

Hans Jahn

*Biography of an
Anti-Nazi Trade Unionist*

by
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Front and rear cover illustrations: *Details from "Allies inside Germany"* by *H A Rothholz*

Born in Dresden, Germany, Rothholz emigrated to London with his family in 1933, to escape the Nazi regime. He retained a connection with his country of birth through his involvement with émigré organisations such as the Free German League of Culture (FGLC) in London, for whom he designed a series of fundraising stamps for their exhibition "Allies Inside Germany" in 1942.

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To those of us who came after and carry on the struggle

Hans Jahn (1885-1960)

One of the most remarkable and almost unknown figures in the German resistance was the secretary of the railway union, Hans Jahn, who became a key figure in organising the anti-Nazi underground struggle amongst railway workers and can teach us a thing or two about how to organise an underground. A study of his life also demonstrates that at least a small number of left trade-union bureaucrats, faced with the Nazis' attempt to break working class organisations, organised at a rank and file level. Much later, he was to say that "one of the greatest tragedies is that German unions did not fight to prevent Hitler taking power in 1933".¹ Jahn fled Germany and, despite multiple arrests and detainments,



continued to attempt to maintain the illegal network. He finally arrived in the UK in 1940. His anti-Nazi activities also indicate there was an organised resistance, even if limited, outside the KPD network.

Hans Jahn worked on the railways from 1914, first as a fireman and then a smelter. In 1920, he became the Secretary of the Works Council Department of the German Railway's Association.² By 1930, Jahn, who had joined the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD, Social Democratic Party of Germany) in 1903, was on the EC of the *Einheitsverband der Eisenbahner Deutschlands* (United Union of German Railway Workers, EdED), and an outspoken opponent of the Nazis. More aware of the threat of Nazism than most, in 1932, he prepared for illegal trade union and political work. In 1934, to disguise his illegal and dangerous work, Jahn nominally became a representation of a Dutch wine trader in Amsterdam.

It is now easy to forget how indispensable the *Reichsbahn* and its staff were to Nazism. As early as 1933, after the *Reichstag* fire, trains were watched and patrolled by the SA and SS. Anyone travelling abroad was questioned and often arrested if suspected of being Jewish but above all a Communist. Later, the railways became the crucial transport for deportations as well as of military

¹ ITF monthly bulletin, Aug/Sept, 1954, library.fes.de/itf/pdf/z9593/1954/z9593_1954_07-09.pdf

² ITF monthly bulletin, Aug/Sept, 1954, library.fes.de/itf/pdf/z9593/1954/z9593_1954_07-09.pdf

equipment. The railway carried Jews, political prisoners and others to the ghettos and the camps, and shuttled soldiers and supplies to the front. Many railway workers did not object.³ Under the Reichsbahn Director, Julius Dorpmüller, the employers slavishly followed Nazi instructions, including purging any supposed Jewish or left-wing employee. Though it is not an aspect of the Second World War that is often dwelt on, the acquiescence (if not support) of many railway workers (about 420,000 altogether) was crucial to Nazi success.⁴

Up until 1933, many German railway workers belonged to the social democratic "Union of Railway Workers in Germany" (EdED) and some to the "Red" union: "Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition". Despite the attempts by leading trade-union bureaucrats to collude with the early Nazi Government, trade-unions were banned on 2 May 1933 and many trade-union leaders imprisoned.

The illegal work of the railway union began as early as 1933. Jahn made contact with the leadership of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in Amsterdam and started to establish a loose network of contacts, he knew many of the union's district officials personally and was soon to develop contacts with SoPaDe, the exile organisation of the SPD.⁵ The railway workers' secret network became key in establishing contacts with reliable German comrades, the gathering of information and carrying illegal anti-fascist leaflets and newsletters into the Reich. Jahn and the Assistant General Secretary of the ITF, Walter Auerbach⁶, also financially supported the left-wing socialist resistance group, Red Shock Troop, until December 1933, when most of their members were arrested.⁷



Walter Auerbach

³ Alfred Gottwaldt, *Eisenbahner gegen Hitler. Widerstand und Verfolgung bei der Reichsbahn 1933–1945* Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2009

⁴ Alfred Gottwaldt: *Railway workers against Hitler. Resistance and persecution under the Reichsbahn 1933 – 1945*. In addition, The French national railway company, SNCF, under Vichy played its part, deporting – by train - more than 76,000 Jews and 'undesirables' to Germany.

⁵ SoPaDe was the exile organisation: the Social Democratic Party of Germany which was based in Prague from 1933 to 1938, from 1938 to 1940 in Paris, and thereafter in London.

⁶ Auerbach, a union officer, was immediately arrested in 1933 but escaped and fled to Amsterdam in May, 1933, from where he was expelled. He later got to England (see Moos, *Anti-Nazi Exiles*).

⁷ The Red Shock Troop, founded in July 1932, one of the largest resistance groups, with about 500 active members, 90% of whom were left-wing Social Democrats, supported a left united front and a proletarian revolution.

The General Secretary of the ITF, Edo Fimmen, played a key role in the resistance to the Nazi regime. The ITF provided extensive financial and logistical support which allowed the building of a nationwide resistance network of anti-Nazi railway workers, especially in Saxony,⁸ He and Jahn worked closely together throughout.

In May 1933, Jahn seized 17,000 index cards with members' addresses before the Gestapo got to them. He selected 107, some of whom he had already recruited for the illegal work when he met Jacobus Oldenbroek, a Dutch union leader who became Assistant Secretary of ITF and who focused on Germany. Jahn and Oldenbroek became the chief links between the ITF and the illegal transport groups. Oldenbroek regularly met with the illegal groups in Hamburg and Stettin. Illegal groups were also formed in Pomerania and East Prussia. In the west of Germany, Jahn made contact with two comrades: Willy Molitor⁹ in Mülheim in the Ruhr and Max Pester in Cologne (see later), to track down, often by bike, further people to act on his and the ITF's behalf.¹⁰ This was perilous and inevitably not always successful.



Edo Fimmen

They maintained contact with dissident members of the SPD, SAK and KPD and with smaller left groups, the Quakers and even with oppositional Nazis such as Otto Strasser.

The first edition of the *Red Strike Troop* was in April 1933 and it published 27 issues of the magazine until November 1933 with a circulation of about 1,500. They also set up local groups. In early December 1933, the Gestapo arrested around 150 members and sympathisers, of whom were subsequently imprisoned. A reorganized illegal group was formed in Berlin in 1934, which survived for a couple of years. Some of the leaders fled to Czechoslovakia where they unsuccessfully tried to push SoPaDe towards a united front.

⁸ Fimmen, Dutch, for a time active in a Christian anarchist group, an active trade-unionist and campaigner for equal rights, from 1919, he was General Secretary of the ISK. He died in 1942.

Edo Fimmen regarded ISK's duties as providing information to help members and member organisations in the struggle over working and living conditions to the highest international standards, supporting international social legislation, and fostering the international rights of trade unions. Fimmen had a profound contempt for the leaders of the German trade unions and of SoPaDe who had fled (with a few exceptions), whom he saw as morally bankrupt for their failure to carry out anti-Nazi work in Germany and with whom he refused to work. However, any member who wished to carry on the struggle found a political home in ISK. The ISK's non-sectarian line meant that they worked with members of revolutionary groups and of both the KPD and the SPD but insisted on their members agreeing to ITF's objectives.

⁹ See separate biography. Willi Molitor 'turned' twice. On June 8, 1935, Molitor was arrested and sent to camps.. But after his release in 1938, he became an undercover agent for the Gestapo, so that all subsequent contact with Jahn was as their agent. However, he 'confessed' to Jahn in Amsterdam in January 1940 and on May 2, 1940, through the mediation of the ITF, he was evacuated to UK by plane.

¹⁰ <https://www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde>

The *Reichsbahn* repair shop at Göttingen, Saxony, became a centre of resistance. Between 20 and 70 (the sources vary) militants were sacked immediately after the Nazis took power.¹¹ After the unions had been banned, the *German Labour Front* (the DAB: the Nazi labour organisation) was nevertheless unable to gain a foothold in the Göttingen repair shop, which became decisive for the resistance.¹² This was partly because of the influence of the former works council chair of the *Reichsbahn* repair shop, Hermann Fraatz,¹³ one of the sacked workers. He became a member of Jahn's illegal railway network as a shop steward for Kassel, an important railway junction, and was to become responsible for the local distribution of underground material, smuggled in from Amsterdam.¹⁴ The underground network in Göttingen survived intact until the arrests destroyed it in January 1936, when four members of the network were killed.¹⁵

Other workers from the repair shop, such as Oskar Schmitt¹⁶, also became activists in Jahn's underground network.¹⁷ From autumn 1935, which was after Jahn had fled, Schmidt took over as local organiser. According to Jahn, in March 1936, the local organisation had 137 groups based on earlier union branches with 284 base leaders and 1,320 contacts.

¹¹ As will be observed from the sources, much of the following section has been culled from the Göttingen state archive: with thanks. But I suspect Göttingen does not just have an unusual archive section but also an unusual anti-Nazi history.

¹² Siedbürger, Günther (1995): *The locomotive hall and its railway workers: factory history and workers' culture in Göttingen 1855 - 1945*

¹³ Hermann Fraatz was a railroad worker, and after fighting in the war, first joined the USPD and then the KPD, for whom he worked, but was expelled in 1930. In the *United Front*, the newspaper of the KPD local group in Göttingen at the time, it explained that the free trade unions were now useless But that 'Former party comrade Fraatz ...refused to organize the union opposition[ie the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition, the Red union] in the most important company in Göttingen' After many death defying ups and downs,(including being offered his job back by the DAB in 1943 which he refused), Fraatz was employed by Deutsche Bahn as a civil servant after the war. Together with Karl Meyer, Gustav Kuhn and Gustav Weiß, he set up the founding committee of the KPD in Göttingen. He remained a member of the railway workers' union. Because of his membership of the KPD, which had been banned, the 78-year-old's house was searched in 1961. Still politically active, he took part in the May 1st rally, 1972. (www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-personal-fraatz-hermann)

¹⁴ Gottwald, op.cit.

¹⁵ www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-personal-fraatz-hermann

¹⁶ Schmitt was an ISK activist, became deeply involved in the ISK resistance campaign in Göttingen, was also a member of the illegal EdEd network and represented them at a couple of international ITF conferences. In March, 1936, Schmitt was arrested and sent to Börgermoor. He was released in January, 1938, and returned to Göttingen. In 1940 Schmitt was drafted and in 1942 brought to court martial for illegal union work. He was then sent to the USSR (I assume with the 999s but this is not stated). He died on November 4, 1972 in Göttingen. (www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/frames/fr_itf-goettingen.html).

¹⁷ www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/frames/fr_itf-goettingen.html. It is excellent that such local heroes are finally being discovered, though as one of their sites itself states, the work on finding out about this resistance is still only rudimentary.

In late 1934 / early 1935, Jahn decided the underground network must have a greater organisational cohesion with an agreed division of labour, a model we recognise but which under Nazism, evidently carried great risks. Jahn demanded that the cadres, mostly railway workers, shop stewards or former local and regional union officials, were coordinated from the centre.¹⁸

For this purpose, a small group, including Willy Molitor (see earlier foot-note), Heinrich Malina (see on), Leo Radtke (see on) and Jahn met at Hugo Bachmann's apartment in Duisburg. Bachmann became the link between ITF and the underground network and, crucially, with Jahn after he fled Germany. Willy Molitor coordinated the illegal work in the west until his arrest in June 1935.¹⁹

Heinrich Malina was Jahn's deputy for the Rhineland and also took over from Molitor after his arrest in 1935, meeting and organising with Jahn and the ITF General Secretary Edo Fimmen in Amsterdam.²⁰ The Rhineland network remained free from arrest the longest. From March 1935 to July 1936, Malina met Jahn and led underground meetings in Venlo, Holland, near the German border as well as organising resistance meetings in Germany at Krefeld, Neuss, Cologne and Düsseldorf. The aim was to instruct newly recruited activists, recruit others and receive reports.²¹ Malina's consequent reports were sent on to ITF. In the summer of 1936, he withdrew from the struggle for security reasons, but was soon after arrested by the Gestapo along with others in his SPD group.²² Hans Funger dominated the illegal work in the Rhineland,²³ alongside Paul Emmen, Willy

¹⁸ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

¹⁹ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

²⁰ Malina was recruited as a direct result of Jahn's hierarchical network: in summer 1934, Max Pester, one of Jahn's 'appointed' successfully recruited Paul Emmen from Krefeld, who in turn recommended Heinrich Malina.

²¹ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

²² After a series of cat and mouse arrests and under constant surveillance, in autumn 1934, Malina, a member of the SPD, had joined the resistance group of railway officials around Hans Jahn. After arrest in 1936, he was released on April 5, 1942, was arrested again in front of the prison and sent to Sachsenhausen and taken into solitary confinement because he had formed a resistance group within the camp. Malina was then taken to the Mauthausen extermination camp but was liberated by American troops on May 5, 1945. He returned to Germany and political activity (Friedrich Ebert foundation).

²³ Hans Funger, SPD, in 1932, organised a socialist resistance group in Neuss that worked in cooperation with the ITF and smuggled illegal material from Venlo, Netherlands to Neuss, But a courier was arrested in February 1937, following the discovery of a car with over 500 illegal pamphlets. 17 resistance fighters, including Hans Funger, were caught and convicted. In October 1944, Funger was transferred from the Lüttringhausen prison and, on October 9, 1944, to the notorious Celle prison, where he died on April 11, 1945, when the prison was bombed, four days before the arrival of the British. (www.celle-im-ns.de/hintergrund/texte/gewerkschaftlicher-widerstand-gegen-den-nationalsozialismus-hans-funger-1891-1945,<http://www.celle-im-ns.de/quelle/revista>.)

Komorowsky and Max Peste, and took over in the summer of 1936 after Malina's withdrawal.²⁴

In 1935, Jahn appointed Leo Radtke as 'district manager' in Westphalia, a former secretary of the railway workers' union in Hamm and Dortmund, with lots of connections in Hamm and Dortmund, with responsibilities for the Rhine-Ruhr area.²⁵ By 1936, Radtke had become a part of the inner circle, meeting up with Jahn and Fimmen outside Germany and reporting on contacts and what was going on, though this was often disappointing as contacts did not materialise.²⁶

By the spring of 1935, Jahn had contacts with up to around 150 bases in 17 districts, many from Saxony and Württemberg. In Hamburg, there were several groups with about 500 members and in Germany as a whole, there were a total of 103 trade union oriented groups, with membership varying from three to eighty. Jahn made a point of keeping in contact, if necessary using code e.g. the picture on the postcard: train station = danger, gardens = everything is flourishing etc. By 1935/1936, Jahn had organised the secret cells into five districts with bases along the railway lines in Rhineland and Westphalia, connected to 16 other "districts". The ITF's illegal railroad workers' organisation initially remained intact, but Jahn admitted that from the beginning of March 1936 a total of 178 bases existed only on paper and very few were as densely peopled as in the "western industrial area".²⁷

The rail workers deposited the smuggled pamphlets in the sleeping cars of the express trains or behind window shutters. The local members of the International Socialist Combat League²⁸ (ISK), a left split from the SPD, who had to find out the

²⁴ Frese, Matthias, *December 1937 -Convicted by the People's Court:Members of the free-trade union railway workers in the Rhine-Ruhr area in court*,

²⁵ Radtke, SPD, worked for the *Reichsbahn* and became chair of the local works council. From 1930, he was the local union secretary the EdED. He lost his position when the Nazis took power. In the summer of 1935 he became district leader of the resistance group of the illegal EdED in Westphalia and became key to the railway resistance., meeting up with refugee trade unionists, for example in Holland, and smuggling in illegal writings.

In mid-February 1937, the Gestapo smashed the resistance network. Radtke was imprisoned. Released, he was re-arrested in August, 1944 and imprisoned in Sachsenhausen. .

After the war, Radtke headed the special department for the care of victims of Nazi persecution but, a stalwart member of the SPD, he became a committed opponent of the VVN (www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/

²⁶ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

²⁷ Mielke, Siegfried / Frese, Matthias: *The unions in the resistance and in the emigration 1933-1945. Sources on the history of the German trade union movement, vol. 5. Cologne 1999.*

²⁸ The ISK, a small cadre organisation made up of people expelled from the SPD from its left, had no more than 200 members in Germany, though with a periphery of between 600 to 1,000 people, but they were deeply involved in resistance work and committed to the united front.

exact train and its number, then pulled the pamphlets from where they were hidden when the train stopped.²⁹ Local bases, such as in Göttingen and Hannover, picked up around 300 to 400 copies at the station. As the ITF member, Alfred Dannenberg, reported: *We knew exactly which train, we knew the train number, we knew the arrival (...). So we practically did not see the man from the International [ISK], nor did we want to.*³⁰ According to the interrogation transcript of one transport worker in Kassel in 1935, he had been receiving *newspapers regularly from the Saar region or Hollandsince the end of 1934*. He described how leaflets etc. were smuggled across the border in a briefcase with a secret compartment. At the border, the person picking up the material identified himself with a specific keyword and then was told where to go.³¹

The underground papers of the *Union of Railway Workers in Germany / ITF section* and ISK's illegal material were concealed on trains, including the ISKs "Reinhardt Letters" (Eisler's pseudonym was 'Reinhardt'), produced monthly, and the *Sozialistische Warte* (ISK Resistance). In 1936, Eichler, head of ISK, gave the number of groups of the *Independent Socialist Trade Union* created around these publications as 60 in a total of 25 locations, principally around Cologne, Görlitz and Hamburg. The Hanover group took around 300 to 400 copies.³²

The pamphlets were mostly four-pages and thinly printed; the comrades were instructed to swallow them in an emergency. *'You can swallow leaflets even if you haven't much practice!* In March 1934, Hans Jahn informed Eichler: *The leaves [of paper] cannot be swallowed.... Please for the next shipment: smaller and thinner sheets.*³³

Jahn's clandestine work on behalf of ITF had included non-railway connections. In June 1934, a Berlin local committee had been formed to include metal workers and printers. The ITF and the metalworkers had connections from earlier struggles. But, in 1935, many of the leading militants in metal were either arrested or fled. Again a traitor was suspected. Later, Jahn reported that there were links established with the garment workers' association and the factory workers' association.

²⁹ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

³⁰ www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-verbindungswege-illegale-schriften.html

³¹ <http://www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-verbindungswege-illegale-schriften.html>

³² <http://www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-verbindungswege-illegale-schriften.html>

³³ International Youth Federation (IJB) / ISK, file group: ISK, correspondence B (1933 – 1946), 4, March 30, 1934, Hans Jahn to Eichler

In 1935, the Gestapo uncovered and arrested many of Jahn's network, including Jahn for the third time. There is a possibility this was because Jahn named some contacts in a letter that fell into Gestapo hands. Sixteen core people were arrested by the Gestapo. The subsequent trial in Dusseldorf of the railway workers is the best known of the trade union resistance during the Nazi era. After months of interrogation, they were charged with high treason. The main defendants Funger, Emmen and Pester received 15 and 10 years in prison, respectively, whereas Malina and Radtke's sentences of 5 and 4 years in prison were comparatively low.³⁴ According to Jahn's own information, on 1 March 1936, after the Gestapo arrests, the organisation still had 137 bases with 284 base leaders and included a total of 1320 officials. But, to limit the danger, Jahn and the ITF now discouraged contact with ISK or, indeed the ITF, except for the respective district leaders.

Due to considerable international pressure and because the Gestapo apparently did not realise who he was, Jahn was released and fled to via Czechoslovakia Amsterdam, where he continued organising resistance from 1936-1938. With the support of the ITF, Jahn remarkably re-divided Germany into districts and managed to re-establish a resistance network, first from Amsterdam and later from Luxemburg, of about 1300 contacts (other estimates make this far lower) with German railway workers especially in northern and western Germany, though there were a few contacts also in southern Germany.³⁵ Some comrades had only one or two contacts, others held onto cells. The Gestapo reported on January 6, 1938: *“The existing [ITF] apparatus in western Germany covered the area from Emmerich to Mainz and from Aachen to Dortmund. [...] [Funger's] task was first to set up bases in all major cities in West Germany, such as Cologne, Aachen, Düsseldorf, Krefeld, Neuss, Duisburg, Essen, Hamm, Koblenz and Mainz in the railway and vital companies...and that reports on the mood of the workforce in factories, the food shortage, the shortage of materials [...] should be sent to the ITF in Amsterdam. The bases and district managers had to send their reports to Heinrich Malina (Krefeld) until 1936 and later in his place to the area manager Hans Funger, who passed them on to the ITF in Amsterdam.”*³⁶

³⁴ Matthias Frese https://www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/input_felder/langDatensatz_ebene4.php?urlID=500&url_tabelle=tab_websegmente

³⁵ Based on the work of Dieter Nelles (*Widerstand und Internationale Solidarität: Die Internationale Transportarbeiter Federation*. 2001), quoted in Jonathan Hyslop, *German seafarers, antifascism and the anti-Stalinist left. The Antwerp group and edo finnen's international transport workers federation, 1933-1940*.

³⁶ www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde

From Amsterdam, Jahn also collaborated with Fimmen and a group of German seamen based in Antwerp to wage a campaign against the Nazi government among the sailors of the German merchant fleet³⁷ and published an anti-Nazi journal for German railway workers.³⁸ But again his group was penetrated, Jahn was deported and went to Antwerp, then on to Luxembourg in March 1938.

But there were Gestapo agents everywhere. In 1937, on the German border, illegal material had been discovered in a car and 19 people were arrested. In 1937/8, Bertel, (probably Walter but unfortunately no further details available), a former KPD member, had formed an illegal group of ten and reported to Jahn on the existence of other illegal groups. Many were subsequently arrested, some were sent to the camps, others killed. As it later turned out, Bertel was an undercover agent for the Gestapo. The fear of the Gestapo and of infiltration meant trusting anybody or organising underground became ever more fraught.³⁹

ITF also had close links with the International Socialist Combat League (ISK). The ISK was a left split from the SPD, originally inspired by Göttingen philosopher, Leonard Nelson. (I would suggest that it seems likely that he helped to radicalise the militants in and around the repair shop in Göttingen.) One of ITF's major achievements was their organization of couriers and dispatch of information through the Swiss member René Bertholet.⁴⁰ ITF members transported their illegal material from Holland, hidden in long-distance trains of the *Reichsbahn* and sent to agreed destination stations in the Reich. On 17 January 1936, a large number of the

³⁷ The group, called the Antwerp group, collaborated with the ITF in building resistance networks on the ships and elsewhere. They were a breakaway from the International Seamen and Harbour Workers, which was dominated by the Comintern. They were anti-Stalinist because of its sectarianism and ineffective stand against the Nazis. Apparently, by 1939, the Antwerp group had contacts with shop stewards on about 300 ships. They planned sabotage: seamen were issued with mercury to destroy the ship's engines.

In a wonderful detail, again drawing from Nelles, Hyslop suggests that the militancy and emphasis on self-organisation of one of the main leaders of the sailors, Hermann Knufken, was rooted in his experience of mutiny in 1918 in Kiel in which he participated in and also in the subsequent events in Berlin in 1919. He became close to the Communist Workers Party (KAPD) and hijacked a trawler to get to a conference in the Soviet Union where he met Lenin.

³⁸ https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/hans-jahn/?no_cache=1, <https://www.gewerkschaftsgeschichte.de/hans-jahn-4404.html> : Dieter Nelles, *Resistance and international solidarity. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in resistance to National Socialism with special attention to seafarers*, Essen 2001.

³⁹ Nelles *Widerstand und Internationale Solidarität: Die Internationale Transportarbeiter Federation*. 2001

⁴⁰ Bertholet joined ISK in 1931. In 1932, he participated in the publication of *Der Funke*, the ISK's anti-fascist paper and was active underground. He was arrested on November 9, 1933, and sentenced to prison. Upon release, he got into Switzerland (probably Berne), which he somehow used as a base to help various refugees. In 1940, he seems to have collaborated with both the British SOE and the OSS, running an underground network in order to pass people in and information out.

ISK activists in Göttingen were arrested, including a handful from the ITF. On February 12th, 1936, Jahn reported to Fimmen that about ‘65 people allegedly belonging to the Nelson movement’ [i.e. the ITF] ‘were arrested on January 16, 1936 in Göttingen... including 4 employees [of the railway network] (Oskar Schmitt, Westernhagen, Bode, and Kleinschmidt)...The reason...was the distribution of illegal magazines and leaflets by ISK members. He suspected this would not lead back to the ISK but that the arrest would have a bad effect on the network.⁴¹ The immediate cause seems to have been a denunciation by a caretaker of comrades at a meeting. There was much concern that the people arrested and tortured would give away information. Although this didn’t happen, the ISK organisation in Göttingen then collapsed.⁴² Gestapo arrests generally tore apart the railroad workers network which was only partially restored by the beginning of the Second World War.

In the first months of 1940, after a brief interruption at the beginning of the war, Jahn successfully re-established contact with the illegal cadres in Germany from Luxembourg. According to Jahn, the activities of the illegals were expanded to include sabotage, something ‘corroborated’ by the Gestapo, including a handful of derailments, though these were of course never officially recognised. Apparently, the ‘conscripted’ Polish railway workers were especially adept at sabotage. Jahn also launched balloons which carried leaflets into the occupied territories!

But on May 10 1940, the German *Wehrmacht* invaded Luxembourg and Jahn and his wife decided to flee with their six-year-old child. The Gestapo had already once attempted to abduct Jahn from Luxembourg. This is what Jahn wrote to Pierre Krier, Minister of Labour of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,⁴³ then living in London, on 26 April 1943 (whom he addressed as ‘Leber Freund Peter’) ‘My wife (Frieda Jahn) was arrested by the Gestapo immediately after Hitler broke into Luxembourg. My child was abducted and the apartment on Rue Wurth-Paquet, 20, first floor was taken over. My wife was sentenced to four years in prison for high treason and is currently in prison in Cottbus [Cottbus women’s penal institution]

⁴¹ <http://www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/itf-raw.html>

⁴² www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/texte/isk-verhaftungen-und-prozess.html

⁴³ ITF Anti-Nazi propaganda campaign and underground operations, and the Hans Jahn papers, 1933-1945, <https://mrc-catalogue.warwick.ac.uk/records/ITF/3/4> (with thanks)

On 5 November 1937 Krier, who belonged to the Socialist Workers party, became Minister for Work in the Dupong-Krier Government. The government was based in London between 1940 and 1944, while Luxembourg was occupied

near Berlin.’⁴⁴ I have not been able to find further definitive reference to the child though one source suggests deportation.

A few months earlier, Paul Tofahrn, the head of the ITF office in Paris, had already tried and had failed to find a way for Jahn to get into France.⁴⁵ But now Jahn fled into France and was arrested twice. He somehow crossed France but was interned in the St. Nicolas camp near Nîmes and was supposed to be shot as a member of the "fifth column".⁴⁶ Somehow he contacted, Hubert Rouger, the mayor of Nîmes, a socialist activist in the anti-collaborationist section of the social democratic SFIO (French Section of the Workers' International). Jahn thereby discovered that he was on the extradition list to Germany. Ill with dysentery, he could not flee. When the German officers including the Gestapo and SS, came to the camp (the so-called Kundt Commission), who regarded the refugees as "warmongers and traitors to their country", the French camp commander had removed Jahn from the list of would-be German deportees and he somehow escaped into the Nîmes forest.⁴⁷

After his escape from the camp, Jahn initially found shelter with Louis Major, somebody he knew from Antwerp. He then went to Montauban, near Toulouse, which had a socialist mayor, Marcel Guerret, who had been the Minister for Refugees in the last Blum government, a friend of Blum's, and was now an active member of the resistance. The Mayor also offered refuge to thousands of Spanish and then German and Austrian refugees, despite the injunctions of the Vichy authorities.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Cottbus was used for the 'Nacht und Nebel' prisoners (Night and Fog), introduced in 1941, to target political activists and members of the resistance. According to Wachsmann (Hitler's Prisons), in Cottbus, the female prisoners were handcuffed at all times and many died. Their relatives were not informed, their farewell letters suppressed and their bodies 'disappeared' (273). Hans Jahn may well never have traced his wife

⁴⁵ Paul Tofahrn, a German, a member of the Belgium Railwaymen's union who took part in its 1923 strike, later became the assistant secretary of the railwaymen's section of the ITF. He moved to Paris in 1939, and London in 1940. In 1943, and became Assistant General Secretary of the ITF.

⁴⁶ The German armed forces quickly overran much of France. Following the French capitulation in June 1940, France was divided into two main zones: the one occupied by the Germans, centred on Paris, and the other, unoccupied, run by the collaborationist puppet government in Vichy. Nîmes, in the South, was under Vichy.

⁴⁷ Lion Feuchtwanger, a leading German writer, Jewish, ardently anti-Nazi, who escaped from Germany, wrote in his autobiography 'The Devil in France' about how the commandants of the camps were not wholly unsympathetic to the plight of the 'inmates' who, if caught as the Nazis troops advanced, would in all likelihood, be sent back to Germany and to their likely death. He was incarcerated in Les Milles, whose commander – finally – organised a train to take such refugees to safety. It didn't work out quite like that but Feuchtwanger survived and got to the US..

⁴⁸ Manuel Azaña, President of the Spanish Republic, after escaping the Gestapo near Pyla, arrived in Montauban, but died of exhaustion on November 3, 1940. In the spring of 1944, Father Leonid Chrol got the occupying *Wehrmacht* soldiers, mostly Ukrainians, to leave Montauban without bloodshed.

Jahn, who as an ITF functionary was particularly at risk of extradition and because of his contact with *SoPaDe*, somehow received a visa for the U.S.A. in mid-September 1940, thanks to the efforts of ISK member, René Bertholet, (see earlier) a courier for the Swiss Workers' Relief Association⁴⁹. What happens next is unclear but Jahn illegally crossed the Pyrenees on September 21, probably on foot over the mountain range. On September 27, 1940, he reached Lisbon via Spain. Amazingly, Jahn used his short time in Montauban and later in Marseille and then Lisbon to organize contact points for future resistance activities

But one must beware understanding what was happening on the railways and indeed more broadly, through the lens of the limited resistance activities. In practice, as Nelles suggests, many in the ITF and the Rail Union, while being strongly anti-Nazi, were not actively involved in underground work. Nobody can blame them given how few of those who were survived. Jahn wrote that 'eight of my best comrades have been murdered in the fight against Hitler by the Gestapo'.

1940 -1945

In 1940, Jahn reached London, and continued to organise as best he could but he was now largely cut off from his base and, more distant and isolated from the remaining anti-Nazi struggle in Germany. He became more top-down in his activities. Moreover, the shift to a Popular Front position of working with almost any anti-fascist rather than the United Front position of building a broad working class based alliance held earlier by ISK, is likely to have reinforced and legitimated a more bureaucratic orientation. In addition, Jahn was pessimistic about the outcome of the war at this point. He wrote: "One senses at every turn how the West is going limp again', accusing them of cowardice. He feared the victory of the *Reich* and, unlike some German refugees, celebrated when bombs fell on German soil and called for more.

ITF established its head quarters in London, Jahn set up a group of German trade unionists which later affiliated to the National Group of German Labour Unionists in Britain.⁵⁰ He participated in the London group around Hans Gottfurcht, its founder and tried to organise a unified German trade union confederation to make

⁴⁹ It was founded in 1936 by the Swiss Trade Union Confederation and the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland and became active in refugee aid.

⁵⁰ Founded in 1941 after other unsuccessful attempts. the National Group of German Labour Unionists was an amalgamation of German exiled organisations, excluding the KPD but including *SoPaDe*, represented by Gerhard Gleissberg, ISK, represented by Willi Eichler, *Neu Beginnen*, represented by Richard Lowenthal and sometimes, a representative of trade unions, represented by Hans Gottfurcht. Its chair was Hans Vogel, also chair of *SoPaDe*.

plans for after the war had ended.⁵¹ An International Railwaymen's conference was held in London in September 1943, whose aim was the development of a post-war plan to safeguard the interests of German workers. Remarkably, it was attended by 46 trade unionists from 14 European countries. I don't know how they got to the UK. It was committed to working out a suitable post-Nazi programme, which was far more farsighted than the Labour Party. It established the 'European Transport Committee' whose first demand was for a unified European transport system.⁵²

Jahn continued to campaign especially over support for refugees from Spain and Germany, working to gain their admittance to the UK. He corresponded about this with other ISK members or ex-members, such as Hilde Meisel, Willi Eichler and Mary Saran.

ISK was represented in the UK by Jahn but also Willi Eichler, the secretary, Kappius and Meisel.⁵³ London became the centre of ISK's overall activities.⁵⁴ Maria Saran, another German exile, was an active member of the Socialist Vanguard Group, a British by-product of the German ISK. She remained in the UK, working as a journalist and responsible for ISK publications. But there were deep divisions and tensions amongst the ISK exiles: who was its dominant voice, who worked with the Labour Party, how to respond to the Labour Party's unexpectedly cool response, which other 'left' groupings should they work with and how they should structure themselves.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Gottfurcht, who originally worked in the textile industry, joined the SPD and became a trade union official. After 1933, he helped build underground union organisation in Saxony, Thuringia and Silesia. In July 1937 he was arrested by the Gestapo but, in 1938, managed to escape to London. He joined the Labour Party, was interned, became a member of the social democratic working group "Germany and Europe after the war" and broadcast for the BBC German-language programmes. When the war ended, Gottfurcht returned to Germany, where he acted as a liaison officer for the TUC and then worked for and became secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade unions

⁵² Ed Walter Lippens, *Plans for European Union in Great Britain and in Exile 1939–1945*, p 658

⁵³ see biographies in Moos, *Anti-Nazi Exiles*

⁵⁴ The Socialist Vanguard Group was a British by-product of the German ISK, indeed became its largest group. Supporting a popular front, the group opposed the Labour Party during the 1930s but became entrists in the early 1940s. The group's priority was to influence foreign policy. One of its main goals was to counter support for the Soviet Union on the British left.

A key German refugee in the Socialist Vanguard group was Maria Saran (July 1897 – February 1976), born in what was then E. Prussia, a journalist and writer. She first joined the USPD but when they split, joined the SPD, while becoming increasingly involved in the ISK and, in 1932, signed their 'Urgent Call for Left Unity'.

In early 1933, Maria Saran escaped with her twelve-year-old daughter, initially to France, then to Denmark and then, by the end of 1933, to the UK. Here she worked with the Socialist Vanguard group. She stayed here working as a freelance journalist, took over from Eisler editing 'Europe Speaks' when he returned to Germany and was active in the Labour Party. I could however find little else about her.

⁵⁵ Dieter Nelles, *Widerstand und internationale Solidarität Die Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation (ITF) im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus*

Jahn and some members of the ISK worked, usually informally, with the SOE⁵⁶ and, later on, with OSS, the American Office of Strategic Services and predecessor of the CIA, earlier in France and then in London. Much ink has been spilled over contested explanations of the role of SOE but briefly its purpose was to conduct reconnaissance, espionage and commit sabotage.

While still in Montaban, based on Jahn's suggestion, Gaby Cordier, a French ISK member who had already travelled thousands of miles as a courier because phone and wireless links could not be trusted⁵⁷, was recruited by René Bertholet, a key organiser and financier of underground couriers, to work with the SOE.

Bertholet also helped ensure that a report by Yvon Morandat, a leading figure in the French resistance, reached SOE, recommending the use of the trade union movement in the resistance. Anthony Brooks, or Alphonse, was parachuted into France in July 1942, by SOE to carry out this mission. Already a friend of Bertholet, who became his mentor, he too stayed with the Montauban mayor.

While the clandestine organisation of railway workers in France cannot be directly attributed to Jahn, it was connected to ITF's underground organisation, The November/December 1944 ITF bulletin, published in England, publicises how, from 1940, French railwaymen helped in the production and distribution of clandestine papers and that armed resistance groups of railwaymen became specialists in sabotage of railways and other industrial establishments.⁵⁸ In the Appendix of MRD Foot's SOE study (1966), drawn from Brook's notes (SOE), it includes mention in April 1944 of the destruction of compressors and transformers in Beziers. As already mentioned, Brooks' main mission, on behalf of SOE, was to approach and help organise railway workers. In an astonishing later interview, Brooks details how he worked with local railway workers to destroy the vital rail link between Montalban and Toulouse and around Lyon as well as derauling trains from Marseille to Lyon, stopping the trains carrying German tanks, thus slowing the German retreat after D Day and limiting its supplies.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Oldenbroek sought a more formal approach: in exchange for sabotage behind enemy lines, he wanted help in the reconstruction of the European trade union movement, but, not surprisingly, this came to nought.

⁵⁷ Seaman, Mark, *Undercover Agent: How one of SOE's youngest agents helped defeat the Nazis*

⁵⁸ http://library.fes.de/itf/pdf/z9593/1944/z9593_1944_11-12.pdf. The deep divisions in the Federation and amongst the anti-Nazi movement more generally are illustrated by, in September 1939, the Federation expelling all communist officers who refused to condemn the Hitler-Stalin pact.

⁵⁹ Interview with Anthony Brooks, IWM, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009337>

The parameters of what happens next are unclear. In the absence of an effective insurgency and distanced from what little resistance still ongoing, in 1944, Jahn in collaboration with SOE and the OSS tried to infiltrate exiled union cadres into Germany and cooperated with the OSS in acts of sabotage in German-occupied northern Italy. Jahn wrote in the ITF bulletin that he had successfully re-established contact with some illegal cadres in Germany who were now committing sabotage on the railways. This is ‘corroborated’ by SOE (and the Gestapo) but who did what is unclear⁶⁰ Nor have I been able to establish how many of these operations were successful but there were at least a handful of derailments,

Another crucial figure in the ISK/SOE operations was Jupp Kappius. In September 1944, Kappius was parachuted into Germany with the purpose of collecting information, in particular about the *Reichsbahn* repair shop in Göttingen, Jahn’s old base. The purpose was to find out about the *Wehrmacht*’s transport capacities and supply routes. Kappius later wrote in a report: "We kept regular contact by courier with leading people on Hamburg, Bremen, Hannover, Berlin, Göttingen, Kassel, Darmstadt, Ulm and Frankfurt / Main (regular except Ulm)", On 1 January, 1945 he reported that many of the locomotives in Göttingen were damaged (as a result of bombing, not sabotage). While it would only take four or five days to repair them, the railway lines were so damaged that they were unusable.⁶¹

To finally return to the question of resistance amongst railway workers: in one form or another it had not disappeared. As late as September 1943, the International Federation of Transport Workers issued an extraordinary ‘call for sabotage’, addressed to the German railway workers:

German railway workers!
For ten years the iron Nazi terror prevented you from attaining the great
ideals
international solidarity and socialism, which formerly the Germans

⁶⁰ Friford (1944) was a supposedly successful sabotage of railway track from Hintshingen to Oberlauchringen, Colan (1945) between Stuttgart and Heilbron, and Fleckney in the Breslau area, Carstairs in Halle; Chalgrove in Hamburg and Bremen, Colburn:Gelnhausen - Schluechtern and Aschaffenberg to Gemuenden, Cregina: Eisenach/Bebra, Cresswell: Fangfoss and Fiddington, Curland (1945) Nordhausen/Blankenheim. (HS 6/6831940-1946 Adam Matthew Publications, <https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/mikro/lit3301.pdf>)

⁶¹ www.stadtarchiv/gottingen.de/widerstand

*Inspired railway workers. (...) You owe it to yourself and the international one
 Union movement to seize this opportunity. (...)
 How can we keep this vow? Only by actively participating in the destruction
 of the
 German war machine. The railroad workers of the free world do this by ...
 Interruption of work to supply the armies fighting against Hitler...
 The railway workers in the occupied countries are sabotaging the railway
 system of the Nazis with all their might
 ...We know what we ask of you. We know we are calling on prisoners to
 tackle their heavily armed minions. (...)
 Your comrades around the world expect you to do your duty. Help
 them to create the conditions for peace: the destruction of the Nazi war
 machine⁶²*

The ITF Journal continued to be produced in English in 1943. In the March/April issue, in an article on German railways, it reminds its readers that, because of conscription, women are increasingly being employed on the railways and are therefore subject to the same risks, in need of the same solidarity and are as worthy of 'citation' as male drivers.⁶³ On 6 June, 1944, ITF joined forces with the American broadcasting station in Europe to send out a joint message calling on all European transport workers to take action. The Journal highlighted that morale was especially high amongst the railway saboteurs when working alongside the (Allied) paratroopers, There cannot be many examples where union magazines called for worker sabotage alongside Allied intervention from above.

Conclusion

Jahn returned to Germany after the war ended with American forces. He became a leading figure in reconstructing the trade unions and, from 1949 till 1958, he became the first elected president of the new German Railroad Workers' Union. From 1956, he became president of the ITF. From 1949, he also represented Hannover for the SPD in the *Reichstag*. Earlier, despite much of resistance in Germany being dominated by members of the KPD, there appears no clear evidence that Jahn chose to work with members of the KPD or had any sympathy towards Stalinism. Now, under the influence of the Cold War, he became a

⁶² Internationaler Jugend-Bund (IJB) / Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (ISK), File group: ISK, Correspondence B (1933 - 1946), www.stadtarchiv.goettingen.de/widerstand/pdf/itf-sabotageauf-ruf-deutsche-eisenbahner.pdf. This leaflet is only available in an imperfect English translation which I've hopefully improved.

⁶³ Anon, from an address to the Mutual Broadcaster System, ITF, z9593-1943-03-04

crusader against the USSR and its satellites. He organised a 'Union Action Committee' to organise clandestinely in the USSR and became editor of 'Voice for Freedom' for illicit distribution in East Germany.⁶⁴ Not for him the position, which I hold, of "Neither Washington nor Moscow". But his politics after 1945 should not divert us from honouring his rare earlier commitment and bravery in organising working-class resistance to the Nazi and fascist regimes, especially when so many in the SPD and the union bureaucracy failed to do so, and repeatedly risking his life in doing so.

Mary Saran (1897-1976)⁶⁵

Born in what was then East Prussia, Saran, a journalist and author, went to study in Berlin. But for her fourth term of medical studies, in 1918, she found herself in Göttingen, straight after the German defeat. Saran went to the headquarters of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, which had been formed as part of the revolutionary movement at that time, and offered her services. She was responsible for the rubber stamp inscribed "Workers and Soldiers Council, Göttingen" which allowed soldiers to obtain food rations.

This location was to have a lifelong impact. Göttingen was Leonard Nelson's base where he met and discussed with a coterie of students.⁶⁶ She became involved in the educational work of the ISK, becoming a member of the organisation and its youth branch. While employed as a social worker, she worked for *Der Funke*, the ISK paper. It was temporarily prohibited late in December 1932 (before the Nazi takeover) when it published an editorial which called Hindenburg "protector of fascism". She was to encounter figures, not always harmoniously, whom she would later meet up with again in London, such as Willi Eichler and Otto Wels, who were to go very different ways.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ ITF Journal, Aug/Sept 1954. This article was written when Jahn became the ITF's new Vice-President and they may well have wanted to publicise his anti-Communist credentials. For all that, Jahn had become a cold war warrior.

⁶⁵ Almost everything here is drawn from her autobiography: *Never Give up*. I make it clear when that is not my source.

⁶⁶ Leonard Nelson, a philosopher, advocated an ethically based socialism, that was anti-clerical and anti-Marxist but which nevertheless supported the importance of leadership..He and Minna Sprecht set up the International Youth Federation in 1917. In 1918, Nelson became a brief became a member of USPD, then of the SPD, from which he was expelled He then founded the ISK; (International Socialist Militant League") in 1925. Willi Eichler succeeded Nelson as president of the ISK after his death. After 1945, the ISK was merged with the SPD. (www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz71062.html#ndbcontent)

⁶⁷ see separate biographies in Moos, *Anti-Nazi Exiles*

Soon she was supporting Mathilde Wurm, a Social Democratic deputy (who was to die in mysterious circumstances later in London) and speaking on behalf of the SPD. She seems to have a negative impression of the KPD as a result of its attempted uprisings in 1921 and 1923.

She fled Berlin in 1933 and escaped via Saarland, briefly stayed in Denmark but settled in Britain in October 1933. She was welcomed by a small group of people connected to the ISK, which became the Socialist Vanguard Group (SVG), many of whom became her friends. As she comments, she had a ready-made friendship network here and so did not feel too disorientated by exile.

She became one of the leaders of the Socialist Vanguard Group.⁶⁸ Boosted by the arrival of other Germany emigrants, it grew, slightly. In 1937, its publication became monthly: *The Vanguard*. In 1941 she became its editor, later co-editing it with Rita Hinden until 1955, bringing in many writers of a social democratic disposition.⁶⁹ Later, it was to become Gaitskellite.

She was highly critical of both the Communist Party, who tried to take everything over, and, initially, the Labour Party. In a comment in her autobiography which suggests she retained some of her original politics, she stated that she would never go near William Gillies, the Labour Party's international secretary because he thought all Germans were Nazis

She became a speaker about Germany and the importance of solidarity and generally moved closer to the circle of German refugees. Till 1947 she was the editor for "Europe speaks" in succession to Wolli Eichler.⁷⁰ She became one of the lecturers for the Foreign Office in German POW camps, though unconvinced it did much good. She also worked with UNESCO, focusing on women's needs and

⁶⁸ The Socialist Vanguard Group was established in the UK in 1929 as the British Section of the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampf-Bund* (ISK), which had evolved in 1926 from the *Internationaler Jugendbund*, led by Leonard Nelson. During the 1930s, the group opposed the Labour Party, but its insignificant influence led it in 1941 to support sympathetic figures in the Labour Party and then to actually adopt an entrism strategy. It also relaunched its journal as *Socialist Commentary*. Douglas, R. M. (2002). "No Friend of Democracy: The British Socialist Vanguard Group 1941-50". *Contemporary British History*. 16 (4): 51–86

The English group was small, but had a disproportionate influence. Allan Flanders edited *Socialist Commentary*, for 30 years after the war and became a key figure in industrial relations but by then, *Socialist Commentary* had become a vehicle for right-wing revisionism in the Labour Party. As the war proceeded, Flanders' revolutionary convictions had given way to the view that capitalism could be transformed from within.

⁶⁹ Born in S. Africa, her family migrated to Palestine and then she moved to England, She married Elchon Hinden and they briefly moved back to Palestine, returned to London but moved back to Palestine where Rita became active in the Labour Zionist Movement. In 1938, they finally settled in England. Rita joined the Labour Party. On the advice of R. R. Kuczynski, she founded the Fabian Colonial Bureau and became its secretary.

⁷⁰ *Anti-Nazi Exiles*

organisations and travelled on a number of humanitarian missions outside Europe. Later, she became a governor in the local comprehensive school.

What I did not spot in her autobiography was her marriage to Alan Flanders, which, whether or not its purpose, secured her British citizenship after she arrived in the UK. In 1929 for three years, Flanders had worked for ISK in Berlin. On his return, he had assumed leadership of the tiny British section, which adopted the name *Socialist Vanguard*. He was to become a leading academic on labour rights and was on the right of the Labour Party.

Saran is one of a rare breed of German refugees who remained politically active in the UK and committed to working for a socialist future, even if, in her case, it came increasingly to take on a distinctly reformist hue.

Willi Molitor (1902-1953)

From 1917, aged fifteen, Molitor had been politically active in the union of railway workers. In 1920 he became a member of the German Metalworkers Federation and the SPD and in 1921, rejoined the German Union of Railway Workers as a fitter for German railways. He became a union official for the SPD. From 1928 to 1933, he was a member of the works council at the *Reichsbahn* repair shop in Mülheim.

After dismissal in June 1933, he attempted to build up a network of contacts among former union members in the Ruhr area. Jahn appointed him to be the leader for illegal resistance in the west. He became a link between Jahn and the ITF, including coordination with ITF headquarters in Amsterdam and with SoPaDe. But Molitor was almost immediately arrested in Duisburg with an illegal SPD group. On June 8 1935, Molitor's position was taken over by Heinrich Malina, who thus became an important interface between illegality and emigration with the management level of the ITF. But Molitor was arrested as a member of the illegal SPD group and sentenced to three years in prison, some of which he spent in the Borgermoor camp. But after his release in June 1938, the Gestapo succeeded in turning him. He then resumed his contacts with Jahn.

In January 1940, Molitor came to the Netherlands as an agent of the Gestapo, but revealed his mission to the ITF and briefly lived underground in Rotterdam. On May 2, 1940, through the mediation of the ITF, he was evacuated to the UK by

plane in order to be able to evade the arrival of the German occupation forces in the Netherlands.

The German police in the meantime had classified him as an enemy of the state and placed him on the specially wanted list. Although I could find out little about his time in the UK, he was interned and campaigned to be released in 1941. In 1946 Molitor returned to Germany.