity. Most significantly, the above message of international solidarity is built upon the notion of injustice. As Bayertz (1998) states, labour solidarity has always included a moral dimension that is not merely based on the existence of a common interest or a common enemy. The agents of the labour movement perceive that they are leading a conscious struggle against injustice – and that justice is on their side.<sup>68</sup>

For the *Arbeiterhilfe*, this became the first instance when the perceived just cause of international solidarity in practice meant that representatives of their solidarity community (Soviet Russia) executed the perceived 'other', who in this case primarily included members of the clergy. The brutality that was used to confiscate the treasures was naturally not discussed by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in public, but its objective seems to have been to counter any news on the brutal church oppression, justifying it to the workers in the West by saying that the church had in fact brought this brutal oppression upon themselves by not having willingly handed over its treasures.

### **Art exhibitions in Berlin**

One of the most successful events organised by Münzenberg was the first Soviet art exhibition in Berlin. It seems rather incredible that Lenin himself was meticulously involved in the project through Münzenberg. The exhibition opened at the Galerie van Diemen at 21 Unter den Linden in Berlin on 15 October 1922. The exhibition was officially co-organised by both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the Russian People's Commissariat of Education (Narkompros). The planning of the exhibition had already begun in December 1921. According to a letter from Münzenberg to Lenin, one of the principal aims of the exhibition was to create a counterbalance to the activities of the Russian (non-Bolshevik) émigré circles who were becoming more visible in Berlin through their cultural and musical evenings and the Russian theatre that had been established in Königgräzerstraße in Berlin.<sup>69</sup>

Münzenberg explained later during a speech held at the enlarged ECCI meeting in Moscow on 1 March 1922 that the forthcoming exhibition of Soviet art had two objectives: on the one hand to achieve moral support for Soviet Russia and on the other hand to produce financial support for the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>70</sup> Within cultural circles, the exhibition was celebrated as the first public display of Soviet constructivist works by artists such as

Kasimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, Vladimir Tatlin, Naum Gabo and Nathan Altman. These were artists who were allegedly expressing a profound, new optimism which had emerged since the Russian Revolution. In total, 594 works of art were exhibited at the van Diemen Gallery. The cover of the exhibition catalogue was designed by Lissitzky himself. As such, the exhibition and its catalogue constituted a significant introduction of modern Soviet art to the West and showcased the cultural advances of revolutionary Russia. Later, art historians even included the exhibition amongst the twentieth centuries' most important exhibitions in Germany.<sup>71</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* also organised a special famine relief exhibition entitled "Hungersnot, Hungerhilfe in Sowjet-Russland (Famine, Famine Relief in Soviet Russia)", that was opened in central Berlin at the former Russian consulate at 11 Unter den Linden on 7 July 1922. The venue of the famine relief exhibition is of significance as towards the end of 1923 it would become the official residence of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* headquarters in Berlin. A perhaps unexpected consequence of the location of the famine relief exhibition was that it was interpreted in the bourgeois press as being an official exhibition of Soviet Russia, although it was organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The exhibition included tables providing statistics on the famine, posters by Soviet artists, photographs and artefacts from the famine area in Soviet Russia. It also presented an overview both of the reasons for and the consequences of the famine and of the famine relief activities of the international organisations, including those of the Red Cross, the *American Relief Administration* (ARA) and of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* report on the exhibition, its breakdown of the visitors to the famine relief exhibition is of special significance, as 60 percent were representatives of the working class, whereas the rest were international travellers who had found their way to the exhibition while strolling along the Unter den Linden. It was planned that the famine relief exhibition would also be taken to the Netherlands and the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Through organising such cultural events the *Arbeiterhilfe* effectively tried to transmit a positive image of Soviet Russia and exhibited the power of international solidarity as it showed to the public the material assistance provided by the international working class to their Russian 'brothers' and 'sisters'.

In conclusion, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities in 1922–1923 were initially concerned with the reimagining of international solidarity as 'productive assistance'. In the end, the so-called "Aufbau" section of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was quietly dissolved, while what remained of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the

political, cultural and propagandist section, which is also the main subject of the remaining part of this book. Although the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance programme ended on an embarrassing note, it did play a historical role in the emerging cultural diplomacy of Soviet Russia. Moreover, the period witnessed a vital reimagining of the ways of spreading the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity and of conveying a positive image of Soviet Russia. The use of illustrations, slides and film became from now onwards pivotal weapons in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* arsenal, and one could argue that this new emphasis on emotive visual communication became a central element of all international solidarity campaigns in the modern era. In fact, it represented the start of the rising importance of the image in the mass politics of the twentieth century that was not limited to governmental organisations and political parties, but realised by international organisations of a new kind.

Nevertheless, it was the events of 1923 in Weimar Germany which eventually altered the entire *raison d'être* of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as it abandoned its focus on Soviet Russia and instead endorsed a form of workers' international solidarity that was instead directed towards the workers of Germany.

# 4

## Solidarity for Germany, 1923

Up until the late summer of 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had articulated an international solidarity which incorporated Soviet Russia as one of the most central focal points and recipients of the expressed international solidarity in Europe and the world. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* change in direction in 1923 saw in effect a return to a form of classic working-class solidarity, as the aim of international solidarity was no longer the saving or building of a socialist republic but the supporting of the German workers who had been thrown into an even deeper social despair due to Weimar Germany's imminent economic, political and social collapse. This was the beginning of a vast international solidarity campaign organised to combat "Hunger in Germany."

It was time for the Russian 'brothers' to show their solidarity in return to the German workers. In this sense, the German crisis provided the opportunity to elevate the honour of international solidarity and its principle of reciprocity.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will therefore challenge the previous research that has explicitly stated that the international solidarity of the radical Left had already during the early 1920s turned into a Soviet-centred loyalty. The events of 1923 strongly refute this established 'linear' progression from international solidarity to loyalty towards the Soviet Union.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign for Germany involved two stages: firstly, it concerned the transportation of 'red grain' to the Ruhr, Saxony and Thuringia, areas which were both crucial for and heavily involved in the planned German October Revolution of 1923; the second stage was connected to a general hunger relief campaign in Germany, launched in late October 1923. The history of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities during the second half of 1923 has not been properly included in the previous

research on the German social disorder of 1923, nor the research on the *German Communist Party's* (KPD) final attempt to organise revolution in Germany.

## Save the starving of Germany!

### Solidarity justified? Defining the German misery

"Hunger, hunger everywhere", Käthe Kollwitz noted in her diary in November 1923.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, citing Gerald D. Feldman's standard work on German inflation, the period of hyperinflation experienced in 1922–1923 was "the most spectacular of its kind ever to hit an advanced industrial society with a market economy".<sup>3</sup> In addition to the hyperinflation, the cities of the Weimar Republic experienced constant shortages of affordable food, fuel and housing. The lack of food was not, however, due to a harvest failure in Germany. The German Minister of Agriculture and Food, Hans Luther, concluded for example that the 1923 German harvest was satisfactory.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Germany experienced a good harvest in summer 1923 has recently been used to assert that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* "German campaign was not, in fact, about famine relief at all", implying the purely propagandist character of the campaign. However, as I will show, almost no one, and least of all Münzenberg, claimed that the German hunger crisis was caused by a failed harvest.<sup>5</sup>

Rhetorically, Münzenberg asked in December 1923 at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* "Hunger in Germany" congress in Berlin whether there had been a crop failure in Germany, when a substantial portion of the population was starving? According to Münzenberg, this was definitely not the case. Münzenberg could do nothing but concur with the blunt statement by the German Conservative Party (DNVP) member of the *Reichstag*, Graf von Westarp, who had recently declared in the German *Reichstag* that "the Germans were starving in front of full warehouses" (Die Deutschen verhungern vor gefüllten Scheunen).<sup>6</sup>

The social chaos and escalating hunger crisis in Germany undoubtedly justified relief work to the starving. According to Feldman's recent assessment, the seriousness of the food shortage in Germany was, "recognised by anyone with a sense of reality on the Right or the Left". At the end of July, German authorities had even been in contact with the *American Relief Administration* (ARA) regarding possible assistance to Germany as it was estimated that there was a risk of a severe hunger crisis in the Ruhr area if foreign aid was not provided.<sup>7</sup> However, according to Hoover there was plenty of food in Germany, and the only problem was that the



people controlling the foodstuffs were unwilling to sell it at prices the German poor could afford.<sup>8</sup>

Recent research has strongly demonstrated that the poor, who were dependent on welfare benefits in Weimar Germany, most likely suffered “catastrophic hardship caused by the erosion of the real value of benefits” during the hyperinflation of 1923.<sup>9</sup> As an example of the social crisis, the British consul in Cologne, amongst others, reported in late October that the looting of shops and vehicles containing foodstuffs was occurring daily. The poor of the cities were also making daily trips to the countryside in search of food, sometimes plundering fields and farms. There were reports from the Ruhr area of hordes of people starving and wandering about.<sup>10</sup>

Only with the benefit of hindsight is it possible to map out the road to Germany’s ‘relative stabilisation’ that was begun in 1924. In the hour of crisis, this road could not have been apparent to many. Thereby, the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg’s activities during the German crisis of 1923 offer a unique basis for analysing both the social situation as it was played out and the remedies that were offered by the radical Left.

### ‘Red grain’ to the Ruhr area, Saxony and Thuringia

The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s campaign for Germany was directly connected with the crisis that broke out on 9 January 1923 when French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr area due to Germany’s inability to pay war reparations in accordance with the demands set out in the 1919 Versailles Treaty. This occupation was met with united national indignation in Germany and led to the declaration of the Ruhr population’s ‘passive resistance’ on 11 January. This passive resistance lasted until 26 September. The Right-wing Cabinet headed by Wilhelm Cuno collapsed on 12 August and was replaced by a ‘grand coalition’ of the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD), the *German Democratic Party* (DDP), the Centre and the *German People’s Party* (DVP) under the DVP’s Gustav Stresemann.<sup>11</sup>

Although Germany was hit by waves of massive strikes, demonstrations and political turmoil throughout the spring and summer, the KPD did not pursue any direct revolutionary politics. It was not until late August, after the fall of the highly unpopular Cuno Cabinet, that the communists started developing concrete plans for a German revolution. Finally, between 21 and 23 September 1923, the *Russian Communist Party* (RCP (B)) approved the Comintern’s plans for the immediate preparation for a revolution in Germany, later dubbed the still-born German October Revolution.<sup>12</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign for Germany is most often only connected with the revolutionary plans. But well before the planning of the revolution, the ship *Arcos* arrived in Bremen in April 1923 with the first shipment of grain from the Russian trade unions.<sup>13</sup> This shipment was accompanied by a Soviet delegation whose official purpose was to accompany the grain to the workers in the Ruhr area.<sup>14</sup> In *Inprekorr* it was announced that the Russian trade unions had selected the *Arbeiterhilfe* as its intermediary for symbolic reasons. It was argued that as the *Arbeiterhilfe* had organised the sending of provisions from the German workers to Soviet Russia in 1921, now the Soviets had the opportunity to show their international solidarity in return to the Ruhr workers through the same organisation. The *Arbeiterhilfe* noted that within bourgeois circles such actions would be understood as acts of charity. However, when it came to "workers' relief" this was not only based on the compassion felt towards their suffering brothers, but was distinguished by their mutual solidarity.<sup>15</sup>

The German police reported with dismay that when the Soviet delegation arrived it had utilised their stay to agitate for communism.<sup>16</sup> One of the members of the delegation proclaimed when delivering the grain that this was not merely an act of philanthropy (*Wohltätigkeit*), but constituted an effort to encourage the international proletariat to rise up against its oppressors.<sup>17</sup> The delegation had first headed to Berlin where they had been spotted in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* offices. One of the delegates, Alexej Trofimov, had proclaimed during a meeting in Berlin that the shipments of grain had provided an opportunity for the Soviet "comrades" to prove their international solidarity in practice ("*ihre internationale Solidarität durch die Tat zu beweisen*").<sup>18</sup> With concern the government reported from the Ruhr area that the local KPD had used the distribution of the Soviet Union's donation as the basis for a huge propaganda campaign.<sup>19</sup> However, French troops occupying the area had at least partially confiscated the grain when it had arrived in Essen as they had suspected the propagandist mission of the consignment.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the shipment, a Cabinet meeting was held at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin on 6 June to discuss methods of preventing the use of future Soviet grain shipments as communist propaganda in Germany. It was concluded that the actual philanthropic deed had been welcomed as a noble action by the workers but, from the government's perspective, the only motive behind the grain shipment had been the determination to agitate for "Bolshevism".<sup>21</sup>

On 9 August, the German authorities noted a rumour stating that the Soviet government intended to send additional shipments directed

mostly towards the workers of Berlin. According to one source, shipments of Soviet grain were already at the German borders, awaiting orders on where they were to be sent. Here the concerns of the German authorities were strikingly similar to the ones expressed in Soviet Russia in 1921, where imported grain threatened to bring down the very political order of the country. The Soviets had clearly learned a good lesson from the activities of the ARA in Soviet Russia.<sup>22</sup>

The obviously intended aims of the shipments with red grain were, according to the German authorities, the re-establishment of Soviet prestige and to encourage support for the Comintern's efforts in bringing the revolution to Germany.<sup>23</sup> It was not, however, until 13 September that the Central Committee (CC) of the RCP (B) decided to organise significant grain shipments to Germany. All together 4,095 tonnes (zehn Millionen Pud) of wheat and corn were to be sent to Germany.<sup>24</sup> This time, the grain shipments were to be sent directly to the new "workers' governments" in Saxony and Thuringia in Central Germany which were envisioned as being the main theatre of the forthcoming German October Revolution. According to the Saxon Minister of Finance, Paul Böttcher, also a KPD member, the Saxon government had been unable to finance the provisioning of 700,000 unemployed and pensioners. Officially, it was declared that the Saxon government had therefore turned to the *Arbeiterhilfe* because it had offered a large donation of grain.<sup>25</sup> Behind the scenes, everything concerning the Soviet grain shipments had, however, already been decided. Münzenberg travelled to Dresden, the capital of Saxony, on Monday 15 October, where the KPD had recently established its revolutionary centre.<sup>26</sup> During a meeting of the central leadership of the KPD (engeren Leitung) held on 16 October, Münzenberg was made responsible for the transportation of grain and flour to Saxony.<sup>27</sup>

To Zinoviev, Münzenberg reported on 20 October that he would provide the Saxon government with 2,500 tonnes (50,000 *Zentner*) of flour.<sup>28</sup> In collaboration with Fritz Heckert of the KPD, who at the time was the Saxon Minister of Trade and Industry (*Wirtschaftsminister*),<sup>29</sup> it was decided to donate the grain to the cooperative mills in Saxony from where the ready-made flour would then be sent to the cooperative bakeries who would then supply the cooperatives with bread for distribution. The *Arbeiterhilfe* reported that the first 80,000 loaves of bread had been distributed in Saxony between 25 and 27 October.<sup>30</sup>

### **New articulations of international solidarity**

The local population was made aware of the campaign through an extensive distribution of leaflets and posters. According to Münzenberg,

especially in Saxony the campaign had attracted a significant amount of attention and the local workers had gathered around the posters in the factories and on the streets and almost every newspaper had written about the campaign.<sup>31</sup>

Münzenberg was the one who developed the actual plan for the 'grain propaganda' on 20 October. As a first step, 30,000 posters were printed. Another poster was also planned which was supposed to convey the difference between the national "owning" class and the international working class in relation to the bread distribution. It was also planned that a leaflet conveying international solidarity in general was to be printed and handed out at the bread distribution locations. Finally, the *Arbeiterhilfe* planned to organise meetings in conjunction with the bread distribution to the unemployed and to the workers, so that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* representatives could speak of the importance of the international.<sup>32</sup>

In the first leaflet the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity is clearly distinguished from the so-called international solidarity of the bourgeois. The capitalists of all countries were portrayed as brothers in their common struggle against both the German revolution and the German communist movement. On the leaflet, two trains, one belonging to the bourgeois, and the other to the workers of the world, illustrated the wildly differing interpretations of international solidarity. According to the leaflet, the workers of the world had to realise that the bourgeois wanted the German workers to starve and that their so-called international solidarity did not result in food shipments, but in shipments of munitions and weapons to be used against them. The bourgeois were further identified as being national socialists, or their sympathisers, as the train carriages in the leaflet are decorated with swastikas. By contrast, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared to the German workers: "Do not be disheartened, but double the energy of your struggle, continue with fists of iron and with daring determination", the leaflet proclaimed. "We, the workers of the world, are determined to assist the German workers in their struggle, to send bread and provisions", the *Arbeiterhilfe* promised. Hence, the train portraying the international solidarity of the workers was filled with the *Arbeiterhilfe's* grain, moving even more rapidly towards the workers in despair. "We will help your suffering women and children", the *Arbeiterhilfe* guaranteed.<sup>33</sup> More explicitly, the *Arbeiterhilfe* tried to convince the workers of the disintegration of national solidarity, while it tried to portray the supremacy of international solidarity.

The illustration in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* second leaflet elaborated on the dangerous state of the solitary worker. In this image, the powerless,

fatigued worker stood alone, stumbling, ready to give up, waiting for the heavy-set and well-dressed capitalist to deliver his final blow. The *Arbeiterhilfe* explained the catastrophic situation of the worker: You have no bread, and the capitalists are buying up all the supplies. Furthermore, a great number of working-class comrades were unemployed and without food, while the unemployed, the women and the workers' children were starving. The *Arbeiterhilfe* concluded: he who hungers is powerless, and he who is powerless cannot fight. At least this was what the capitalists were counting on, the *Arbeiterhilfe* exclaimed. The *Arbeiterhilfe* then emphasised that working-class comrades in Russia, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and many other countries were not willing to let the workers of Germany suffer any longer. Comfortingly, the *Arbeiterhilfe* assured them that the first shipments of provisions that would end their hunger were already on their way. As in 1921, the workers of the world would not turn their backs but were prepared to put their international solidarity into action. Now, once again, it was through the *Arbeiterhilfe* that this international solidarity was to be awakened. In conclusion, this leaflet proudly proclaimed that the international community of the workers was effectively taking the "hunger-bat" away from the capitalist, through its active assistance of the hungry. Most significantly, the workers were not urged to be either loyal or united in their solidarity with the Soviet Union, but rather to trust in the international solidarity of the workers of the world in the form of a classic workers' solidarity.<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to determine how the *Arbeiterhilfe's* leaflets and posters were received by the workers, although a report from Thuringia indicated that there were several conflicts during the distribution of bread to the local workers. The authorities had decided to intervene after they had inspected the leaflets which the *Arbeiterhilfe* had distributed along with the bread. The military officials decided that the tone in the leaflets had the aim of agitating the workers and the fact that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was proclaiming that it was only the international community of workers that was actually assisting the starving did not go down too well either.<sup>35</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe's* leaflets were consequently confiscated and were considered by the military command in Thuringia to be very dangerous. The military leadership was indeed concerned about the effect of these leaflets as they concluded that they could even threaten the very "peace and order" in Germany, as the propaganda was being spread under the guise of assistance.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 4.1 Leaflet by the *Arbeiterhilfe*: “Worker, Hunger is Crushing Your Struggle” (1923)

Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum.

### Aborting the German revolution

Although the KPD managed, in line with the plan, to initially form workers' governments with the SPD in Saxony and Thuringia, their efforts to mobilise the wider German masses failed miserably. An isolated bid for power in Hamburg was begun by the KPD but, by 24 October, the German police and military had completely crushed the armed uprising which had not found any popular support in Hamburg or Germany. Despite this setback, the Comintern initially continued to believe in the potential of the revolutionary situation in Germany. However, the KPD completely lost its base in Saxony when the *Reichswehr* marched into the major cities on 22 October. That same day, the CC of the KPD moved back to Berlin from Dresden in order to avoid being arrested.<sup>37</sup>

Münzenberg was present during the meeting of the leadership of the KPD's *Small Central* that was held in Berlin on 24 October. It was decided that the KPD would not call either for a general strike or for the "final struggle" in Germany, as previously planned. By a majority of nine votes to two, it was decided to immediately halt the revolutionary struggle.<sup>38</sup>

On 26 October, a state of emergency was declared throughout the Weimar Republic; and, by the beginning of November, it was finally acknowledged in Moscow that the revolutionary situation in Germany had been completely over-estimated.<sup>39</sup> After the KPD's still-born October Revolution and Hitler's own unsuccessful bid for power in Munich on 9 November, the KPD, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and the *Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei* (The German Völkisch Freedom Party) were all banned by the German head of the Army Command, General Hans von Seeckt (1866–1936), on 23 November 1923.<sup>40</sup>

According to Münzenberg's calculations, the Soviet Union had so far provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with 13,000 tonnes of grain. However, in response to the failed German revolution, the Soviet government had, according to Münzenberg, sent a decree preventing any further distribution of the grain in Germany. The decree was probably issued in early November and therefore the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not given enough time to distribute all the grain it had received. Münzenberg reported later in Moscow to the CC of the RCP (B) that by the end of December 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had delivered 2,000<sup>41</sup> tonnes of grain to Saxony and 600<sup>42</sup> tonnes to Thuringia. Of the remaining grain in the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s possession, 3,000<sup>43</sup> tonnes were being stored in warehouses in Dresden, and 7,000 tonnes had been transported to the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s localities in Berlin where it had been turned over to the Soviet trade delegation.<sup>44</sup>

The first part of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign for Germany was thereby concluded. As Münzenberg stated at a closed meeting for communists in December 1923, the German relief campaign had originated at a time when it was still believed that the communist-socialist regimes in Saxony and Thuringia were on the verge of taking power over the whole of Germany. Then, the most urgent question had been to secure the food supply of the revolutionary Central Germany. However, due to the course of events in Germany, the revolutionary potential had vanished and the KPD had been crushed. As this became apparent, Münzenberg continued, the whole action had to be reconsidered. But in what follows, it seems that Münzenberg's witnessing of the escalating social crisis motivated his call to organise a rapid hunger relief in Germany.<sup>45</sup>

## **International solidarity against hunger in Germany**

### **The origins of the campaign**

On 14 October, Münzenberg wrote to Zinoviev about the desperate plight of the workers in Germany. Münzenberg must have witnessed a clear worsening of the hunger crisis in Germany as he declared to Zinoviev that the general level of destitution amongst the local workers was indescribable. (Die allgemeine Notlage bei den hiesigen Arbeitern is unbeschreiblich). In his letter, Münzenberg told Zinoviev that several foreign philanthropist organisations had started organising relief campaigns for the destitute in Germany. Münzenberg expressed his strong support for a plan forwarded by the "Russian women and Party" to assist German women and children. Münzenberg urged the Comintern to commence its practical assistance as soon as possible and stated that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was prepared to help with technical and organisational measures, to open orphanages, launch soup kitchens and to organise the distribution of bread in cooperation with the KPD and its Women's Section. As a first step in a new international campaign, Münzenberg had already sent a telegram to Edo Fimmen in Amsterdam, asking him whether he would be willing to support the campaign.<sup>46</sup>

Münzenberg acted quickly and the press was notified on 17 October that the Executive Committee of the *Arbeiterhilfe* had decided to launch a vast relief action for the suffering German workers' children, women, unemployed workers and the elderly.<sup>47</sup> However, this was in fact long before the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) had officially given the new campaign its blessing.



Münzenberg wrote another letter to Zinoviev on 24 October, the very same day that the KPD had decided to postpone its revolutionary offensive. Münzenberg expressed his conviction that if a substantial campaign for Germany was immediately initiated in America, Argentina, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and France, the material and moral results would certainly be significant. According to Münzenberg, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had already done everything in its power to successfully start the German campaign. Münzenberg vividly described to Zinoviev the catastrophic conditions of the workers in the industrial areas. The workers had no money to buy food and, even if they did have money, there was often no food to buy. It appears that the initiative was clearly in Münzenberg's hands, although he assured Zinoviev that he would regularly send reports and clippings from newspapers so that the Comintern leadership could keep themselves up-to-date with the achievements of the campaign.<sup>48</sup>

In Moscow, it was not until 26 October that the Presidium of the ECCI decided to grant the *Arbeiterhilfe* permission to carry out and expand its relief campaign in Germany.<sup>49</sup> Münzenberg reported on 28 October the successful launch of the campaign to Piatnitzki. "In all countries," Münzenberg boasted, committees working to alleviate the hunger crisis in Germany had been established, and the *Arbeiterhilfe* had already received donations from Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Netherlands and Switzerland.<sup>50</sup> However, according to Münzenberg, by the end of October, the Comintern had still not provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with any funds for the campaign. Münzenberg consequently threatened both Piatnitzki and Zinoviev that if funds were not immediately sent to Berlin, he would end the campaign on 1 November.<sup>51</sup> It was not until 10 November that the Presidium of the ECCI finally confirmed its decision, whereby it also limited the campaign to a duration of three months. However, on 19 February 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* mandate for the German relief campaign was extended by a further three months.<sup>52</sup>

### Classic working-class solidarity

While the Comintern was ensnared in its own bureaucracy, Münzenberg was quietly confident that his plans would eventually be approved. There was simply no time to wait. On the same day that the Comintern decided in favour of the campaign in Moscow, 26 October, Münzenberg powerfully launched the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity campaign for Germany in the form of a new bulletin entitled *Hunger in Deutschland. Bulletin der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe (Hunger in*

Germany, the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin*). On the front page of its first issue, published on 26 October 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* appeal "An die Werktätigen der ganzen Welt! (To the working masses of the whole world!)" dramatically called for the international solidarity of the workers of the world. A devastating picture of the future of the German workers was produced, emphasising the uncertainty of the situation. No one knew what the consequences of the hunger crisis would be. Worryingly, it was suggested that the German crisis could even become worse than the famine of 1921 in Soviet Russia. However, already during this first appeal it was pointed out that, although the outcome might be similar, the reasons for the crisis were completely different. In Germany the hunger crisis was declared by the *Arbeiterhilfe* to be a product of both the "bankruptcy of the German capitalist leadership" and the collapse of the bourgeois economy.<sup>53</sup>

The element of reciprocity was evident already in its first appeal: "The Russian proletariat had already weeks ago started to pay back double the amount of aid that it had received in 1921". But the Soviet Union was only one of the many actors involved on the solidarity front. The workers of America, Australia and Europe were also urged to organise rapid aid to the workers of Germany. The Soviet shipments of grain to Germany were declared to be only the first steps of the campaign, the rest was to come from the workers of the world.<sup>54</sup> From the very outset, this workers' international solidarity was justified by its practical assistance, and Münzenberg urged the setting up of committees in all countries which would start fundraising for the starving Germans. Münzenberg stressed the importance of "the feeling that the German working class did not stand alone in its struggle, but was supported by the workers of all countries". This feeling would, he assured, "infuse the German working class with new courage".<sup>55</sup>

The hunger crisis also gave the opportunity to criticise the SPD's actions as a part of the German government. One of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* supporters, Dr. Leo Klauber, expressed an especially harsh criticism of the social democrat Otto Wels. In Klauber's opinion, Wels had sneered arrogantly at the "cannibalistic Hunger-Russia" up until the end of 1922, but was now forced to confess the failure of his own policies.<sup>56</sup> To illustrate how catastrophically the German government and the SPD had failed since it had formed the 'grand coalition' in mid-August 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* used its *Bulletin* to spread extensive news of the social chaos and the many human tragedies. In its first *Bulletin* a tragic story was reported to awaken emotionally charged expressions of solidarity. Citing an article from the bourgeois newspaper, the *Berliner Zeitung* (*The Berlin*

*Newspaper*), the *Arbeiterhilfe* reported a story about a group of workers' children who had headed from Berlin to a nearby village to look for potatoes. As the children were digging in a field, the police had turned up. In an alleged effort to disperse the children, the police opened fire. According to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, a 13-year-old boy from Neukölln, the son of a war widow, fell to the ground screaming "Mutter (Mother)!" He had been shot right through the heart, the *Arbeiterhilfe* reported. A 14-year old girl who had been with the boy had also been shot in the chest. She survived, but was in hospital in a critical state. Now children, driven by hunger and looking for potatoes, had been mown down. The *Arbeiterhilfe* called out: "Workers of the world intercede, help!", urging them to awaken their solidarity for the German workers.<sup>57</sup>

In an *Arbeiterhilfe* poster from the latter part of October 1923, the Russian famine was not compared as such to the hunger crisis in Germany, but instead the feeling amongst the workers was compared:<sup>58</sup>

Once again, as in 1921 [...], the feeling of solidarity flares up powerfully in millions of workers' hearts, and millions of workers' hands collect and toil to help you German workers.<sup>59</sup>

Solidarity was not some cold slogan. No, it was depicted as being a burning flame within the hearts of the workers. Just as in 1921, the people in despair were not to be left to their callous fate: "Do not despair! Do not collapse in your poverty and need! Millions of working class women and men of all countries are at work, to aid you!" It was guaranteed that these were not just empty promises but actions that were already being realised.<sup>60</sup> In conclusion it was declared in a spirit of classic Marxist working-class solidarity:

Rest assured that you are not alone, but that the working class all over the world is with you and is ready to support you with all its might and means. Long live the solidarity of the workers of all countries!<sup>61</sup>

These documents show that although the red grain from Russia was an important element at the beginning of its campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* expressions of solidarity cannot be regarded as being particularly Soviet-centred. Soviet Russia was only one amongst many nations in this international solidarity that was allegedly being awakened all around the world. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* close connections with the Comintern could not, however, have been missed by anyone reading the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin*. On the front page of the *Bulletin* published on 13 November,

a personal message from the President of the Comintern, Grigory Zinoviev, was printed. Zinoviev declared that, at this moment in time, one could not find a more serious duty for a worker with an international mindset than to deliver assistance to the starving and fighting workers of Germany and their children. "May every worker hear and follow this appeal!", the *Arbeiterhilfe* added.<sup>62</sup>

As in 1921, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* appeal for help was signed by a significant number of well-known people in the form of 'political solidarity'. They included amongst others the Nobel prize winners Romain Rolland (1915), Albert Einstein (1921) and Anatole France (1921).<sup>63</sup> In addition, the Extended CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* included a number of other prominent figures and socialist politicians, including Martin Andersen Nexø, Henri Barbusse, Edo Fimmen, Maxim Gorky, George Grosz, Olga Kameneva, Käthe Kollwitz, Franz Oppenheimer, Bernhard Shaw and Ernst Toller.<sup>64</sup>

One of Münzenberg's greatest successes in the German campaign was having once again attracted the support of Käthe Kollwitz, who submitted several lithographs illustrating the social misery in Germany. One of her most famous lithographs was used as a poster and published on the cover of the booklet *Hunger in Deutschland*. Just as the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 1921 had published the booklet *Helf! Russland in Not!* which had included contributions by prominent figures as well as artwork by Kollwitz and Georg Grosz, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to repeat its success in 1923. The booklet *Hunger in Deutschland* included contributions by such people as Mathilde Wurm (SPD), Heinrich Mann, Alfons Paquet, Arthur Holitscher and Münzenberg.<sup>65</sup>

## Solidarity in times of reaction

### The "Hunger in Germany" Congress, 1923

The highpoint of the German campaign was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international "*Hunger In Germany*" congress organised in the large congress hall of the Herrenhaus (the former House of Lords) in Berlin on 9 December 1923.<sup>66</sup> In total, a report to the Comintern revealed, the congress was attended by 500 guests and delegates. The congress also attracted representatives from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Yugoslavia, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Switzerland, Spain, Poland and Canada.<sup>67</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* had even invited the German Minister of the Interior and had encouraged the government to send a delegation to the

congress.<sup>68</sup> Boldly, even General von Seeckt (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) had been sent a personal invitation to the congress.<sup>69</sup> In response, an urgent meeting of the ministries and of the Red Cross was to be held on 3 December. The Red Cross pointed out that it had always managed to take care of all necessary relief activities in Germany and was thus sceptical towards the *Arbeiterhilfe's* initiative. All of those present agreed that the clippings from the communist press clearly showed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had close links to the communist movement, although this connection had not been evident during its relief activities in Berlin. From the many soup kitchens in Berlin, it had only been reported from one that food had been provided to members of the banned KPD.<sup>70</sup>

The crisis had brought together a broad united front against the hunger. As proof of this, the social democratic Municipal Councillor Hinze greeted on behalf of the city of Berlin the *Arbeiterhilfe* at the opening of the congress, and officially recognised the practical relief work it was providing in Berlin.<sup>71</sup> In a report to Moscow, the atmosphere at the congress was characterised as having been excellent. Even the bourgeois present at the congress had maintained a very animated mood throughout.<sup>72</sup> The Presidium of the congress also included socialist and communists such as Mathilde Wurm, Helene Stöcker, Edo Fimmen (Amsterdam), Helen Crawford (Britain), Ture Nerman (Sweden), Münzenberg and Voldemar Aussem (Soviet Union).<sup>73</sup>

The principal speech of the congress was given by Münzenberg that focused on both the reasons, magnitude and progress of the hunger campaign in Germany. Münzenberg stated that he personally believed that a real solution to the crisis could only be achieved through a reorganisation of the German economy in conjunction with a reorganisation of the European and world's financial systems.<sup>74</sup> Münzenberg had a clear plan of action ready:

We believe that the German state must regard it as its foremost task to provide the threatened German people with clothes, food and a dwelling and that all other tasks, whatever they may be, must take second place to this task. We believe that even the question of the replenishment of the German Armed Forces must be postponed in favour of providing the starving workers with bread. (Rapturous applause!) Our view is that even our three battleships which lie today at the mouth of the Elbe should temporarily stop being heated with coal and their coal be placed at the disposal of the food kitchens for the unemployed in Hamburg. (Rapturous applause!) Our view is that everything must be done in order to fulfil this elementary duty that

every country has towards its national comrades (Volksgenossen), in order to put an end at last to this starvation and death.<sup>75</sup>

Curiously, Münzenberg argued for stronger national solidarity in Germany to save the hungering. As shown in Chapter 5, Münzenberg's underlying reasoning was that the goal in Germany at this point was not to revolutionise the workers anymore, but to save the radical workers from looming total destruction.

Edo Fimmen was one of the prominent socialists also present during the congress in Berlin. Fimmen's speech was noted in a secret report written by the *Arbeiterhilfe* after the congress as being almost too far to the Left and too politically tainted.<sup>76</sup> The speech is a highly relevant analysis of the state of international solidarity in 1923 which has not been acknowledged in the previous research. Although he was at the time the head of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), he was not an official representative of the trade union movement at the congress. He introduced himself as a member of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s CC. Fimmen had earlier in 1923 resigned from his post as the General Secretary of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) due to a political scandal caused by Fimmen's negotiations with the Profintern in Berlin to form a united front.<sup>77</sup> At the Berlin congress, he spoke of the importance of the workers' international solidarity but he concluded with regret that in early December 1923 there was no powerful feeling of international solidarity towards the German workers. Some efforts had been made by the international trade union federation to send funds to German unions so that they could continue their activities, but there was no sign of any international relief initiative from the international unions for the German workers. Were, then, the feelings of international solidarity weaker for the German workers compared to the Russians in 1921? According to Fimmen, this was absolutely not the case. In his opinion, the reason was to be found in the then current general economic trends. Between the years 1919–1921 the economic restructuring of post-war Europe was still characterised by prosperity. However, in 1923 the conditions in Europe were described by Fimmen as being a severe time of reaction, symbolised by the rise of fascism in various parts of Europe.<sup>78</sup>

Fimmen, who in 1921 had been very sceptical of Münzenberg's workers' relief, now defended the *Arbeiterhilfe* that in his mind all too often was described as being a tool of Moscow. It was therefore thought to be a good deed not to support the *Arbeiterhilfe*. As a consequence, however, the German workers were also left without assistance, as the

non-socialist philanthropic organisations did not have quite the same ability to reach the workers as the *Arbeiterhilfe* did.<sup>79</sup>

According to some theories, Fimmen further elaborated, hunger would have a revolutionary effect on the working class, but this would only be true during its initial phases. Once a certain line had been passed, a counter-revolutionary outcome would be the result. A *Lumpenproletariat* (proletarian outcasts) might perhaps be willing and able to plunder and pillage, but it was not a revolutionary power. Therefore, irrespective of whether one was on the Right or the Left of the socialist camp, the fight for the German workers should be understood as the struggle of all workers both in Germany and around the world. Fimmen's speech received several minutes of long thunderous applause.<sup>80</sup>

### Solidarity and propaganda from the government's perspective

Two days after the congress, on 11 December 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* held a closed meeting, open only to the communist delegates of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international and national sections. In this purely communist forum, Münzenberg could justify the campaign in purely communist terms. In this context he explained that the current campaign for Germany was absolutely and emphatically a political campaign.<sup>81</sup> Münzenberg was a master at using the right language in different forums. Just as convincing as he had been at the *Hunger in Germany* congress, he could talk with that same conviction as a communist amongst other communists. It must be remembered that several voices within the KPD and the Comintern did not understand the purpose of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* German campaign and would rather have seen the organisation dissolved sooner rather than later. Münzenberg was acutely aware of this, and he always emphasised very strongly and very clearly the *Arbeiterhilfe's* revolutionary importance within communist circles.

To the communists, Münzenberg explained that they had made an effort at the congress to strengthen the *Arbeiterhilfe's* position in Germany by "camouflaging" its connections with the communists and by having invited Right-wing socialists and representatives from the German authorities to its congress. Only 10–15 percent of the participants had been communist delegates, whereas the rest had been social democrats and others. Münzenberg argued that the congress had been a great experiment and he had allegedly gone to the congress "trembling with fear". They, the communists, had been very limited in number, but in the end even several of the social democrats had remarked that Münzenberg had spoken ingeniously. It was very convenient for the *Arbeiterhilfe* to attract the support of social democrats, although

Münzenberg did acknowledge the tactic's innate danger, as it could lead to the communists losing control over the organisation. While this was not a danger at the international level, this was a major concern at the local and regional levels. Moreover, Münzenberg confessed that he did not have complete freedom of action as, for example, the day before the congress he had been forced to make a deal with the *Reichsministerium* (Reich Ministry) that he would not use the term 'communism' in his speeches. Not even in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publications could they use the term 'communism' but, as Münzenberg noted, this would not prevent them from conveying their message.<sup>82</sup>

The only time period when the *Arbeiterhilfe* can be said to have tried to deliver communism in disguise, was between November 1923 and March 1924 during the state of emergency. Both before and after this time period, it was not a problem for the *Arbeiterhilfe* to articulate a radical message of international solidarity that supported the cause of the KPD and Soviet Russia. As shown, the reasons for this turn was clearly motivated by necessity, and not so much by a subversive preconceived plan. If the *Arbeiterhilfe* or Münzenberg openly spoke for communism, the *Arbeiterhilfe* would have been banned.<sup>83</sup>

For Münzenberg, ensuring that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not banned was of the utmost importance as its campaign and relief work was not something that could be carried out illegally. Münzenberg revealed in his secret speech on 11 December that a ban had been closer than ever in early December when military representatives of the KPD had transported weapons under the *Arbeiterhilfe's* name. The consignment had been discovered by the police, and it was only through undisclosed "personal connections" with the German government that an immediate ban on the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been avoided, Münzenberg revealed.<sup>84</sup>

Disturbingly indifferent of the consequences for the people relying on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* hunger relief, the KPD started utilising the *Arbeiterhilfe's* central office at 11 Unter den Linden in Berlin for party work. As long as the KPD was careful in its usage of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* organisation for party work, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* position as a legal organisation was not jeopardised. However since the KPD's ban, several incidents had occurred. For example, the surprise at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* office had been total when suddenly 30–40 women had turned up asking about a KPD meeting. The surprise had been no less when on the same day a delivery direct from the KPD's press house at *Friedrichstadt Druckerei* had been delivered by hand-cart to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* office for storage. Münzenberg observed accusatorily that this open delivery had certainly been observed by the police, thus jeopardising the *Arbeiterhilfe's* future work.<sup>85</sup>



Clara Zetkin supported Münzenberg's complaints and concurred in a report to Zinoviev that the KPD had utilised the *Arbeiterhilfe's* bureaux and addresses in Berlin for subversive activities, including weapon transports, without any proper agreement with the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The KPD's activities had, according to Zetkin, been politically and conspiratorially idiotic and objectionable. Moreover, Zetkin emphasised to Zinoviev the importance of having a "neutral institution" such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* during the current situation in Germany as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the only organisation that could stay in touch with the masses. Zetkin was crystal clear: "We cannot compromise it".<sup>86</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* real troubles with the authorities had begun after the declaration of the state of emergency in Germany on 26 October 1923. As a pre-emptive measure, sensitive documents were placed in a locker at the Friedrichstraße train station where they were thought to be secure. In an ironic twist of fate, the person who had secured the material in the locker had evidently been unaware of the fact that if the locker was not emptied within two months, it would be opened by the authorities. After two months, in late November or early December 1923, someone working at the Friedrichstraße train station had – blissfully unaware of the far-reaching consequences of his actions – opened the *Arbeiterhilfe's* locker and discovered a cardboard box. After a short inspection, the box was immediately handed over to the political police (department I.A.) which suddenly found itself confronted by a pile of politically sensitive material on the *Arbeiterhilfe* dating from the middle of 1922 up until summer 1923.<sup>87</sup>

A thorough investigation of the material was completed by the political police on 27 December 1923. A 16-page long report summarised the contents of the seven folders of documents which had been obtained from the locker. The first folder had contained the minutes of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* World congress held on 14 July 1923. The police report concluded that the minutes alone revealed everything one needed to know about the *Arbeiterhilfe*, as one could read the "unmasked" speeches of Münzenberg. In summary, the political police were left with no doubt that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was integrally connected to the KPD, the Comintern and Soviet Russia.<sup>88</sup>

However, as the *Reichswehrministerium* (German Ministry of War) stated on 2 January, while the obtained documents contained many interesting facts, much of the information was already old news.<sup>89</sup> Although the *Arbeiterhilfe* was undoubtedly part of the communist movement, this did not provide a final answer to the most fundamental question regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe*, namely: was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* political propaganda

more damaging than the benefits of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* practical relief work amongst the German poor? This dilemma would continue to haunt the German authorities for many years to come.

On 14 January 1924, the Police President of Berlin urged the military authorities to immediately call a governmental meeting to discuss the appropriate measures to be taken against the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Amongst others the Police President had been alarmed as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* *Brotmarken* from Thuringia had a printed Soviet star decorated with the Hammer and Sickle, and the *Arbeiterhilfe's* *Essmarken* (Food coupons) in Berlin had printed citations that showed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was at least a *Klassenkampforganisation* (Class struggle organisation).<sup>90</sup> Ten days later, on 24 January 1924, a secret meeting took place at the German Ministry of the Interior where the fate of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was discussed. Nearly every major governmental body was represented at this meeting, including the Ministry of the Interior, the State Councillor for the Supervision of Public Order and the *Staatskommissar für die Regelung der Kriegswohlfahrtspflege* (State Councillor for the Regulation of Wartime Social Welfare) together with representatives from the *Reichswehrministerium* (Ministry of War), *Reichsarbeitsministerium* (Ministry of Labour), *Preußische Ministerium des Innern* (the Prussian Ministry of the Interior), *Preußisches Ministerium für Volkswohlfahrt* (the Prussian Ministry of Social Welfare) and a representative from police headquarters in Berlin.<sup>91</sup>

The Ministry of War's representative concluded that, if the military authorities had known of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* intimate link to the Comintern at an earlier stage, then it would have been banned along with the other communist organisations on 23 November 1923.<sup>92</sup> Now, although General Hans von Seeckt, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the acting leader of the Weimar Republic during the state of emergency had gained access to the new documents on the *Arbeiterhilfe*, his representative pointed out that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had not focused on political agitation but on providing substantial amounts of food to people in need in Berlin, Saxony and Thuringia. Despite these relief efforts, the Prussian representatives stressed that the public had to be informed through the press of the "*Arbeiterhilfe's* true character". As a condition for the ban of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, an immediate replacement of its relief activities that currently provided for 15,000 people in Berlin, as well as further replacements for their other food-provisioning centres in Saxony and Thuringia were required. The Reich Commissar Kuenzer then produced a plan of action: An "Aufklärung in der Presse (press release)" exposing the true nature of the *Arbeiterhilfe* would first be published. Next, the Prussian Ministry for Social Welfare would see to

it that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* soup kitchens were overtaken by other organisations, after which "a ban of the entire" *Arbeiterhilfe* would follow.<sup>93</sup> It was further concluded that:

The dependence of the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe on Russia and the communist party must be made clear above all to the social democrats as well, who [...] actually believe that at least the German section of Internationale Arbeiterhilfe [...] does not indulge in communist propaganda.<sup>94</sup>

Apparently, no relief organisation was able to replace the *Arbeiterhilfe* and, contrary to the demands of all those present at the meeting, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not banned in Germany. As General von Seeckt concluded in late February in a last assessment regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe* "[...], I gained the impression that the political propaganda, even if it is unquestionably the actual purpose of the agency, at this time took second place to its charitable activity".<sup>95</sup> In the end, it seems that it was the concrete hunger relief provided by the *Arbeiterhilfe* that actually saved it.

In conclusion, thanks to its German hunger campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had managed to transform its organisation from a solidarity organisation for Soviet Russia into a international organisation which corresponded more to the classic idea of Marxist working-class solidarity. It established the foundation for an ever expanding *Arbeiterhilfe* which in the coming years developed into a significant international organisation for transnational solidarity that saw the entire world as its field of operation.

The following chapters consequently also depart from the chronological approach, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* expanded into diverse fields of activity through its international solidarity work. The years between 1924–1933 were a time of unprecedented expansion but were also a time of new challenges and a fierce battle over the meaning and understanding of international solidarity both within the communist movement and between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the social democrats.

# 5

## Creating a Permanent International Solidarity Organisation

Up until 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had consisted of more or less largely uncoordinated committees which had been created during specific campaigns. As this chapter will show, the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s turn towards a membership organisation in 1924 initiated a process which culminated in the *Arbeiterhilfe* being turned into a permanent international solidarity organisation.

Parallel to the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s turn towards a permanent solidarity organisation, serious disputes emerged between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its social democratic and communist critics. Workers' solidarity became highly contested within the German Left during the mid-1920s and raised such vital questions on the front pages of the German press as: Who had the right to speak for solidarity and what were the 'correct' interpretations and nuances of this workers' solidarity? The *Arbeiterhilfe* was repeatedly singled out by the social democrats as an illegitimate or corrupt voice calling for solidarity, allegedly misleading the German working class towards radicalism. Paradoxically, as will be shown, while the social democrats were fighting against the *Arbeiterhilfe* on the grounds of its 'disguised Bolshevism', the *Arbeiterhilfe* was simultaneously itself the target of stern criticism from within the communist movement. From the left-wing communist point of view, the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s message of solidarity was challenged on the basis of its insufficient radicalism.

The second and third parts of the chapter will analyse how the *Arbeiterhilfe* was conceptualised as a "sympathising mass organisation" in the context of the Comintern's plans in 1926 to form a so-called "solar system" of sympathising organisations. It is interesting to note that the concept of "mass organisation" was not widely, if at all, used to describe the *Arbeiterhilfe* as an organisation prior to 1926. On the basis of the German and Russian archive material, this concept did

not come into active usage until 1927. The final part of this chapter presents a source-based analysis of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ability to spread its message of international solidarity over 1924–1932, which takes into account membership figures, publishing activities and its organisational expansion.

### **An illegitimate voice of solidarity?**

In the following, my main focus will be on the heated debate concerning the *Arbeiterhilfe's* legitimacy as a solidarity organisation. I propose here that the debates regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe* in fact constituted a fierce struggle over the meaning and understanding of solidarity, which is of crucial significance for the history of international solidarity during the interwar period. The issue is also of special significance for the debate on the possibilities of forming a common working-class milieu in Weimar Germany.

### **The social democratic onslaught**

At a closed meeting in December 1923, Münzenberg asserted that one of the major debates within the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD) was how to relate to the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Of particular concern for the *Arbeiterhilfe* was that the SPD had started to actively discredit the social democrats who supported the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Furthermore, the SPD was now running its own parallel relief campaign for the hungry in Germany, and therefore demanded that the social democrats who were active in the *Arbeiterhilfe* abandon it in favour of the social democratic welfare organisation the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (Workers' Welfare Association). Demands of this sort had, according to Münzenberg, been made to the social democrats Meta Kraus-Fessel, MdR (Member of the *Reichstag*) Mathilde Wurm (1874–1935) and Dr. Hermann Weyl (1872–1925) and possibly to others as well.<sup>1</sup> Münzenberg's concerns were confirmed in late December 1923 when the SPD publicly declared that if any social democrats decided after all to collaborate with the *Arbeiterhilfe*, they were acting completely without the SPD's consent.<sup>2</sup>

This was, however, only the beginning. The SPD's main assault against the *Arbeiterhilfe* commenced on 9 February 1924 when *Vorwärts* published a front page article on the *Arbeiterhilfe* by Ernst Reuter-Friesland. Reuter-Friesland had earlier been a leading member of the *German Communist Party* (KPD), until he was expelled from the party in January 1922. In October 1922 he became a member of the SPD and immediately became the editor of *Vorwärts*.<sup>3</sup> His article was entitled

"The International Workers' Relief: What it Officially Says and What it Secretly Does". Reuter-Friesland declared that it was *Vorwärts'* duty to warn the public of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* treacherous character, clearly taking on the mission of the Prussian government's representative, who on 24 January 1924 had demanded a press campaign to reveal the 'true character' of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It was revealed that the article's 'revelations' regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe* were based on a secret protocol from an *Arbeiterhilfe* conference that *Vorwärts* had received from a sympathetic source.<sup>4</sup> What is now known is that this sympathetic source was none other than the German government itself. Previous research has assumed that the public 'unmasking' of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in the German press had originated from the SPD and "independent union rivals on the Left" who had contacts inside the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Chapter 4, on the contrary, this was no ordinary leak nor the result of any investigative journalism, but a well-instigated governmental campaign headed by the highest authorities of the Weimar Republic in cooperation with the social democrats. No doubt remains. The only reason for the leak to *Vorwärts* was to justify a dissolution of the *Arbeiterhilfe* once the public had been made aware of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* 'scandalous connections'.

*Vorwärts* declared that there remained no doubt that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was an organisation created by Soviet Russia in order to influence public opinion in favour of Soviet foreign policy. In effect, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity was presented to the public as a dangerous weapon being utilised by Soviet Russia in order to spread communism. Here solidarity was primarily seen as a weapon utilised by the communist movement, very much in accordance with the front organisation perspective.<sup>6</sup>

Reuter-Friesland's article in *Vorwärts* resulted in a significant amount of public interest, and in the following day's issue of the paper, it was noted that the article confirmed the public's astonishment at the deceitfulness of the "Bolshevik propaganda apparatus".<sup>7</sup> Münzenberg immediately issued a statement in response to the article where he noted that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had never denied that it had found its supporters amongst communists and those who sympathised with Soviet Russia. It was only during the current German campaign that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had found supporters from other circles as well. He challenged *Vorwärts* to explain exactly how the *Arbeiterhilfe's* current activities in Germany contradicted its claim to being an *above-party* organisation? According to Münzenberg, *Vorwärts* had been unable to deliver proof of any such conduct. Furthermore, he criticised *Vorwärts* for having given the

impression to its readers that the 'secret' material it quoted originated from a meeting held during the past days or weeks, or the *Hunger in Deutschland* Congress. Münzenberg pointed out that this material was from the summer of 1923 and had no bearing on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* hunger campaign in Germany. In Münzenberg's view, this proved that *Vorwärts* was unable to find anything compromising about the *Arbeiterhilfe's* current activities. Quite the contrary, in fact. Münzenberg fired back by asking *Vorwärts* how it could assault the one organisation that was providing for 25,000 workers daily in Germany when it knew that such an offensive could lead to a ban on the *Arbeiterhilfe* and to an immediate end to this relief work.<sup>8</sup>

*Vorwärts* declared, however, that it could not be fooled as it knew that the political role of the *Arbeiterhilfe* – even in its alleged neutral work – was to advance Soviet Russia's efforts to win "ground on which it could start manoeuvring" against social democracy.<sup>9</sup> In effect, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work was portrayed in *Vorwärts* as being Bolshevik manipulation striving to bring German workers under foreign influence. Radical international solidarity was simply equated with Soviet foreign policy and something external infused to the German working class. In another article, it was explicitly claimed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was being used by Soviet leaders as a recruiting ground for communist assault troops. Through food and goodwill, the workers were being lured into the *Arbeiterhilfe*, then slowly indoctrinated and finally prepared for clandestine communist activity.<sup>10</sup> According to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, these attacks against the *Arbeiterhilfe* were based on the old social democratic fear that, if social democrats cooperated with workers of different political affiliations in a common cause, only the social democrats would alter their political views. Clearly, this did not convey a very confident belief in the social democratic idea, the *Arbeiterhilfe* retorted.<sup>11</sup>

In essence, what the SPD was arguing was that, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed to speak on behalf of a common workers' solidarity, it was in effect an illegitimate voice of solidarity that was trying to mislead the workers towards radicalism. However, as Stjernø (2005) has shown, the SPD itself at the time had a troublesome relationship with the idea of workers' solidarity. The SPD's latest party manifesto of 1921 had actually not mentioned solidarity at all, nor even mentioned their common interests, brotherhood or feelings of solidarity towards the international working class. One could thus argue that the previously overlooked high-profile conflict with the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 1924 influenced the SPD to the extent that it felt compelled to include the notion of a classic Marxist solidarity in the Heidelberg party programme of 1925. It was

then reassured that: "The German Social Democratic Party is conscious of the international solidarity of the proletariat, and is determined to fulfil all duties that grow out of this".<sup>12</sup> Perhaps, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* and especially Münzenberg's, public accusations towards the SPD as the betrayers of labour solidarity had indeed cast doubt on the SPD's relationship to international solidarity, which needed to be verified in its actual party manifesto.

For the social democrats, their onslaught against the *Arbeiterhilfe* had, however, only just begun. Tactically, only weeks before the *Reichstag* elections held on 4 May 1924, the social democratic *General Federation of German Trade Unions* (ADGB),<sup>13</sup> which at the time was the most powerful labour federation in the Weimar Republic, published a booklet entitled *The Third Column of Communist Politics: The International Workers' Relief* (1924). This 24-page publication was based on the documents that the political police had obtained from the Friedrichstraße locker.<sup>14</sup> The ADGB claimed that the public image of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a charitable organisation had misled a great number of "well-meaning" philanthropists who were unaware that they were being used by the communists for propagandist purposes.<sup>15</sup> The ADGB's booklet could be perceived as being one of the first attempts to develop the front organisation perspective as it claimed to 'reveal' the two-faced character of the organisation which, through its 'benign solidarity work', was hiding its true Bolshevik character.

This was the single most devastating blow against the *Arbeiterhilfe* and, as an immediate response, the *Arbeiterhilfe* launched a series of leaflets and booklets which defended the reputation of the organisation.<sup>16</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* could not, however, convincingly refute the legitimacy of the secret documents. Instead the *Arbeiterhilfe* highlighted the outrageous fact that the only way that the ADGB could have gained access to the secret material was through their cooperation with the German political police.

The *Arbeiterhilfe* elucidated its continued mission through the explicit language of international solidarity, singling out the *Arbeiterhilfe* as being the "latest fruit on the tree of international proletariat solidarity" and "a pillar of proletarian self-help".<sup>17</sup> For the social democrats, this so-called fruit of solidarity resembled more a poisonous apple to be shaken down and left to rot. To protect the *Arbeiterhilfe's* position as a legitimate voice of solidarity, the *Arbeiterhilfe* published the leaflet entitled "A Stab in the Back of the Striking Workers".<sup>18</sup> In this leaflet it was vigorously emphasised that, since a wave of strikes in Germany had commenced in January 1924, the ADGB had not been very much involved in the



workers' struggle. Now, through its attack on the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the "ADGB bureaucrats" were in fact stabbing the workers in the back by betraying the workers' solidarity.<sup>19</sup>

As a ban of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not forthcoming, the SPD allegedly even tried, as a last resort, to take over the *Arbeiterhilfe* 'from below'. For example, the local branch of the SPD in Chemnitz had encouraged all unions to join the *Arbeiterhilfe* so that they could prevent the KPD from politically utilising the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>20</sup> This was not, however, a lasting solution. Forces within the social democratic leadership regarded the *Arbeiterhilfe* as being one of the most dangerous organisations operating within the German labour movement and, as a result, the SPD's party congress took decisive steps to solve the 'issue' of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in June 1924. The MdR Wilhelm Sollmann (1881–1951), who had functioned as the Reich Minister of the Interior from August to November 1923, proposed a motion at the party congress suggesting that the SPD should make it impossible for social democrats to maintain their membership in the SPD if they supported the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>21</sup> On 14 June 1924, this motion was approved at the SPD's party congress and henceforth all social democratic members of the *Arbeiterhilfe* were threatened with expulsion from the SPD.<sup>22</sup> *Vorwärts* publicly justified the decision in Sollmann's spirit:

Since the International Workers' Relief is an organ of communist-Bolshevik politics, whose principal aims include the destruction of social democracy, participation in the International Workers' Relief is incompatible with affiliation to social democracy.<sup>23</sup>

The SPD's decision was declared by the *Arbeiterhilfe* to be a true betrayal of the German working class, and of international solidarity.<sup>24</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* ridiculed the SPD for imagining that the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s food to the workers was stirred with the "poison of class struggle" and hence had to be stopped. As a result of this decision, the *Arbeiterhilfe* proclaimed that the poorest of the German workers were from now onwards either doomed to starve or to beg for alms from the bourgeois welfare organisations. As the *Arbeiterhilfe* pointed out, these alms were not without their strings and, in effect, it was through these strings that "capitalism subjugated the German workers".<sup>25</sup>

To the SPD's dismay the social democrats Meta Kraus-Fessel and Eugen Rosemann publicly expressed their continued support for the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>26</sup> In response to the SPD's decision, the *Arbeiterhilfe* sent an open letter to all "SPD comrades" who were active within the *Arbeiterhilfe*.

The letter, signed by Kraus-Fessel, questioned why the SPD had made such a hasty decision without first discussing the matter. According to Kraus-Fessel, the decision seemed more like a "Party dictate" which would eventually force the individual members of the SPD to take a class hostile action (*klassenfeindliche Handlung*) as they would be involuntarily forced to leave the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It was feared that a possible collapse of the *Arbeiterhilfe* would leave a great number of women and children of strikers, who did not enjoy any social benefits at all, totally and utterly destitute.<sup>27</sup>

Kraus-Fessel noted that the social democratic *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, which had been founded in 1919, had now joined with bourgeois welfare initiatives such as the *Jungdo*, *Stahlhelm*, *Heilsarmee* and the *Reichswehr* in the so-called *Deutsche Nothilfe* during the winter of 1923–1924. In her opinion, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was a proletarian, above-party relief organisation with an international base founded on the idea of *self-help*, proletarian solidarity and mutual assistance. She thus identified the *Arbeiterhilfe* as the "Red Cross of the international working class", which assisted the proletariat in times of oppression and/or social misery caused by natural calamities and economic crises. In Kraus-Fessel's view, it was most odd that the SPD had allowed its members to join the *Stahlhelm* or the *Jungdo*, yet felt the need to ban their membership in the *Arbeiterhilfe*. She boldly encouraged everyone to rise up in protest against the SPD's campaign against the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>28</sup>

Georg Ledebour (1850–1947)<sup>29</sup> was another prominent socialist who openly protested against the SPD's decision. Ledebour, who at the time was a member of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Central Committee (CC), publicly praised the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s mission:<sup>30</sup>

The IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*] has set itself the task of protecting needy proletarians in all countries from descending into complete impoverishment. That is an extraordinarily deserving cause which ought to be supported by comrades of all persuasions. All such persuasions are indeed represented in both the leadership and the membership. It is absolutely absurd that the SPD claims that the IAH cannot act across party lines because the initiative is taken by communists. If one takes this view we can never act together, for it is in the nature of things that someone always has to make a start.<sup>31</sup>

Ledebour could not in any way comprehend the SPD's position and publicly declared his continued support for the *Arbeiterhilfe* against the SPD's "unqualified" accusations.<sup>32</sup>

Preserved archive material shows that the Social Democratic Party's discipline was generally honoured and letters of resignation from SPD members immediately started to reach the *Arbeiterhilfe*. However, several of these letters of resignation expressed clear regret as "the relief to the working classes was far more important than any party conflict".<sup>33</sup> The author Max Eck-Troll explained in his letter of resignation to Alfons Paquet, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* leader in Frankfurt-am-Main, why the SPD's decision had been particularly regrettable:

The reason why I have very willingly placed myself at the disposal of the IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*] is that I feel that the collaboration of social democrats and communists in the IAH could be a bridge for the later unification of all proletarian parties, which despite all present-day contrasts will come about one day, because it must come about.<sup>34</sup>

Despite some social democratic regrets, as expressed by Eck-Troll, the consequences for the *Arbeiterhilfe* were ultimately the worst imaginable, as the SPD managed to unite its divided ranks.

In a sense, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was correct in its criticism of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, as it claimed that the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* simply did not have the capacity to unite the broad masses or to offer relief activities on an above-party basis. As the *Arbeiterhilfe* argued: was it seriously expected that all workers – including left-wing radicals – would join the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* which cooperated with the bourgeois relief organisations and with the *Reichswehr* in the *Deutsche Nothilfe*: Was it actually expected that the fighting workers would unite with the very people they were fighting against?<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the *Arbeiterhilfe* could argue that the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* did not operate as a workers' solidarity organisation, but instead as a charity organisation, not as an organisation that was perceived as a part of 'us', or built on the notion of mutuality and reciprocity.

After 1924, any chance of future collaboration during international solidarity campaigns was greatly reduced. No matter what the *Arbeiterhilfe* or its supporters argued, SPD members were from now on unattainable when it came to formal membership, clearly affecting the possibilities to form a unified proletarian milieu in Germany. However, as it will be shown, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had a vast field of activity that was not restricted to membership, but directed to the general working-class public in the form of broad cultural work and public celebrations of solidarity, which again enabled the broader realisation of a counter-cultural workers' culture based on the idea of a transnational workers' community.

However, the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg had other more powerful adversaries to contend with. While the social democratic allegations were accusing them of veiled radicalism from the outside, voices within both the Comintern, the KPD and the *Internationale Rote Hilfe* (IRH/MOPR) started to question the need for a "philanthropic" organisation such as the *Arbeiterhilfe*.

### **The assault from within: the communist criticism**

Almost at the same time as the SPD and ADGB were attacking the *Arbeiterhilfe*, forces within the Comintern apparatus and the KPD began to question the very existence of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. An extended internal debate ensued during which Münzenberg, amongst others, was forced to explain, elaborate and justify the nature of both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its message of international solidarity.

A problematic situation had developed within the Comintern as it had created two international organisations which, in the eyes of the workers, were at times difficult to differentiate from each other. The communist *Rote Hilfe* had been founded in Germany in April 1921 with the aim of assisting persecuted and imprisoned communists. From the very moment that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was founded in September 1921, representatives of the *Rote Hilfe* had expressed their concern that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work competed with that of the *Rote Hilfe* and had pushed its work into the background.<sup>36</sup> The following year, the German *Rote Hilfe* was made a part of the IRH which was established during the Comintern's Fourth World Congress in Moscow. The establishment of the IRH led to the reproduction of the conflict and competition between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH on an international scale. This peculiar situation caused severe confusion amongst the rank and file, as the IRH had been founded as an "international political Red Cross" for political prisoners in capitalist states, whereas the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been described as the "Red Cross of the international working class". The two organisations had several fundamental similarities as they had both been formed into membership organisations and both organised fundraising campaigns in the name of international solidarity in 1924.<sup>37</sup>

To clarify the confusion, the two organisations were repeatedly requested to explain their difference to the workers. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was even forced to report on the front page of its official *Bulletin* on 20 January 1924 that "The Internationale Arbeiterhilfe is not the 'Rote Hilfe'" referring to several newspapers that had erroneously confused the two organisations.<sup>38</sup> Even the German State Commissioner for the Supervision of Public Order totally confused the two organisations and

it was even (incorrectly) reported that Münzenberg was the leader of the *Rote Hilfe*.<sup>39</sup>

The unclear delineation between the two organisations caused a prolonged conflict which culminated in several heated discussions of the relationship between the IRH and the *Arbeiterhilfe*. One such occurred during a meeting of the IRH's CC in Moscow on 18 March 1923. Münzenberg was not present at this meeting, but the *Arbeiterhilfe* was instead defended by Piatnitzki, who at the time was one of the most prominent leaders of the Comintern. During the meeting, Piatnitzki summarised the past and present activities of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and concluded with conviction to the IRH that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* future existence was of great significance to the Comintern. Piatnitzki's conclusion was, however, directly challenged by the IRH, whose representatives demanded the immediate dissolution of the *Arbeiterhilfe* for "practical and political" reasons. As Willi Budich of the IRH elaborated: "The *Arbeiterhilfe* collects funds under our slogans – aid to the fighters of the revolution – and we have no grounds to trust in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* loyalty". Another IRH representative further alleged that through its activities, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was encroaching upon the IRH's field of competence. He was joined by another IRH representative who proclaimed that there was simply no room for both organisations as they were competing with each other over a limited pool of workers. However, Piatnitzki refused to endorse a dissolution of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and stressed instead that the conflict between the two organisations had to be resolved. Significantly, it was never suggested that the IRH should be dissolved, which confirms that it was primarily the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the alleged "third column of communist politics", that was being threatened from Moscow.<sup>40</sup>

Münzenberg made in December 1923 a clear distinction between the IRH and the *Arbeiterhilfe* during a closed meeting in Berlin. In Münzenberg's view, the *Rote Hilfe* was a 100 percent pure and exclusive institution of the *Communist Party* (CP) and the Comintern. Furthermore, Münzenberg claimed that the *Rote Hilfe* raised its funds only from party members or the party's immediate sympathisers. By contrast, Münzenberg maintained that the *Arbeiterhilfe* did not only consist of communists but also embraced social democrats, trade unionists, members of cooperatives, bourgeois intellectuals and sympathising groups. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was only purely communist at its core, Münzenberg stressed. Furthermore, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities were completely legal, whereas the *Rote Hilfe* was at the time banned in Germany. Most significantly, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* mission was to raise funds to support large numbers of workers wherever need and

hunger surfaced. Münzenberg emphasised his firm conviction in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* mission to provide for all workers, irrespective of their political affiliation. He affirmed to the all-communist audience: "This is completely clear and does not need to be discussed at all". Controversially, Münzenberg demanded that the better part of the money raised in the Soviet Union should be channelled through the *Arbeiterhilfe* and not through the *Rote Hilfe*, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was "the only organisation" that could also utilise the funds for propaganda. If the *Arbeiterhilfe* was provided with \$US 100,000 of Russian fundraising money, it would, according to Münzenberg, be able to spread the word to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. Large Soviet donations would only be a burden for the IRH, Münzenberg claimed. He therefore suggested that all Russian money should be transferred to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, which would then donate a portion of it to the *Rote Hilfe*, so that it could provide food to the imprisoned communists.<sup>41</sup>

The dispute between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH was strongly linked to the political struggle that was at the time being played out within the KPD, the Comintern and the *Russian Communist Party* (RCP (B)). The insecure state of affairs had already begun in December 1922 when Lenin had had to give up his active work on health grounds, and this confusion had lasted until May 1924.<sup>42</sup> For the KPD, this was a time of internal vendettas. As the German October Revolution had failed, convenient scapegoats had been found amongst the old leadership, and therefore the so-called "Right-wing opposition" had been set up, while a "Middle" and a "Left" group were fighting each other for power. There was a serious state of disorder within the KPD until 19 February 1924 when a new leadership was elected in Moscow consisting of representatives from both the Left and Middle groups. It would, however, be the Left that thereafter dominated the new KPD that in general did not appreciate the significance of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>43</sup>

Münzenberg engaged wholeheartedly in the debate in a letter he sent to Walter Stöcker<sup>44</sup> on 2 February 1924. Münzenberg explained to Stöcker, who was then the provisional chairman of the KPD, that the two of them did not belong to the same fraction within the party as he, Münzenberg, agreed on several key issues with the so-called "Right-wing" opposition. In Münzenberg's highly critical and personal letter to Stöcker he questioned the very methods of propaganda and organisation of the party.<sup>45</sup> Münzenberg explained to Stöcker that

... the salvation and recovery of the party can only come about when you understand at last how to bring new, broad currents of life and

movement into the party; if things continue as they have in recent months, we will become a sect.<sup>46</sup>

The KPD was still at the time banned in Germany, and thus Münzenberg emphasised to Stöcker the importance of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its mouthpiece, the *Sichel und Hammer*. As Münzenberg stated, it was the only legally published communist pictorial newspaper in Germany, and it had a print run of 150,000 copies per issue. Münzenberg further challenged Stöcker by proclaiming that this had been accomplished without any support and, according to Münzenberg, without any interest from the party. He continued discrediting Stöcker by exclaiming: "Neither you, nor anyone else, has for one minute thought about how to use this newspaper politically or its distribution, etc, etc. Are you even aware, as the provisional Chairman of the Party, that such a newspaper is being published?"<sup>47</sup> Münzenberg continued quite correctly:

The Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party concerns itself almost on a weekly basis with this issue [the *Arbeiterhilfe*], its district associations [...], the ministries, the press pro and contra, and not once have you invited me to give a report. The campaign has been running since October [1923] and in those four months you have not found 5 minutes to discuss it with us. As I write, this sounds so unbelievable, so incomprehensible, that I have to unconsciously stop and think. And yet it is true – you have not invited me to a single discussion on this matter.<sup>48</sup>

Münzenberg continued fervently to ask what the KPD had done to attract the youth through positive work? Who did the KPD attract? In Münzenberg's view, no one.

Stöcker retorted in the name of the KPD's *Direktorium* that the KPD had in fact recently dealt with the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The KPD had namely been very concerned about the "pacifist" nature of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, Stöcker explained. Münzenberg had allegedly been invited to a joint meeting with the leaders of the KPD and a representative of the *Rote Hilfe*. As Münzenberg had not turned up, Stöcker declared to Münzenberg, the *Direktorium* had decided that the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s solidarity work in its entirety would henceforth be reorganised with a greater emphasis on proletarian solidarity (*mehr proletarisch-solidarischen Charakter*). Apparently, no one had informed Münzenberg about the matter.<sup>49</sup>

Political controversies and personal animosities often go hand in hand. This was especially true of the conflict between the IRH and the

*Arbeiterhilfe*, which was very much based on the personal animosity between Münzenberg and Willi Budich, who until January 1924, was the secretary of the IRH's "Foreign Division". When Budich was replaced in early 1924 by the American communist Israel Amter,<sup>50</sup> the initial goodwill and hopes for a newly found brotherly collaboration between the two organisations were quickly dashed. In his first letter from Moscow to Münzenberg, Amter was clearly influenced by Budich's hostility towards Münzenberg. Amter declared to Münzenberg the historic importance of the IRH as an organisation which, according to Amter, would forever greatly eclipse the significance of Münzenberg's "love child" (Lieblingskind), the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Amter further argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s ongoing international solidarity campaign against hunger in Germany meant assisting a bourgeois government as the *Arbeiterhilfe*, through its soup kitchens, was helping to alleviate the social crisis. Amter stated rather smugly that the only reason for not disbanding the *Arbeiterhilfe* was because it was an operational organisation and "because we can perhaps still re-model it and find further use for it".<sup>51</sup>

Münzenberg, always intensely defensive of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, asked Amter in his polemical reply why Amter did not, as the secretary of the IRH and as a member of both the *Executive Committee of the Communist International* (ECCI) and the Presidium of the Comintern, immediately stop these allegedly counter-revolutionary actions that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was pursuing? Münzenberg continued: "My dear! You have not done it, because you do not believe, and cannot believe in your own words written to me". Münzenberg was infuriated by the stance taken by the left-wing communists, including Amter. Münzenberg felt obliged to explain that, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* was able to support up to 20,000 people daily, this was only a fraction of the six million unemployed Germans and clearly did not represent a noticeable benefit to the German government.<sup>52</sup> Münzenberg spelled out to Amter the degree of his misconception regarding the state of the social crisis in Germany:

You seem to have no idea over there [in Moscow] of the extent to which the vanguard, mainly families of the [German] Communist Party, is being economically ground down today. [...] There are local groups and organisations of the Communist Party in Germany in which up to 80% of the members are unemployed and without means. [...] The very large danger threatening the German workers' movement today is that 1) the genuinely determined revolutionary elements are being shot, beaten, arrested, placed in asylums, driven out of the country and economically ground down. In order to prevent the latter we



regarded it as our honourable task to attempt to strengthen precisely these communist-revolutionary families and to keep them alive.<sup>53</sup>

In conclusion, Münzenberg retorted to Amter that the benefit of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, which in Amter's mind represented a "philanthropic, bourgeois association", was that it actually accomplished what the IRH did not have the capacity to do, namely to aid and assist the vanguard of the German proletariat.<sup>54</sup>

Münzenberg also had his strong supporters in the Comintern and on 19 February 1924, the Orgbüro of the ECCI decided that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not, after all, to be disbanded. Significantly, however, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was criticised because it had been too philanthropic in its approach. Paradoxically, the practical solidarity work which had guaranteed the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s survival as a legal organisation in Germany was the main ground for the revolutionaries' criticism in Moscow. Was the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s message of solidarity in fact too moderate for the radicals of the Comintern?

However, in order to defuse the conflict between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH, the ECCI decided that, in the future, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had to "morally and materially" support the IRH and to donate a minimum of 10 percent of all the funds the *Arbeiterhilfe* raised to the IRH.<sup>55</sup> This evidently did not deter Amter from 'informing' the CP of the USA in late February that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been dissolved and that all subsequent funds raised were to be exclusively directed to the IRH. Münzenberg was furious when he found out about the matter and blamed Amter for aggravating the conflict between the two organisations.<sup>56</sup>

A central bone of contention was the fact that both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the *Rote Hilfe* were attempting to expand their organisations into membership organisations in Germany. The *Rote Hilfe* argued that the recruitment of individual members to its organisation enhanced the feeling of solidarity between the workers and the victims of 'class injustice', whereas advertising for individual membership in the *Arbeiterhilfe* only had negative consequences. It was consequently argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe* should limit itself to recruiting only "collective members", in the form of other organisations or unions.<sup>57</sup>

In order to end the confusion and to prevent any further conflicts arising, a new meeting had to be organised in Moscow. On 15 November 1924, the Comintern decided in favour of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s right to recruit both individual and collective members. However, a commission had to be set up in order to smooth the relations between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH.<sup>58</sup> On 1 December, the situation between the *Arbeiterhilfe*

and the IRH was discussed at the ECCI's Orgbüro meeting. A resolution was passed that stressed that it was imperative that the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH strictly operated as two separate individual organisations. In addition, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had to stress its 'above-party' character but at the same time abstain from all "purely philanthropic work".<sup>59</sup> The conflict with the IRH led to a strict definition of both the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s fields of activity and its concept and practice of solidarity. It was made completely clear in the ECCI resolution that:

The IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*] can only intervene in such cases of need where the impoverishment of the masses threatens to turn into a reactionary force. At present, the major task of the IAH is to support striking or locked-out workers where the struggle has become the focal point of interest of the working class of whole countries on account of its size, its long duration, the exemplary heroism of the workers involved or some other reason. On no account may the IAH assume the function of a normal strike fund, which is reserved exclusively for the trade unions.<sup>60</sup>

The centrality of sufficient control from the ECCI was also stressed and henceforth all international campaigns had to be approved by the ECCI. Significantly, it was added that, in urgent cases, international campaigns could be started without the approval of the ECCI on the condition that they were launched in cooperation with the local CP, which provided Münzenberg a great deal of independence.<sup>61</sup>

The conflict between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH was officially resolved and both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the *Rote Hilfe* sent a joint letter to the respective organisations' regional and local committees on 25 December 1924. In their letter it was stressed that while the *Rote Hilfe* supported political prisoners and their families irrespective of party affiliation, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was to provide material assistance to the victims of economic crises and natural calamities affecting the wider population.<sup>62</sup>

However, contrary to the friendly cooperation imposed upon them in Moscow, their conflicts and competition continued throughout the Weimar period. One could ask how effective the Comintern's alleged hierarchical system of control really was, when it was unable to coordinate the work of its own international organisations, often leading to bitter conflicts over which organisation had the right to pursue which campaign. One can, therefore, view the Comintern's efforts to form a system of mass organisations in 1926 as being a direct consequence of the

organisational disorder resulting from the prolonged conflict between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the IRH. The significance of the early debates between these organisations and the criticism levelled at the *Arbeiterhilfe* by both the KPD, IRH and the Comintern forced Münzenberg to more clearly define the meaning and purpose of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as an international solidarity organisation.

### Turning the *Arbeiterhilfe* into a “sympathising mass organisation”

The prerequisite for the survival of the *Arbeiterhilfe* as an organisation was that it was perceived in Moscow as being an organisation which attracted a considerable amount of support for both communism, the Comintern and for the Soviet Union. The importance ascribed to Moscow’s blessing is evident from the discussions on the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s future which took place in Moscow in September 1925. Münzenberg, Francesco Misiano and Fritz Platten stressed in a joint report to the ECCI how important an organisation the *Arbeiterhilfe* was and how, since its inception, it had dutifully served the Comintern and the Soviet Union. In this context, the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s main mission was to serve as a neutral organisation which attracted left-leaning groups to the CP and which recruited intellectuals, artists and scientists as supporters of both the Comintern and the Soviet Union. Its purpose was to act as a world-wide “umbrella organisation” (Mantelorganisation) which could reach out to millions of people.<sup>63</sup>

To clarify the state of affairs, a “mass commission” was convened by the Comintern on 17 February 1926 in Moscow to discuss the coordination of the Comintern’s so-called mass organisations. The Finnish communist and high-ranking Comintern functionary, Otto Wille Kuusinen (1881–1964) chaired the meeting, with Münzenberg as secretary. This commission was convened to discuss Zinoviev’s thesis on the revolutionary work amongst the proletarian masses and the future work of the envisioned “system” of organisations, which until then had been labelled “subsidiary” or “aid organisations” but which from now onwards would be referred to as “sympathising organisations”.<sup>64</sup>

Münzenberg elaborated on the secretive nature of the meeting as he explained that, although they had convened to discuss the role and mission of specific organisations, they should refrain from mentioning them in publications regarding the organisation of the masses. In Münzenberg’s view, there would be devastating consequences if the Enlarged Executive of the Comintern in its published resolutions were to label the IRH or the *Arbeiterhilfe* as the Comintern’s above-party organisations. Such statements would make these organisations easy prey for

the SPD press that could describe them as imaginary united front organisations created by the Comintern to dupe the workers.<sup>65</sup>

Münzenberg was convinced that most CPs, after years of reluctance would finally understand the significance of the so-called sympathising organisations, but most of the CPs were very sceptical as to why they had to be offered a “whole bouquet” of these organisations. The sheer number of these organisations had, in many cases, been perceived as an issue which only complicated party affairs. Münzenberg emphasised, however, that the CP leadership had to understand that the communist functionaries were not meant to split themselves between all these subsidiary organisations. These organisations were being created for the masses who were not a part of the communist movement and consequently only required the engagement of a small core of communist functionaries.<sup>66</sup>

Münzenberg explained to those present the difference between the so-called sympathising organisations, which were more or less permanent organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the IRH, the *Sportintern* (Red Sport International) and the *Krestintern* (Red Peasant International) and organisations which had been created for a specific purpose but only for a limited amount of time. For example, as sympathy for the Soviet Union had developed very favourably amongst German workers thanks to a trip to the Soviet Union by a German delegation in 1925, it would be possible to utilise this feeling of sympathy organisationally. Münzenberg also suggested that, due to the development of the colonial question, it would be possible to organise a League for the Support of Colonial Struggles (*Liga zur Unterstützung der Kolonialkämpfe*).<sup>67</sup>

In his concluding speech, Zinoviev explained to the commission that he regarded it as no coincidence that they had held such a meeting at this point in time. In Zinoviev's view, this represented a watershed within the whole communist movement. Until 1926, they had been engaged in creating and strengthening the CPs all around the world. As a consequence, the communists had been the ones who had split the labour movement and formed smaller CPs. That era had come to an end, Zinoviev declared. Now, the time had come for the Comintern to form and engage in broad mass organisations.<sup>68</sup>

Zinoviev emphasised that the Comintern's mission was mainly to engage in issues that the social democrats either did not address or where they were at their weakest. Thus, Zinoviev explained that it was no coincidence that the Comintern was very much engaged in the women's question, as here the social democrats were very weak internationally. Another such area was the movement for China and the liberation

movement of the workers and peasants in the East. The social democrats had no programme for these issues, and hence Zinoviev elaborated on the great prospects of forming organisations in Europe for the Chinese national liberation and the labour movements in the Orient. Another such area where the social democrats lacked a programme was in the fight against war.<sup>69</sup>

In Zinoviev's opinion, there was an urgent need to adapt to the bourgeois world but at the same time, naturally, to remain communists. Under these circumstances, it was of the utmost importance to form a "whole network" of above-party organisations, such as the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the IRH and the *Krestintern*. These organisations, Zinoviev declared, would constitute a "great weapon" in the hands of the Comintern.<sup>70</sup>

As a result of this meeting, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was henceforth categorised as being a "sympathising mass organisations for special purposes". The mission of such mass organisations was to raise funds amongst the broad masses of "indifferent workers" but also to establish links to groups of social democratic and syndicalist workers, intellectuals, and small bourgeois circles.<sup>71</sup> In a special tribute to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, it was concluded in the Comintern report that of all such organisations, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had to the highest degree understood how to outwardly preserve an above-party character and had managed to include in the most broadest sense the working masses and also the important groups of intellectuals. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* mission as an already established organisation was therefore to: 1) provide aid during natural calamities and greater economic struggles in the context of proletarian self-help, and to make use of pacifist and philanthropic feelings amongst intellectuals and the left-leaning bourgeois in order to mobilise against the "class rule" in the capitalist countries; 2) mobilise stronger support amongst the trade unions, cooperatives and the small and middle peasantry in order to enhance its opportunities to provide material aid; 3) to especially expand as an organisation in China, India and Japan, although without weakening its work in Europe. In this context, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* work was valued as especially significant in countries where there were either no CPs or very weak ones; and 4) to improve its means of agitation and its propaganda work through film distribution and publishing companies. In conclusion, the Comintern confirmed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was an aid organisation of permanent importance and was to be organised in every country where there was a strong communist movement.<sup>72</sup>

In the published report on this mass commission, Kuusinen famously stated that the Comintern was to create a "whole solar system" of organisations and smaller committees around the CPs which would be under

the influence of the party, although they were not to be under their "mechanical leadership". Kuusinen criticised the comrades who cared all too little about the actual organisation of the work amongst the masses. The neglect of the organisational gains provided by the mass actions and campaigns had to come to an end, Kuusinen concluded.<sup>73</sup>

Nikolai Bukharin<sup>74</sup> (1888–1938), who had replaced Zinoviev as the leader of the Comintern in November 1926, also made an especially strong case for the *Arbeiterhilfe* by stating at the Political Secretariat's meeting in January 1927 that:

We need mass organisations, therefore we cannot dissolve the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. It is a fact that in various campaigns the newspapers of the IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*] reacted faster and better than our party press. We cannot dissolve this organisation because of the campaigns that we want to conduct.<sup>75</sup>

Münzenberg was indeed perceived as the main expert in this area of mass organisations, and he was selected to speak at the Comintern's Sixth World Congress in Moscow, 17 July – 1 September 1928, on the aims of the mass organisations. Münzenberg emphasised that the mission of the mass organisations was to reach the millions of indifferent workers who did not listen to the propaganda of the CP and to find new ways of awakening and attracting them. According to Münzenberg, the task of the mass organisations was to build a bridge to the non-communist workers who did not have the courage to join the CP, but who were prepared to sympathise with the communist movement. Most importantly, it was through the mass organisations that the communists' sphere of influence could be expanded. Münzenberg provided a comprehensive analysis of why millions of workers would not join the CP. Despite all efforts, these people would never join the party due to either anxiety or comfort and due to the party's ban in several countries. In the forthcoming struggles, Münzenberg predicted that, as the CPs might be attacked by the police and "fascists", the role of the mass organisations as a reserve of supporters, would become crucial. Finally, Münzenberg stressed to the radicals in Moscow that the mass organisations also functioned as a means of recruiting new members to the party and of delivering ready-trained functionaries to the party. This statement remains controversial, however, as on the other hand Münzenberg repeatedly stressed that most of the people engaged in the mass organisations would never due to various reasons become members of the party.<sup>76</sup>

## Organisational expansion and influence, 1924–1932

The aim of this section is to analyse how the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership organisation expanded in Germany between the years 1924–1932; it will also analyse how the *Arbeiterhilfe* created spheres of influence and public visibility through events and congresses in Germany; finally, this section queries how the *Arbeiterhilfe* developed an immense proletarian press for its international solidarity work in Germany.

Officially it was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* German congress that decided in March 1924 that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was to be turned into a permanent solidarity organisation. It was argued that, as the need for aid most often arose quite rapidly, one benefit of being a permanent organisation would be that it could continuously raise and save funds which would enable a rapid launch of aid initiatives in moments of crisis.<sup>77</sup>

### Membership figures, congresses and public events

As the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership numbers increased, communist critics began to target the *Arbeiterhilfe* for not reaching the non-party members, and thus not functioning as the proposed bridge between the communists and the rest of the working class. In response, Münzenberg sent statistics to Piatnitzki which proved the contrary. Münzenberg provided figures on the political affiliations from twelve local *Arbeiterhilfe* groups in Germany in February 1925 of which only four had more registered KPD members than non-party workers. However, only one of the local groups had any social democratic members.<sup>78</sup>

It appears that the social democratic workers were beyond the reach of the *Arbeiterhilfe* when it came to individual membership, but the matter was completely different when it came to collective membership. This is probably also one of the main reasons why their collective membership was maintained. Münzenberg reported to Zinoviev in April 1925 that a significant incident had occurred in Hamburg. The *Verband des Opfer des Krieges und der Arbeit* (The Association for the Victims of War and Labour), one-third of whose membership base consisted of social democrats, had during its congress voted against joining the *Rote Hilfe*, as it was perceived as being a communist organisation or at least as an organisation controlled by a communist leadership. However, the meeting had then almost unanimously voted in favour of joining the *Arbeiterhilfe*, which had provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with 50,000 new collective members.<sup>79</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership figures have remained a controversial question in the previous research and still remain a difficult issue

to clarify due to the large discrepancies in the various reports.<sup>80</sup> By 31 August 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed to have 400 local groups with over 20,000 individual members in Germany.<sup>81</sup>

In January 1925, the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed to have three million individual and collective members around the world. The German national organisation was the strongest, but notable organisations had allegedly also been formed in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the United States, Argentina, Japan, Australia and Russia. In Germany, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was by then organised into 483 local groups consisting of 33,600 individual members. In addition, 276 associations or organisations had joined the *Arbeiterhilfe* and provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with 1,320,000 collective members.<sup>82</sup>

At the *Arbeiterhilfe's* first German National Congress (*Reichskongress*), organised in Halle in November 1925, the *Arbeiterhilfe* assembled 200 delegates who represented approximately 30,000 individual members.<sup>83</sup> However, after the initial expansion of the organisation, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership base did not increase significantly for several years.<sup>84</sup>

However, after 1928 the information regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership in Germany becomes very contradictory. It is, however, difficult to judge the validity of the different figures. Often the governmental reports were based directly on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* own published figures, leaving no external source capable of evaluating its actual membership numbers. It seems that there was a veritable stagnation of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership base in 1929 and early 1930. The *Arbeiterhilfe* explained, in April 1930, that, despite a number of promotional campaigns, it had been unable to increase its membership numbers. During strike aid campaigns, new members were successfully recruited but the *Arbeiterhilfe* was then unable to retain their membership.<sup>85</sup> Münzenberg claimed in *Inprekorr*, however, that the German *Arbeiterhilfe* had managed to increase its membership base by 23,000 during the winter of 1929–1930, resulting in 60,000 individual members in Germany.<sup>86</sup> However, significantly lower numbers for this period were also presented by the *Arbeiterhilfe*.

Of great interest is the *Arbeiterhilfe's* first “public criticism” of its membership figures, presented during the German *Arbeiterhilfe's* congress in October 1931. Compared to any other previously published figures, the figures released in October 1931 provided the lowest numbers for the years 1929–1930. Here, for the first time a difference is made between “paid-up members” and “registered members”. According to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the main problem of the organisation was that it managed to recruit many new members during ongoing campaigns, but then was unable to retain them as paid-up members. For example in Berlin, the



*Arbeiterhilfe* had received about 10,000 filled in membership forms from the beginning of the year until 31 August 1931, but only 15 percent (1,500) of them had paid their monthly membership fees.<sup>87</sup>

Looking at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* official figures for 1930–1931, it appears that the *Arbeiterhilfe* witnessed a nothing less than spectacular increase in its membership numbers. As the official figures show, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to register over 100,000 new individual members between the first quarter of 1930 and July 1931, increasing the number to 148,000 registered members. The secretary of the German *Arbeiterhilfe*, Georg Dünninghaus, pointed out that one of the main factors leading to the spectacular increase in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership figures was the performances and tours by the *Arbeiterhilfe's* agitprop theatre group *Kolonne Links*, which will be discussed further in Chapter 8. Between February 1929 and March 1931, *Kolonne Links* had, according to Dünninghaus, managed to attract up to 16,800 new members to the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>88</sup>

However, while the *Arbeiterhilfe* reported significant successes in recruiting new members in 1931, one governmental report provides a completely different picture. The authorities' reporting of significantly lower *Arbeiterhilfe* membership figures was based on a booklet that had been published by the CC of the KPD.<sup>89</sup> According to this report, the *Arbeiterhilfe* did not manage to significantly increase its membership base in 1931. The report states that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had 52,825 paid-up members in January 1931, with the numbers having only experienced a moderate increase to 55,635 by December. The highest figure of the year was registered for June, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* had 57,962 members. The number of local groups had on the other hand increased from 641 in January to 901 in December 1931.<sup>90</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership figures were presented as even less significant in another governmental report which claimed that, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* had 55,635 members in December 1931, it in fact only had 44,701 paid-up members (abgerechneten Mitgliedern).<sup>91</sup> However, according to an unpublished report, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* subscription journal *Mahnruf: Organ für internationale Solidarität* (*The Call: Publication for International Solidarity*) had 80,000 subscribers in July 1930 and 110,000 subscribers by December 1930. This would indicate that the number of registered members could be more accurate than first expected.<sup>92</sup> Looking at the gender division of the members, the *Arbeiterhilfe* stated in October 1931 that 50 percent of its members were women.<sup>93</sup>

Irrespective of the actual membership figures, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not satisfied with the achieved numbers. In October 1931, Münzenberg

noted to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* functionaries that, despite the *Arbeiterhilfe's* many successes, it had one significant weakness: it had not managed to develop into a real mass organisation. In Germany, where it was strongest, it had 100,000 individual members, but this was not sufficient. In comparison, the ADGB had over 5 million members and the social democratic sports organisations had one million members in Germany. Consequently, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership figures were merely regarded as being a rather modest start.<sup>94</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* continued to set itself high organisational objectives. It was declared that by March 1932, the German *Arbeiterhilfe* should have 50,000 new members who also would remain members of the organisation. Furthermore, the *Arbeiterhilfe* aimed to establish 420 new local groups, 400 factory groups, 500 new collective members, to create 150 youth groups (Jugend-Aktivs) and 250 children's groups (Pionieregruppen).<sup>95</sup> A detailed plan for every district was also published and the Berlin district, for example, was required to increase the number of its local groups from 89 to 200 and to strengthen its membership base by 12,700 new fee-paying members.<sup>96</sup>

However, to gauge the *Arbeiterhilfe's* or any other organisation's influence only through its membership figures runs the risk of overlooking other forms of influence and public visibility. One significant part of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* visibility in the public sphere were its many conferences and congresses that were organised all over Germany. The *Arbeiterhilfe* organised so-called world (or international) congresses, national congresses and congresses for the German states (Landeskonferenz), district conferences and local meetings. Major national conferences were organised in Halle (1925), Erfurt (1927), Dresden (1929) and Berlin (1931). The World Congress organised in Berlin in 1931 will be analysed in detail in Chapter 8.

In addition to its public congresses and conferences, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was also a prolific organiser of events of various kinds. These events were open to all, not just restricted to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* members. The following figures indicate, however, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* potential to spread its message of international solidarity within Germany. In 1929 it organised according to a published report 3,375 events (film screenings, lectures, public meetings, demonstrations, etc) that were attended by nearly 760,000 people. The figures were even more impressive for 1930, that showed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had organised 5,036 events that had been attended by a total of 908,000 people.<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately it remains the only available source and must then be regarded critically, at least when it comes to the estimates on the numbers of people attending the events.

This level of activity is verified also for 1931, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* reported in November 1931 that it had that year organised over 5,000 public meetings and events, which allegedly had been attended by almost two million people.<sup>98</sup>

### **Publishing for the masses: Münzenberg's Red Media Empire**

The *Arbeiterhilfe*'s publishing ventures were orchestrated through its publishing house the *Neuer Deutscher Verlag* (NDV), with its headquarters at the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s office at 11 Unter den Linden, later relocated to the 48 Wilhelmstraße in Berlin. The NDV was created within the context of the feared ban on the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 1924. The Executive Committee of the *Arbeiterhilfe* had at the time decided to separate its publishing department, which then mainly consisted of the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*)'s predecessor *Sichel und Hammer*, from the rest of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. In the summer of 1924 the NDV was established as a financially and commercially independent publishing house. Its main missives were to publish the *AIZ*; to publish texts for the *Arbeiterhilfe*; to publish various works that the Comintern wished to publish but which did not fit into the profile of the Comintern's publishing house; to publish poetry and fiction with revolutionary content with the aim of reaching its circles of sympathisers and to earn enough on sales to these circles to cover the costs of its propaganda literature.<sup>99</sup>

Münzenberg explained to the CC of the KPD in July 1925 that the NDV was under the political control of the Comintern's Agitprop Department, but was not financially dependent upon the Comintern. Münzenberg declared that, alongside their political duties, they had given themselves the mission to prove that a working-class publishing house could, with accurate calculations and effective management, sustain itself.<sup>100</sup>

By the beginning of 1926, after 18 months of publishing activities, the NDV had managed to turn the publication of *AIZ* into a profitable affair as it was now able to make a profit of 5,000 mark per issue. By the end of 1925, the NDV had managed to sell a total of circa 3,575,000 copies of the *Sichel und Hammer/AIZ*.<sup>101</sup>

The *AIZ* was an unparalleled success story. In April 1926, Münzenberg reported to the KPD that the *AIZ* had a print run of 200,000 copies per issue and that it could be described as a "really healthy" business venture. Münzenberg could report that the *AIZ* was also being purchased by non-communist workers and circulated within those circles. It was very doubtful, Münzenberg explained, that a purely communist pictorial newspaper would succeed in reaching those circles. Münzenberg made these statements in a response against the plans of the CP's publishing

house, Viva, to launch its own pictorial newspaper. Consequently, Münzenberg urged the Politbüro of the KPD to drop any such plans as such a rivalry between two communist pictorial newspapers would constitute a severe political setback. If the party leadership did not agree with Münzenberg, he declared, he would be forced to contact the ECCI in Moscow and to ask for their views on the Viva's plans.<sup>102</sup> Münzenberg again skilfully utilised his independence from the KPD and whenever there developed a conflict, Münzenberg could always threaten to take the matter to Moscow, where he was backed up by powerful allies.

There also circulated unclear views on the relationship between the NDV and the KPD. In one confidential letter, it was clearly spelled out that the NDV was not a "party company" but a branch of the *Arbeiterhilfe* which was not under the KPD's control although it did closely collaborate with the Comintern. Nevertheless, the NDV did have to comply with the KPD's politics, even though it was financially completely independent.<sup>103</sup> By 1929, the NDV's major publications included the *AIZ*, the monthly journals the *Eulenspiegel* (*the Owl Mirror*), the *Arbeiter-Fotograf* (*the Worker Photographer*) and the *Magazin für Alle* (*the Magazine for Everyone*) as well as the *Buchgemeinschaft Universum* (the Universal Book Club). In total, the NDV's branches in Berlin employed 50 people in June 1929.<sup>104</sup> In addition to journals, the NDV was also a prolific publisher of novels, historical books, social political texts, books on current affairs and editions with original texts by prominent "revolutionaries". Amongst others, it published Kurt Tucholsky's *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (1929), which became a monumental success selling its first edition of 15,000 copies in only a couple of days.<sup>105</sup>

The *AIZ* experienced a significant increase in its circulation between December 1926 and September 1927. From 1 January 1927, it was published weekly (50 issues in 1927).<sup>106</sup> The print run of the *AIZ* was around 200,000 copies per issue in the beginning of 1927, and it steadily increased thereafter to 220,000–250,000 copies per issue. On 1 January 1927, 144,000 copies were sold through the KPD's distribution network and 44,000 copies through the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publishing house and "bourgeois" distribution networks. By 15 September 1927, the KPD was distributing 170,000 copies (a 22 percent increase), while the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publishing house was distributing 81,000 copies (a 90 percent increase). Thanks to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* distribution connections, it proved that the *AIZ* enjoyed an increasing readership beyond party circles, particularly after 1927.<sup>107</sup> In October 1931, Münzenberg could proudly proclaim that the *AIZ* was being published weekly with

a print run of up to 550,000 copies and was being read by over two million Germans per week.<sup>108</sup>

Now compared to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* membership numbers, its publishing ventures provide a much more powerful picture of the organisation and its ability to spread its message of international solidarity.

In conclusion, the *Arbeiterhilfe* experienced a significant expansion between 1924 and 1932. It was transformed into a membership organisation with an organisational structure and its own hierarchy of functionaries. It organised several major congresses and conferences, organised a multitude of events and it developed a vast illustrated press, which is best remembered as Münzenberg's Red Media Empire only comparable to the right-wing media empire controlled by Alfred Hugenberg. One could consider the *Arbeiterhilfe's* closer affiliation to the CP as a disadvantage for its membership recruiting. If the main idea had been to attract sympathisers who did not, due to various reasons, wish to join the CP, why would they then join the *Arbeiterhilfe* if it was made into an official part of the communist movement? It seems therefore plausible, that although fewer wished to officially become members of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, significantly more people still enjoyed its illustrated press, its movies, agitprop theatre and its many solidarity festivals. In the end, the strength of the *Arbeiterhilfe* can not be measured in membership numbers, but in its ability to create an attractive culture of transnational solidarity, open to all sympathisers.

# 6

## Broadening and Radicalising Solidarity, 1924–1932

The years 1924–1928 have traditionally been described as a period of ‘relative stabilisation’ in the history of the Weimar Republic, as Germany during these years was saved from both substantial foreign political burdens and from further extreme domestic crises. However, as Detlev Peukert argues, an “illusion of domestic stabilisation” has prevailed despite the fact that the period was rife with significant social conflicts which could only be called stable when compared to the first and last years of the Republic.<sup>1</sup> For the *German Communist Party* (KPD), the 1923 still-born October Revolution had had devastating consequences. The party was banned in Germany until 1 March 1924 and between September 1923 and April 1924 it had lost over 40 percent of its membership base.<sup>2</sup> The social deprivation of the German workers remained high, however, and during the first months of 1924 a series of prolonged strikes hit the industrial areas of Germany.<sup>3</sup> In conjunction with this development, the *Arbeiterhilfe* found its new mission in the form of strike aid and support of all those living in destitution. The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s efforts after 1924 could be summarised as an attempt to broaden its articulations of solidarity, as women and children of the German working class were actively integrated into the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s articulations of solidarity.

Having already looked at the importance of the Comintern’s decisions in Moscow in relation to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, this chapter approaches the subject from the German perspective. The year 1924 is, in the history of the Weimar Republic, known as the year of struggle, as the number of working days lost due to strikes and lockouts rose to an all-time high.<sup>4</sup> Workers tried, in vain, to preserve their eight-hour workday that had been introduced in Germany by the revolutionary government in November 1918.<sup>5</sup> Up until late 1923, there had been high expectations

of the era of the “working union” but these soon turned to bitter disappointment for the workers.<sup>6</sup>

State authority in Germany was conferred largely through the German state’s social welfare policy. The social democrats perceived social welfare policy as being simply a means of raising the living standards of the working class. This idea of social policy was not limited to material assistance alone but included an attempt to form an ‘orderly family’ thus requiring intervention into peoples’ family life, health issues, sexuality, child-rearing and education. The long tradition of state paternalism flourished during the Weimar Republic as both industry and the state authorities perceived social welfare policies as a means of moulding German workers into orderly subjects and thus creating social stability after years of revolutionary upheaval. Weitz (1997) suggests that it was precisely this combination of traditional state paternalism and the *Social Democratic Party’s* (SPD) social political programme which in Germany led to the broader enlargement of the Weimar Republic’s role in the field of social welfare.<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that the German government’s social welfare policies advanced the material lives of the workers but, as Weitz states, its welfare programmes ultimately proved to be completely insufficient. This was especially true as the wave of rationalisation which hit German industry in 1924. Unemployment levels had never been so high, which soon caused a structural split within the German working class. On the one side, there were the employed and mostly skilled workers. On the other side, a large mass of structurally unemployed and jobless workers was developing. These unemployed formed a kind of sub-stratum within the German working class which was not only isolated from the “world of work” but also from the social democratic world of organisations and their cultural traditions.<sup>8</sup> These groups of workers and their families were of special interest to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, just as other movements and parties had developed a special interest in, for example, women’s issues after female suffrage was introduced in 1918 in Germany.<sup>9</sup> From the *Arbeiterhilfe’s* perspective, it was – rightly or wrongly – assumed that this group of people would possess the weakest feelings of national solidarity as their nation had so obviously left them to their miserable fate as outsiders of the system and the national community.

In the first part of this chapter, I will elaborate on how the *Arbeiterhilfe* turned away from general hunger relief in Germany and towards supporting “workers in their struggle”. Strike aid would constitute a significant new field within the *Arbeiterhilfe’s* international solidarity work from 1924 onwards. This engagement led to a significant expansion

of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* support system as, in the name of proletarian solidarity, it initiated to broaden its articulations of solidarity supporting the women and children of fighting workers. As the Russian relief campaign turned from saving to building socialism, so did the initial "Hunger in Germany" campaign build on saving the German workers from destruction. The second stage called, however, for a radical response to the unjust and unequal Weimar society and to global economic crisis which hit Germany after 1929 where the victims of oppression were empowered by the transnational solidarity articulated by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. How was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* future role as an international solidarity organisation envisioned, and how was its radicalised message of solidarity justified in response to the "crisis of capitalism" that plummeted Weimar Germany into its worst crisis ever? The radicalisation is especially analysed through the *Arbeiterhilfe's* visual representations and, in particular, the development of its logo.

### **From hunger relief to strike aid, 1924**

Recent research has claimed that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* "militant" strike aid initiative was launched as late as 1929. The results of this chapter will, however, strongly refute this claim and illuminate both the origins and development of its strike aid initiative from 1924 onwards.<sup>10</sup>

The main purpose of this section is to investigate how the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity changed as it actively engaged in strike aid. The most characteristic element of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* strike aid was that it always maintained an international dimension. No national or local strike was merely an issue for the workers of that region or country, but was turned into a struggle inspiring the engagement of workers across borders. Major strikes inspired the creation of significant transnational networks and imaginaries of an transnational working-class community.

The question of strike aid was integrally connected with the conflict between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the social democrats in Germany. The *Arbeiterhilfe* vigorously emphasised that, since the start of the wave of strikes in Germany in the beginning of 1924, the *General Federation of German Trade Unions* (ADGB) had been very unengaged in the struggle of the workers; and the "ADGB bureaucrats" were, according to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, effectively betraying the solidarity of the workers through their attacks on the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>11</sup> In their publications, the *Arbeiterhilfe* provided a very heroic image of the workers, who were striking despite their harsh circumstances. According to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the workers



knew what was at stake; they knew that their struggles concerned the very survival of the German labour movement and working class. They knew that their only option was to prevail. In this context, the *Arbeiterhilfe* pointed out that in many districts and cities, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the one and only organisation that was providing practical aid to the strikers.<sup>12</sup>

The stakes were high as one of the most fundamental symbols of the Weimar Republic, the introduction of the eight-hour workday, was successfully being contested by German industry in 1924. Alongside the image of a starving workers' family on the front cover of the 1 May 1924 issue of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publication *Not und Brot (Need and Bread)*, it declared: "Destitution and Hunger, because they defended the 8-hour day".<sup>13</sup> The workers were, according to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, suffering due to their convictions, making individual sacrifices in the name of the whole working class. Consequently, these struggling workers were presented as being legitimate recipients of the international solidarity of the working class, highlighting again the reciprocity of solidarity. They had fought for 'us', and hence it was the duty of all workers to assist them in return. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* *Künstlerhilfe* committee made a major contribution to the campaign as it published a special booklet containing statements and artwork in support of the eight-hour day. In his introduction, Alfons Paquet paid homage to the struggling workers, stating that "those Germans who were fighting for the eight-hour day were fighting for the future of their children".<sup>14</sup>

The first German governmental reports on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* strike aid originated from January 1924. According to a report, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been active since December 1923 in the support of striking metalworkers in Lüdenscheid and Altona. The local authorities had reported that, due to the distribution of bread and Soviet grain, the strikers' position had been considerably strengthened. According to this report, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had initially provided needy workers' families with bread and grain but, once the strike had started, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* provisions had been put at the disposal of the strike's leadership.<sup>15</sup> Correspondence between the *Arbeiterhilfe* in both Berlin and Frankfurt-am-Main and the *Deutscher Metallarbeiterverband* (German Metalworkers' Union) in Hanau confirms the early start of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* strike aid initiative in other parts of Germany as well. In Hanau at least, the first initiatives for strike aid came from the *Arbeiterhilfe's* local representatives, and not from above.<sup>16</sup>

On 16 March 1924, the German *Arbeiterhilfe* convened for a national congress in Berlin. The SPD and the ADGB had not yet dealt the

*Arbeiterhilfe* their final blow; and hence the congress was attended by an eclectic mix of social democrats, socialists and communists. Münzenberg held a speech where he appealed for assistance to the German fighting but starving workers, as the fate of the workers decided the fate of the German people.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of this congress, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign against hunger in Germany was officially redirected away from the general "Notstands-Speisungen (emergency provisioning)" to active support of workers in their struggle, to the victims of the economic crisis and to the building of proletarian children's homes.<sup>18</sup> Typically the congress blessed a new mission and goal of the *Arbeiterhilfe* after the fact, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* had already for months supported strikers in Germany.

In early May 1924, Münzenberg reported that German workers had clearly been made aware of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* support activities as almost 50 undecided requests for strike aid from various cities and towns had reached the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>19</sup> According to Münzenberg, these letters had either been sent from the central committees of trade unions (*Gewerkschaftszentrale*) or from oppositional unions requesting food supplies for strikes that had been initiated against the will of the trade union's "bigwigs".<sup>20</sup>

A new level of confusion was, however, reached as a result of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* shift from "philanthropic" relief work to strike aid in 1924. The shift towards assisting "workers in their struggle" caused the unforeseen consequence that many workers did not renew their trade union memberships in 1924 as they felt it was no longer necessary. If strike action was needed, many workers seemed to feel that they could simply rely on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* assistance instead. For the Profintern and the Comintern, the spreading of such beliefs amongst the German workers was the worst imaginable outcome.<sup>21</sup>

The result of the Comintern and the KPD's insistence that the *Arbeiterhilfe* 'radicalise' its solidarity work was that workers not only confused the *Arbeiterhilfe* with the *Rote Hilfe*, but also with the trade unions. In an attempt to save the situation, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had to print a booklet which explained the relation between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the trade unions by stating that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was indeed not a trade union and that it should not be assumed to be a reserve cash-box for the trade unions during strikes.<sup>22</sup>

Preserved correspondence shows that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* practical solidarity work was not only financed by "Moscow gold" but also by locally collected funds. For example, the south-west district leadership of the German *Arbeiterhilfe* in Frankfurt-am-Main had made several requests

for financial support from the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin but had been bluntly informed that their activities had to be mainly financed through their own fundraising. There were, of course, differences within Germany. For example, the German National Committee of the *Arbeiterhilfe* concluded that south-west Germany was perfectly capable of raising local funds if it was willing to make the effort, whereas regions such as the Ruhr, Saxony, Thuringia and central Germany were regarded as being incapable of raising substantial funds.<sup>23</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* funds originated partially from workers but also from individuals such as the eminent sociology professor, Franz Oppenheimer in Frankfurt-am-Main, who sent a personal cheque in support of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>24</sup> However, in many cases, the donations that the *Arbeiterhilfe* received consisted of minimal amounts, for example, 20 pfennigs. In response to allegations that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fundraising money was unaccounted for, the numbered fundraising lists were regularly published in the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin*.<sup>25</sup> When it came to strike aid, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was, therefore, partially self-sufficient. Severe problems arose later in 1924 when the *Arbeiterhilfe* requested permission from the German authorities to organise fundraising. In some areas, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fundraising requests had initially been granted, but these had to be revoked in October 1924 when the Minister of the Interior sent to all *Landesregierungen* (constituent state governments) a strongly worded recommendation not to allow the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fundraising activities due to their "communist character".<sup>26</sup>

It is highly relevant to note the parallel discourses, where on the one hand the *Arbeiterhilfe* was being described in public as an ingenious propaganda tool of the communist movement and a disguised arm of Soviet foreign policy. Although the leaders of the SPD and the ADGB together with the German authorities were certain of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* role as an active tool in the hands of the KPD, it appears that the KPD in 1924 was utterly uninterested in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities and was only sporadically informed of its activities. Moreover, it seems that a great deal of its provisions and funds were collected by a base of active supporters 'from below' – instead of being staged by Moscow gold.<sup>27</sup>

### From victims to active agents of solidarity

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity campaign for German workers reached new heights after the introduction of the so-called Dawes Plan. The committee appointed by the Allies' Reparations Commission to sort out Germany's financial crisis had begun drawing up the Dawes Plan in

January 1924. On 9 April 1924, this committee presented a blueprint for the reorganisation of the German monetary system, including the offer of an international loan to Germany and the rewriting of the German reparations schedule. For the Germans, the Dawes Plan was generally thought to be acceptable as it finally brought the French occupation of the Ruhr to an end and also reduced Germany's reparation payments, at least initially. A central component in the new treaty was the United States's role as a central financial power in the reconstruction of Europe which would result in a significant inflow of American capital to Europe. The so-called London Agreement was signed by the Allies on 9 August 1924, although it was not ratified by Germany until 30 August. Thus, the Dawes Plan came into effect on 1 September 1924 and the first Dawes Loan to Germany was issued in mid-October 1924, after which the German market started attracting a large share of foreign investment. Between 1925–1928, up to one-third of Germany's total investment was mainly financed by American capital imports.<sup>28</sup>

In response, the *Arbeiterhilfe* proclaimed that Germany's deal with the Allies in fact resulted in rising costs of living, lower wages and longer working hours for the German workers. It was, therefore, the duty of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, it was proclaimed in September 1924, to prevent the "total enslavement" of the German working class and to assist it in its struggle against financial oppression. The "enslaved" German workers would soon be receiving "*coolie wages*", symbolising the lowest salaried workers in the world and, therefore, the *Arbeiterhilfe* warned that if the implementation of the Dawes Plan was not prevented, it would mean the beginning of a new era of international capitalism defined by grave exploitation.<sup>29</sup>

Only days after the signing of the London Agreement on 9 August 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed that the consequences of the "colonisation of Germany" had already become evident.<sup>30</sup> With this development in mind, supporting the resistance struggle of the German working class was declared to be the *Arbeiterhilfe's* primary mission and Münzenberg even defined the campaign for the victims of the Dawes Plan as being the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fourth major campaign, following the two campaigns for Russia in 1921–1923 and the German campaign of 1923.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* rhetoric, developments in Germany were perceived as being integrally connected with the rest of the world. If the wage reductions and "enslavement" of the German working class were allowed, then it would function as a precursor for the workers of the world. Therefore, the *Arbeiterhilfe* proclaimed that the whole world should involve itself in the financial struggle of the German workers but,

as the *Arbeiterhilfe* also emphasised, the fate of the German working class would ultimately remain in the hands of the German workers themselves. They had to activate themselves for their own struggle; international solidarity was a necessity but without a true German will to fight, it would not be sufficient.<sup>32</sup> International solidarity could only be mobilised for those who made active resistance, while solidarity for the passive victims would make it resemble an act of charity.

The main proclamation made during the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s campaign was that hunger as a phenomenon was not constrained within national borders but was, in essence, international. Therefore hunger was something that concerned everyone, from the rice worker of China to the American small peasant and the industrial centres of London, Paris, New York and Berlin. Hunger was international and it had to be fought on an international basis, the *Arbeiterhilfe* stated, echoing modern agendas of transnational social movements and NGOs.<sup>33</sup> The outcry "Need and Bread" (Not und Brot) supposedly echoed all over Germany not, however, as powerless begging but as a clear and loud call of the "self-conscious" proletariat, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared.<sup>34</sup>

Hunger was being utilised as a method to keep the workers weak, it was argued and, therefore, it was absolutely everyone's duty through the agency of the *Arbeiterhilfe* to prevent "mass murder" being committed by American–European industry. The *Arbeiterhilfe* called out to everyone who had preserved their "human heart and conscience" to prevent the impending oppression. The *Arbeiterhilfe* declared: We must stop thousands of the best proletarians and their families being led to their deaths; hunger was not to be allowed once again to lead hundreds of thousands of workers prematurely to their graves; we must stop people committing suicide as a final solution. Only proletarian solidarity could remedy the situation, it was argued, and this remedy would be provided through the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It was an outright declaration of war against hunger in Germany.<sup>35</sup>

However, a serious allegation, which continued to haunt the *Arbeiterhilfe*, was that it was too philanthropic in its solidarity campaigns. As long as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was engaged in organising soup kitchens and providing food and bread to the German workers, its activities were continually criticised by the left-wing communists. Therefore a significant change in the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s articulations of solidarity can be seen, where the objects of solidarity were turned to active agents of international solidarity who fought against their oppressors.

This change is effectively seen when comparing the visual representations of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s message of solidarity. The cover illustration

from a 1924 issue of *Not und Brot* portrays an elderly man standing on his own with his hands behind his back, under the eagle eye of police surveillance. Without doubt, this image projects a gloomy atmosphere, and the striking worker is portrayed even more clearly as the passive recipient of working-class solidarity and sympathy. Here, the depiction of social reality could be seen as a call for charity.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, in 1929, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* published its "United in their Fight against Capitalist Tyranny" image, it was projecting a completely different message of solidarity. Instead of a solitary worker, this image shows a whole group of strong, young men prepared to fight. They are united in their struggle, fists clenched, prepared to fight against social injustice. Here, the message of solidarity is not one based on pity. Instead, this message of solidarity urges others to join those already fighting, to unite with the fighting columns of workers. Images of suffering are changed to images of active resistance, although the backdrop of both images is formed by the actual social deprivation and oppression of the workers. With this change in its visual representation of solidarity, the danger of confusing the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity with charity was effectively erased.<sup>37</sup> As shown in the following section, this form of radicalisation also encompassed the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work for women and children.

### **Solidarity for the women and children of the workers**

At the *Arbeiterhilfe's* congress held in March 1924, the most significant resolutions dealt with the fight against the dismantling of the welfare system in Germany. The *Arbeiterhilfe* expressed its support for the expansion of the public welfare programme, but stressed at the same time its strict opposition to "bourgeois charity". As shown below, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* social political work was very strongly constructed on a stark visualisation of the dichotomy between the rich and the poor in society.<sup>38</sup>

The main point of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* social political programme was to highlight the need to support the whole worker family. In fact, as it was expressed in one leaflet, the *Arbeiterhilfe* also considered the whole worker family during strikes and lockouts. The *Arbeiterhilfe* declared: "Striking workers, think about your children! Without aid, they will starve during the strike". Here the *Arbeiterhilfe* could step in as the caretaker either through the children's homes or through food distribution. Every army was lost, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared, if it was not provided with munitions during the struggle.

Since the beginning of the German hunger campaign in the autumn of 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had shone the spotlight on the plight of the German workers' children. In very melodramatic language, the desperate state of the children made the headlines in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign newspapers, journals and leaflets. The most effective use of children in order to win sympathy and solidarity was Käthe Kollwitz's artwork from the "Mappe Hunger" which included her lithographs 'Germany's Children are Starving' and 'Bread!' published by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in early 1924. In *Sichel und Hammer*, the state of the working-class children was expressively utilised to mobilise the workers to fight. This illustration effectively depicted the Weimar Republic as a state where the rich and wealthy were feasting while working families were holding their malnourished babies and small children. The existence of a national solidarity was passionately challenged and, instead, the forces of order were presented as being the ones causing the starvation of the workers' children. The illustration below clearly shows how the *Arbeiterhilfe* attempted to construct a significant 'other' represented by the vulgar, inhuman bourgeois; and how it tried to create a bond of solidarity between the oppressed workers.<sup>39</sup>

The construction of this bourgeois/capitalist 'other' was vividly emphasised in the context of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* child relief. In a further attempt to both dehumanise the bourgeois capitalist and mobilise workers to fight, the *Arbeiterhilfe* published an article by Otto Rühle on child prostitution in January 1930, where the sexual appetite of the bourgeois man is depicted in similar terms. Here, working-class children and virgin girls are depicted as being special delicacies sought after by bourgeois men. They were not, however, only described as objects of desire but also presented as being a valuable commodity for brothels where there was a constant demand for "green fruit". As a result, there was a whole network of agents whose mission it was to reach the most desperate workers' quarters and shattered proletarian families.<sup>40</sup>

The only way to prevent this ravaging and to rescue working-class children from the jaws of capitalism, starvation and brutal exploitation was, according to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, through international solidarity.

On 17 March 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe's Reichsvorstand* (German National Executive) decided that child relief work was to become a permanent part of the organisation.<sup>41</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* mission's was to save Germany's malnourished workers' children through proletarian children's homes where the children could regain their physical and mental health. "Help, so that the working class will be healthy and strong", the



Figure 6.1 'Fünf Jahre Ordnung! Eure Kinder Verhungern! (Five Years of Order! Your Children are Starving to Death!)' (1923)

Source: *Sichel und Hammer* 2 (30.11.1923).

*Arbeiterhilfe* declared. If the next generation is made weak, all progress was meaningless.<sup>42</sup>

During its "Hunger in Germany" campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had directed its aid to all children facing starvation but, due to its shift towards strike aid, the *Arbeiterhilfe* stressed hereafter in its publications





Figure 6.2 Käthe Kollwitz, 'Brot! (Bread!)' (1924)

Source: Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne/VG-Bild-Kunst.

that its relief work was being specifically directed to the children of disciplined workers (*Gemaßregeleiten*) and those of the unemployed.<sup>43</sup>

After the initial stage of establishing children's homes, arranging transport and holiday camps, the *Arbeiterhilfe* developed two separate

*Arbeiterhilfe* children sections. The so-called “*Pioniere* (Pioneer)” groups were set up for the younger children, while the Youth Section was set up for the older children and teenagers.

Initially there was a tendency to victimise women and children. They were perceived as being weak and mainly the passive recipients of solidarity. As Kollwitz’s lithograph ‘Bread!’ shows, the women in their role as mothers were left desperate, exhausted and hungry while the men were out fighting against social injustice. So, although the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s strike aid had protected the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s campaign from accusations of being charity work, the way it was portraying the plight of women and children itself triggered feelings of solidarity and sympathy that risked further accusations of philanthropic charity work.

The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s solidarity campaigns had had during its initial years an ambiguous relationship to women. Often they were presented as being victims of the capitalist society, thrown into poverty and despair. While the men were either at work, striking or locked out, the women were generally left at home to take care of the children. In order to support the strikers, the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s solidarity was, therefore, directed towards the working-class woman in order to enable her man to struggle, to free him from the burden of a starving family and to devote his energies to the common fight for social justice. This notion of a victimised and utterly passive woman was during the latter part of the 1920s significantly challenged. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was calling for the women to finally liberate themselves from passivity and to rise up in resistance. The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s message of solidarity was no longer directed to the victimised, but to the fighting woman. As the following illustration shows, this newly born active force in the class struggle took expression in women heading off to the fight, waving the flag of socialism. Significantly, what seems to be driving the women is not merely ideological conviction, but in their role as mothers, fighting against social injustice.<sup>44</sup>

The shift towards portraying women as active agents of international solidarity was not, however, immediate. Alongside images of this new strong woman were portrayals of “weaker” women or despairing women which continued to be used, especially, for example, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* used illustrations by Kollwitz whose prevailing theme was that of a suffering mother.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to its efforts to activate the women living in Germany and the capitalist West, the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s relief work for women also included the glorification of the ‘new’ woman in the Soviet Union. This “Soviet woman” was, for example, described in the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s publication *Mahnruf* as a type unknown in Western Europe, as the Soviet



Figure 6.3 ‘Sollen die Kinder die Opfer sein? (Must the Children Be the Victims?)’ (1927)

Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum.

woman was completely free. She was declared to be free both from capitalism and from her role as a second-class creature under the oppression of men. The message to the German women was clear: even you can achieve such a liberation if you fight for the international solidarity of the working class.<sup>46</sup>

As a consequence of the women's new active role, a separate Women's Section was officially founded in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* German national congress during Easter 1929. Separate women's sections were then founded and, in 1930, the *Arbeiterhilfe* allegedly organised 468 meetings for women which in total were attended by 17,900 people. It also launched a specific journal for women called *Der Weg der Frau* (The Way of the Woman) in 1931.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion, as part of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity, women were transformed from being mere passive recipients of solidarity, into subjects actively fighting for the working class and its children in the name of international solidarity. Finally, people were not asked to pity women, but to join them at the barricades.

### Reshaping the *Arbeiterhilfe's* logo

As a way of illustrating this radicalisation of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, where the focus is shifted from the victims to the active agents of solidarity, or the transformation of the victims to committed fighters, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* insignia acts as a perfect subject for analysis. When the *Arbeiterhilfe* originally launched its trademark logo, it showed a malnourished, weak male figure hanging on to a carriage wheel. Clearly, this was a frail figure desperately calling for solidarity.<sup>48</sup>

However, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* articulations of solidarity were radicalised, so was the ailing figure in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* logo. This was expressively clear in the versions published in 1931 and 1932. The same theme was preserved in the logo but, as can be seen in a 1931 version, significant changes had been made. The male figure had by 1931 turned into a muscular man communicating strength, resilience and the power of international solidarity. The next year the signals of strength were maximised and a new kind of militancy overwhelmed the figure. If the male figure in the original version was gazing dejectedly downwards and in the second version his head was raised in determination, the final figure turned his gaze defiantly upwards, stressing his preparedness to fight and to defend the honour of international solidarity. Furthermore, in the final version, the wheel held by the male figure was turned towards the viewer, perhaps as part of a final effort to get rid of the wheel itself,



Figure 6.4 The Arbeiterhilfe's Logo (1923, 1931 and 1932)

Source: A: Protokoll der internationalen IAH-Konferenz in Berlin am 20. November 1927 mit Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen (Berlin: Verlag der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1927); B: Mahnruf: Organ für internationale Solidarität 3 (1931); C: IAH-Funktionär, Juni (1932).

symbolising complete empowerment and liberation. One could argue that the changes in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* visual representation of solidarity in its logo were a direct result of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* radicalisation during the early 1930s. Such radicalisation or militarisation of workers' symbols during the Weimar period can also be seen more generally as images of brotherly handshakes were replaced with clenched fists signalling the preparedness to fight.<sup>49</sup>

In correspondence to the changes in the logo, Münzenberg stated in October 1931 explicitly that *Arbeiterhilfe* was facing an important crossroad. Until then, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been too extensively an aid organisation, but hereafter it was to become an active part of the fighting Red united front. "We are not only the 'provisioning column' (Proviantkolonne), but also the 'fighting column' (Sturmkolonne) in the struggle against capitalism, for the enforcement of socialism upon Earth".<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, between 1924–1932, the *Arbeiterhilfe* developed its international solidarity work in Germany into a broad support base for "workers in their struggle". In this chapter, I have argued that this encompassed a significant effort on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* part to broaden the concept of its international solidarity work within Germany. Significantly, women and children were actively included in its solidarity work, initially primarily as the passive victims of their financial struggle, and then as both active participants and bearers of international solidarity. A general radicalisation of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity was also realised in 1924 through the switch from general hunger relief to active support of the workers' resistance to social injustice.

# 7

## Towards a Global International Solidarity, 1924–1926

Inspector Edward Everson of the Louza Police Station in Shanghai shouted: “Stop, if you do not stop I will shoot” on 30 May 1925. A large crowd of demonstrating students were then approaching the police station near Nanjing Road in Shanghai. The crowd did not back away and Inspector Everson gave the order to fire. However, “nobody heard, so he snatched a rifle from one of the men and fired the first shot himself”. The Municipal Police, consisting of British, Sikh and Chinese policemen, were expected by law to shoot to kill in the event of danger to life and property. Moments later, four young men lay dead on the street and a further eight passed away later. In the trial that followed, all of the witnesses agreed that the crowd had been “good-humoured almost up until the last”, although some reports claimed that the angry protesters had been shouting vehemently “Kill the foreigners!” The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs even prepared a dossier on the dead men, including photographs of the white shirts worn by two of them, showing that they had been shot in the back. As Bickers (2003) concludes, it was Britain’s “single biggest disaster in China”, and would result in a violent wave of anti-British and anti-foreign rallies all over the country.<sup>1</sup>

Even the Soviet ambassador in Beijing, Karachan, had smugly stated that the Soviet Union did not in fact need to incite the Chinese against the imperialists, as the imperialists were doing it all by themselves.<sup>2</sup> What is less well-known, however, is that within weeks, demonstrations organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe* for the Chinese people appeared in Germany in the name of international solidarity, with the workers of the West being urged to send their assistance to the fighting Chinese people.

This chapter is written within the context of the Comintern’s involvement in the colonial liberation movement. It is not, however, written

from the perspective of Soviet foreign policy or interstate relations, but seeks to understand how the early transnational solidarity networks and movements between the workers of the West and the colonials were developed by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It has recently been argued that the aftermath of World War Two signalled a rupture of 'the global' both within and on the national plane which destabilised identities based on national membership. The rise of the global imaginary within the Cold War context was thus facilitated by the freer circulation of images, people and materials across borders through counter-cultural "new social movements". The post-1945 era has also been described as the era when humanitarianism 'went global'.<sup>3</sup> The chapter at hand brings to light the often forgotten transnational and global movements and networks for international solidarity in the context of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. In conjunction with Iriye (2002), who emphasises the already rising role of international organisations in the forming of the global community during the interwar period, it can be argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was, during the 1920s, making significant transnational connections in the fields of both cultural and social internationalism as these areas involved questions and problem areas that went beyond the national frameworks and required international solutions.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the question of hunger and poverty which had preoccupied the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Soviet Russia and Germany, the question of national liberation from the "oppression of imperialism" represented one of these global issues. This was a significant shift away from the traditional understanding of "international", primarily meaning relations within the Western world (Europe, North America and Australia), towards a truly global international solidarity which embraced a new kind of connection between the people of the West and the Third World.

After the First World War had ended and the world had gathered in Paris for the Versailles peace negotiations in 1919, the main buzzword was Woodrow Wilson's principle of national self-determination. However, instead of producing a new world order based on national self-determination, the peace treaty confirmed and provided the British, French and Japanese empires with significant territorial gains. The treaty delivered in effect the zenith of imperial expansion, and the British Empire, for example, became larger than it had ever previously been. However, as Manela (2007) points out, territorial control was not a sufficient factor in maintaining an empire when its legitimacy was all the more undermined by the principle of national self-determination that spurred national liberation movements especially in the colonial world. If the end of the First World War had briefly generated a strong belief



amongst colonial nationalists that their national self-government and equality in international relations would be honoured, the peace negotiation quickly turned these expressed hopes into embittered upheavals.<sup>5</sup>

Although the “Wilsonian moment” passed without any direct consequences for the imperial order, it did bring about popular movements in the colonies and established transnational networks of nationalist activists united by global ambitions: the creation of a new international order where all nations were recognised as equal and sovereign. As a consequence of the shattered illusions in Paris in 1919, a strong incentive for rising up against the West was produced.<sup>6</sup> Wilson was not, after all, the only one who had embraced the language of national self-determination. In Moscow, the newly founded Comintern advocated a strong anti-imperialist rhetoric which also embraced the principle of self-determination. Contrary to the false hopes of Versailles, the Kremlin and the Comintern embraced the colonial liberation movements and, in 1920, the Comintern turned its attention towards the colonial question. As Young states (2001), “for the first time, anti-colonial activists from all over the world assembled to debate a common strategy against imperialist power”.<sup>7</sup>

It has recently been claimed that the term ‘solidarity’ was not used in the context of the Comintern and the Soviet Union’s support of the colonial and semi-colonial liberation movements. Instead, it has been argued that, since the colonial question involved the interests of the Soviet state, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between international solidarity and loyalty to the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter will contradict and nuance these statements through the reintroduction of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s and the Comintern’s first major anti-imperialist campaigns in Europe and the world and in doing so will focus on the Chinese liberation movement in 1925.<sup>9</sup> How was the situation of the Chinese workers brought to life in Germany and what kind of connotations did the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s message of international solidarity entail? Why, indeed, would the dire plight of the Chinese workers and peasants have any meaning for the workers of Weimar Germany, let alone inspire them to express their support and solidarity?

## Forging the alliance between the Bear and the Dragon

As a direct result of the Versailles Peace Treaty, Soviet Russia perceived China as a natural ally in its fight against imperialism.<sup>10</sup> Developments in China were, from Moscow’s perspective, full of promise. One of the major sources of indignation confirmed by the Versailles Treaty was that

the German colonies in China were not handed back to China but were, according to an agreement between Japan, Britain and France, taken over by the Japanese Empire. As news of the terms of the Versailles Treaty reached Beijing, a massive protest movement was organised by young Chinese nationalist students. The so-called Fourth of May Movement of 1919 paved the way for the emergence of modern China, as both nationalists and socialists started seeking allegiances which would help China achieve national self-determination.<sup>11</sup> The Fourth of May Movement would also find a strong echo in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign of 1925, as discussed further below.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921, but it remained a relatively weak organisation throughout the 1920s. It was instead Sun Yat-sen's nationalist movement, the Guomindang, which was Soviet Russia's main alliance partner in China. In an effort to form a strong nationalist platform, Sun Yat-sen formed an alliance with the Soviet Union and cooperated with the CCP. It was predicted that the Guomindang and the CCP, with Soviet support, would become more powerful in the struggle for anti-imperialist nationalism in China. From the perspective of the CCP and Moscow, this united front with the 'bourgeois-nationalists' was merely a tactical one to be maintained only until the CCP had grown strong enough to take independent action.<sup>12</sup> By the end of 1924, Soviet prestige and influence had increased significantly throughout China. If India had earlier been perceived as being the hub of the Asian revolution, China represented from now onwards the main arena and hope for a revolutionary development in Asia.<sup>13</sup> For the British authorities, the increasing influence of Moscow in China was a matter of extreme urgency. At stake was not only the loss of its influence in China, but the fear of a weakening British Empire if the Chinese disorder and protests were spread to the crown jewel of the Empire, India.<sup>14</sup>

### **The *Arbeiterhilfe* enters East Asia**

The hitherto unknown origins of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* engagement with East Asia had already begun in conjunction with the disastrous earthquake that had devastated the Tokyo area on 1 September 1923, resulting in over 100,000 casualties. When Münzenberg travelled to Moscow in mid-September 1923, he was put in charge of organising a relief campaign for the Japanese.<sup>15</sup> On 1 October, Münzenberg was assigned by the Comintern to send a letter to all of the *Central Committees* (CC) of the *Communist Parties* (CP) regarding the *Arbeiterhilfe's* forthcoming

campaign for the Japanese peasants and workers.<sup>16</sup> This clearly shows that although the Comintern was concerned with the revolution in the West, it did not put aside the development of the Asian situation. This constituted in effect the beginning of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* engagement in East Asia and the launch of a completely new kind of international solidarity campaign both in Europe and the world.<sup>17</sup>

On 20 October 1923, the *Arbeiterhilfe* published its first *Bulletin* on its relief committee for Japan.<sup>18</sup> However, due to the simultaneous worsening social crisis in Germany, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign for Japan was called off on Münzenberg's suggestion on 24 October, the very same day that the *German Communist Party* (KPD) decided to halt the revolutionary struggle in Germany. As shown in Chapter 4, Münzenberg insisted that all means and energy were instead to be concentrated on the German hunger campaign. Münzenberg then instructed Zinoviev to let the Japanese delegation and unions in Shanghai take over the funds already allocated for the Japanese relief campaign.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* initial venture in Asia was almost over before it had started.

The first references in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publications on the situation in China are dated 30 September 1924, as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* members in Germany were informed of a vast flood in China which had cost the lives of 50,000 people and had left many thousands more homeless and without provisions. According to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, no one amongst the European bourgeois cared for these victims, as they were only concerned about how the lands of China could be plundered and exploited. If the "imperialist countries" were China's natural enemies, then the natural ally and protector of China and of the peoples of Asia was consequently presented as being the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> In October 1924, Münzenberg had concluded that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was faced with major aid campaigns that would require an expansion of the organisation. Aiding the flood victims in China was highlighted by Münzenberg as being one of the most urgent calls for assistance.<sup>21</sup> However, the China campaign of 1924 was never developed into a major campaign. For the *Arbeiterhilfe's* global ambitions in East Asia though, it proved instead to be an essential second step forward after the Japan relief operation.

The floods occurred as tensions in China regarding Anglo-French-American imperialism were visibly increasing. On 5 September 1924, the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions in China declared that they had formed a "Hands off China" society, which was supposed to function as a model to be replicated elsewhere. Later in September a permanent "Hands off China" committee was appointed in Moscow.<sup>22</sup>

On 3 October 1924, it was reported that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had joined the "Hands off China" committee and also a *Relief Committee for the Support of the Financially Severely Flood-Affected Masses* ("Hilfskomitee zur Unterstützung der von der Überschwemmung wirtschaftlich schwer geschädigten Massen"). The latter had allegedly been formed by the Soviet ambassador Karachan in Beijing.<sup>23</sup> Karachan had also sent a telegraph from Beijing to the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin and requested them to send a delegation to Beijing.<sup>24</sup>

It was not, however, only the *Arbeiterhilfe* that was establishing contact with China. Chinese delegations were also getting in contact with the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Germany. For example, during the *Arbeiterhilfe's* congress organised in the *Maistersaal* in Berlin on 26 October 1924, a Chinese delegation was present. According to newspaper reports, the Chinese Yan Han Ling (also referred to as Yan Han Lun) had made a profound impression when he gave a speech on the political and financial crisis in China.<sup>25</sup> He was allegedly part of a Chinese delegation heading from Paris to Moscow that had stopped over in Berlin and established contact with the *Arbeiterhilfe*. According to Yan Han Ling, it was essential to form an *Arbeiterhilfe* committee in China as the Red Cross was currently the only organisation in China caring for the poor or the victims of the recent flood. As Yan Han Ling stated, how significant indeed it would be, if the idea of solidarity was established in the largest country in the world?<sup>26</sup>

On 1 December 1924 the Orgbüro of the *Executive Committee of the Communist International* (ECCI) approved a resolution that provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with the mandate to initiate solidarity campaigns in China, Japan and the colonial countries where the masses had not reached class consciousness but were engaged in national liberation struggles against European and American imperialism. Its material assistance was to be accompanied by campaigns that would elaborate on the solidarity between the workers of the world and the nationally oppressed peoples in the colonial countries.<sup>27</sup> It was concluded that:

The economically or ideologically backward masses of these countries [the colonial countries] need to be shown that there is no solidarity between the [oppressive] imperialists of Europe and America and the European and American workers, but that oppressed nations and the fighting proletariat as a class are natural allies.<sup>28</sup>

Equally, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* unspoken mission was to convince and educate the Western workers on the relevance of this transnational

global community, as this newly imagined community was most likely not generally accepted or even comprehended by the workers at the time.

However, a dent in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* global ambitions was delivered by the Secretariat of the *Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* RCP(B) as it on 30 March 1924 had decided that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Russian National Committee was to be “dissolved”. This order was carried out on 15 April.<sup>29</sup> Münzenberg was devastated by the ruling which only left the *Arbeiterhilfe's* bureau in central Moscow in place. As he explained in a letter to the CC of the RCP(B), he could understand that the Russians thought the *Arbeiterhilfe's* presence as a relief organisation in European Russia was perhaps no longer necessary, but surely not in Asia? In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* view, it was natural to extend its organisation to Asia, especially to Japan, China, Korea and India; and to Afghanistan, Persia and Turkestan in Central Asia. And such an expansion of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was also in accordance with the Comintern's directives, Münzenberg maintained in a bold step to contradict the RCP(B)'s and the Comintern's rulings. Now, the Soviet Union was more or less excluded from the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ongoing international campaigns and its newspapers, illustrated journals and bulletins. Münzenberg could not believe that it was the intention of the RCP (B) to exclude the Soviet Union from these international solidarity campaigns.<sup>30</sup> Münzenberg was not heard, but events in China provided instead the *Arbeiterhilfe* the opportunity to create a major anti-imperialist movement in Germany and the world.

### **The Thirtieth of May and the rise of a global international solidarity**

The demonstrations on 30 May, that would end in the shooting of several Chinese demonstrators had originally been inspired by striking Chinese workers in a Japanese-owned mill in Shanghai. A scuffle had broken out between the strikers and the Japanese managers on 15 May and one of the strikers, a young man, was injured in the fight. He died two days later, providing the Shanghai labour movement with its first important martyr, which in effect turned the economic struggle into a nationalist movement. However, as the foreign authorities pressured the Chinese newspapers not to report the incident, the student movement took it upon themselves to organise mass memorial meetings. However, to start lecturing against imperialism in the foreigners' quarters was not without its dangers and could lead to immediate arrests. In order to ensure a successful demonstration, the students cooperated and prepared the

demonstrations set for 30 May with the CC of the CCP, which included several university professors.<sup>31</sup>

The "Thirtieth of May Movement" unleashed a wave of strikes at the other treaty-bound ports and, on 19 June, general strikes took place. For example, in Shanghai and Hong Kong Chinese workers refused either to board or to unload British ships, and British companies were boycotted. The outrage against the British gained new momentum when British troops opened fire on demonstrating cadets, students and workers in Shameen, Guangzhou's diplomatic quarter, killing 52 and wounding over 100 more demonstrators. This incident was later named the "Shameen Massacre". The Thirtieth of May movement resulted in the first large-scale united protest of nationalists in revolt against foreign rule on the one hand and workers striking against their working conditions in the foreign-owned factories on the other. Furthermore, the Thirtieth of May movement significantly strengthened the CCP both in Shanghai and in other parts of the country.<sup>32</sup>

How, then, was the Thirtieth of May movement turned into a global affair? A central prerequisite was the creating of an organisational network between the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin and China. Already during the autumn of 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* CC in Berlin had given Karl Müller the task of organising the *Arbeiterhilfe* in China in the context of the campaign for the flood victims, although it appears that he never left for China.<sup>33</sup> Müller was a Swiss communist whose real name was Hans Itschner (1887–1962). Itschner had previously worked for the *Arbeiterhilfe* in both Berlin and Paris, but had been arrested by the police in Paris on 29 March 1924 under suspicion of being a Bolshevik agitator and had been sentenced to one year in prison.<sup>34</sup> Thanks to contacts to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Georgi Chicherin, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to move Itschner to Moscow, where he started working for the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>35</sup>

However, in late April 1925, Itschner was still in Moscow, from where he wrote to the ECCI that the *Arbeiterhilfe* did not at the time have any specific campaign in China, as its campaign for the flood victims had long since been wound up. The task of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* delegation heading to China was at the time, according to Itschner, to support the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ongoing campaigns, namely the relief campaign for workers' children in Germany, the campaign for the victims of the Dawes Plan in Germany and the international campaign for the workers' loan to the Soviet Union. These were campaigns that the Comintern had approved and, as Itschner explained, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had always interpreted its mandates as being worldwide, and hence it could activate its solidarity campaigns in every corner of the world.<sup>36</sup>

Itschner was finally able to leave Moscow for Beijing around 27 May 1925 together with the German communist using the alias Friedrich Lienhard, whose real name was Karl Schulz (1884–1933).<sup>37</sup> Schulz, was a political émigré and had since early 1925 been working for the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Moscow. Ironically, when they left Moscow, Schulz and Itschner had no idea that China was about to be thrown into the worst anti-imperialist turmoil since 1919. Prior to their departure, they had prepared a work plan for the *Arbeiterhilfe* in China that, according to Itschner, suggested that they only do preparatory work during the first weeks or months before going public. However, when they arrived, the Thirtieth of May incident had totally altered the situation in China and the main objective of the Chinese *Arbeiterhilfe* now became supporting the Shanghai movement. According to Itschner, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* new programme in China had been decided during a joint meeting together with representatives of the CCP, the Comintern and the Profintern. In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* first published appeal in China, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had called for the “Oppressed peoples, oppressed classes, unite!” According to Itschner, this appeal had been enthusiastically received, and it had allegedly also been published in the main Chinese press.<sup>38</sup>

On 15 June, Münzenberg informed Moscow that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was prepared to do anything for the China campaign, but was in urgent need of material on China from Moscow. Once the material arrived, Münzenberg promised to utilise the *Arbeiterhilfe's* illustrated press for the campaign, publish appeals and, if Moscow could provide it with the documentary film “Das Dokument von Shanghai (The Document from Shanghai)”, then the *Arbeiterhilfe* could cause a major stir, Münzenberg assured them. The film was not, however, released until 1928.<sup>39</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* published the first issue of its new *Bulletin für China/for China/pour la Chine* on 19 June. Five days later, Münzenberg sent an extensive report to Otto Wille Kuusinen on the China campaign. In his report, Münzenberg confirmed that from the first moment they had heard of the strike in Shanghai they had investigated the possibility of organising a campaign for China. As one of its first actions, in addition to publishing its *Bulletin for China* and founding a press central for the China campaign, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had begun to organise mass meetings and demonstrations with Chinese delegates in the cities of Europe. In order to create the right momentum, Münzenberg asked if the Comintern could inform all its national sections that the Comintern supported the *Arbeiterhilfe's* China campaign through its apparatus, networks and press. Furthermore, Münzenberg proposed to the Comintern that it support

the *Arbeiterhilfe's* request to the RCP(B) for all fundraising for China in the Soviet Union to be sent through the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>40</sup> This last request was, however, politely declined by the ECCI.<sup>41</sup>

## Making the local global

How, then, did the *Arbeiterhilfe* try to create these new bonds of transnational solidarity, how was its message of international solidarity justified? The *Arbeiterhilfe* summoned the workers of the world to embark on a grand mission: to stop the imperialist powers from oppressing the Chinese striking workers. These were not some far-off incidents, it was argued, but events highly relevant for the workers of Germany, Europe and for the rest of the world.<sup>42</sup> As the *Arbeiterhilfe* argued:

The struggle of the Chinese workers is your struggle; their defeat is your defeat; their victory is your victory. 450 million workers and peasants have to be helped to free themselves from the clutches of the imperialistic robbers.<sup>43</sup>

This appeal was directed at all revolutionary workers, all friends of the struggling proletariat and to all humanitarians (*Menschenfreunde*), who together could secure the very "existence, human worth and national freedom" of the struggling workers, peasants and intellectuals of China.<sup>44</sup>

As this appeal reveals, a significant factor often overlooked in the analysis of international solidarity, is its emotional character.<sup>45</sup> This time, in its very first appeal, printed on the front page of the *Bulletin for China*, the severity of the situation was expressed in order to both increase the feeling of compassion and establish a human connection. Perhaps the geographical distance to the events demanded the usage of an even stronger emotional language. It was stated that the situation of the Chinese workers was simply unbearable: the "coolies" were the poorest, most exploited and destitute workers in the world. The fate of children was again effectively used to establish a fundamental emotional bond of social solidarity. It was described how in Shanghai's foreign quarters alone, 25,000 children under the age of 12 years were generally working 12 hours a day; the children received almost no pay, the living conditions resembled that of slavery and, in the northern and south-western parts of China, the food situation was so appalling that cannibalism was on the increase.<sup>46</sup>



However, a narrative of suffering was not a sufficient foundation for the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign, if it was not to be confused with charitable relief. Suffering and unbearable exploitation constituted the emotional backbone and moral foundation of the campaign, but it had to be combined with the active resistance and liberation struggle of the Chinese people. The essential departure point and prerequisite for the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign was the indignation of the Chinese and their rising up against their oppressors, the very awakening of the Chinese people. As pointed out by Fitzgerald (1996), 'awakening' is a vague concept that simply refers to a "transition in a state of consciousness from sleep to wakefulness". Nationalists in China were, however, unwilling to let the people wake up to their nationhood by themselves and emphasised the importance of awakening the nation through reformers and revolutionaries.<sup>47</sup> The same could easily be said about the *Arbeiterhilfe's* efforts to awaken international solidarity.

This awakening was very effectively illustrated by the *Arbeiterhilfe* through a drawing by Deni (Denissow) originally published in *Pravda*. Here, a strong Chinese male figure in ragged clothes, fists clenched and with a facial expression signalling a determined commitment to fight is depicted. The social misery described in detail by the *Arbeiterhilfe* provided the Chinese with the moral right to rise up in resistance against oppression, which also made him the perfect recipient of international solidarity as this campaign could not in any way be confused with charity.<sup>48</sup>

The initial strike in Shanghai had perhaps not been in of itself sufficient to turn it into a global matter, but it was instead the reaction of the European forces in Shanghai that had turned the strike into an issue for the whole of China and, according to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, for the workers of the world. As claimed by the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the forces of order had ignited the indignation of the Chinese and as the *Arbeiterhilfe* put it, it was like a spark hitting gunpowder, freeing the explosive power of the oppressed against imperialism.<sup>49</sup> This description was perhaps not too far off the mark as the strike movement had indeed spread like wildfire throughout China.

On 20 June 1925, the day after its first *Bulletin for China* had been published, Münzenberg sent a telegramme to the Chinese government. Münzenberg's message to the Chinese confirmed that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had initiated a relief campaign based on the warmest sympathy (*heißeste Sympathie*) and practical solidarity. Another telegramme had been sent to a "strike committee" in Shanghai in which it was declared that appeals for money, clothes and provisions had begun. "Hold out, brotherly aid is on its way", the telegramme promised.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 7.1 Hands off China! Workers! Support the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Aid Campaign for China! (1925)

Source: *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 2 (23.6.1925).

As another illustration included in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* second *Bulletin for China* shows, the role of the European worker is clear, and follows modern theories on solidarity group formation which stresses the need to form a strong image of the common enemy, of the significant other, that brings two completely separate groups, such as the German and Chinese workers, together.<sup>51</sup> Here, the common adversary of both the Chinese and the Western or perhaps the German worker is the ruthless capitalist wearing the trademark black suit and top hat. Significantly, the capitalist is not depicted as an Asian, but is of European or American descent. As the image shows, however, the strength and roles of the Chinese and German worker are not equal. The German worker is independent and strong, whereas the Chinese worker is depicted as being oppressed and weak, caught with the capitalist noose around his neck. This illustrates

in essence the role of the European worker, and the meaning of international solidarity.<sup>52</sup> The message sent to the “imperialists” was clear: in unison, the European and Chinese workers were calling out to the imperialists of the world to keep their “Hands off China!”<sup>53</sup> This illustration was essentially in line with both the Comintern’s and the RCP(B)’s anti-imperialist policy in Moscow which was based on the belief that, if the colonial or semi-colonial countries were assisted in their liberation from European and American control, this would also save communism in the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup> Note, however, the absence of any references to the Soviet Union in the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s illustrations. The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s articulations of international solidarity in relation to China was not set up with the aim of assisting the Soviet Union but was portrayed as classic working-class solidarity against capitalist oppression.

However, two different representations of the Chinese worker emerge revealing a crucial element of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s message of international solidarity. Firstly, at the moment of their awakening, the Chinese worker is strong and determined to put up a fight, but in the second image, he is portrayed as being weak and in need of assistance. Thus, on the one hand, the awakening of the Chinese was a prerequisite for the calling for international solidarity in order to justify its sudden mobilisation in China. However, if he was so strong, did he really need the solidarity of the European workers? The second image emphasises that he Chinese people were in need of assistance; in need of the strong arm of international solidarity. And this is also where the *Arbeiterhilfe* came into the picture, as the mediator, as the agency that enabled, empowered and activated international solidarity between Europe and China.

However, in between strength and weakness, there was desperation. The successful mobilisation of solidarity required a belief in the mutual commitment to fight. It had to be proven that international solidarity was not being summoned for a lost cause and, if there was something that the *Arbeiterhilfe* wished to communicate to the German workers, it was that the Chinese had been driven to such a level of despair that they were resorting to all available means to overthrow the imperialists and to gain their national liberation.<sup>55</sup>

Another illustration, from the cover of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s illustrated newspaper *Not und Brot*, depicts this desperation clearly: According to the caption, after having given an enthralling speech, a Chinese teacher cut his finger to write in his own blood on a poster: “Chinese awaken! Sacrifice your lives for China’s salvation!” Although this did convey a message of determination and dedication, it also sent a message of radicalised desperation, of a fight taken to the extreme which required and

demanded the international solidarity of all workers and sympathisers. The story of the Chinese man writing with his own blood was a direct reference to the "Fourth of May Movement" of 1919, when Chinese outrage at the Versailles Treaty had caused a huge wave of protests. Then, at a student meeting, one young man had cut his finger and written on the wall with his own blood. In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* presentation of the issue, it was not only the duty of the Chinese proletariat to fight against the "murderous system" of exploitation. The system was global, the *Arbeiterhilfe* argued, and thus it required the united fighting strength of the workers of the world.<sup>56</sup>

The linked destinies and histories of the workers of the world against the international forces of capitalism were emphasised in every appeal made by the *Arbeiterhilfe*:

The German workers, who themselves are being oppressed more and more to become colonial slaves of world imperialism and who can see a foretaste of their own fate in that of the Chinese coolies, are interested above all in supporting the revolutionary movement which is beginning to gather a momentum not just in China but also in all colonies, Egypt, Morocco and India. The extent of the exploitation of the colonial slaves will mirror the extent of the exploitation of the German workers. The condition of the workers in Shanghai is an issue for the German and the world proletariat.<sup>57</sup>

In summary, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had, through the launch of its campaign, set in motion a transnational movement that was emphasising the global element of the ongoing struggles beyond Europe and the Western world. However, apart from its published texts and illustrations stressing the need to take action, how did the *Arbeiterhilfe* in practice attempt to awaken the workers of Germany for China?

### **Creating international solidarity between Germany and China**

In Germany, solidarity campaigns for China were soon taking place all around the country. For example, in Berlin, a mass meeting was organised on 22 June during which speeches by both a Chinese representative, the KPD's Ruth Fischer (member of the *Reichstag* (MdR)) and Münzenberg (MdR) were given.<sup>58</sup> This mass meeting had been attended by several Chinese, and the Chinese speaker had even spoken in his mother tongue. Münzenberg had emphasised in his speech that the

German workers until very recently had known almost nothing about the Chinese. Münzenberg emphasised that the story of the Chinese teacher who had cut his finger in a revolutionary act of defiance had proven what kind of sacrifices the Chinese proletariat was prepared to make in order to claim its freedom. Hence, Münzenberg encouraged the Berlin workers to show their “brotherly solidarity” again, as they had done during the Russian famine in 1921.<sup>59</sup>

German workers were encouraged to donate money with slogans such as “A donation worth six cigarettes enables a Chinese worker to survive for one day”, or “For the price of one and a half pints of beer, one striking worker in China can survive for one day”, or “With three hours’ of a Berlin worker’s pay, ten Chinese strikers can survive for one day”.<sup>60</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s German–Chinese engagement did not restrict itself to mass meetings in Germany. On 15 July, the *Arbeiterhilfe* could proudly proclaim that its representative in China, Karl Schulz (known in China under the name Friedrich Lienhard) had spoken at a mass meeting that had been attended by over 100,000 people in Beijing on 30 June.<sup>61</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe*’s second representative in Beijing, Hans Itschner (alias Karl Müller), noted in a secret report that it had been a spectacular event, as it was the first time that a foreigner who was also a representative of the working class and was of the “white race” had given a speech at a Chinese mass meeting.<sup>62</sup>

Münzenberg later recounted at the “Hands off China” congress in Berlin on 16 August 1925 that when Schulz had stood up to go to the rostrum to speak in Beijing, the people in the front rows had actually initially tried to stop him. They saw him as being a representative of the whites who the Chinese identified only as oppressors, which caused significant bewilderment and confusion. But once the interpreter had translated Schulz’ first words, it became clear that this white man had not come to China as an oppressor, not as a capitalist. He had come to China as a man of compassion (*Mitleidender*), as a man wanting to assist them. Instantly, the meeting in Beijing was transformed into a scene of rapturous jubilation and a several minutes long “tumult of exultation” had followed. Schulz had allegedly been lifted up in the air by the Chinese and was, for several minutes, held aloft in “wild enthusiasm”. Münzenberg exclaimed that he was extremely proud of this moment: For the first time, “the brotherly bond between the white and the yellow proletariat” had been established. In Münzenberg’s words it was nothing less than a moment of great historical importance (*ein Moment von historischer, gewaltiger Bedeutung*).<sup>63</sup> Evidently, the overwhelming delight of having a white speaker supporting the Chinese

struggle had been so enormous that the Chinese present at the meeting had demanded that many more such events be organised in China and also for the workers in Shanghai.<sup>64</sup>

Back in Berlin, the *Arbeiterhilfe* organised a number of events offering both workers and sympathisers the whole solidarity experience. The second "China-Evening" for the *Arbeiterhilfe's* relief campaign, for example, presented the première of a Chinese play preformed by Chinese students which dramatised the "liberation struggle of the Chinese proletariat". The evening also included a presentation by a Chinese delegate on "China's Revolutionary Mission" and a lecture on "the Development of China's Cultural History". The evening was brought to a close with Chinese music.<sup>65</sup> For the first time, the increasingly heterogenous culture of transnational solidarity in Germany had actively been infused with Chinese culture, music and politics.

Münzenberg could be very satisfied with the achievements of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* China campaign. He informed Zinoviev that over 1,000 meetings with Chinese delegates had been organised in both Germany, several other European countries and the United States.<sup>66</sup> Münzenberg estimated that approximately five million people had attended the *Arbeiterhilfe's* China meetings and demonstrations across Europe.<sup>67</sup> All this had been achieved despite the fact that the CPs had been unwilling to engage themselves sufficiently in the campaign. As Münzenberg complained to Piatnitzki on 24 July, despite repeated demands, the communist press had not reacted with sufficient energy.<sup>68</sup> It seems that for the 'internationalist' KPD, national issues were at the time regarded as more important, making the *Arbeiterhilfe's* broad group of supporters the main carrier of the transnational solidarity culture in Germany.

The attempt to create a bond of international solidarity between the workers of China and Europe caused new tensions, however, within the European labour movement. The *Arbeiterhilfe* had sent appeals to both the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) in Amsterdam and the German *General Federation of German Trade Unions* (ADGB) to join in its campaign for China. The ADGB had discussed the events in China during a meeting but, in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* view, the ADGB's subsequent declaration of its "cordial sympathy" was not worth much. The *Arbeiterhilfe* sardonically declared that it was like someone calling from the safety of the shore to someone drowning: "They will drown in a few minutes; I could help them, but I am not going to; however, they can die in the certain knowledge that they have my fullest sympathy".<sup>69</sup>

This was not international solidarity as it should be. For the *Arbeiterhilfe*, international solidarity was the same as practical solidarity work, or at

least this is what was claimed in the *Arbeiterhilfe's Bulletin for China*. Its articulations of solidarity emphasised the need for practical material assistance, whereas pure symbolical solidarity did not in the end make any difference.

When the IFTU finally officially addressed the situation in China on 17 August, an expression of their “warmest sympathy” was forthcoming but they declared that there was unfortunately no possibility of them engaging in material assistance for the Chinese. In Münzenberg's view, this was an outrageous betrayal of international solidarity.<sup>70</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* remained the only organisation that had initiated an international solidarity campaign and which claimed at least to provide material assistance to the Chinese in their struggle. In a sense, as neither the IFTU nor the *Labour and Socialist International* (LSI) were engaging themselves in the support of the Chinese workers, Münzenberg could claim a moral victory for the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the communists.

### The “Hands off China” congress in Berlin (1925)

The zenith of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign for China was, however, the international “Hands off China” congress that Münzenberg organised in Berlin on 16 August 1925. On the invitation signed by both Münzenberg and Georg Ledebour, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared that, for months the Chinese struggle had left “the world holding its breath” which was the main reason for its organisation of the congress. All those who sympathised with the exploited and oppressed Chinese workers were welcome.<sup>71</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign had again managed to assemble an impressive list of German intellectuals who provided their moral support or, in accordance with Scholz's (2008) definitions, their ‘political solidarity’ to the Chinese people. The list of prominent figures, published on 2 July, included such names as Heinrich Zille, Alfons Paquet, Heinrich Vogeler, Erich Mühsam, Otto Nagel, Karl August Wittfogel, Georg Grosz, Ernst Toller and Käthe Kollwitz. The list included several other authors, artists, an actor, a composer, five professors, a total of 18 people with doctoral degrees, the two secretaries of the *Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte* (the German League for Human Rights) and the secretary of the Quakers.<sup>72</sup>

The minutes of the Hands off China congress were never published and have not previously been utilised in the research. These have now been located as part of this research in the *Russian State Archives of Social and Political History* (RGASPI) in the archives of the CCP.<sup>73</sup> A more detailed presentation of the proceedings is therefore justified. How was

international solidarity discussed and brought to life during this unique congress?

Amongst the delegates at the congress were representatives of the Profintern and the *Krestintern* as well as delegates from Austria, Czechoslovakia, France and Britain.<sup>74</sup> In the audience there were also 12 Chinese guests.<sup>75</sup> Münzenberg claimed that no one amongst those assembled could a little while ago have believed that over 1,600<sup>76</sup> people would now be assembled with prominent intellectuals and representatives of the workers' movement for a congress in support of China in Berlin. Münzenberg claimed later in a letter to Zinoviev that 300–350 of the guests at the congress were eminent intellectuals, including Graf von Reventlov and Käthe Kollwitz.<sup>77</sup>

A Presidium including, amongst others, Ledebour, Münzenberg, a Chinese delegate and the anarchist and author Erich Mühsam, was elected.<sup>78</sup> The first speaker was the Chinese representative Tschang Peh Chung from Shanghai, who spoke on "the present stage in the Chinese liberation struggle".<sup>79</sup> The second speaker was Dr. Ernst Meyer<sup>80</sup> (1887–1930). During Meyer's lengthy speech, he highlighted the fact that, while the German workers and intellectuals did not have any immediate connection with the ongoing struggle of the Chinese, the German workers could perfectly well understand the struggle of the Chinese workers against exploitation as they themselves were suffering under the Dawes Plan; and the German intellectuals, whose hopes and wishes for a nationally independent Germany had been dashed by the *Entente*, could perfectly well understand the hopes and wishes of the national liberation movement of the Chinese people. This understanding between the German and Chinese should now, according to Meyer, not only be restricted to solidarity demonstrations but be expanded to include practical relief work.<sup>81</sup>

The principal speech of the congress was delivered by Münzenberg who commenced his speech by answering the often repeated question: Why in the world should the German workers engage themselves in a solidarity campaign for China? As Münzenberg saw it, on the basis of international solidarity, it was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* duty to understand the deprivation in China as their own deprivation. He declared that "as proletarians we feel the need of our class comrades everywhere: whether they live in Moabit [Berlin], Stuttgart, Peking or London is entirely unimportant to us". The stenographer had noted "loud applause," after these words by Münzenberg.<sup>82</sup>

Münzenberg continued that this was why the Chinese workers should not only be supported in the name of solidarity but also in the interest



of European workers. “The Chinese coolie wages indirectly threaten the standard of living of the entire international working class”, Münzenberg ominously predicted. In this spirit Münzenberg stated that they were obliged to assist the Chinese. It was time to end the slavery of the Chinese. It was time to make the “coolie” disappear and to introduce a politically organised and with ‘us’ united Chinese proletariat.<sup>83</sup>

Münzenberg was, however, very pessimistic regarding the material result of the campaign. Where was the *Arbeiterhilfe* supposed to raise funds? According to Münzenberg, the *Kleinbürgertum* (petite bourgeoisie) and the workers in the trade unions were uninterested. Therefore, the *Arbeiterhilfe* could only turn to the revolutionary trade unions, although these were small and financially weak. In Germany there was yet another problem as the most “advanced parts of the working class” had been thrown onto the streets where they had been for months, some for years, living in deprivation. It was to these people that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had sent its appeals for China. Many others had again at the time been on strike, fighting their own struggles. What could be expected when the *Arbeiterhilfe* turned up in these circles to collect money for the Chinese workers; how could these workers assist, when there was no money left to give, Münzenberg asked, and thereby touching upon one of the major challenges facing every solidarity campaign organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>84</sup>

Despite these difficulties, Münzenberg claimed at the congress that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had within a period of four weeks collected approximately one million Goldmarks. Münzenberg believed that this was a good sign and that it constituted a practical example of international solidarity. However, he added that 4/5 of this sum had been collected by the Russian trade unions; in Germany only 50,000 marks had been collected, whereas Russia had contributed 700,000 marks.<sup>85</sup> It seems doubtful, however, that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had collected even that much in Germany. Münzenberg explained in a letter later in September that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had only been able to collect between 80,000 and 100,000 marks of which only half had so far reached the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>86</sup>

Irrespective, one million marks was deemed by Münzenberg at the congress in Berlin to be too little, when it was compared to the actual needs in China. Still, Münzenberg claimed that it was an example that showed how gladly the poor shared their bread with those who had even less. Taking these fundraising problems into account, Münzenberg concluded by stating that the lasting importance of the China campaign was principally on the cultural side.<sup>87</sup> But in hindsight, perhaps even more importantly the campaign had for the first time vividly imagined

the existence of a transnational community between the oppressed of the world and China and actually made an active effort to 'sell' its message of a new global international solidarity. Münzenberg also finished his speech with a strong appeal for unity which emphasised his global understanding of international solidarity:

We want to form a holy alliance, we, the white, yellow, black and different coloured underdogs. The colour of the skin should not represent the deciding factor, but rather the fact that one is an underdog, a poor person with an empty stomach who is nevertheless full of enthusiasm for the liberation of all those who are suffering.<sup>88</sup>

After Münzenberg's call for a holy alliance of the oppressed of all races the audience burst, according to the stenographer, into a prolonged thunderous applause.<sup>89</sup> The congress had been a resounding success.

### **After China... the world itself**

Directly after the congress plans for the future of the movement were being discussed in Berlin and Moscow. On 18 August, two days after the "Hands off China" congress, Münzenberg wrote to Zinoviev that the professors and several Chinese trade unions at the congress had suggested the idea that the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* be assigned the task of organising a major congress against imperialist colonial policies within two or three months. Both Brussels and Copenhagen were suggested as being suitable venues for this congress. Münzenberg thought this to be a very good idea, and he assessed the current state of the world with raging colonial wars (e.g. in Morocco and Syria) as being an ideal time to organise just such a congress. It would also be crucial to attract participants from China (Beijing), Morocco, Egypt, India and from other colonial countries. Münzenberg predicted that such a congress would even eclipse the LSI's recent congress in Marseille which had discussed the colonial question without passing any resolutions. In fact, Münzenberg regarded the plan to be so important that he was prepared to travel within days to Moscow to discuss it personally with Zinoviev.<sup>90</sup>

After the "Hands off China" Congress the colonial question continued to be of central interest to the *Arbeiterhilfe*. In the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ), the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s first appeal, which had been published in Chinese in Beijing, was reprinted. This appeal was signed by Henri Barbusse, Bernhard Shaw, Upton Sinclair, Clara Zetkin, A. A. Purcell, Prof. Forel, Edo Fimmen and Willi Münzenberg.<sup>91</sup> Even the cover story

of the December 1925 issue of the *AIZ* was dedicated to the “Liberation Struggle of the Colonial Peoples”.<sup>92</sup> All this was, however, just the beginning of Münzenberg’s engagement in the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle that would lead to the establishment of the League against Colonial Oppression (LACO) in 1926 which was remodelled into the League Against Imperialism (LAI) in 1927. Although the LAI was created to lead the anti-imperialist struggle and forms a separate story, anti-imperialism still formed a central part of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s articulations of international solidarity. This will be shown particularly in Chapter 10 in the context of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s campaign work against a new imperialist world war.<sup>93</sup>

In conclusion, the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s international solidarity campaign of 1925 represented a watershed on several levels. Firstly, it constituted the first concrete attempt to create a bond of international solidarity between the workers of the West and China. In this context, the campaign was of major significance as it paved the way for several anti-imperialist and anti-colonial conferences in Europe, which would be significant forums for future leaders in the de-colonisation process of the Cold War era. Secondly, the China campaign represented a breakthrough of the global imaginary into Germany, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* and especially Münzenberg helped to turn the local struggle in Shanghai into a global affair. In addition, Münzenberg made several public speeches in which he elaborated on the necessity of all races to work in solidarity against oppression and need across national and ethnic borders. The China campaign made a lasting imprint on the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s articulations of international solidarity that highlighted that from now on wherever on the planet there were proletarians in misery, this would be a matter for the workers’ international solidarity, forging the belief in transnational workers’ community on a global scale.

# 8

## Solidarity on the Screen and Stage

New methods of spreading the message of solidarity were continuously being embraced by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. If the traditional method was to respond spontaneously with solidarity to sudden conflicts and crises, the solidarity work illuminated in this chapter was instead deliberately commissioned, created and produced by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It is argued here that through film, cinema and theatre, the *Arbeiterhilfe* created new forums for celebrating international solidarity, reaching hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Germans. The diverse cultural activities that are analysed in this chapter include the *Arbeiterhilfe's* involvement in the production and distribution of proletarian films in Germany on the one hand, and on the other hand the *Arbeiterhilfe's* major involvement in Weimar Germany's agitprop theatre scene.

Contrary to almost every other aspect of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the organisation's film distribution and production in Germany was not brought down by the coming of the Third Reich, but was wilfully ended by the Soviet government in December 1931. Conspicuously, the 1920's most powerful initiative in the Western world to spread the message of international solidarity and a positive image of the Soviet Union was terminated by the Soviet Union itself.

It is here argued that the performances, in the form of proletarian films and theatre troupe plays, functioned as important public celebrations for international solidarity in Germany. This chapter is not limited to a content analysis of the films or theatrical plays, but develops a broad solidarity analysis with several thematic layers. These include the very introduction of proletarian film as a genre; the many challenges of distributing and producing alternative films; an analysis of such early proletarian motion pictures as *Aelita*, *Sein Mahnruf* (*His Call*) and the Battleship *Potemkin*; and, when the source material allows it, a

comprehensive analysis of the reception of the films and theatre plays by the audience and the debates that were sparked off as a result of these contested articulations, performances and celebrations of international solidarity.

## **Conquering film, 1924–1932**

### **Münzenberg on proletarian cinema**

In 1925, Münzenberg published a major booklet on the role and power of film as a new mass medium.<sup>1</sup> Just as Münzenberg had in an earlier article in 1922 emphasised the significance of the image in printed publications, he now argued that the main difference between film and printed material was that the former produced a much stronger sensation and had a much greater effect on people. The development of the film industry left no doubt in Münzenberg's mind: during the coming decades, film would rule the world.<sup>2</sup> The use of film as a propaganda weapon for the Soviet Union has been the subject of numerous studies, but seldom has film been analysed as a way of inspiring feelings of international solidarity, or seen as a part of a wider culture of a transnational solidarity community.<sup>3</sup>

Going to the cinema had already become popular before the First World War, but it was only after 1918 that cinema became an influential mass medium in Germany. By the mid-1920s, two million people were going to the cinema every day and by 1930 the number of cinemas had in comparison to 1918 more than doubled to 5,000 with two million seats.<sup>4</sup>

Film was power and, once this power was recognised, a great race between those aspiring to master it commenced. The communists feared that, if film as a medium was left in the hands of the bourgeois, it would become one of the most powerful methods to deceive and fool the masses.<sup>5</sup> The potential was, according to Münzenberg, nothing short of enormous as, according to his figures, 80 to 90 percent of all cinema-goers in Germany belonged to the working class or close to it. What, then, were they watching? The answer, according to Münzenberg, was films produced only for the dissemination of national, bourgeois propaganda, or “worthless, and kitschy sensationalist films” produced by the American or European film industry limited to love, marriage and comedy.<sup>6</sup>

Münzenberg hence proposed that a totally new genre had to be invented, the proletarian film. However, realising the importance of film was one thing, but to actually produce and distribute proletarian films was a completely different matter. Such an endeavour required

financing, technical equipment and knowledge that ultimately resulted in the rather late entry of alternative films which could compete with the productions of the major film companies. As Münzenberg highlighted in 1925, it was difficult, if not impossible, to produce “anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois” films in the capitalist countries as no workers’ organisation could possibly provide the financing required to make a good quality film. The only realistic way of producing alternative films was therefore to produce them in the Soviet Union. The only problem was that the development of the Soviet film industry had been severely damaged and hindered by the revolution, civil war and general lack of technical equipment.<sup>7</sup>

### **A German–Russian film collaboration: the *Mezhrabpom-Film***

The basis for the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s activities within the world of cinema was based on a symbiosis between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the private Russian film production company *Russ*. On 3 January 1924, the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Russian central bureau, operating under its Russian short-name “*Mezhrabpom*”, signed a contract with the “*Künstler-Kollektiv Russ*” (*Russ*). This contract stated that *Russ* from now onwards was committed to only producing films in agreement with the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>8</sup> The central aim of this contract was that the two parties from then onwards would produce joint films and distribute them. The new name of the two merged companies was none other than the world-renowned *Mezhrabpom-Russ* which was later renamed *Mezhrabpom-Film*. The headquarters of the merged company was located in central Moscow at the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Russian central bureau on 3 First Tverskaya Yamskaya.<sup>9</sup>

Through the merger, a whole range of specialists and directors became accessible to the *Arbeiterhilfe*. However, as it was stated in a secret report on the *Mezhrabpom-Film* in 1929, the merger had also resulted in one political drawback for the *Arbeiterhilfe* as the idea of a private collective was not highly regarded in Soviet society.<sup>10</sup> According to Francesco Misiano, who was the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s representative in the film company, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had, from the very beginning, attempted to increase the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s influence at the cost of *Russ*. Thus, by mid-1928, the *Arbeiterhilfe* had successfully bought out the *Russ*'s share of the company without losing the collaboration of the *Russ*'s film production crew. By the end of 1928, the Central Committee (CC) of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the sole owner of the film company. In light of these changes, the name of *Mezhrabpom-Russ* was changed to *Mezhrabpom-Film* on 17 September 1928, in accordance with a decision by the Council of People's Commissar (Sovnarkom).<sup>11</sup>

The success story of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* film production company was nothing less than spectacular. Between October 1927 and October 1928, *Mezhrabpom-Film* accounted for 52 percent of the Soviet Union's entire film export. This was indeed an impressive figure, as the rest of the export was made up by several major Russian film companies which together had over 20 times the accessible capital that *Mezhrabpom-Film* had.<sup>12</sup>

*Mezhrabpom-Film's* biggest problem was that it had to work without sufficient capital of its own. Another problem was the actual writing of scripts for new *Mezhrabpom* films. Long delays in production followed as the *Mezhrabpom's* "literary bureau" could not produce scripts as rapidly as they were required. Film ideas "from the masses", the workers themselves were, according to Misiano's report, in most cases worthless and it was impossible to use existing scripts from pre-revolutionary times. New films required new scripts which complied with the new standards of Soviet cinema.<sup>13</sup>

In Misiano's words, *Mezhrabpom-Film* had from the very beginning striven to produce pioneering work, especially in the field of revolutionary films. It was estimated that up until 1932 about 60 percent of its productions had socialist content, while other films had been important due to their export value and the foreign currency that was, in this way, brought to Russia.<sup>14</sup> Misiano stated:

The fact that 'Mezhrabpom-Film' belongs to an international organisation based in Berlin with sections in the most diverse countries provided the company with the means of quickly establishing connections in a number of countries. [...] For all these reasons 'Mezhrabpom-Film' is to be regarded in Russia and abroad as one of the most important arms of the film industry of the international proletariat, which is also capable of accelerating and strengthening the development process of the foreign proletarian film organisations.<sup>15</sup>

Up until 1928–1929, the Soviet film industry had been beyond the control of the Party. However, with the launch of the first Five Year Plan, the opportunity for independent work was all the more restricted. As Taylor (1979) expresses it: "In the 1920s, Soviet film-makers had been able to portray reality as they saw it; in the 1930s they had to portray reality as the Party saw it".<sup>16</sup> The Soviet government wanted total control of the film industry and there were already in January 1930 ongoing plans on the Soviet government's side to merge the *Mezhrabpom-Film* with the main Soviet film company, *Sovkino*. Then, however, the Political Commission of the Political Secretariat of the *Executive Committee of the*

*Communist International* (ECCI) managed to influence the Sovnarkom in order to postpone the plans.<sup>17</sup>

Münzenberg requested himself on 1 March 1930 that the CC of the *Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)* RCP(B) discuss and decide on the fate of *Mezhrabpom-Film* before the various Soviet institutions took action against it. His request was approved and the future of *Mezhrabpom-Film* was transferred to the CC of the RCP(B). Münzenberg was allowed to prepare a short statement on the matter which set out the plans that the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* had developed for *Mezhrabpom-Film*.<sup>18</sup> One unsigned and undated document archived amongst other documents from 1930 could possibly provide the key to the mystery. It was a document written to highlight the meaning and significance of *Mezhrabpom-Film* for the production of films dealing with issues that were central to the workers' movement. Evidently, no other Soviet film production company could do this. Here a clear answer was provided as to how the *Mezhrabpom-Film* was to be related to the new centralised Soviet film industry managed by the *Sovkino*. The suggestion was that *Mezhrabpom-Film* would remain an independent proletarian franchise under the responsibility of the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Furthermore, the films produced by *Mezhrabpom-Film* and the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s other film organisations were to be decided on by the Comintern but, as a compromise, all plans were to be confirmed by Soviet institutions.<sup>19</sup>

The *Mezhrabpom-Film* managed to continue as an independent film producer until 1936. However, as I will show later on in the chapter, very few in the West had the possibility to enjoy them after 1932 due to the Soviet government's actions against the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Berlin based distribution company *Prometheus*. Before that, the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg were centrally involved in introducing a completely new alternative film culture to Germany and the entire Western world.

### **From 'Polikuschka' to 'Sein Mahnruf'**

In the following analysis, three important early proletarian films produced by *Mezhrabpom-Russ* will be looked at. Thanks to the deal between the *Russ* and the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin was granted worldwide distribution rights to the famous film *Polikuschka*. This film had been produced earlier by *Russ* and starred highly acclaimed actors from pre-revolutionary Russia such as Ivan Moskvín (1874–1946) from the Russian State Theatre.<sup>20</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s pictorial newspaper *Sichel und Hammer*, *Polikuschka* was defined as being proletarian if one understood proletarian as something that stirred up people's minds. The German writer and poet, Max Barthel, could not stop praising the film,



declaring it to be more fantastic than all American adventure films and more romantic than all Europe's historic films. In essence, the film was, in Barthel's view, proof of the rising creativity that had been released thanks to the Russian Revolution.<sup>21</sup> After its première in March 1923 in Berlin, *Polikuschka* was publicly characterised in Germany as a milestone for the Russian film industry and was the season's film sensation. This was no minor affair but in fact a significant cinematic achievement, praised even in the major German newspapers, including *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Vorwärts*.<sup>22</sup>

Later, the conservative press in Germany would criticise the screening of *Polikuschka* as an outlandish tactical manoeuvre on the part of the Bolsheviks. *Polikuschka* had allegedly been enthusiastically welcomed as it was a politically innocent film, but in the process it had opened the doors for future Soviet revolutionary films which were anything but politically innocent.<sup>23</sup>

The first motion picture produced by *Mezhrabpom-Russ* was the first Soviet science-fiction film *Aelita* which had been largely developed by the *Russ* before the merger. It was loosely based on a story by Alexei Tolstoi and directed by "one of the most celebrated directors from pre-revolutionary Russian cinema", Iakov Protazanov. Significantly, this production was, according to the *Arbeiterhilfe*, setting new standards in Russia as the set of the futuristic film had been put together using technical equipment imported from the United States, France and Germany. When *Aelita* had its première at the end of September 1924, it became *the* major film sensation in Soviet cinema until it was surpassed two years later by the film Battleship *Potemkin*.<sup>24</sup> However, Soviet critics judged *Aelita* to be "too Western" and "ideologically unprincipled".<sup>25</sup> This criticism significantly delayed the distribution of *Aelita* abroad. In a letter to the Narkompros, Misiano defended *Aelita* as, despite its ideological flaws, it produced excellent propaganda for the Soviet Union. Misiano emphasised that the film showed to the world that the Soviet film industry was capable of producing sophisticated films which both artistically and technically were comparable to any foreign films. Moreover, Misiano pleaded with the Narkompros to finally, months after its Russian première, permit the export of the film to Germany, as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* finances were, according to Misiano, totally dependent upon the potential earnings generated from the distribution of *Aelita*.<sup>26</sup>

The story of *Aelita* was nothing short of mind blowing. The film follows the daydream of a Russian man suffering through the famine years. In his dream an engineer constructs a machine that enables both

him and a Red Army soldier to fly to the planet Mars. The people on Mars appear to resemble the people on Earth, but they live in a high-tech society that is ruled by "extreme capitalism" which has transformed the planet into a slave society. Life on Mars is dominated by the ruling class and the military, who are in turn governed by the fair Princess Aelita. The Martian underdogs consist of the local workers who are oppressed by innovative means. On Mars, the lives of the workers are only of value when they are working for the ruling class. Hence, the very moment when workers are found to be idle or unemployed they are characterised as "unprofitable eaters". The capitalist measure against these workers on Mars is to literally put them on ice, to freeze them until they are needed as workers again. The visitors from Earth, and especially the Red Army soldier Gusev, who has already been involved in the establishment of several Soviet Republics on Earth, does not at this point hesitate to take action and calls the workers of Mars to revolt against Princess Aelita.<sup>27</sup> One can thus find a clear connection with the *Arbeiterhilfe's* work for international solidarity. As the imaginary revolutionary process illustrates, not even the most distant atrocities are beyond the limits of international solidarity, and hence the film expands the concept of international solidarity into an interplanetary solidarity between workers of the solar system, or perhaps even the universe. The lesson is clear: The international solidarity of the proletariat knows no boundaries.

The second example of an early motion picture produced by *Mezhrabpom-Russ* was entitled *Sein Mahnruf: Ein Grossfilm aus dem Befreiungskampfe des russischen Volkes* (His Call: A Major Film from the Liberation Struggle of the Russian People) which, like *Aelita*, was directed by Iakov Protazanov. *Sein Mahnruf* had its German premiere on 8 November 1925 at the Schauburg on Potsdamer Platz in Berlin with an audience of 1,400 people. In the film programme for that evening, Münzenberg presented *Sein Mahnruf* as the film that all left-leaning newspapers had long desired. It was called a truly proletarian film as it was in line with the ideology of the workers' movement and supported its struggle.<sup>28</sup> Even *Pravda* in the Soviet Union defined the film as the most important achievement of the young Soviet cinema.<sup>29</sup>

The story of the film follows a young working-class woman in Leningrad, and the "slow but certain" rise of Soviet Russia under Lenin's leadership. The dramatic climax of the film is represented by the news of Lenin's death. *Sein Mahnruf* was thus one of the first films which dramatised and publicly dealt with the sorrow, trauma and insecurity resulting from Lenin's death earlier in 1924. The film follows the main

characters as they are informed of Lenin's fate, but who still refuse to believe the news. Telephone lines had been broken by a snow storm, so the information could not be confirmed. A young man is then sent on horse back to the nearest postal station. Hours pass, and the people wait anxiously for his return. On his journey, the young rider changes horses at a peasant farm.<sup>30</sup> Münzenberg's description of the events at the peasant household contains a good bit of drama in of itself as he narrates the gripping scene:

– “What is the matter, what misfortune is chasing you?” [the peasant family asks the rider]

What pain marks the faces of the peasant family right down to the smallest child when the rider tells them: “Lenin is dead”, and what an outburst when he has to deliver the same message to the waiting crowd.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the workers of the world had the opportunity to weep together in the cinema over the loss of their ‘great leader’, forging the transnational workers’ community. Despite the sorrow, the film concludes with the “great, uplifting, positive, hopeful” spectacle after Lenin's funeral with Lenin's call from the grave to all workers to continue his work. The film's final scene consists of an image of Lenin's hand pointing forward, while in the background hundreds of thousands of workers are demonstrating, all with red banners. According to Münzenberg, this was a prime example of a proletarian film as it ultimately provided the viewers with the positive will to help and work for the great aims of the workers' movement. Münzenberg concluded that this film could, if only its distribution was permitted, help millions of workers find their way to the workers' movement.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that Münzenberg did not claim or suggest that people would turn to communism because of this film, but simply that it would help the workers find their way to the labour movement and to socialism.

Until 1925, *Sein Mahnruf* was, according to Münzenberg, the prime example of a proletarian film both regarding ideological content and technical and photographic realisation. It ended up being acclaimed by both critics and thousands of German workers. By the end of November 1925, about 50,000 Germans had seen the film.<sup>33</sup> However, Münzenberg was quick to confess that in the area of technical production, the proletarian productions could not be compared to the outstanding work by American and Swedish film-makers. The main point in 1925 was not to compete in excellence but to celebrate the fact that for the first time

in the young history of cinema it was possible to produce any motion pictures at all that were completely independent of bourgeois capital and banks.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Battleship *Potemkin***

One of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* greatest successes was achieved with Sergei Eisenstein's monumental motion picture the Battleship *Potemkin*.<sup>35</sup> The film was not a *Mezhrabpom-Russ* production, but was produced by *Goskino*. The significant role played by the *Arbeiterhilfe's* film distribution company became even clearer when not one of the film distributors in Germany had accepted *Potemkin*. Thus, it came to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* distribution company *Prometheus* and became an integral part of the history of world cinema.<sup>36</sup> The master copy of the film was sold to *Prometheus*, as the Soviet film industry did not have the technological capacity to duplicate it. However, as the master copy was being sent off for the mandatory review by the German censors, the original negative was cut and the cut pieces were lost in the process, leaving no authentic copy of Eisenstein's masterpiece.<sup>37</sup> Unsurprisingly, the movie was not received well by the German authorities and on 24 March 1926 they notified the *Arbeiterhilfe* that the censors had classified it as a political film (Tendenzfilm). The representative of the *Reichswehrministerium* (German Ministry of War) had expressed a particular hostility towards the film as, in his view, the film in fact attempted to persuade the police forces and the military to break ranks and to instigate a mutiny. Thus, although *Potemkin* concerned the mutiny in Odessa in 1905, it was concluded that the film was a clear threat to the public calm and order, and therefore the German public was not permitted to view it.<sup>38</sup>

*Prometheus* demanded a reconsideration and the lawyer and former Chairman of the *German Communist Party* (KPD), Paul Levi (1883–1930), represented the *Prometheus'* case at the governmental Film Review Office (Film-Oberprüfstelle).<sup>39</sup> In communist circles, Levi's involvement was most likely regarded as a rather unconventional choice as he had been ousted from the KPD in 1921, whereupon he had become one of its most public critics. Furthermore, in 1922 Levi had returned to the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD) and had been a *Reichstag* Deputy for the SPD since 1924.<sup>40</sup> As the review process showed to *Prometheus'* advantage, political bias in a film on its own was simply not sufficient grounds for its prohibition. However, the possibility of bringing criminal charges against *Prometheus* was still an option for those wishing to stop Battleship *Potemkin* in its tracks. As was pointed out during discussions between the state agencies in Berlin, the *Staatsgerichtshof zum*

*Schutz der Republik* (State Court for the Protection of the Republic) had, in an earlier case, judged that confiscated publications portraying revolutionary events could be interpreted as material preparing the way for civil war in Germany. Such examples showed how the use of history could be very dangerous and it was consequently argued that printed material depicting historical events could actually be used as a means of spreading communist propaganda in disguise. Following this logic, the mere portrayal on film of the military and revolutionary preparations for the Russian Revolution, or for any other revolutionary events such as the mutiny at Odessa, was the same as teaching Germans how to instigate such a revolution in Germany.<sup>41</sup>

In the end, however, Battleship *Potemkin* could not be stopped, although Eisenstein could not avoid the censorship cutting 'improper' scenes from the film. Its German première was finally set for 29 April 1926 at the Apollo Theatre located at 218 Friedrichstraße. The première was accompanied by new music composed by Edmund Meisel, and he would also be the conductor during the première. It was customary at the time that silent films were accompanied by music, but Meisel had had the opportunity to work on an original film sound track with Eisenstein himself, who had arrived in Berlin for the German première. Later, Eisenstein recalled that this represented his first foray into talking pictures, as the sound track had been created in cooperation and in collaboration with both the composer and the director, resulting in a "single audiovisual image for the work". The effectiveness of their collaboration would also be clearly noted by the authorities reporting on the première.<sup>42</sup> The première of the film was widely advertised and, in conjunction with the film's première, the cover of the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ) also featured an illustration from Battleship *Potemkin* with the caption "Brüder, zu uns! (Brothers, to us!)" which clearly elaborated on the theme of solidarity and brotherhood.<sup>43</sup>

The première and subsequent screenings of the film can here be interpreted as being significant opportunities to publicly celebrate international solidarity. A police report from the première provides a unique insight into what occurred inside the Apollo Theatre in late April 1926. According to the observer, the audience consisted of representatives from all social classes. The majority, however, consisted of "proletarians," who also included members of the Red Front Fighters (RFB) and Russian emigrants. To the surprise of the observer all present appeared to enjoy the film, even the bourgeois amongst them. He had, however, a ready explanation for this seemingly irrational behaviour. Allegedly, it was the very high artistic quality of the film that had led to the unexpected

general enthusiasm.<sup>44</sup> The film was simply so outstanding that anyone could enjoy it, even members of the bourgeois. It is interesting to note that the observer had not been that concerned about the content of the film, but had been rather more affected by the accompanying music composed by Meisel. He stated that: "More dangerous than the film to me is the music, which is extraordinarily exciting due to its strange rhythm, which is very cleverly matched to the action in the film".<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, he reported the public's reactions to the performance on the screen. Certain parts of the film had been wildly applauded, like the scene where the officers were killed, and the scene where the fallen sailors were commemorated by the masses in Odessa and the subsequent fraternisation (*Verbrüderung*) between the rest of the sailors in the naval fleet and the sailors on the *Potemkin*. However, despite *Potemkin's* many spectacular scenes, it did not lead to any demonstrations after the film. The observer's final conclusion was that *Potemkin* was not threatening when it was shown in this manner, but it had a menacing potential if it was shown to an audience consisting only of communists and Red Front Fighters, or was accompanied by speeches from communist leaders.<sup>46</sup>

Immediately after its première, a call for a ban on the 'Bolshevik' film was published in the conservative *Deutsche Zeitung*. The rhetoric was clear: the flow of Bolshevik propaganda films to Germany was steadily increasing, and the newspaper's editor could not understand how *Potemkin* with its poisonous effect could have passed the censors, who had earlier been so diligent in banning patriotic films. A further proof of the censors' poor judgement was the alleged constantly recurring fiery scenes at the Apollo Theatre. The newspaper was not referring to scenes performed on the screen, but in the audience. For example, during the scene in the film where one of the mutineers was being punished, someone in the audience had allegedly applauded in defiance and thereafter had been harassed by communists in the audience. This had apparently resulted in heated exchanges and scuffles at the theatre. *Potemkin* was a serious matter, with its performances on the screen reflecting back perceived social reality to the audience. A strong identification with the characters in the film was perhaps not that surprising as Germany had itself experienced the 1918 mutiny which had led to the November Revolution. Thus performances on the screen could lead to strong emotional outbursts in real life. Clearly, the public celebration of international solidarity was a sensitive business which did not need much provocation before it turned into real fights.<sup>47</sup>

The film, *Deutsche Zeitung* concluded, represented in effect "a punch in the face of every good German" (*Dieser Film ist ein Faustschlag in das*

Gesicht jedes guten Deutschen).<sup>48</sup> From this perspective, those viewing the film were not good Germans, and could perhaps be as hostile as the mutineers, and were potential sympathisers of international working-class solidarity.

Even years after its initial première in Germany, Battleship *Potemkin* continued to stir up controversy. In the summer of 1928, what was alleged, and contrary to claims in the previous research, to be the original version of the film, was finally allowed to be shown in Germany.<sup>49</sup> The film hit the headlines once again after an incident which occurred in July 1928. A *Reichswehr* soldier was buying tickets for *Potemkin* in Berlin when suddenly three men, who had been patrolling outside the cinema, came in from off the street. Inside they had produced commandant credentials and prohibited the soldier from seeing Battleship *Potemkin*, as they claimed it was forbidden for *Reichswehr* soldiers to watch it. The incident allegedly led to a considerable commotion inside the theatre. The *Berliner Tageblatt* considered the matter to be a very peculiar incident, as the German censors had approved the film two years previously. As the newspaper rhetorically asked: "Detectives of the Wehrmacht who storm a cinema in order to capture its guests – what should one say to such a spectacle played out in the capital of the Republic?"<sup>50</sup> The incident even provoked the conservative *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* to publicly defend the illegal actions of the *Reichswehr* detectives through a full-blown offensive on Münzenberg and Soviet films in general on the front page of its newspaper.<sup>51</sup>

Battleship *Potemkin* became *Prometheus'* greatest success and, according to an internal Comintern memo written in 1932 by Emil Unfried, one of the directors of the *Prometheus*, the film had by then been viewed by over 5 million Germans.<sup>52</sup> It was fast securing its place in the annals of world cinema.

### **From the world of *Prometheus*: distributing proletarian films in Germany**

In this part of the chapter I will elaborate on the difficult task of distributing and producing proletarian films in Germany.<sup>53</sup> In the beginning, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* film company *Prometheus'* objective had simply been to distribute proletarian documentaries and motion pictures but later it included the actual production of German proletarian films. On the distribution side, the *Prometheus* was rather successful, whereas its production of films was constrained by financial difficulties.<sup>54</sup>

Although conditions for distributing Soviet films in Germany were far from ideal, *Prometheus* reported in 1930 that it had managed to reach 713 cinemas in Germany, where their films were being screened.

According to the *Prometheus*' numbers, there were in the beginning of 1930 approximately 2,500 cinemas in Germany which were screening films daily. However, it was calculated that of all German cinemas only 1,395 were establishments that the *Prometheus* had any chance of reaching. To make matters even more difficult, the provincial cities often only had one or two cinemas per city, resulting in enormous pressure on these as only 100 to 300 films could be shown per cinema per year, whereas there were 500 films competing each year for market share. The competition was fierce and the fact that *Prometheus* was offering Russian films was not to its advantage:

Added to that is the general animosity towards Russian films. The majority of cinema owners and also many cinema-goers reject them for political reasons alone. The majority of cinema-goers are women, who demand only very light films and the very worst kind of kitsch, for which reason the films of Harry Liedtke and films with [William] Dieterle such as 'Die Heilige und ihr Narr' ['The Saint and Her Fool'] achieve record successes. [...] [-] even in purely working-class areas, films such as 'Unsere Emden' ('Our Emden') do better business than even 'Battleship Potemkin'.<sup>55</sup>

During the first few years, it had become apparent that in many cases it was the "revolutionary character" of the Soviet films that had made them difficult to sell in Germany in competition with the bourgeois films. Only if the film had a very interesting theme and was of an unusually high artistic standard was it possible to distribute the films successfully. The cinema owners simply refused even to consider playing Soviet films in their theatres. This refusal could have been ideologically based but it seems that other issues might have been involved as well. Emil Unfried reported instances in the provinces where cinema owners had agreed to show films distributed by *Prometheus* but had then been forced to cancel after they had been terrorised or threatened by national socialists.<sup>56</sup>

Another challenge that arose was the introduction of sound for the 1929–1930 season. In the ensuing competition, *Prometheus* had for that season and the following season only silent films to offer. Some efforts were made by *Prometheus* in Germany to introduce sound to several of the Soviet films it distributed. However, the technical supremacy of the bourgeois film producers was unprecedented and considered to be impossible to compete with.<sup>57</sup> The shift to "talking films" occurred within a very short space of time although the shift to sound constituted a significant challenge for the film production companies as it increased



production costs by 40 percent. Of the 183 German films produced in 1929, only eight were provided with sound. However, by 1932, all films produced in Germany were talking films.<sup>58</sup>

Further trouble for *Prometheus* was caused by German protective legislation which stipulated that for every foreign film distributed by a company, at least one or sometimes two German films had to be distributed as well. It was called the *Kontingentbestimmung* (quota regulation). This had forced *Prometheus* to distribute German films by other producers and to produce its own German films. Only from 1929 onwards was it possible to be granted an exemption and to pay a fee instead. This was not, however, a good deal for *Prometheus* as the exemption fee required was 15–30,000 Rmk (Reichsmark) and its Soviet films often did not turn out to be great financial successes. For example, when *Prometheus* distributed the film *Das Lied vom alten Markt* (The Song from the Old Market) its ticket sales amounted to 50,949 Rmk but, taking into account the exemption fee of 23,000 Rmk and the costs of distribution and marketing totalling 30,000 Rmk, its financial results were indeed not overly impressive.<sup>59</sup>

Production costs were high and ticket sales could never be guaranteed. Moreover, as with for example *Salamander* (1928, a joint production with *Mezhrabpom-Film*) it was upon distribution banned by the censors in Germany. However, *Prometheus* films like *Mutter Krauses Fahrt ins Glück* were great successes, both in a political and a financial sense. The film's production costs had only been 70,000 Rmk whereas it had generated earnings of 200,000 Rmk.<sup>60</sup>

The very first Soviet talking film was produced by *Mezhrabpom-Film*, and distributed by *Prometheus*. The film titled *Der Weg ins Leben* (*The Road to Life*) was brought to the German market in August 1931. This film was expected to rescue *Prometheus* from its very critical financial situation, but it turned out to be a lost cause. The film received rave reviews in the press, but unfortunately these did not translate into an equally strong financial result. Perhaps, Unfried reflected in 1932, the fact that the dialogue had been in Russian or the theme of the film simply did not attract the wider German population could explain its failure. However, one significant factor explaining the poor result was also the large amount of sabotage carried out against the film by the national socialists around the country.<sup>61</sup>

However, *Prometheus* did not give up but instead launched itself into the very expensive production of its own talking film. This would be *Kühle Wampe, oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* (*Who Owns the World?*). The production of this film did not, however, rescue *Prometheus* as had

been hoped but instead worsened its financial situation, and finally *Prometheus* had to abandon its involvement in the film project. This forced *Prometheus* into near bankruptcy and, on 11 December 1931, it cancelled all its payments and called a meeting of all its creditors to be held on 16 December 1931.<sup>62</sup> Conspicuously, *Prometheus'* main debt was to the Russian trade delegation in Berlin, a total of over 715,000 Rmk. A large part of this debt included the licence fees that *Prometheus* had been unable to pay, although between 1926 and 1931 it had already paid licence fees of over 560,000 Rmk to the trade delegation.<sup>63</sup> Apparently, though, this was not enough. It turned out to be a mission impossible to make the production and distribution of proletarian films economically viable. In the end, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* 'Red Dream Factory' in Berlin was brought to its knees by the Soviet government's expectation to also make a profit while spreading the message of international solidarity to the world.

*Prometheus'* financial collapse resulted in the fact that no Soviet films were presented in Germany after the première of *Der Weg ins Leben* in August 1931. Almost one year later, in June 1932, Unfried could, on behalf of *Prometheus*, state with great regret that no new Soviet films had entered the German market since then as the trade delegation had been unable to find a new company willing to distribute Soviet films in Germany. The demise of *Prometheus* actually had devastating consequences, and not only in Germany.<sup>64</sup> Unfried concluded that:

Since the disappearance of *Prometheus*, the Soviet film has ceased to exist not only in Germany, but also in the entire remainder of the capitalist world. We are of the opinion, however, that the Soviet Union cannot do without this important cultural means of propaganda.<sup>65</sup>

The predicament that proletarian revolutionary film now found itself in was devastating. In the midst of the interwar era's most profound fight over the hearts and minds of the German masses between the national socialist and the socialist camp – the Soviet Union decided to pull back the most powerful media of them all. In one blow the *Arbeiterhilfe* lost the most effective means of spreading its message of international solidarity and a positive image of the Soviet Union in the Western world. Symbolically for the history of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, *Prometheus'* last film project, *Kühle Wampe* was concluded with the famous 'Solidaritätslied (Solidarity Song)' penned by Bertolt Brecht himself. In its very last film, it called to the workers to move forward, to remember the most powerful force of the workers of the world: solidarity.

In conclusion, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities in film and cinema played a pivotal role in its public visibility in Weimar Germany. This chapter has shown, through a number of examples, what huge potential and possibilities film offered as a medium for reaching the masses and for spreading the message of international solidarity.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* cinema work created unique opportunities for German workers to view films which departed radically from those offered by the "bourgeois" film production companies and Hollywood films, as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* films elaborated on themes such as the international solidarity of the working class and the liberation of all peoples from the yoke of capitalism. Through its active visual language and engaging stories, film brought the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity to life like never before.

### The *Arbeiterhilfe* and agitprop theatre, 1927–1931

Besides cinema, theatre troupes played a crucial role in the spreading of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity. It is argued here that through their stage performances, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* agitprop theatre troupes created a vital public space for the celebration of international solidarity which created a new and innovative way of spreading the *Arbeiterhilfe's* counter-cultural message of international solidarity. Through drama and comedy they illustrated the need for a united working-class community standing against the bourgeois 'other'. The aim of the following pages is to investigate how the *Arbeiterhilfe* was involved in Weimar Germany's renown proletarian theatre movement and how this was utilised in its campaign work.

The Russian *Proletkult* had inspired a group of German intellectuals, artists and workers to establish the League for Proletarian Culture in 1919 and who were then involved in forming the first Proletarian Theatre in Berlin. During the years that followed, similar proletarian theatres were established in major German cities, although they generally remained short-lived experiments. The leading artistic light who left a lasting imprint on the scene of the German proletarian theatre was, of course, Erwin Piscator, who from 1921 onwards was also the main force behind the *Arbeiterhilfe's* *Künstlerhilfe*.<sup>66</sup> Piscator had moved to Berlin in late 1918 where he had been introduced to the Dada group immediately upon his arrival. It was here that he became acquainted with Georg Grosz, John Heartfield and Franz Jung – all of whom would become central figures in the history of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>67</sup>

The 1920s indeed represented the golden age of political theatre with such luminaries as Piscator and Bertolt Brecht rising to fame and establishing the 'epic theatre' which introduced the use of photography, montage, sound recordings and other technical innovations to theatre. It was Piscator who introduced mass media to the stage and broke with the theatre traditions from the *Kaiserreich* by focusing his theatre on both current events and recent history in a direct, politically engaging manner.<sup>68</sup>

Piscator played an important role through his productions for the KPD in 1924–1925 which inspired the formation of several pioneering agitprop troupes. After 1925, the development of agitprop theatre troupes in Germany was rapid. That year the KPD's Party Congress embraced the idea of actively using agitprop troupes and, by 1929, almost every communist meeting or demonstration included the performance of an agitprop troupe.<sup>69</sup> During this period, two significant developments occurred. Firstly, on 3 September 1927, the *Piscatorbühne* (The Piscator Theatre) opened on Nollendorfplatz, in the vicinity of Berlin's fashionable East End. Secondly, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to leave an indelible and lasting imprint on the German agitprop theatre scene.<sup>70</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* major involvement in interwar agitprop started with the organisation of a tour of the most influential Soviet workers' theatre group, the Moscow "*Blaue Blusen* (the Blue Shirts, or often incorrectly translated as the Blue Blouse)" in Germany in the autumn of 1927.<sup>71</sup> Later, between February 1930 and March 1931, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* own agitprop group called *Kolonne Links* (Column Left), toured extensively throughout Weimar Germany.

### **Agitprop from Moscow: the Blue Shirts on tour in Germany**

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* invitation for the Blue Shirts to tour Germany in 1927 was a significant example of a transnational transfer of worker's culture during the interwar period. Like the *Arbeiterhilfe's* van Demien exhibition in 1921, the 1927 tour of the Blue Shirts offered a splendid opportunity to showcase the new proletarian culture being developed in the Soviet Union. The German tour was later described as a major factor in the establishment of a wave of new agitprop troupes in Germany, as in most towns where they had performed local theatre groups were, in the words of Rühle (1963), popping up like mushrooms. Significantly, the Blue Shirts did not only inspire new formations, but also enriched their dramatic forms. In total, the Blue Shirts performed in 25 cities to about 150,000 spectators in Germany.<sup>72</sup>

The tour of the Blue Shirts was organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in conjunction with the ten-year celebration of the Russian Revolution to spread sympathy for the Soviet Union amongst the wider population.<sup>73</sup> As documents from Moscow show, in 1927 Münzenberg and the *Arbeiterhilfe* were put in charge of the international campaign for the celebration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. From March 1927 onwards, Münzenberg had been making extensive plans for the celebration and, in this context, he suggested in a letter to the Secretariat of the Comintern that the Comintern's Agitprop Department assist him in organising a number of massive Russian cultural events and celebrations in Europe. He then specifically asked for the Blue Shirts to be sent on a tour of the West.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, on 11 July 1927, the German *Arbeiterhilfe* sent the Blue Shirts in Moscow an invitation to tour Germany.<sup>75</sup> The *Arbeiterhilfe* officially sent visa applications for the 14 members of the Blue Shirts to the German embassy in Moscow on 3 August 1927. The German authorities were, however, concerned that the group would spread political propaganda in Germany and consequently endanger security and order in Germany.<sup>76</sup> The Reich Commissioner for the Supervision of Public Order had recommended that the German embassy in Moscow not grant visas to the Blue Shirts members. As earlier examples have shown, the disorganisation of the Weimar institutions was incredible. The Reich Commissioner for the Supervision of Public Order was in this case completely taken aback when on 7 October he read in the newspapers that the Blue Shirts had, in spite of his orders, arrived in Germany and had already given two initial performances in Breslau (today's Wrocław in Poland) and was set to perform in Berlin on three consecutive nights, 7–9 October.<sup>77</sup> As it turns out, it was the Berlin Police President himself who had permitted the entry of the Russians and, during a security check, all 14 members had possessed valid entry and departure visas granted by the German embassy in Moscow.<sup>78</sup>

The promotional booklet printed for the Blue Shirts' performances at the newly opened Piscator Theatre in Berlin provides an excellent description of the spectacle. In an attempt to describe the theatre of the Blue Shirts, it was explained that the word "cabaret" was a completely inaccurate description. The European cabaret was only characterised by alcohol and obscenities, whereas the agitprop troupe offered singing, dancing and recitals through the use of jokes, satire and pathos. It was called Soviet Russian "Kleinkunst-Bühne (variety theatre)"<sup>79</sup>

In a unique police report on the Blue Shirts' Berlin première, an inside view of the performance and the audience's reactions is provided. As

in the report on the *Potemkin* première at the Apollo Theatre one year earlier, the entry of Soviet Russian agitprop theatre generated significant public interest. The Piscator Theatre was completely sold out, with a capacity of 1,100 spectators which was a lot more than most theatres in London could accommodate.<sup>80</sup> According to the police report, the audience during the Berlin première in the evening of 7 October consisted mainly of Russians, allegedly staff members of the various Soviet institutions in Berlin. The performance was hosted by a German compère who explained to the audience that the group should be perceived as being a “living newspaper” which, especially in the Soviet Union, was a necessity due to the high levels of illiteracy. The police report noted that the performance included almost no decorations. The costumes of the performers consisted of Blue Shirts which, depending on the sketch, were complemented with various garments. Their singing was fast, at times there was dancing and other bodily movements. What followed consisted of ten different sketches which, through parody, jokes and propaganda, offered their support to the Soviet system. The most notable sketch was entitled “Ford and We”, which depicted how Fordism, symbolised by the assembly line, was being utilised in the Soviet Union in order to construct socialism. It was explained how Ford’s system was used in capitalist countries in order to exploit the workers to the maximum, whereas in the Soviet Union the system was being made to serve the wider population. Ford is depicted as constructing his system in the capitalist West when he is suddenly interrupted by a radio broadcast informing him of the Soviet Union’s utilisation of his system. Upon hearing this, the audience watches how Ford faints powerlessly to the ground. Again, according to the police report, when the show ended, the Blue Shirts received a thunderous applause from the audience. Then ‘spontaneously’, a group of people in the second row had started singing the *Internationale*, which the rest of the audience had quickly joined in with. Supposedly, the police noted in their report, this constituted communist Germany’s greeting to the Soviet Union.<sup>81</sup> It was yet again an example of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s efforts to construct a transnational solidarity community and a broad culture of international solidarity in Weimar Germany.

In the audience were KPD leaders such as Wilhelm Pieck who, in a report published in *Rote Fahne*, explained that the fact that the performance was in Russian and that most of the audience did not understand a word of what they were saying was of no consequence. “Complete understanding” had been achieved by the actors’ gestures, movements and tone of speech. Pieck classified the performance as the “best possible

propaganda".<sup>82</sup> It seems that a unique quality of the performances in Berlin, and also for their entire German tour, was that the Blue Shirts managed to attract a mixed audience consisting of "curious" bourgeois and ordinary workers. What impressed some communist reviewers was the fact that all the sketches played by the group were always performed as a collective (vollständige Kollaktivitet), as there was never a scene with just one performer on the stage, which was deemed to be individualistic bourgeois art.<sup>83</sup>

The initial tour of the Blue Shirts was regarded as having been such a success that the *Arbeiterhilfe* twice requested an extension of their visit in Germany. The Blue Shirts troupe's last performance was held in Berlin on 18 December 1927.<sup>84</sup>

One could argue that the performances of the Blue Shirts created unique celebrations for international solidarity in general, and for international solidarity towards the Soviet Union in particular. The performances gathered people who could laugh and enjoy the stories of life in the Soviet Union and thus form an understanding and appreciation of the Soviet world. This was a crucial aspect in creating a sympathetic, pro-Soviet atmosphere which was a prerequisite for the establishment and strengthening of international solidarity between the workers of the world and the Soviet Union. If the workers of Germany were to show their international solidarity towards the Soviet Union, they needed to form a positive understanding of the Soviet system, to be 'educated' about the "new Russia". As it is argued here, if the Soviet Union could not be presented in a positive light which enabled people to view it with sympathy, there was no possibility of forming any bonds of solidarity. This was the great leap forward offered by the Blue Shirts, to make the Soviet system comprehensible and to even make people laugh together about the opponents and critics of the Soviet system, and thus effectively present an image of the 'other' and a sympathetic image of the imagined transnational community of the workers of the world and the Fatherland of all workers: the Soviet Union.

### ***Kolonne Links*: agitprop for international solidarity**

In a bid to repeat the success of the Blue Shirts, the *Arbeiterhilfe* began a collaboration with the seven actor strong agitprop troupe *Kolonne Links* in December 1929. The leading light and founder of the group Helmut Damerius, was then called to the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s office in Berlin to work for the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>85</sup>

In his recollections of the *Kolonne Links* era Damerius explains the decision not to call the troupe "Rote Kolonne (Red Column)". The

clear intention was that their primary aim was to reach and influence those who were not yet Red, but who were on the Left.<sup>86</sup> The purpose of this tour was, according to Damerius, both to spread the idea of international solidarity to the workers of Germany and to recruit new members to the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>87</sup> It provided sympathisers with a possibility to engage in a radical culture of international solidarity although without forcing them to become members of the *Communist Party* (CP) or the *Arbeiterhilfe*.

In the advertisements for *Kolonne Links'* shows, the *Arbeiterhilfe* even presented the troupe as the "Blue Shirts of Germany".<sup>88</sup> Their show was staged in two parts with a representative of the *Arbeiterhilfe* holding a short speech during the interval.<sup>89</sup> The *Kolonne Links* also presented during every show its own signature song (Truppenlied) which elaborated on the necessity to stand up in resistance against the "mortal enemy", the bourgeois, and to tie a fraternal knot with Red Russia. In the refrain it called on the grey columns of workers to advance, to make the decision before it was too late: "Left, left, left, proletarian".<sup>90</sup>

Reports on the *Kolonne Links'* tour started to appear in June 1930. It was reported that *Kolonne Links* had been so successful during its tour in the Ruhr area that of the 7,270 people who had seen their show, 877 or 12 percent had signed up to be members of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>91</sup> In July 1930, *Kolonne Links* had allegedly helped to recruit 6,000 new members during a four-month period in which the group had performed at 103 *Arbeiterhilfe* meetings. The group had also integrated fundraising into its programme, as in the summer of 1930 when they collected money for the strikers and their children in Mansfeld.<sup>92</sup>

On 29 March 1931, *Kolonne Links* bade farewell to Berlin with a final performance before leaving for the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup> Up until their departure, *Kolonne Links* had managed to attract up to 16,800 new members to the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>94</sup> *Kolonne Links'* tour in the Soviet Union constituted a reciprocal complement to the Blue Shirts' tour in Germany in 1927. The German troupe initially performed in Moscow, after which it went on tour all the way to Baku in today's Azerbaijan and Tbilis in today's Georgia.<sup>95</sup>

From the government's perspective, the performances by *Kolonne Links* were deemed to be a glorification of the Soviet Union and a belittling of all governmental and cultural achievements in Germany.<sup>96</sup> It was thus perhaps no surprise that in May 1931, in the midst of the global economic crisis, the German government banned all performances of "Red" agitprop groups in the spirit of the state of emergency (Notverordnung). Münzenberg declared it to be a part of the general



cultural reaction taking place in Germany which was directed against the working class.<sup>97</sup>

Due to the measures by the Weimar Republic, agitprop became equated with public attempts to provoke civil disobedience. In the process the *Arbeiterhilfe* lost another of its most effective means to spread its message of solidarity, which also was absent from the crucial struggle against the national socialists before Hitler's coming to power in 1933.

In conclusion, alongside its film and cinema work, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* activities within the field of agitprop theatre formed a crucial part of its public visibility and image in Weimar Germany. The tour of the Soviet agitprop troupe Blue Shirts in Germany formed a crucial benchmark in Soviet cultural diplomacy during the twentieth century which enabled the showcasing of the Soviet Union's cultural capabilities and the innovations of a 'proletarian culture' in the West. It further inspired a whole movement of agitprop theatre in Weimar Germany that enabled the German workers to spread of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity through the mediums of drama and comedy.

# 9

## Celebrating International Solidarity, 1930–1932

This chapter narrates and analyses the major public celebrations of international solidarity in Germany, with a focus on Berlin as the scene of the celebration. In the first part, the focus of the analysis will be on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Days (1930–1932) that involved tens of thousands of people which, especially towards the end of the Weimar Republic, became the most important international solidarity festival.

The second part of the chapter deals with the most spectacular international solidarity event the *Arbeiterhilfe* ever produced: the ten-year anniversary of the *Arbeiterhilfe* which culminated in the “World Congress of International Solidarity”, organised in Berlin in October 1931. One could argue that it represented the last prodigious public international solidarity congress organised on German soil before the coming of the Third Reich. The analysis of the celebrations also depict the *Arbeiterhilfe's* reactions and further radicalisation in the context of the devastating economic crisis in Weimar Germany.

### **A people's festival? The International Solidarity Day**

The festivals and spectacles form a clear part of the new ‘mass politics’ that was constructed on the active usage of symbols, myths, public festivals and rites. Many studies have claimed that it was the national socialists who ‘invented’ the use of aesthetics in mass politics during festivities and mass events. More recently, this image of national socialist supremacy in the field of mass politics has been challenged by studies focusing on mass events commissioned by the Weimar Republic and in studies of the political cultures of the republican parties and the workers’ movement. International Solidarity Day has not been acknowledged as

having been either a significant festival for international solidarity or any kind of public festival in Germany in the previous research.<sup>1</sup>

It will hence be argued that between 1930–1932 this event developed into one of the major public festivals of the Left. However, in comparison to public celebrations concerning mainly communists, such as the LLL festivals organised by the *German Communist Party* (KPD) in commemoration of Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg; the *Arbeiterhilfe* attempted to create a festival for everyone who sympathised with the idea of international solidarity, as a kind of people's festival.<sup>2</sup> If earlier studies have highlighted the culture of radicalism that was developed by the *Communist Party* (CP) in Germany, here it is argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* festivals and celebrations of solidarity form a crucial, but hitherto forgotten, part of the study of the fragmented political culture within the Weimar Republic and the counter-cultural activities of the German working class.

### **1930: the festival of the one hundred thousand**

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Day seems to have originated from the annual summer festivals that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had organised for workers' families since 1925.<sup>3</sup> However, the first festival that was actually called "Solidarity Day" (Solidaritätstag) was organised in Berlin on 2 July 1927.<sup>4</sup> The celebrations expanded each year, but it was in 1930 when International Solidarity Day was first consciously transformed into the *Arbeiterhilfe's* most high-profile event of the year.

As the motto for the 1930 International Solidarity Day "Fest der 100,000 (Festival of the 100,000)" proclaimed, this was clearly the start of a new vision of what the solidarity spectacle was meant to be.<sup>5</sup> It was proclaimed to be the "Day of Mass Mobilisation", as the event for demonstrating the brotherly unity of all workers.<sup>6</sup> The message of solidarity was hence defined very broadly, including all anti-capitalist forces. It was further emphasised that, although the event was a celebration of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, the organisation did not represent an end in itself but was the "embodiment" and "organisational expression" of proletarian solidarity and the international unity of all workers.<sup>7</sup>

For the first time International Solidarity Days were also organised in other countries.<sup>8</sup> In Germany, events were apart from Berlin organised in Hannover, Essen, Offenbach, Hanau and Breslau.<sup>9</sup> In a secret Comintern resolution it was stated that 30–40 events were organised in Germany in 1930.<sup>10</sup>

Both radical and moderate demands were mixed together and variously highlighted in different contexts, depending on the particular

forum in which they were being expressed. On the one hand, the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin welcomed all friends of proletarian solidarity. Yet it still publicly subscribed to the idea of supporting the formation of a Soviet Germany.<sup>11</sup>

The people of Berlin apparently embraced the new version of the event, and the *Arbeiterhilfe* estimated that 120,000 people had attended the spectacle in Berlin. It was defined as being "one of the most grandiose solidarity demonstrations that Berlin had witnessed during the past years".<sup>12</sup> Other sources have, however, given significantly lower estimates of the number of people who were at the event. According to *Vossische Zeitung*, the 13 July International Solidarity Day in Berlin was attended by 50,000 people.<sup>13</sup> In an elaborate police report, it was again estimated that 45,000 people had attended the event at the Rehberge park, of whom about 10,000 were women, 15,000 youths, and 8,000 children. Irrespective, even the lowest numbers indicate that the event had been turned into a major event for the celebration of international solidarity.<sup>14</sup> As shown below, it was from beginning to end a celebration of counter-cultural rituals and practices.

At the Rehberge festival grounds everyone in attendance was provided with a solidarity badge while several music groups performed around the area and workers' songs were sung.<sup>15</sup> As the *Fahnenlegation* (delegation of standard bearers) entered the park, a trumpet fanfare heralded their arrival. Münzenberg entered the grounds at the head of the demonstration, which was met with jubilation by the masses.<sup>16</sup> A "forest of red flags" then entered the festival grounds. These included the flags of the KPD, the KPD districts of Berlin, the red sports clubs, the singers' clubs, the *Rote Hilfe* and, of course of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. On the banners one could read slogans in defence of the Soviet Union, and in solidarity with the strikers in Germany. Suddenly, in the middle of the march one could see a group of the illegal *Red Front Fighters' League* (RFB). A Soviet workers' flag could also be seen flying.<sup>17</sup> For the police it was a clear embarrassment that such illegal groups had managed, despite strict controls, to participate in the demonstration. According to the police, the RFB members had concealed their forbidden garments under their clothes and then, at some unobserved moment, had sneaked into the parade.<sup>18</sup>

Speeches were then held amongst others by Münzenberg as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* General Secretary; Alfons Goldschmidt as a leading member of the German *Arbeiterhilfe*; and Hermann Remmele, who together with Ernst Thälmann and Heinz Neumann at the time represented the 'triumvirate' in charge of the KPD. The speeches were concluded with the joint singing of the *Internationale*.<sup>19</sup>

When the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ) reported on Berlin's International Solidarity Day in its following issue, it emphasised the fact that Münzenberg's appearance on stage had been the highlight of the spectacle.<sup>20</sup> In his speech, Münzenberg made a strong stand for the revolutionary struggle of the workers. As capitalism in the Western world was struggling with one of the most devastating economic crises, it was estimated that 100 million people were suffering in desperate need. Furthermore, Münzenberg emphasised the devastating situation in China and India, which meant that in all 200 million people were living in misery. "An economic system that depends upon such suffering, must perish," Münzenberg declared to a cheering audience. The suffering could not be prolonged and the workers were required to head a persistent, passionate struggle against the ruling class. One could not count on the help of others, but the destiny of the workers was in their own hands: "No God, no trade union Secretary will help us. We must help ourselves". The only force able to head the proletarian revolution was, according to Münzenberg, the CP. Social democrats and the bourgeois had predicted the fall of communism hundreds of times, but, in Münzenberg's view, International Solidarity Day showed the true colour of Berlin. "Berlin is Red and remains Red," Münzenberg declared, and continued asking: "Who will be victorious in the great battle between the classes, we or the capitalists?" The crowd roared "We!" after which Münzenberg demanded to know who would be victorious: "Stalin or Hitler?" whereupon the crowd shouted: "Stalin! Stalin!"<sup>21</sup>

After Münzenberg's speech, the crowd divided into smaller groups as people attended the performances of the agitprop troupes and the sports events.<sup>22</sup> On the dance stage, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* very own *Kolonne Links* performed its entire programme.<sup>23</sup> International Solidarity Day was also attended by the *Proletarische Freidenker* (Proletarian Free-Thinkers) who established a stand for those wishing to leave the church, "this organisation of the class enemy" (Kirchenaustrittszentrale (the Centre for Leaving the Church)).<sup>24</sup>

Amongst the most noteworthy cultural events was a game of chess with living pieces. One side was dressed in bourgeois outfits, while the other side wore proletarian clothes. The bourgeois pieces included a priest with a black tree cross and a police man riding a wooden hobby horse.<sup>25</sup> As the programme ended and the crowd left the grounds of the Rehberge park, *Rote Fahne* at least articulated the hope that the masses had through the solidarity spectacle been filled with a fresh fighting spirit which they would take along to their respective factories and companies in order to continue their struggles.<sup>26</sup>

The celebration did not, however, end peacefully as clashes occurred between the communists and the police with 22 people being arrested, most of them quite young. Counter-cultural practices such as wearing forbidden uniforms or singing forbidden revolutionary songs became a provocative way to show civil disobedience, where the actual crime was indeed questionable.<sup>27</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* journal *Mahnruf*, it was stated that it had not only been a success for the organisation but also a very successful event for the development of the revolutionary idea amongst German workers. It was even claimed that the event had represented a grandiose "mass confession to the proletarian revolution".<sup>28</sup> The following day, it was claimed that, despite the oppression of the workers of Berlin, International Solidarity Day had shown that their enthusiasm to fight (*Kampfbegeisterung*) was not broken but most certainly alive and only growing stronger. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Day had shown that Berlin belonged to the revolution.<sup>29</sup>

Afterwards, International Solidarity Day was discussed in the context of the day and the struggles ahead. The Brüning government's strong reaction against the communists in particular, including a total ban against anything seen as provoking civic disobedience in Germany, was sharply criticised. It was up to the masses, who had supported International Solidarity Day, to show that solidarity meant action. The "Black Chancellor" and his supporters had to be shown that the German working class could not be taken to the butcher's like lambs to the slaughter. It was committed to fighting.<sup>30</sup>

### **1931: "a fiery manifestation of the will to fight"**

The 1931 International Solidarity Day was a solidarity spectacle of unprecedented proportions. Even the bourgeois newspaper *Welt am Montag* noted afterwards that the spectacle organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin "overshadowed all other events of this nature". It even exclaimed that it was so well organised and with such great attractions that one almost forgot that it was a "communist day of struggle" (*Kampftag*).<sup>31</sup> After the 1931 event, Münzenberg highlighted that International Solidarity Day had been a "powerful and spectacular" demonstration for the Red united front. It had supposedly managed for one day to unite communists, social democrats and non-party members in revolutionary demands.<sup>32</sup>

According to a secret report sent to the Comintern, International Solidarity Day was celebrated in 600–700 German cities and villages and thus represented a significant increase from the 30–40 event of the previous year.<sup>33</sup>

The slogan of the 1931 event was “For Bread and Freedom” (Für Brot und Freiheit). The subsequent inclusive slogans included the calls for a struggle of unity (Einheitskampf) of all the oppressed, for the Soviet Union and for international proletarian solidarity. The excluding slogans called for a fight against social reaction, against oppression and fascism and against the imperialist war. Significantly, unlike in 1930, the concept of social fascism was not utilised in this context. Instead, the first appeal for International Solidarity Day ended with the classic 1848 call for international solidarity: “Proletarians of all countries, unite!”.<sup>34</sup> In the appeal signed by the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s CC it was stated that International Solidarity Day had to become a “fiery manifestation of the will to fight” amongst workers, worker intellectuals, peasants and the impoverished middle classes. It was the day when millions had to pledge their solidarity with the 30 million unemployed of the world and to form a revolutionary united front against capitalist oppression.<sup>35</sup>

Dünninghaus later declared that the 1931 International Solidarity Day had become an impressive symbol for the future international union of all peoples. He continued melodramatically that “in all countries, hearts are beating for proletarian solidarity”.<sup>36</sup> Here, again, the strong emotional character of solidarity is highlighted. Passionately, hearts are beating for the transnational unity of all oppressed peoples.

In *Rote Fahne*, the purpose of International Solidarity Day was formulated in far more revolutionary and military terms, calling it the “general roll-call for active proletarian solidarity”.<sup>37</sup> International Solidarity Day was, naturally, not perceived in such terms in, for example, the *AIZ*, where it was portrayed as being a demonstration day for all those in the capitalist system who were denied bread and freedom. For all these people, International Solidarity Day and its motto “proletarian solidarity helps to free the world” represented an unshakeable truth and promise of the future.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the revolutionary rhetorics the *Arbeiterhilfe* still managed to maintain the festival's celebratory character of a day for everyone to joyfully celebrate international solidarity.<sup>39</sup> The festival was perceived as being a celebration of emancipation and an effort to change the world: to free it from the system of capitalism. In the era of unprecedented unemployment levels, this vision of a new supposedly better world was certainly, for some, a cause worth celebrating and dreaming about.<sup>40</sup>

On 21 May 1931, another pre-International Solidarity Day meeting was held in Saalbau Friedrichshain in Berlin where Münzenberg professed that the destiny of the capitalist system was clear: it was condemned to death (the crowd at this point broke out in vigorous applause). In the

climax of his speech, Münzenberg animated the audience with a spirit of resistance as he stated that, despite his immunity as a member of the *Reichstag*, he had been searched for weapons when entering the hall, and yet he and the crowd had still smuggled into the premises the sharpest of all weapons – Marxism! (“und doch haben wir die schärfste Waffe hereingeschmuggelt – den Marxismus!”).<sup>41</sup> It was a promising start for the 1931 celebration of solidarity.

However, the spaces accessible for celebrating solidarity in Berlin were constantly diminishing as the Berlin police force under the social democrat Albert Grzesinski's (1879–1947) leadership, banned several elements of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Day on the basis of the German government's notorious *Notverordnung*.<sup>42</sup> More restrictions followed, with celebrations only being permitted at indoor venues and parks.<sup>43</sup> The police president also banned all agitprop troupe performances, which was a serious setback for the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The police were cracking down on Solidarity Day as they had noted the fact that Solidarity Day had traditionally involved a significant amount of fundraising but, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin at least were not allowed to collect any money, anyone found to be fundraising would be arrested for illegal conduct.<sup>44</sup>

A mass meeting at the Berlin *Sportpalast*, held on Thursday 11 June, became the new start signal for the spectacle, after which the celebrations would continue over the weekend at 16 venues around Berlin.<sup>45</sup> The 1931 International Solidarity Day was officially supported by other mass organisations and sympathising organisations, including the *Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition* (RGO), the *League Against Imperialism* (LAI), the *Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur* (Ifa), workers' sport organisations, women's organisations and youth organisations.<sup>46</sup> This year's programme also offered a performance by the acclaimed Joseph Bilé, “the Negro-actor”, who held an enthusiastic speech and sang and played “Negro folk songs”.<sup>47</sup>

The main Berlin Solidarity Day event was on 14 June 1931 and was organised at the Carlshof park which was located within the vicinity of the Red Wedding and Moabit Berlin districts. A trumpet fanfare heralded the opening ceremony of the spectacle after which a parade of marchers holding banners and flags entered the grounds singing revolutionary songs.<sup>48</sup> The estimates on how many people had attended this celebration vary significantly. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* own press had estimated that at the Carlshof park alone between 35,000 and 40,000 people had attended, and that in the whole of Germany 150,000 people had participated in the celebration.<sup>49</sup> However, the Berlin police estimated



on the basis of observations at 12 locations on 13–14 June that in total 31,850 people attended International Solidarity Day in Berlin of which 15,000 had attended the Carlshof spectacle.<sup>50</sup> In an internal report on the *Arbeiterhilfe*' solidarity work in the Berlin area, it was estimated that the Carlshof spectacle had attracted 20,000 people. In the rest of the Berlin–Brandenburg area, it was reported that 54 local groups had organised International Solidarity Days. In total, it was estimated that the Berlin–Brandenburg district had amassed no less than 100,000 people during its International Solidarity Day.<sup>51</sup>

In his speech to the crowd at Carlshof, Münzenberg spoke of the desperate state of the German working people and of the struggles ahead.<sup>52</sup> In Münzenberg's view, the aim of International Solidarity Day was to spread the idea of international solidarity to the workers and to convince the masses that this day was the first step away from the slavery of capitalism and towards the freedom of socialism.<sup>53</sup>

International Solidarity Day also offered a grand finale, as mentioned in the introduction of this book. Trumpeters played the *Roten Zapfenstreich* (something like the Red Military Tattoo in English) and shortly thereafter the long awaited fireworks display commenced. A large *Arbeiterhilfe* symbol was illuminated in the dark and a thundering cannonade was heard. The enthusiasm of the crowd allegedly knew no limits and thousands spontaneously started singing the *Internationale* as a great red fire lit up the Berlin night sky symbolising the bright future of the working class.<sup>54</sup> As expressed in *Rote Fahne* on 16 June,<sup>55</sup> International Solidarity Day constituted a captivating pledge to the "revolutionary people's front" (revolutionäre Volksfront). From other parts of Berlin, police reports noted that the overall nature of the spectacle was that of a people's festival ("Die Veranstaltung trug den Charakter eines Volksfestes").<sup>56</sup> These kinds of statements confirm that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had managed to create a broad public interest and most likely succeeded in attracting new groups of people to the counter-cultural celebrations taking place in Weimar Germany.

However, conflicts seemed to be an inevitable part of the celebrations. In Berlin, open violence between the supporters of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the national socialists had broken out on Solidarity Day. Around 7 a.m. in East Berlin there had been a gunfight between communists and national socialists. In the communist press, it was claimed that this fight had been the result of national socialist provocation in the workers' neighbourhood. The incident resulted in four severely injured workers, one of whom later died despite hospitalisation. A total of seven communists and one national socialist were arrested at the scene.<sup>57</sup> For the first time

the *Arbeiterhilfe's* celebrations of international solidarity were violently challenged by the defenders of an extreme German national solidarity.

### **1932: the last mass call for international solidarity in the Weimar Republic**

The 1932 International Solidarity Day was strongly integrated into and influenced by the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war campaign which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10. Münzenberg promised in a letter to the Comintern that the *Arbeiterhilfe* would develop this year's International Solidarity Day into a "real international anti-war day".<sup>58</sup> The slogans for International Solidarity Day were initially articulated in the *AIZ* in an anti-war spirit, where they called for "international solidarity against imperialist war – for the defence of the Soviet Union and Soviet China!". However, the slogans published in the *AIZ* also included classic calls for the improvement of the daily lives of the workers, for example, "Solidarity of all workers in their struggle against 'wage robbery' (Lohnraub) and social reaction – for work, bread and land" (Boden): Significantly, the *Arbeiterhilfe* also called for the creation of "the Red united front against capitalism and the fascist dictatorship!".<sup>59</sup>

The 1932 International Solidarity Day was conceived within a more international context than ever before. The *Arbeiterhilfe* proclaimed that International Solidarity Day offered the working class throughout the whole world the opportunity to simultaneously demonstrate in the North and South, in the East and the West, under the Red flag of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Everyone would thereby be united by the idea of proletarian solidarity and the common will to bring the "bankrupt" system of capitalism to an end. In addition, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared that the struggle for international solidarity was a struggle against racism (Rassenhass) and warmongering and declared their global message of international solidarity: "Whether black or white, brown or yellow, we all, who are oppressed and exploited, demonstrate on 12 June". Characteristically, the *Arbeiterhilfe* did not only present 'rational' arguments for its cause but actively appealed for an emotional commitment from the individual workers, declaring that the struggle against capitalism involved the very fate of "you and your family, your children, your class" and, of course, the future of the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> This constituted the 'we' group of the transnational workers' community.

Brotherly greetings were also sent on behalf of hundreds and thousands of "Negro workers" in Africa, the West Indies and South America from the Hamburg based *International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers*.<sup>61</sup> In Neukölln, Joseph Bilé represented the "Black proletariat" of

the Berlin area. Bilé had, therefore, been promoted from his earlier role as a “Negro artist” during the 1931 International Solidarity Day and was now represented as a serious representative of the Black proletariat.<sup>62</sup>

The main venue in Berlin was, as the previous year, the Carlshof Plötzensee outdoors venue.<sup>63</sup> Münzenberg gave the main speech of the Solidarity Day at the Carlshof, where the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ongoing anti-war campaign and the increasing war danger in the Far East provided a new character to Münzenberg's articulations of international solidarity. He declared that he had just returned from Moscow and he assured all those present that the Soviet Union wanted nothing but peace. However, if a Japanese soldier crossed the border into the Soviet Union, the Red Army was prepared to defend itself. According to Münzenberg, all imperialist countries and warmongers were calling out “Moscow must fall”. Therefore it was the urgent duty of the working people to defend the Soviet Union and, if the national armies should try to mobilise them against the Soviet Union, the workers should instead use these weapons against the enemies of the Soviet Union. Münzenberg also spoke of the German political situation and stressed the *Arbeiterhilfe's* demand that the social democratic workers collaborate and join the struggle. Münzenberg concluded his speech by proclaiming that “The ‘Third Reich’ must not, and will not come, if the working class rises up”.<sup>64</sup> This year's calls thus united an anti-war, anti-capitalist and anti-fascist message of international solidarity.

In a ritual of international solidarity, a Japanese and Chinese representative were invited on stage stressing the importance of the mutual solidarity between the peasants and workers of China and Japan. Their appearance was concluded with a symbolical, brotherly handshake. The spectacle was concluded with a great firework display, a choir performed an anti-war song and in conclusion a gigantic banner declaring: “We protect the Soviet Union” was revealed. According to a published report, the crowd then started singing the *Internationale* in exhilarated voices.<sup>65</sup>

The AIZ claimed that about 250,000 people had taken part in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Day in Berlin.<sup>66</sup> However, the actual celebration in 1932 had been severely more restricted in scope. In a report from the Berlin police president to the Minister of the Interior, it was noted that the events in Berlin had generally been well attended, although the numbers reproduced in the communist press had not been achieved. The total number of participants was estimated at 30,000.<sup>67</sup>

In the German *Arbeiterhilfe's* secret report, preserved in the *Russian State Archives of Social and Political History* (RGASPI), it was estimated

that the event in Berlin had attracted 45,000–50,000 people. Despite efforts to make International Solidarity Day a festival for all proletarian organisations, it was concluded that, in most cases, International Solidarity Day had remained an “*Arbeiterhilfe* affair”, as other organisations had not supported the event in any significant way.<sup>68</sup> The report concluded:

It must be said openly that the Solidarity Day was not as successful with regard to the recruitment of social democratic workers for the Red united front as it ought to have been in view of the objective conditions and the change of mood in the circles of social democratic workers.<sup>69</sup>

The *Social Democratic Party's* (SPD) ban against the *Arbeiterhilfe* from 1924 had not been revoked which still prohibited involvement in the *Arbeiterhilfe*. It remains, however, uncertain if the majority attending the event was communist or politically unorganised.

After these events, it was decided that the following International Solidarity Day was to be organised on 11 June 1933 but, as Chapter 10 will show, by summer 1933, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* German organisation had been more or less totally dismembered and any attempts to hold such celebrations could only be carried out illegally. The 1932 International Solidarity Day became hence the last major celebration organised in the name of international solidarity during the Weimar Republic.<sup>70</sup>

In conclusion, between 1930–1932, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to make International Solidarity Day a significant spectacle for the celebration of international solidarity in Weimar Germany. The development of the event included both an international and a German national expansion as more countries were included and more cities and towns within Germany were included. In a short time, the *Arbeiterhilfe* managed to create a completely new day for the public celebration of international solidarity. At its height, International Solidarity Day became a true people's festival but, as shown by the 1932 event, its development was marred on the one hand by an overly public alliance with the KPD, which tarnished the *Arbeiterhilfe's* image of being an above-party international organisation; and on the other hand, Weimar Germany imposed harsh conditions on the development of public events of this nature. In the end, it must be regarded as being highly significant that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was able to organise any kind of International Solidarity Day at all in the hostile climate of the late Weimar Republic. It constituted a significant public festival of counter-cultural international solidarity that enabled

the joint celebration and performance of public rituals that highlighted the interconnectedness of the transnational workers' community – and highlighted their role as defenders of the socialist Fatherland. Again, classic Marxist articulations of solidarity were integrated with the destiny of the Soviet Union.

### **Exhibiting the power of solidarity: Berlin 1931**

In 1931, the *Arbeiterhilfe* celebrated its ten-year anniversary in spectacular style in Berlin. The main highlight of the celebration was the “World Congress of Proletarian Solidarity”. This congress and associated celebrations of international solidarity have not been the focus of any previous research. Münzenberg himself presented it as an event that not only concerned the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its affiliate organisations, but was also an important spectacle for the entire international working class.<sup>71</sup> The celebration included a great deal of commemoration and congratulations of past achievements, but the World Congress also constituted a forum where the future road of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its solidarity work was defined in the context of the ever deeper global economic crisis. Along with the International Solidarity Day, the anniversary celebrations fixed the *Arbeiterhilfe* as the principal international solidarity organisation of the Left in Weimar Germany.

#### **“Hundreds of millions of hearts belong to us”**

The anniversary celebrations that were held between 9 and 15 October 1931 were not limited to one congress but included four major inter-linked congresses. The main event consisted of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Eighth World Congress. Within the same week, the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s Fourth German National Congress; its First International Women's Congress and its First International Youth Congress were also held in Berlin.<sup>72</sup>

It cannot be regarded as self-evident that the *Arbeiterhilfe* would be able to organise such a vast celebration in Berlin, as the *Internationale Rote Hilfe*, for example, chose to convene in Moscow for its anniversary the following year.<sup>73</sup> Unlike Moscow, Berlin offered a completely different setting, a wide array of possibilities but also several significant restrictions imposed by the German authorities. The aim in 1931 was not to organise a communist event for members of the CPs of the world but to gather all socialists and sympathisers under the Red banner of international solidarity. As Dünninghaus declared, international proletarian solidarity was the bridge that all working people, small peasants,

worker intellectuals, the unemployed, civil servants, scientists and doctors (Ärzte) could march on, opening the congress to all interested participants.<sup>74</sup> The 1931 World Congress offered the unique possibility for like-minded people to gather together from all around the world in order to debate and celebrate one of the cornerstones of any proletarian revolution: international solidarity, its significance, meaning and implementation.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* anniversary events in Weimar Berlin were both serious, with meetings, congresses and deliberations being held, and celebratory, with various manifestations and rituals of solidarity being performed. One evening, the *Arbeiterhilfe* invited the foreign delegates at the World Congress to a cultural event at the *Schubertsaal* in Berlin. Upon arrival, an ensemble of the RGO sung enchanting songs, and one of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Youth groups performed a few short political plays depicting the then current political situation in Germany, as visual lessons for the foreign delegates. The dance group Hans Weidt performed "revolutionary dances" which were received with great applause. There were also performances by the popular proletarian musicians Ernst Busch and Hans Eisler. "That was an atmosphere," one of the participants exclaimed later, "that one had not experienced in a long time". But the true celebration commenced only after the official programme was over when Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs, Americans, French, Austrians and many others started improvising, reciting, singing and dancing. Battle songs in every language were sung. Some were dancing Russian dances in the middle of the hall while others clapped and stamped their feet to the rhythm of their moves. Again and again there were joint singing, cheers, jubilation and joint pledges to fight. It was an "unforgettable night of true cordiality, genuine mirth and resolute fighting spirit", one of the participants wrote in the following day's paper.<sup>75</sup> There was evidently a very special atmosphere at this congress in Berlin as Eleanor Despard from Ireland declared that she was very impressed by the "atmosphere of hope".<sup>76</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* could present a long list of famous artists, intellectuals and scientists who both supported and congratulated the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The most eminent amongst them formed an honorary Presidium consisting of Maxim Gorky, Henri Barbusse, John Dos Passos, Alfons Goldschmidt, Bishop William Montgomery Brown and Georg Ledebour.<sup>77</sup> In the *AIZ*, the *Arbeiterhilfe* could publish greetings from Gorky himself and from Romain Rolland.<sup>78</sup> In the printed programme for the World Congress, greetings from, amongst others, Upton Sinclair,

Theodore Dreiser, Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Nagel, Leonhard Frank and Arthur Holitscher were published.<sup>79</sup>

In the international and German presses, the celebration of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anniversary commenced in August 1931. Significantly, its commemoration was not restricted to the organisation as such but also prominently included the glorification of Münzenberg as its General Secretary. In these reports, it is vividly illustrated that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* success to success mainly was due to Münzenberg's organisational talent, his temperament and his willingness to put his whole self on the line for the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Millions of oppressed people around the world were talking about Münzenberg during the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anniversary, revering him as their friend, "full of trust and faith," it was declared.<sup>80</sup>

In almost every article that was published on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anniversary, Lenin was presented as the revered forefather of both the *Arbeiterhilfe* and of international solidarity. In this context, Münzenberg was presented as Lenin's successor as the protector of international solidarity around the world through his position as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* General Secretary. This image is supported, for example, in a promotional piece published in the *AIZ* before the World Congress where a portrait of Münzenberg is conspicuously placed to the right of a Lenin portrait. The cover of *Mahnruf* presented again that the celebration of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the same as celebrating its two founding fathers, Lenin and Münzenberg.<sup>81</sup>

Although Münzenberg was revered as the international protector of solidarity, the principal reason for the *Arbeiterhilfe's* string of successes was not a person but the magic word "solidarity" (das Zauberwort "Solidarität"), it was declared. It was "solidarity" that had empowered the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>82</sup> This was an international solidarity resting on reciprocity, on the idea that solidarity signified the assisting of the oppressed by the oppressed all around the world.<sup>83</sup>

Still, Münzenberg's role was emphasised and he was even called the *Führer* of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. In 1931, the KPD had embraced a "Führer" rhetoric, evidently as a counter-claim against the *National Socialist German Workers' Party's* (NSDAP) claims that Hitler was the "Führer". In the communist press it was without question Thälmann who was described as being the "Führer" of the German working class.<sup>84</sup> If Thälmann was the 'Führer' of the German working class, it seems like a very bold statement, in the context of Stalin's rising dictatorial powers in Moscow, to declare Münzenberg the 'Führer' of international solidarity in the world.

The history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was used to illustrate the power of international solidarity and its meaning for the socialist liberation struggle.<sup>85</sup> Full of confidence Münzenberg declared in August 1931 at a meeting in Berlin:

One sixth of the world belongs to us; hundreds of millions of hearts in all countries belong to us. We are the heralds of a new and better social order, we are the victors of tomorrow. On this, the 10th anniversary of the IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*], I promise you that we shall not rest until we have established a socialist Germany and a socialist world. We place the work of the IAH, the international proletarian solidarity, at the service of this great struggle!<sup>86</sup>

Several minutes of applause followed and then the workers stood up and started singing the *Internationale*. *Welt am Abend's* reporter at the scene concluded that there was as much rapturous applause for the "Führer" Münzenberg as there was for the accomplishments of the *Arbeiterhilfe*. Both had been pivotal in the realisation of the "greatest idea in human history – the world-wide solidarity of the working class".<sup>87</sup>

From the beginning of October, almost daily *Arbeiterhilfe* celebrations and commemorations took place.<sup>88</sup> Even a special exhibition on the ten-year history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the AIZ was opened at 54/56 Leipziger Strasse in central Berlin.<sup>89</sup> The most ambitious commemoration was produced in the form a 528-page illustrated book published in the autumn of 1931 in Münzenberg's name entitled *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (Solidarity. Ten Years of the International Workers' Relief)*.<sup>90</sup> It constituted the first published presentation of the international history of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, and, at the time, it was also perceived as being a textbook on practical solidarity work.<sup>91</sup>

### **The "World Congress of Proletarian Solidarity"**

The World Congress was not without reason characterised as an unprecedented opportunity for delegates from all over the world to meet and discuss the "necessary improvement of international unity".<sup>92</sup> Münzenberg contentedly reported a couple of weeks before the congress that the *Arbeiterhilfe* had managed to secure delegates from nearly all significant "imperialist and colonial countries" which included representatives from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, South and West Africa, Java, Indochina, India and China.<sup>93</sup> However, several of the distant representatives did not travel all the way from their native countries, but



were already living in Europe. For example, India was represented by the Workers' Welfare League of India which was based in London, and by the *Indische Studentenschaft* which was based in Berlin.<sup>94</sup> In a police report, it was stated that the congresses in Berlin had attracted a total of 230 foreign delegates.<sup>95</sup> The Berlin police further confirmed that at least the following countries were represented at the congress: England, Sweden, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, France, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Netherlands, the United States, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Uruguay, Peru, China, Bulgaria, Egypt, Spain, Poland, Australia and the Soviet Union.<sup>96</sup>

One may wonder how the German authorities allowed the presence of the five-person strong Soviet delegation, and it seems that when the German Foreign Ministry granted their visas, they had proceeded without consulting the German Ministry of the Interior. This omission was regarded as being a fatal mistake as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* World Congress was, in an official report, deemed to be "a purely communist affair" and characterised Hans Abolin, the leader of the Soviet delegation, as a particularly dangerous communist agitator. Abolin would surely exploit his time in Germany and make contacts with the Red trade unions, it was feared.<sup>97</sup> This mistake led to the Foreign Ministry receiving a stern rebuke from the Minister of the Interior who made the severity of the matter perfectly clear:

To my way of thinking it is not acceptable that, on the one hand, the President of the German Reich is passing emergency laws in order to fight communist attempts to overthrow the present system and state police authorities are taking measures against this movement while, on the other hand, foreign agitators are being permitted by a state authority to enter Germany.<sup>98</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* was obviously keen on producing data on what kind of people attended its World Congress in Berlin. In an unpublished report it was concluded that, of the 226 official delegates at the World Congress, 78 percent (176) were male and 22 percent were women (50). Their social composition had also been investigated and it appears that the majority, or 136 to be more specific, were classified as workers, 20 of the women were defined as housewives, 29 were students, 18 were classified as intellectuals, 12 secretaries, 8 agricultural labourers, and 3 small traders (*Kleingewerbetreibende*). On the political side it was concluded that 61 percent (138) were members of a CP, 22 percent (51) were non-party members, 10 percent (23) were social democrats, 7 were

members of the *Sozialistischen Bund*, 2 were syndicalists and 5 were members of the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*.<sup>99</sup> Finally, an investigation into the delegates' trade union affiliations revealed that 50 percent (112) were not union members, 27 percent (61) were organised in the free trade unions, and 23 percent (53) were members of the RGO.<sup>100</sup> These statistics show that the congress had indeed attracted a very diverse set of delegates where the majority were communists but that also included a significant number of politically uncommitted, and even social democrats. It was after all not a 'pure communist event'. The total number of delegates and guests at both its German and World Congresses was 1,845 people.<sup>101</sup>

### Spectacles and rituals of solidarity on Alexanderplatz

The main stage of the events was the *Lehrervereinshaus* (Teachers' Clubhouse) on Alexanderplatz, where the main hall had been ceremoniously decorated with revolutionary banners in German, English, French, Russian and in other languages.<sup>102</sup>

During the opening session of the World Congress, an international Presidium was elected. It consisted of representatives from Russia, Germany, France, Ireland, India, England, West Africa, the United States, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Norway, Uruguay, Egypt, Australia, Indonesia, Spain, China and the Netherlands.<sup>103</sup> According to the stenographer, they were applauded, cheered and accompanied by the joint singing of the *Internationale*. Someone from the middle of the audience then shouted: "We welcome the Presidium as an expression of the unity of the workers of all countries with the salutation of the German working class, a powerful threefold "Red Front". The audience then roared to the assembled Presidium: Rot Front! Rot Front! Rot Front! In one blow, one of the German communists' most memorable salutation was transferred to a global audience of radicals.<sup>104</sup>

Münzenberg then addressed the international crowd and highlighted that the congress was convening at a historical moment:

[...], the building of the imperialistic, capitalistic world is cracking and swaying in every joint. And if Mr [Fritz] Tarnow, the leader of the social fascist trade unions in Germany, puts himself forward as a doctor to this sick capitalism in order to have 'Hilferding' drops prescribed for it, then we say: we do not want to be doctors in this system; we want to play the role that Marx historically assigned to us – the grave-diggers of capitalism. In this spirit we open our congress.<sup>105</sup>

The duty of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was, according to Münzenberg, to be part of the fighting Red unity that was striving to conquer capitalism and to install communism in the world.<sup>106</sup> In the spirit of internationalism, Münzenberg provocatively sent during a speech later that day his brotherly greetings to the Chinese workers and declared that every Chinese worker stood closer to them than any German exploiters whom they “hated with a passion”.<sup>107</sup>

The official Soviet delegate Hans Abolin declared as a representative of the Soviet trade unions that his organisation had collectively joined the *Arbeiterhilfe* as they had realised the important role of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in the struggle for the world’s liberation from capitalism. The history of the Soviet Union and the *Arbeiterhilfe* were perceived by him as being closely interlinked as he declared

that the existence of the Soviet Union was a consequence of the international solidarity and aid of the working class, and that the Soviet Union at the same time was an important element in the international proletarian revolutionary solidarity.<sup>108</sup>

Following Abolin’s speech, Clara Zetkin was greeted by the audience with the greatest reverence as the “alte Klara (old Clara)”. She appeared not only as one of the founding figures of the *Arbeiterhilfe* but also as an official representative of the Executive Committee of the *Internationale Rote Hilfe*. Due to bad health Zetkin was only able to briefly greet the audience, after which her actual speech was presented by Traute Hölz who was introduced to the congress by Münzenberg as “our best, diligent and most trusted” comrade who had set up the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s Women’ Section. Zetkin described the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a lush branch in the tree of life of the class conscious working class. Zetkin then even stated that “the victory of the Russian revolution had also been a success and merit of the *Arbeiterhilfe*”.<sup>109</sup>

Following Zetkin, another legendary figure came to the rostrum, as Georg Ledebour made a short appearance. He noted that he was one of the few non-communist socialists who had maintained his official support for the *Arbeiterhilfe* ever since the mid-1920s. Ledebour expressed his conviction that the German workers’ prolonged toleration of the Brüning government was a fatal mistake and that the conscious working class of Germany should not any longer tolerate the current state of affairs. Ledebour also emphasised the importance of the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s above-party politics (*überparteilichkeit*) as, in his view, it was the only such organisation which allowed the cooperation of representatives of

different strands of socialism, as long as they subscribed to the idea of proletarian class struggle. Ledebour expressed hope that his presence at the World Congress would influence the *Arbeiterhilfe* to continue as an above-party organisation.<sup>110</sup>

What, then, was the purpose of all this, Münzenberg asked the audience? For Münzenberg, the answer was simple: it was all about stronger agitation. He was not looking to profit from the *Arbeiterhilfe's* endeavours and enterprises, but he wanted to create at any price the means to agitate. It was everyone's duty to wake up those slumbering and to make them realise what the world had become. According to Münzenberg, the time for the final struggle between the communists and their adversaries was ripe, even over-ripe.

Objectively speaking, the time was ripe to take action against the enemy, subjectively speaking, however, we have to work in order to rouse the millions who are still undecided through new refined and ingenious methods of agitation. We must awaken their hearts and their brains.<sup>111</sup>

For Münzenberg international solidarity was all about a process of awakening. Solidarity resided within the hearts and minds of all peoples, but was suppressed and asleep. The mission was to sound the alarm, to produce such a wake up call that millions would rise up into active consciousness.

They, Münzenberg continued, today were the heirs of Marx and Engels, of August Bebel and his time and even of Lenin, and it was this legacy which required them to turn their resolutions into active struggle, to bring about the fall of the bourgeois around the world. They had the gravest of responsibilities to form a new world, a world where the police, guns and the army would no longer be the instruments of the bourgeois against the proletariat, but the instruments of the proletariat against the bourgeois. They wanted to turn the capitalist system into a socialist economic system offering "bread and work and apartments and sun and beauty and light" to everyone. They wanted to abolish prostitution from the world. Münzenberg finally declared: "We are not only the proletariat, with us rises the whole of humanity, only through us is it possible to shape a new culture and higher world order. Comrades, we shall triumph!"<sup>112</sup>

In his final speech, Münzenberg declared to the audience his message of hope and will to struggle: "Light in the minds, marrow in the bones, fire in the hearts – that is our solution. Provisioning column today, fighting column of the proletariat tomorrow, everything for socialism". The jubilation for the *Führer* of the *Arbeiterhilfe* amongst the audience knew apparently no bounds and, in triumph, they jointly sang the

*Internationale*.<sup>113</sup> As the *Internationale* had been sung by people of all races and nations, in 40 different languages, *Welt am Abend* concluded that it was the hymn of the proletarian world revolution; setting the seal on international unity.<sup>114</sup> The congress was turning out to be a major event for the efforts to imagine and empower the transnational workers' community on a global scale.

### Münzenberg's finest hour? The spectacle at the *Sportpalast*

The spectacular highpoint of the World Congress was the public mass meeting held on 10 October at the Berlin *Sportpalast* in Potsdamer Straße.<sup>115</sup> During a meeting before the spectacle, Münzenberg described to the assembled functionaries and delegates that, when following Marx's definition of what the duty of the propagandist was, it meant making white whiter and colouring the shades of black even darker. Münzenberg stressed that communists were often accused of upsetting the listeners by exaggerating the level of desperation amongst the workers and magnifying the level of luxury amongst the ruling class. This was the aim of agitation, Münzenberg calmly stated. Later that day, when the delegates and functionaries gathered at the public meeting at the *Sportpalast*, it would be an occasion for agitation, and there they would all enter as agitators for the revolutionary workers. There they would portray the misery of the poor as even worse and darken the image of desperation, because they all knew that the non-political, indifferent workers needed strong contrasts to reach consciousness.<sup>116</sup>

When the event was about to begin, the *Sportpalast* was filled to capacity with 15,000 people, and allegedly thousands had been forced to stand outside. *Welt am Abend* described the spectacle as "a grandiose and unforgettable experience" for all participants.<sup>117</sup> Even Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the *West European Bureau* (WEB) in Berlin, declared in a secret report back to Moscow that the *Arbeiterhilfe's Sportpalast* event had been dazzling (*glänzend*).<sup>118</sup>

An international line-up of speakers was present at the *Sportpalast*, including Harry Pollitt (England), Henri Barbusse (France), Willi Münzenberg, Hermann Remmele, Joe Wilkin (representative of the American Negro workers) and Rahe Madan Mohan (India).<sup>119</sup> A "hurricane" of elation, applause and cheers erupted in the *Sportpalast* as Münzenberg together with Remmele and Abolin entered the hall at the very front of the delegation. It was a level of jubilation that the *Sportpalast* had perhaps never previously witnessed, *Welt am Abend* exclaimed. Again and again waves of jubilation broke out through the crowd, and one could feel the pulse of the revolutionary community as

the representatives advanced through the masses in the hall, *Welt am Abend* proclaimed. The whole procession took approximately 30 minutes as delegates from all around the world entered the premises.<sup>120</sup>

When Münzenberg took the stage he confidently declared that they had not assembled as the hunted or chased, but as the victors of tomorrow. Münzenberg spoke vividly about the *Arbeiterhilfe* and its mission to forge a strong bond of solidarity between the working people of all races and nations in order to create a Red united front of workers of all parties. As Münzenberg concluded his speech, the entire hall erupted, singing the *Internationale* and celebrating the founder and *Führer* of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>121</sup> The celebrations represented one of the highlights of Münzenberg's career and constituted indeed a unique celebration of international solidarity in Weimar Germany.

However, although Münzenberg was on stage a celebrated hero of international solidarity, backstage a significant struggle over the future of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was being fought. Georgi Dimitrov of the WEB in Berlin had the mission to definitively alter the way the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been governed: "It is absolutely necessary to put an end to the current practice in the leadership where Münzenberg personally controls everything and works with subordinate employees. And I hope that we will succeed".<sup>122</sup> Apparently, Münzenberg had been irritated (*Misstimmung*) and insulted (*Kränkung*) due to the Comintern's efforts to form an accountable 'collective Secretariat' in the *Arbeiterhilfe*.<sup>123</sup> Dimitrov's criticism of Münzenberg's leadership was uncompromising:

On an international scale, Münzenberg's leadership of the IAH [*Arbeiterhilfe*] can be characterised as sporadic, unsystematic and generally superficial. His great initiative and organisational powers were absorbed almost exclusively by concerns for the operations of the IAH which, although very important, cannot in any way replace the mass work and mass campaigns or the development of the IAH as a mass organisation.<sup>124</sup>

Still, Dimitrov assessed the *Arbeiterhilfe* to be one of the most important organisations for the communist movement, although he admitted that most CPs had not yet realised the importance of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in its ability to reach the wider population. In this sense, Dimitrov also criticised the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s congress in Berlin for having been far too communist, instead of being the congress of an above-party-based mass organisation.<sup>125</sup>

Dimitrov's intervention in Berlin constituted the Comintern's first effort to bring Münzenberg under its control and to restrict his independence. It seems, however, that for as long as the *Arbeiterhilfe* was based in Berlin, Münzenberg was the person in control, and that it was only after 1933, once the *Arbeiterhilfe* had been re-established in Paris, that the Comintern finally managed to increase its direct control.<sup>126</sup>

# 10

## International Solidarity against War and Fascism, 1927–1933

The last chapter of the book is, firstly, set in the context of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war campaign work. Special emphasis is placed on how fear and anxiety were used and cultivated in order to strengthen the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity. The focus here will be on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war campaign work in the context of the 1927 war scare, the German *Panzerkreuzer* affair of 1928, and the fear of a new imperialist war, which culminated in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war congress, organised in Amsterdam in 1932. How was this war scare articulated and how was it used to mobilise the German Left for both international solidarity and the defence of the Soviet Union? Here, the analysis of a new culture of fear is especially focused on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* descriptions of the future total war and the role of gas warfare.

The second part of the chapter will deal with the national socialists' devastating assault on international solidarity as they rose to power in Weimar Germany. It tells the story of how the *Arbeiterhilfe* tried to mobilise international solidarity against the 'national solidarity' of the radical Right and how the *Arbeiterhilfe* was dealt its final blow by being banned and hunted down after the establishment of the Third Reich.

### **Constructing international solidarity on fear and anxiety**

So why don't [...] the French and English armies march on Moscow? Because international solidarity lives, because the imperialists know that a march on Moscow would be a march towards their own downfall.<sup>1</sup> (Willi Münzenberg 1931)

The question of war and international solidarity have been closely linked throughout the twentieth century. Amongst the most radical



popular beliefs has been the idea that international solidarity articulated by civil society and social movements could have the power to stop wars waged by governments. In the context of the post-First World War Europe, the *Arbeiterhilfe*, or the communists for that matter, were not alone in expressing apprehension regarding the future. According to Overy (2010), “nothing provoked greater public anxiety in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s than the fear of war”. The British were certainly not alone in building upon such anxieties. The First World War had clearly shown what kind of destruction modern mass warfare was capable of and many genuinely feared that Western civilisation would not survive a new war. “If mankind does not end war, war will end mankind”, was one of the era’s characteristic, and distressing, verdicts.<sup>2</sup>

Psychologists and psychoanalysts make a point of differentiating between fear and anxiety, with the first being directed towards an easily identifiable “danger”, while the second refers to a more generalised state of an anticipated subjective threat. As Bourke (2005) highlights, for historians it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the emotional states expressed in the past. Significantly, it has been argued that in fear states people are generally inclined to respond actively and fight together, whereas anxiety states make people tend to withdraw from one another and seek individualistic solutions.<sup>3</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s anti-war work, both elements seem to have been present, although it naturally is impossible to determine what workers actually felt when reading or observing the *Arbeiterhilfe*’s texts and images.

Most recently, Münzenberg’s involvement in the anti-war movement and the “war fear” in the Soviet Union have been characterised as examples of his typical “phantom causes”.<sup>4</sup> If one employs a conservative Eurocentric perspective on interwar history, then one could agree with the claim that there was no impending war threat during the 1920s. However, the very idea of an “interwar period” is heavily Eurocentric and, if one is willing to gaze beyond the American and European context to the escalating situation in the Far East, the question of war was indeed an urgent one. Moreover, as Iriye (2002) emphasises, the 1920s and 1930s cannot only be perceived as being a period for the study of the “origins of the Second World War”. If this perspective remains the only framework for this period in history, “then”, Akira continues, “the international organisations must be seen as having been naïve exercises in idealism at best, or misguided attempts to divert nations’ and citizens’ attention to irrelevant pursuits at worst”. If merely judged on their inability to prevent the coming of the Second World War, the many international organisations of the era did not ultimately make much, if

any, difference. However, if one looks instead at the survival and development of internationalism and of transnational solidarity cultures, as in this study, international organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* were significant agents.<sup>5</sup>

In order to understand the *Arbeiterhilfe's* efforts to mobilise international solidarity through the spreading of a war anxiety, particular attention will be paid to the visual representation of the threat of war, especially the new and even more frightening advent of gas warfare that was used by the *Arbeiterhilfe* to break the workers' loyalty to their Fatherlands. In this context, the contrast between international and national solidarity becomes explicitly clear as the "myth of national solidarity" is revealed in the context of war and misery, with the working people of Germany in particular seen as being the main victims.

### **War on war: a brief introduction**

The focal point of the research into the "war scare" in the Soviet Union is generally dated to the rupture in Anglo-Soviet relations in 1927. The main focus of this introductory section is, however, to show the continuities and discontinuities in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war work. Socialists had for decades demonstrated against all 'warmongers', and claimed that their anti-militarism was one of their most heralded principles. As Carsten (1982) states, if the social democratic vote for war credits in August 1914 can be explained by the general nationalist tumult and the need to defend the Fatherland, the *Social Democratic Party's* (SPD) continued support of the war effort in 1916 and 1917, when significant opposition amongst the German masses arose, cannot. For many socialists, their opposition to war became the very reason for their turn to the Left. Some, such as the communists, advocated ideas of turning the world war into revolutionary war, whereas other socialists simply strove to bring the war to an end.<sup>6</sup>

For the communists, the issue of fighting war was not as clear-cut as it first might appear, as the struggle could not under any circumstances succumb to pacifism. Furthermore, the Comintern was influenced by Lenin's idea that the coming of war was inevitable and that it was the duty of the communists to transform the next war into a civil war. How, then, could the communists seriously campaign against war, if in any case it was perceived as being inevitable? Another significant point hindering any mass mobilisation for such a cause was the fact that the people of Europe wanted peace, not civil war. The social democrats could even claim that the communists were the main warmongers as the prerequisite of world revolution was perceived as being a new world

war. However, active propaganda for revolution and civil war could only lead to the complete isolation of the communists.<sup>7</sup> In the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s publications one can sense a genuine disbelief in a prolonged peace under capitalism, but as noted above, their war fear and anxiety was not specific to them, but symptomatic to society at large.

For example, in 1924 the *Arbeiterhilfe* had, through the *Künstlerhilfe*, commissioned a publication commemorating the ten-year anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. This publication included seven lithographs by a who's who of German modern art, including Otto Dix, Georg Grosz, Otto Nagel, Käthe Kollwitz, Willibald Krain, Rudolf Schlichter and Heinrich Zille. These lithographs reminded people of the death, misery and suffering on the battlefields, and of the gruesome consequences of war.<sup>8</sup> However, already in 1924 international solidarity was not only being built upon the awful memories of the past war, but also concentrated all the more on heightening the fear and anxiety for the second, approaching world war. For example, the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s pictorial newspaper *Sichel und Hammer* featured on the cover of its June 1924 issue a picture of a modern lightweight tank (*Leichter Kampfwagen*). "The impending colossal war", the main headline under the picture declared, leaving a clear impression of the devastation that a future war would bring.<sup>9</sup>

A central concern for the *Arbeiterhilfe* in its anti-war campaigning was the alleged rearmament taking place in the United States, Britain and France. Although "millions were [still] rotting in the mass graves of the First World War", the imperialist powers were already engaged in "wild rearmament", the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared in the September 1925 issue of *Sichel und Hammer*. Although the *Arbeiterhilfe* (incorrectly) spoke of rearmament, the central issue was in fact the actual modernisation and introduction of new improved weapons.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of rearmament in Britain and the United States, for example, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was completely wrong, as no significant rearmament began until the mid-1930s.<sup>11</sup> It has been argued that general disarmament was especially being advocated by the British as they had no direct enemy threatening their national security.<sup>12</sup> However, if one looks at Britain in the context of Empire, it becomes apparent that, although it had no direct military threat in Europe, the Soviet Union constituted the main threat to the British Empire. The Comintern's support of the national liberation movements was perceived as being particularly threatening for the British influence in Transcaucasia, Asia Minor, Persia, Afghanistan and India. The most feared national security scenario for the Soviet Union was the establishment of a "capitalist

encirclement" by the Soviet Union's neighbouring countries if they signed alliances with Western Europe.<sup>13</sup> As seen in the case of China, any national liberation of the colonies would represent the worst possible threat to the various Western empires and wherever rebellion against the forces of order occurred, the natural response was to protect the interest of Empire through military interventions.

Such responses enabled Münzenberg to claim in December 1925 that, although the First World War had ended with peace in Europe, from a global perspective the First World War had never ended. The war had merely been moved to other locations, and thus challenging the very concept of an 'interwar period'. For Münzenberg, the failure of the *League of Nations* as the protector of world peace was most apparent if one considered the developments in the colonial world. The First World War had first found its continuation in the Russian civil war, after which the war was continuing in the colonies. Britain had been involved in military operations in Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and China; France and Spain were engaged in a bloody war in Morocco; and a new violent uprising against French rule in Syria under the mandate of the *League of Nations* had recently started.<sup>14</sup> Münzenberg declared that only the European working class could hinder the spilling of more workers' blood for the imperialist cause, for the oppression of the colonial people who were "longing for freedom" (*freiheitsverlangender Kolonialvölker*).<sup>15</sup> Hence the international solidarity of the European workers was extended by Münzenberg to the colonial world. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was naturally not alone in promoting its campaign against the colonial wars and, especially in France in 1925–1926, the *French Communist Party* (PCF) launched the most extensive campaign against a colonial war ever organised in Europe. The French example revealed, however, a weakness in the anti-war campaign as the call for a general strike in France on 12 October 1925 against the French military atrocities in Morocco and Syria was only answered by a small number of French workers.<sup>16</sup> This clearly illustrated a central problem also relevant for the *Arbeiterhilfe*: how could one effectively mobilise European workers for far-off atrocities? How could they be inspired to show their support in solidarity, and to make actual sacrifices?

The coverage of the rising military industrial complex in the Western countries constituted a central element in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* efforts to mobilise international solidarity. The constant innovations in the weapons industry, with ever more effective and deadly weapons being introduced, created a powerful real source of anxiety and emphasised the notion that Western civilisation would indeed not survive another 'total

war'. During the period of stabilisation in the mid-1920s, war anxiety was perhaps partially contained; but when the element of economic, political and social crisis was mixed in with the new technical innovations enabling mass destruction, the possibilities of spreading war anxiety increased significantly. In this context, the events of 1927 constitute a pivotal watershed after which the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg managed to construct a frightful image of an impending imperialist war in which the future of humanity, the destinies of the workers of the world and the Soviet Union were all inextricably linked. Significantly, as I will show, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity was not directly built upon loyalty to the Soviet Union, but upon the belief that the only force that could prevent the impending total war were the workers of the world.

### **The impending imperialist war, 1927**

The main wave of Soviet anxiety regarding a new imperialist war originated from the rupture in Anglo-Soviet relations in May 1927 and the Chinese situation in 1927, both of which had a significant impact on the international anti-war movement. The Comintern and the Soviet Union had been hoping for a Chinese revolution up until 1927, when the united front between the *Chinese Communist Party* (CCP) and the nationalist Guomindang collapsed.<sup>17</sup>

In Britain again, the conservative government had been airing the possibility of a diplomatic rupture with the Soviet Union since February 1927, as Soviet activities in China were perceived as being a direct threat to the interests and influence of the British Empire. The British police raid on the Anglo-Russian Co-Operative Society (Arcos) and the Soviet trade delegation (next to Arcos) in London on 12–15 May was then used as a final excuse by the British government to sever diplomatic relations completely on 24 May.<sup>18</sup> The *Executive Committee of the Communist International* (ECCI) assembled to discuss the Chinese situation and the war danger during its Eighth Plenum held between 18 and 30 May. Due to the escalating situation in China and the expected rupture in Anglo-Soviet relations, it was declared during this Plenum that the danger of war had never been greater.<sup>19</sup> Although the feared attack turned out in fact to be illusory, the British moves against the Soviet Union did set in motion a genuine war scare in the Soviet Union which cannot only be perceived as being a Stalinist manoeuvre.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps an unwanted effect of the urgent call for international solidarity in the defence of the Soviet Union was that it was presented as a weak country unable to defend itself and that it was in need of the

international solidarity of the workers of the world. This rhetoric was, however, significantly altered during the early 1930s. As Münzenberg expressed in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, the march of the imperialist armies towards the Soviet Union was not going to lead to the destruction of the Soviet Union, but to the imperialists themselves. Münzenberg did not of course refer to the Soviet Union's military might but to the power of international solidarity residing in every country's working class.

In response to the rising danger of war, the Soviet Union declared that it strictly wanted to preserve peace and to maintain its peaceful foreign policy. However, contrary to the Soviet rhetoric of peace, the Comintern embraced a new "ultra-Left" line in 1927–1928. The Comintern's radical "Third Period" was made its official line at its Sixth World Congress, held between 17 July and 1 September 1928. It emphasised that a new period of capitalist crisis with socialist revolutions and imperialist wars was approaching. However, despite the Comintern's radical rhetoric, the maintenance of European stability was perceived by the Soviet government as being a necessity for Soviet industrialisation and the building of socialism. Characteristically, despite the radical rhetoric of this Third Period, nowhere was this radicalism turned into action. It has hence been argued that Soviet foreign policy needs forced both the Comintern and the *German Communist Party* (KPD) to suppress their revolutionary intentions for the benefit of Soviet relations with Germany.<sup>21</sup>

### **The *Panzerkreuzer* affair, 1928**

In the middle of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* war threat campaign, the German government decided to build four battleships. It presented the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the KPD with an unprecedented opportunity to depict the SPD as the betrayer of both German national solidarity and the international solidarity of the working class, whereas the *Arbeiterhilfe* could present itself as the defender of German workers in the name of international solidarity.

The social democrats had used the slogan "Kinderspeisung statt Panzerkreuzer (Food to the Children instead of Battleships)" in the parliamentary elections of May 1928, but then, once in charge of the new coalition government, it had supported the construction of "Panzerkreuzer A" for the benefit of preserving the coalition government under the social democratic Chancellor Hermann Müller. The *Panzerkreuzer* programme had been approved by the previous Cabinet and, under the pressure of the Minister of War, General Wilhelm Groener, the Müller Cabinet decided unanimously on 10 August 1928 to

approve funding for the first of four modern battleships. When the SPD notified the German public of its support for the battleships, it caused an outrage both amongst the left-leaning SPD Members of the *Reichstag* and many social democratic workers who, according to Harsch (1993) “unleashed a storm of protest in the SPD more intense than any since the revolution”.<sup>22</sup>

In the *Arbeiterhilfe's* criticism, the government's battleship programme was contrasted to the social conditions in Weimar Germany and used as a political bat against the coalition government and, especially, the SPD as it allegedly preferred to build battleships than to provide food to the starving German children. In order to enhance the image of social democratic betrayal, Käthe Kollwitz's lithograph showing hungry children from the “Hunger in Germany” campaign was reproduced in *Mahnruf*. Chancellor Müller was presented in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* satirical journal *Eulenspiegel* with his glasses reflecting the swastika, with only battleships on his mind. The illustrations clearly corresponded to the Comintern's new line towards social fascism and emphasised the SPD's leaders' role as being a significant ‘other’ which was working against the interest and solidarity of the workers.<sup>23</sup> From the *Arbeiterhilfe's* and the KPD's perspective, the SPD's actions provided them with a golden opportunity to agitate against the social democrats in the context of the anti-war struggle and to show the German workers that the SPD did not stand on the side of the working class. Münzenberg saw this as being a typical example of when the interests of a small group of industrialists were allowed to trample over the interests of millions of Germans. “Not a pfennig for the *Panzerkreuzer*”, Münzenberg declared.<sup>24</sup> In its most emotionally charged form, the 80 million marks granted for the construction of the first battleship were contrasted with the state of German children, as it was claimed that in capitalist Germany, there was no money for the support of proletarian children. It hence appealed to all mothers and fathers to fight against the *Panzerkreuzer*.<sup>25</sup>

In order to drum up support for a national referendum initiated by the KPD against the construction of the battleships the *Arbeiterhilfe* formed a committee called the “Reichsausschuss für Volksentscheid gegen Panzerkreuzerbau (The National Committee for the Referendum against the Building of Battleships)” which was placed under the chairmanship of both Georg Ledebour and Münzenberg.<sup>26</sup>

Münzenberg made a speech on “Bread or *Panzerkreuzer*?” at a rally organised by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin in early October 1928. Münzenberg claimed that, through the building of the battleships, capitalist Germany was showing its true face. Furthermore, he declared that, as the ships

were destined for the Baltic Sea fleet, Germany was attempting to join the imperialist front directed against the Soviet Union. Münzenberg also engaged in open polemics against the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (*Workers' Welfare Association*) as the *Arbeiterhilfe* had allegedly sent invitations requesting them to join the campaign against the *Panzerkreuzer*. How could an organisation that claimed to be in favour of building up Germany's social security system *not* oppose the *Panzerkreuzer*, Münzenberg asked rhetorically? Was it not a betrayal of the workers' interests that German governmental funds were being channelled into such projects, instead of assisting the workers living in misery? Hence, the *Panzerkreuzer* affair was skilfully integrated into the *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign against the looming imperialist war, as it could be interpreted as being the start of a "new-German imperialism" and Germany's alignment in the imperialist front against the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

### **Gas warfare and international solidarity**

The prospect of gas warfare was utilised in particular by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in order to create anxiety.<sup>28</sup> Below, it will be argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* depictions of the impending total world war were crucial for its criticism of national solidarity and for the strengthening of its articulations of international solidarity. The devastating experiences of gas warfare during the First World War resulted in the 1925 Geneva Protocol which prohibited the use of chemical weapons in warfare.<sup>29</sup> However, although France ratified this Protocol in 1926, the Soviet Union in 1928, Germany in 1929, and the United Kingdom in 1930, Japan for example did not ratify it until 1970 and the United States in 1975. So, despite the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the fear of gas attacks remained and became institutionalised in the Soviet Union in January 1927 when the OSOAVIAKHIM (Association to Support the Defence and the Chemical and Aeronautical Industries) advocated the importance of having a "civil defence", providing military education to the masses in order to defend the "socialist Fatherland in danger".<sup>30</sup>

The fear of gas as a weapon was the most recurring theme in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articles cultivating war anxiety and the fear of the 'other'. In one article published in *Mahnruf*, readers were reminded of the "evil bestiality" of the future imperialist war. It was regarded as being a certainty that gas would become most significant in the imperialist war against the Soviet Union. The capitalist production of poisonous gases was also seen as an analogy of the capitalist system. Just like poison gases, capitalism attempted to poison the consciousness of the workers through capitalist ideology transmitted through church, school,



cinema, the press, sports, radio and the welfare system. In this context, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was perceived as being a stronghold or perhaps even the mask protecting against the poisonous gases emitted by the bourgeoisie in order to intoxicate people's minds.<sup>31</sup>

In June 1929, all *Arbeiterhilfe* organisations were encouraged to prepare an active campaign in support of the communist-endorsed Anti-War Day, organised internationally on 1 August 1929. In the directives sent from the *Central Committee* (CC) of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, special focus was to be placed on the consequences of war, the dismantling of the social security system and the consequent social misery of the masses and especially the tragic fate of women and children.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the most characteristic line of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war campaign work was the emphasis on the ghastly fate of the civilian population during the next war, where the women and children would have no protection. The workers could not be warned enough, it was claimed in a 1929 issue of *Mahnruf*, that everything was prepared for the use of gases and bomb squadrons that would bring about total chaos and immense destruction.<sup>33</sup>

As the *Arbeiterhilfe's* illustrations show, the most prominent visualisation of the capitalist-imperialist 'other' was portrayed through the gas mask. During the following years, the *Arbeiterhilfe* skilfully utilised the gas mask as a powerful way of dehumanising its opponents and strengthening its message of international solidarity. Claims by 'capitalists' that chemical gases were only being produced for peaceful purposes, were deemed to be completely false. Although many factories did produce "peaceful" products, it was claimed that the chemical factories which were producing artificial fertilisers, paint, or artificial silk could, within one day, be transformed into factories producing explosives and poisonous gases.<sup>34</sup>

In *Mahnruf*, the development of various gases was discussed, concluding with the disquieting observation that new gases had been refined to such a degree that gas masks no longer offered any protection. These gases were called "mask breakers" (*Maskenbrecher*) and destroyed the last hope of survival in the case of a gas attack. As *Mahnruf* declared, through the use of gas bombs, no civilian population was safe as any city or town could be the target of a precision attack. Even worse, gas bombs could be dropped with parachutes, and they would quietly start spreading the gas when it reached a certain altitude. Infused with even more anxiety, *Mahnruf* described how the gases used could be heavier than air so that they slowly descended in their odourless and colourless form into a city, so that the "unsuspecting elderly, men,

women and children" inhaled the poison. In detail *Mahnruf* depicted the inhuman consequences of a gas attack. Some gases did their work slowly, damaging both lungs and the blood circulation. Other gases penetrated right through the skin and made breathing impossible. In both cases, death was assured through suffocation. Worst of all were the gases that did their work slowly, as one could feel perfectly fine for days although the poison was steadily leading the victim towards a certain death.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the gas attack had already been made, doing its lethal work on our ignorant minds and bodies? Such reports clearly had the intention of spreading general anxiety about the future war from which no one was safe and constructed a fearful image of the capitalists who were apparently prepared to use any means to realise their imperialist aims.

With these remarks in mind, *Mahnruf* delivered the most disturbing conclusion, namely that it was impossible for the state to provide all of its citizens with complete protection from these gases. This was especially true for the densely populated workers' quarters which were more or less entirely without protection. According to *Mahnruf's* gloomy prediction, hundreds of thousands of people were going to meet a ghastly death in the next war, as only those wealthy enough could provide their families with safe havens. For the rich, there was no need to worry about the looming gas attack, but the fear was real for the masses. The only remedy for them, *Mahnruf* declared, was to transform the present form of society, where imperialist powers possessed such monstrous weapons, into a future society where the use of such weapons would be an impossibility.<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, the lack of gas masks for the entire population was used by the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a means of breaking the belief in national solidarity and thereby enhancing the pressure to form a united front of international solidarity. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* argumentation could even have been a central reason for the distribution of the "people's gas masks" (Volksgasmask) during the Third Reich from 1937 onwards to strengthen the belief in a strong national solidarity.<sup>37</sup>

### **Fighting the imperialist war globally**

However, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* was against war, it followed the Comintern's line as to which wars should be opposed and which supported. In *Mahnruf*, three distinct types of war were delineated. Firstly, there were wars between the imperialist states, secondly, there were imperialist counter-revolutionary wars against the proletarian revolution and countries where socialism was being constructed and,

finally, there were national revolutionary wars against the imperialist powers in the colonies. In the first case, all parties involved were waging reactionary wars and were to be opposed. The second case could, on the other hand, mean waging an imperialist war against the Soviet Union. So, although the imperialists were waging a reactionary war, the defenders of the Soviet Union were fighting a revolutionary war for socialism and for the common benefit of the world proletariat. In the third case, the liberation struggles in the colonies were also perceived as being wars for a just cause. They were also wars that would lead to world revolution. It was consequently presented as being the *Arbeiterhilfe's* duty to make the masses realise the difference between the coming wars and to make them realise which front they belonged to.<sup>38</sup>

The question of war was integrally connected to the concept of international solidarity. Münzenberg made a clear distinction between himself, the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the leaders of the *Labour and Socialist International* (LSI), and claimed that leaders such as Ramsey MacDonald of the British Labour Party, the Belgian Emile Vandervelde of the LSI and the social democrat Otto Wels in Germany had never actually believed in international proletarian solidarity.<sup>39</sup> The flames had been stoked by SPD Members of the *Reichstag* like Georg Schöpflin (1869–1954), who in March 1931 had exclaimed in the *Reichstag* that “when it came to the Fatherland, he would ten times prefer to join with Groener, the bourgeois Minister of War, than with the communists”.<sup>40</sup> Münzenberg’s natural reply to this abandonment of international solidarity was equally provocative when he declared: “We would rather join one hundred times with the French, English and Chinese workers, than even once with the German capitalists”.<sup>41</sup> The ‘powerful force’ of international solidarity was totally absent from the social democrats’ politics, Münzenberg claimed. Münzenberg and other “revolutionary Marxists” on the other hand claimed to have a “deep inner conviction” that international proletarian solidarity was one of the most important levers in both the class struggle and the proletarian revolution.<sup>42</sup>

The fear of a new global war escalated after 1931 due to the “Manchurian crisis” that has been defined as a “global crisis for ‘collective security’” between 1931–1933. Here indeed was a significant crisis on the Soviet Union’s border where the interests of not only China and Japan, but also those of the British Empire and the United States were involved. The Japanese intervention in Manchuria led to the establishment of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo and to the Japanese withdrawal from the *League of Nations*. The Manchurian crisis has thus been described as one of the major international crises of the period, and it is in this

context that the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war work of the early 1930s must be perceived.<sup>43</sup>

As Steiner (2007) highlights, Japan's role was important for the European empires as it was viewed as being a power that secured their investments and interests in the Far East. Hence the Dutch, due to their interests in the Dutch Indies, and the French due to their interests in Shanghai and Indochina, were throughout the crisis sympathetic towards the Japanese. Throughout 1932, there were, according to Steiner, rumours of a secret understanding between France and Japan. It did not materialise, but the French made certain that the *League of Nations* did not concern itself too much with what the Japanese were doing in Asia.<sup>44</sup>

In response, the Soviet Union was perceived as being surrounded by imperialist warmongers but, as much as the threat was made into an international affair, so too was the international solidarity of the workers developed by the *Arbeiterhilfe* into a bond which united "Negroes, Whites and Asians" into one common transnational front, as shown in the image below.<sup>45</sup> In a most striking illustration published on the cover of *Mahnruf* in June 1932, the international opposition against warmongers is depicted as the Red flag of socialism being held firmly by a white, black and yellow hand against an approaching tank. On the back cover, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* concrete agenda was spelled out: "international solidarity against the imperialist war! Organise strikes in the armament industry; stop the transportation of munitions".<sup>46</sup>

The workers were warned of the capitalist deception which claimed that war would bring an end to the crisis and lead to the creation of jobs and increased salaries. Let there be no mistake, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared, war meant nothing else than a deepening misery, increasing oppression, stronger terror and millions of working class victims. The only winners of the war were the "capitalist-imperialist hyenas" who would make millions of US dollar profits. Thus, the events taking place in the Far East were turned into issues of life and death for the European and German workers. They were urged by the *Arbeiterhilfe* to step out in active resistance against the imperialist war and to defend the Soviet Union. As a radical measure the *Arbeiterhilfe* urged the workers to increase their control of both the production and the transportation of munitions and weapons in all capitalist countries.<sup>47</sup>

It seems that wherever the imperialist war was played out, it was perceived as being an immediate threat to the Soviet Union, as a first step towards its borders. As a 1932 illustration in the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*) shows, the "imperialist capitalists" are marching with their artillery over a road of corpses, while the capitalist in the image,



Figure 10.1 Standing united in international solidarity against the imperialist war (1932)

Source: *Mahnruf. Organ für internationale Solidarität* 4 (1932).

wearing the trademark top hat, is yelling at the top of his voice the order to advance.<sup>48</sup> On another cover of *Mahnruf*, the dreaded imperialist warmonger is depicted. In this photomontage, the dehumanised figure is wearing a top hat and his face is covered with a gas mask; his arms are made of machine-gun barrels; his body is an iron-clad safe; his legs are made of artillery barrels; and his feet are made of tanks. As the imperialist marches forward, he bellows "Profit! Profit! I need a new bloody war!" His stomach is empty, and he is hungering for a new profitable war. This was the image of the ghastly enemy, the brutal mercenary of imperialist capitalism, which was threatening the workers of the world. It would certainly show no mercy to the workers and thus the workers were required to support the transformation of the next war into a "socialist world republic".<sup>49</sup>

As another illustration for the 1932 International Solidarity Day depicts, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not encouraging the workers towards pacifism but towards active resistance against the warmongers, who here are represented by a British soldier. Epitomised by the slogan "Your Fists are the Best Peace Instrument", the *Arbeiterhilfe* was clearly leading the way towards active resistance in the name of international solidarity. Again, the enemy was depicted as the anonymous gas-mask-wearing soldier of the imperialist powers, equipped with lethal gas containers.

In conclusion, this section has shown how a distinct culture of fear and anxiety was embedded in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of international solidarity. However, contrary to claims of being purely a Stalinist influence, it is shown here how the element of fear and anxiety played throughout the post-First World War period a significant part. This also enabled the *Arbeiterhilfe* to convincingly argue for the importance of defending the Soviet Union against a new imperialist war, actively being played out by Japan in the Far East during the early 1930s. Just as the *Arbeiterhilfe* had in 1921–1922 called for the saving and building of Soviet Russia, it now called all sympathisers to defend the Soviet Union. Ultimately, this was perhaps also done in the spirit of workers self-help where the defence of the Soviet Union was seen as the protection of the German workers' very own interests. From this perspective, the German workers' ready support of the campaign makes it perhaps more comprehensible than simply arguing that they were blindly following the Soviet Union's foreign policy needs. They were still perceived as part of the same transnational solidarity community based on mutuality and reciprocity, honouring the principle of solidarity. This naturally did not hinder Stalin from exploiting the solidarity expressed by the workers of the world to his own ends. Even here, there was a spectrum

of international solidarity being articulated that in the Western radical social movements united the First World War's spirit of waging a 'war on war' with the defence of the Soviet Union.

### **International solidarity under assault**

Fear was not only used in relation to a nearing imperialist war, but was also utilised to mobilise international solidarity against the national socialist terror in Germany. However, one of the major controversies regarding Weimar Communism has been its relationship and response to the national socialists.<sup>50</sup> Although economic crisis and political radicalisation were closely linked in Weimar Germany, rising radicalism was never a foregone conclusion, as in the United States, for example, no such development had occurred. The devastating development in Germany was most clearly expressed in its unemployment figures. In 1929, about 1.5 million were unemployed. Thereafter, the numbers had increased drastically to three million by mid-1930, and reached their all-time high of 6 million in early 1932. Most likely an additional two million unemployed were not included in these statistics, as they were no longer officially registered as job-seekers.<sup>51</sup> The parallel radicalisation can most clearly be seen in the significant increase in the number of Germans who voted for either the *National Socialist German Workers' Party* (NSDAP) or the KPD. In the parliamentary elections held four years earlier in May 1928, the KPD had received 10.6 percent of the German vote, whereas the NSDAP had only received 2.6 percent of the vote. In July 1932, the KPD had increased its share of the vote to 14.5 percent (5,355,300 votes), while the NSDAP had dramatically increased its share to 37.3 percent (13,745,700 votes). Looking at the total radical vote base between both parties, their united votes increased from 4,074,900 votes in 1928 to their all-time high of 19,101,000 votes in July 1932.<sup>52</sup>

Notably, the number of people voting for either right-wing or left-wing radical parties was significantly higher than the number of unemployed. If the unemployed had been counted together with their dependents, approximately one-fifth of the entire German population, or 12.82 million people, were directly affected. Although the increase to catastrophic levels of unemployment in Weimar Germany was integrally connected with the spectacular rise of the NSDAP, it has been shown that the unemployed did not primarily vote for Hitler, but primarily gave their vote on the ballot to the KPD.<sup>53</sup>

A significant increase in those who supported communism took place, but what, then, was their relationship to international solidarity? Did

the support of communism also lead to a strengthened support of international solidarity, or was this communist support conceptualised in the framework of a national revolution and resistance? Furthermore, although the KPD had only 360,000 registered members in 1932, it had managed to attract almost six million voters. In other words, there was a significant sphere of influence beyond the party base, where the *Arbeiterhilfe* most likely played a significant role.

Despite the rise of the NSDAP, the KPD firmly maintained, on the insistence of both Stalin and Ernst Thälmann, that the social democrats remained the communists' "main enemy" and that, as a result, no mass propaganda against national socialism was organised by the KPD during the rapid rise of the NSDAP, 1930–1933. Even after the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor on 30 January 1933, and the almost total disintegration of the KPD, the German communists were still fighting against their main adversary: the SPD.<sup>54</sup> As late as June 1932, the KPD launched its Anti-Fascist Action (*Antifa*) which tried to form a united front from below, but it never accepted the idea of collaborating with the SPD itself.<sup>55</sup> How did the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-fascist work relate to the KPD's and the Comintern's ambiguous fight against the NSDAP, and how did the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg respond to the national socialists' assault? How was international solidarity conceptualised within the framework of "anti-fascism" in 1931–1933?

As the sections below show, the question of how to respond to the national socialist threat was an issue that provoked a bitter controversy within the communist movement. Münzenberg was hugely involved in this controversy, which is important to bear in mind when analysing Münzenberg and the *Arbeiterhilfe's* opportunities for building an anti-fascist mass mobilisation. The internal party struggle will first be looked at, followed by an analysis of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* attempts to construct a new message of international solidarity on the basis of anti-fascism. The final section will deal with how the *Arbeiterhilfe* was shut down, forced underground and ultimately into exile after Hitler's coming to power and the burning of the German *Reichstag* during the night of 27–28 February 1933.

### **The internal struggle**

When the KPD's leaders met Stalin in his study at the Kremlin on 30 and 31 October 1931, Stalin demanded that the KPD continue its vehement opposition to the SPD. After the meeting, Heinz Neumann wrote in *Rote Fahne* on the KPD's intention to destroy the SPD. As Hoppe (2007) demonstrates, even though some of the KPD's actions were primarily



directed against the national socialists, the KPD leadership was strictly instructed from Moscow not to “mislead” the workers by fomenting anti-fascist opinion amongst the people in Germany. Once again, Stalin himself instructed Thälmann to maintain the KPD’s line and to present the SPD as the “bourgeois’ most dangerous supporters” and to avoid an “opportunist overestimation” of the threat posed by Hitler. Therefore, at a meeting of the KPD leadership in April 1932, Thälmann responded to two other leading members of the KPD, Hermann Remmele and Heinz Neumann, who were demanding a direct struggle against Hitler, that there was no question of any special campaign against Hitler at the time.<sup>56</sup>

Stalin was actually counting on the rise of the NSDAP to state power already in the summer of 1932. Instead of permitting a united front between the KPD and the SPD which might have been able to hamper this development, the Soviet Embassy in Berlin was instructed to prepare for the national socialists’ coming to power.<sup>57</sup> The KPD’s highest leadership was, since the autumn of 1931, in a state of crisis. Neumann and Remmele had started a campaign against Thälmann and although Thälmann was the KPD’s leading figure, it was Neumann who managed to maintain the closest relationship with Stalin. Neumann spoke Russian and he had had several private meetings with Stalin in Moscow. This close relationship led Neumann at least to believe that it was he, and not Thälmann, who was the main leader of the KPD. Furthermore, Neumann was intellectually far superior to Thälmann. However, in October 1931, Stalin made it quite clear at a meeting that the KPD’s leadership belonged to Thälmann and not to anyone else. Back in Germany, the conflict between the two leading figures escalated and, as it was time for another tête-à-tête with Stalin in January 1932, Thälmann chose to leave Neumann behind in Berlin. After this meeting with Stalin, Thälmann returned with a mandate to strengthen his position through the appointment of more people loyal to him, which gradually led to the ousting of both Neumann and Remmele from the KPD. This struggle continued in great secrecy behind the scenes throughout the spring of 1932, with both cliques striving to build their own alliances. Finally, in the end of March 1932, both Neumann and Remmele were called to Moscow to sort out their “oppositional actions” in the CC of the KPD. Although one might think that the call from Moscow signalled the immediate end of Neumann’s political career, Neumann in fact met Stalin once again in a private meeting, during which Stalin declared his continued support for Neumann. The conflict within the KPD dragged on and finally, in the summer of 1932, Neumann was removed from his positions within the KPD’s leadership. Thälmann thereafter turned his frustrations in Berlin towards Remmele

and his supporters that continued until the summer of 1933. Finally, in November, he was ousted from the KPD leadership. Hence, while the NSDAP was on the rise in Weimar Germany, Thälmann's main preoccupation remained the KPD's internal party struggle, and the struggle against the SPD.<sup>58</sup>

Münzenberg was a close associate of both Neumann and Remmele and, in documents produced during the latter part of the 1930s when Münzenberg was in a constant state of conflict with Moscow, it is pointed out that Münzenberg played an active role within the Neumann-Remmele alliance in its struggle against Thälmann.<sup>59</sup> It is even alleged that he was one of the leading members of the Neumann-Remmele alliance.<sup>60</sup>

However, although Münzenberg was close friends with Neumann and his wife Margarethe Buber-Neumann, the sister of Münzenberg's life partner Babette Gross, he did not agree with him regarding his tactical line against the national socialists. Nor did Münzenberg agree either with the KPD's line or with the KPD's policy after the November 1932 elections when the KPD's press declared that the national socialist threat had been overcome as the NSDAP's share of the vote decreased to 33,1 percent. Münzenberg regarded himself as the best-known anti-fascist who was defined in the bourgeois press as the strongest bearer of the anti-fascist struggle.<sup>61</sup>

Münzenberg's claim to be a 'true' anti-fascist is of course controversial but this claim is supported, for example, in a letter dated 25 May 1931 in which Neumann made the claim to Leo Flieg at the KPD, who was another of Münzenberg's close friends, that Münzenberg had been infected by the "national socialist psychosis" raging in Germany and was allegedly totally overestimating the national socialists.<sup>62</sup> According to Gross, during the weeks preceding the German parliamentary elections on 31 July 1932, Münzenberg was more restless and nervous than ever before. Often he could not sleep at night and only wandered about, as if waiting for the national socialists' final assault.<sup>63</sup> Neumann represented however the left-wing line which believed that the national socialists' rise to power was neither to be feared nor opposed. After all, did not the coming of the Third Reich advance the fall of the bourgeois state and pave the way for the proletarian revolution, it was argued? In this sense, war and fascism were inextricably linked as, from the left-wing perspective the advance of both fascism and war ultimately only advanced the communists' cause. Apparently, in the early 1930s, Münzenberg even felt that the KPD and Comintern cadres, who were loyal to Stalin's position not to overestimate the danger of Hitler, regarded Münzenberg instead of Hitler as the main enemy.<sup>64</sup>

### **Fighting national socialism with international solidarity**

In contrast to the KPD's and Stalin's insistence that the social democrats were their main enemy, it is here argued that the *Arbeiterhilfe* with Münzenberg's support was expressing its most brutal criticism of the national socialists. The *Arbeiterhilfe*'s official work plan for the second half of 1931 stated in contradiction to Stalin's orders that "the struggle against the fascist danger and especially the murder-terror of the national socialists is still one of the main missions of the *Arbeiterhilfe*".<sup>65</sup>

Stalin's orders not to engage in mass politics against Hitler combined with the totalitarian perspective, which has argued that Stalinism was in fact very similar to national socialism, at least in respect to terror, crimes against humanity and the common opposition to Western "liberal" traditions, has for long discredited all communist anti-fascism initiatives.<sup>66</sup> However, a significant difference between communists and national socialists at the end of Weimar Germany was the difference between their respective calls for international and national solidarity. As Weber (2007) argues, a difference must be made between communism in the Soviet Union under the Stalinist dictatorship which, since the mid-1920s, had adhered to constructing "socialism in one country", and communism as a radical social movement in non-communist states. The KPD was clearly, as the passage above shows, loyal to Stalin's line with regard to its weak opposition to the national socialists, but what about the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg? The question of solidarity seems to be crucial in this context.

Münzenberg expressed in February 1931 that the NSDAP was trying to "prove" in their propaganda that there was no such thing as international and proletarian solidarity and that there could only exist a feeling of community (*Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*) between the members of one nation. In Münzenberg's view, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was clear proof of the contrary, of the triumph of proletarian solidarity.<sup>67</sup>

Further, in May 1931 Münzenberg expressed at another *Arbeiterhilfe* meeting his conviction that Hitler had made the mistake of confusing Germany with Italy. It should not be forgotten that they, the German workers, were the successors of Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and would provide a completely different answer to fascism than the Italians, he emphasised.<sup>68</sup>

Although Münzenberg argued strongly against Hitler, the KPD's position towards the NSDAP led to many embarrassing instances of collaboration during the final year of the Weimar Republic. The KPD was, for example, instructed by Moscow to support the national socialist-initiated referendum in Prussia which resulted in the fall of Otto Braun's (SPD) government. Furthermore, during the 1932 German presidential

elections, the KPD refused to negotiate with the SPD and the republican parties on the subject of a joint candidate, and instead ran Thälmann as the only socialist candidate, whereas the SPD officially supported Hindenburg as the lesser evil in order to prevent Hitler from winning the election. Also, during the Berlin transport workers' strike (the Berlin Transportation Company [BerlinerVerkehrsgesellschaft] BVG strike), the KPD found itself in a united front with the Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation (National Socialist Organisation of Factory Cells; NSBO) against the social democrats.<sup>69</sup>

What was the *Arbeiterhilfe's* reaction to these instances of collaboration? According to Babette Gross, on 20 July 1932, Heinz Neumann had asked Münzenberg whether he could use the *Arbeiterhilfe's* press to support the national socialist referendum in Prussia. Münzenberg had, according to Gross, deemed the idea to be completely crazy and categorically refused to popularise the KPD's decision to side with the national socialists. How could he make such a decision palatable or even comprehensible, Münzenberg had argued? It was one thing to fight against the SPD, but quite another to join with the "mortal" enemy of the working class in that struggle. As *Rote Fahne* was then banned, Münzenberg's latest newspaper acquisition *Berlin am Morgen* was instructed by the Comintern to report and support the KPD's position on the Prussian referendum. According to Gross, Münzenberg expressed only "ridicule and mockery" regarding the KPD's line, even urging the editors of the newspaper to refrain from publishing anything at all on the matter. A party order was, however, a party order, and even Münzenberg published an article in *Berlin am Morgen* in which he expressed his support for the referendum.<sup>70</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* was also embracing the general Comintern line that the social democrats constituted a moderate wing of "fascism" (social fascism). This conceptual elasticity means, however, that it is today quite challenging to distinguish between the nuances in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* struggle against "fascism". What did the *Arbeiterhilfe* mean when it called for a resistance to the "fascist threat", only the NSDAP or also the SPD in accordance with the Comintern line?<sup>71</sup>

One should, however, bear in mind that, for the majority of the German workers, fighting fascism in Germany entailed a specific struggle against the NSDAP and its supporters. One can therefore assume that, when the *Arbeiterhilfe* used slogans simply urging the workers to make a stand "against fascism", it was in effect incapable of directly communicating that this was in fact a slogan against both the national socialists and the SPD.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps its communist supporters could make this distinction, but it remains highly doubtful whether 'unorganised' workers could interpret the concept of fascism in such a way.

As will be shown in the following, in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articles carrying headlines against fascism, the reader is often informed that the social democrats were also part of the fascist unit, or were at least presented as being its avid supporters. In other words, these articles obeyed the strict party discipline, yet when one looks at the *Arbeiterhilfe's* visualisation of the "fascist threat", it clearly singles out the national socialist as being the fascist enemy, as the depicted fascist is seen with a swastika on his uniform. SPD symbols are not included. One could thus argue that the *Arbeiterhilfe* publicly identified the national socialists as being the main enemy, as they were represented both visually and in the actual texts, whereas the social democrats were only included in the texts.

As the headline of the December 1931 cover of the *Mahnruf* declares: "Be prepared against Fascism", it clearly identifies the enemy of the working class as the NSDAP. It is thus perfectly clear to whom the *Arbeiterhilfe* is referring. The anonymous author of the leading article of the issue proclaimed the need for international solidarity against fascism. However, in contrast to the visual image, in the text the author strongly criticised the SPD and especially its policy of toleration which was based on the notion that "Brüning was better than Hitler". The workers were urged to realise that the "true face of fascism was not only national socialism". The SPD was blamed for having "allowed" the NSDAP to grow strong through its policy of toleration, and was criticised for having supported the ban on "the only proletarian defence organisation," the *Red Front Fighters' League* (RFB). According to *Mahnruf*, the only way to expose the role of the "fascists" as being the protectors of the capitalists' interests was through an active engagement in economic struggles. The social democrats allegedly wanted to cure the dying patient, capitalism, and preserve bourgeois society. Instead, *Mahnruf* called for all those oppressed in all countries to join forces. The only way to achieve a better humanity, it was argued, was through the amassing of all workers under the Red flag. Only the Red united front guaranteed that international solidarity did not remain empty words, *Mahnruf* concluded.<sup>73</sup>

At the *Arbeiterhilfe's* World Congress in October 1931, Münzenberg explicitly pointed out the national socialists as the main threat and enemy of the communists. Münzenberg had declared:

And if Hitler exercises his power tomorrow and if fascism knocks on the door and if Hitler threatens that heads will roll, then we say: yes, perhaps heads will roll, but the question is: whose heads will roll? The day is drawing near when power will be in our hands. [...] It can no longer be a question of who the victor will be; it is merely a question of when we will triumph.<sup>74</sup>



Figure 10.2 "Tatbereit gegen Faschismus! (Be Prepared against Fascism!)" (1931)  
Source: *Mahnruf, Organ für internationale Solidarität* 12 (1931).

Similarly, on 25 November 1931, the German *Arbeiterhilfe* had declared to its local groups that the "fascist" leaders had openly declared their intention to initiate a pogrom against the working class when it came to power. The only solution was the formation of a proletarian united front

against fascism, the *Arbeiterhilfe* claimed. However, as the *Arbeiterhilfe* did not advocate an alliance between the SPD and the KPD, the only acceptable united front was that between the workers themselves, a so-called united front from below. Although social democracy constituted the main enemy of the KPD, a confrontational attitude towards the social democratic workers was never encouraged. Instead, the *Arbeiterhilfe* urged its members to initiate friendly discussions with both SPD members and the *Reichsbanner*, and to form joint *Schutzstaffeln gegen den Mordfaschismus* (defence squadrons against murder-fascism). Significantly, in November 1931, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was still proclaiming that: "The struggle against fascism will be the main task of all proletarian organisations during the coming weeks and months".<sup>75</sup>

On the cover of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* journal for its functionaries, *IAH-Funktionär*, all functionaries were warned of how "fascism" was showing ever more boldly its "bloody grimace". It declared that "fascism had become one of the most serious dangers for the workers in both town and country". One should not underestimate the danger of the national socialists, it was argued and, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* singled out the SPD leaders as being the destroyers of the united front, it claimed with satisfaction that the anti-fascist front was being built in a joint effort by the rank and file of both communists and social democrats. The workers were reaching out to their brothers to make a united stand against a common enemy.<sup>76</sup>

A sign of the rising radicalism in Germany was the escalation in street violence, which also showed that it was the national socialists who were the main enemy. It became a new feature in the *Arbeiterhilfe's* publications to mourn its fallen supporters, "Unsere Toten".<sup>77</sup> One of the first *Arbeiterhilfe* members to allegedly become the victim of national socialist terror was the 23-year-old Otto Grüneberg in Berlin. It was claimed in the press that he had been mortally stabbed by national socialists one late night, on 31 January 1931, when he was on his way home from an *Arbeiterhilfe* event. His murder led to the *Arbeiterhilfe's* declaration of a united front against the national socialists. It declared: "The firm will to organise a millionfold revolutionary fortified mass struggle against this national socialist terror, places class-conscious social democratic, communist and indifferent workers in a united front". It was defined as a struggle against the brown murder-plague (Mordpest).<sup>78</sup> Again the *Arbeiterhilfe* was calling for a mass struggle against the NSDAP.

The *Arbeiterhilfe* also made a serious attempt to mobilise women against the national socialists. What was the role of the woman in

the Third Reich, *Mahnruf* rhetorically asked its readers, if not to be the object of total subjugation? The proletarian woman was urged to oppose national socialism as its central goal was to put women back in the home, where her only political significance was to reproduce. A further repressive element of the national socialists was discerned in the understanding between the NSDAP and the church, as the national socialists supported Section 218 which criminalised abortion. It was explained to the readers of *Mahnruf* that, in the NSDAP's view, to prevent or in any way not support the natural reproduction of the German *Volk* (people) constituted a betrayal of the race (*Rassenverrat*). The natural role of the woman was to be submissive to the man of the house. If this was not what the woman wanted, then she was urged to visit the meetings of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* Women's section.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, in July 1932, the *Arbeiterhilfe* launched parallel to the KPD's Anti-Fascist Action a "mass struggle" against "reaction and fascism". Its main preoccupation consisted, however, in finding ways to blame the social democratic leaders for the NSDAP's rising influence. From now onwards, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared, all members of the *Arbeiterhilfe* belonged to the offensive forces against national socialism. Significantly, the national socialists were defined as being a force that halted the disintegration of the capitalist system. "Fascism meant millions of deaths from starvation, the crushing of all proletarian organisations, [and] the bloodiest oppression and mass murder", the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared. The only way to prevent the national socialists from coming to power, was if the workers made a united stand against them. Thus, it was thought that the SPD's leaders were "deserting" to the ranks of the NSDAP, whereas the social democratic workers would unite together with the communists to destroy fascism. In July 1932, the *Arbeiterhilfe* declared: "Getting social democratic workers involved in this struggle: that is our great historical mission".<sup>80</sup>

During the November 1932 elections, the *Arbeiterhilfe* continued to direct its attention towards fighting the national socialists. In the context of its support for the KPD, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* election campaign slogan was "against fascism – for socialism".<sup>81</sup> However, in contrast to its anti-war cause featured on many of *Mahnruf's* front pages, the *Arbeiterhilfe* only devoted one front page to the fascist threat. Thus, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* position on "fascism" remained ambiguous until the very end, as it at times declared it to be the main enemy but then could never engage in any open mass action against the national socialists as the *Arbeiterhilfe* continued to be more concerned about how to fight the SPD leadership.



### The total destruction of international solidarity

Just like the KPD and other proletarian organisations, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was the target of several police raids and investigations during the last year of the Weimar Republic. On 1 September 1932, over 30 officials of the political police started raiding the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s offices at 48 Wilhelmstrasse and 5 Stallschreiberstrasse in Berlin.<sup>82</sup> These raids were justified by the Berlin Police President on the grounds of the need to establish the truth regarding claims made in a letter sent by an anonymous informant claiming that surprise raids of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s premises would lead to the acquisition of vast quantities of secret material on the KPD. However, as the Berlin Police President informed the Minister of the Interior on 15 September, the raids had failed to produce any such evidence and all the confiscated material had been returned. According to the Police President, the confiscated material had, however, proved beyond any doubt that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was not an above-party organisation (*überparteiliche Verein*) but was closely associated with the KPD.<sup>83</sup>

A couple of days prior to Hitler's rise to power in Germany, on 30 January 1933, Münzenberg made an official request to the Comintern asking whether he could be permitted to relocate the headquarters of the *Arbeiterhilfe* to the Netherlands. The matter was dealt with by the Political Commission of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI on 3 February 1933. Although several days had passed since Hitler's *Machtübernahme* (assumption of power), Münzenberg's request was turned down and he was instructed to remain in Germany until the *Arbeiterhilfe* was banned by the government. It was explained to Münzenberg that this decision did not, however, prevent him from making preparations in case of a ban.<sup>84</sup> Hence, Münzenberg remained in Germany, although the national socialist propaganda against him was mounting. The national socialists accused him of having committed all sorts of provocations, including hostage murder (*Geiselmorde*) and the poisoning of wells.<sup>85</sup> In accordance with the Comintern's instructions, the *Arbeiterhilfe* despatched one man in advance to Amsterdam in order to make preparations for a relocation. It was even discussed whether Münzenberg should be the one to travel to Amsterdam in advance, but he had allegedly stated that he could not leave Germany. Later, on 21 March, the Comintern decided that if it was possible for the *Arbeiterhilfe* to legally set up its headquarters in Paris, then the Comintern had nothing against the suggestion.<sup>86</sup>

The immediate effect of Hitler's rise to power was that the political police raided anew the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s central offices at 48 Wilhelmstrasse.<sup>87</sup> The final end for communism in Germany after Hitler's coming to power was, however, the burning of the *Reichstag* during the night of 27 and

early hours of 28 February 1933.<sup>88</sup> That night signalled the beginning of a frenzied witch-hunt by the Gestapo after all the leading communists and socialists in Germany, with Münzenberg being one of their prime targets. When news of the *Reichstag* fire reached Münzenberg he was in south-western Germany, near the French border. In the early hours of 28 February 1933, Münzenberg secretly crossed the border into France. He later recalled in a letter that as he had crossed the border he had reasoned with himself that this was the only rational thing to do. However, the thought of leaving his comrades behind had weighed heavily on his mind. According to Münzenberg, the only way he could overcome this immense sense of loss was to engage himself in the most feverish activity for the benefit of his comrades left behind in the Third Reich. It was a decision that would define his subsequent engagement both for international solidarity, against Hitler, and later also against Stalin, until his own demise in the summer of 1940.<sup>89</sup>

After the burning of the *Reichstag*, the German section of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was literally smashed to pieces by the Third Reich. The national socialists' rise to power in effect represented an unprecedented defeat of international solidarity in interwar Germany. The *Arbeiterhilfe* continued to function as an organisation until 1935, but its German section never recovered nor did it ever regain its former strength. The German authorities were extremely efficient in finding secret cells of the organisation and arresting the *Arbeiterhilfe's* remaining activists. Finally, after the Comintern's Seventh World Congress in the summer of 1935, the *Arbeiterhilfe*, or what was left of it, was "reorganised" and effectively dissolved by a decision of the Comintern.<sup>90</sup>

The *Arbeiterhilfe* was never, however, set to function as an illegal organisation in Germany as the history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* was defined by its public presence: by its demonstrations, conferences and congresses, by its soup kitchens and social political work, by its pictorial newspapers and journals, by its festivals and exhibitions, and by its agitprop theatre and proletarian films. All this came to its end in late February 1933, when its calls for international solidarity in the streets and halls of Germany were finally silenced. It represented in effect a total destruction of international solidarity in Germany and a final silencing of the movements, cultures and celebrations of transnational solidarity that had been created by the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg in the Weimar Republic.

# 11

## Conclusions: Hidden Cultures of Transnational Solidarity

The aim of this study has been to write the first comprehensive history of the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* and its articulations of international solidarity during the Weimar Republic, 1921–1933. This work has been identified as a contribution to the transnational history of the interwar period as its main focus has not been on governmental politics or intrastate relations, but has focused on the transnational world of an international (nongovernmental) organisation. The main question of this study has been how the *Arbeiterhilfe* through an emotional language and visual culture tried to ‘awaken’ international solidarity. How was solidarity actually envisaged, organised and brought to life by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Weimar Germany? How did its articulations of solidarity change over time and how did it form significant cultures, movements and celebrations of transnational solidarity?

All of the chapters have shared the same basic questions on international solidarity: encompassing the analysis of inclusion and exclusion; the construction of ‘the other’; and the relationship between international solidarity and concepts such as charity or humanitarianism, brotherhood or sisterhood, and internationalism. Throughout this book, the aim has not been to provide the concept of ‘solidarity’ with a static definition, but to analyse its changing and complex nature within its historical context.

The main reference point for the discussion on solidarity has been largely influenced by Stjernø’s seminal work on the history of solidarity. According to Stjernø the main difference between the so-called Leninist and the social democratic interpretation of solidarity was that the latter strove to broaden the concept of solidarity – to make it more inclusive – while Lenin and his followers stressed the importance of a

purely working-class solidarity, which made it very restrictive. Stjernø also suggests in his work that the concept of solidarity was not used at all by the Comintern and that, although it embraced the notion of a 'proletarian internationalism', it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish this from loyalty towards the Soviet Union. Stjernø lastly maintains that the Comintern did not employ the language of solidarity within the context of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism either. This new history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* has shown, however, that the communist movement of the interwar period on the contrary extensively articulated solidarity as a means of uniting everyone who supported the struggle of the working class in the spirit of a classic Marxist workers' solidarity as a part of a German counter-cultural workers' movement. Moreover, although the *Arbeiterhilfe* pursued a number of solidarity campaigns which were Soviet-centred, the *Arbeiterhilfe* also pursued a number of international solidarity campaigns which cannot rationally be viewed as expressions of loyalty to the Soviet Union. The culture of transnational solidarity that the *Arbeiterhilfe* created and communicated was never critical to the Soviet Union, but attempted to construct an image of the Soviet Union as a supporter of all the liberation struggles that were taking place in the world. Contrary to any other transnational solidarity articulated in Germany at the time, it strove to include the Soviet Union in the transnational workers' community, to make it a natural part of 'we', the workers of the world. It was included in this global solidarity community and expected to subscribe to the principles of solidarity, including reciprocity and commitment to fight for the common goal – the bringing about of colonial liberation and the liberation from the system of capitalism, for the benefit of socialism.

It is here maintained that the central element missing in the previous analysis of the communist movement's idea of international solidarity, is the inclusion of the Comintern's main international organisation for international solidarity: the *Arbeiterhilfe*. This study has also emphasised Münzenberg's role as being a significant yet hitherto forgotten and suppressed voice for international solidarity within the interwar context. That said, this work has tried to introduce a new spectrum of solidarity to the analysis where black and white dichotomies are replaced by a historical, source-based analysis: Solidarity was not only a political weapon in the struggle, but also an alternative identity, culture, emotion and even a goal in itself. For the leaders of the Comintern and the Soviet Union, international solidarity had the clear goal to advance the Bolshevik revolution and to support the Soviet Union, but for the German workers themselves it could also represent a way to self-help and

a way to empower the weak and poor in society. For many, and perhaps also for Münzenberg, the *Arbeiterhilfe* represented a unification of the spectrum in one organisation. It aimed to revolutionise society, but also to give practical assistance to those engaged in the struggle. To 'show' solidarity could be a symbolical gesture, but for the *Arbeiterhilfe* it most often also meant doing practical relief work. However, for the workers involved it could also 'simply' mean a joint celebration and jubilation of belonging and being accepted in a local, national, transnational and even a global community imagined by the *Arbeiterhilfe*. In nations where promises of social welfare and security in a paternalistic tradition were regarded increasingly unattainable, the feeling of a betrayed national solidarity and injustice could easily make the promises of a real and effective international solidarity more attractive.

The initial launch of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in the cause of famine relief in Soviet Russia in 1921 shows, however, that it at the outset was not a well-prepared propaganda campaign, but a desperate call for solidarity articulated in the context of a true humanitarian crisis, which also threatened the very continuation of the Russian Revolution. Consequently, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* famine relief was not conceived within the context of charity, but within the context of a workers' international solidarity the objective of which was not only to save the starving but also to save Soviet Russia from destruction. In terms of Soviet Russia's image, the 1921 hunger campaign produced the worst possible result, as it proved that Soviet Russia was incapable of handling the crisis and was more or less desperately calling out for assistance to the capitalist world. The image of Soviet Russia was thus initially presented as one of weakness and destitution, which created a transnational solidarity movement based on sympathy and pity rather than on political propaganda showcasing the so-called workers' paradise.

In the third chapter, it is shown how the *Arbeiterhilfe's* initial message of international solidarity for Soviet Russia was altered and reimagined. Images of weakness and pity were slowly erased and the so-called 'productive assistance' initiative transformed the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity into a 'positive' action for both the reconstruction of the famine area and the building of socialism. This reimagining was combined with the realisation of how strong an impact the use of images and film could have when campaigning for international solidarity. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity campaign for Soviet Russia (both famine and productive assistance) thus constituted the beginning of Münzenberg's Red media empire in Berlin, which produced a vast number of illustrated and cinematic products in support

of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity work. Essentially, one could argue that the launch of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* productive assistance initiative created the embryo of Soviet cultural diplomacy, the aim of which was to showcase the land of revolution.

As productive assistance came to an end in 1923, this radically transformed both the *Arbeiterhilfe* as an organisation and its message of international solidarity. Two central events occurred in 1923 which resulted in a significant diversification of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of international solidarity. Firstly, the devastating earthquake in Japan on 1 September 1923 signalled the beginning of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* engagement in the Far East. Secondly, the hyperinflation crisis in Weimar Germany in the autumn of 1923 signalled the beginning of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* deep engagement in Germany as an international solidarity organisation. The significant change that occurred through the launch of these two campaigns was that neither of them was directed towards Soviet Russia. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was no longer calling for international solidarity in order to save or reconstruct Soviet Russia, but was calling for international solidarity of the workers of the world, including Soviet Russia, to assist destitute workers. This change, subsequently turned the *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations towards a classic form of workers' brotherhood and internationalism.

Its "Hunger in Germany" campaign brought the *Arbeiterhilfe* to a totally new level of prominence in Germany. Of all the organisations connected to the Comintern, it was the only one that was not banned by the German government in the autumn of 1923, as its practical international solidarity work, achieved through a network of soup kitchens, was regarded as being invaluable. As a result, the direction of international solidarity was altered and the principle of reciprocity that was so strongly linked to the idea of solidarity was honoured, as Soviet Russia provided aid to German workers, who only two years earlier had shown their solidarity to Soviet Russia. A noteworthy aspect of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work was that it was never presented as simply the writing of appeals or the organising of rallies in a form of symbolic solidarity, but always retained a very practical element. Solidarity was never allowed to become just empty words, but always meant action in the form of practical solidarity work either through the establishment of soup kitchens or active fundraising in the name of international solidarity.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* campaign in support of German workers led the organisation to launch a strike aid initiative in early 1924. Its strike aid would become an integral part of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work throughout the Weimar period. In a sense, this represented a broadening

and radicalisation of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* message of solidarity, as left-wing critics had deemed the *Arbeiterhilfe's* work in Germany as being too philanthropic. Simply assisting destitute workers was not enough. The point was to support “workers in their struggle”, meaning workers who were on strike or locked out, which provided the *Arbeiterhilfe* with a more radical message of international solidarity. Its strike aid initiative introduced the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Germany to the world of social policy as it had to focus its practical solidarity work on the victims of the strikes and labour conflicts, namely the women and working-class children. Also here, one can discern a radicalisation as women were initially mostly presented as mere recipients of solidarity and not as the active agents of solidarity. Consequently, the *Arbeiterhilfe's* fusing of the gender roles in its message of solidarity resulted in the cultivation of an image of the active and fighting woman, which stood in stark contrast to the passive and victimised women in its earlier images. Even in the case of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work for children, a radicalisation can be discerned as it was redirected from a general relief action to the assistance of the children of strikers and “workers in their struggle”. Later on, the activation of children and youths was even realised in special pioneer and youth sections of the *Arbeiterhilfe* with their own uniforms and slogans.

The global expansion of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity work, which began with Japan in 1923, provided the organisation with a truly international, if not global, agenda. Here it has been shown how the *Arbeiterhilfe* ingeniously articulated international solidarity in the context of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in 1924–1925, with a special emphasis on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* solidarity campaign for China. For the first time a major anti-imperialist congress was organised in Berlin that called for the united struggle of all suppressed irrespective if ‘white, black or yellow’. What mattered was class – not race.

I have also analysed the methods used by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in order to spread its message of solidarity. In addition to building up an organisational structure with both individual and collective membership, the *Arbeiterhilfe* made great advances in its public image and ability to reach large sections of the population. The central element of this analysis has focused on public displays, or celebrations, of international solidarity, represented on the one hand by its mass meetings such as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* International Solidarity Days and congresses such as the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ten-year anniversary congress in Berlin in 1931, but also by its forays into the fields of cinema and agitprop theatre. The films and plays themselves presented the message of international solidarity

but the experience in of itself – actually going to the cinema or watching an agitprop performance together with others – produced rituals and a common workers' solidarity felt through the drama performed on stage. Film and theatre were in this way powerful weapons in the construction of 'the other', whether it be the capitalist, imperialist or fascist evil and in forging an imagined transnational, global community.

The *Arbeiterhilfe's* articulations of international solidarity were integrally linked to the question of the war danger during the interwar period. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* active creation and nurturing of war anxiety and, in particular, the fear of a new and imminent imperialist war in which chemical weapons, tanks and air forces were to be utilised was a powerful way of mobilising international solidarity in the late 1920s and early 1930s. As the chapter on the *Arbeiterhilfe's* anti-war campaign work shows, the representation of the capitalist as a dehumanised 'other' was effectively used as a means of breaking down an identification with the nation and national solidarity and strengthening the feeling of international solidarity.

The final, but most problematic, part of this book deals with the *Arbeiterhilfe's* relationship to national socialism in Germany. Despite Stalin's active prohibition of any mass propaganda against the national socialists, the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg singled out the national socialists as the main enemy of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and of the very concept of international solidarity. Here the racism of national socialism was seen as an effort to imagine a national community based on race, whereas the *Arbeiterhilfe* distinguished this only as a method to misguide the workers from their true transnational identity based on class and oppression. In this respect, national socialism and communism were not sibling ideas in the totalitarian family, but diametrically opposite. This is also of great significance when identifying the *Arbeiterhilfe* as a radical social movement and not as a totalitarian front organisation.

How, then, should the *Arbeiterhilfe* be perceived in the context of the history of international solidarity and the history of interwar communism? What did the *Arbeiterhilfe* ultimately achieve? As Iriye (2002) points out, most research has evaluated the achievements of the international organisations solely on the basis that they failed to prevent the next world war, just as they failed to prevent the rise of Hitler. However, as Iriye also argues, the historical relevance of international organisations lies in their transnational and global connections, their transfers of ideas (e.g., solidarity), information and people as well as in their ability to identify and communicate global patterns of exploitation, social injustice and oppression. In a prolific manner, the *Arbeiterhilfe's*



articulations of international solidarity tried to make the workers think globally and accept all races as being part of the global, transnational community of the oppressed, and thus actively strived for the dismantling of borders between nations. However, the *Arbeiterhilfe* was due to its efforts to define a dehumanised capitalist 'other' as the protagonist of child labour, prostitution, brutal exploitation, war-mongering, and the protector of an unjust class-society and imperial system, active in constructing new barriers. The inherent logic of solidarity required the inclusion and exclusion of groups and classes. It was never a universal solidarity, although it clearly articulated a global imaginary. Due to its global mindset it was very inclusive compared to any other articulation of solidarity of its time. However, its very dark construction of the capitalist 'they' enhanced its radicalism and highlighted the aspect of active struggle and resistance. This, in combination with its open support of the Soviet Union and communism clearly distinguished it from social democratic articulations of solidarity.

Despite the *Social Democratic Party's* (SPD) struggle against the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the SPD's ruling to forbid official affiliation to the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 1924, there certainly existed a possibility to form a common working-class community and identity based on international solidarity that was separate from party politics. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* public celebrations, mass culture, proletarian films and agitprop theatre were by certainty experienced by a vast number of non-communist workers and hence it contributed in a significant way to the creation of an alternative space for Weimar Germany's proletarian milieu. At times it could perhaps unite representatives of all working-class parties for a joint solidarity celebration or cinematic experience, but in most cases it meant an above-party experience including the communists and 'unorganised' workers, but excluding SPD members.

The history of the *Arbeiterhilfe* cannot only be seen as part of the history of class struggle and communism, but corresponds on many levels to timeless problems concerning the attempts to build a transnational global community. How, for example, can a sense of community or identification beyond the nation state be generated? How have international organisations dealt with such issues in the past? Transnational history addresses problem areas that are beyond the capabilities of the nation state, problems which no single government alone can provide a solution to, such as hunger, famines and natural calamities, but also questions of oppression, human rights, racism and war. Transnational movements and ideas play a pivotal role in the shaping of the modern, contemporary world; hence the historical understanding of the

twentieth century's transnational history needs to be further developed. The often still hidden history of international organisations such as the *Arbeiterhilfe* and their radical articulations and counter-cultures of transnational communities and solidarities need to be reintroduced into history to understand the development and formation of the entangled, interconnected and globalised world of today.

# Notes

## 1 Introduction

1. 'Der Tag der Solidarität', *Welt am Abend (Waa)* 136, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 229.
2. The *Arbeiterhilfe* was also known by various names and acronyms in different countries: In Germany (from 1924) as the *Bund der Freunde der Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (IAH); in France as the *Secours Ouvrier International* (SOI); in the UK as the *Workers' International Relief* (WIR); in the USA as the *Friends of Soviet Russia*; and in Russia as the *Mezhrabpom*. Note that the organisation is not to be confused with the other international "Red" relief organisation called the *International Red Aid*, which is also known under its Russian (MOPR) or German (IRH) acronym.
3. Helmut [Dimitrov] to the Comintern, 12.10.1931, RGASPI 499/1/33, 123.
4. For further details on the LAI see Fredrik Petersson, "We are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers". Willi Münzenberg, *the League against Imperialism and the Comintern, 1925–1933* (Lewiston: Queenston Press, 2013).
5. Daniel Laqua, "Preface," in *Internationalism Reconfigured. Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, ed. Daniel Laqua (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), xii; Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013), 46.
6. Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History. The Past, the Present and the Future* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 14–15.
7. Patricia Clavin, "Introduction. Conceptualising Internationalism between the Wars," in *Internationalism Reconfigured. Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, ed. Daniel Laqua (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 1–7.
8. Peter Willetts, *Non-Governmental Organisations in World Politics. The Construction of Global Governance*, Routledge Global Institutions (London: Routledge, 2011), 6–12, 22–23; Bob Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organisations. From 1815 to the Present Day* (London: Routledge, 2009), 5–12, 37–56; Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924*, ed. Jay Winter, *Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
9. Adolf Ehrh, *Bewaffneter Aufstand! Enthüllungen über den kommunistischen Umsturzversuch am Vorabend der nationalen Revolution* (Berlin: Eckart-Verlag, 1933), 26–27; Adolf Ehrh, *Entfesselung der Unterwelt. Ein Querschnitt durch die Bolschewisierung Deutschlands. 2. überarbeitete Auflage* (Berlin: Eckart-Verlag, 1933), 54–64; Adolf Ehrh, ed. *Der Weltbolschewismus. Ein internationales Gemeinschaftswerk über die bolschewistische Wühlarbeit und die Umsturzversuche der Komintern in allen Ländern. Herausgegeben von der Anti-Komintern* (Berlin: Nibelungen-Verlag, 1936), 26–30.
10. See also the list of "organisations ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party": *The Communist Solar System. The Communist International* (London: The Labour Party, Labour Publications Dept., 1933).

11. Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004 [1951]), 477–480.
12. F. Bowen Evans, ed. *Worldwide Communist Propaganda Activities* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955), 25.
13. J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit. The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958), 227–242.
14. Evans, *Worldwide Communist Propaganda Activities*, 25–26.
15. Lynn Mally, “Inside a Communist Front. A Post-Cold War Analysis of the New Theatre League,” *American Communist History* 6: 1 (2007), 65–67.
16. Bernard S. Morris, “Communist International Front Organizations. Their Nature and Function,” *World Politics* 9: 1 (1956), 77–78; Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, vol. 3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971 [1953]), 399–402; James David Atkinson, *The Politics of Struggle. The Communist Front and Political Warfare* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1966), 28–29. See also: *The Techniques of Soviet Propaganda. A Study Presented by the Sub-Committee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Acts and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Eighty-Ninth Congress, First Session* (U.S. Government printing office, Washington, 1965), 12–13. FBI-Records, File 100–11392, Part 14 of 25, American Friends Service Committee.
17. Richard Gid Powers, *Not without Honor. The History of American Anticommunism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 75; Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer. How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12. See also Michael David-Fox, “The Fellow Travelers Revisited. The ‘Cultured West’ through Soviet Eyes,” *Journal of Modern History* 75: 2 (2003), 300–335.
18. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World was Going our Way. The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 2–3; Stephen Koch, *Double Lives. Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (New York: Enigma Books, 2004), 20; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 12.
19. Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 306–307.
20. A criticism supported by Hartmann Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien. Kultur- und Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung (1890–1933)* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1980), 13, 229–230. See also the important critique by Tauno Saarela, “International and National in the Communist Movement,” in *Communism. National & International*, ed. Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1998), 15–18.
21. Hermann Weber, “Zur Rolle des Terrors im Kommunismus,” in *Verbrechen im Namen der Idee. Terror im Kommunismus 1936–38*, ed. Hermann Weber and Ulrich Mählert (Berlin: Aufbau Verlagsgruppe, 2007), 14, 38–39.
22. Alexander Vatlin, *Die Komintern. Gründung, Programmatik, Akteure, Geschichte des Kommunismus und Linksozialismus* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2009), 42.
23. Kevin McDermott, “Bolshevisation ‘from Above’ or ‘from Below’? The Comintern and European Communism in the 1920s,” in *Communism. National & International*, ed. Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (Helsinki:

- Finnish Historical Society, 1998), 105. This fact is strongly demonstrated in the anthology by Norman LaPorte, Kevin Morgan, and Matthew Worley, eds., *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern. Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). See also Andreas Wirsching, “‘Stalinisierung’ oder Entideologisierte ‘Nischengesellschaft’? Alte Einsichten und neue Thesen zum Charakter der KPD in der Weimarer Republik,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 45: 3 (1997), 449–466.
24. See, for example, McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 307.
  25. See further: Bill Seary, “The Early Years. From the Congress of Vienna to the San Francisco Conference,” in *‘The Conscience of the World’. The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System*, ed. Peter Willetts (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), 16–17. A NGO is defined by Peter Willetts as a “... non-profit-making, non-violent, organised group of people who are not seeking governmental office”. Peter Willetts, “Introduction,” in *‘The Conscience of the World’. The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System*, ed. Peter Willetts (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), 1–5, 10–11.
  26. Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 183, 98.
  27. See further in James Joll, *The Second International 1889–1914* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 231, 6–41; Sinclair Armstrong, “The Internationalism of the Early Social Democrats of Germany,” *American Historical Review* 47: 2 (1942), 249–258.
  28. Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266–267.
  29. Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 99.
  30. Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age. Britain and the Crisis of Civilization* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 2–3. Overy’s study focuses on Britain, but the general mentalities and outlooks of the era can be perceived as being transnational in their character.
  31. Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany. The Long Road West*, vol. 1: 1789–1933 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1–2.
  32. Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 3–6.
  33. Richard Cornell, *Revolutionary Vanguard. The Early Years of the Communist Youth International, 1914–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 54.
  34. Willi Gautschi, *Lenin als Emigrant in der Schweiz* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1973), 121–122, 77, 93–96. See also Babette Gross, *Willi Münzenberg. Eine politische Biographie. Mit einem Vorwort von Arthur Koestler* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1967), 64–71; McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 37–38.
  35. Gautschi, *Lenin als Emigrant in der Schweiz*, 276–282. Citation 278.
  36. Gross, *Willi Münzenberg*, 79–80; Willi Münzenberg, *Die Dritte Front. Auszeichnungen aus 15 Jahren proletarischer Jugendbewegung* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1930), 248–263; McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 60–71.
  37. Wladislaw Hedeler and Alexander Vatlin, eds., *Die Weltpartei aus Moskau. Der Gründungskongress der Kommunistischen Internationale 1919. Protokoll und neue Dokumente* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 13, 7.
  38. Branko M. Lazic and Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Lenin and the Comintern*, vol. 1 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 174–175.
  39. Cornell, *Revolutionary Vanguard*, 215–220, 230–231. Münzenberg was replaced by the Russian communist Lazar Schatzkin.

40. Münzenberg to Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck und Georgi Dimitrov, Paris, 15.11.1937, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4036/515, 135.
41. Münzenberg, *Die Dritte Front*, 347–348.
42. Bernhard H. Bayerlein, ed. *Georgi Dimitroff. Tagebücher 1933–1943* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2000), 165. Original quote: “Münzenberg ist ein Trotzkiist. Wenn er herkommt, werden wir ihn verhaften. – Geben Sie sich Mühe, ihn hierher zu locken”.
43. Notizen über Leitungssitzungen der KPD vom 21.9.1938–23.12.1938 in Paris, SAPMO BArch, NY 4036/495. First published in Kasper Braskén, “Mot hunger, krig och fascism! Internationella arbetarhjälpen, Willi Münzenberg och kampen för internationell solidaritet i Weimartyskland 1921–1935,” *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 94: 2 (2009). See also, Kasper Braskén, “‘Hauptgefahr jetzt nicht Trotzkiismus, sondern Münzenberg’ – East German Uses of Remembrance and the Contentious Case of Willi Münzenberg.” *Comintern Working Paper* (CoWoPa): 22 (2011).
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45. Oberste Gerichte der UdSSR, Beschluß Nr. 44–4146/58, Belfort-Bikenhauer (Birkenhauer), Erich Wilhelm, BStU, MfS SV 170/88, Bd. 4, 330–331.
46. *Die Internationale* 5/6 (1939), 196–202, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4036/515, 234.
47. Willi Münzenberg, ‘Der russische Dolchstoß’, *Die Zukunft* 3, 22.9.1939. Münzenberg’s famous outcry has lately been highlighted in Bernhard H. Bayerlein, “Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!”. *Vom Ende der linken Solidarität. Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1941* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlagsgruppe, 2008).
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49. Wessel, *Münzenbergs Ende*, 232; Gross, *Willi Münzenberg*, 331–332; Kurt Kersten, “Das Ende Willi Münzenbergs. Ein Opfer Stalins und Ulbrichts,” *Deutsche Rundschau* 83: 5 (1957), 496–499. The years 1830–1940 have been described as the “classical era of working-class internationalism” in Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, “Introduction,” in *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940*, ed. Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (Leiden: Brill, 1988), VII.
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81. Zoll, *Was ist Solidarität heute?*, 11–12; Bayertz, “Begriff und Problem der Solidarität,” 40–41, 46.
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## 2 Awakening International Solidarity, 1921

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2. Benjamin M. Weissman, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921–1923*, Hoover Institution publication (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1974), 2–4; Figes, *A Peoples Tragedy*, 778. See further ‘Notes on measures for combatting famine and stepping up economic growth’, early July 1921. Published in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 42 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 330–331.
3. Gorky’s appeal is reproduced in Figes, *A Peoples Tragedy*, 778–779. See also W. I. Lenin, *Briefe*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, vol. VIII: Juni–November 1921 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1973), 4. The chronology of Gorky’s appeal is discussed in Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand. The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), 38–39. See also Bruno Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia. Perception and Prejudice, 1848–1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 438–440. On Nansen see Carl Emil Vogt, *Nansens kamp mot hungersnöden i Russland 1921–23* (Oslo: Aschehough, 2007), 101–118. McMeekin erroneously states that Gorky’s appeal was released to the international press corps on 23.7.1921, Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow’s Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 105.
4. Argued in Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 42–43; David Burner, *Herbert Hoover. A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 96–101, 114, 132–133.
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6. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive. The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 40. Quotation from Mitrokhin’s notes and transcripts.

7. See a detailed account in Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 39–40.
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12. Willi Münzenberg, *Die Dritte Front. Auszeichnungen aus 15 Jahren proletarischer Jugendbewegung* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1930), 347–348.
13. Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 53–54, 278.
14. Lenin, ‘Appeal to the International Proletariat’, published on 6.8.1921 in *Pravda*. See translation in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 502.
15. McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 106.
16. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 3.7.1921, RGASPI 324/1/554, 35. Documents place him however in Moscow on 13.7.1921. See further, Konstituierende Sitzung der Exekutive am 13.7.1921, RGASPI 495/1/40, 24–25.
17. The Small Bureau was constituted at the Comintern’s Third World Congress. It was re-named the “Presidium of the ECCI” in late August 1921. See further Degras, *The Communist International 1919–1943. Documents*, 272.
18. Protokoll 3 der Sitzung des Engeren Büros des EKKI, 19.7.1921, RGASPI 495/2/4, 25.
19. Zinoviev and the other members of the ECCI to the WES bureau, Petersburg, 23.7.1921. Translation of Russian original to German by the German authorities, BArch, R 1507/67240/539, 578–580a.
20. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 38–39.
21. Sitzung der Exekutive vom 27.7.1921, RGASPI 495/1/41, 10–11, 26–27.
22. Protokoll 3 der Sitzung der Exekutive der Komintern, 27.7.1921, RGASPI 495/1/41, 7; Sitzung der Exekutive vom 27.7.1921, RGASPI 495/1/41, 28.
23. Münzenberg to Lenin, Moscow, 28.7.1921, RGASPI 2/1/20029, 1.
24. Untitled document on the organisation of the Comintern’s famine relief campaign [late July 1921], RGASPI 495/60/1, 10–11.

25. An die Zentralleitungen aller Kommunistischen Parteien und Organisationen, Moscow, 31.7.1921, RGASPI 495/18/42, 12–18.
26. Protokoll No. 7 der Sitzung des Engeren Büros des EKKI, 1.8.1921, RGASPI 495/2/4, 51.
27. Alexander Vatlin, *Die Komintern. Gründung, Programmatik, Akteure*, Geschichte des Kommunismus und Linkssozialismus (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2009), 247–255.
28. The VKPD to the Executive of the SPD, 23.7.1921, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 92–93; ‘Die Solidaritätsaktion für Sowjetrußland’, *Rote Fahne (RF)* 341, 28.7.1921, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 217; ‘Aufruf zu einer Hilfsaktion für Sowjetrußland! An das deutsche Proletariat! An die werktätige Bevölkerung in Stadt und Land!’, signed by the ZK der VKPD, Berlin, 28.7.1921, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 221; This is confirmed in the report “R.K., In. 49, 4.8.1921”, BArch, R 1507/67240/539, 407a–408.
29. Richard Lindström (Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet) to the LSI, 3.8.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 58; Telegramme from Vliegen and Werkhoven at the Dutch Social Democratic Labour Party to the Executive Committee of the Second International [LSI], Ramsay MacDonald, 3.8.1921. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 5. See also ‘Die Russenhilfe’, *Vorwärts* 361 (3.8.1921); and the cover of *Vorwärts* ‘Die Hilfsaktion für Rußland. Cholera in Warschau’, *Vorwärts* 362 (3.8.1921).
30. Letter from the LSI, August 1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 2.
31. See further Protokoll der Sitzung über die Hilfsaktion für Rußland am Mittwoch, den 3. August 1921, *Landesarchiv Berlin* (LAB), A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 1014, 6–9a; Bericht über die am Mittwoch, 3.8.1921, in der Mathäi-Kirchstr. 21/22 stattgefundenen Konferenz, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 94–95.
32. Report “R.K., In. 49, 4.8.1921”, BArch, R 1507/67240/539, 407a–8; Report “R.K. 49, Ausl., 5.8.1921”, BArch, R 1507/67240/539, 437a–438a.
33. Abschrift, Nr. 16627/21. Auszug aus dem Lage-Bericht, 5.8.1921, SAPMO–BArch, R 1501/113328, 193; Report from the RdI to the Auswärtige Amt, Berlin, 12.8.1921, SAPMO–BArch, R 1501/113328, 194–195a.
34. Report “R.K., In. 50, 9.8.1921”, BArch, R 1507/67240/539, 453a–454a. On the Russo-German trade agreement see: Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed. European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 161–162.
35. Karl Schlögel, *Das russische Berlin. Ostbahnhof Europas* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2007), 12–13, 147–151, 55. See also ‘Die Hauptquartiere der russischen Sowjet-Vertretung in Berlin’ written by the RÜöO, Berlin, 16.2.1922, BArch, R 1507/67116/131, 158a.
36. In English the committee was named “Committee for organising of relief for the starving population of Russia by the workers of all countries”. See e.g. RGASPI 538/2/3, 11.
37. Protocol, 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 2, 6.
38. “Thomas” to Rakosi, 25.8.1921, RGASPI 499/1/5a, 102; “Thomas” to Rakosi, 3.9.1921, RGASPI 499/1/5a, 106; Protocol: ‘Verhandlung der Mitglieder des internationalen Büros’, 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 6.
39. Rumours of the IFTU’s conference was first mentioned in ‘Die Amsterdam Internationale in Berlin’, *Vorwärts* 370 (8.8.1921); See also Protocol:

- 'Verhandlung der Mitglieder des internationalen Büros', 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 4.
40. 'Amsterdam für Rußland', *Vorwärts* 382 (15.8.1921). See biographical information on the IFTU representatives in Anthony Carew, Geert Van Goethem, and Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, "Bibliographical notes," in *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, eds. Anthony Carew, et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000).
  41. Protocol, 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 1.
  42. Protocol, 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 2–6.
  43. Protocol, 14.8.1921, RGASPI 538/2/1, 7–13, 18–25.
  44. International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, 'The Russian Relief Movements', IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 10–11. Citation 11.
  45. 'Zersplitterung der Hilfsaktion für Rußland', *Vorwärts* 383 (16.8.1921).
  46. 'Keine Zersplitterung in der Russenhilfe!', *Vorwärts* 388 (18.8.1921).
  47. 'Keine Zersplitterung in der Russenhilfe!', *Vorwärts* 388 (18.8.1921); see also "From Freiheit", 17.8.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 100, 1. See further on the social democratic responses to the famine in Jürgen Zarusky, *Die deutschen Sozialdemokraten und das sowjetische Modell. Ideologische Auseinandersetzungen und außenpolitische Konzeptionen 1917–1933* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992), 142–146; Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia*, 436–443.
  48. (Translation) Article by Münzenberg in *RF*, 19.8.1921. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 100, 102–103.
  49. Gilles at the International Department of the Labour Party to Macdonald, 26.8.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 35–36; W. Gillies to MacDonal, 18.8.1921; Gillies to Otto Wels, 18.8.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 77; and Gillies to Macdonald, 17.8.1921. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 23.
  50. Otto Wels to the "Executive Committee of the Second International", [18.8.1921], IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 77. On Wels see further Peter D. Stachura, *Political Leaders in Weimar Germany. A Biographical Study* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 181–182.
  51. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 77.
  52. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 1.
  53. See further in 'Zum Stand der internationalen Verhandlungen für die Vereinheitlichung der proletarischen Hilfsaktion', *Bulletin* 8 (29.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 46.
  54. 'Eine internationale Konferenz für die Rußlandhilfe in Berlin', *Bulletin* 15 (16.9.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 80.
  55. Zirkularbrief and die Zentralkomitees aller Sektionen der Kommunistischen Internationale zur Hilfsaktion für die Hungernden in Sowjet-Russland, Moscow, 26.9.1921, RGASPI 495/18/44, 157. On the united front see McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, 27–32; Jane Degras, "United Front Tactics in the Comintern 1921–1928," *St Anthony's Papers*: 9. International Communism (1960), 9–22.
  56. Münzenberg to MacDonal, 10.10.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 59.
  57. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 59.
  58. IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 59–60.

59. MacDonald to Münzenberg, 14.10.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 61; Münzenberg to MacDonald, 20.10.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 62–63; MacDonald to Münzenberg, 24.10.1921, IISH, LSI, London Secretariat Archives, 99, 64; Ludmila Thomas, *Georgi Tschitscherin. "Ich hatte die Revolution und Mozart"*, trans. Helmut Ettinger (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2012), 117–137.
60. Protokoll der Sitzung der Executive der Kommunistischen Internationale, 14.9.1921, RGASPI 495/1/42, 21.
61. Protokoll der Sitzung der Executive der Kommunistischen Internationale, 14.9.1921, RGASPI 495/1/42, 20; Auszug aus dem Protokoll Nr. 13 der Sitzung des Präsidiums der Exekutive, 14.9.1921, RGASPI 495/2/5, 45.
62. RGASPI 495/1/42, 20
63. A. Rautmann, "Deutsch Sektion" to the CCs of all CPs, RGASPI 495/1/49, 86–88.
64. 'Deutsche Künstlerhilfe', *Bulletin* 4 (22.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 18.
65. 'Für die Hungernden in Rußland', *Bulletin* 8 (29.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 45.
66. Holitscher to Einstein, 16.8.1921; Münzenberg to Einstein, 1.9.1921; Einstein to Münzenberg, 3.9.1921; Einstein to Barthel, 6.9.1921; Münzenberg to Einstein, 7.9.1921; Kollwitz to Einstein, 11.9.1921; Holitscher to Einstein, 17.9.1921; Einstein to Kollwitz, 19.9.1921. Transcripts in Diana Kormos Buchwald et al., *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*, vol. 12: The Berlin Years (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 251–252, 267, 271, 277, 279, 282–283, 285, 470.
67. 'Für die Hungernden in Rußland', *Bulletin* 8 (29.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 45.
68. Erwin Piscator, 'An alle Künstler und Intellektuelle' *Vorwärts* 471 (6.10.1921). Akademie der Künste (AdK), Berlin, Erwin-Piscator-Sammlung 157. See also John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator. Half a Century of Politics in the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1986), 43–51.
69. Erwin Piscator, 'Bericht der deutschen "Künstlerhilfe für die Hungernden in Rußland von ihrer Gründung bis zum 15.7.1922', *Rote Aufbau* 2 (1923), AdK, Erwin-Piscator-Sammlung 157.
70. Circular 7 from Komitee Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjet-Russland, Berlin, to the Bezirksleitungen der KPD, 21.9.1921, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 16–17.
71. On Vogeler, see Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, 2. überarbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008), 968–969. See further in Heinrich Vogeler, *Werden. Erinnerungen mit Lebenszeugnissen aus den Jahren 1923–1942, neu herausgegeben von Joachim Priewe und Paul-Gerhard Wenzlaff* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1989), 523.
72. On Grosz, see further Beth Irwin Lewis, *Georg Grosz. Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1971).
73. Käthe Kollwitz to Hans Kollwitz, Berlin, 23.8.1921. Transcript in Käthe Kollwitz, *Briefe an den Sohn 1904 bis 1945. Herausgegeben von Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1992), 184.
74. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher. Herausgegeben von Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1989), 508, 908.
75. Autobiography by Käthe Kollwitz written in 1943: 'Die Jahre 1914–1933 zum Umbruch.' Included in Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, 745–747.

76. An die Zentralleitungen aller Kommunistischen Parteien und Organisationen, Moscow, 31.7.1921, RGASPI 495/18/42, 12–18.
77. “Die Spekulation auf den hunger und der Feldzug des Weltkapitals gegen Sowjet-Russland,” signed by the ECCI, Moscow, 13.8.1921, RGASPI 495/1/41, 71–74. See also ‘Nieder mit der Hungeroffensive des Kapitals gegen Sowjet-Rußland!’, [signed by the ECCI on 12.8.1921] *Bulletin* 5 (25.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 21; Kurt Bayertz, “Begriff und Problem der Solidarität,” in *Solidarität. Begriff und Problem*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 21; Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 17.
78. Münzenberg to the Centrals of the CPs and organisations and worker-relief committees, 21.9.1921, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 8–9.
79. Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 58.
80. ‘Arbeiter! Bauern! Angestellte und Beamte!’, *Bulletin* 3 (19.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 11.
81. Proletarische Hilfe für Sowjet-Russland! An die Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen aller Länder!, ECCI, 30.7.1921 [draft version!], RGASPI 495/18/41, 204, 206. This appeal was later published by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in the name of the ECCI, entitled: ‘Ein Aufruf der Kommunistischen Internationale an die Arbeiter der ganzen Erde’, *Bulletin des Auslandskomitees zur Organisation der Arbeiterhilfe für die Hungernden in Russland (Bulletin)* 1 (17.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 1–2.
82. Proletarische Hilfe für Sowjet-Russland!, 30.7.1921, RGASPI 495/18/41, 210–211.
83. Bayertz, “Begriff und Problem der Solidarität,” 43, 49.
84. Münzenberg, ‘Menschheit, Humanität, Solidarität’, *Bulletin* 12 (5.9.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 65–66.
85. Münzenberg, ‘Der Völkerbund verweigert den Hungernden die Hilfe’, *Bulletin* 19 (1.10.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 90; ‘Es bleibt bei der Ablehnung einer Hilfsaktion für die Hungernden in Rußland’, *Bulletin* 25 (13.10.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 127; Münzenberg, ‘Die internationale Sammelwoche für die Hungernden in Rußland vom 9–16. Oktober 1921’, *Bulletin* 20 (3.10.1921), SAPMO–BArch, NY 4005/110, 45–46; F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967 [1950]), 149–150; George Scott, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 77–78.
86. ‘Telephone message to G.Y. Zinoviev’ 22.8.1921, Lenin, *Collected Works*, 45, 263.
87. ‘Arbeiter! Bauern! Angestellte und Beamte!’ [signed by the *Arbeiterhilfe*], *Bulletin* 3 (19.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 11.
88. Münzenberg, ‘Der internationale Kampf der Proletarier gegen den Hunger in Rußland’, *Bulletin* 3 (19.8.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 12–13.
89. Gustav Gundelach, “Solidarität mit den Völkern der Sowjetunion”, SAPMO–BArch, SgY 30/0321, 47–49. Käthe Pohl, alias Lydia Rabinowitsch, (1892–1938?), joined the Bolsheviks during WWI and moved to Germany in 1920. See further on Pohl in Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 684–685.
90. ‘Die kommunistische Nähstube’ *Bulletin* 15 (16.9.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 89.
91. Gustav Gundelach, “Solidarität mit den Völkern der Sowjetunion”, SAPMO–BArch, SgY 30/0321, 47–49.

92. Else Baum, 'Die Hilfsaktion und die deutschen Kommunistinnen', *Inprekorr* 19 (1922), 154.
93. 'Die Not – Die Hilfe', *Bulletin* 35 (29.12.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 186.
94. 'Rettet die Kinder!', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 1 (7.11.1921); 'Rettet die hungernden Kinder', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 2 (1.12.1921); 'Von der Hungerkatastrophe', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 3 (20.12.1921).
95. 'Auch ein proletarisches Hilfswerk', *Bulletin* 21 (4.10.1921), RGASPI 538/2/6, 118.
96. Münzenberg, 'Die Hilfe der Arbeiter', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 2 (1.12.1921); Vorschläge für eine Hilfsaktion für Sowjet-Russland [1921], SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 87; Zirkularbrief an die Zentralkomitees aller Sektionen der Kommunistischen Internationale zur Hilfsaktion für die Hungernden in Sowjet-Russland; Moscow, 26.9.1921, RGASPI 495/18/44, 161–162; Rundschreiben: An alle Bezirkskomitees und Bezirksleitungen der KP[D], signed by Paul Scholze, Reichskomitee der Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjetrussland, Berlin, 13.12.1921, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 40; 'Werbt für die Patenschaften des Liebknecht-Luxemburg-Kinderheims in Tscheljabinsk', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 6, Ende März (1922); 'Deutschland: Tätigkeitsbericht des deutschen Komitees der "Arbeiterhilfe"', *Bulletin* 42 (12.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 273a; 'Liebknecht-Luxemburg-Heim', *Rundschreiben* 12, Berlin, 27.10.1921, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 27.
97. "Protokoll der Sitzung am 5. Dezember" [1921], RGASPI 538/1/1, 4–6, 11–14. On Edwin Hoernle see further in Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 385–386.
98. 'Das Liebknecht-Luxemburg-Kinderheim in Tscheljabinsk', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 6, Ende März (1922).
99. "Bericht über das Kinderheim bei Tscheljabinsk," confidential report signed by Zetkin to the "Auslandskomitee der IAH", 12.10.1922, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4005/117, 135–145.
100. For a published pictorial account of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* orphanages in Soviet Russia and Europe 1921–1927, see: *Kinderhilfe und Kinderheime der Internationalen Arbeiter-Hilfe*, (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1928).
101. On the organisation of the Comintern's famine relief campaign [late July 1921], RGASPI 495/60/1, 10–11.
102. Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjet-Russland (Reichskomitee) to the Prussian MdI, 8.10.1921, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4132, 68; The Berlin Police President to Herrn Staatskommissar für die Regelung der Kriegswohlfahrtspflege in Preußen, 12.11.1921, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4132, 85.
103. The Regierungs-Präsident in Köln to the Herrn Staatskommissar für die Regelung der Kriegswohlfahrtspflege, 18.10.1921, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4132, 70–70a.
104. Protokoll der Sitzung der Executive der Kommunistischen Internationale 14.9.1921, RGASPI 495/1/42, 21.
105. Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 182–183, 199.
106. Zirkularbrief and die Zentralkomitees aller Sektionen der Kommunistischen Internationale zur Hilfsaktion für die Hungernden in Sowjet-Russland; Moscow, 26.9.1921, RGASPI 495/18/44, 154–156.

107. RGASPI 495/18/44, 154–156.
108. RGASPI 538/1/1, 23–24.
109. Appeal signed by the ECCI, 31.7.1921, RGASPI 495/18/42, 18.
110. This poster has been called the “peak of Soviet agitational psychological poster”. See further Dmitri Stakhievich Moor (1883–1946) and ‘Help’ in Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 41–50, 135.
111. Zirkularbrief, RGASPI 495/18/44, 154.
112. Zirkularschreiben an alle Kommunistischen Parteien, Organisationen und Arbeiterhilfkomitees, by the Executive of the Comintern, 28.11.1921, RGASPI 495/18/44, 195.
113. Erweiterte Exekutive-Sitzung. III Internationale, 14. Sitzung, 1.3.1922 (Abendsitzung), RGASPI 495/159/35, 6; Letter from Scholze and Münzenberg, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4132, 137–138a.
114. Report by Münzenberg presented at the Comintern’s Fourth World Congress in Moscow, 21.11.1922, RGASPI 491/1/151, 37–38.
115. See a detailed account in Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*, 39–40.
116. Erweiterte Exekutive-Sitzung, 14. Sitzung, 1.3.1922, RGASPI 495/159/35, 5–6.
117. Münzenberg to Radek, 12.1.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 23.

### 3 Reimagining International Solidarity, 1922–1923

1. L. Kamenew, ‘Wechselnde Formen der internationalen Arbeiter-Solidarität’, *Wirtschaftshilfe für Sowjetrußland. Beilage zu Nr. 42 des Bulletin* (5.7.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 68.
2. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Third ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 111–115.
3. Zetkin’s speech is erroneously titled “Auftreten Clara Zetkins auf dem Weltkongress der IAH am 5.12.1921 in Berlin”, SAPMO–BArch, NY 4005/39, 118–121. Zetkin’s speech was held during a closed communist meeting held the following day. The entire minutes are preserved in RGASPI 538/1/1.
4. Münzenberg to Lenin, 22.12.1921, RGASPI 5/3/202, 1.
5. Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed. European International History 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 153–155.
6. Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, vol. 3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971 [1953]), 351–356.
7. Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, 163, 6–73; Andrew J. Williams, *Trading with the Bolsheviks. The Politics of East-West Trade, 1920–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).
8. ‘Die nächst-dringenden Aufgabe: Motorpflüge’, *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 4 (20.1.1922). The *Arbeiterhilfe* even published a transcript of Nansen’s speech held on 12.11.1921 in Geneva.
9. ‘Schafft Last-Autos!!’, *Bulletin* 36 (15.1.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 1–2.
10. Münzenberg, ‘Motorpflüge und Lastautos für Sowjetrußland’, *Bulletin* 37 (15.2.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 12.
11. See the slogans in *Bulletin* 37 (15.2.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 21.
12. Münzenberg, ‘Hungerhilfe – Wirtschaftshilfe’, *Bulletin* 35 (15.1.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 7–8.



13. Internationale Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjet-Russland, *Das neue Russland. 30 Bilder nach original-Photographien aus Sowjet-Russland. Mit Einleitung von Willi Münzenberg* (Berlin: Verlag der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1922).
14. Sekretariat EKKI to Münzenberg, 24.1.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 30.
15. Erweiterte Exekutive-Sitzung, 14. Sitzung, 1.3.1922 (Abendsitzung), RGASPI 495/159/35, RGASPI 495/159/35, 15–18.
16. Circular from [Paul] Scholze, on behalf of the German Reichskomitee to all "Bezirkskomitees der Arbeiterhilfe", 5.4.1922, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 48–49. Citation, 49.
17. SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 49.
18. 'Tätigkeitsbericht: Deutschland: Tätigkeitsbericht des deutschen Komitees der "Arbeiterhilfe"', *Bulletin* 42 (12.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 273a.
19. Münzenberg, 'Motorpflüge und Lastautos für Sowjetrußland', *Bulletin* 37 (15.2.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 12.
20. '3. Weltkonferenz der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe zu Berlin, 5. Juli 1922', *Bulletin* 41 (24.6.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 43ob.
21. 'An die Werk tätigen aller Länder!', *Bulletin* 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 279a.
22. 'Wie deutsche Arbeiter eine Maschine für Rußland bauten', *Bulletin* 42 (12.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 276.
23. 'An alle Arbeiterhilfskomitees und angeschlossene Organisationen', *Bulletin* 40 (19.5.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 33; Münzenberg, 'Die dritte internationale Konferenz der Arbeiterhilfskomitees', *Bulletin* 42 (5.7.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 47–48; 'III. Weltkonferenz der internationalen Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjetrußland, Berlin, den 5.–11. Juli 1922', *Bulletin* 42 (12.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 268.
24. '3. Weltkonferenz der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe zu Berlin, 5. Juli 1922', *Bulletin* 41 (24.6.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 43ob.
25. 'Produktive Wirtschaftshilfe', *Sowjet-Russland im Bild* 9 (1922).
26. 'An die Werk tätigen aller Länder!', *Bulletin* 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 279–279a.
27. Münzenberg, 'Die dritte internationale Konferenz der Arbeiterhilfskomitees', *Bulletin* 42 (5.7.1922), RGASPI 538/2/12, 47–48.
28. 'Aufruf des Exekutivbureaus der IAH', *Bulletin* 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 280.
29. Münzenberg to "Lieber Genosse", 15.7.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 39ob.
30. Peter Schmalfluss, "Die Internationale Arbeiteranleihe für Sowjetrußland 1921–1923," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 29: 5 (1987), 608–613.
31. Protokoll der Sitzung der Executive der Kommunistischen Internationale, 14.9.1921, RGASPI 495/1/42, 21.
32. 'Internationale Arbeiteranleihe', *Bulletin* 43 (21.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 283a–284.
33. 'Garantiebeschluß der russischen Sowjetregierung für die 1. internationale Arbeiteranleihe', *Rote Aufbau* 2 (15.10.1922), 18. Copy of Obligation Nr. 1870 preserved in SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 300. The German authorities concluded that to sell such a loan did not need approval of the German authorities. See: R.Ko. In 86, 1.3.1923, "Internationale Arbeiteranleihe für Sowjetrußland", BArch, R 1507/67241/541/1, 34.

34. 'Das Geld der Arbeiter im Dienste der Arbeiterklasse', *Sichel und Hammer* 3, [December] 1922.
35. "Erste Internationale Arbeiter-Anleihe", SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 299.
36. Münzenberg, 'Der Rote Aufbau', *Rote Aufbau* 1 (15.9.1922), 6; 'Gründung der Industrie- und Handels-Aktiengesellschaft Internationale Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjetrußland', *Rote Aufbau* 2 (15.10.1922), 39–40.
37. Documents illustrate the very sceptical stance towards the *Arbeiterhilfe* that reigned within police and governmental circles. RÜöO to the Zentralpolizeistelle, Karlsruhe, 30.5.1922, BArch, R 1507/1096a, 213. See also 'Hohn und Spott – die Rußlandhilfe der Sozialdemokratie', *Rote Aufbau* 2 (15.10.1922), 35–36.
38. Scholze (Reichskomitee) to the Zentrale der KPD, Pieck, 13.2.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 141.
39. See further "Bericht über die Gesamteinnahmen der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe (vom 15. Juni 1922 bis 31. April 1923)", BArch, R 1507/1096b, 95–107. The USA is not included in these numbers. In another report it was claimed that by January 1923 bonds had already been sold for 30,000 US Dollars, expecting further sales of 50–60,000 dollars. IAH to das Präsidium der Kommunistischen Internationale, 31.1.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 138a–139.
40. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, 28.2.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 149–151.
41. Unsigned letter to the Politsekretariat des EKKI, Moscow, 10.2.1929, RGASPI 495/18/740, 5–6.
42. Gracchus, 'Die Wirtschaftshilfe als nationalökonomische Kategorie', *Rote Aufbau* 1 (15.9.1922), 13–17. The statutes of the *Aufbau* state that "Der Zweck der Gesellschaft ist ausschließlich gemeinnützig: sie dient nur der Hebung des russischen Wirtschaftslebens, insbesondere der Lage der Arbeiter in Sowjet-Russland," RGASPI 538/2/8, 94–7ob; citation on p. 95.
43. Münzenberg, 'Wirtschaftshilfe für Sowjetrußland', *Sowjet-Rußland im Bild* 10 (1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 290–291.
44. 'Das 1. Arbeitsjahr der IAH in Rußland', *Rote Aufbau* 1 (15.9.1922), 21–28. The report was dated 18.8.1922. See also the reports: 'Die drei Güter der IAH bei Kasan' and 'Ein Brief aus der Traktoren-Garage beim Ural-Büro der IAH' published in *Rote Aufbau* 1 (15.9.1922).
45. See on the Comintern's Fourth World Congress in: Degras, *The Communist International 1919–1943. Documents*, 374–436.
46. See Münzenberg's comments on the preparation of the resolution in the minutes of "IV. Weltkongress der K.I., 31. Sitzung", RGASPI 491/1/215, 4. The resolution presented by Münzenberg on 5.12.1922 is preserved in RGASPI 491/1/215, 5–9.
47. Lenin to Münzenberg, Moscow, 2.12.1922. Published as 'Ein Brief Lenins an den Gen. Münzenberg zur Frage der Wirtschaftshilfe', *Rote Aufbau* 4/5 (15.1.1923), 3–4. A photocopy of Lenin's original letter was published in Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931*, 192/193.
48. Smidowitsch to Piatakoff, 22.3.1922, RGASPI 495/205/8801, 8–9.
49. Unsigned letter [from Eberlein] to Münzenberg, 19.1.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 3.

50. Münzenberg to Eberlein at the Parteizentrale der KPD, Berlin, 15.1.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 135.
51. See complete revision of the Russian *Arbeiterhilfe* in: "Revisionsbericht", signed by E. Kruse on 3.6.1923, RGASPI 538/2/18, 79–90.
52. Resolution der Revisionskommission vom Allrussischen zentralen Gewerkschaftsrat und vom Zentrosojus in Sachen der Revision der IAH, 24.11.1923, RGASPI 538/2/18, 131. See further on the various crimes and misconducts narrated in detail by Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 135–143.
53. Auszüge aus den Protokollen d. Sitzungen d. Präsidiums des EKKI, Nr. 31, 10.11.1923, "Fragen über die Umstellung der Arbeit der IAH", RGASPI 495/2/20, 4.
54. IAH's Executive to the Sekretariat der Komintern, 21.6.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 82.
55. Münzenberg to Exekutive der Komintern 21.6.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 80.
56. Münzenberg[?] to Krestinski, 23.6.1923, GARF 1065/3/63, 28–30.
57. Micheal David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment. Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31–40.
58. Note that Olga Kamenewa's role in the *Arbeiterhilfe* is not touched upon in David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 38–39.
59. Münzenberg, 'Die Propaganda für die Hungerhilfe durch das Bild', *Inprekorr* 10 (1922), 84–85.
60. Münzenberg, 'Die Propaganda für die Hungerhilfe durch das Bild'.
61. See e.g. Riccardo Bavaj, "'Revolutionierung der Augen'. Politische Massenmobilisierung in der Weimarer Republik und der Münzenberg-Konzern," in *Politische Kultur und Medienwirklichkeiten in den 1920er Jahren*, ed. Ute Daniel, et al. (München: R. Ouldenbourg Verlag, 2010), 81–100.
62. Münzenberg to Sekretariat der Komintern, 2.1.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 14–15; Münzenberg to Sekretariat der Komintern, 12.1.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 18.
63. RGASPI 538/2/9, 18. The ECCI Sekretariat had enclosed 80 photographs with a letter from Lenin to Münzenberg in mid-November 1921 which had apparently been lost in the mail. See: Sekretariat EKKI to Münzenberg, 24.1.1922, RGASPI 538/2/9, 30.
64. Münzenberg to "Lieber Genosse", Moskau, 4.2.1922, GARF 130/5/1096, 64. This letter is preserved with other letters from Münzenberg to Lenin.
65. 'Deutschland: Tätigkeitsbericht des deutschen Komitees der "Arbeiterhilfe"', *Bulletin* 42 (12.7.1922), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 273a; Münzenberg to Präsidium der Komintern, 31.1.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 7; Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 26.2.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 16.
66. Winokurov (Volkskommissar für soziale Fürsorge), 'Die Hungerhilfe und die russische Geistlichkeit', *Inprekorr* 16/17 (1922), 136; 'Die Hungerhilfe in Rußland', *Inprekorr* 18 (1922), 143.
67. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 97–98.
68. Kurt Bayertz, "Begriff und Problem der Solidarität," in *Solidarität. Begriff und Problem*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 44–45.
69. Münzenberg to Lenin, 22.12.1921, RGASPI 5/3/202, 1; See the exhibition catalogue *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung, Berlin 1922* (Berlin: Internationale

- Arbeiterhilfe, 1922) preserved in GARF 130/5/1096, 234 f. See also article by G. G. L. Alexander, 'Die Erste Russische Kunstausstellung', *RF* (17.10.1922) in Klaus Kändler, Helga Karolewski, and Ilse Siebert, eds., *Berliner Begegnungen. Ausländische Künstler in Berlin 1918 bis 1933. Aufsätze, Bilder, Dokumente* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1987).
70. Erweiterte Exekutive-Sitzung, 1.3.1922, RGASPI 495/159/35, 10.
71. Helen Adkins, "Erste Russische Kunstausstellung, Berlin 1922," in *Stationen der Moderne. Die bedeutenden Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, ed. Michael Bollé and Eva Züchner (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie. Museum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur, 1989), 185–196; Bernd Finkeldey, "Im Zeichen des Quadrates. Konstruktivisten in Berlin," in *Berlin–Moskau 1900–1950*, ed. Irina Antonowa and Jörn Merkert (München: Prestel, 1995), 160; Christine Hoffmeister and Christian Suckow, *Revolution und Realismus. Revolutionäre Kunst in Deutschland 1917 bis 1933* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1978), 150.
72. 1. Bericht über die Ausstellung "Hungersnot, Hungerhilfe in Sowjetrußland", [20.7.1922], GARF 1065/3/44, 85–87; Münzenberg to das Präsidium der Kommunistischen Internationale, 31.1.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 139a. See also newspaper clippings from the German press on the exhibition published 16–18.7.1922, RGASPI 538/2/8, 32–34.

#### 4 Solidarity for Germany, 1923

1. On solidarity and reciprocity see: Kurt Bayertz, "Begriff und Problem der Solidarität," in *Solidarität. Begriff und Problem*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 43–44.
2. Notes from Kollwitz's diary, end of November 1923, Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher. Herausgegeben von Jutta Bohne-Kollwitz* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1989), 563.
3. Gerald D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder. Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), vii; Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, Second ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 48.
4. Feldman, *The Great Disorder*, 706–707.
5. Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 160–161.
6. Willi Münzenberg, *Ursache, Größe und Bekämpfung der Hungersnot in Deutschland. Rede gehalten auf dem Weltkongreß der IAH in Berlin am 9. Dezember 1923* (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1923), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 2–3, 7–8. See also: Arthur Holitscher, 'Das Grab vor der Scheune' in Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, ed. *Hunger in Deutschland. Mit Beiträgen von Max Barthel, Mathilde Wurm, Heinrich Mann, Dr. Alfons Paquet, Arthur Holitscher, Willi Münzenberg, G. G. L. Alexander* (Berlin, 1923), 15.
7. Feldman, *The Great Disorder*, 706–707.
8. Münzenberg, *Ursache, Größe und Bekämpfung der Hungersnot in Deutschland*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 9–10.

9. Theo Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, New Studies in Economic and Social History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56.
10. Feldman, *The Great Disorder*, 767–768.
11. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 46–48; Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft*, Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte (München: Oldenburg, 2008), 13–14.
12. Fridrich I. Firsov, “Ein Oktober, der nicht Stattfand. Die revolutionären Plände der RKP(B) und der Komintern,” in *Deutscher Oktober 1923. Ein Revolutionsplan und sein Scheitern*, eds. Bernhard H. Bayerlein, et al. (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2003), 38–50.
13. The RdI to the Foreign Ministry, Berlin, 4.7.1923. BArch, R 1501/113329, 329–329a. A picture of the Russian delegation is reproduced in *Sichel und Hammer* 8, 1.6.1923.
14. Report on “Agitation aus Anlass der Übersendung des russischen Getreidetransports” by the RÜöO; Berlin, 7.5.1923, BArch, R 1501/113329, 164–165.
15. See ‘Die Hilfsaktion der russischen Arbeiter für ihre Arbeiterbrüder im Ruhrgebiet’, *Inprekorr* 34 (February 1923), 247; Richard Oehring, ‘Ruhrhilfe und Arbeiterhilfe’, *Inprekorr* 46 (March 1923), 353; and ‘Die finanzielle Hilfe der russischen Arbeiter für ihre Arbeitsbrüder im Ruhrgebiet’, *Inprekorr* 46 (March 1923), 354.
16. Forwarded letter from the authorities in Hansa to the Preussischen Staatskommissar für öffentliche Ordnung in Berlin. Forwarded by the RÜöO to the RdI, Berlin, 2.5.1923. BArch, R 1501/113329, 163–163a. The following names are mentioned Alexander Bulgakow, Alexej Trofimow, Wassily Gusskow and Boris Koselew. See also BArch, R 1501/113329, 329.
17. The RÜöO to all Nachrichtenstellen, Berlin, 7.5.1923, BArch, R 1501/113329, 164–165.
18. The RdI to the Foreign Ministry, Berlin, 4.7.1923. BArch, R 1501/113329, 329–329a.
19. Report from the Reichskanzlei, Zentralstelle Rhein-Ruhr to the Foreign Ministry, 16.5.1923, BArch, R 1501/113329, 170–170a.
20. Bericht über die am Mittwoch den 6.6.1923 in der Reichskanzlei abgehaltene Besprechung über Massnahmen zur Verhinderung der kommunistischen Propaganda bei Verteilung russischer Getreidespenden, BArch, R 1501/113329, 182.
21. Bericht über die am Mittwoch den 6.6.1923 in der Reichskanzlei abgehaltene Besprechung, BArch, R 1501/113329, 182–183.
22. The RÜöO to the RdI, Berlin, 9.8.1923. BArch, R 1501/113329, 323–323a
23. BArch, R 1501/113329, 324–325.
24. [40 Pud=16.38 kg]. ‘Dokument 18. Beschluss des ZK der RKP(B) über die Organisation von Getreidelieferung nach Deutschland’, Bernhard H. Bayerlein et al., eds., *Deutscher Oktober 1923. Ein Revolutionsplan und sein Scheitern* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2003), 140–141. Transcript from the Russian Presidential Archive. The decision on the amount of grain needed in Germany was perhaps based on the calculations by Eugen Varga presented on 11.9.1923 in his report “Zur Brotversorgungsfrage”, RGASPI 495/18/182, 5–7.

25. 'Die sächsischen Kapitalisten als Volksausplünderer', *Volkswacht* 223, 19.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 5. The article reports on the discussions held in the Saxon government on 17.10.1923.
26. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 20.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 130a.
27. "Verwendung des Gen. Münzenberg", Protokoll der Sitzung der engeren Leitung, 16.10.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/2/15, 267.
28. [1 Zentner = 50 kg]. Münzenberg [unsigned] to the CC of the KPD; Dresden, 20.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 11–12; Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 20.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 130a.
29. See the composition of the Saxon government in Bayerlein et al., *Deutscher Oktober 1923*, 147.
30. Münzenberg [unsigned] to the Zentrale of the KPD; Dresden, 20.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 11–12; '500 000 (eine halbe Million) Brote wurden in Sachsen durch die IAH verteilt', *Hunger in Deutschland 2*, 29.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 39. For more details on these grain transports see Protokoll der Sitzung, 27.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/17, 83–84.
31. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, Berlin, 24.10.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 188–188a.
32. Münzenberg [unsigned] to the Zentrale of the KPD; Dresden, 20.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 11–12.
33. Leaflet 'So die internationale Solidarität der Bourgeoise! So die internationale Solidarität des Proletariats' BArch, R 1507/1096b, 1.
34. Leaflet 'Arbeiter, der Hunger vereitelt Deinen Kampf!', [late 1923], BArch, R 1507/1096b, 2.
35. Gruppe Hasse, Hauptquartier Weimar, to the Reichswehrministerium, 10.11.1923, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 4.
36. The Militärbefehlshaber Thüringen, H.Qu. Weimar to the Reichswehrministerium, 20.11.1923, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 6.
37. See Firsov, "Ein Oktober, der nicht Stattfand," 38–55. See also the chronology of events in Bayerlein et al., *Deutscher Oktober 1923*, 144–149, 234–237.
38. Minutes of the meeting of the KPD leadership meeting, 24.10.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/2/15, 273–275.
39. Firsov, "Ein Oktober, der nicht Stattfand," 38–55.
40. Bayerlein et al., *Deutscher Oktober 1923*, 310. On Seeckt, see Peter D. Stachura, *Political Leaders in Weimar Germany. A Biographical Study* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 162–163.
41. By 28.10.1923 the *Arbeiterhilfe* had already provided Saxony with 2,000 tonnes of grain. See: Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, Berlin, 28.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 19.
42. This figure is disputed as Münzenberg had reported earlier that 800 tonnes of grain had already been transported. See: Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, Berlin, 28.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 19. According to a detailed report from the *Arbeiterhilfe* to the Berlin police, a total of 560 tonnes of grain were distributed to 13 cities in Thuringia, and a further 35 tonnes of flour were distributed to Apolda in Thuringia. See further in: Report from the *Arbeiterhilfe* to the Polizeipräsidium, Berlin, 24.11.1923, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4355, 10a.
43. Another report stated that the *Arbeiterhilfe* was storing 3,700 tonnes of grain in Dresden. See: "Joseph" to Münzenberg, Berlin, 7.11.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 12.

44. Dokument 90. Willi Münzenberg: Bericht an das Zentralkomitee der RKP(B) über die Getreideverteilung in Deutschland, 29. Dezember [1923], in Bayerlein et al., *Deutscher Oktober 1923*, 411–412.
45. Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 1–2.
46. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 14.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 130.
47. 'Hilfsaktion der "Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe" für die deutschen Hungernden', *Volkswacht* 223, 19.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 4.
48. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, Berlin, 24.10.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 188–188a.
49. Auszüge aus den Protokollen d. Sitzungen d. Präsidiums des EKKI: Nr. 97 vom 26.10.1923, RGASPI 495/2/20, 7.
50. Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, Berlin, 28.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 19.
51. RGASPI 495/60/12, 19; and Paul Thompson to Zinoviev, Berlin, 25.10.1923, RGASPI 495/60/12, 27.
52. Auszüge aus den Protokollen d. Sitzungen d. Präsidiums des EKKI: Nr. 31., 10.11.1923, RGASPI 495/2/20, 4; Auszüge aus den Protokollen d. Sitzungen d. Präsidiums des EKKI: Nr. 36., 19.2.1924, RGASPI 495/2/20, 4.
53. 'An die Werktätigen der ganzen Welt!', *Hunger in Deutschland* 1, 26.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 37.
54. RGASPI 538/2/21, 37.
55. Münzenberg, 'Das internationale Proletariat eilt der deutschen Arbeiterklasse zur Hilfe', *Hunger in Deutschland* 1, 26.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 37ob.
56. Leo Klauber, 'Hunger und Hungerfolgen in Deutschland', *Hunger in Deutschland* 1, 26.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 37ob–38.
57. 'Hungernden Berliner Arbeiterkinder werden beim Suchen von Kartoffeln niedergeschossen', *Hunger in Deutschland* 2, 29.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 39ob. The source of the information is indicated as being the *Berliner Zeitung* 290, 25.10.1923. See also 'Die täglichen Hungerkrawalle in Deutschland', *Hunger in Deutschland* 1, 26.10.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 38ob.
58. Poster 'An die werktätige Bevölkerung Deutschlands!'. Signed by Das Zentralkomitee der Internationale Arbeiterhilfe [undated, October 1923], BArch, R 1507/1096b, 3.
59. Poster 'An die werktätige Bevölkerung Deutschlands!'. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 3.
60. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 3.
61. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 3.
62. 'Der Vorsitzende der Kommunistischen Internationale für die deutsche Arbeiterhilfsaktion' *Hunger in Deutschland* 5, 13.11.1923. Zinoviev's appeal was dated to 3.11.1923, RGASPI 538/2/21, 45.
63. 'Helft!', *Hunger in Deutschland* 4, Berlin, 9.11.1923. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 24.
64. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 24; 'Einladung zu einem internationalen Kongreß aller Hilfsorganisationen u. Komitees mit dem Thema: Hunger in Deutschland', *Hunger in Deutschland* 4, Berlin, 9.11.1923. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 24a.
65. Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, *Hunger in Deutschland*.
66. Invitation card to the *Internationalen Konferenz "Hunger in Deutschland"* assigned to the Reichsinnenminister, Dr. Jarres, sent from the Exekutivkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, Berlin, 1.12.1923, BArch, R 1501/113208, 26.
67. Bericht über den Kongress der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe "Hunger in Deutschland", RGASPI 538/2/19, 202. See the entire minutes of the

- congress preserved in RGASPI 538/1/4, 23–143. An independent report by the “Deutsche Zentralausschuß für die Auslandshilfe” on the congress is preserved in BArch, R 3901/9119, 27–28.
68. Paul Thompson, the Exekutivbüro der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, to the RdI Berlin, 1.12.1923. BArch, R 1501/113208, 13.
  69. Einladung from the Exekutivkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, Willi Münzenberg, to “Herrn General v. Seeckt”, Berlin, 1.12.1923, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 27–27a. See also: Eggebrecht to the Reichswehr-Ministerium, Herrn General von Seeckt, Berlin, 5.12.1923, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 28.
  70. Bericht über die Besprechung am 3. Dezember 1923 im Reichsarbeitsministerium über die internationale Arbeiterhilfe, Berlin, 5.12.1923, BArch, R 1501/113208, 11–11a.
  71. Bericht über den Kongress der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe “Hunger in Deutschland”, RGASPI 538/2/19, 202.
  72. RGASPI 538/2/19, 203.
  73. RGASPI 538/2/19, 202.
  74. Münzenberg, *Ursache, Größe und Bekämpfung der Hungersnot in Deutschland*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 2–3, 11–12.
  75. SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 12.
  76. Bericht über den Kongress der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe “Hunger in Deutschland”, RGASPI 538/2/19, 203.
  77. RGASPI 538/2/19, 206. On Fimmen in 1923 see Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, “Edo Fimmen. Iron Fist and Silken Glove. A Biographical Sketch,” in *The International Transportworkers Federation 1914–1945. The Edo Fimmen Era* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1997), 58–59.
  78. Edo Fimmen, *Die Gewerkschaften und die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Rede gehalten auf dem Weltkongreß der IAH in Berlin am 9. Dezember 1923* (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1923), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 17–18.
  79. Fimmen, *Die Gewerkschaften und die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 18.
  80. Fimmen, *Die Gewerkschaften und die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/2, 19–20.
  81. Münzenberg stated: “Es handelt sich bei augenblicklichen Aktion für die Deutschlandhilfe um eine absolut und ausgesprochen politische Aktion.” Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 1.
  82. Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 2–5
  83. The RÜöO to the RdI, Berlin, 27.11.1923, BArch, R 1501/113328, 7–8a.
  84. Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 3–4.
  85. Münzenberg to the CC of the KPD, Berlin, 15.11.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 195–195a.
  86. Zetkin to Zinoviev, Moscow, 25.11.1923, RGASPI 324/1/555, 6–6ob. Transcript published in Bayerlein et al., *Deutscher Oktober 1923*, 387–389.
  87. Report by the Polizeipräsident in Berlin to the Wehrkommando III (3. Division), Berlin, 29.12.1923, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 50–51.
  88. Police report by the Abteilung IA., Aussendienst, Berlin, 27.12.1923. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 41–48a.
  89. The Reichswehrministerium (Heer), Truppenamt, to the Wehrkreiskommando III, Berlin, 2.1.1924, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 54.



90. The Polizeipräsident, Abteilung IA to the Wehrkommando III (3. Division), Berlin, 14.1.1924, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 88.
91. Bericht über die Sitzung im RdI, 24.1.1924, Tagesordnung: Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, BArch, R 1501/113208, 56.
92. On 23.11.1923, all "Organisationen und Einrichtungen" of the KPD were banned. Hans Meier-Welcker, *Seeckt* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1967), 416.
93. Bericht über die Sitzung im RdI, 24.1.1924, Tagesordnung: Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, BArch, R 1501/113208, 56–57a.
94. BArch, R 1501/113208, 57–57a.
95. Seeckt to the RdI, Berlin, 7.3.1924, BArch, R 1501/113208, 64.

## 5 Creating a Permanent International Solidarity Organisation

1. Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 4–5.
2. According to 'Entlarvte kommunistische Propaganda. Zuerst Politik, dann Menschlichkeit' [unknown newspaper], 27.12.1923, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 191, Nr. 4355, 41.
3. This article is unsigned, but the author was identified by Münzenberg as being "Friesland alias Reuter". See: Willi [Münzenberg] to unknown recipient, Berlin, 11.2.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 33. On Reuter (Friesland) see Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, 2. überarbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008), 727–728.
4. 'Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Was sie öffentlich sagt und was sie heimlich tut', *Vorwärts* 9.2.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 32.
5. Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 210.
6. SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 32.
7. 'Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Münzenberg kann nicht leugnen', *Vorwärts* 10.2.1924, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 521a; German Committee of the *Arbeiterhilfe* to all the local committees of the IAH, Berlin, 11.2.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/7, 6.
8. Münzenberg, 'Erklärung. Der Vorwärts und die IAH'. Signed by the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/7, 157–159.
9. 'Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe', *Vorwärts* 10.2.1924, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 521a.
10. 'Internationale Arbeiterhilfe', transcript from unknown newspaper, 13.2.1924, BArch, 1507/1096b, 522.
11. 'Ein Generalangriff gegen die IAH', *Not und Brot* 20, 10.4.1924.
12. Steinar Stjerno, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99–100.
13. The ADGB was created in 1919 from German craft and industrial unions of manual workers. During the years 1924–1929 its political activity was restricted to supporting the SPD. In 1930 it had about 4.7 million members. Gerard Braunthal, *Socialist Labor and Politics in Weimar Germany. The General*

- Federation of German Trade Unions* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1978), 9–10, 32. See also Bernhard Vogel, Dieter Nohlen, and Rainer-Olaf Schultze, *Wahlen in Deutschland. Theorie–Geschichte–Dokumente, 1848–1970* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 296–297.
14. Report from the RÜöO to the Nachrichtenstellen, Berlin, 1.5.1924, BArch, R 1501/113208, 67.
  15. *Die dritte Säule der kommunistischen Politik "Internationale Arbeiterhilfe". Dargestellt nach authentischem Material* (Berlin: Verlagsgesellschaft des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 1924), 3–6.
  16. At least one of the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s leaflets against the ADGB had had a print run of 500,000 copies. Münzenberg [to the KPD], Berlin, 25.4.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 42. The *Arbeiterhilfe* published at least the following booklets: *Die Säule der proletarischen Selbsthilfe. Eine Antwort auf die Broschüre des ADGB* (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1924); *Die IAH. Die Säule der proletarischen Selbsthilfe* (Berlin: Verlag für Gewerkschaftsliteratur, 1924).
  17. *Die IAH. Die Säule der proletarischen Selbsthilfe*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 102–110.
  18. 'Ein Dolchstoß in den Rücken der streikenden Arbeiter!' Leaflet signed by the Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, [May/June 1924], SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 35–35a.
  19. 'Ein Dolchstoß in den Rücken der streikenden Arbeiter!', SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 35–35a.
  20. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, Berlin, 8.5.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 44.
  21. Peter D. Stachura, *Political Leaders in Weimar Germany. A Biographical Study* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 166–167.
  22. 'Ein neuer Anschlag der SPD' und ADGB' Führer gegen die IAH', Pressedienst der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe Berlin 11, 16.6.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 297; 'Die "Arbeitervvertreter" auf dem SPD–Parteitag verbieten die Mitgliedschaft bei der IAH', *Not und Brot* 27, 1.7.1924.
  23. *Vorwärts'* article was reproduced by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 'Der Vorwärts wärmt den Parteibeschluss gegen die kommunistische "IAH" auf', *Pressedienst der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe Berlin* 12, 2.7.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 299.
  24. 'Neuer Anschlag gegen die IAH', Signed by the Reichskomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe [June 1924], SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 36–36a.
  25. SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 36a.
  26. 'Ein neuer Anschlag der SPD–Führer auf die IAH!', *Not und Brot* 26, 16.6.1924.
  27. 'Offener Brief an alle in der IAH tätigen SPD Genossen', signed by Meta Kraus-Fessel, 17.6.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 2–3. It was also printed in *Not und Brot* 27, 1.7.1924.
  28. 'Offener Brief an alle in der IAH tätigen SPD Genossen', SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 3–4.
  29. Georg Ledebour had been a member of the SPD since 1890. He was also one of the founders of the USPD. He was an Mdr 1900–1924. Ursula Ratz, *Georg Ledebour, 1850–1947. Weg und Wirken eines sozialistischen Politikers* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1969), 200–222.

30. 'Protest des Genossen Ledebour', published transcript of a letter from Georg Ledebour to the Zentralkomitee der IAH, 22.6.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 5. This letter was also published in *Not und Brot* 27, 1.7.1924.
31. 'Protest des Genossen Ledebour', SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 5.
32. SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 5–6.
33. Theodor Thomas to IAH-Frankfurt, Frankfurt, 2.7.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 108.
34. Max Eck-Troll, Schriftsteller, to IAH-Frankfurt a.M., Alfons Paquet, 23.6.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 104.
35. 'Der Vorwärts wärmt den Parteibeschluss gegen die kommunistische "IAH" auf', *Pressedienst der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe Berlin* 12, 2.7.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 299.
36. A concern expressed by Otto Gäbel (1885–1953) who represented the German *Rote Hilfe* and who was also a member of the KPD's CC. See: Gäbel to Albert Einstein, 3.9.1921, in Diana Kormos Buchwald et al., *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*, vol. 12: The Berlin Years (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 272.
37. The IRH was often also known by its Russian acronym MOPR (Meschdunarodnaja organizacija pomoschtschi borzam rewoljuzii). Kurt Schilde, "'Schafft Rote Hilfe!' Die kommunistische "Wohlfahrtsorganisation" Rote Hilfe Deutschlands," in *Die Rote Hilfe. Die Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen "Wohlfahrtsorganisation" und ihrer sozialen Aktivitäten in Deutschland (1921–1941)*, eds. Sabine Hering and Kurt Schilde (Oplanden: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 38–40; Schilde, "'Es lebe die Internationale Rote Hilfe!,'" 59–60; Nikolaus Brauns, "Proletarische Klassensolidarität. Die Stellung der Roten Hilfe innerhalb der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung," in *Die Rote Hilfe. Die Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen "Wohlfahrtsorganisation" und ihrer sozialen Aktivitäten in Deutschland (1921–1941)* (Oplanden: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 88–89. See also 'IRH und IAH', *Thüringer Volksblatt* 52, 5.5.1924. BArch, R 1507/1096c, 72.
38. 'Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe ist nicht die Rote Hilfe', *Hunger in Deutschland* 12, 20.1.1924. BArch, R 1507/1096b, 441.
39. Report from the RÜÖO to the Polizeidirektion in Bremen, 23.1.1924. BArch, R 1501/113330, 84–85.
40. Protokoll Nr ... der Sitzung des ZK der IRH vom 18.3.1923. This meeting was attended by Lepeschinski, Marchlewski, Fischer, Kramaroff, Mietkewitsch, Tjomkin, Budich, Terracini, Amter, Passon, Pieck and Piatnitzki, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4036/789, 2–9.
41. Sitzung der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 11.12.1923, RGASPI 538/1/4, 18–20.
42. Edward Hallett Carr, *The interregnum 1923–1924* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 350, 72–73.
43. Klaus Kinner, *Der deutsche Kommunismus. Selbstverständnis und Realität*, vol. 1, Die Weimarer Zeit, Geschichte des Kommunismus und Linkssozialismus (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1999), 67–75.
44. Walter Stöcker [Stoecker] (1891–1939) Stöcker was at the time the leader of the "Middle" group within the KPD. See further on Stöcker in Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 905–907.
45. Münzenberg to Stöcker, Berlin, 2.2.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 97.
46. SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 97.

47. SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 97.
48. Underlined in the original, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 97–98.
49. Walter [Stöcker] to Münzenberg, 3.2.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 26–27.
50. On Israel Amter (1881–1954) see further in Branko Lazitch and Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern. New, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 6.
51. Amter described himself to Münzenberg as the “Sekretär der Auslandsabteilung der MOPR”. See: Amter to Münzenberg, 15.2.1924, RGASPI 538/3/27, 7.
52. Münzenberg to Amter, 22.2.1924, RGASPI 538/2/17, 10–11.
53. RGASPI 538/2/17, 11–12.
54. RGASPI 538/2/17, 11–13.
55. Protokoll Nr. 36 der Sitzung des Orgbüros des EKKI, 19.2.1924, RGASPI 495/26/9, 4; Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH (Angenommen in der Sitzung des Sekretariats [of the ECCI], 1.12.1924), RGASPI 495/18/253, 6.
56. Münzenberg to Amter, 5.4.1924, RGASPI 539/2/57, 3.
57. MEB [Mittel Europäische Büro] to the “Vollzugsbüro der RGI” in Moscow, 16.10.1924, RGASPI 534/4/83, 176–177.
58. Beschlussprotokoll der IAH-Kommission, 15.11.1924, RGASPI 495/60/33, 7–8.
59. Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH (Angenommen in der Sitzung des Sekretariats [of the ECCI] vom 1.12.1924), RGASPI 495/18/253, 4.
60. Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH, RGASPI 495/18/253, 4–5.
61. RGASPI 495/18/253, 6.
62. The Zentralkomitee der RHD, IAH and the Reichsvorstand des Bundes der Freunde der IAH to the district and local organisations of the RHD and IAH, 25.12.1924, RGASPI 538/2/24, 57.
63. Münzenberg, Misiano and Platten to the Secretariat of the Comintern, 7.9.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 111–111ob; and attached document on the *Arbeiterhilfe* [no heading], RGASPI 538/2/27, 114–115.
64. Protokoll der Sitzung der Massenkommision, 17.2.1926, RGASPI 495/164/271, 3–4.
65. RGASPI 495/164/271, 4.
66. RGASPI 495/164/271, 4–6. See further on the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s relation to the colonial question and anti-imperialism in chapters seven and ten.
67. Protokoll der Sitzung der Massenkommision, 17.2.1926, RGASPI 495/164/271, 6–8.
68. Protokoll der Sitzung der Massenkommision, 17.2.1926, RGASPI 495/164/271, 33–34.
69. RGASPI 495/164/271, 34–35.
70. RGASPI 495/164/271, 35–36.
71. “Leitsätze für die Arbeit in den sympathisierenden Massenorganisationen für spezielle Zwecke” [1926], RGASPI 495/164/293, 16.
72. RGASPI 495/164/293, 18–19.
73. ‘Die Tagung des Erweiterten EKKI. Sechszehnte bis achtzehnte Sitzung (Ausführlicher Tagesbericht) Sechzehnte Sitzung 8.3.1926. Bericht der Politischen Kommission: Bericht der Kommission für die Arbeit unter den

- Massen. Berichterstatte Genosse Kuusinen'. Transcript from *Inprekorr* 32, 6.4.1926, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 104, 2–3.
74. Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, 51–53.
  75. Entwurf zur Resolution der IAH: Polit-Sekretariat 19.1.1927, RGASPI 495/3/3, 328.
  76. Summary of Münzenberg's speech at the Comintern's Sixth World Congress, R.Ko.In.127, in "Der VI Weltkongress der Kommunistischen Internationale", BArch, R 1507/2041, 18–19.
  77. 'Bund der Freunde der IAH', *Not und Brot* 25, 1.6.1924; and 'Der 3. Weltkongress der IAH', 26.10.1924, *Not und Brot* 36, 15.11.1924, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 105a. See the original statute of the German *Arbeiterhilfe*, approved on 27.7.1924 in "Satzungen des Bundes der Freunde der IAH", SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 123–124a. These statutes were revised both in 1927 and 1929. See: "Satzungen des Bundes der Freunde der 'Internationalen Arbeiter-Hilfe' (nach der II. Reichskonferenz, Ostern 1927)", SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 135–137a; and "Satzungen des Bundes der Freunde der 'Internationalen Arbeiter-Hilfe' (nach der III. Reichskonferenz, Ostern 1929)", BArch, R 8051/38, 287–290a.
  78. "Einige Zahlen über die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe in Deutschland", supplement to a letter from Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, 10.2.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 25.
  79. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 28.4.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 43.
  80. The most comprehensive, albeit limited, analysis of this matter is found in: Hartmann Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien. Kultur- und Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung (1890–1933)* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1980), 108–111.
  81. 'Die IAH wird Massenbewegung', *Not und Brot* 32, 15.9.1924, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 57.
  82. '3 Millionen Mitglieder in der IAH' and '33600 Einzelmitglieder und 1 320 000 Kollektivmitglieder in Deutschland', *Telegramm-Nachrichtendienst der IAH*, Berlin, 10.1.1925, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 300, 300a.
  83. Münzenberg to Kornblum, [11.1925], RGASPI 538/2/27, 176. See also the report by the German authorities on the Halle Congress, 7–8.11.1925, in "Internationale Arbeiterhilfe", BArch, R 1507/2028, 139–140. The report provides the same membership figures as in Münzenberg's letter.
  84. "Vormarsch der Organisation: Mitgliederbewegung", in an extensive report on the *Arbeiterhilfe*'s development between 2.4.1927 to April 1929 entitled "Für Funktionäre", BArch, R 8051/38, 342.
  85. Erich Lange, 'Die Stagnation überwinden', *Rote Aufbau* 4 (April 1930), 232.
  86. Münzenberg, 'Solidaritätstag der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', *Inprekorr* 58 (1930), 1336.
  87. 'Offene Kritik zur Mitgliederwerbung', in *10 Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Bericht: IAH Deutsche Sektion: Vom 3. Reichskongress, Ostern 1929 Dresden zum 4. Reichskongress Oktober 1931 Berlin. Von der Massenbewegung zur Massenorganisation*, BArch, R 8051/39, 288a.
  88. Georg Dünninghaus, 'Die Arbeit der deutschen Sektion der IAH', *Inprekorr* 97, 9.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 90–91.
  89. See "Zahlenmäßige Übersicht über die Entwicklung der kommunistischen Massenorganisationen im Jahre 1931", report by the Polizeipräsident, Abteilung I; Berlin 29.3.1932, BArch, R 1501/20193, 35–38.

90. Auszugweise Abschrift IA 2160/25.4. (Stuttg) aus "Die Organisatorische Entwicklung der Partei im Jahre 1931", [25.4.1932], BArch, R 1501/20686, 267.
91. "Rote Hilfe Deutschlands und IAH (Deutsche Sektion)", report from the Berlin Polizeipräsident to Herrn Minister des Innern, 1.4.1932, BArch, R 1501/20686, 278. These figures are also reproduced in Hermann Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 365.
92. "Stand der Massenorganisationen" [December 1930/January 1931], SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/4/76, 43. See also the corresponding figures published in 'Zeitschriften und Literatur' in *10 Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe. Bericht: IAH Deutsche Sektion*, BArch, R 8051/39, 290a-291a.
93. Traute Hölz, 'Vor der ersten internationalen Frauenkonferenz der IAH', *Inprekorr* 92, 25.9.1931. BArch, R 1501/20197, 55.
94. Minutes: Weltkongress 1. Tag Nachmittag, RGASPI 538/1/8, 62-63.
95. 'Im Sturm zur Massenorganisation', *IAH-Funktionär* Dezember (1931).
96. 'Soll- und Kontrollziffern der Landesbezirke für den Sturmplan bis 31. März 1932', *IAH-Funktionär* Dezember (1931).
97. Dünninghaus, 'Die Arbeit der Deutschen Sektion der IAH', *Inprekorr* 97, 9.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 91.
98. 'Resolution zu den wichtigsten politischen und organisatorischen Aufgaben der IAH, Deutsche Sektion', *IAH-Funktionär* (November 1931).
99. "Eineinhalb Jahre Neuer Deutscher Verlag". Report on the NDV attached to a letter from Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 8.1.1926, SAPMO-BArch, RY 5/I 6/3/357, 2-3.
100. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, Orgbüro, 30.7.1925, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 22-24.
101. The usual cost for producing one issue of *AIZ* was 12,440 marks, while the amount earned per issue was 17,500 marks. "Eineinhalb Jahre Neuer Deutscher Verlag", SAPMO-BArch, RY 5/I 6/3/357, 5-6.
102. Münzenberg to the Polbüro der Zentrale der KPD, 6.4.1926, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 9.
103. A. König, Reklame- und Anzeigevertrieb GmbH, to Karl Haak, 24.9.1926, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 128-129.
104. "Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Willi Münzenberg", [June 1929], SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 165.
105. "Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Willi Münzenberg", [June 1929], SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 169-170; Rolf Hosfeld, *Tucholsky. Ein deutsches Leben*, Second ed. (München: Siedler, 2012), 219.
106. The plan to change the *AIZ* into a weekly journal had been decided during the autumn of 1926. See, Rundschreiben 4, 6.8.1926, to "die Vertriebsstellen der *AIZ*", signed by Münzenberg, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 103-105.
107. Two diagrams sent as an attachment to a letter from Münzenberg to Hugo Eberlein, 19.9.1.1927, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/145, 7; See: "Entwicklung der Auflage der *AIZ* ab. 1.12.1926-28.9.1927", I & II, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/145, 8-9. See also "Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Willi Münzenberg", [June 1929], SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/707/132, 165; "Eineinhalb Jahre Neuer

- Deutscher Verlag" [1926], SAPMO-BArch, RY 5/I 6/3/357, 4; AIZ editions per issue 1927–1929, RGASPI 538/2/44, 286–287.
108. 'Zehn Jahre IAH – Zehn Jahre AIZ', *WaA* 235, 8.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 88; 'Zehn Jahre IAH', *RF* 187, 22.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 113.

## 6 Broadening and Radicalising Solidarity, 1924–1932

1. Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 207–208. During the Cold War, Marxist scholars described the era as the "relative stabilisation of capitalism" and non-Marxist scholars called it the "stabilisation's phase" during the Weimar Republic. See further Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924 bis 1930*, ed. Gerhard A. Ritter, *Geschichte der Arbeiter unter der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1986), 13.
2. In September 1923, the KPD had 294,230 (paid-up) members whereas in April 1924 it only had 121,394 members. Ben Fowkes, *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), 115, 205.
3. Hermann Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 53.
4. Gerald D. Feldman and Irmgard Steinisch, "Die Weimarer Republik zwischen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsstaat. Die Entscheidung gegen den Achtstundentag," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* XVIII(1978), 412–413.
5. Gerald D. Feldman, "Streiks in Deutschland 1914–1933. Probleme und Forschungsaufgaben," in *Streik. Zur Geschichte des Arbeitskampfes in Deutschland während der Industrialisierung*, eds. Klaus Tenfelde and Heinrich Volkmann (München: C. H. Beck, 1981), 273.
6. Michael Schneider, "Zwischen Machtanspruch und Integrationsbereitschaft. Gewerkschaften und Politik 1918–1933," in *Die Weimarer Republik 1918–1933. Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft*, eds. Carl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1987), 187.
7. Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990. From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 110–113.
8. Weitz, *Creating German Communism*, 116–121.
9. Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes. Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
10. Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire. A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 239. McMeekin states that "the "strike aid" label was opportunistically back-dated [by Münzenberg in 1931] to apply to earlier IAH failures [...]." In fact, there was no "back-dating," the initiative began in 1924.
11. 'Ein Dolchstoß in den Rücken der streikenden Arbeiter!', SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 35–35a.
12. SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 35.

13. 'Not und Hunger, weil er den 8 Studentag verteidigte', *Not und Brot* 21/22, 1.5.1924.
14. *8 Stunden. Stellungnahme führenden Künstler zum Achtstundentag*. (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1924). AdK, Sella-Hasse-Teilnachlass, Nr. 29. This booklet includes a poem by Max Barthel and shorter texts by Erwin Piscator, Erich Mühsam, Lu Märten, Berta Lask, and Kurt Hiller; and artwork by Felixmüller, Heinrich Zille, Sella Hasse, Otto Dix, Georg Grosz, Otto Nagel, Käthe Kollwitz, Karl Holtz, Eric Johansson, Willibald Krain and Alfred Birkle. See also 'Aufruf der Künstler für die Verteidiger des Achtstundentages', *Not und Brot* 26, 16.6.1924.
15. The 6. Division (Wehrkommando VI) to the Reichswehrministerium, Heeresleitung T 1 III, Münster, 18.1.1924, BArch, R 1507/1096b, 87; The RÜöO to the RdI, Berlin, 28.6.1924. BArch, R 1501/113208, 100.
16. See e.g. The Deutscher Metallarbeiterverband in Hanau to Joseph Lang, IAH-Frankfurt Committee, Hanau 27.12.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 19; Bornstein, IAH, Deutsches Komitee, to Joseph Lang, Berlin, 31.12.1923, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 23; Bornstein, IAH, Deutsches Komitee, to Josef Lang, IAH Frankfurt, Berlin, 30.1.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 38. Karl Rehbein, IAH Ortskomitee Hanau, to Josef Lang, IAH Bezirksausschuss Frankfurt, 6.2.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 50.
17. Unpublished report on the congress entitled "Der Reichskongress der IAH am 16. März 1924", SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/3, 1-9.
18. Police report on political organisations in Germany, R.Ko.Nr.In. 103, 16.4.1924, BArch, R 1507/2023, 30-31. See also 'Die IAH stellt ihre Hilfe um', *Not und Brot* 20, 10.4.1924.
19. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, Berlin, 8.5.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 43-44.
20. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, Berlin, 13.5.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 47.
21. RGASPI 534/4/83, 176-177.
22. *Wie die IAH die Gewerkschaften unterstützt und wie die Gewerkschaften der IAH helfen können* (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1924), SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 111-126a.
23. Bornstein IAH Deutsches Komitee, to Josef Lang, Südwest-deutschen Bezirksausschuss der IAH, 28.2.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 61-61a.
24. IAH Deutsches Komitee (Kasse), to Josef Lang, Südwestdeutschen Bezirksausschuss der IAH, 14.3.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 71.
25. Original fundraising lists from 1923-1924 are preserved in SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/10, 122-134.
26. The RdI to all Landesregierungen. Copy sent to the RÜöO, Berlin, 13.10.1924, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 90-90a.
27. Münzenberg to the Zentrale der KPD, Berlin, 8.5.1924, SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/I 2/3/225, 43.
28. Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed. European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2007), 240-250, 431.
29. "Aufruf! Für eine neue internationale Hilfsaktion! Für die deutschen Arbeiter! Für die Unterstützung des wirtschaftlichen Weiterausbaus im russischen Notgebiet!", *Not und Brot* 31, 1.9.1924, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 14.
30. 'Die ersten Folgen des Dawes-Gutachtens für deutsche Arbeiter', *Not und Brot* 32 (15.9.1924), 2-3. BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 52a-53.



31. Münzenberg, 'Die IV. große Aktion der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', *Not und Brot* 32 (15.9.1924), 2–3, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 54a–55.
32. 'Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe', *Not und Brot* (1924). BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 75a.
33. 'Zum III. Kongress der IAH', *Not und Brot* 35, 1.11.1924. BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 99a. Note that the congress was later renamed the Fourth.
34. 'Die Aktionswoche der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe in Deutschland', *Not und Brot* 35, 1.11.1924, BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 102–102a.
35. BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 107.
36. 'Streik' (1924), *Not und Brot* 25, 1.6.1924.
37. 'IAH. Geschlossen im Kampf gegen Unternehmerwillkür' [1929], SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15.
38. *Mitteilungsblatt für den Funktionäre des Bundes der Freunde der IAH* 1, January 1925, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 6–8.
39. J. K.: Fünf Jahre Ordnung! Eure Kinder Verhungern!, *Sichel und Hammer* 2, 30.11.1923. On Kollwitz see Renate Hinz, ed. *Käthe Kollwitz. Druckgrafik, Plakate, Zeichnungen* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1983).
40. Otto Rühle, 'Kinder-Prostitution', *Mahnruf* 1 (1930).
41. Protokoll der Sitzung der Landesausschüsse, 17.3.1924, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/5, 3.
42. [Leaflet] "Sollen deine Kinder verhungern?? Hunderttausende von deutschen Arbeiterkindern hungern!", Reichskomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe [1924], SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/86, 37.
43. 'Die IAH hilft den Kindern der Gemaßregelten und Erwerbslosen', *Not und Brot* 38 (December 1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 198.
44. 'Helft Kindern in Not!', [cover] *Mahnruf* 1 (1927).
45. See for example the Kollwitz lithograph printed in *Mahnruf* 4 (1929).
46. 'Sowjetfrauen', *Mahnruf* 2 (1930).
47. Beschluss zum Bericht der Fraktion der IAH. Angenommen in der Sitzung des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 8.2.1929, RGASPI 495/3/86, 60a–64; Dünninghaus: 'Die Arbeit der deutschen Sektion der IAH', *Inprekorr* 97, 9.10.1931. BArch, R 1501/20197, 91.
48. This logo was used by both the Aufbau and the *Arbeiterhilfe*. The only difference is the text encircling the logo. The oldest version of the logo is found on the Aufbau's letterhead. See letter dated 12.4.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 164; The oldest *Arbeiterhilfe* letterhead with the logo is dated 15.11.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/6, 84.
49. See further in Gottfried Korff, "From Brotherly Handshake to Militant Clenched Fist. On Political Metaphors for the Worker's Hand." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 42: Fall (1992), 70–81.
50. Minutes: Weltkongress 1. Tag Nachmittag, RGASPI 538/1/8, 53.

## 7 Towards a Global International Solidarity, 1924–1926

1. Quotations from Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me. An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 163–168. See also S. A. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses. Nationalism and Labor in Shanghai, 1895–1927* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 168–170.

2. Dan N. Jacobs, "Soviet Russia and Chinese Nationalism in the 1920s," in *China in the 1920s. Nationalism and Revolution*, eds. F. Gilbert Chan and Thomas H. Etzold (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 47.
3. Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary. Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 105–113; Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity. A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 118.
4. Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 20–30.
5. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10–13; Niall Ferguson, *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 315–317; Patrick O. Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I. America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe, 1919–1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25–45.
6. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 222–225.
7. Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 127–134.
8. Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266–267.
9. The rudimentary outlines of the *Arbeiterhilfe's* China campaigns are included in Thomas Kampen, "Solidarität und Propaganda. Willi Münzenberg, die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe und China," *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* 5: 2 (2004), 99–105; Joachim Krüger, "Die KPD und China (1921–1927)," in *Rethinking China in the 1950s*, ed. Mechthild Leutner, *Chinese History and Society. Berliner China-Hefte* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007), 108–113.
10. Alexander Lukin, *The Bear Watches the Dragon. Russia's Perceptions of China and the Evolution of Russian-Chinese Relations since the Eighteenth-Century* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 75–77.
11. Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution. China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3–25; Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth Century China. The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 51–71.
12. Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 98–99; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 163–166. See also Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919–1927* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).
13. Edward Hallett Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924–1926*, vol. 3, *A History of Soviet Russia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 730–731.
14. Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze. Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 185.
15. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 20.9.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 124.
16. Even before Münzenberg's return from Moscow, the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin had made significant preparations for the campaign. See "I. Bericht über die vor Eintreffen des Genossen Münzenberg in Berlin unternommenen Schritte in der Japan-Hilfsaktion", early October 1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 223–224.

17. "An alle kommunistischen Parteien", appeal written by Münzenberg, 3.10.1923, RGASPI 495/18/173, 230.
18. A copy of *Bulletin der Japanhilfe-Komitees der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe* 1, 20.10.1923 is preserved in RGASPI 538/2/21, 35–36ob.
19. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 24.10.1923, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 188–188a.
20. 'Die IAH für die Opfer der Überschwemmung in China', copy probably from *Not und Brot* 33 (30.9.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 179a.
21. Münzenberg, 'Die Aufgaben des III. Kongresses der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', copy probably from *Not und Brot* 33 (30.9.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 179.
22. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924–1926*, 3, 727–728.
23. Reported in 'IAH', *Thüringer Volksblatt*, Gotha 159 (3.10.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 73.
24. 'Delegation der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe nach Peking', *Not und Brot* 34, 15.10.1924.
25. Chinese names appear as they were originally transcribed to German. 'Der Herbstkongreß der IAH', *Sächsische Arbeiter Zeitung*, Leipzig 167 (3.11.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 98–98a; 'Der große Herbstkongreß der IAH', *RF* 142 (28.10.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 114; *Not und Brot* 36 (15.11.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 106.
26. 'Der 3. Weltkongress der IAH am 26. Oktober 1924, Meistersaal-Berlin', *Not und Brot* 36 (15.11.1924), BArch, R 1507/67232/530, 106.
27. Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH (Angenommen in der Sitzung des Sekretariats vom 1.12.1924), RGASPI 495/18/253, 4–5. For an overview of the IRH's international network see Kurt Schilde, "'Schafft Rote Hilfe!' Die kommunistische 'Wohlfahrtsorganisation' Rote Hilfe Deutschlands," in *Die Rote Hilfe. Die Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen "Wohlfahrtsorganisation" und ihrer sozialen Aktivitäten in Deutschland (1921–1941)*, eds. Sabine Hering and Kurt Schilde (Oplanden: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 57–72.
28. Richtlinien für die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der IAH und IRH, RGASPI 495/18/253, 5.
29. This decision had apparently been made as it was assumed that the Russian trade unions could take over the *Arbeiterhilfe's* ventures in Russia. The CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin to the Central of the RCP(B), 9.6.1925, 534/3/122, 37–38.
30. The CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* in Berlin to the CC of the RCP(B), 9.6.1925, RGASPI 534/3/122, 37–41.
31. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth Century China*, 101–107; Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike. The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 81–84.
32. Michael Share, "Clash of Worlds. The Comintern, British Hong Kong and Chinese Nationalism, 1921–1927," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57: 4 (2005), 609; S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made. Communism in Shanghai 1920–1927* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 89–107.
33. Karl Müller in Beijing to Kornblum, Piatnitzki and Voitinski, 14.7.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 91.
34. Itschner had identified himself at the trial in Paris as a Russian citizen with the name Karl Müller, born in Markstadt on 3.8.1888. See letter from the

- Russian bureau of the *Arbeiterhilfe* to Volkskommissar des Auswärtigen, Chicherin, 16.5.1924, RGASPI 538/3/31, 17. The real identity of Karl Müller has not been divulged in the previous research.
35. Evidence of Itschner's presence in Moscow is confirmed in a letter from Karl Müller to Schaerer, 13.11.1924, RGASPI 538/3/24, 3.
  36. Karl Müller to Kornblum at the Secretariat of the ECCI, Moscow, 22.4.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 39–39ob.
  37. Karl Schulz was one of the founders of the KPD. He went into exile to Moscow in early 1925. Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, 2. überarbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008), 844.
  38. Karl Müller in Beijing to Kornblum, Piatnitzki and Voitinski, 14.7.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 91–92.
  39. Münzenberg to Misiano, 15.6.1925. Forwarded as a part of letter from Misiano to Losowski, 21.6.1925, RGASPI 534/3/340, 14.
  40. Münzenberg to Kuusinen, 19.7.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 97–98.
  41. The Secretary of the ECCI to Münzenberg, 24.6.1925, RGASPI 495/18/397, 6.
  42. 'Helft den Hungernden und streikenden Arbeitern Chinas', *Für China/for China/pour la Chine: Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 1, 19.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59. The appeal was signed by the Executive Committee of the *Arbeiterhilfe*.
  43. BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59.
  44. BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59.
  45. See further, Mikko Salmela, "Kollektiiviset tunteet solidaarisuuden liimana," in *Solidaarisuus*, eds. Arto Laitinen and Anne Birgitta Pessi (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2011), 61–81.
  46. BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59.
  47. John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China. Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 3.
  48. 'Das Erwachen des Sklaven', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 1, 19.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59a.
  49. 'Der Streik in China', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 1, 19.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 59a.
  50. 'Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe an die Regierung in Peking'; and 'Die IAH an das Streikkomitee in Shanghai', both signed by the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* and Münzenberg. *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 2, 23.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 62.
  51. Kurt Bayertz, "Begriff und Problem der Solidarität," in *Solidarität. Begriff und Problem*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 21.
  52. 'Hände weg von China', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 2, 23.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 62b.
  53. 'Hände weg von China', BArch, R 1507/1096f, 62b.
  54. Richard C. Kagan, "From Revolutionary Iconoclasm to National Revolution. Ch'en Tu-hsiu and the Chinese Communist Movement," in *China in the 1920s. Nationalism and revolution*, eds. F. Gilbert Chan and Thomas H. Etzold (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 64–65.
  55. Cover of *Not und Brot* 43: *China-Sondernummer*, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 75.
  56. 'Die IAH als Not- und Brotfront im fernen Osten', *Not und Brot* 43 (1925): *China-Sondernummer*, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 75b. Description of the Fourth of

- May Movement, see Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 339.
57. 'Die IAH als Not- und Brotfront im fernen Osten', *Not und Brot* 43 (1925): *China-Sondernummer*, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 75b.
  58. 'Von der Hilfsaktion', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 3 (26.6.1925), BArch, R 1507/1096f, 66b.
  59. 'Imposante Massenkundgebung für China in Berlin und im Reich', *Not und Brot* 43 (1925): *China-Sondernummer*, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 75f.
  60. 'Historisches über China', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 3, 26.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 66c; 'Berliner Arbeiter stiften Stundenlöhne für die Chinahilfe der IAH', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 4 (2.7.1925), BArch, R 1507/1096f, 71c.
  61. The figure of 300,000 people is also mentioned. 'Riesenkundgebung in Peking der IAH', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 6, 15.7.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 76.
  62. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 48; 'Riesenkundgebung in Peking der IAH', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 6 (15.7.1925), BArch, R 1507/1096f, 76.
  63. Minutes of the "Hands Off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 48; Karl Müller in Beijing to Kornblum, Piatnitzki and Voitinski, 14.7.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 92.
  64. RGASPI 538/2/27, 92.
  65. '2. China-Abend', *RF* 166, 23.7.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 84; 'Uraufführung eines revolutionären Chinesischen Dramas', *RF* 168, 25.7.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 85.
  66. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 18.8.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 108.
  67. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 49.
  68. Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, 24.7.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 1.
  69. 'Was werden die Gewerkschaften tun?', *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 2, 23.6.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 62c.
  70. Münzenberg to the Profintern, 19.9.1925, RGASPI 534/3/122, 155.
  71. 'Einladung zu dem Kongress "Hände weg von China"', Berlin, 1.8.1925, signed by Münzenberg and Ledebour, RGASPI 495/30/165, 72.
  72. The complete list was published in *Bulletin der IAH-Hilfsaktion für China* 4, 2.7.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 71.
  73. The minutes were found during research in Moscow in 2011 in fond 514 which contains documents on the CCP.
  74. "Internationale Arbeiterhilfe: Kongress 'Hände weg von China!' am 16. August im ehemaligen Herrenhaus zu Berlin", [minutes of the congress], RGASPI 514/1/164, 6-7.
  75. Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol.Präs. Berlin, vom August 1925: Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, BArch, R 1507/67115/123, 86.
  76. Later Münzenberg reported to the Comintern that the China Congress had been attended by "over 1,000 people", of whom 300 to 350 were prominent intellectuals, 18.8.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 108. However, according to a police report the congress was attended by no more than approx. 600 people, of whom a large portion were women. See: Abschrift aus Bericht des Pol.Präs. Berlin, vom August 1925: Die Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, BArch, R 1507/67115/123, 86.

77. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 47–48.
78. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 7.
79. I have been unable to further identify this Chinese speaker, although in a letter from the German section of the Guomindang there is a reference to a "comrade Tschang," possibly implying that he was a member of the Guomindang. See: Changle Chung, Koumintang-Partei, Sektion in Deutschland, to Reichsvorstand des Bundes der Freunde der IAH, 24.11.1925, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 62. His origins from Shanghai is noted in the report by RÜöO, Berlin, 27.8.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 148.
80. Meyer was one of the leading figures when the KPD was founded in 1918. At the time of the China Congress, Meyer was one of the strongest critics of the ultra-left leadership of the KPD which at the time headed the Party. Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, 598–599. According to a report, the second speaker was originally scheduled to be Dr. Kuczynski who was supposed to speak on "Die Bedeutung der chinesischen Kämpfe für die welt-politische und volkwirtschaftliche Lage". See further the report by RÜöO, Berlin, 27.8.1925, BArch, R 1507/1096f, 148.
81. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 37.
82. RGASPI 514/1/164, 40.
83. RGASPI 514/1/164, 40–41.
84. RGASPI 514/1/164, 44.
85. RGASPI 514/1/164, 44.
86. Münzenberg to the Profintern, 19.9.1925, RGASPI 534/3/122, 155–156.
87. Minutes of the "Hands off China!" Congress in Berlin, 16.8.1925, RGASPI 514/1/164, 47–48.
88. RGASPI 514/1/164, 49–50.
89. RGASPI 514/1/164, 50.
90. Münzenberg to Zinoviev, 18.8.1925, RGASPI 538/2/27, 108–109.
91. 'Hilfsaktion der IAH für die Streikenden in China', *AIZ* (August 1925), 15.
92. *AIZ* (December 1925).
93. For further details on the history of the LAI, see Fredrik Petersson, "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers". *Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism and the Comintern, 1925–1933* (Lewiston: Queenston Press, 2013).

## 8 Solidarity on the Screen and Stage

1. Willi Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film! Winke aus der Praxis für die Praxis proletarischer Filmpropaganda* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1925). BArch, R 1507/67234/533, 264. This booklet was also noted by the German authorities who concluded that it illustrated how significant the Russian government's interest in proletarian films was. Report from RÜöO to the Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, Berlin, 19.5.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/533, 263.
2. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 3.
3. Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda. Myth or Reality?* (London: Cassell, 1999), 3–4. For a recent analysis that highlights films as a part of

- the *Arbeiterhilfe's* international solidarity work, see Günther Agde, "Mit dem Blick nach Westen," in *Die rote Traumfabrik. Meschrabpom-Film und Prometheus 1921–1936*, eds. Günther Agde and Alexander Schwarz (Berlin: Bertz + Fischer Verlag, 2012), 141.
4. Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, Second ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 96–97.
  5. Münzenberg quoted here an earlier statement made by Zinoviev. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 2.
  6. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 8, 10.
  7. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 10–11.
  8. 'Vertrag zwischen Meschrabpom und Rus', Moscow, 3.1.1924. Transcript printed in Günther Agde and Alexander Schwarz, eds., *Die rote Traumfabrik. Meschrabpom-Film und Prometheus 1921–1936* (Berlin: Bertz + Fischer Verlag, 2012), 163–166. The original contract is located in RGASPI 17/60/754, 127–133. See also the report on the early collaboration between the *Arbeiterhilfe* and the Russ in "Bericht über die Revision der Tätigkeit der IAH in der SSSR", 16.3.1925, RGASPI 538/3/43, 59–63.
  9. Vertrag. Kopie. Übersetzung aus dem Russischen, Moskau, 1.8.1924, RGASPI 495/30/165, 24–25. This version of the contract was signed by Misiano (*Arbeiterhilfe*), Moisej Alejnikow (*Russ*) and Scheljabuschky (*Russ*).
  10. Bericht über die Tätigkeit der "Meschrabpom-Film", signed by Misiano, Berlin, 24.3.1929, RGASPI 495/30/621, 1.
  11. Bericht über die Tätigkeit der "Meschrabpom-Film", signed by Misiano, Berlin, 24.3.1929, RGASPI 495/30/621, 1. For legal reasons, the number of shareholders remained three even afterwards: the total capital was divided between the CC of the *Arbeiterhilfe* (690,000 Rubels); *Prometheus-Film* (5,000 Rubels) and *Weltfilm* (5,000 Rubels). The *Mezhrabpom-Film* thus became one of the most important of the *Arbeiterhilfe* enterprises. The *Arbeiterhilfe's* CC would later increase its share to 1,190,000 Rubels. Bericht über die Tätigkeit der "Meschrabpom-Film", signed by Misiano, Berlin, 24.3.1929, RGASPI 495/30/621, 1–2.
  12. RGASPI 495/30/621, 3.
  13. RGASPI 495/30/621, 5, 8.
  14. RGASPI 495/30/621, 2.
  15. RGASPI 495/30/621, 2.
  16. Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 157.
  17. Protokoll Nr. 37 der Sitzung der Politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 23.1.1930, RGASPI 495/4/11, 6.
  18. Protokoll Nr. 43 der Sitzung der politischen Kommission des Politsekretariats des EKKI, 1.3.1930, RGASPI 495/4/15, 1.
  19. Unsigned and undated report on *Mezhrabpom-Film* from 1930, RGASPI 495/18/757, 296–298.
  20. 'Aufführung des ersten russischen Spielfilms in Deutschland', *Pressedienst der Internationale Arbeiterhilfe für Sowjetrussland*, [undated, 1923], SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 323.
  21. Max Barthel, 'Polikushka', *Sichel und Hammer* 5, 1923.
  22. 'Aufführung des ersten russischen Spielfilms in Deutschland', SAPMO-BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/1, 323. Münzenberg wrote excitedly to Moscow about the fantastic

- reception of the film the day after its première. Münzenberg to Piatnitzki, 6.3.1923, RGASPI 538/2/19, 26.
23. 'Filmseuche', *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* 318, 10.7.1928, BArch, R 8051/19, 51–51a.
  24. *Die Filme der IAH*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 53a; Ian Christie, "Down to Earth. Aelita Relocated," in *Inside the Film Factory. New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, eds. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1991), 80–102. On the significance of Protazanov for the Mezhrabpom-Russ see: Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses. Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 105–121.
  25. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses*, 110.
  26. Misiano and Friedmann to Hauptreperitoirkomitee des Narkompros, 3.12.1924, RGASPI 538/3/33, 112–113ob.
  27. *Die Filme der IAH*, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 53a.
  28. Münzenberg, 'Sein Mahnruf', Programm: Filmaufführung (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe), SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 3/23/37, 22–23; Münzenberg to Bela Kun, 30.11.1925, RGASPI 495/30/165, 164.
  29. Cited in: Mark Wolozki, "Meshrabpom-Rus / Meshrabpomfilm. Einiges zu Filmen aus diesem Studio," in *Proletarischer Internationalismus und Film. Gemeinsame Ausstellung des Staatlichen Filmarchivs der DDR, des Staatlichen Filmarchivs der UdSSR (Gosfilmofond) mit dem Gorki-Studio, Moskau und dem Zentralen Haus der DSF, Berlin 16. Dezember 1976 – 13. Februar 1977* (1976).
  30. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 10–11.; Münzenberg, 'Sein Mahnruf', SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 3/23/37, 23a.
  31. SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 3/23/37, 23a.
  32. SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 3/23/37, 23a.
  33. Münzenberg to Bela Kun, 30.11.1925, RGASPI 495/30/165, 164.
  34. Münzenberg, *Erobert den Film!*, 10–11.
  35. See further in Richard Taylor, *The Battleship Potemkin. The Film Companion* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000).
  36. Bericht über die Liquidation der Prometheus Film Verleih & Vertriebs G.m.b.H, Berlin, 13.6.1932, RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 101.
  37. Taylor, *The Battleship Potemkin*, 12.
  38. Report by the RÜöO, Berlin, 24.3.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 3–3a.
  39. 'Potemkin – das Fiasko der Filmoberprüfstelle. Wie das Gift in Dosen gereicht wird', *Deutsche Zeitung* 159a, 12.5.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 107.
  40. On Levi, see Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945*, 2. überarbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008), 543–544.
  41. Report by the RÜöO, Berlin, 10.4.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 6–7.
  42. Report from the RÜöO to the Reichsjustizministerium, Berlin, 28.4.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 35. On the collaboration between Meisel and Eisenstein see Taylor, *The Battleship Potemkin*, 100–105.
  43. "Brüder, zu uns!". Szene aus dem russischen Monumentalfilm "Panzerkreuzer Potemkin", dem größten Filmerfolg der letzten Jahren, *AIZ* 9, 1926.
  44. Report: Uraufführung des Films "Panzerkreuzer Potemkin" im Apollo Theater, Berlin, Friedrichstr. [29.4.1926], BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 140.
  45. BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 140.



46. BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 140.
47. 'Wo bleibt das Verbot des Bolschewistenfilms?', *Deutsche Zeitung* 155, 8.5.1926. BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 78.
48. 'Wo bleibt das Verbot des Bolschewistenfilms?'
49. This report contradicts the information on censorship provided earlier by Taylor.
50. 'Potemkin-Film und Reichswehr' *Berliner Tageblatt* 319, 8.7.1928, BArch, 8051/19, 52.
51. 'Filmseuche', *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* 318, 10.7.1928, BArch, 8051/19, 51–51a.
52. Bericht über die Liquidation der Prometheus Film Verleih & Vertriebs G.m.b.H, Berlin, 13.6.1932, RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 102.
53. On 2.2.1926 the *Prometheus-Film G.m.b.H.* was added to the commercial company register. Its predecessor the *Prometheus-Film-Gesellschaft* which had been founded in mid-1925 had never been added to the register. As the leaders of the new Prometheus, Ernst Becker, Richard Pfeiffer, Emil Unfried and Willi Münzenberg were registered. See full report in the files of the RÜöO, Berlin, 27.4.1926, BArch, R 1507/67234/534, 34–34a.
54. Resolution zu Prometheus-Film. Appendix to: Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Meschrabpom-Film, signed by Misiano, Berlin, 24.3.1929, RGASPI 495/30/621, 11; Bericht über die Liquidation der Prometheus Film Verleih & Vertriebs G.m.b.H, Berlin, 13.6.1932, RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 103.
55. Die Ausnutzung der Sowjet-Filme durch die Prometheus in Deutschland, Berlin, 17.2.1930, 495/25/1258 B, 49–50.
56. Bericht über die Liquidation der Prometheus Film Verleih & Vertriebs G.m.b.H, Berlin, 13.6.1932, RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 103–104.
57. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 106.
58. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 96–97. According to Kolb, the cinema network was not, however, adapting as quickly to sound. In October 1930, merely 900 of the total 5,000 cinemas in Germany were equipped with speakers. The number of seats in these cinemas totalled approximately 600,000.
59. Bericht über die Liquidation der Prometheus Film Verleih & Vertriebs G.m.b.H, Berlin, 13.6.1932, RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 104.
60. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 106–107.
61. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 108; Agde and Schwarz, *Die rote Traumfabrik*, 192.
62. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 108.
63. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 109–110.
64. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 112–113.
65. RGASPI 495/25/1258 B, 113.
66. Richard Stourac and Kathleen McCreery, *Theatre as a Weapon. Workers' Theatre in the Soviet Union, Germany and Britain, 1917–1934* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 91–92. On Piscator's involvement in the *Künstlerhilfe* see chapter two.
67. John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator. Half a Century of Politics in the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1986), 43.
68. John Willett, *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 129–135; C. D. Innes, *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre. The Development of Modern German Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 2–22.
69. Innes, *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre*, 39.

70. Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, 69–74, 123.
71. On the Blue Shirts in the Soviet Union, see Stourac and McCreery, *Theatre as a Weapon*, 3–4, 30–73.
72. Stourac and McCreery, *Theatre as a Weapon*, 73–76; Ludwig Hoffmann and Daniel Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, Second ed., vol. I (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1972), 245; Jürgen Rühle, *Theater und Revolution. Von Gorki bis Brecht* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1963), 150.
73. “‘Blaue Bluse.’ Ein russisches Arbeiter-Kabarett”, *Mahnruf* 11 (October 1927).
74. Münzenberg to the Sekretariat der Komintern, 26.3.1927, RGASPI 495/30/350, 15–16.
75. Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, I 242.
76. Report on “Kabarett: ‘Blaue Bluse’ aus Moskau” by the Berlin Police President, Zörgiebel, to the Minister of the Interior, 30.9.1927, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4043, Nr. 244, 156–158.
77. The RÜöO to the Auswärtige Amt, 7.10.1927, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4043, Nr. 244, 178.
78. Minister des Innern to RÜöO, Berlin, 2.11.1927, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4043, Nr. 244, 187.
79. Blaue Bluse Moskau. Erstes Gastspiel in Deutschland in der Piscatorbühne (1927), GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4043, Nr. 244, 163–166.
80. Capacity of the Piscatorbühne according to Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, 69.
81. Police report: “Sowjetrussische Arbeiter-Truppe ‘Blaue Blusen’. Vorstellung am 7.10.1927, 12 Uhr nachts, Theater am Nollendorfplatz”, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 77, Tit. 4043, Nr. 244, 183–188.
82. Wilhelm Pieck, ‘Blaue Bluse’, *RF* 12.10.1927. Transcript in Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, vol I, 254–255.
83. Werner Hirsch, “Das Gastspiel der ‘Blauen Blusen’ in Chemnitz”, *Der Kämpfer*, 12.10.1927, Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, vol I, 242–243.
84. Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, vol I, 242–243.
85. Helmut Damerius, ‘Kolonne Links, Berlin’ in Hoffmann and Hoffmann-Ostwald, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater 1918–1933*, vol I, 350–352.
86. Helmut Damerius, *Über zehn Meere zum Mittelpunkt der Welt. Erinnerungen an die “Kolonne Links”* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1977), 24–25.
87. ‘Ueber 6000 neue Mitglieder der IAH geworben’, *RF* 155, 6.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 81.
88. “‘Blaue Blusen’ Deutschlands, ‘Kolonne Links’”, poster for a performance on 13.6.1930 at the Circus Busch in Berlin, SAPMO–BArch, RY 1/I 2/8/87, nn.
89. ‘Ueber 6000 neue Mitglieder der IAH geworben’, *RF* 155, 6.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 81.
90. Photocopy of “Truppenlied der ‘Kolonne Links’”, Berlin, reproduced in Damerius, *Über zehn Meere zum Mittelpunkt der Welt*, 39. Text and music by unknown.
91. ‘Vormarsch der IAH’, *WaA* 106, 2.6.1930. BArch, R 1501/20684, 55. The tour in the Ruhr area included 13 performances. See timetable in “Arbeitsplan der IAH Ruhrgebiet, Für die Monate Mai, Juni, Juli [1930]”, BArch, R 8051/38, 406–407.

92. 'Ueber 6000 neue Mitglieder der IAH geworben', *RF* 155, 6.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 81; "'Kolonne Links' sammelt für Mansfeld!", *RF* 159, 11.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 92; 'Kolonne Links', *WaA* 164, 17.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 93.
93. "IAH. Einmaliges Auftreten der Kolonne Links vor der Fahrt nach der Sowjetunion am Sonntag, den 29. März abends 8 Uhr un Kliems Festsälen, Hasenheide", *RF* 75, 29.3.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 21; 'Kolonne Links' nimmt Abschied", *WaA* 75, 30.3.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 23.
94. Georg Dünninghaus, 'Die Arbeit der deutschen Sektion der IAH', *Inprekorr* 97, 9.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 90–91.
95. 'Kolonne Links in USSR' *WaA* 89, 17.4.1931. Transcript from BArch, R 1501/20685, 27. See also Damerius, *Über zehn Meere zum Mittelpunkt der Welt*, 200–240.
96. Report by the Rdl to die Nachrichtenstellen der Länder, Berlin, 20.1.1931, BArch, 1501/20684, 250a.
97. Willi Münzenberg: 'Platz dem Arbeitertheater', *WaA* 117, 22.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20584, 309.

## 9 Celebrating International Solidarity, 1930–1932

1. The Weimar period's public festivals, described in the context of public rituals, have only recently become the subject of research. See especially Nadine Rossol, *Performing the Nation in Interwar Germany. Sport, Spectacle and Political Symbolism, 1926–36* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Pamela Swett, "Celebrating the Republic without Republicans. The Reichsverfassungstag in Berlin, 1929–32," in *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Karin Friedrich (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 139–159; Pamela E. Swett, *Neighbors & Enemies. The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7–11. The festivals of the German workers' movement have recently been described in Matthias Warstat, *Theatrale Gemeinschaften. Zur Festkultur der Arbeiterbewegung 1918–33* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2005).
2. On the LLL festivals, see Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990. From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 178–185; Warstat, *Theatrale Gemeinschaften*, 175–192.
3. 'Ein Kinderfest der IAH', *RF* 192, 22.8.1925. BArch, R 1507/1096f, 134.
4. 'Der erste Solidaritätstag in Berlin', *Mahnruf* 6 (June 1927). The event was first not called Solidarity Day, but was advertised as a great summer festival. "Großes Sommer-Fest zugunsten unseres Kinderheims im 'Karlshof', Plötzensee am Sonnabend, den 2 Juli 1927" *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe: Mitteilungsblatt des Bundes der Freunde der IAH* 4 (April 1927). Published by Landesausschuss Berlin-Brandenburg, 4.1927, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 105a.
5. Erich Weinert, 'Fest der 100 000!', *WaA*, 20.6.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 2.
6. 'Der 13. Juli. Tag der Massenmobilisierung', BArch, R 1501/20197, 7.
7. 'Solidaritätstag der IAH am 13. Juli in den Rehbergen', *WaA* 112, 15.5.1930, BArch, R 1501/20684, 49.

8. Münzenberg, 'Solidaritätstag der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', *Inprekorr* 58 (1930), 1335.
9. 'Hunderttausend unter den Fahnen der IAH', *Arbeiterhilfe. Mitteilungsblatt für die Funktionäre der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe* 7 (August 1930), 168; 'In 1000 deutschen Orten Solidaritätstag der IAH', *WaA* 115, 20.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 173.
10. 'Resolution zum Thema: Solidaritätstag' [17.7.1931], RGASPI 495/4/401, 41.
11. 'Der Solidaritätstag. Es lebe die proletarische Solidarität' in *Tag der proletarischen Solidarität. Internationale Arbeiterhilfe Bezirk Berlin-Brandenburg 13. Juli im Volkspark Rehberge 19. Juli im Carlshof* (Berlin: Internationale Arbeiterhilfe Berlin-Brandenburg, 1930).
12. 'Der große Solidaritätstag der kämpfenden IAH', *WaA* 161, 14.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 24.
13. 'Chronik vom Tage', *Vossische Zeitung*, 14.7.1930. BArch, R 1501/20197, 23.
14. Bericht über den Tag der Solidarität in den Rehbergen, 13.7.1930. Signed by Abteilung I.A., III G. Aussendienst, Berlin, 14.7.1930. GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 109–110.
15. 'Der Tag der IAH in Berlin', 14.7.1930, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 132.
16. 'Massenaufmarsch für proletarische Solidarität', *RF* 162, 15.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 27. Münzenberg's participation at the front of the parade is only mentioned in this article.
17. 'Der große Solidaritätstag der kämpfenden IAH', *WaA* 161, 14.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 24.
18. Police report, Berlin, 15.7.1930. GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 115.
19. Bericht über den Tag der Solidarität in den Rehbergen am 13.7.1930. Signed by Abteilung I.A., III G. Aussendienst, Berlin, 14.7.1930, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 109–110.
20. 'Der Tag der proletarischen Solidarität', *AIZ* 30 (1930).
21. 'Solidarisch zu jeder Hilfe bereit. Das Kampfgeblöbnis in den Rehbergen', *WaA* 161, 14.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 26.
22. 'Massenaufmarsch für proletarische Solidarität', *RF* 162, 15.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 27.
23. Bericht über den Tag der Solidarität in den Rehbergen am 13.7.1930. Signed by Abteilung I.A., III G. Aussendienst, Berlin, 14.7.1930, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 110–111.
24. 'Am 13. Juli Kirchenaustritt in den Rehbergen', *RF* 158, 10.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 11. This event is confirmed in the police report on the International Solidarity Day: GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 110a.
25. Bericht über den Tag der Solidarität in den Rehbergen am 13.7.1930, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 110–111.
26. 'Massenaufmarsch für proletarische Solidarität', *RF* 162, 15.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 27.
27. Of the arrested all except three were born between 1905 and 1913, meaning that they were between 17 and 25 years old. GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 219, Nr. 41, 116–116a. In the press it was claimed that only 21 people had been arrested. 'Chronik vom Tage', *Vossische Zeitung*, 14.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 23.
28. Georg Dünninghaus, 'Unter den Fahnen proletarischer Solidarität', *Mahnruf* 8 (1930), 4–5.

29. 'Herrliche Solidarität! Berlin gehört der Revolution', *WaA* 161, 14.7.1930, BArch, R 1501/20197, 25.
30. 'Der Solidaritätstag der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', *WaA* 167, 21.7.1930. BArch, R 1501/20197, 34.
31. 'Aufmarsch der Massen', *WaA* 136, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 231; 'Kommunistische Werbetag', *Welt am Montag* 24, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 232.
32. Willi Münzenberg, *Mit uns das Volk. Millionen marschierten am 3. internationalen Solidaritätstag mit der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe* (Berlin: Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1931), 17.
33. In an untitled internal Comintern report it was concluded that events were organised in "over 600" locations throughout Germany, 'Resolution zum Thema: Solidaritätstag' [17.7.1931], RGASPI 495/4/401, 41.
34. '14. Juni 1931', *Arbeiterhilfe. Mitteilungsblatt für die Funktionäre der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe* 3 (March 1931), [cover].
35. 'Für Brot und Freiheit. Heraus zum Solidaritätstag!', *Arbeiterhilfe. Mitteilungsblatt für die Funktionäre der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe* 4 (April 1931), 57. This appeal includes a full list of supporting organisations and well-known individuals.
36. Dünninghaus, 'Von Solidaritätstag zum Weltkongreß', *Mahnruf* 7 (1931), 8–9.
37. 'Rote Mobilmachung zum Solidaritätstag', *RF* 111, 29.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 183.
38. 'Der 14. Juni ein Tag der Solidarität', *AIZ* 22 (1931), 445.
39. 'Vor der Spartakiade. Solidaritätstag der IAH', *WaA* 116, 21.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 175.
40. 'Der 14. Juni – ein Tag der Solidarität', *AIZ* 22 (1931), BArch, R 1501/20197, 179.
41. Police report "Bericht über die internationale Kundgebung der IAH zum internationalen Solidaritätstag am 14. Juni 1931 im Saalbau Friedrichshain zu Berlin", BArch, R 58/3007, 46–47a; See also the published account 'Die Stoßbrigadiere der IAH. Grandiose Kundgebung im Saalbau Friedrichshain', *WaA* 116[?], 21.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 30. Citation from *WaA*.
42. 'Verbot der Aufmärsche zum Solidaritätstag am 14. Juni', *WaA* 125, 2.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 189.
43. 'Auch die Aufmärsche am 14. Juni verboten', *RF* 115, 3.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 201; 'Verbot der öffentlichen Demonstrationen und Aufmärsche zum Solidaritätstag der IAH', *Inprekorr* 55, 9.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 216.
44. Report by the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Landeskriminalpolizeiamt (IA), on "Solidaritätstag der "Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe" am 14.6.1931", Berlin, 9.6.1931. BArch, R 1501/20197, 214.
45. 'Solidaritätstag, Kampftag gegen Notverordnung', *RF* 119, 7.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 210; 'Massenprotest gegen Notverordnung', *WaA* 130, 8.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 212. A leaflet for the Sportpalast event lists Thälmann, Münzenberg and Albert Kunz as the main speakers. See: "Auftrakt zum internationalen Solidaritätstag", BArch, R 58/3307, 83.
46. 'Mobilisierung für den Solidaritätstag', *WaA* 133, 11.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 219; 'Die Ifa und der Solidaritätstag', *WaA* 134, 12.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 221; 'Arbeitersportler zum Solidaritätstag', *WaA* 135, 13.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 225; 'Millionen marschieren 14. Juni am internationalen Solidaritätstag unter den Fahnen der IAH', *Die Junge Garde*

- 50, 14.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 227; An extensive list of supporting organisations is provided in the article 'Für Arbeit, Brot und Freiheit', *WaA*, 16.5.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 239.
47. 'Der Tag der Solidarität', *WaA* 136, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 229. On the international political life of Joseph Bilé, see Robbie Aitken, "From Cameroon to Germany and Back via Moscow and Paris. The Political Career of Joseph Bilé (1892–1959), Performer, "Negerarbeiter" and Comintern activist," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43: 3 (2008), 597–616.
48. 'Der Massenaufmarsch in Berlin am Solidaritätstag der IAH', *RF* 126, 16.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 234.
49. 'Aufmarsch der Massen', *WaA* 136, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 231; 'Kommunistische Werbetag', *Welt am Montag* 24, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 232.
50. "Zusammenfassung der Personenzahlungen der IAH zum Solidaritätstag," BArch, R 58/3307, 131. According to a description of the venue published by the *Arbeiterhilfe* in 1927, the Carlshof area had an official capacity of 30,000 people. See "Großes Sommer-Fest zugunsten unseres Kinderheims im 'Karlshof'", Plötzensee am Sonnabend, 2 Juli 1927, *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe: Mitteilungsblatt des Bundes der Freunde der IAH* 4 (April 1927), SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/16, 105a.
51. Bericht des Landesvorstandes der IAH Bezirk Berlin-Brandenburg an die Landeskongress am 14./15. Januar 1933 in Berlin für die Berichtsperiode vom 1.1.1931 –30.11.1932, SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/8, 65.
52. 'Der Massenaufmarsch in Berlin am Solidaritätstag der IAH', *RF* 126, 16.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 234.
53. 'Der Tag der Solidarität', *WaA* 136, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 229.
54. BArch, R 1501/20197, 229.
55. 'Millionenaufmarsch am Solidaritätstag', *RF* 126, 16.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 235.
56. Police report from the celebration in the Lichterfelder-Festsälen on Zehlendorferstraße, Berlin, 15.6.1931, BArch, R 58/3307, 120.
57. 'Naziprovokationen am Solidaritätstag', *Die Junge Garde*, 17.6.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 50.
58. Münzenberg to Kun, 21.4.1932, RGASPI 495/18/934, 10.
59. '12. Juni 1932', *Mahnruf* 5 (1932).
60. "An alle Lokal-Redakteure", SAPMO–BArch, RY 9/I 6/7/15, 230–231.
61. 'Kampfgruß der Negerarbeiter', *Inprekorr* 47 (1932). See further on the activities and history of the ITUCNW in Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic. African American Agency, West African Intellectuals and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
62. BArch, R 1501/20682, 320; and 'In ganz Berlin war Sonntag: Die Heerschau der roten Solidarität' *RF* 129, 14.6.1932, BArch, R 1501/20682, 321.
63. 'Wohin am 12. Juni? Der Internationale Solidaritätstag in Groß-Berlin', *WaA* 127, 2.6.1932, BArch, R 1501/20682, 272. See the list of localities in 'Internationaler Solidaritätstag. 14 große Kundgebungen am 12. Juni', *RF* 121, 4.6.1932, BArch, R 1501/20682, 274.
64. 'Rote Einheitsfront für Sowjetrußland!', *WaA* 136, 13.6.1932, BArch, R 1501/20682, 320.

65. BArch, R 1501/20682, 320; and 'In ganz Berlin war Sonntag: Die Heerschau der roten Solidarität' *RF* 129, 14.6.1932, BArch, R 1501/20682, 321.
66. 'Solidarität ist das Gebot der Stunde', *AIZ* 26 (1932).
67. The Police President's report stated vaguely "so mögen doch in sämtlichen Lokalen etwa 30000 Personen versammelt gewesen sein."
68. Bericht vom internationalen Solidaritätstag 1932, RGASPI 538/2/81, 140.
69. RGASPI 538/2/81, 142.
70. Vermerk: Die Schrift "Der Vormarsch" – Bulletin der IAH. No. 1 – vom Januar 1933 bringt folgenden Artikel: "Der 5. internationale Solidaritätstag am 11.6.1933", BArch, R 1501/20682, 326.
71. Münzenberg, 'Der Weltkongreß der proletarischen Solidarität', *Inprekorr* 96, 6.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 85.
72. "Der 8. Kongress der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe", RGASPI 495/25/1258A, 76. A summary of the proceedings of the four congresses in Berlin was published in the *Inprekorr* 98–100 (1931).
73. Moscow was probably chosen as the Soviet Union had the largest MOPR section. See further *10 Jahre Internationale Rote Hilfe. Resolutionen und Dokumente*. (Berlin: Mopr-Verlag G.m.b.H., 1932).
74. Dünninghaus, 'Vom internationalen Solidaritätstag zum Zehn-Jahre-Weltkongreß', *Inprekorr* 68, 14.7.1931. BArch, R 1501/20197, 42.
75. 'Kulturabend des Weltkongresses der IAH', *WaA* 238, 12.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/2097, 98.
76. Minutes: Weltkongress-Eröffnungssitzung, RGASPI 538/1/8, 36.
77. 'Für den Weltkongreß der IAH', *WaA* 231, 3.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 74. This article includes an extensive list of all well-known supporters.
78. Maxim Gorki & Romain Rolland, 'Unsere Gruss dem Weltkongress der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe', *AIZ* 41 (1931), BArch, R 1501/20197, 86.
79. "Programm und Tagesordnung des 8. Weltkongresses der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe", Berlin, Oktober 1931, RGASPI 495/4/141, 17–20; and BArch, R 1501/20197, 135.
80. Otto Steinecke, '10 Jahre IAH', *WaA* 186, 12.8.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 99.
81. 'Vor dem Weltkongress der IAH', *AIZ* 35, 26.8.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 49; Paul Scholze, '10 Jahre Weltorganisation der proletarischen Solidarität', *Inprekorr* 72, 24.7.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 44; cover of *Mahnruf* 9 (1931).
82. BArch, R 1501/20197, 50.
83. Rudolf Kohn, 'Die Entscheidungsstunde der IAH' *Inprekorr* 93, BArch, R 1501/20197, 59.
84. See further in Bert Hoppe, *In Stalins Gefolgschaft. Moskau und die KPD, 1928–1933*, Studien zur Zeitgeschichte (München: Oldenbourg, 2007).
85. 'Das große Werk der IAH', *WaA* 187, 13.8.1931, BArch, R 1501/20685, 100.
86. BArch, R 1501/20685, 100.
87. BArch, R 1501/20685, 100.
88. 'Aus Berlins Arbeiterbewegung', *WaA* 229, 1.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 67.
89. '10 Jahre IAH!', *WaA* 230, 2.10.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 69. See also: Otto Heller, 'Die Jubiläumsausstellung der IAH', *Inprekorr* 98 (1931), 2219, BArch, R 1501/20197, 109.
90. This book was co-authored by Francesco Misiano, Paul Scholze, Louis Gibarti, Kurt Sauerland, Traute Hölz, August Brandt, Georg Dünninghaus, Leo Katz,

- Hans Schulz, Otto Nagel, Otto Steinicke and Willi Strzclewicz. The first nine names were acknowledged as being co-authors in 'Solidarität', [unmarked newspaper clipping, 1931], BArch, R 1501/20197, 52. The last three are only mentioned in Münzenberg's introduction Willi Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1931), 10.
91. Münzenberg, *Solidarität. Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–1931*. See also Paul Friedländer, 'Das neue Buch: Solidarität. Zehn Jahre internationale Arbeiterhilfe', *WaA* 29, 4.2.1932, BArch, R 1501/20685, 181.
  92. 'Münzenbergs große Rede auf dem Weltkongreß', *WaA* 238, 12.10.1931, Beilage 2. BArch, R 1501/20197, 96.
  93. Willi Münzenberg, 'Vor dem Weltkongreß "10 Jahre IAH"', *Inprekorr* 91, 22.9.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 53; 'Delegierte aus Tunis, Alger, Süd- und Westafrika auf dem Kongreß der IAH', *WaA* 227, 29.9.1931, BArch, R 1501/20197, 61.
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  96. Report from the Polizeipräsident, Abteilung IA, to Herrn Minister des Innern, Berlin, 5.11.1931. Forwarded on 14.11.1931 from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior to the RdI and the Foreign Ministry, BArch, R 1501/20197, 133.
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  105. RGASPI 538/1/8, 4.
  106. RGASPI 538/1/8, 4.



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109. Minutes: Weltkongress-Eröffnungssitzung, RGASPI 538/1/8, 18–20. The transcript of Zetkin's speech presented by Hölz is found in RGASPI 538/1/8, 20–26; quotation from 22.
110. Minutes: Weltkongress-Eröffnungssitzung, RGASPI 538/1/8, 18–19.
111. Minutes: Weltkongress 1. Tag Nachmittag, RGASPI 538/1/8, 63–66. Citation p. 66.
112. RGASPI 538/1/8, 66–67. Citation p. 67.
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Organizatsionnyi otdel (Orgotdel) IKKI

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**Newspapers**

*Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*

*Hunger in Deutschland*

*IAH-Funktionär / Arbeiterhilfe*

*Internationale Presse Korrespondenz (Inprekorr)*

*Mahnruf*

*Not und Brot*

*Rote Fahne*

*Sichel und Hammer*

*Sowjet-Russland im Bild*

*Vormarsch*

*Welt am Abend*

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