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# **The Comintern: Institutions and people**

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# INDEX

- 1 Comintern's Archives: history and its objectives
- 2 The first period: the soviet period
- 3 Methodology
- 4 Fundamental historical questions
- 5 The structure of the Comintern
- 6 The cadres of the Comintern
- 7 Technicalities: the names of Comintern's bodies
- 8 The concrete problem of names by scheme
- 9 Pseudonyms of the Cadres
- 10 The Institutions of the Comintern: International Red aid
- 11 Development of International Red aid
- 12 The purpose of International Red aid
- 13 Comintern and the USSR
- 14 Comintern's secret operations
- 15 Comintern's cadres commitment



## **Comintern's Archives: history and its objectives**

The first period was marked by attempts to reconstruct the biographies of victims of Stalinism. This was carried out at the behest of the Communist Parties in the last years of their existence, in order to have their executed cadres rehabilitated by Soviet or Russian judicial organs. Writing history from the standpoint of the victim, filling out the "blank spots" in communist history, and reassembling biographies of the forgotten were research activities in this first phase. This period coincided with the last year of the GDR's existence - between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. Numerous memoirs, which had often lain in locked drawers for years, were published, as were many articles on the history of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Comintern.

## **The first period: the soviet period**

Reconstituting the biographies from the world of the Comintern and Stalinism is a phase of historical research not yet ended. Most of the pertinent personalities are either not known at all or have been mentioned solely in hagiographic texts which are of little use to the Comintern scholar.

In a second phase, research concentrated on single Communist Parties, whose archival material is usually in Moscow. Scholars found their “own” national section in the masses of papers; on the basis of such investigations a new pattern emerged to document the history of the individual Communist Parties.

## Methodology

At least two directions of research emerged in respect of the utilization of Russian archival material. First, to use the new sources to revise accounts of the Comintern's role in general (political history), and to illuminate the history of the power struggle and fractions within the world body. Proceeding along these lines, the researchers hoped to fill in the gaps in Comintern history, and, at a later date, to contribute to a general history underpinned by the new documentation.

The second approach has a different intention - to take the new archival material as the foundation for a history of the rituals and mentalities which permeated the International and the world of Stalinism. The specific phenomena deserving examination in this connection are the (for our modern understanding at least) psychological patterns activated during the various waves of Stalinist repression - faith, conviction, social disciplining and the "production" of standardized personalities.

## Fundamental historical questions

How historians can make use of the material on the Comintern? Apart from additional information about events in communist history, in particular resolving the mystery behind apparently inexplicable positions taken up by one party or another, progress has been made in the following areas: **the organizational structure of the Comintern; the authority it possessed and how it wielded it; those individuals staffing leading positions in the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI).** New insights were also gained concerning the power mechanisms permeating the world movement, the purges it initiated the terror which followed them. A biographical approach, examining how whole groups of functionaries or individual communists fared, proved to be the most valuable access for researchers.



## The structure of the Comintern

The complex diagram of the Comintern's structure was gradually disclosed, providing an overview of an organization which was **multifunctional, geographically widespread and changing its shape time and again**. Authoritative bodies and numerous committees, hitherto unknown, emerged from the archives. Many functionaries, whether cadres or employees of the Comintern, regained their historical place in the scheme of things. Previously, only the most important leaders and the foreign staff of ECCI were identified with name and function. Now it is possible to examine who the staff employees were, what they did and what happened to them. The Communist International had, on average, approximately 400 persons on its payroll, but the number varied greatly over the years.

The reorganization of 1935 which introduced the centralization of administrative duties and placed the central bodies dealing with the national sections on a geographical basis under the personal responsibility of prominent foreign communists (Togliatti, Marty, Gottwald, etc.).



## The cadres of the Comintern

The personal or “cadre” files comprise one of the most extensive collections in the Comintern Archive. In the course of his or her political life, a party cadre was obliged to write down **a political curriculum vitae** on numerous occasions, sometimes on preprinted questionnaires. The Cadres Department of ECCI collected these papers, along with any other pertinent material, and placed them in personal dossiers. Reports on individuals, assessments and even denunciations found their way into the files. Elements of individual or collective biography can now be examined **as they stand or used, *en masse*, to analyse "party" biographies not only as a collation of data documenting a person's political development.**

1. Biographical passages designed to comply not with subjective experience, but with what was felt to be the linearly correct political development of a militant party member;
2. as component parts of a prototype biography representative of a whole generation of communist fighters.

## **Technicalities: the names of Comintern's bodies**

When first names are not mentioned, it is frequently impossible to identify persons. Between the Second and the Third Congresses Wilhelm Koenen was elected to the Little Bureau of the ECCI (Presidium). At that time, however, his brother Bernard was one of the leaders of the KPD and also working on the apparatus of the ECCI. Another example: at the 11th ECCI plenum in 1931 Muller (no first name, no country) was elected. At that time, however, the KPD had among its leaders Oscar Muller, Herbert Muller, Georg Muller and Kurt Muller, and the Swiss CP Robert Muller, who also took part in the ECCI meetings during the 1930's. The man elected was Kurt Muller. The same is true for the name Popov. At the Third Congress Dimitar Popov was elected for Bulgaria. At the Seventh Congress Blagoj Popov was elected. In addition to these two Nikolaj Popov was active in the Comintern and headed the delegation of the CP of the Soviet Ukraine at the Seventh Congress. His address at that Congress was published with his photo in the Moscow *Pravda* in August 1935. Further, Stanke Dimitrov, member of the bureau-in-exile of the CP of Bulgaria and collaborator in the ECCI apparatus, used the pseudonym Popov in August 1935.

# The concrete problem of names by scheme

SEVENTH CONGRESS (25 JULY – 20 AUGUST 1935)

Table 49. *The ECCI elected at the Seventh Congress*

*Members*

USSR

Ežov, Nikolaj I.; Manuil'skij; Moskvín, Michail A. (Trilisser, Mejer A.); Stalin; Ždanov, Andrej A.

Austria

Koplenig

Britain

Gallacher; Pollitt

Brazil

Prestes, Luis Carlos





## Pseudonyms of the Cadres

The use of pseudonyms in the Comintern was a consequence of illegality. At the Sixth Congress Knorin and Popov, both members of the CPSU, were elected under the pseudonyms Sokolik and Lovickij as ECCI candidates for the CP of Poland. Both of them played an important part in deposing the Kostrzewa-Warski group from the leadership of the CP of Poland later on. The same thing happened to Sakun, a member of the CPSU, who was elected as candidate to the ECCI Presidium for the CP of Yugoslavia under the pseudonym Milkovic, and played a similar part in the expulsion of Sima Markovic, the then secretary-general, from the leadership of the CP of Yugoslavia. **In some cases we find that not one but several Comintern functionaries acted under the same pseudonym at different periods, or, on the other hand, that the same person used different pseudonyms at the same time.** During his work in Vienna in 1924 Georgi Dimitrov was known under the pseudonym Dimov among the members of the bureau-in-exile of the CP of Bulgaria, and among the leadership of the Balkan Communist Federation under the pseudonym Viktor, but at the same time he used the pseudonym Oswald as ECCI representative for the CP of Austria.

The use of pseudonyms did not only serve the purpose of protecting the delegates against persecution, but increasingly that of manipulating the organs of the Comintern and its sections, especially during Stalin's struggle against the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition and against Bucharin. For example, **the secretary-general of the CP of Rumania Baltazar**, whose real name was **Elek Koblos**, was recalled in 1928 because of right-wing deviation; his successor was a man called **Barbu**, who acted under the pseudonym Petrulescu at the Sixth Congress. **Barbu-Petrulescu's real name was Vitalij Holostenko**; from 1922 till 1928 he had belonged to the CP of the Ukraine; in 1931 he was recalled because of left-wing deviation. He was succeeded by a certain **Horn**, whose real name was **Aleksander Danieluk** and who came originally from Warsaw. Until 1929 he had been one of the leading officials of the CP of Poland; at the Fifth Congress he had represented this party under the pseudonym **Stefanski**. As a result of his belonging to the Warski-Kostrzewa group he was deprived of all his functions in the CPP and transferred to the Comintern apparatus. At the 13th ECCI plenum he represented the CP of Rumania under the pseudonym **Grigorescu**.



The practice illustrated by this example often was contrary to the rules of the Comintern and its sections. For instance, it was not permitted that members of the International Control Commission were elected on other organs of the Comintern; to evade this rule the delegate of the CP of Italy Egidio Gennari, who had belonged to the ICC from the Fifth Congress, was elected to the Presidium and the Political Secretariat of the ECCI at the 8th plenum under the pseudonym Maggi and not under his own name.

Why the names' research is always important: it is possible to deduct changes in the evaluation of the revolutionary situation in various countries by the Comintern leaders. It also gives an insight into the interests of Russian foreign policy in *different* periods.

## The Institutions of the Comintern: International Red aid

Created in 1922, IRA served the Comintern for over twenty years until it was dissolved with its parent in 1943. At its peak (1932-1933) this front attained a membership of over fourteen million, scattered over seventy-three national sections. It claimed to have provided relief and aid for thousands of Communist and non-partisan revolutionaries who were subjected to the persecutions of "bourgeois class justice" and "white terror". From its presses poured a steady stream of propaganda in a dozen languages - handbills, leaflets, pamphlets, books, and periodicals. *The Red Aid leadership initiated and conducted protest demonstrations and campaigns on behalf of the most celebrated causes of the 1920's and 1930's: Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro Boys, Tom Mooney, the Reichstag Fire Trial, Ernst Thalmann, Antonio Gramsci, and the Spanish Civil War.*

International Red Aid was most active and most useful to the Comintern after 1926, but the preceding four years were perhaps more crucial in the organization's history. Between 1922 and 1926 the front developed its basic organizational forms and began to refine its various activities, and during these four years the Comintern forged in the heat of controversy the role IRA was to play in its larger strategy.

First four years: this topic touches on matters of more general significance. In the first place, the bitter rivalries that erupted in the Russian Communist Party upon Lenin's death had their impact on IRA, specifically felt in Zinoviev's efforts to impose his theory of revolution and to use the Comintern and its auxiliaries as a power base. In addition, the controversy that developed over the purpose of IRA arose out of disagreements over the implications of the Comintern's United Front strategy.



The first executive body of IRA was a small Central Bureau of four persons, to which fell the responsibility of setting up the new organization. The Central Bureau after only three months (December 1922 to March 1923) was expanded to eight members and renamed the Central Committee (CC IRA). During the remainder of 1923 and until July the CC IRA (its membership almost identical to the Central Committee of MOPR USSR, the Soviet section of IRA) conducted the affairs of the organization.

The First International Conference of IRA, held in Moscow in July 1924, changed the name of the central apparatus to the Executive Committee (EC IRA) and enlarged the body to twenty-eight members, adding several non-Soviet Red Aid leaders. More representative of the international organization than the Central Committee had been, the new Executive Committee exercised greater effective control, although its designated powers and functions were essentially the same as its predecessor's.

The EC IRA occupied a position analagous to that of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). It was the executive body of an international organization over which it exercised a strict control. According to various statements on organizational principles (including the Statutes of IRA adopted in 1928), final authority fell to the international congress; but in fact the international meetings of IRA were no more decisive than those of the Comintern (at least after the Third Comintern Congress).

In both organizations the congresses merely ratified decisions already made by the central apparatus. **After 1924 the principle of "democratic centralism" was applied to IRA as to the Comintern;** consequently the Executive Committee determined the policies of every section of the international organization. To the EC IRA was given control of every decisive lever of power: **it regulated the finances of the national sections and the organization as a whole; it passed on the statutes of national sections; it monitored the work of officials at the national level; it approved or rejected the sections' programs of action; It determined whether a section remained affiliated with IRA.**

## Development of International Red aid

The first step toward creation of International Red Aid came **in August 1922**, when the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party appealed for aid on behalf of alleged victims of bourgeois persecution in Poland. *In response to this appeal the Polish Bureau of the Russian Communist Party formed a Commission to Aid Political Prisoners in Poland, which was placed under the leadership of **Julian Marchlewski**, representing the Society of Old Bolsheviks, and **Felix Dzerzhinski**, representing the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles.* On September 13 Marchlewski presented to the Society of Old Bolsheviks in Moscow a resolution to create an international organization of aid to political prisoners in all countries. The organization would be called in Russian *Международная организация помощи борцам революции* (МОПР), usually translated as International Red Aid. It was formally established on September 29 under the leadership of Marchlewski and P. N. Lepeshinsky.



At its founding IRA was considered much more important for its aid to persecuted revolutionaries than for its appeal to the masses; the latter role was not even mentioned at the Fourth Comintern Congress. The need to seek mass support, however, was articulated at the initial meeting of the Central Bureau of IRA, held on December 22, 1922. Whatever the specific purposes of IRA, a world-wide network of sections was required before its presence would be felt.

On June 26 1923, the CC IRA declared that Red Aid organizations must be established in every country, particularly in those in which the "white terror does not hold sway". **It was observed that such countries (Britain, France, and the United States) offered the best opportunity for creating sections, and that these sections should provide the bulk of financial support for the organization as a whole. By this time sections were being formed in eight countries outside the USSR - Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.** In an effort to consolidate Communist aid activities and the prevent duplication in this work, the Plenum stated that all independent aid organizations, such as the League to Aid German Children, would be absorbed into IRA.

The most significant activity of IRA during 1923 was the aid it rendered to political prisoners. **Outside the Soviet Union, in fact, this was the only activity undertaken by the organization, according to the ECCI.** The amount of aid distributed cannot be determined accurately, for the various sections allegedly collected and dispensed funds without any accounting to the CC IRA. In addition to any money expended locally and not reported, the CC IRA reported **that it spent over one-half its total revenue for the year - 170,000 of 300,000 rubles - on aid to political prisoners in capitalist countries.** Most of the money sent from the Soviet Union for aid to political prisoners abroad was disbursed through the German (42.5%) and the Bulgarian (28%) sections. The remainder was parceled among twelve other European countries, China, and Japan. Germany and Bulgaria were, of course, the states in which the Communists made abortive attempts at revolution during the autumn of 1923.

The IRA also began on a very small scale to develop its potential as a vehicle of Communist agitation and propaganda (агитпроп: агитация и пропаганда). Aside from an inconsequential amount of published propaganda, the bulk of Red Aid agitprop was related to the various commemorative days celebrated by the Comintern. The revolutionary anniversary with which IRA became most closely connected was March 18, the founding date of the Paris Commune in 1871. The Fourth Comintern Congress had already designated March 18 to be an annual "Day of Aid to Revolutionary Fighters", an idea congenial to IRA, even though the date was not at that time linked with the organization.

Four aims summarized the objectives of IRA agitation and propaganda for years to come, included the following:

- 1) to win the sympathies of the broad masses for imprisoned revolutionary fighters.
- 2) to intensify the fight for the amnesty of “our persecuted revolutionaries”.
- 3) to increase the collection of aid for political prisoners and their families.
- 4) "to give moral strength and relief to our prisoners". After 1923 the founding day of the Paris Commune was consistently identified as the Day of IRA and was celebrated as the organization's first and most important annual campaign.

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**As a result:** By the end of 1923 International Red Aid was a well-established Comintern auxiliary. It had begun to form a network of sections that would eventually extend to seventy-three countries. IRA was not yet an overwhelmingly effective dispenser of aid, although 170,000 rubles (about \$86,000) spent on relief was a creditable beginning. But the organization had thus far operated within a rather narrow sphere; the full potential of its usefulness to Comintern strategy was still unrealized. In its first year, as the ECCI observed, IRA had followed a severely limited course in confining its activities to aiding political prisoners. During the next two and a half years a broader definition of IRA tasks would be worked out amid larger controversies within the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern.

## The purpose of International Red aid

The possibility of a conflict over the purpose of International Red Aid appeared late in 1922, but only in the early months of 1924 did the possibility become reality. Once the debate had begun, however, it continued until the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI in 1926. **The issue of controversy was whether IRA should be a narrowly Communist aid organization or a broader, "non-party" agitational and organizational weapon of the United Front.** The outcome of the debate over the aims of IRA determined the nature of the organization and its activities at least until 1935.

**The course of the debate was significant because it was conducted on the periphery of the struggle for power within the Soviet Union in the aftermath of Lenin's death in January 1924.** Grigori Zinoviev, one of the major contenders, precipitated the IRA controversy when he used the organization as a medium through which he expressed his theories of revolution.

The debate over the purpose of IRA was opened by Zinoviev, the Comintern chairman, when he spoke on January 30, 1924, to an All-Union Conference of MOPR USSR. Fight against the "white terror". He said, in Germany, "thousands of worker-Communists are left without a crust of bread because they are Communists." In Yugoslavia severe repression had forced the Party underground. Similar pictures were drawn of the situations in Japan, Bulgaria, and Italy. Zinoviev also suggested that in countries where the class struggle was not severe, as in the United States, IRA should provide an organizational structure to parallel weak Communist Parties and to help strengthen them.

Zinoviev expected IRA to benefit the Communist movement in two ways. First, the aid given incarcerated revolutionaries would enable them to survive the temporary recovery of capitalism and **to conserve their strength for the later revolution**. In the second place, IRA seems to have been considered an organizational **“alternative to the Party”** wherever Communists were weak or subjected to repression.



The ECCI presented a different interpretation in a report issued on the eve of the Fifth Comintern Congress. Appearing in the spring of 1924, the report summarized the activities of the various organizations of the Comintern during the eighteen months since the Fourth Congress, and it included a rather lengthy section devoted to the activities and prospects of International Red Aid.

The ECCI in its report implied that International Red Aid should be an instrument of the United Front "from below", the strategy to which the Comintern would shift at its Fifth Congress (June-July 1924). **The policy of the United Front "from above", calling for temporary Communist alliance with Social-Democratic parties, had been called into question when the Saxony uprising of October 1923 failed at least partly because the Social-Democratic leadership refused to support the Communist initiative.**

As a result the Fifth Congress required that, except in special circumstances, the United Front strategy was henceforth to be applied "from below". **Instead of alliance with Socialist leaders, Communists were now to appeal directly to the Social- Democratic rank-and-file, seeking to bring them under Communist influence while attacking their leaders.** The new interpretation of the United Front directly affected the character of IRA. So long as IRA was presented in narrowly terms (i.e., Zinoviev's interpretation), it would have little appeal to the non-Communist masses. As a seemingly non-partisan organization disseminating propaganda and enlisting the masses in its ranks, however, IRA was made to order for the United Front "from below".

Yet the conflict between the front's alternative purposes was not resolved, Furthermore, the Congress considered it essential that Communist Parties help enlarge and strengthen IRA, and it specified three ways in which they were to work toward this end.

1. Communist Parties must in every way support IRA and promote the creation of IRA organizations, sections, and branches in their countries, while urging their members to take active part in Red Aid work and to pay regular dues.

2. **The Party press must devote the greatest attention to agitation and propaganda for aid to revolutionary fighters.**

3. ...attention to IRA must be given in all Party campaigns. The resolution also confirmed March 18 as the Day of IRA and noted that all sections of the Comintern were to participate in its celebration. The Fifth Comintern Congress apparently held International Red Aid in rather high regard; it certainly gave the front a far stronger endorsement than the Fourth Congress had done.



- a. The question of how International Red Aid could most effectively serve the Comintern once again became an issue in March 1925. And again Zinoviev was responsible for arousing the controversy, this time when he spoke to the First All-Union Congress of MOPR USSR (March 17-18).
- b. Zinoviev's speech to the MOPR USSR Congress summarized his philosophy of revolution, which was to be condemned as "ultraleftist" in 1927. He held that IRA must devote its energies almost exclusively to providing "aid to revolutionary workers of the whole world persecuted by the bourgeoisie."
- c. The spokesman for the EC IRA at the Congress was V. P. Kolarov, whose presence in this capacity was an implicit rejection of Zinoviev's position since he had not supported Zinoviev at the IRA Conference in July 1924, and, more importantly, had become identified with Stalin. Kolarov did discuss the necessity of aiding revolutionary fighters, and he urged that the Party give increased support to IRA. When he defined the purpose of the organization, however, **he declared its "most important task" to be the "mobilization of the broadest masses under the banner of international solidarity"**. Kolarov did not attack the statements of Zinoviev; he simply ignored them.

After the MOPR USSR Congress the matter of determining what the Comintern expected of International Red Aid was taken over by the Executive Committee of the Communist International in the Fifth and Sixth Plenums of the ECCI (March 21-April 6, 1925, and February 17-March 15, 1926, respectively). These two meetings of the Comintern leadership exercised more influence over the policies and activities of IRA than any others between the Fourth and the Seventh Comintern Congresses.

The Fifth Plenum adopted a resolution devoted specifically to the question of IRA and its place in Comintern strategy. The resolution stressed the importance of IRA in the face of intensifying "white terror", growing fascism, and deepening class struggle; and it included among the responsibilities of IRA in this situation both **the influence it was to extend over non-Communists** and the aid it was to give revolutionary fighters. The Plenum placed itself firmly in support of the offensive interpretation of IRA by emphasizing the mass influence of the organization far more than the aid it rendered.

The ECCI declared that International Red Aid should become a "truly mass, non-party, public organization", the purpose of which was to involve the "toiling masses" in the revolutionary movement. **IRA was to be "an elementary school to educate the masses in the spirit of international proletarian solidarity"**. Its usefulness to the Comintern would be twofold. First, it would through agitation and propaganda either neutralize the unaffiliated masses or gain their active support. Second, it would provide "a reserve from which the Communist Party may be replenished", acting as a sort of clearing house for potential Party members.

Thus the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI ended the debate over the purpose of IRA by rejecting almost completely Zinoviev's "defensive interpretation". **International Red Aid was no longer to be considered a Communist organization, but rather an independent class organization only incidentally supported by Communists.**



Not only did the Fifth ECCI Plenum state unambiguously the use to be made of International Red Aid; it also suggested the value of auxiliary organizations in general. The theses adopted by the Plenum defined the United Front simply; it was **“the method of revolutionary agitation and organization of the masses - i.e., the correct approach of Communists toward the broad working mass in a given stage of the movement.”** A primary means of reaching and enveloping these broad masses, the theses declared, was the **"establishment of a whole series of auxiliary non-party organizations"**. The Plenum unquestionably placed IRA in the category of auxiliary organizations mentioned in the theses.

The Fifth Plenum introduced the idea of expanding the use of auxiliary organizations, and the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI (during February and March 1926) elaborated upon the earlier suggestion. Its general resolution on the Communist movement demanded that "various forms of mass organizations be established in every country". The resolution continued, "of the organizations already in existence, the work of IRA above all demands the support of Communists."

The Sixth Plenum formed a special Commission on Mass Work, headed by the prominent Comintern figure, Otto Kuusinen. In his report for the Commission Kuusinen declared, **"We must, so to speak, create a whole solar system of organizations and small committees around the Communist Parties."** Kuusinen stressed the value of sympathetic, but non-Communist, organizations; International Red Aid was specified as an example.

The system of fronts to which Kuusinen referred was described more fully in the resolution presented by his Commission, **"On Methods and Forms of Organizationally Enveloping the Masses Drawn into the Sphere of Communist Influence"**. This document was probably the most important ever issued by the Comintern on the subject of front organizations. The special concern of the Kuusinen resolution was the type of body it described as the **"sympathetic mass organization created to fulfill special tasks"**; International Red Aid was again named.

Two kinds of these sympathetic groups were identified according to their relationship with the Comintern: those “autonomously dependent” and those fully independent. Although none were given at the Plenum, examples of organizations "autonomously dependent" upon the Comintern would probably include the Communist Youth International and the International of Communist Women. International Red Aid, on the other hand, fell into the "independent" group; it was not to be considered an overtly Communist organization.

If IRA was to be independent of the Comintern, how did the Comintern maintain control over the policies and activities of IRA? The resolution presented by Kuusinen's Commission answered this question explicitly. **All Communists in a “sympathetic mass organization” such as IRA were to organize themselves into a "fraction", especially in the central apparatus of the front.** The activities of the fraction were to be conducted under the "political leadership of Party organs on the basis of instructions and directives of the ECCI". The great importance of this kind of Communist work was strongly emphasized:

“Every Communist Party member must be aware that fraction work in mass organizations [...] is also *Party work*, and for most members of the Party is even the most important part of their Party work.”

You need to remember:

- 1. Policies and decisions of the Red Aid central apparatus were thus subject to the approval of the Comintern apparatus, even though IRA as an organization was in no way formally tied to the Comintern.**
2. The United Front strategy had been refined and strengthened when the ECCI during 1925 and early 1926 specified the place to be filled by International Red Aid and other "sympathetic mass organizations".
3. In the case of IRA the decisions of the ECCI, which concluded the controversy **over how the front would be used**, required that relief activities must be secondary to **agitation and propaganda**, although relief was definitely not abandoned.



## Consequently:

a. **The resolution of the debate over purpose, defined by the Fifth and Sixth Plenums, also reflected the political struggle within the Soviet Union, for it reinforced the strategy against which Zinoviev had set himself.** The controversy within International Red Aid concerning the utility of the organization helped to clarify the issues of dissension within IRA and the Comintern. In resolving that controversy, Comintern and Red Aid leaders revealed that IRA would serve international Communism as an offensive weapon of the United Front "from below".

b. International Red Aid, founded in 1922 primarily to dispense relief to incarcerated revolutionaries, by 1926 had been transformed into an **organization to disseminate Communist propaganda under the allegedly non-partisan banner of creating "international solidarity"** among the "toiling masses". This shift in purpose determined the character of the organization and its activities, as well as the relationship between it and the Comintern, at least until 1935. **The changes in IRA also reflected significant and closely related trends in the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern, namely, the rapid decline of Zinoviev and the simultaneous final rejection of his "aggressive" revolutionary policy in favor of the more "passive" strategy of the United Front.**

c. The year 1926 marked the emergence of International Red Aid as a recognized component of the total revolutionary strategy of the Comintern. **Having already set up a sound organizational structure, IRA now began to refine its methods of reaching the non-Communist masses, i.e., its weapons of agitation and propaganda. The precise relationship between the Comintern and its auxiliary was also stated, a relationship in which IRA acted strictly according to the dictates of the Comintern, while carefully maintaining a formal independence.** The years before 1926 had molded International Red Aid to the needs of the Comintern; and after 1926 until its dissolution in 1943 IRA served its parent, faithfully executing the demands of Comintern's policy.

## Comintern and USSR: a fundamental relation

“EXTRACTS FROM THE RESOLUTION OF THE FOURTH  
COMINTERN

CONGRESS ON 'FIVE YEARS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

5 December 1922

. . The fourth world congress of the Communist International observes that Soviet Russia, the proletarian State, now that it is no longer forced to defend its bare existence by force of arms, has turned with unexampled vigour to the construction and development of its economy, keeping steadily in sight the transformation to communism. The separate stages and measures leading to this goal, the transitional steps of the so-called new policy, are the outcome, on the one hand, **of the particular given objective and subjective historical conditions in Russia**, and, on the other, of the slow rate of development of the world revolution and of the isolation of the Soviet republic in the midst of capitalist States. . . .

The fourth world congress reminds the proletarians of all countries that the proletarian revolution can never triumph completely within a single country; rather must it triumph internationally, as world revolution. The labour of Soviet Russia, its struggle for existence, for the achievements of the revolution, is the fight for the liberation of the proletarians, the oppressed and exploited of the whole world, from the chains of slavery. The Russian proletarians have more than done their duty as the revolutionary protagonists of the world proletariat. The world proletariat must at last do theirs. **In all countries the workers, the disinherited, and the enslaved, must proclaim their most active solidarity, moral, economic, and political, with Soviet Russia. Not merely international solidarity, but their own most fundamental interests demand that for this purpose they must take up the sharpest fight against the bourgeoisie and the capitalist State. In every country their battle-cry must be: Hands off Soviet Russia! De jure recognition of Soviet Russia! Active support of every kind for the economic construction of Soviet Russia!** Every strengthening of Soviet Russia means a weakening of the world bourgeoisie. The five years of Soviet Russia's existence is the most severe blow that world capitalism has ever received, and one from which it will not recover”.



## Comintern's secret operations

When the plans of the Comintern and the KPD to seize power in Germany by means of an armed revolution failed in October 1923, the Comintern directed its efforts chiefly to Britain. At the Fifth Congress in 1924 Zinoviev stated:

“Politically, the most important section of the Communist International, at present, is not the German, nor the Russian, but the British Section. Here we are faced by remarkable situations: a Party of only three to four thousand members, wields far wider influence than would appear from these figures. For in Britain we are dealing with a different tradition. MacDonald's party is not much stronger than ours. [...] The tradition of a mass party is not known in England. [...] To form a mass party in England is the chief task of the entire present period. The conditions are There.”

A prominent Comintern member stated: “How does it happen that all the fundamental problems of the Communist International fail to stir our fraternal British party?... All these problems have the appearance of being forcibly injected into the activities of the British Communist Party... In the British party there is a sort of special system which may be characterized thus: the party is a society of great friends”.

At the end of 1929 Comintern ousted the previous leadership from office, during the process of bolchevization of all the western communist parties, and imposed a new leadership on the CPGB. Harry Politt, the new General Secretary, abandoned all attempt to reach an accommodation with the “class enemies” of the Labour Party. During 1930 the CPGB denounced Ramsay MacDonald’s second government as “social fascist”.

On 11 October 1929 the Comintern had sent secret instructions to the CPGB urging it to set up cells within the armed services aimed at collecting secret information, agitating against commanding officers and distributing anti-militarist propaganda.

In 1929 the French Communist Party (PCF) set up a network of “worker correspondents” who were asked to send information from military units and the arms industry to the Party newspaper, *L’humanité*, which forwarded to Moscow. This open invitation to covert activities led to the imprisonments of much of the PCF leadership. In addition, Comintern invited other Parties to follow the example of the PCF.

More precisely, in June 1934 Kim Philby, who had graduated from Trinity College in 1933, had his first contact with his soviet controller. He spent most of the year after graduation in Vienna working for the International Workers Relief Organization (connected to the MOIP political issues) and acting as a courier for the underground Austrian Communist Party. While in Vienna he met and married a young communist Litzi Friedmann. Almost thirty years later, after his defection to the previous USSR, Philby admit how he had been recruited:

“... Lizzy came home one evening and told me that she had arranged for me to meet a “man of decisive importance”. I questioned her about it but she would give me no details. The rendez-vous took place in Regents Park. The man described himself as Otto. I discovered much later from a photograph in MI5 files that the name he went by was Arnold Deutsch. I think that he was of Czech origin... A convinced communist, he had a strong humanistic streak. He hated London, adored Paris, and spoke of it with deeply loving affection. He was a man of considerable cultural background. Otto spoke at great length, arguing that a person with my family background and possibilities could do far more for Communism than the run-of-the-mill party member or sympathizer... I accepted. His first instructions were that both Lizzy and I should break off as quickly as possible all personal contact with our Communist friends”.



After he had left England for the last time, Deutsch had an even more outstanding academic record than any of the Cambridge 5. As Philby recalled, he was of Czech origin, his parents had moved to Austria when he was a child. At Vienna University he had progressed in only five years from undergraduate entry to the degree of PhD with distinction. Though his doctorate was in chemistry, he had also taken courses in psychology and philosophy. After being awarded the PhD, he had, remarkably, combined secret work for Comintern and the OGPU with open collaboration with the German Communist psychologist Wilhelm Reich.

Deutsch had the lead role in recruiting the Cambridge five. His strategy based on the cultivation of youth radical high-fliers from leading universities before they entered the corridors of power. As he mentioned: “ Given that the Communist movement in these universities is on a mass scale and that there is a constant turnover of students, it follows that individual Communists whom we pluck out of the party will pass unnoticed, both by the Party itself and by the outside world. People forget about them. And if at some time they do remember that they were Communists, this will be put down to a passing fancy of youth, especially as those concerned are scions of the bourgeoisie. **It is up to us to give the individual recruit a new [non-Communist] political personality**”.

Deutsch's initial reports to Moscow on Philby reflected his interest in psychology as well as his intelligence training. He quoted about Philby:

“He comes from a peculiar family. His father [currently adviser to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia] is considered at present to be the most distinguished expert on the Arab world... He is an ambitious tyrant and wanted to make a great man out of his son. He repressed all his son's desires. That is why Sonny is a very timid and irresolute person. He has a bit of a stammer and this increases his diffidence... **However, he handles our money very carefully.** He enjoys great love and respect for his seriousness and honesty. He was ready, without questioning, to do anything for us and has shown all his seriousness and diligence working for us”.

Deutsch asked Philby to recommend some of his Cambridge contemporaries. His first two nominations were Donald Maclean, who had just graduated from Trinity Hall with first-class honours in modern languages, and Guy Burges of Trinity College, who was working on a history PhD thesis which he was never to complete. By the end of 1934, with Philby's help, Deutsch had recruited both, telling them –like Philby- to distance themselves from Communist friends.

The first of the Cambridge Five to penetrate the British institutions was Maclean, who entered the Foreign Office in 1935. Burgess's main role in his early years as a Soviet agent was as a talent-spotter. Early in 1937, by then BBC producer, he arranged the first meeting between Deutsch and Antony Blunt, French linguist, art historian and fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Blunt in turn identified as a likely recruit his former student John Cairncross, a Scottish Marxist. Deutsch met Cairncross in May 1937 and reported to Moscow that he "was very happy that we had established contact with him and was ready to start working for us at once". The files of the previous KGB credit Deutsch with the recruitment of –approximately- twenty agents during his time in Britain. The most successful, however, were the Cambridge Five: Philby, Maclean, Burgess, Blunt and Cairncross.

**Which are the reasons of the above commitment expressed by former Comintern's members and KGB spies working directly for the OMS or the soviet secret services ?** How can we explain their actions?



## Comintern's cadres commitment

The historical context after the end of WWII: espionage, counter-espionage and communist ideology.

Example (Berlin): a. The founder of the west Germany Intelligence Reinhard Gehlen had been Hitler's chief of Intelligence on the eastern front -intelligence Officer who was chief of the Wehrmacht Foreign Armies East (FHO) military-intelligence unit during WWII (1942–45)- and by the end of 1944 he cut a deal with the Americans and turn over not simply his staff and himself but also his documents.

b. His chief of Counter-Intelligence Heinz Felfe, former Nazi a German spy, became a soviet agent. He worked with Hans Clemens, a former colleague from their days in German Intelligence. Both Felfe and Clemens were from Dresden.



In order to understand what bonded Western European communists to communist ideology and to Comintern's institutions, attention must be paid to the following areas:

1 the political, philosophical and cultural attachment forged by an intellectual emotional and psychological identity with a humanitarian belief against exploitation inspired by the October revolution and the USSR in general. (For example :The institutional question).

2 the ideological-political nexus as a constituent part of a unified ideological architecture based on programs agreed upon and common goals imposed through the long process of bolshevization.

3 the personal nexus forged by the transfer of cadres from Moscow to the head offices of the Communist Parties in Western Europe and vice versa.

4 The constant belief that “In all countries the workers, the disinherited, and the enslaved, must proclaim their most active solidarity, moral, economic, and political, with Soviet Russia”.

Last but not least: All the Comintern's cadres as Deutscher and the Cambridge 5 shared **the common ideological faith** in the future of a humanity freed from the exploitation and alienation of capitalism.