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Special Issue: Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity

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Introduction: Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity

Abstract

Across 1950s Afro-Asia, the ongoing process of political decolonization occurred in tandem with increased connection between the local, the regional, and the global. A variety of internationalist movements emerged, much more polyphonic than the voices of the political leaders who had gathered at the Bandung Conference. Trade union networks played a particularly important role not just in organizing labor but in connecting local unions to regional and global ones. These networks were held together by exchanges between local African and Asian trade unions and large international federations such as the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. But they were held together at least as much by more horizontal connections in pursuit of Afro-Asian solidarity. Many of the latter built on antiimperialist alliances, revived or reconstituted, dating back to the interwar years. A focus on the trade-union internationalism of the period can recover a "chronology of possibility" in early Cold War Afro-Asia that has since become obscured by the internationalist failings of the 1960s. It also demonstrates the limited analytical value of the term "non-alignment" for the broader Afro-Asian moment during the early years of the Cold War. Instead, it recasts the 1950s as a global moment for Afro-Asia, in which internationalists built networks that were elastic enough to encompass a wide variety of actors and ideas and resistant enough to withstand the pressure of bodies larger and more powerful.

Introduction

During the tumultuous years of decolonization and the early Cold War in Africa and Asia, international trade union networks played an important role in deciding the course of local organized labor, and vice versa. Coinciding with the "open 1950s"[1] and occurring on the periphery of the "Bandung Moment,"[2] the

two decades after the Second World War were a period of internationalist and regionalist enthusiasm, in which organizations and people across the region charted independent and often surprising courses through the politics of the era. Political turmoil notwithstanding, the ongoing political decolonization and the sense that imperialism was firmly on the defensive combined to create confidence that a new world was in the making.

This special issue embraces Frederick Cooper's interventions on the "dialectics of decolonization," which offers a way out of the teleological trap of "reading back" decolonization from its resulting nation states.[3] Social movements could feed into nationalist movements but could also be strong antagonists to state power.[4] This applied particularly to the labor movement, which, in turn, had important implications for the manifold Afro-Asian futures that still seemed possible in the 1950s.[5] The complex relationship between trade unionism and decolonization at both the local and international level has been the subject of many interventions since.[6] Despite a shift away from the study of trade-union leadership in labor history generally, historians have continued to study trade unions across Afro-Asia as powerful voices of opposition.[7] As a recent special issue edited by Gareth Curless demonstrates, the political role of trade unions across the colonized world was and is inextricably bound to the imperial context in which these unions emerged.[8] But rather than study trade unions in their local and national contexts, this special issue asks what trade union networks across the decolonizing world can tell us about the political horizons of 1950s Afro-Asianism. These networks' (anti-)imperial roots, however, remain crucially important here, as they shaped their visions for a more just international order. By looking at international trade union networks, this special issue recovers one such "chronology of possibility" in early Cold War Afro-Asia that has since become obscured by the internationalist failings of the 1960s.[9]

These networks were held together in various ways. They consisted of exchanges between members of local unions and large trade union federations, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). They were, in equal measure, horizontal attempts to organize actors across Afro-Asia in pursuit of Third World solidarity, but they also built on international trade union connections made earlier, dating back to alliances forged in the early days of the League against Imperialism, the "Amsterdam International," and the International Labour Organization (ILO).[10]

Together, the articles in this special issue bring these networks from the abstract to the concrete, by offering case studies of impactful personal and institutional relationships held together by a sense of Afro-Asian solidarity. They examine the agency of trade union organizers who shared expertise, offered assistance or solidarity, and sought to exert influence—either as local African and Asian attempts to have their voices heard by large international bodies or as members of large international bodies seeking to correct the course of local unions in volatile political environments. In retrospect, many of the entanglements described in this issue were easily disentangled, but in the 1950s, such disillusionment had not yet set in. This issue, therefore, recovers the multidirectionality of Afro-Asian engagements through its focus on trade unionism and the polyphonic internationalisms it encompassed.

This brief era of belief in the transformative power of international solidarity coincided with the opening years of the Cold War. The flourishing of

trade-union internationalism in 1950s Afro-Asia took place against a backdrop of rivalry between the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions. As the trade union federations of the First and Second World, respectively, they were engaged in a fierce competition for the affiliation of trade unions across Africa and Asia. This competition was at the heart of both federations' missions, as it had been part of the reason the ICFTU broke away from the WFTU in 1949 in the first place.[11]

The original WFTU was founded in 1945 under sponsorship of the British Trade Union Congress, in partnership with a network of other national and re-gional federations. It was intended to be a more inclusive successor to the so-called "Amsterdam International," the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), which had existed from 1919 to 1945. Several of its continental European leaders had moved to London just in time at the start of the Second World War, making the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) the de facto cen-ter of the international labor movement.[12] It was no coincidence, therefore, that Walter Citrine, who had steered both the TUC and the IFTU through the tumultuous years of the interwar period and the Second World War, presided over the WFTU's founding Congress. Though the position of IFTU president was largely an honorary one, his chairmanship of the 1945 WFTU conference revealed a clear commitment to institutional continuity. It was also a signal that there was trouble afoot.

The foremost complaint against the IFTU had always been its lack of global representation, and the few unions from Afro-Asia that the organization did in-clude had not joined until the 1930s. For Asia, this had been limited to the *Persatuan Vakbonden Pegawai Negeri* (Indonesian Federation of Public Servants) and the Indian National Trades Union Federation.[13] A third, the *Association Chinoise du Travail*, joined during the war years. African participation was lim-ited to the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa and the segre-gated *Arbeiterverband für Südwestafrika*. The latter was admitted conditionally, pending removal of its policy of blocking African workers from joining. In the end, the Arbeiterverband made no such change but was admitted anyway.[14] It was no surprise, then, that many in the decolonizing world had not considered the IFTU a body that had their best interests at heart. No less problematic than the inclusion of workers of color was the question of colonialism: while the IFTU's main competitor, the Red International of Labor Unions, could count on an enthusiastic following in the colonized world for its unequivocal opposi-tion to colonialism and imperialism, the IFTU was much more cautious, avoid-ing any clear statements on the issue. At the very least, the federation lacked understanding of the anticolonial struggle.[15]

Some of this interwar legacy carried over into the Cold War, not least in the person of Citrine, who was known as a staunch anticommunist and seen as the most visible representative of the former IFTU.[16] Questions of the organiza-tion's position vis-à-vis both communism and decolonization marred the WFTU's attempt to become an inclusive body from the beginning. In 1949, anticommunist unions withdrew from the WFTU to form the ICFTU, essen-tially offering unions a choice between radical and reformist trade unionism. For affiliated and unaffiliated unions alike, their internationalist engagements had now become another Cold War battleground. The centrality of the issue of de-colonization to the split is made clear by the fact that the first WFTU Congress

after the rift, held in Milan in the summer of 1949, reformulated its objectives as follows: "The WFTU proclaims its prime objective is to contribute to the emancipation of the working people by means of struggle: against all forms of exploitation of people . . . against colonialism, imperialism, domination and expansionism in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres; for the elimination of racism and underdevelopment; to guarantee sovereignty, freedom and security of nations, non-interference in their internal affairs, respect for their political, economic and social independence and the establishment of a new and just international economic order."[17]

The split left a divided trade union scene in Afro-Asia as well. The 1955 directory of the WFTU, prepared by the US Department of Labor "because of the urgent need by government agencies, students, and the free trade union movement for up-to-date information on . . . Communist labor organizations," claimed that WFTU membership mainly consisted of unfree trade unions that were "for all practical purposes, arms of their governments."[18] The actual directory, however, reveals a different picture. In Africa and Asia especially, the WFTU had succeeded in affiliating trade union federations that could claim to represent considerable numbers of workers. In India, the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) joined the WFTU, and its veteran leader Shripad Amrit Dange received a seat on its executive council. It would be very hard indeed to view the AITUC as an arm of the Indian government, considering India's contested trade union landscape and the fact that the AITUC's main national rival federation, the INTUF, had its own set of international engagements and was affiliated to the ICFTU.[19] In Indonesia, SOBSI (*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* or General Trade Union Organization of Indonesia) and SOBRI (*Sentral Organisasi Buruh Republik Indonesia* or Central Labor Organization of the Republic Indonesia) joined the WFTU. The former was closely linked to PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, whereas the latter was the trade union wing of rival communist party *Partai Murba*, cofounded by the famous trade unionist and freedom fighter Tan Malaka.[20] The young but experienced SOBSI chairman Njono Prawiro represented Indonesia in the WFTU Executive Council.[21] These two Indonesian organizations alone claimed to represent 3,470,284 workers, although the US Department of Labor estimated the actual figure was probably below two million.[22]

In all, Africa and Asia had eleven EC members against Europe's thirteen (including three Russian seats) and five for Latin America. On paper, at least, this made good on a long-standing promise by the WFTU to the Afro-Asian region. But as the articles in this issue show, the WFTU's policy of inclusion also caused the ICFTU to redouble its attempts to build relationships with unions in Africa and Asia in the 1950s. As the next two sections will show, both federations actively courted the workers' organizations in the decolonizing world as part of their Cold War rivalry, but from the perspective of the decolonizing world, that Cold War lens is limiting. The importance of trade-union internationalism in this period must be viewed through a "Bandung lens" as well. It was precisely in the spaces "between" the large international federations that an Afro-Asian trade unionism was able to develop.

Trade Unionism and the Bandung Moment

Against the background of these multiple options for international affilia-
tion, as well as new opportunities for exchange within Afro-Asia, trade-union
internationalism became intricately entwined with the "Bandung Moment." As
Gerard McCann notes in his contribution to this issue, "trade unionism was an
incubator where alternative visions of decolonized futures vied for experimental
ascendency after the Second World War." This special issue is therefore rooted
in, and part of, new and ongoing research into the many Afro-Asian networks
that were part of the larger Bandung Moment but not part of "official" diplo-
matic or interstate initiatives. The expanding Afro-Asian Networks Research
Collective, coordinated by the editors of this special issue, shines new light on
the way in which nonstate and semistate actors across the region interacted with
each other and the world and seeks to add informal networks and lesser-known
gatherings to the history of the Bandung Moment.[23] In particular, this work
emphasizes that the historiographical boundaries between official and nonoffi-
cial spaces need blurring. An official conference in the eyes of one delegation
could be an unofficial or indeed subversive one in the eyes of another.[24] This
was particularly true of the international trade union circuit of 1950s Afro-Asia.

Conversely, such research also sheds light on the claims to global inclusivity
of large international bodies such as the ICFTU and IFTU.[25] These bodies' in-
clusivity efforts were strongly dependent on the knowledge—and often also on
the linguistic abilities—of these federations' African and Asian affiliates and
contacts, who used such opportunities to contest the globalism of these federa-
tions and to channel their own forms of internationalism through these net-
works.[26] This meant that the decades under examination in this issue
constituted more than a collision—and sometimes merger—of different modes
of internationalism: they constituted a collision of different geographies as well.
As the contributions clearly show, the division between the First, Second, and
Third Worlds may have been an important driver of policy for organizations
such as the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial
Organizations)[27] and the ICFTU, but it was not always a straightforward or
even meaningful division on the ground. From an Afro-Asian perspective, this
division was alternatively considered an unwanted imposition by former coloniz-
ers or an unfortunate limitation on opportunities for international connection.
The composition of delegates to major Afro-Asian gatherings such as the Afro-
Asian Writers Conference (Tashkent, 1958) or the Afro-Asian Women's
Conference (Cairo, 1961) makes this clear: such gatherings often purposefully
disregarded Cold War lines.[28] Alongside the trade union meetings in the articles
presented here, such gatherings prove that in this period, there was still space to
incorporate divergent forms and conceptions of internationalist alliances. It was
arguably more important (and attractive) to connect the local to the regional
and global, than to attach the local to one single power bloc. Local and regional
organizations survived, and indeed thrived, by being deliberately vague about
their political color. Paraphrasing McCann in this issue, this tendency placed
the trade-union internationalism of the Bandung Moment *in* the Cold War but
does not make it *of* the Cold War. This ideological flexibility is exactly what
was lost when this brief era of possibility ended in the latter half of the 1960s.

Nevertheless, it is important not to romanticize the Afro-Asian solidarities of the 1950s. Rather than imposing a lens of "success" in the 1950s and "failure" in the 1960s, the authors in this issue shed light on the nature of postwar trade-union internationalism and the characteristics that set it apart from both its more inchoate predecessors and its more restrictive later incarnations. In this, the trade union leaders under examination fall roughly into the "generational division" proposed by Mark T. Berger. He divides the history of Third Worldism into two moments: the 1950s and early 1960s, during which a "first generation" of Afro-Asian leaders created regionalist projects for national liberation and anti-imperialist pan-movements, and the 1960s and 1970s, when a "second generation" with more explicit or radical political visions operated in an international environment that demanded clear ideological statements.[29]

The idea of a "first generation" fits the Afro-Asian trade union leadership examined here, as political decolonization demanded the pioneering of new forms of trade unionism. If international alliances between unions had previously been viewed primarily as opportunities and conduits for anti-imperialist activism, the postwar world and the institutional logic of the new international organizations demanded different strategies. Trade union connections became tools for organization- (and sometimes nation-) building, transferring expertise of the more technocratic aspects of development, efficiency, and labor mobilization. What, then, were the characteristics of this "first generation" of trade union internationalists, and to what extent did such new directions also demand a different kind of trade union leader?

The first generation of postwar trade union leaders consisted, at least in part, of veterans like Sripad Amrit Dange mentioned above. His years as president of the All-India Trade Union Congress in the interwar years had been a crash course in navigating the international competition between communist and noncommunist federations. He had witnessed firsthand the havoc this competition could wreak on a fragile national trade union movement as the question of international affiliations split his in two, one of the many rifts that divided federations into communist and noncommunist ones in the closing years of the 1920s. The need for unions to declare themselves for either camp during Stalin's Third Period spelled the end for the eclectic internationalism of the early interwar years, not unlike the way the hardening of the Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s spelled the end of the internationalist daring of the 1950s.

Dange was far from the only interwar veteran who contributed his experience of the tumultuous interwar years to the making of postwar trade unionism. Makhan Singh, George Padmore, Liu Ningyi, and Messali Hadj, all protagonists in this special issue, shared similar trajectories. And with the exception of Liu Ningyi, who was denounced as a prominent ACFTU (All-China Federation of Trade Unions) worker in 1968, they were not active beyond the 1950s.[30] The type of "subaltern internationalism" practiced by the veteran leadership, further clarified by Rachel Leow in her contribution to this issue, made them well-equipped to navigate the 1950s: sensitive to ongoing freedom struggles, prepared to converse across considerable difference, and ready to take on empires.

Other trade unionists in this issue, such as Tom Mboya, George Weaver, and Govindasamy Kandasamy, did not enter the trade union scene until the 1940s and 1950s. Still, they had more in common with their peers who had been tried and tested in the interwar years than with their younger colleagues

whose political worlds were shaped exclusively by the Cold War world. Njono, the Indonesian chairman of SOBSI mentioned above, fit this description as well: he was only twenty-four years old when the organization was founded in the midst of Indonesia's decolonization war, but after spending almost a year in China to learn about workers' organization there, he became SOBSI's leader by twenty-eight.[31] His trade unionism was rooted in both the independence struggle and Afro-Asian solidarity.[32] As Vanessa Hearman has shown, Njono traveled to Cairo in September 1958 to participate in a solidarity committee in support of the Algerian struggle, along with twenty other Indonesian labor organizers.[33] But Njojo's career, too, ended in the mid-1960s. SOBSI was outlawed following the 1965 military coup, which ended decades of Indonesian workers' organization.[34] All its leaders were to report to the police. Njono was arrested and was sentenced to death in the anticommunist trials by extraordinary military courts in 1966.[35]

If any generalization across Afro-Asia can be made about the characteristics of this "generation" of trade union leadership, it is that their education as labor leaders had taken place in the late colonial context. Their experiences with union organization and strikes were rooted in anti-imperialist activism, and their international connections, both personal and institutional, were made toward that end. This anti-imperialism became the motor for Afro-Asian solidarity in the postwar context, in which earlier connections and the platforms offered by new international organizations could be used to apply political pressure and lobby for peers in need of resources and other forms of support.

In this context, a special role was reserved for African-American labor leaders. Recognizing that the domestic struggle for civil rights was intimately connected to the global struggle against imperialism, these leaders made strong connections with their counterparts in Africa and Asia. The contributions by Su Lin Lewis and Rachel Leow discuss the Asian travels of A. Philip Randolph and George Weaver, respectively. Leaders like Randolph also make an appearance in the contribution by McCann as "interpreters of the aspirations of Africans and ardent activists on their behalf," who were instrumental in keeping unions within the sphere of influence of the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU.[36] International solidarity plays an important role in the contribution by Mathilde von Bulow, too; she shows that the direction of Algerian trade unionism was determined in no small way by the ability and willingness of international federations to rally in support of the Algerian freedom struggle.

"Subaltern Internationalism" vs. "Technocratic Internationalism"?

But the 1950s were more than a replica of prewar trade union strategies. Even if there was a considerable continuity of leadership and themes across the war, decolonization and the early Cold War presented trade union leaders with a changed world. The challenge of the 1950s, then, was to adapt the federations that the early generation of leaders had created to this new context and to implement new strategies for efficient and effective mass organization. As a result, three significant changes occurred: the formation of a "subaltern internationalism" specific to the Afro-Asian movement; the development of strategies for this "subaltern internationalism" to respond to the demands of the new "technocratic internationalism" of the major international federations; and the

emergence of a "non-aligned" trade unionism for Afro-Asia, which included a closer blend of unionism and politics than most "Western" labor leaders would have preferred. All three were marked by a strong desire not to be limited by political labels not of their own making.

As a set, the contributions show that this subaltern internationalism consisted of a "patchwork" unionism that co-opted techniques developed for European industrial relations but also contested its universalist notions of development. At the personal level, this patchwork is particularly evident in the life and thought of Makhan Singh, whose work is explored in McCann's contribution. Singh could be considered a traditional Marxist internationalist, but he advocated a multiracial comradeship that encompassed, and sometimes took precedence over, a wide array of "leftist" politics. In his internationalism, socialism consisted of a "portable and malleable set of propositions." At the institutional level, a similar pattern is visible in the internationalism of the UGTA (*Union générale des travailleurs algériens*), whose leaders are the focus of Von Bulow's contribution. There were several reasons for the UGTA to maintain ties to the ICFTU, but not if it precluded receiving money and supplies from, for instance, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Von Bulow shows that this was more complex than the desire to be supported from different corners: the "Spirit of Bandung" shaped the Algerians' conception of internationalism both as an identity and as a practice. The UGTA supported attempts to institutionalize Afro-Asian solidarity through the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization (Cairo, 1957), played an important role in the first All-African People's Conference (Accra, 1958), and supported the All-African Trade Union Federation (Casablanca, 1961). None of these institutions were significant sources of material or financial support for the UGTA, but they were crucial in embedding Algerian trade unionism both locally and regionally.

How did such a "patchwork" internationalist grammar fare in the context of the early Cold War? It is here that the contributions to this issue provide an important corrective to existing histories. As a set, they demonstrate that the "labor imperialism" of the international trade union federations was not always as deaf to decolonizing voices as it has been made out to be, nor were anticolonial struggles always sublimated into Cold War agendas. Likewise, they show that "non-alignment" has limited analytical value to the writing of Afro-Asian trade union history. All contributions show the importance of personal relationships to the course of organized labor and the refusal of such relationships to conform to political demarcations. To take the example of African-American representatives of the "First World" trade union federations from the contributions by Lewis and McCann: A. Philip Randolph's travels put him in touch with Japanese and Burmese socialists and connected his politically diverse Asian colleagues to an important AFL-CIO veteran like Maida Springer, who for her part had strong links to the Pan-African movement, knew Kenyatta through George Padmore, and hosted Tom Mboya when he visited the United States. Springer's strong ties to European and American labor leaders meant that she could, and did, give voice to the perspectives of Asian and African trade unionists and the significance of the ongoing decolonization process.[37] Such networks of affinity are hard to freeze into Cold War frames.

In addition, they present cases not just of engagement across Cold War lines but of "reverse impact." As Leow shows in her contribution, the AFL-CIO and

ICFTU were not up against Afro-Asian neutralists who "declined American liberalism because they 'failed' to see its value." Rather, they were up against trade unionists who understood it, and its limitations, very well. And as Leslie James's contribution bears out, attempts to "educate" Afro-Asian workers how to be "good" trade unionists often resulted in knowledge of the particular needs and challenges of Afro-Asian labor movements flowing the other way. As Leow argues, it is more appropriate to speak of dialogical internationalism than of pedagogical internationalism.

There were several sites for such exchanges. The ongoing competition between the WFTU and the ICFTU/AFL-CIO over who gets to "teach" Afro-Asian workers how to be good trade unionists was increasingly institutionalized in training courses and even colleges. As Von Bulow notes in her contribution, the WFTU ran popular training courses specifically for African trade unionists. The ICFTU, for its part, set up a trade union college in Calcutta. It was inaugurated on November 5, 1952, by, among others, trade union veteran V. S. Mathur, who also makes an appearance in Leow's contribution to this issue. Over time, it developed a coherent curriculum, a diverse student body, and would even come to include a quarterly journal, *Asian Trade Unionist.*[38] Its poster art, however, was telling: aware that it was losing the battle for the "minds" of Asian trade unionists because the WFTU was willing to be much more explicit in its condemnation of colonialism, its slogans emphasized freedom and self-government (figures 1 and 2), trying to emphasize the compatibility of these ideals with the social-democratic leanings of the organizations. "Liberty, justice, and dignity for all" and "freedom through economic and political democracy" (figure 1), while not explicitly directed against the WFTU, were clear statements of intent. African and Asian trade unions themselves, meanwhile, were not averse to exploiting this competition to their own advantage. As one of Von Bulow's protagonists writes to the ICFTU in response to concerns about their contacts behind the Iron Curtain: "offer us scholarships and training courses, which we shall be delighted to accept."

Finally, the articles show that the top-down paternalist contact from the WFTU, ICFTU, and AFL-CIO was far from the only international exchange from which Afro-Asian labor leaders drew their strategies and built their strengths: they connected with their Afro-Asian peers outside of the context of these federations as well. These horizontal exchanges offered particular possibilities for the development of a "subaltern" trade-union internationalism adapted specifically for Afro-Asia. Union leaders met at gatherings rooted firmly in the Afro-Asian movement and organized in the region, such as the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization conferences in Cairo (1957) and Conakry (1960). As a result, the WFTU tried to use such gatherings to reach union leaders and channel influence through these specifically Afro-Asian organizations.

Counterintuitively, one effect of the encounter with Afro-Asian trade unionism was that global trade union bodies were forced to acknowledge that there was no one way to be a trade unionist. As both McCann and Lewis note in their contributions, safeguarding trade unions from political control was considered a vital principle by American trade unions as well as by the global trade union federations more generally. But while A. Philip Randolph was strengthened in this conviction when he visited Burma and saw the Burma Railways Union try to steer clear of the tense political atmosphere pervading the country,
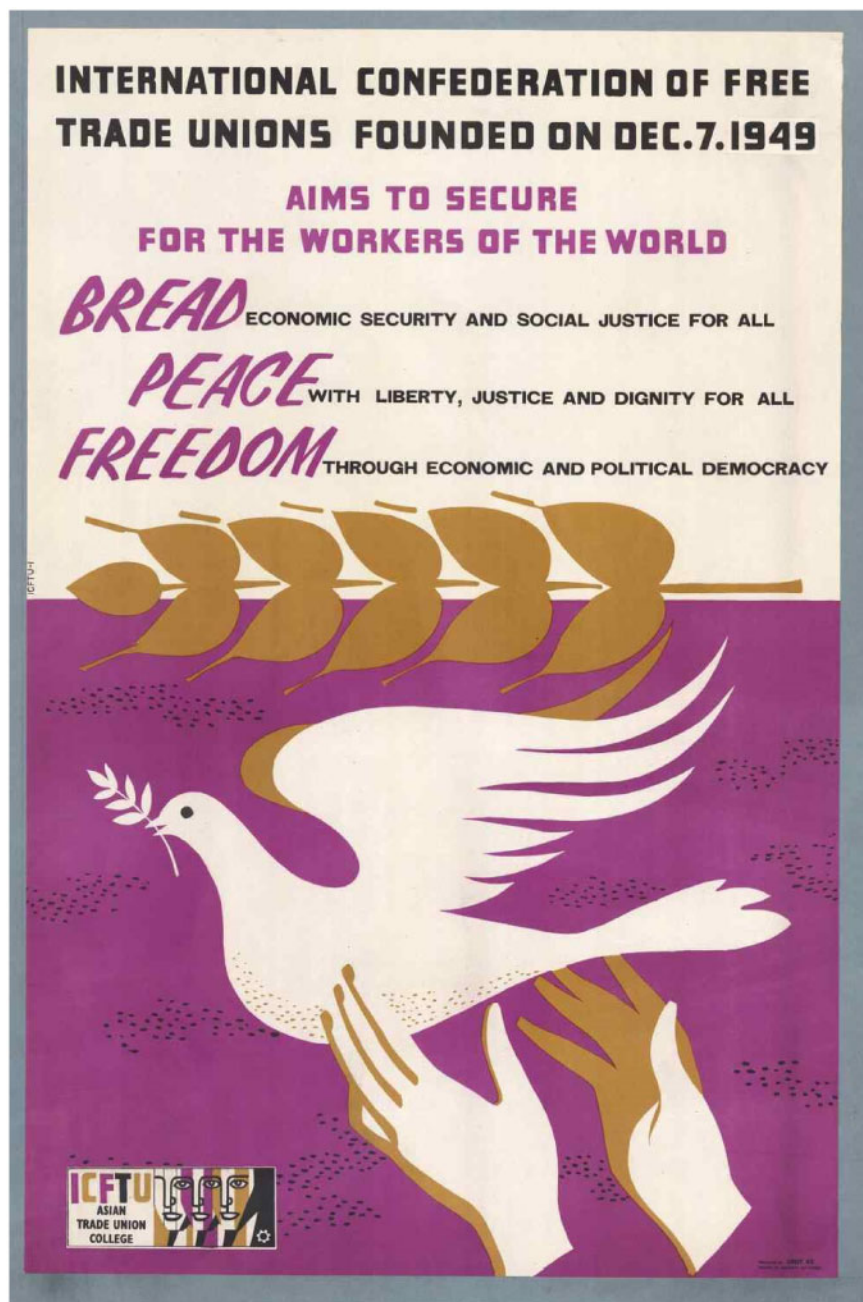
Figure 1. Poster for the ICFTU-run Asian Trade Union College in Calcutta. International Institute for Social History, ICFTU Archives, BG E4/376.
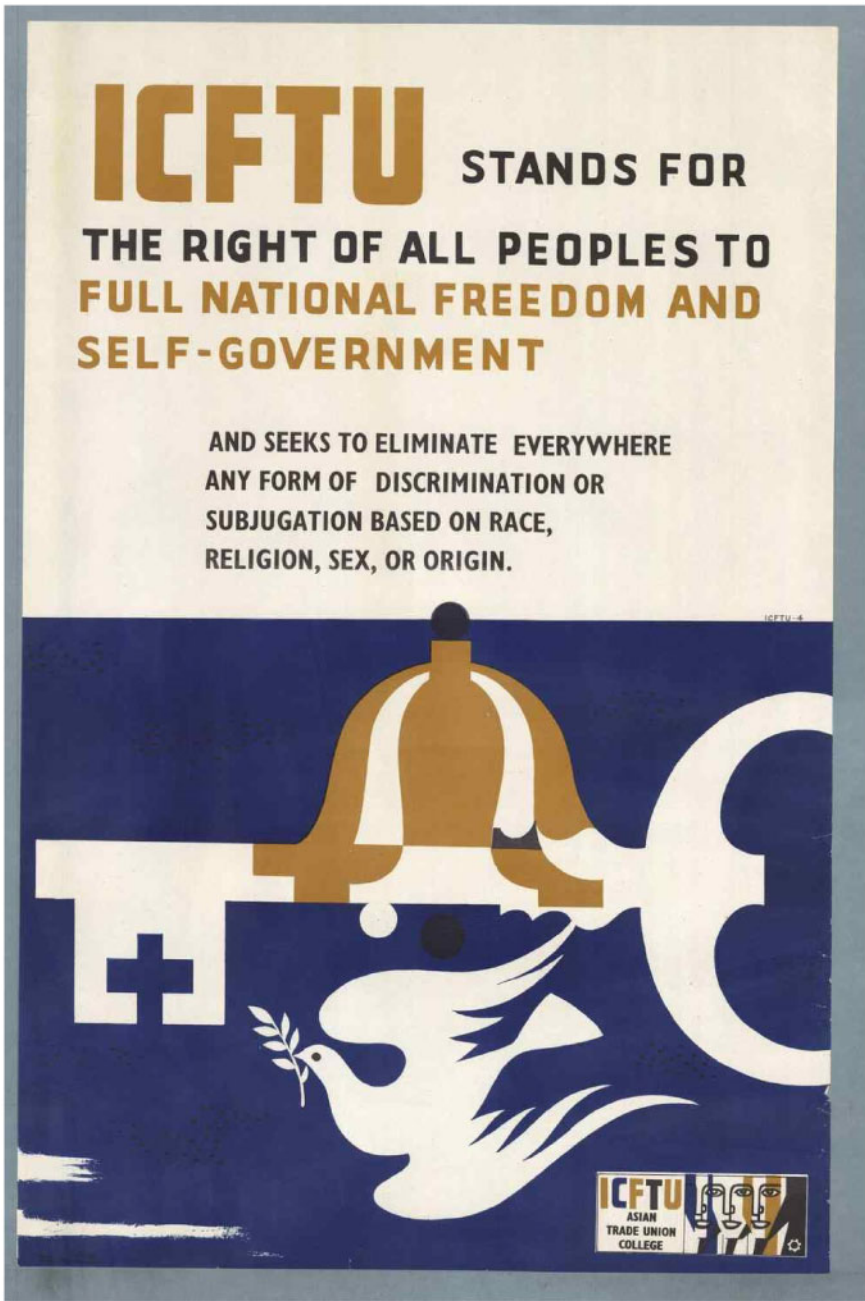
Figure 2. Poster for the ICFTU-run Asian Trade Union College in Calcutta. International Institute for Social History, ICFTU Archives, BG E4/378.

others were forced to acknowledge that this axiom was, in fact, context dependent: where trade unions were at the forefront of the fight for independence, the separation between labor and politics was not always clear.[39]

To some trade unionists, then, to describe oneself as "non-aligned" meant to reserve the right not to be labeled. As the Cold War progressed, explicitly professing "socialist" or "communist" trade union strategies was increasingly accompanied by the imposition of decisions from outside powers. It determined who one's international interlocutors were, to which federations one could affiliate, or which conferences one could attend. From an Afro-Asian perspective, this was an imposition in more ways than one: not only were the labels themselves not of their making, they had different meanings in different contexts and stages of political decolonization. Moreover, as the contributions to this issue show, the inclusive Afro-Asianism of the 1950s quite cheerfully cut through many of the ideological demarcations of the Cold War. Lewis cites Burma Railways President U Maung Ko, who explained that these labels limit opportunities for access to information, people, and places.[40] The refusal to align, in other words, was twofold: a refusal to conform to the Cold War lines drawn by the ICFTU/AFL-CIO, on the one hand, and the WFTU, on the other, but also a refusal to abide by the rules of internationally acceptable, "palatable" trade unionism.

Trade Unionism and Afro-Asian Solidarity

The articles in this issue are drawn from a wide range of archival material that reflects the case it makes for a transnational and polycentric Afro-Asian trade unionism. The archives of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam provide a goldmine of "grey literature" produced by trade unions and trade unionists across the world. In no small part, this special issue is the result of the authors' collaborative work in these archives, during which time we were able to find and share connections directly.[41] The individual authors have supplemented these sources with documents housed in places ranging from the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library in Nairobi to the Archives nationales d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence. The order of the articles presented here reflects the importance the editors attach to widening the Bandung Moment to include Afro-Asian engagement beyond the intergovernmental sphere. Others have noted a tendency to cast the Bandung Moment as a primarily Asian initiative, which included African movements but was not driven by them.[42] As the articles show, the lens of trade-union internationalism greatly complicates this picture. It is for this reason that African case studies frame this issue.

In "The Possibilities and Perils of the International in Kenya," Gerard McCann reaches back into the late 1930s and 1940s to demonstrate the centrality of trade unionism to the African freedom struggle generally and to Kenya specifically. Through its two main protagonists, Makhan Singh and Tom Mboya, his narrative moves from Kenyan trade unionists' engagement with the international left to formal alignment with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Placing the question of pedagogy at a distance, McCann gives center stage to the local trade unionists who coproduced the internationalism of the early Cold War and tied Kenya into global conversations on power,

decolonization, and workers' rights—as he notes, "a globalist future spectacularly unrealized."

Next, Leslie James places the focus not on trade unionists but on their daily administrivia: the many changes organized labor underwent in this period as a function of early Cold War trade union internationalism. She shows how global competition between the ICFTU and the WFTU shaped worker organization on the ground in both practical and philosophical ways. She tells this story through the Nigerian activities of Trinidadian trade unionist Macdonald Moses, in whose view effective trade unionism was possible only through rationally organized and efficient bottom-up organization. Through Moses, she demonstrates that technocratic ideals in Afro-Asian trade unionism were rooted not just in ideology but also in colonial experiences and transnational conversations. Transformation, James shows, can also come from "the tedious, the prosaic, and the routine."

Su Lin Lewis focuses on the person of A. Philip Randolph, the president of the United States' largest black union and a prominent civil rights campaigner. His travels to Burma and Japan in the early 1950s show the convergence, and divergence, between African-American and Asian socialists and trade unionists in the everyday politics of the Cold War. Lewis shows how, besides Randolph's obvious mission in Asia to further "trade union democracy," his Asian travels also fed back into his labor politics in the US, throwing into relief American efforts abroad while segregated trade unions remained in existence at home.

Rachel Leow likewise focuses on the multidirectionality of such encounters. In her examination of American labor expert George Weaver's service in Asia, she moves beyond his obvious identity as a Cold War technocrat on a mission in the decolonizing world and views his networks and encounters through the lens of dialogical rather than pedagogical internationalism. In doing so, she shows how the archives of the competing trade union bodies of the Cold War are uniquely able to shed light on the intersections between local, national, and international levels of activism because they have ties to all three. This makes it possible to uncover the dynamics of the "Bandung Moment" several levels below Bandung and create, in her words, a more genuinely "people's history of the Cold War in Asia."

Finally, Mathilde Von Bulow shifts the focus back onto Africa in order to show that, on the Algerian trade union scene at least, the AFL-CIO's "labor imperialism" of the Cold War was not always or necessarily at odds with its sponsorship of anticolonial struggle. She uses the evolving relationship between Algerian trade unionism, American labor, and the ICFTU as a lens through which to view the impact of the early Cold War generally, and decolonization and Afro-Asianism particularly, on Algerian organized labor. Von Bulow stresses the nuanced understanding of local political dynamics by some AFL-CIO representatives that is also evident in the articles contributed by James, Lewis, and Leow. But she also demonstrates the limits of that understanding, through the inability of the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU to offer unequivocal support for the Algerian freedom struggle—support that was readily given in the case of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, laying bare the clash between European and Afro-Asian interests for all to see. A result of this failure on the part of trade-union internationalism to support the Algerian case in a meaningful way was, in the end, a move away from the moderate internationalism offered by the ICFTU

and AFL-CIO, and toward Afro-Asia. Finally, Von Bulow's article reads as a cautionary tale: American labor's international agenda was not determined by anticommunism to the exclusion of all else, and the ICFTU, for all its declarations of anti-imperialist intent, was not as tolerant of different conceptions of organized labor as it claimed to be. Between the constraints on "Western" trade-union internationalism and the possibilities on the "blurry edges"[43] of the Cold War, Afro-Asian agency became the deciding factor.

Conclusion

This special issue demonstrates the limits of looking at trade unionism in the early Cold War as a race in which the ICFTU and WFTU, as competing global bodies, each tried to sign up more Afro-Asian trade union congresses than the other. Whether viewed from Burma, Kenya, Algeria, or India, motivations on the part of trade union leaders to work with either body were varied, local, and often only tangentially connected to Cold War lines drawn by imperial powers far away.

As a set, the contributions likewise show the limited analytical value of the term "non-alignment" in evaluating the broader Afro-Asian moment during the early years of the Cold War. Few of the Afro-Asian protagonists in these articles fit the mold of a decolonizing world "reacting" to an expanding global ideological struggle that was not of its making. Instead, they recast the "long 1950s" as a global moment for Afro-Asia in which internationalists built networks that were elastic enough to encompass a wide variety of actors and ideas and resistant enough to withstand the pressure of bodies larger and more powerful. Non-alignment did not mean disaffiliation; seen from this perspective, it meant the freedom to have more varied affiliations.

Finally, these articles pit a moment of global optimism and opportunity in the 1950s against a more closed and fractured world in the 1960s. In the former, with political decolonization ongoing, labor activism and anti-imperialist politics were intricately intertwined and sometimes even conflated. In the latter, they would increasingly become separate spheres of activism. As Leslie James notes in her analysis of Macdonald Moses's thought, trade unionism was the avenue out of colonialism. In the 1950s, this placed trade unionists at the heart of Afro-Asian gatherings. As labor organizers, they had the unique ability to translate Afro-Asian internationalism to local agendas and bring local concerns to regional and global platforms.

Endnotes

1. For this point, see M.T. Berger, "After the Third World? History, Destiny, and the Fate of Third Worldism," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 9–39.

2. For works that conceptualize a "Bandung Moment" beyond diplomatic initiatives, see C. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*, (Columbus, OH, 2010); A. Finnane, *Bandung 1955: Little Histories* (Caulfield, Australia, 2010); Menon, Dilip, "Bandung is Back: Afro-Asian Affinities," *Radical History Review* 119 (2014): 241–45; N. Miscovic, H. Fisher-Tine, and N. Boskovska, eds. *The Non-aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi, Bandung, Belgrade* (London, 2014); V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York, 2009); S. Tan and A. Acharya, eds., *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore, 2008).

3. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 406.

4. For an elaboration of this point, see, particularly, Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: the Labour Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996).

5. In Cooper's words, "what kinds of Africas would be imaginable in the postcolonial era." Cooper, *Tensions of Empire*, 406.

6. For more recent monographs on this relationship, see, among others, Jerome Teelucksingh, *Labour and the Decolonization Struggle in Trinidad and Tobago* (London, 2015); Hakeem Tijani, *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire and Decolonization since 1945* (London, 2012).

7. Lynn Schler, Louise Bethlehem, and Galia Sabar, "Rethinking Labour in Africa, Past and Present," *African Identities* 7, no. 3 (2009): 287–98. See also Rajnarayan Chandravarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India, c. 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 1998).

8. Gareth Curless, "Introduction: Trade Unions in the Global South from Imperialism to the Present Day," *Labor History* 57, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.

9. Burke, "'Real Problems to Discuss'; The Congress for Cultural Freedom's Asian and African Expeditions, 1951–1959," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 1 (2016).

10. For these connections see, among others, T. Imlay, "International Socialism and Decolonization during the 1950s: Competing Rights and the Postcolonial Order," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 4 (2013): 1105–32; C. Stolte, "Bringing Asia to the World: Indian Trade Unionism and the Long Road Towards the Asiatic Labour Congress, 1919–37," *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 3 (2012): 257–78; S. Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (Oxford, 1959).

11. A. Carew, "Conflict within the ICFTU: Anti-communism and Anti-colonialism in the 1950s," *International Review of Social History* 41 (1996): 147–81: 147.

12. G. van Goethem, *De Internationale van Amsterdam: De Wereld van het Internationale Vakverbond, 1913–1945* (Antwerp, 2003), 69.

13. E. D. Hawkins, "Indonesia," in: W. Galenson, ed., *Labour in Developing Economies* (Berkeley, CA, 1963), 71–137: 92.

14. Van Goethem, *De Internationale van Amsterdam*, 267.

15. W. Tossdorff, "Moscow versus Amsterdam: Reflections on the History of the Profintern," *Labour History Review* 68, no. 1 (2003): 79–97: 82.

16. Neil Riddell, "Walter Citrine and the British Labour Movement, 1925–1935," *History: Journal of the Historical Association* 85 (2000): 285–306: 301.

17. "History," World Federation of Trade Unions, section IV–II: "Objectives," accessed February 16, 2018, www.wftucentral.org/history/.

18. *Directory of World Federation of Trade Unions* (Washington, DC, 1955), iv.

19. H. Crouch, *Trade Unions and Politics in India* (Bombay, 1966); P.S. Gupta, *A Short History of the All-India Trade Union Congress* (New Delhi, 1980).

20. H. Poeze, *Verguisd en Vergeten: Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945–1949* (Leiden, Netherlands, 2007), 2: 945ff.

21. *Directory of World Federation of Trade Unions*, 28–9.

22. *Directory of World Federation*, 29.

23. Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, "Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Africa and Asia," *Radical History Review* 131 (2018): 176–82, www.afroasiannetworks.com.

24. For this argument, see Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Networks in the Early Cold War," Special issue, *Journal of World History* 30, no. 2 (2019); Carolien Stolte, "'The People's Bandung': Local Anti-imperialists on an Afro-Asian Stage," *Journal of World History* 30, no. 2 (2019): 125–56.

25. In this issue, the American Federation of Labor (in this period AFL-CIO) plays an important role alongside the WFTU and ICFTU. The AFL-CIO was an affiliate of the ICFTU but often appears as an independent actor, as the organization had its own role in representing US interests abroad.

26. For this point, see Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, "Manifesto," 178.

27. The AFL-CIO was a merger between the American Federation of Labor (1886–1955) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (1935–1955). The latter consisted of indus-trial unions, which had previously been unwelcome in the craft union-dominated AFL.

28. H. Halim, "Lotus, the Afro-Asian Nexus and Global South Comparatism," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32, no. 3 (2012): 563–83; D. Joon, "'Our Forces Have Redoubled': World Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (2015): 233–52.

29. Berger, "After the Third World," 9.

30. Lee Lai To, *Trade Unions in China* (Singapore, 1986), 112–19.

31. D. Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951–1963* (Berkeley, CA, 1963), 133–34.

32. See also the SOBSI principles outlined in G. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), 279; R. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca, NY, 1965), 100.

33. Vanessa Hearman, "Indonesian Trade Unionists, the World Federation of Trade Unions and Cold War Internationalism, 1957–65," *Labour History* 111 (2016): 27–44: 36.

34. D. Lev and R. McVey, *Making Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), 131.

35. M. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since 1200* (London, 2008), 328; Hearman, "Indonesian Trade Unionists," 42.

36. Y. Richards, quoted by McCann in this issue. See "African and African-American Labor Leaders in the Struggle over International Affiliation," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998): 303.

37. On Maida Springer's international connections, see Y. Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2000), 99.

38. International Institute for Social History (IISH), ICFTU Archives, 3240: ATUC general correspondence.

39. See the contribution by McCann in this issue.

40. See the contribution by Lewis in this issue.

41. On the importance of collaborative work to this type of global history, see "Manifesto," 179–81.

42. Gerard McCann, "Where was the 'Afro' in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa's 'Bandung Moment' in 1950s Asia," *Journal of World History* 30, no. 2 (2019); Robert Vitalis, "The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Bandoong)," *Humanity* 4, no. 2 (2013): 261–88; Antoinette Burton, "Epilogue," in Lee, *Making a World after Empire*.

43. L. James and E. Leake, "Introduction," in *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence*, eds. E. Leake and L. James (London, 2015), 1–17: 1–5.