

Leonid Babičenko

The International Red Aid

1. The Formation of the International Red Aid

The tide of social disturbances in Europe caused by the Russian revolution in October 1917 and the next year in Germany and Austria-Hungary soon began to come down. The bourgeois reaction went into the offensive and began mass terror and juridical persecutions of class struggle participants. It was necessary for the proletariat to retreat and to keep a vanguard of fighters. In a number of countries communist unions had appeared, which rendered material, moral and legal aid to imprisoned revolutionaries and emigrants.

The participants of the revolutionary events in Russia remembered the experience of the Political Red Cross, which was created by the Bolsheviks during the First Russian Revolution. Its branches functioned actively till 1918 in different countries, including Australia. These branches collected money in order to organize escapes of Russian revolutionaries from prisons, exiles and penal servitude, to support their families and to hire advocates.

Because of the circumstances at the end of 1922 in Moscow on the initiative of the "Society of Old Bolsheviks" and the "Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles" an organization called International Red Aid (IRA) was founded. In the USSR this organization was called "Meždunarodnaja organizacija pomošči borcam revoljutsii" (MOPR). The founders of the organization asked Comintern for support. The Fourth Comintern Congress endorsed the organization on November 30. The Congress asked communist parties to support the national sections of IRA, which were meant to help communists and non-party persons. The Soviet communists had a special role, they were obliged to help "the victims of political struggle for communism" and to promote "the international unification of all who sympathized with the communist idea".¹

In the middle of December 1922 with the aid of the Executive Committee of Comintern (ECCI) the Central Bureau of IRA was formed under the leadership of the Polish communist Julian Marchlewski. The representatives of the communist parties and national associations from Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the USSR became members of the Bureau.

In the first year of its existence the Central Bureau was the leading centre of the Soviet section and of the international organization. Since the beginning of 1924 an independent staff of the Soviet section of MOPR was set up: the Central Committee (CC). The Soviet MOPR was headed by the old Bolshevik P.N. Lepešinskij. On the eve of 1923 the Bureau addressed to the citizens of Soviet Russia with its first appeal for joining the new organization and supporting foreign revolutionaries.² The appeal found a broad response among the people. Branches of MOPR appeared in many towns and villages of the USSR. An important role in the formation of IRA in the USSR played the instruction of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party to local committees, which obliged them to take an active part in the solidarity movement with persecuted revolutionaries in foreign countries.³ Along with the formation of IRA sections in the USSR, the national unions of Red Aid emerged in the European countries, in North and South Africa and in Asia. By the time of the First Conference of IRA (July 1924) twenty-eight sections or (official name) "Fraternal independent unions" had entered the organization. The Conference determined the structure of the organization, developed the forms and methods of work and adopted the regulations (ustav) of IRA. In these regulations the organization declared itself a non-party union and formulated its aims: to render material, moral, political and juridical aid to victims of revolutionary and class struggle in all countries by the arousing of international solidarity consciousness in the masses.⁴ By this time the formation process of IRA had been finished, and the links between the national sections began to

¹ 10 let MOPR v rezoljucijah i dokumentach (Moscow, 1932), p. 260.

² Ibid., pp. 7-9.

³ "O sodejstvii Meždunarodnojo organizacii pomošči borcam revoljucii", *Izvestija ZK RKP(b)*, No. 2 (1923), p. 97.

⁴ *Pervaja meždunarodnaja konferencija MOPR, 14-16 Juli 1924. Stenografičeski otčet* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 112-115.

strengthen. The new directive body - the Executive Committee (EC) - was elected. The structure of the EC was the following: representatives of national sections of Red Aid, Comintern, the Central Committee of the RCP(b), the International Women's Secretariat of the ECCI, and of the organizations which were the branches of Comintern (International Labour Aid, Trade-Unions Red International, Communist Youth International and others).

2. 1923-1928

From the very beginning IRA declared in its regulations the adoption of the non-party principle, the United Front strategy and the readiness to support all persecuted persons independently of their party-belonging. But all these principles were only declared, the leaders of most Red Aid sections were communists. In many cases the communist parties and Red Aid sections had common funds. That was so, for example, in Germany in 1923-1924 when Y. Stasova (under the pseudonym Hertha) simultaneously was the Comintern emissary in the German communist party and the secretary of the EC of Red Aid. She distributed funds received from Moscow according to her own discretion, and both sides were displeased with that. Sometimes the money intended for political prisoners and for trials maintenance was spent on party needs. That led to conflicts between the party and Red Aid, and also displeased political prisoners and their relatives. The EC insisted on organizational independence of the sections, but it did not pretend to absolute independence of communist parties and Comintern.

All the principal and minor questions of IRA and its foreign sections activities were under the careful notice of the ECCI and the Central Committee of the RCP(b)-CPSU(b). IRA problems were discussed more than fifty times between the Fourth and the Fifth Congress of Comintern. During the following years this tendency remained invariable. The activity of IRA was discussed by the high authorities of Comintern, at its congresses and at the EC plenums. In July 1924 in a resolution of the Fifth Congress called "International Red Aid" it was ascertained that this organization unified the masses of working people independently of their party-belonging and became "one of the main means of united front strategy".⁵ But in reality it was not so. After the failure of grandiose plans concerning the armed insurrection in Germany in the autumn of 1923, Comintern diverged from this strategy. Among the Comintern leaders and in the RCP(b) the Stalin-Zinov'ev opinion was widely spread that social-democracy became a counter-revolutionary party, a wing of fascism, which co-operated with the bourgeoisie. That led to refusal of common actions with the leaders of social-democracy and of a united front strategy. Red Aid thoroughly fulfilled all directives of Comintern because of dependence upon the latter. IRA carried out the Comintern policy, but in accordance with its primary humane aims of standing up for democracy and lawfulness in bourgeois countries, it sometimes exceeded the bounds of Comintern's ideological directives. Due to its specific character Red Aid was very useful for Comintern and communist parties because it promoted their influence on the masses, bourgeois intelligentsia, middle levels of the population, which often were far from communist ideas. But in spite of the dogmatic line of Comintern the activity of IRA in different countries was more adequate to real situation. In 1926 Georgi Dimitrov had observed that the practical activity of IRA should be "everyday propaganda in favour of the United Front".⁶

During the next three years after its first conference IRA continued to work actively and simultaneously formed the authorities of the organization in the centre and the periphery. The number of IRA sections had increased up to forty-four units, the membership had increased up to 11,200,000 members, but the Soviet members formed the half.⁷ Rapid numeral increasing demanded variety and resourcefulness in the methods of work and it was necessary to take into account the local conditions in each country. The second IRA conference, which was held in Moscow at the end of March-beginning of April 1927, was devoted to these problems. The experience of the previous period was generalized and the aim of transformation of IRA into a mass organization of working people was determined. A more ramified structure of leadership similar to that of Comintern was created. The new structure included an EC, a presidium, a secretariat, secretariats of groups of countries (*Landessekretariate*), and local bureaus in Berlin, Paris, Vienna and Latin America. Comintern conducted the

⁵ Bela Kun (ed.), *Komunističeskij Internacional v dokumentach. Rešenija, tezisy i vozzvanija kongressov Kominterni i plenumov IKKI. 1919-1932* (Moscow, 1933), p. 451.

⁶ Georgi Dimitrov, "Mopr i bor'ba za edinyj front", *MOPR*, No. 4 (1926), pp. 4-5.

⁷ *Vtoraja meždunarodnaja konferencija MOPR* (Moscow, 1927), p. 73.

policy of "bolshevization" of parties and demanded to organize party-cells in the enterprises, and IRA also insisted on creation of Red Aid cells in different countries, similar to the Soviet cell. The Conference Resolution obliged IRA to create such cells in enterprises, the creation of territorial unions was also allowed. Under the influence of the Soviet section all IRA sections sought to increase the number of members, and even a whole staff of an enterprise could join IRA. In spite of the declarations about the respect of the non-party principle and statements about aspiration to form central and local direction bodies from the representatives of different parties (IRA members), the conference tried to isolate the organization. At the conference it was stated that for more effective support of persecuted revolutionaries only a single section of IRA should function in each country. That statement appeared because of the creation of the Matteotti Fund in the spring of 1926. The Fund was organized at the initiative of Socialist Labour International. This organization intended to protect social-democrats and support "the working-class movement in the countries where democracy was absent", as was declared in the regulations of the new union.⁸ The support of working-class struggle and democratic principles in countries with communist and fascist regimes was another main aim of the Fund.

The Matteotti Fund became a counter-balance to International Red Aid. The controversy between communists and social-democrats was transferred into the sphere of humane aid, thus the collaboration between different parts of working class was hampered. It led to the decrease of real support of revolutionaries.

The part of the resolution concerning the future work of the sections included demands of using more correct and diverse methods of work, involving more people into the sections and taking into account concrete conditions. But very often such resolutions remained only declarations. The problems of juridical support of revolutionaries were discussed in detail at the conference. These problems became the matters of discussions in special commissions, which analyzed the activity of the juridical bureau in different countries and of the Central Bureau in Moscow. Directives and resolutions concerning measures for more correct defence of the accused at the trials were adopted. In the autumn of 1927 IRA carried out a juridical meeting, and in December 1929 a conference was held in Paris, at which the International Juridical Association was founded. This Association had the task to resist anti-democratic laws in different countries and to defend political prisoners.

At its 1927 conference IRA was obliged to strengthen the agitation and educational work among the non-communist masses with the purpose of forcing them to realize the community of their class interests. According to the words of the Soviet section leader, Lepešinskij, "They should pass through the communist school".⁹ The conference resolution attached great importance to the matter of agitation and propaganda and considered them as an independent line in IRA activity. Thus the aid itself became the secondary question. Another demand of the conference was that all sections should independently organize actions against the war and the menace of fascism and also celebrate the Tenth anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia. IRA leaders seriously believed that such measures could attract new members to the organization from the working people and intellectuals.

After a year the Sixth Comintern Congress insisted on the fulfilment of these tasks in a resolution concerning International Red Aid. The congress asked the communist parties to support IRA and also considered that the main aim of IRA should be the struggle against international fascism, racism and lynch court in the USA, and against the "imperialist terror" in China.¹⁰

At the conference problems concerning the support of political emigrants - the number of which had much increased - and questions connected with their right of sanctuary were discussed in detail. The IRA sections were obliged to involve wide sections of the population into the support movement of political refugees.¹¹

The conference became an important factor in the development of IRA and a new impulse for subsequent work. There was a progress in the work of the Austrian IRA section. Social-democrats were the most active members of this section. Illegal sections in the Balkan and in the Baltic countries managed to create legal

⁸ *Protiv belogo terrora. Rezoljucii kongressov Kominterni i plenumov IKKI* (Moscow, 1934), p. 24.

⁹ *Vtoraja meždunarodnaja konferencija MOPR*, p. 29.

¹⁰ *VI kongress Kominterni. Stenografičeskij otčet. Tezisy, rezoljucii, postanovlenija, vozzvanija*, Vol. VI (Moscow and Leningrad, 1929), p. 171.

¹¹ *Vtoraja meždunarodnaja konferencija MOPR*, p. 59-60.

sections. New sections sprang up in Latin America and Asia.¹²

3. 1928-1934

In the spring of 1928 IRA officially marked the fifth anniversary of the beginning of its practical activity. Its chairman Clara Zetkin wrote the introduction for a brochure on this first five years. In this introduction the successes of IRA in respect of strengthening the organization and supporting victims of bourgeois and fascist terror were described. There was marked also that IRA had become an important factor of public life. Zetkin unequivocally emphasized that Red Aid had sprung up not as the "battle subdivision" of a political party, but as an "international sanitary unit for the liberation struggle of exploited and oppressed people".¹³ Zetkin stated that IRA was not tied up with any party-political regulations, ceremonies or duties, and that the party membership of participants of revolutionary struggle, of terror victims or of IRA members was of no importance.

Zetkin was not an orthodox communist, so she tried to avoid the transformation of Red Aid into a branch of the respective communist parties. But IRA and Comintern resisted that. The leaders of Comintern and IRA also declared their organizations to be non-party institutions, but in practice these declarations were disproved. At the end 1928, beginning of 1929, when in Comintern a left tendency was displayed, there was a campaign against so-called "right-wingers" and "compromisers", especially in the German communist party in connection with the Wittorf case, and the non-party principle of Red Aid was seriously tested. At urgent request of the leaders of CPSU(b) and Comintern the purge (chistka) in German Communist Party touched its leaders - Wilhelm Döwle, W. Korbacher, J. Schler, Felix Schmidt and others. The purge took place in the territorial organizations. Clara Zetkin was against it, but she was called a "right-winger", and being alone she could not stand against the Red Aid dissidence.¹⁴ For several years there were two IRA wings, and that weakened the support movement of victims of bourgeois and fascist terror. From 1929-1931 Zetkin attempted anew to restore the unity of the organization, but her attempts failed.¹⁵

The communist party leaders followed the ECCI directives and fought with the right-wingers in the IRA sections. In 1928 the similar crisis broke out in the American IRA section, the International Labour Defence (ILD). Its secretary, D. Kennon, who was an ally of Trotsky and was therefore excluded from the communist party, tried to uphold the non-party principle of the ILD, but without success. Before long he and some active workers were discharged. The similar situation took place in the Belgian IRA section. Its leaders proposed to support Trotsky after his deportation from the USSR, but these intents were suppressed. The former leaders were replaced by orthodox communists.¹⁶

IRA suffered much because of its imitation of the forms and methods of propaganda of communist parties. The chairman of the German section, Wilhelm Pieck, when analyzing the work of the organization during 1929-1930, had established that the organization had no real united front strategy.¹⁷ That influenced the IRA members. Since 1929 the number of collective and individual members of the organization began to decrease. The fluctuation of IRA members increased. Because of the far leftist "class against class" tactics, the refusal of the united front strategy and all bourgeois institutions, and because of an over-estimation of the perspectives of Socialist revolution the relationships in working people environment, even in IRA, were badly aggravated.

The period of world-wide economic decline promoted the encroachment on civic rights and liberties. The polarization of political forces took place in this period, and the repressions of government and fascist bands against participants of class actions were strengthened. Under these conditions the fulfilment of the main tasks

¹² A.I. Avrus, *MOPR v bor'be protiv terrora i fašizma, 1922-1939* (Saratov, 1976), p. 142.

¹³ Clara Zetkin, "Zum Geleit. Vorwärts!", in *Fünf Jahre Internationale Rote Hilfe* (Berlin, 1928), p. 7-8.

¹⁴ Russian Center for Preservation and Study of Documents of Modern History (RCPSDMH), f. 539, op. 2, d. 342, l. 1-5, 95, 131-139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, d. 311, ll. 13-14, 22-25, 27-30.

¹⁶ *Faschismus, Trotzkismus und die internationale Solidaritätsbewegung* (Paris, 1937), pp. 46-48.

¹⁷ RCPSDMH, f. 539, op. 3, d. 515, l. 22.

of IRA - defence of bourgeois democracy and terror victims - became far more difficult. In spite of the tendency to politicize IRA, during all those years it tried to weaken the repressive measures of governments and fascist bands, to defend democratic achievements of previous years, and to expose the anti-national character of extraordinary laws introduced in a number of countries.

During the decline the IRA tasks were broadened. Traditionally supporting persecuted proletarians, it also took care of arrested strike participants, unemployed demonstrators and hunger-marchers. IRA members entered committees of strikers and unemployed.

The increase of social and political tensions in several countries forced the IRA sections to mobilize their work. Red Aid continued to support persecuted revolutionaries in Italy, the Balkan countries, Poland and even Indo-China and India.¹⁸

The largest mass movement of international solidarity in which many countries were involved was at that time the campaign in defence of nine black unemployed young men from Scottsboro (Alabama). They were falsely accused of the violation of white women and condemned to death. The EC of IRA and its sections during 1930-1935 organized protests in the press, meetings and trips through several European countries of the chairman of the American section, Luis Andgol, together with Ada Rite, the mother of two of the condemned men. The first success was achieved in the autumn of 1932, when the USA Supreme Court decided to revise the condemnation. Later IRA continued to support these young men, and the death sentence was repealed. In 1935 four of the young men were released.¹⁹

The scale of the international actions of IRA during the period of economical decline was smaller than that of the former period of stabilization. The reason of this was that IRA's likeness to communist parties. Controversy, severance of relations with the socialist parties and the Matteotti Fund - all this impeded common actions in defence of victims of terror and fascism.

The results of IRA activities during the first ten years of its existence were discussed at the International IRA Congress which was held in Moscow from 10-24 November 1932. Clara Zetkin could not participate in the Congress because of illness. In *Inprekorr* she published an article in which she called to working people to assist in IRA activities.²⁰ The ECCI member Bela Kun greeted the participants of the Congress, stating that "IRA was one of the main aides of Comintern". Reports on the activities of the EC and the Inspection Committee and the traditional reports on the support of victims of bourgeois governments and fascist units terror, on the international situation and on the tasks of IRA were submitted to the congress. The activity of the Soviet IRA section concerning the support of persecuted revolutionaries was highly estimated.²¹ Elena Stasova, who was vice-chairman but in fact directed IRA, made a report in which she mentions the numerical growth of the organization. On the contrary the number of collective members decreased, but that did not worry the IRA leaders, because they believed that the former members had not been active enough, and that those who had remained had made their work more actively.²²

In the congress documents and in a number of Soviet articles of the seventies it was noted that the numerical growth of the national IRA sections in the years of decline was caused by the non-party strategy. We believe that it was caused by the polarization of classes, because in the period numerical growth not only took place in communist parties, but also in fascist organizations, unions and movements. The likeness of IRA, although a humanitarian organization, to communist parties had strengthened in those years, that is why the process of secession from IRA began: some trade unions, sport and humanitarian social-democratic unions and bourgeois intelligentsia had left the organization.

¹⁸ Leonid Babičenko [et al.], "Iz istorii Meždunarodnoj organizacii pomošči borcam revoljucii", *Novaja i novejšaja istorija*, No. 6 (1972), pp. 78-79.

¹⁹ Arnol'd Nikolaevič Šlepakov (ed.), *Dviženie meždunarodnoj solidarnosti trudjaščichsja 1924-1932* (Kiev, 1980), pp. 176-186.

²⁰ Clara Zetkin, "An alle Werktätigen, an alle Brot-, Freiheit- und Kulturverlangenden!", *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz*, No. 89 (1932), pp. 2851-2853.

²¹ *Protokoll des ersten Weltkongresses der Internationalen Roten Hilfe [...]* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1933), p. 265.

²² Avrus, *MOPR v bor'be protiv terrora [...]*, p. 200.

The congress had taken into account the world situation and asked in its resolutions the sections to participate more actively in strikes and in public unions, especially social-democratic ones. Because of the increased danger of fascism and war the sections were obliged to participate in anti-fascist and anti-war actions. But the statements about IRA adherence to the principles of a non-party and united front strategy were rather symbolical. In 1932 a commission of the Political Secretariat of ECCI, which studied the activities of communists in the European IRA sections, had mentioned a "political and organizational lag" in their work, poor contacts with social-democratic trade and peasants unions. It was also admitted that the IRA sections "were not yet really non-party mass organizations and had less members than the communist parties, though there should be two or three times more members in IRA than in the communist parties".²³

The "class against class" tactics, the underestimation of fascist danger, the definition of the world situation as transition period to "the third round of revolutions and wars" - all that became the main part of IRA agitation.

In this period IRA was under the influence of Comintern and became its branch, that is why IRA had lost its own specific features. In a congress resolution it was especially mentioned that "the struggle against white terror and fascism is an integral part of the working masses struggle" and that agitation campaigns of IRA were "the concentrated forms of class struggle".²⁴

At the Congress the attacks on the Matteotti Fund and on social-democratic parties were repeated. These attacks only intensified the complex relationships between them, Comintern and IRA. A special document was issued concerning a report of Stasova, called "The enemies of IRA". The Matteotti Fund, the Juridical Fund in Norway and other "social-fascist and anarchical organizations" were ranked among the enemies, and besides this the inner enemies of IRA were mentioned: nine "right-opportunist and trotskyist" groups in Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Spain, China, Rumania, USA, Czechoslovakia and Ecuador, which were deviated or excluded from Red Aid from 1928-1931 during the Comintern's struggle against the "right-wing deviation".²⁵

A new stage in IRA development began in 1933, when the national-socialists came to power in Germany and the danger of fascism and war had increased. In this situation it was very important to struggle against the spread of reactionary ideology and war danger, and for democratic rights. IRA sought to defend the rights of persecuted revolutionaries, antifascists and participants of liberation movements by all available means.

Many sections worked under conditions of repression and illegality. The number of repressed and killed participants of class struggle increased enormously during 1933-1935 in Germany, Poland, Balkan and Baltic Countries and China.²⁶

The organization tried to support the revolutionary and antifascist movement and to defend the accused at unjust trials. It also supported repressed persons and their families and upheld their right of sanctuary.

The most massive and effective was the movement for supporting victims of German fascism, which were initiated in March 1933 on the initiative of ECCI. The IRA sections joined this movement. The campaign had been initiated to save the life of the German communist leader Ernst Thälmann and against the provocative arson of the *Reichstag*. There also was a campaign against the trial in Leipzig of the Bulgarian communists Georgi Dimitrov, Blagoj Popov and Vladimir Taneev.²⁷

The campaign week in favour of the victims of German fascism which took place in Europe from 18-23 June and in other parts of the world from 15-23 July found a broad response. During the week there were meetings and demonstrations against the assassination of German antifascists, convictions without trial and investigation, tortures, mockeries and the system of concentration camps. Money was collected for prisoners, political emigrants and their families. From 1933-1936 more than 100,00 persons, who had escaped arrests and

²³ RCPDSMH, f. 539, op. 2, d. 462, l. 97-104.

²⁴ *Rezoljuzii i postanovlenija Vsemirnogo kongressa MOPR* (Moscow, 1933), p. 15, 19.

²⁵ RCPDSMH, f. 539, op. 1, d. 23, l. 21-32.

²⁶ A.N. Šlepakov (ed.), *Meždunarodnaja solidarnost' trudjaščichsja v bor'be protiv fašizma i ugrosy vojny 1933-1939* (Kiev, 1984), p. 36-38.

²⁷ David Elasar (ed.), *Proces o podvođe rejchstaga i Georgij Dimitrov. Dokumenty*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1981), p. 39-41,

had not resigned themselves to fascist dictatorship, had emigrated from Germany via Czechoslovakia.²⁸

During the mass actions in defence of Georgi Dimitrov and his friends in Leipzig IRA together with the International Labour Aid (ILA) achieved mutual understanding with many international non-communist assistance committees and organized a counter-trial in London with the participation of famous lawyers, public figures and representatives of science and culture.

The steadfast position of Dimitrov, who defended revolutionary ideas and denounced fascism, along with the anti-fascist actions in many countries caused the appearance of the first non-party unions. Simultaneously with the campaign in defence of Dimitrov the movement of solidarity with Ernst Thälmann was organized by prisoners of the Hitlerite torture chambers. After the release of the accused in Leipzig the committees in defence of Thälmann and Dimitrov had unified and thus stirred the anti-fascists to greater activity. Red Aid asked to support not only communists - Edgar André, A. Lutgence, Arthur Ewert - but also social-democrats like Carl Mierendorf, anarchists like Erich Mühsam and bourgeois liberals like Carl von Ossietzky. The organization improved its authority by actively supporting the Austrian social-democrat *Schützbund*, which stirred up an anti-fascist rebellion in February 1934. The Austrian Red Aid, in spite of a ban, collected more than five thousand shillings during the first week of the solidarity actions. French Red Aid was the first organization to help the *Schützbund* members. In the USSR the money collecting campaign had an unprecedented character. In a very short the sum equal to one million Austrian shillings was collected. Soviet sections of IRA took care of 500 members of the *Schützbund*, who found shelter in the USSR. IRA had sent to Austria several delegations from England, France, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland to ascertain the situation and to distribute the means. French Red Aid organized the juridical defence of the February battles' participants which stood trials. The success of this action led to a numerical growth of Red Aid in Austria. For several months of 1934 the strength of the organization increased by five thousand persons.²⁹

The solidarity campaign with the Asturia miners, who had risen against the reactionary Spanish government, was also very successful. In this campaign communists, socialists, anarchists and partisans of other political parties, which were indignant at savage reprisal with rebels, participated. The most active were the IRA sections of Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR. In the USSR about 700,000 golden roubles for the support of the miners were collected.³⁰

4. 1935-1939

In the course of the above-mentioned actions in several regions committees of unity were organized, which consolidated communists, socialists, anti-fascist intelligentsia and middle strata. The Red Aid sections of France, Spain and Austria had gained the greatest authority in this period.

Summarizing the experience and taking into account the wish of common actions among social-democrats, the EC of IRA began to change its tactics. At a meeting in February 1934 the EC had discussed the possibility of common actions of labour organizations. In a resolution the EC emphasized that the work "in reformist organizations among the social-democratic workers was of great importance" for all the sections.³¹ The resolution recommended to create common supporting committees, to call a unification conference, to participate in different strike and anti-war committees, and to be members of delegations sent to political trials against anti-fascists. The document admitted common actions only together with basic socialist organizations and demanded to strengthen the struggle against the Matteotti Fund. But even that slight deviation from the former line much favoured the consolidation of anti-fascist forces for a rebuff to fascism and reaction. At the end of 1934 the EC of IRA, due to successful common actions of the French, Spanish and Austrian sections, had proposed the leaders of the Labour Socialist and Amsterdam Trade Union Internationals to help the Spanish trade unions, to support the miners of Asturia and to organize common international actions in defence of fascism

²⁸ Avrus, *MOPR v bor'be protiv terrora* [...], p. 213.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 218-219.

³⁰ Jurij Lvuvin, *Internacionalism v dejstvii* (Moscow, 1985), p. 138.

³¹ Anatolij Avrus and Leonid Babičenko, "MOPR i edinstvo dejstvij trudjaščichsja", *Rabočij klass i sovremenyj mir*, No. 5 (1972), p. 156.

victims in other countries. This constructive proposal was not supported by the leaders of social-democracy.³² The IRA sections of France, Poland, Germany and Rumania appealed to socialist parties and trade unions with the same proposals. Red Aid of Belgium, Greece, France and Czechoslovakia, together with socialists, managed to carry out common actions in support of the Asturia rebels. These events had quickened the revision of the policy of the EC of IRA. For example, in September 1934 IRA had oriented the Belgian section to find an agreement with national progressive organizations. The appeals of the EC of IRA were concrete, they called for common struggle for the release of political prisoners and to submit an amnesty draft. IRA also appealed for the elimination of the laws restricting the democratic liberties and for ensuring the right of sanctuary for political emigrants from countries with military-fascist dictatorships.

At the end of 1934 IRA had directed its sections to work within Christian, bourgeois and fascist unions. The EC insisted on the observation by the sections of the non-party principle, asked them to be free from sectarianism and to be occupied with every-day practical questions first of all.

In January 1935 the Political Commission of ECCI had marked the ways of making IRA a real mass non-party anti-fascist united front organization. From now on it should participate in political actions with its own slogans, widen its social base and let non-party workers participate in the leadership.

At the Seventh Comintern Congress, due to efforts of the EC and of the IRA sections, agreements with social-democratic organizations were concluded in some countries. These agreements concerned common actions against fascism and bourgeois reaction. The successes achieved in the sphere of common actions in defence of terror victims were marked at this congress.³³

Dimitrov stated that "MOPR had gained affection and gratitude of hundreds of thousands of proletarians and revolutionary elements of peasants and intelligentsia".³⁴ He reminded of the fact that it would be impossible for communist parties to realize the policy of an anti-fascist people's front according to the decisions of the Seventh Congress "without the participation of mass working-people's organizations".³⁵ The congress resolutions obliged IRA to become a "real mass organization of working-people in all capitalist countries [...], to be a kind of a 'Red Cross' of a united proletarian front and of an anti-fascist people's front, which should involve millions of working people [...]"³⁶

In August 1935 a plenary meeting of the EC of IRA took place, in order to reorganize the work of the organization in accordance with the resolutions of the Seventh Comintern Congress. The plenum recommended to involve the various strata of society, except for the upper bourgeoisie, fascists and other reactionaries, in the Red Aid activities. IRA was obliged to be more active in fascist unions and to legalize the solidarity movement in the countries with fascist and military-dictatorial regimes. It also should support persecuted anti-fascists, appealing to all political and mass organizations struggling against reaction and fascism. In a resolution the plenum appealed to refuse decidedly the former methods and style of work and to achieve a unity of actions on national and international levels.

Using the experience of Red Aid of France and Spain, the EC recommended all its sections to cooperate with the numerous solidarity committees, founded by progressive intelligentsia, social-democracy and other political organizations, and also to create themselves similar committees and to involve in them the various strata of society. In accordance with the decisions of the ECCI communists should work in these committees on a par with the others and not dictate their will. Communist parties would send the most experienced party workers for working in IRA sections. IRA was successful in this unification of the masses on the basis of anti-fascism and democracy. It fulfilled the decisions of the plenum of August 1935 in the situation of fascist danger.

³² "Einheitsaktion für alle Opfer des weißen Terrors und der kapitalistischen Klassenjustiz", *Rundschau*, No. 12 (1935), pp. 648-649.

³³ "Der siebente Weltkongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ausführlicher Bericht. Fortsetzung Diskussion zum Bericht des Genossen Dimitroff", *Rundschau*. No. 62 (1935), p. 25505.

³⁴ Georgi Dimitrov, "Za edinstvo rabočego klasa, protiv fašizma. Zaključitelnoe slovo na VII Vsemirnom kongresse Komunističeskogo Internacionala", in *Georgi Dimitrov. Izbranie proizvedenija*, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1983), p. 161.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Simultaneously a process of reorganization took place in IRA. In 1936 in Paris a new magazine, *Einheit* (Unity), was published in German, French and Spanish. Famous socialists and representatives of anti-fascist parties and intelligentsia took part in it. Red Aid began to refuse communist party's methods and forms of agitation. The language of its press became more vivid and intelligible.³⁷

The secretariat and the presidium of the EC of IRA were abolished in November 1937. In Paris an efficient section management was created. In Moscow only bureau for the contacts with the ECCI and the Soviet IRA section remained. These measures were caused by the international situation. The most part of the IRA sections (forty-six out of seventy-two) turned out in an illegal or semi-illegal state. The conditions of the activities in the respective countries differed much. To make the connection with the sections more mobile and flexible it was required to bring the leading body nearer to them.

The reorganization of the structure favoured IRA to become a mass anti-fascist solidarity movement. Its sections France, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania and Italy progressed much in that direction. In 1937 Red Aid of France managed to win the influence among parties and unions, which were members of the People's Front. Its membership increased up to 150,000 persons, and it was called the "France and Colonies People's Aid". In 1935 it managed to collect 950,000 francs for supporting persecuted revolutionaries and anti-fascists, in 1936 3,104,000 and in 1937 4,192,000 francs.³⁸ The IRA section in Italy managed to unite with the Matteotti fund, thus a united committee for supporting victims of fascism and war was created. Since 1936 in the Polish IRA section communists, members of the Polish Socialist Party, non-party persons and public figures closely collaborated. Since 1935 socialist-revolutionaries were active in the Austrian Red Aid. The composition of its central board at its June conference was the following: 40% communists, 35% socialist-revolutionaries, 25% non-party persons.³⁹

In 1936 Red Aid of Spain had become similar to a united people's front organization. Due to its activity "thousands of anarchists, socialists and non-party workers became closer to communists", José Diaz wrote.⁴⁰ In the course of the national-revolutionary war in Spain all support committees united in a common organization on the initiative of Spanish Red Aid. In 1937 it united more than 350,000 members, in 1939 nearly 700,000. Red Aid organized sanitary and medical services in the Republican Army, supported the wounded, refugees, widows and orphans.

The first line of struggle against fascism passed through Spain in that time. Many IRA sections actively joined the international movement in support of the Spanish people. The representatives of the sections became members of international and national commissions for the support of the Spanish Republic, Spanish children and sanitary centres. These committees were non-party and united broad circles of the democratic community round the cause of the support of Spain. In January 1937 IRA took part in international solidarity conference with Spain and sent a delegation of secretaries to Madrid and Catalonia to investigate the need of Republic.

The scope of the solidarity campaign with Spain had been enormous in the USSR.⁴¹ Many governmental and public institutions had supported the Republic. Soviet trade unions and IRA sections were the most active.

French People's Aid passed 24,000,000 francs to Spain, American Red Aid 120 doctors and nurses, fifty field hospitals and ambulances and a great deal of medicaments. The Red Aid sections from the Scandinavian countries, Canada, Mexico and Argentina much supported the Spanish republicans. IRA founded children's homes for Spanish children in Belgium, England, France, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. The Soviet IRA section gave refuge in children's homes to about 4,000 Spanish children. More than 51,000 children were sheltered in different countries because of IRA's care.⁴²

The actions for the support of the Spanish people were the last of the mass campaigns of IRA before

³⁷ Leonid Babičenko [et al.], "Iz istorii Meždunarodnoj organizacii pomošči", p. 81-82.

³⁸ Avrus, *MOPR v bor'be protiv terrora* [...], p. 231.

³⁹ A.Z., "Reichskonferenz der Österreichischen Roten Hilfe", *Rundschau*, No. 30 (1935), p. 1496.

⁴⁰ *Den Parijskoj Kommuny - den MOPR* (Moscow, 1941), p. 19.

⁴¹ Anatolij Avrus [et al.], *Vernost' proletarskomu internacionalizmu*, (Saratov, 1983), pp. 100-109.

⁴² Šlepakov (ed.), *Meždunarodnaja solidarnost' trudjaščichsja* [...], p. 195.

the Second World War. During the war the anti-fascist committees and anti-fascist people's front were founded in different countries.

The EC and the national unions of IRA could not enter the numerous anti-fascist and anti-war committees which acted outside IRA.

The drastic turn planned by Comintern and by communist parties for the position of an anti-fascist people's front was dashed in 1937. The political trials in the USSR against former leaders of the communist party had fatal consequences. The orgy of terror of Stalin's regime against its own citizens and against political emigrants aroused indignation and distrust with the policy of the CPSU(b) and Comintern abroad.

From the beginning of the Second World War the links between the EC of IRA and its sections had been broken off. The number of illegal IRA organizations increased. The leading centre in Paris was dissolved because of the authority's terror. IRA ceased functioning as an international organization.⁴³ Its sections entered the people's and national fronts and continued to support victims of fascism.

International Red Aid from 1935-1939 took steps to unite the working class people in accordance with the decisions of the Seventh Comintern Congress. IRA favoured the Comintern's influence on the masses. It became the first step of political consciousness for many millions of workers and peasants. IRA struggled effectively against bourgeois, military-dictatorial and fascist regimes. Red Aid had accounted for many hundreds of discharged revolutionaries, thousands of fighters against terror and violence that evaded prison.

6. Historiography

Among the works dedicated to the problems of the international working-class and communist movements the works which concern International Red Aid still occupy a very small part. The first investigations of the theme began in the 1920s and 1930s, when the first works of the IRA leaders appeared. They are of interest first of all due to the fact that they show many aspects of the practical activity of IRA. The conclusions of these works are often subjective, the estimates of the role of IRA are too high. The mentioned works served only for the positive aspects of IRA's activity, without mentioning the negative ones. Many brochures appeared in 1932 in connection with the Tenth anniversary of the organization.⁴⁴

In the same period articles about IRA by social-democrats appeared. In these articles the activity of IRA was characterized only from one side because of keen polemics between communists and socialists. They made an emphasis on the cases of inobservance by IRA of the non-party principle and on the inconsistency in the realization of the tactics of a united working people's front. IRA was estimated only as an instrument of Comintern for agitation and propaganda. Its role was belittled in the matter of practical support of the victims of political repressions in many countries. IRA was reproached with the refusal of creating an organization for the support of the victims of the reaction together with the Labour Socialist International (LSI) and that reproach was partly true. IRA did not unite with the Matteotti Fund, but the social-democracy leaders also bore the responsibility for that. In the 1960s serious researches of IRA's problems began in the historical literature of the former USSR due to positive influence of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, which dethroned the personality cult of Stalin. As the history of Comintern had been revised it became necessary to study the history of mass organizations, which were submitted to Comintern. In connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Comintern a brief historical essay had appeared in which was described some information about the mass organizations.⁴⁵ This essay became a methodological guide for those researchers who specialized in IRA's problems. Since the second part of the 1960s these problems became an object of active study, especially the

⁴³ Babičenko [et al.], "Iz istorii Meždunarodnoj organizacii pomošči [..]", p. 82.

⁴⁴ Felix Schmidt, *Mopr za rubejom* (Moscow, 1928); *Pod znamenem boevogo internacionalizma. Osnovnye momenty i bližajšie sadači raboty MOPR za rubejom* (Moscow, 1930); Elisaveta Ševeljova [et al.] (eds), *MOPR za rabotoj* (Moscow, 1931); Felix Kon, *Kak byl osnovan MOPR* (Moscow, 1932); Stanislav Pestkovski, *Bratskaja ruka* (Moscow, 1932); Elisaveta Ševeljova, *Na rubeže desjatiletija* (Moscow, 1932); Clara Zetkin, *Desjatiletie MOPR* (Moscow, 1932); Elena Stasova, *10 let MOPR* (Moscow, 1933); Marsel Cordje, *MOPR Francii v antifašistkom fronte* (Moscow, 1936); Žovani Verdi, *Krasnaja pomošč Ispanskoj respublike* (Moscow, 1937), etc.

⁴⁵ A.I. Sobolev (ed.), *Kommunističeskij Internacional. Kratkij istoričeskij očerk* (Moscow, 1969).

problems connected with the Soviet IRA section.⁴⁶ The research work consisted in the collection of information, the search for new sources and in a wide use of periodical editions and archives. The works by Anatolij Avrus, Jurij L'vunin and Rahile Pikovskaja are distinguished among the others by the source study fulfilled by the authors. Avrus dedicated a great part of his book just to the history of IRA as an international organization. The IRA archives were not available when he wrote his book, which affected the standard of his work. The author repeated the reproaches to Clara Zetkin mentioned by Stasova in the beginning of the 1930s. It was said that Clara Zetkin was against the transformation of IRA into a real political class organization, and considered it only as a charity organization. But we think that the real point of disagreement was another. Zetkin believed that IRA should be an independent non-party organization, she was against the left deviation thrust on IRA by Comintern and by communists parties and also against the inner-party discussions within IRA. On the contrary, Stasova, who was an orthodox person, stood up for the implicit following of the Comintern's directives, thus such policy affected adversely the influence of IRA upon the masses, who had little in common with communists.

The next work by Avrus appeared five years later and was a result of the study of a wide range of sources, which had not been used before.⁴⁷ The work also included documents of CC of IRA. The author analyzed in his work more carefully the successes and shortcomings of IRA at different stages of its activity. He examined some negative results of the period of politicizing (1929-1933). However, in this book and later in his thesis the author did not avoid the enthusiastic estimation of IRA activity.⁴⁸ There is no reason for Avrus's assertion that "Soviet and foreign marxist historians had fully reconstituted the picture of IRA activity".⁴⁹ We believe that the problem is not yet solved completely.

Avrus estimated one-sidedly the investigations of western historians (as are the estimations of most of former Soviet scientists). He believes that their works falsified the history of IRA and served as a means for struggle against the world revolutionary movement.⁵⁰ The author contests unfoundedly the conclusions of the works by American historians like Carter, Fraenkel and Frost. Their works are dedicated to important political trials in the USA in the 1920s and 1930s: Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Boys.⁵¹ The works by these American historians proved that the International Labour Defence (ILD) was not independent of the communist party of the USA, and that the latter was an obedient executor of the directives from Moscow. We have studied the original sources and inferred that their conclusions are correct. American historians asserted that the American sections of IRA and the communist party had used their actions in defence of political prisoners in their own narrow party interests and thus had hampered the unity of actions, but we consider these conclusions controversial. It needs special careful investigations. Other potential allies of the communist party and of the ILD were also guilty of the breakdown of common actions.

In his last works Avrus emphasized a substantiation of the thesis that IRA "was one of the best means for the realization of a united front strategy, especially from 1924-1929".⁵² This thesis was repeated many times

⁴⁶ Rachil Pikovskaja, *Dejatel'nost' sovjetskoj sekcii MOPR v 1922-1932gg.* (Moscow, 1970); Leonid Šoročov, "Iz istorii Meždunarodnoj organizacii pomošči borcam revoljucii. 1922-1934", in *Voprosy vseobščej istorii Evropy* (Vologda, 1967); Anatolij Avrus, *Proletarskij internacionalizm v dejstvii* (Saratov, 1971); Leonid Babičenko, "Pervyi etap dejatel'nosti MOPRa", *Voprosy istorii*, No. 10 (1970); Jurij L'vunin, "Iz istorii sozdanija i pervych let dejatel'nosti sovjetskoj sekcii Meždunarodnoj organizacii pomošči borcam revoljucii 1922-1928", in *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, No. 1 (1973), pp. 21-62; Jurij L'vunin, *Bor'ba kommunističeskoj partii za ukreplenie internacionalnych svjazej rabočego klassa SSSR* (Moscow, 1975); etc.

⁴⁷ Avrus, *MOPR v bor'be protiv terrora [...]*.

⁴⁸ A.I. Avrus, "MOPR - organizacija proletarskoj solidarnosti v bor'be protiv terrora i fašizma. 1922-1939" (dissertation, Leningrad, vyššaje partijnaj škola, 1979), pp. 1-42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁵¹ Dan Thomas Carter, *Scottsboro. A tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge, 1969); Osmond K. Fraenkel, *The Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (New York, 1969); Richard Frost, *The Mooney Case* (Stanford, 1969).

⁵² Avrus, "MOPR - organizacija proletarskoj solidarnosti [...]", p. 28.

in IRA documents, but in practice it has been realized very rarely.

Scholars from socialist countries contributed much to the study of IRA history. They paid attention mainly to analyzing the activity of the IRA sections in their own countries and briefly touched the international aspects of IRA history.⁵³ There are distinguished works by the Bulgarians Asen Kalinkov and Dinu Šarlanov. They described the history of the IRA section in their country.⁵⁴

Three outstanding Soviet and foreign works were published in Kiev during the last ten/fifteen years, they were dedicated to the problems of the international solidarity movement of the working people from 1917-1939.⁵⁵ The scientific researches of former years have been accumulated in these works. Well-known specialists in Soviet and International Red Aid history were among the authors. The whole period of IRA and its Soviet section functioning till the Second World War is represented in the mentioned works. The attention is concentrated on common actions of the organizations. The authors did not touch on questions of the inner structure.

The book published by Avrus, Babicenکو and L'vunin in 1983 is notable for its complex approach to the research of most of the problems of the Soviet IRA sections. Archival materials, published sources and the press are broadly used in it. The part of the book dedicated to the activity of the Soviet section during the Great Patriotic War up to the section's dissolution is of special interest.⁵⁶

The book by Jurij L'vunin published in 1985 became a step forward in the process of thorough reflection of IRA's support of revolutionaries.⁵⁷ The author devoted much attention to the insufficiently known period from 1933-1937. The work is notable for using materials of central and local archives of the former USSR. Many facts and figures concerning the IRA support of repression victims in many countries are made more exact. There is a comparative analysis of the connections between the working people of the USSR and of foreign countries in different periods of IRA activity. In the mentioned work there is no analysis of negative points of the IRA activity. The author traditionally explains many failures of common actions as "sabotage" of right-wing leaders of international social-democracy and trade unions.⁵⁸

In the 1970s several works by western historians dedicated to the history of IRA were published. In 1970 the American historian Martin J. Ryle published an article in which he expounded the content of the practical IRA activity from 1922-1926 and for the first time examined the process of increasing dependence of IRA upon the Comintern.⁵⁹ He pointed out the discrepant character of IRA's aims: On the one hand the thorough support of revolutionaries and of revolutionary tendencies, on the other hand IRA had to embody the principles of the United Labour Front, thus the aims of revolution became a minor question. Ryle raised the

⁵³ Johannes Zelt, *Proletarischer Internationalismus im Kampf um Sacco und Vanzetti [...]* (Berlin, 1958); Johannes Zelt, *... und nicht vergessen - die Solidarität! Aus der Geschichte der Internationalen Roten Hilfe und der Roten Hilfe Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1960); Aleksander Zatorski, *Czerwona pomoc (MOPR) w Polsce w latach 1924-1928* (Warsaw, 1966); Gerhard König, "Der Kampf der Roten Hilfe Deutschlands gegen die Klassenjustiz der Weimarer Republik und für die Freilassung der proletarisch-politischen Gefangenen in der Periode der Weltwirtschaftskrise 1929-1932" (Ph.D., Weimar, 1966); Maria Bednařiková, "Literatur und Quellen zur Geschichte der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe und der Internationalen Roten Hilfe", *Sbornik prací filosofické fakulty brněnské University*, No. 11 (1967); etc.

⁵⁴ Asen Kalinkov, *Pomoščno dvizenie v Bălgarija. 1944-1945* (Sofia, 1969); Dinju Šarlanov, *Pomoščno dvizenie v Bălgarija* (Sofia, 1971).

⁵⁵ Boris Zabarko [et al.], *Meždunarodnaja solidarnost' trudjaščichsja. 1917-1923* (Kiev, 1978); Šlepakov (ed.), *Dvizenie meždunarodnoj solidarnosti [...]*. Arnold Šlepakov [et al.], *Meždunarodnaja solidarnost' trudjaščichsja v borb'e protiv fašizma i ugrosy vojny: 1933-1939* (Kiev, 1984).

⁵⁶ Anatolij Avrus [et al.], *Vernost' proletarskomu internacionalizmu* (Saratov, 1983).

⁵⁷ Jurij L'vunin, *Internacionalizm v dejstvii* (Moscow, 1985).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵⁹ Martin J. Ryle, "International Red Aid and Comintern Strategy 1922-1926", *International Review of Social History*, Vol. XV (1970), pp. 43-68.

question about the transformation of IRA from an organization for the support of revolutionaries into a powerful mouthpiece of communist ideas. Such tendency had took place really. But this should not belittle the IRA services concerning material and moral support of victims of terror and lawlessness.

Ryle came to the conclusion that discussions about the nature of IRA and its devotion to revolutionary and non-party principles had stopped after the removal of Zinov'ev from the ECCI in 1926.⁶⁰ But the fact is that clashes because of communist parties' interference in IRA affairs and discussions about the non-party principle continued throughout the whole period of IRA functioning. Unfortunately, Ryle's theoretical conclusions were not confirmed thoroughly by original sources. The author used only minor brochures of the 1920s, a few official ECCI documents, documents of the Fifth Congress of Comintern and of the Soviet IRA section.

When analyzing the works by researchers from western and former socialist countries about IRA activity one can come to the conclusion that all of these works displayed a one-sided approach. It is possible to overcome such an approach only by means of eliminating the ideological barriers, remains of the "cold war" and stereotyped thinking.

The Perspectives of Investigations of the History of International Red Aid

All the works dedicated to the IRA history which have been published up to now did not elucidate an important side of IRA activity: its financial organization. Soviet scientists have always affirmed that the membership dues of the Soviet section were its financial base. The dues used to be sent abroad for supporting revolutionaries and their families. It was prohibited to elucidate in the press the financial affairs of Comintern and its branches. The access to archives was also strictly prohibited.

"The hand of Moscow", which financed these organizations, was mentioned only in works by western scientists, but the problem was not well-reasoned. There are no more obstacles for investigating the question of the financing of IRA and its sections staff. Today we already have an opportunity to restore the problem in common features. All the dues and donations collected in the Soviet Union were not hard currency and could not reach the destination to serve the purpose. The hard currency was at the disposal of the Financial Committee of the Soviet of People's Commissars, but in fact the money was at the disposal of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPP(b)/CPSU(b).

This is why at the end of each year the EC of IRA made up a calculation of costs for the next year and substantiated the necessity of increasing the sums. This was motivated by the upgrowth of emigration, repressions and prosecutions of the participants of class disturbances. The increased calculation of costs used to be sent to the ECCI, to the Central Committee of the CPSU and to the Financial Committee of the Soviet of People's Commissars. The sum used to be approved, but sometimes the calculation of costs could be reduced. The distribution of money was under control of a special IRA Budget Commission, which consisted of its vice-chairman, secretaries and chief financier. The Commission determined the volume of monthly payments for each IRA section depending on the membership and on the number of victims of terror the section was in charge of. There was a kind of extra-ordinary grants which were used in cases of mass repressions, for unforeseen important trials and for emigrants. The volume of the grants was often determined by the sections themselves, or by a representative of the respective communist party in the ECCI. The latter used to apply to IRA for additional aid. To receive an extraordinary grant the EC of IRA addressed to the Financial Committee of the Soviet of People's Commissars special applications, which were usually satisfied. According to the report of 1924, in 1923 the EC of IRA paid \$ 85,769 to sixteen sections. The most part of money was received by the following sections: German Red Aid: 42,5%, Bulgaria: 28%, Poland: 9,4%. In 1924 the sum of grants was five times as much. The sections of twenty-seven countries received more than \$ 473,000.⁶¹ The 1929's report of the Budget Commission shows that the regular monthly grant for the Polish Red Aid made up \$ 4,300, for China Red Aid \$ 6,000, for Austria \$ 100 and for Belgium \$ 75.⁶² For example, in 1934 38 sections received 1,236,250 French francs from the EC of IRA. In 1935 the EC asked the Financial Committee of the Soviet of People's Commissars for 5,357,000 francs, but it received only 4,173,000 francs. The largest grant (1,120,000

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 55-57.

⁶¹ RCPSDMH, f. 539, op. 4, d. 235, l. 6.

⁶² Ibid., l. 44.

francs) was intended for German Red Aid, 975,000 francs for Poland, 600,000 francs for China, 300,000 franc for Italy, 150,000 Francs for Austria, 105,000 francs for India. A minimum grant of 7,500 francs was intended for the small sections of Albania, Honduras, Egypt, Paraguay, South Africa and others.⁶³ In spite of the Financial Committee's limitations in 1935, the EC of IRA spent 6,630,000 francs during the first eight months of that year and exceeded the origin calculation of costs for more than 2,450,000 francs.⁶⁴

The EC and the sections carried out actions in defence of revolutionaries, called conferences and meetings, published literature and supported the local bureaus. All expenses were defrayed owing to regular and extraordinary financial injections. This becomes clear from the conference reports of the Budget Commission for 1937. On January 19, according to a petition by Wilhelm Pieck, additional grants of 15,000 francs for the Defence Committee of Ernst Thälmann were affirmed. In the middle of february an extra-ordinary grant of 56,000 francs was paid to Red Aid of Italy. Business trips of advocates to trials were also paid - to Rumania for Macedonians' cause and to Brazil for the cause of Luis Prestes (Arthur Everet). On April 16 the Commission agreed to pay for a trip of a lawyer and a public figure to the Nazi inspired trial against Catholic priests in Berlin. On May 9, the payment of more than \$ 300 for the participation of lawyers in trials against the German antifascists Max Maddalena, K. Lubetsch, Rudolf Stamm and others was discussed. On May 29, the expenses were affirmed for a meeting of the International Juridical Conference in July in Paris (74,000 francs), and also \$ 600 for the support of emigrants from Bulgaria.⁶⁵

Thorough investigation of the problem of the "non-party principle" should be an important task of future IRA research. In different stages of its activity IRA depended on ideological and tactical Comintern directives. Either IRA imitated blindly the forms and methods of communist parties or it attempted to be independent, which was reflected in its relation with the masses. Untill the Seventh Comintern Congress IRA followed the united front strategy only in a few cases. Communists payed a main role in IRA because they formed nearly half of the membership. They pretended to leadership in the cases of common actions with social-democratic and other progressive organizations. The communists considered themselves not as members equal in rights, but as leaders. This "vanguard" became an important obstacle in the sphere of common actions of IRA, thus its insincerity was demonstrated regarding the united front strategy.

In spite of its "non-party principle" IRA had oriented itself mainly to the support of communists which were persecuted by authorities. It could not be otherwise because the organization was founded by communists and financed by the government of the Soviet Union. This is why it was unreal to expect it to defend the victims of totalitarianism in the USSR. IRA did not recognize the political prisoners as such, who had been former participants of the Russian revolution: socialist-revolutionaries and mensheviks. The number of dissidents, mostly partisans of Trotsky, considerably increased, thus the movement in defence of arrested and exiled members of the opposition had strengthened in the foreign sections of IRA. The EC of IRA was forced to express its opinion on the problem.

In December, 1928, the EC had prepared the draft of an appeal to the communist factions of the IRA sections boards: "About the exiled members of the opposition in the USSR". Shortly afterwards the document was approved and sent to the different countries. In this appeal the persecutions of members of the opposition were qualified as "defensive measures" against the "counter-revolutionary actions of the opposition". It was explained in the document that the aim of these "protection measures" of the Soviet Government was "to keep the power of proletariat, which is a source of World proletarian revolution development".

The protectors of the dissidents declared that IRA as a non-party organization should condemn any repressions irrespective of a system of a country. The authors of the Soviet circular persisted in their opinion and affirmed that "the non-party principle did not mean political neutralism". They criticized the Matteotti Fund for supporting the Mensheviks and for "attempts to create a basis for counter-revolution in the USSR".

The circular asked the IRA sections to support the "protection measures" and to expose supposedly false information about the severe conditions of life of political prisoners in their place of exile. The EC of IRA categorically affirmed that "the prison regime in the USSR is the best all over the world". The EC asked its sections to protest against "the trotskyists, social-democratic elements, who try to use IRA for their struggle

⁶³ Ibid., d. 291, l. 170.

⁶⁴ Ibid., l. 14.

⁶⁵ Ibid., d. 305, l. 1-3.

against the USSR in favour of their own political interests".⁶⁶ During the following years the Soviet attitude towards the dissidents and their western defenders remained invariable.

A "white spot" in a historiography of IRA is the theme of the political emigration from 1933 to 1939, in particular the destiny of political refugees in the USSR. Most of them were repressed between 1936 and 1938. The works dedicated to the activity of the Soviet IRA section contain only an enumeration of grants collected for the support of emigrants in European countries. Till February, 1936, the EC of IRA and the CC of the Soviet section took care of emigrants in the USSR, verified their documents and gave them a status of political emigres. Later the verification was entrusted to the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), to the People's Commissariat of Home Affairs (NKVD), partly to Comintern and to Communist Parties' representatives in the ECCI. The verification had an accusatorial character, because it was the period of the struggle against the "people's enemies" (1936-1938) and the foreigners were reckoned among "the spies, trotskysts, participants of different hostile anti-party groups", which supposedly were in the environment of the communist parties and of emigrants. The Communist Party leaders, bodies of the NKVD and the press had suggested to the masses that all foreigners (especially political emigres) were spies and people's enemies. On April 12, 1938, the Soviet newspaper *Journal de Moscow* stated that "each Japanese living abroad is a spy, [...] every German [...] is a Gestapo agent".⁶⁷ They tried to get rid of foreigners who had become party members and deported them home, where they were also repressed. Such was the destiny of a considerable number of German communists deported in 1939-1940 and given over to Gestapo. But the Soviet section followed the policy of non-interference. It only had given information about emigrants who were already verified to the ECCI, the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) and NKVD. Many IRA activists became victims of Stalin's "cleans" (chistka).⁶⁸

This theme needs thorough research in the future.

Red Aid kept to neutrality regarding the mass repressions of Soviet citizens, thus it demonstrated an adherence to class interests but not to the non-party principle. In the summer and autumn of 1936 in many countries a movement against the condemnation to death of sixteen members of the so-called "anti-Soviet trotskistko-zinov'ev centre" had developed. To weaken the protest movement the EC of IRA charged the International Juridical Association, which functioned in Paris under its supervision, to publish in its bulletin the official data of the trial and an article about "the advantages" of the new Soviet constitution. The Association was obliged to publish an article by the famous English lawyer Denis Nowell Pritt, who justified the condemnation of opposition members and tried to prove that condemnations to death did not contradict the Soviet constitution and that the USSR stood for the defence of personal freedom.

The order of the EC was quickly fulfilled. In November some parts of Pritt's brochure *The Zinoviev Trial had appeared in the Association's bulletin*. In December the EC of IRA had made a translation of these parts and manifolded them for the sections press.⁶⁹

There is also the collaboration of IRA with the military intelligence service of the USSR and with the KGB. This question should be investigated also. The Central Intelligence Department of the Red Army (GRU) asked Stasova to use the IRA channels for the support of its agents, who were unmasked and condemned because of espionage in a number of countries. The GRU transferred money to the EC of IRA for the maintenance of their agents in prison and gave instructions concerning the allowed sum, which should not exceed the usual sum for the support of political prisoners. After their discharge the former agents arrived to the USSR with the help of IRA under the pretence of political emigrants.⁷⁰

From 1935-1937 the EC of IRA supported nineteen Soviet and Polish citizens condemned because of espionage in favour of the USSR.⁷¹ The Chief of the Polish section of the Red Cross, Stefania Sempołowska, and the Chief of the GRU, M.S. Urickij, solicited for that. At the GRU's request IRA placed in Soviet children's

⁶⁶ Ibid., d. 402, ll. 1-6, 46-50.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 495, op. 292, d. 101, l. 13-16.

⁶⁸ Ibid., op. 73, d. 61, l. 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. 539, op. 2, d. 849, ll. 1, 9, 11-13.

⁷⁰ Ibid., d. 848, ll. 8, 18-19.

⁷¹ Ibid., ll. 38, 40, 43, 80.

homes the children of foreign GRU agents, who worked abroad or had returned already.

Besides the above-mentioned, there are other non-studied problems and "white spots" in the history of IRA. The common efforts of historians of western and former socialist countries could solve these problems.

Nowadays one should more thoroughly and without bias research the historical past of IRA and the positive and negative aspects of its activity. Now we have free access to the documents of the EC of IRA, which present the original sources and are kept in the archives of Russian Centre of Keeping and Studying the Documents of Newer History in Moscow, it should be easier to get to know the truth.

of IRA under the pretence of political emigrants.⁷⁰

From 1935-1937 the EC of IRA supported nineteen Soviet and Polish citizens condemned because of espionage in favour of the USSR.⁷¹ The Chief of the Polish section of the Red Cross, Stefania Sempołowska, and the Chief of the GRU, M.S. Urickij, solicited for that. At the GRU's request IRA placed in Soviet children's

⁶⁶ Ibid., d. 402, ll. 1-6, 46-50.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 495, op. 292, d. 101, l. 13-16.

⁶⁸ Ibid., op. 73, d. 61, l. 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. 539, op. 2, d. 849, ll. 1, 9, 11-13.

⁷⁰ Ibid., d. 848, ll. 8, 18-19.

⁷¹ Ibid., ll. 38, 40, 43, 80.