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The Missing Link? Western Communists as Mediators Between the East German FDGB, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and African Trade Unions in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s

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Abstract

In the interstices of Cold War rivalries and anti-colonial agitation in late 1950s Africa, African workers came into the focus of African nationalist politicians, Western leftists, colonial regimes and state socialist states alike. They were a small, but influential group, increasingly organized in trade unions and capable of bringing whole economies to a halt. European communists on both sides of the Iron Curtain saw these workers not only as part of an inceptive working class but also debated their role as a potential key force in global anti-capitalist revolution – if they had the right concepts. But how could trade union representatives, particularly those ones from Eastern Europe, actually get in touch with their African counterparts? Based on archival materials of the East German *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB), this article discusses East-West-South connections in labor education with a special emphasis on the role of Western trade union officials working for or affiliated to the communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Drawing on their international experience, personal networks and linguistic skills, French and British communists established and intensified links between African trade unions and WFTU affiliates like the FDGB in the 1950s and early 1960s. Their influence facilitated and shaped these East-South connections. First, through their networks in West Africa, Western communists enabled the WFTU and the FDGB to internationalize their concepts of trade union education and integrate it into African political structures. Secondly, we examine the African Workers' University in Conakry, an East-West-South joint venture between the West African *Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire* (UGTAN) and the WFTU, where trade unionists from the entire African continent attended courses between 1960 and 1965 and where European communists broadened their horizons while often holding on to rigid views. Thirdly, the article examines how European trade union functionaries talked about

African course participants behind closed doors—building on the transcripts from a 1963 WFTU gathering on education for African trade unionists. Emphasizing their insider knowledge, French communists with experience in African trade union education called for innovative pedagogical concepts including a more practice-related education which acknowledged the heterogeneous conditions in different countries. However, they also promoted Eurocentric stage theories and saw a need to “discipline” Africans. The article concludes that the cooperation between actors from East, West and South rested on some shared assumptions, but encounters also led to reconceptualizations and realizations of ideological and practical constraints in international labor education.

Keywords: trade union education; African trade unions; Western communists; World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU); Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB); East-South relations

Introduction

As anticolonial agitation in Africa gained momentum in the 1950s, African workers came into the focus of nationalist politicians, Western leftists, colonial regimes, and the socialist camp alike. African workers were a small but influential group, increasingly organized in trade unions and capable of bringing whole economies to a halt.¹ European communists on both sides of the Iron Curtain came to see these workers not only as part of an inceptive working class but also as an influential player in anti-colonialism. Given that there were few communist parties in Africa, European communists perceived trade unions as gateways to establish contacts and mobilize the most progressive elements of African societies in order to foster a global anticapitalist revolution toward socialism.² Most believed, however, that this required a trained socialist vanguard—an elite of class-conscious cadres well versed in Marxism-Leninism—within the trade unions. Starting in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and its national affiliates stepped up educational and training activities for African trade unionists, both in Europe and on the African continent.³ Trade unions thus became “a significant interface of East-South interactions and concrete social experiences, operative across the whole world.”⁴ As Gabriele Siracusano has recently argued, educational programs targeting African trade unions for the formation of “political and workers’ cadres” were “fundamental for the spread of socialism on the continent” at large.⁵ At the same time, our understanding of how such programs—especially in Africa—were conceptualized, set up, and contested remains limited.⁶ It is also unclear how the connections between African trade unions and the communist world were established in the first place, and how these exchanges challenged or even changed attitudes and practices prevalent in European trade unions. This article maps the establishment of transnational education programs and shows how the WFTU’s engagement with African trade unions was shaped by the transnational networks of Western communists who facilitated the connection between Africa and the socialist states.

The WFTU’s offensive in labor education was built on previous expansions as well as ideological reorientations. With the founding of the WFTU in October 1945 in Paris, trade unions from communist and noncommunist as well as colonial countries were united for the first time since 1919. Anthony Carew has described how the WFTU was envisioned in the aftermath of the allied victory against the fascist powers

as “part of a new global framework of economic and social institutions that would build a better world and eliminate the causes of the war.”⁷ The founding congress was attended by 272 delegates from 56 nations, representing 64 million workers.

But labor unity was fragile. Differing ideologies and conflicting views on trade unionism after World War II made for constant tensions in the organization and when it appeared that a majority of unions within the WFTU would oppose the US-American Marshall Plan, a number of national centers from North Western Europe and North America decided to split from the WFTU. This led to the establishment of a new anticommunist trade union federation in 1949—the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).⁸ The ICFTU and the WFTU now vied for dominance in global labor activism. The WFTU, as an “anti-imperialist, class-based global Trade Union Organisation,”⁹ continued with its approach of revolutionary trade unionism drawing on Marxist class analysis to bring social progress, national liberation, and, ultimately, socialist world revolution. Its national affiliates included Eastern European national centers such as the East German *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB), but also Western ones such as the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT)¹⁰ and the Italian *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL).

The global spread of the WFTU was constrained by imperial interests. The staunch anticolonial activities of the WFTU were considered a threat by the British and French governments, which, by the early 1950s, enforced a ban on communist literature and WFTU activities in their colonies.¹¹ Until the mid-1950s, the WFTU’s engagement with the Third World was also hampered by Stalinist disregard for African anticolonialists as “national bourgeoisie” and dogmatic understandings of class analysis which failed to grasp concrete realities on the African continent. Yet already at the WFTU’s Third World Congress in Vienna in 1953, delegates from seventy-nine countries, representing eighty million workers on all five continents, gathered to join the proceedings. The congress poster, featuring a Black male worker and a white male worker as well as an Asian woman dressed in a trench coat, evoked a sense of unity across geographic divides and professional groups.¹²

From the 1950s onward, the WFTU was “not a monolithic, but a polycentric organization”¹³ of global reach, with national affiliates in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Western Europe in addition to the “Eastern bloc” countries that the WFTU is usually associated with. In the context of this article, “West” refers to Western states, institutions, and individuals, regardless of their ideological orientation. The Western communists who are the focus of this article were citizens of capitalist countries that, in the case of France and Great Britain, were colonial powers. French and British communists were, in many ways, counterhegemonic groups, but in terms of language (speaking the colonial lingua franca), their access to organizational and informal networks as well as specific knowledge, they also profited from the imperial heritage and their membership in the West. This becomes particularly clear in contrast to trade union representatives from the socialist camp—here referred to as the “East.” They were citizens of communist-led states that promoted anticapitalism and anti-imperialism on a strictly Marxist-Leninist basis—and usually lacked connections to territories and people that had been subjected to European colonial rule. Transnational organizations like the WFTU thus provided opportunities to

experiment with new forms of connectivity.¹⁴ Actors from the “South,” including African politicians and trade unionists, shared the historical experience of imperial subjection. During the Cold War period, particularly in the aftermath of the Bandung Conference in 1955, they used connections to both East and West to their own ends, which included personal advancement, but also the furthering of collective causes such as labor organization, decolonization, development, and nation-building. African trade unions were drawn into—and actively tried to make use of—Cold War rivalries between the two grand federations, the communist-dominated WFTU and the anticommunist ICFTU.¹⁵ At the same time, African labor leaders also had to navigate tensions between workers’ socioeconomic demands, nationalist goals, and pan-African visions.¹⁶ The links between these different spheres in the East, the West, and the South were embodied by just a handful of mobile persons who advocated competing strategies of internationalization and favored different alliances for the mobilization of financial, symbolic, and administrative resources.

Given the polycentric character of the WFTU, traces of these relations can this be found in numerous archives—and even in one single archive, there are myriad leads for the transregional currents of labor activism. This article is based on archival materials of the national trade union federation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the FDGB. These materials also include minutes as well as protocols of WFTU functionaries’ meetings that help to understand the role of Western trade union activists of communist orientation in establishing and intensifying links between African and Eastern European trade unions in the 1950s and early 1960s.

We examine the role of Western communists for East-South linkages in trade union affairs in three different ways. First, given the precarity of early East-South linkages, communist trade union functionaries from France (organized in the French trade union center CGT) acted as mediators. Through their networks and foothold in West Africa, Western communists were key for the WFTU and its Eastern European national affiliates such as the FDGB to internationalize union education and integrate it into African political structures. Secondly, building on and expanding the work of Françoise Blum and Gabriele Siracusano, the article turns to the establishment of the African Workers’ University in Conakry which educated trade union cadres from the entire African continent between 1960 and 1965.¹⁷ Finally, we show how Western communists’ opinions shaped the FDGB’s and WFTU’s views on African trade unions, and perceptions of Africa at large. The French college directors of the CGT represented “their” African trade union colleges during meetings under the auspices of the WFTU. One exchange of experience, the 1963 gathering on education for African trade unionists, will be analyzed in detail here. While the cooperation between actors from the East, the West, and the South rested on some shared assumptions, encounters also led to a number of adaptations of the curricula and the realization of ideological and practical constraints in trade union education across different national contexts.

The Precarity of Early East-South Linkages

The impulses of Eastern European trade unions to reach out toward Africa were intricately connected with the dynamics of decolonization. Similar to other trade unions

in the socialist camp, the East German FDGB was integrated into the centralized state structure of the GDR and acted as a “transmission belt,” to use Lenin’s classic expression, for the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) to mobilize East German workers and employees. Beyond its role within the country, the FDGB was also an important player in East Berlin’s economic and foreign policy where it could carve out its scope of action by fusing proletarian internationalism with anticolonialism. Connections to trade unions in colonial and postcolonial countries also served as proto-diplomatic channels since the West German Hallstein Doctrine (1955) effectively blocked the diplomatic recognition of the GDR around the world. Throughout the 1950s, the FDGB organized solidarity campaigns for the wars in Korea and Indochina and supported the Algerian independence struggle.¹⁸ The WFTU’s Fourth World Congress in Leipzig in 1957, which was hosted by the FDGB, brought a “new lease on life” to the WFTU, primarily due to “its ability to attract non-Communist Afro-Asian trade-union leaders on an unprecedented scale, even including some from ICFTU affiliates.”¹⁹ The congress championed solidarity with workers struggling against colonialism and emphasized the importance of the colonized world for socialist world revolution.²⁰ The “Year of Africa” in 1960, when seventeen states attained independence, shifted the focus of attention to the African continent.

In the view of GDR functionaries, which echoed the Soviet perspective, political independence was a precondition to speed up the historical transition to world socialism. In a public statement, the FDGB leadership enthusiastically welcomed the development that “[t]he 190 million Africans have now shaken off the colonial yoke,” believing that the “great successes of their sacrificial struggles are an expression of the new balance of power on our planet, which is determined by the existence and growth of the enormous socialist world system.”²¹ With its high-level declaration disseminated widely in French and English, the FDGB claimed to support the African unions in a common struggle against the perceived common enemy—imperialism. An “Action Plan for the Further Work of the FDGB in Africa” called for the production of Marxist-Leninist materials in English, French, and Arabic to be disseminated among African trade unionists. In these materials, the FDGB’s support for African liberation struggles should be highlighted. Additionally, documentary films were to be created to inform African audiences about GDR society and cultural life in East Germany. The action plan also called for a closer examination of the political, economic, and trade union situation as well as the struggle of the working class in African countries.²² Although all these measures were deemed essential to reach out and also gain knowledge about African contexts, “[t]he most important support for the African trade unions” was held to be “the quick education of the largest possible number of trade union cadres.”²³ This credo had already been proclaimed at a WFTU meeting in September 1960 in Prague by the Sudanese WFTU Secretary Ibrahim Zakaria.²⁴ As the FDGB (and other Eastern European trade unions affiliated to the WFTU) were now willing to support (and shape) trade union education on the continent, African labor leaders were also anxious to exploit Cold War rivalries to maximize access to scholarships and material assistance for their unions and national centers respectively.²⁵

Yet there were many barriers to overcome in reaching African trade unions and knowing their circumstances.²⁶ Trying to engage with the accelerating momentum of decolonization, trade union education in the GDR was rapidly stepped up. After the first courses had commenced in 1959, by 1961 the Foreigners' Institute at the FDGB's existing central trade union college "Fritz Heckert" in Bernau near Berlin had been expanded to cope with an intake of more than one hundred Africans per year.²⁷ Supported with a monthly stipend and free medical care, trade unionists from more than a dozen African countries usually studied for eighteen months in the GDR, the first eight of which were reserved for learning the language of instruction: German.²⁸ The training of African "cadres" was one of the central pillars of the FDGB's strategy for an "effective support of the anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, national liberation struggles."²⁹ Based on the concept of proletarian internationalism, the curriculum was designed to train a "class-conscious" vanguard that, equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge from internships in GDR companies, would tackle trade union problems at home and at the same time aid the international policy of the FDGB (including the objective to contribute to the GDR's diplomatic recognition) in the East-West rivalry.³⁰

The WFTU confirmed its determination to intensify links with African trade unions at the meeting at its headquarters in Prague in September 1960. The participating secretaries Ibrahim Zakaria, Guisepppe Casadei, Vladimir Berezin, Luigi Grassi, and Marcel Bras spoke in front of representatives from European socialist countries³¹ as well as the Italian CGIL and the French CGT. Zakaria emphasized that the FDGB's delegation to West Africa in 1960 under FDGB president Herbert Warnke who was also one of the WFTU's vice presidents also boosted the WFTU's work toward Africa.³² Nevertheless, especially in East Africa, the activities of the WFTU and its affiliated organizations were few since the British attempted to prevent WFTU personnel and literature from entering their colonies. Admitting that the WFTU needed to be better informed about the trade union movements in Africa, Zakaria highlighted the importance of the training and education of trade unionists to form a vanguard. The educational activities should take place both in socialist countries and in Africa.³³ This was easier said than done, however. It was far from easy for African students to reach countries in the socialist camp³⁴—especially those from what were still colonial territories—and even more difficult for communist trade unions in the East such as the FDGB to get a foothold in African countries on the verge of political independence, where communists were unwelcome.³⁵ Thus, journeys to Africa usually only became possible once countries had become independent and sought relations with the socialist East, but even then language barriers, Western pressures, and widespread anticommunism among postcolonial elites hindered such exchanges.

Despite restraints and censorship from the colonial powers, the WFTU had succeeded in enrolling Africans with courses in Budapest where around 160 trade unionists from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America were trained between 1953 and 1955. In 1957, Czechoslovakia hosted a seminar for the women of European, Asian, African, and Latin American trade union organizations.³⁶ Western communists were often involved in these ventures. When the WFTU institutionalized its trade union college in Budapest in fall 1959, it was headed by the French CGT

functionary Jean Marillier and at least one other CGT member, Paul Dupont, lectured at this institution.³⁷ As these courses at the WFTU's central college did not meet the rising demand for union education, the WFTU's affiliates in the GDR, USSR, and ČSSR established institutes targeting African and Asian unionists between 1959 and 1961.³⁸ Yet although the FDGB, for instance, with its sizable membership of 6.3 million card-carrying members, was an important and comparatively well-endowed affiliate of the WFTU, it lacked expertise and contacts to run such programs on its own. French and British communists were important in channeling WFTU scholarships (and scholarships of its Eastern European affiliates such as the FDGB) to African trade unionists as well as students and workers, both in Africa and in the metropolises.³⁹ The links of the CGT reached back further in time since most of the founding members of the Pan-West African *Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire* (UGTAN founded in 1957) were trained by the CGT and had taken up posts within the WFTU during the 1950s. The most prominent example was the WFTU's vice president Abdoulaye Diallo (1953–1957) who later acted as one of UGTAN's secretary generals.⁴⁰ Earlier educational ventures of the CGT thus facilitated later links with the WFTU and Eastern European trade unions.⁴¹

Although UGTAN facilitated contacts between the WFTU and its affiliates with African trade union functionaries, problems in “reaching” and “knowing” trade unions and addressing their specific local conditions persisted. The fact that delegation visits and teaching exchanges remained rare in the early 1960s exacerbated the problem of knowledge gaps. As late as 1963, the Soviet functionary in charge of the Soviet Trade Union College in Moscow, which also educated African unionists, admitted that the Soviets hardly knew anything about local realities, rivalries, and ideological orientations in Africa.⁴² The teaching staff at the Foreigners' Institute at the FDGB's Trade Union College “Fritz Heckert” in Bernau similarly faced a dearth of information, lacking empirically solid literature on class relations and trade unions in Africa. As a number of these teachers were pursuing academic qualification works in the field of African trade unions,⁴³ they needed to find new strategies to get access to information. One strategy was to exchange materials with Bernau's African alumni. Trade union officials such as the Ghanaians J. A. Osei and Eric K. Amoah, the Cameroonian Osée Mbaitjonge, the Kenyan Henry Koweru, the Malian Boubacar Diallo, and the Zambian Amos Ndyamba, to name a few, initiated and maintained an exchange of books, magazines, and newspapers, often accompanied by news on their career trajectories.⁴⁴

East German college staff also eagerly read, and highly appreciated, studies of Western communists about African trade unions and labor relations and the history of the continent at large. One of them was the Marxist geographer and historian of Africa Jean Suret-Canale (1921–2007). Suret-Canale had been part of communist study groups in the late 1940s and an active CGT trade unionist in French West Africa during the 1950s. Following Guinea's decision to prefer immediate independence to continued French influence in September 1958, Suret-Canale was one of only two French teachers who decided to stay in Guinea—while all other French teachers left.⁴⁵ His works provided important impulses for East German academics for establishing area studies in the early 1950s in the GDR and for facilitating contacts to leaders of liberation movements. At the Bernau College, Suret-Canale's books were

considered the “staff of life” (*täglich Brot*) among East German trade union teachers concerned with international affairs.⁴⁶ Similarly popular and influential were the works of the British CP member and WFTU functionary Jack Woddis (1914–1980). Woddis had already been responsible for earlier East-South linkages when he conducted a WFTU program for African trade unionists in Budapest in 1957.⁴⁷ Woddis’s publications included the pamphlet *The Mask is Off! An Examination of the Activities of Trade Union Advisers in the British Colonies* (1954) as well as two monographs, *Africa. The Roots of Revolt* (1960) and *Africa: The Lion Awakes* (1961), with extensive sections on African trade unions.⁴⁸ These two books were compiled into one volume by the East German publishing house Dietz and published under the title *Afrika, Kontinent im Morgenrot* (1963). Woddis’s next book on Africa, *Africa. The Way Ahead* (1963), was translated and published by Dietz under the title *Afrika – der Weg nach vorn* (1964). The German translations became an important foundation for teaching and researching African labor issues in the GDR. *Africa: The Way Ahead (Afrika – der Weg nach vorn)* was considered the “bible” of teachers at the trade union college’s Foreigners’ Institute, as its former director Heinz Deutschland remembered.⁴⁹ In *Africa – The Way Ahead*, Woddis examined whether Africa could follow a “non-capitalist path of development,” warned of neo-colonialism, and analyzed conditions for Africa’s economic progress and economic independence in the light of pan-African ideas and the quest for unity. The book also included an immensely valuable country-by-country guide to African parties, politicians, and trade unions.⁵⁰ However, the most important French communist in terms of links between East Germany and West African trade unions in the early 1960s, was Maurice Gastaud. Gastaud did not only facilitate the entry of East German trade union teachers into West Africa but also encouraged the FDGB to support construction of a new college compound for the “African Workers’ University” (*Université Ouvrière Africaine de Guinée*⁵¹), which was housed in temporary premises like hotels until the final building was finished in 1964.

Joint Venture East-West-South: The “African Workers’ University” in Conakry (Guinea), 1960–1965

The emergence of the African Workers’ University as an East-West-South joint venture reflects both opportunities and constraints in setting up transnational labor education programs. It was no coincidence that the WFTU could establish its first foothold in West Africa rather than in East Africa or Southern Africa. For one, alongside the anticolonial networks of Africans already established during the interwar period, communist study groups during and after World War II as well as the activities of the CGT prepared a fertile ground for Marxist thought in West Africa. Unlike many British communists, French communists had been very interested and quite successful—particularly through trade unionist links—in building up such a presence in West Africa after 1945.⁵² By 1948, forty thousand salaried workers in French West Africa were unionized in the CGT—representing more than half of all unionized workers. Over time, however, the CGT’s role was challenged. With the rise of nationalism and demands for autonomy and a focus on anticolonialism and the “African personality,” the presence of French communists, their focus on economic

exploitation, and their ambiguous position on anticolonialism⁵³ came to be seen more critically. The newly emerging group of African trade union functionaries, many of whom had been trained by the CGT and sometimes came to play important roles in anticolonial politics (e.g., Ruben Um Nyobe from Cameroon), became divided over the question of maintaining or severing association. The former postal office trade unionist Abdoulaye Diallo,⁵⁴ who maintained close friendships with French communists since the early 1950s, believed that links to the metropolitan union and the WFTU provided organizational experiences and material resources. Others in the CGT, most notably the Guinean trade unionist Sékou Touré, were in favor of greater autonomy. This reflected developments in the realm of political parties as French West Africa's largest political party, the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), had just disaffiliated from the PCF in 1950.⁵⁵ The rivalry was also based on diverging political strategies: Touré emphasized the need to forge a separate body that was suited to cater for specifically African needs such as anticolonial liberation and the development of the "African personality." In contrast, the "assimilationist" group around Diallo held the more orthodox view that working-class unity across borders and joining European Communists in their fight against capitalism were preferable to an autonomous but notably weaker and more isolated, Africanized trade union organization that represented only a small fraction of the population.⁵⁶

These tensions between differing understandings of trade unionism and transnational ties also shaped the establishment and running of the African Workers' University in Guinea. At its inception in 1960, the trade union college was the only project of this type in French-speaking Africa. In East Africa, the Western-dominated ICFTU had a much stronger position and opened the African Labour College in Kampala, the capital of the British protectorate Uganda, in 1958. The college offered trade union seminars in Uganda from where the ICFTU aimed to spread its educational activities to Anglophone East, West, and Southern Africa in the early 1960s.⁵⁷

The central figure at the African Workers' University in Guinea was its first director, the *cégétiste* Maurice Gastaud, who had joined the Communist Party in 1940. Gastaud was an active member of the Résistance and became a leading functionary in trade union education. In 1958, his first posting to Africa led him to Congo-Brazzaville (which he described as his "first time to tread African soil"⁵⁸); his second to Guinea.⁵⁹ According to Françoise Blum, the agreement on the African Workers' University of Guinea was signed with the WFTU in November 1959 at the initiative of the UGTAN.⁶⁰ In response to UGTAN's call for cooperation by Seydou Diallo—a CGT-educated Guinean trade unionist—the WFTU sent Gastaud. The college was quickly operational, though it needed some adjustments. The first two courses took place in Dalaba, around 350 kilometers from Guinea's capital Conakry. Given the remoteness of the location and unfavorable material conditions, the location was shifted to a rented hotel in Conakry.⁶¹ From February 1960 through January 1965, 16 courses with 469 participants (including only 26 women⁶²) were organized at the African Workers' University. The course duration varied between eight days and six weeks for the inter-African courses. These were attended by students from as far as Zanzibar and Kenya to the East, Angola and Southern Rhodesia to the South, Algeria and Morocco to the North, and Senegal

to the West. The majority of course participants were sent by national centers and individual unions sympathizing with Touré's Guinea, UGTAN (and later AATUF) and—to a certain degree—with the WFTU.⁶³ The college's Board of Directors included Maurice Gastaud, the Senegalese labor leaders Abdoulaye Gueye and Abdoulaye Thiaw as well as the Guineans Kaba Mamady (president of the Guinean national trade union center *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée*, [CNTG]), Seydou Diallo (Secretary General of UGTAN), and Ansoumane Oularé (Vice President of the CNTG).⁶⁴ While most of the lectures at the African Workers' University were delivered by Gastaud himself, assisted by a small number of foreign staff and West African trade unionists mentioned above, the college also invited some of the period's most important anti-colonial activist intellectuals and influential members of liberation movements for guest lectures. In 1960, for instance, the Martinique-born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, Angolan writer Mário Pinto de Andrade and Amílcar Cabral, an agronomist and Marxist thinker from Guinea-Bissau, gave talks about liberation struggles in Algeria and Portuguese-ruled territories.⁶⁵

Additional European lecturers came from both the Eastern and Western parts of the WFTU network and included the WFTU functionary and British communist Jack Woddis, Soviet instructors, and Italian teachers from the CGIL.⁶⁶ Similar to the above-mentioned opportunities to access and co-produce knowledge, these sojourns were valuable opportunities for FDGB functionaries and the teaching staff of the Foreigners' Institute at the FDGB trade union college "Fritz Heckert" in Bernau to learn and expand their horizons. The contents of their presentations were often taken from their own regional and topical frameworks. According to the 1960 curriculum, Karl Kampfert, the director of the trade union college in Bernau was scheduled to speak about "The role of trade unions in the socialist countries" (Kampfert), while Wilhelm Wilke was to teach about "Competition, its principles, its means, its objectives" ("L'émulation, ses bases, ses moyens, ses buts").⁶⁷ During his 1961 teaching stint, Wilke taught on problems of national democracy like class struggles and contradictions in the quest for economic development in independent states. Wilke was impressed with the political orientation of the participants from Portuguese Guinea, who accounted for five out of a total of twenty-one students.⁶⁸ Wilke's report on his observations and encounters "on the spot" in 1961—it was his first trip to Africa—reflected disillusion and criticism directed at the Guinean political elite. Wilke was shocked that "the whole Politbureau and the government" were driving West German Mercedes Benz; he also reported on "reactionary elements" in the government sabotaging plans and the policies of nationalization and the population's increasing anger at this self-enriching minority.⁶⁹ Evidence suggests that these observations were influenced by Gastaud, who had a much better insight into political affairs and social realities than Wilke could possibly have.⁷⁰ In a letter to a French associate, Gastaud wrote that Wilke hardly knew anything about African realities due to his travel inexperience and was mostly concerned with gaining teaching experience and material for his dissertation on Guinean trade unions.⁷¹ The FDGB's contribution to teaching and analysing the situation in Guinea was initially rather small. Soon, however, more and more Guinean alumni from the Bernau college returned to their country, some of whom climbed the career ladder in the trade union or state administration.

In April 1964, WFTU secretary Chleboun proposed to send Wilke to Guinea again—this time, however, not as a member of the FDGB but as a WFTU employee to spare the Guineans repercussions in their intensifying relations with West Germany.⁷² Chleboun recommended that Gastaud and Wilke specified their tasks to prevent Wilke from being used only for auxiliary tasks at the college.⁷³ The WFTU official Chleboun further aimed to portray the assistant position as Gastaud's deputy as tempting for Wilke: since invitations for African trade unionists from the continent to study at Conakry college were handled through personal contact, there would be the possibility for Wilke to travel to other African countries as a WFTU employee and invite non-Guinean trade unionists.⁷⁴ This certainly presented a welcome opportunity for Wilke and the FDGB to strengthen their networks among African trade union leaders who delegated students to Conakry. For the propagandists' course, different topics were prepared by the school's director Gastaud, Tehle (the director of the trade union college of the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Trade Union Movement), Borodin (from the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, USSR), Wilke, and Julis (French CGT, teaching at the Malian union college in Bamako). A committee was set up to analyze the teachings and summarize them at the end of the course in six brochures for the African trade unions. The themes were shaped by proletarian internationalism and included the tasks of trade unions in "young nation states" (i.e., newly independent countries), the creation of a working-class alliance, relations between trade unions and agricultural cooperatives, "scientific socialism," and the role of trade unions in a socialist society.⁷⁵

Apart from teaching, the African Workers' University was also an East-West-South joint venture in terms of other resource transfers. The FDGB assumed important roles in building and running the institution. It provided most of the funding for the new college facilities. The GDR also dispatched engineers to oversee the construction work done by Guinean workers. Gastaud visited the GDR a number of times during the 1960s to discuss the institution's development and consolidate the FDGB's willingness to support it. In a meeting with FDGB president Warnke, he claimed that the FDGB was highly respected in Guinea and that there existed a good basis for future relations between the CNTG and the FDGB's International Relations department. According to Gastaud, the FDGB's positive image resulted from factors such as the education of Guinean trade unionists at the Bernau college and donations, like a vehicle equipped for movie screenings, which toured the country.⁷⁶ While from a Guinean perspective, contacts to East Germany mattered for the mobilization of resources and training opportunities (both initially strongly mediated through the WFTU and Gastaud), the FDGB's functionaries and teaching staff profited from the closer connections between their trade union center and the Guinean organized labor movement as a "gate" to gain new experiences and knowledge. The FDGB did not, however, gain the anticipated prestige for its biggest financial contribution—the building of the African Workers' University's new college facilities for the Guinean CNTG. As an East German representative noted with deep irritation, the FDGB's comprehensive contribution—in internal FDGB communication, the college's new facilities, which included four large buildings, a classroom for one hundred people, a movie theater, a sports field, and group study rooms, seen as fully "donated by us"—was not publicly acknowledged, neither during the opening on November 30,

1964, nor in national broadcasts about the institution.⁷⁷ In an attempt to streamline the national trade union center CNTG further with his ruling party, Sékou Touré took control of the college and converted it into a party school of the PDG.⁷⁸ International courses and close cooperation with the WFTU were discontinued. In several ways, the hopes of FDGB and WFTU functionaries were thus not fulfilled. In sum, the African Workers' University in Conakry may be seen as an ambitious East-West-South joint venture in the field of trade union education. Under the directorship of French communist Gastaud, it allowed the WFTU to successfully establish a foothold in West Africa and train unionists from across the continent. The WFTU also financed a trade union college in Bamako, Mali, which was led from 1962 to 1965 by another French *cégétiste*, Gilbert Julis.⁷⁹ The experiences gathered at these two colleges on the continent were considered crucial for future adaptations of African trade unions and trade union education—topics discussed at WFTU conferences and meetings.

Openness and Orthodoxy within the WFTU: The 1963 Experience Exchange

As the nationalist takeover of the African Workers' University in Guinea shows, the relation between trade unions, states, and parties became a central issue in the early 1960s. Trade unions were actual or perceived threats to postcolonial rule in an increasing number of African countries. While some African trade unions played key roles in overthrowing regimes (e.g. in Congo-Brazzaville and Dahomey in 1963), many others were illegalized, marginalized, and co-opted.⁸⁰ Given these circumstances, the WFTU organized a conference to discuss what kind of trade union education would suit African (as well as, to a lesser extent, Asian and Latin American) contexts. This 1963 conference, organized by the WFTU's Department for Education, was not the first exchange of experiences, though we would characterize it as the "high point" of the internationalization of union education within the WFTU during the 1960s. At an earlier WFTU meeting in Prague in 1960, the WFTU secretaries had highlighted that experiences from the African Workers' University in Guinea should be examined and considered for further educational activities.⁸¹ Gastaud, who had just been appointed as director of the Conakry College, had already then pointed out that his experiences at the college would make it necessary to gear teachings toward the specific problems of each country and their respective trade unions. According to Gastaud, fundamental differences could be seen in the approach toward class analysis. Gastaud stated that African colleagues knew little about the geography and history of Africa; the same applied to issues of social security or the creation of trade union programs.⁸²

The 1963 exchange of experiences permits a closer look at the conceptual debates. The event was held in June 1963 at the FDGB's trade union college "Fritz Heckert" in the East German town of Bernau with twenty-eight speakers, eight of whom were FDGB functionaries. Due to the heterogeneous background of the participants, nine interpreters were needed to facilitate the discussions, which were held in German, English, French, and Russian. Delegates included higher and leading representatives from the WFTU, the French directors from the trade union colleges in Guinea (Maurice Gastaud) and Mali (Gilbert Julis), Jean Marillier, a French CGT

official who had served as principal at the WFTU's trade union college in Budapest, and three WFTU officials actively involved in education, including the WFTU secretaries Edvín Chleboun from Czechoslovakia and the Sudanese Ibrahim Zakaria who headed the WFTU's Africa section. While the audience was an international crowd including many Africans, all speakers except for Zakaria were Europeans—despite the conference objective to discuss the WFTU's concepts on union education in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and to coordinate the existing trade union education programs of the WFTU's national affiliates.⁸³ A major aim of the WFTU was to shift the main focus of training from Europe to Africa.⁸⁴ To this end, the experiences of the French communists Gastaud and Julis in their position as directors of the trade union colleges in Conakry and Bamako were particularly valuable. In his opening statement, the director of the trade union college in Bernau, Professor Karl Kampfert, welcomed the “French friends Gastaud, Julis and Meriller [sic]⁸⁵ who, through their great experience in the field of educating African trade union functionaries, will without a doubt enrich our conference and its results.”⁸⁶

Opinions regarding necessary changes varied. On one end of the spectrum, the Czechoslovak WFTU secretary Chleboun emphasized that trade union education should be “undogmatic” and depart from “needs of political and unionist struggles in Africa.” Notably, Czechoslovakia also had one of the most flexible curricula. On the other end of the spectrum, the Bulgarian representative presented a curriculum with “strongly dogmatic tendencies,” which was, in fact, nothing but a two-year program for Bulgarian party cadres boiled down to a one-year course for foreigners. While Bulgarian rigidity was unusual, Eastern European functionaries and Western communists agreed that newly evolving concepts of African socialism led to a “confusion” of trade unions and the working class in Africa. Yet, a “[c]onsensus was reached that due to political reasons, it would not be advisable to introduce a specific module on Marxist Philosophy into the curriculum.”⁸⁷ Communists from both sides of the Iron Curtain were probably aware that a course on Marxist Philosophy would do little to strengthen the numerous skills African trade union functionaries needed in their daily union work such as the collection of membership fees, chairing a meeting, bargaining techniques, and strike organization. These skills figured prominently in the curricula of the African Labour College in Kampala of the rivaling ICFTU.⁸⁸ An emphasis on ideology may also have estranged more moderate trade unions. The majority of conference participants advocated a balance of Marxist-Leninist theories—“careful and exact theoretical education”—and more down-to-earth economic and practice-related contents applicable to various contexts. But if such curricular changes were desirable, the crucial question was still what knowledge and conditions could provide a sound point of departure. This is where Western communists, with their international experience, spoke with distinct authority. Maurice Gastaud, repeatedly pointing out his “insider” position in Guinea, emphasized that the WFTU would have to take into account “local conditions,” which varied from territory to territory, differed between urban and rural areas, and included heterogeneous modes of production.

Understanding history to be a primarily material process taking place in successive stages, Gastaud pointed out that Africa, where various precapitalist forms of labor relations coexisted, was “many hundreds of years backward”—a fact that for him

determined and limited “the consciousness of the workers.” According to Gastaud, a high rate of illiteracy and low levels of formal education among workers and the rank-and-file of trade unions, who often spoke neither English nor French, made it difficult to “target” these audiences with conventional means; also, it was important to have the “students firmly under control.” Citing the example of a man who grew up in Cote d’Ivoire’s forest area in a “primeval” community, Gastaud doubted that men who were supposedly still living at the “first stage” of development would be capable of absorbing theories about stages of development. Still, he strongly warned of heterodox theories of socialism and revolution—probably alluding to Frantz Fanon—that conceptualized peasants, instead of the working class, as Africa’s revolutionary subject.⁸⁹ Insights could also be won from taking another look at Soviet history, Gastaud suggested: in the 1920s, the Soviet Union faced and overcame many problems that he saw in contemporary Africa, including polygamy, religion, work ethics, and punctuality. In this way, Gastaud did not only turn his own experiences into lessons, he also invited a knowledge exchange with colleagues from Communist countries to tackle the problems he observed in Guinea. “We aren’t dogmatists,” he concluded his speech, calling for enriched theories to combat “reformism” more effectively.⁹⁰

Gilbert Julis, director of the trade union school of Mali’s national trade union center in Bamako (which, unlike the pan-African African Workers’ University in Guinea, only catered to national cadres), echoed many of Gastaud’s themes, particularly the necessity to transmit general “laws of development,” even if this seemed difficult in the face of widespread illiteracy (resulting from colonialism) and indiscipline among course participants. Even more than Gastaud and echoing established colonial tropes, he perceived instilling discipline and a regimented work ethic as one of the most important educational tasks: “Permanently we have to explain to people to work all the time, all day.”⁹¹

The 1963 experience exchange thus showed that the Western communists drew heavily on stagist and materialist models that made Africans appear backward, and European communists advanced—particularly in terms of ideology and work attitudes. Given these reservations, Julis also saw a big gap between African socio-economic realities and hopes for a swift build-up of a thriving socialist society—a gap that could only be bridged if communists like him were to “guide our African colleagues’ attention to the period of national transition in the realization of a national economy before talking too frequently about socialism.” Colleagues in Mali and elsewhere should be educated about the necessary “sacrifices” in building socialism; and they should be taught to shun theories of nationally particular African socialisms or a “third way” that threatened to “crush the revolution.” In terms of trade union education, Julis also criticized the GDR’s concept: eighteen months was too long, twelve months—in French or English rather than German⁹²—would suffice, given that many course attendants were workers and functionaries whose absence inhibited the activities of trade unions.⁹³

Another speaker at the conference was Jean Marillier. Unlike Gastaud and Julis, however, he did not assign a guiding role to himself in crude vanguardist terms. He advocated a non-elitist approach to union education in which not only a socialist vanguard but the “masses” would be provided with education on all levels. Reflecting

on his role as principal of the WFTU trade union college in Budapest in the late 1950s, he pointed out that several of the graduates of earlier courses had risen to important positions in the WFTU and national bureaucracies, even if he “could not say that our fighters are Marxists-Leninists.”⁹⁴

Gastaud, Julis, and Marillier all navigated the stream of dogmatist Marxist-Leninist theories by calling for more adaptation to African needs while also warning of “reformism” in the shape of African socialism and theories about a non-aligned “third way.” Their demands fueled wishes to reform the WFTU’s international activities: In addition to the existing long-term courses in the socialist countries of Europe, the WFTU called for the establishment of short-term courses in national training centers on the African continent preparing participants for the overseas stays. The rising demand for qualified teachers created a bottleneck for the WFTU, especially for lecturers conversant in English, Portuguese, and French—imperial languages that were hardly spoken in the socialist East.⁹⁵ Some of the structural problems that inhibited East-South relations in general and in trade union relations in particular thus remained unsolved.

Conclusion

Western communists played a crucial role in linking the global Cold War “East” and “South” in the realm of trade unions in the 1950s and early 1960s. Western communists facilitated early exchanges and knowledge transfers in these areas: books by Suret-Canale and Woddiss were important sources of information; they shared their experiences from international courses in Budapest, Conakry, or Bamako during WFTU exchange meetings; they enabled teaching stints and teaching cooperation on the continent; and they channeled WFTU scholarships that would lead African functionaries and workers to attend trade union courses behind the Iron Curtain. In several ways, the WFTU provided a stage for Western communists on which they could move further and more elegantly than their Eastern European counterparts.

Both Western communists and African actors used the relations to the WFTU and its Eastern European affiliates such as FDGB to mobilize financial resources, recruit teaching staff, and source scholarships from the WFTU and its national affiliates for overseas seminars. Whereas thousands of African trade unionists continued to attend courses organized by the WFTU and its national affiliates behind the Iron Curtain until 1990, the orientation of trade union education underwent significant changes, reverting from more experimental and carefully adapted approaches during the 1960s to a more dogmatic kind of education in the 1970s and the early 1980s.⁹⁶ In this perspective, the African Workers’ University in Guinea must be considered as a project that signaled the overlaps and tensions between “proletarian internationalism” and Third World nationalism at the intersections of “East,” “West,” and “South,” shaped by the knowledge, networks, and labor activism of Western communists working alongside their comrades from Africa and Eastern Europe. While the exchanges of knowledge were far from unidirectional, the interactions were also marked by hierarchies and misguided expectations that constrained transnational labor education programs.

Notes

1. On the 1953 general strike in French West Africa see Elizabeth Schmidt, "Trade Unions and Nationalism in French Guinea, 1945–1958," in *Trade Unions in West Africa*, ed. Craig Phelan (Oxford, 2011), 69–98. More generally on strikes in colonial Africa, see Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996), chap. 6, 225–60.
2. Jack Woddis, *Afrika. Kontinent im Morgenrot. Anhang: Parteien und Politiker in Afrika* (Berlin, 1963); Heinz Deutschland, Wilhelm Wilke, and Gerhard Powik, *Afrikas Arbeiter im Kampf. Die Gewerkschaften Afrikas im Ringen um die nationale Unabhängigkeit* (Berlin, 1964). We are grateful to Heinz Deutschland for sharing this material with us.
3. Research on the international educational activities of the WFTU and its national affiliates, such as the CGT and FDGB, has only recently gained some momentum, see, e.g., Françoise Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale dans la Guinée de Sékou Touré: L'Université Ouvrière Africaine, 1960–1965," *Revue Historique* 667 (2013): 661–91; Gabriele Siracusano, "Trade Union Education in Former French Africa (1959–1965): Ideological Transmission and the Role of French and Italian Communists," *Third World Quarterly* 42 (2020): 483–502; Immanuel R. Harisch, "Nkrumahism, East Germany, and the South-East Ties of Ghanaian Trade Unionist J.A. Osei during the Cold War 1960s," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 54 (2021): 309–32.
4. Eric Burton, "Kindred by choice. Trade Unions as Interface between East Africa and East Germany," in *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular. Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*, ed. Kristin Roth-Ey (London, 2023).
5. Siracusano, "Trade Union Education," 484. On workers' education more generally, see Michael Merrill and Susan J. Schurman, "Toward a General Theory and Global History of Workers' Education," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 90 (2016): 5–11. For a global comparative perspective on three trade union colleges of the ICFTU, WFTU/UGTAN/CNTG, and the FDGB see Immanuel R. Harisch, "Great Hopes, False Promises. African Trade Unions in the World of Organized Labor. Institutions, Networks, and Mobilities during the Cold War 1950s and 1960s," PhD Thesis (University of Vienna, 2023).
6. Among the few studies are Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale"; Yvette Richards, "Labor's Gendered Misstep: The Women's Committee and African Women Workers, 1957–1968," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44 (2011): 415–42; Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, *Union Education in Nigeria: Labor, Empire, and Decolonization since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2012).
7. Anthony Carew, "A False Dawn: The World Federation of Trade Unions (1945–1949)," in *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, eds. Anthony Carew et al. (Bern, 2000), 165–86, 169.
8. Victor G. Devinatz, "A Cold War Thaw in the International Working Class Movement? The World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 1967–1977," *Science & Society* 77 (2013): 342–71, 347.
9. Debkumar Ganguli, *History of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU): Yesterday - Today - Tomorrow* (New Delhi, 2000), 22. We thank Johanna Wolf for sharing this publication with us.
10. The CGT was established in 1895. After World War II, it turned from a social-democratic organization into a predominantly communist trade union.
11. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 409.
12. After being evicted from Paris in 1951, the WFTU moved to Vienna, from where it was evicted again in 1956 and found a safe haven in Prague. Ganguli, *History of the WFTU*, 21–39; Immanuel Geiss, *Gewerkschaften in Afrika* (Hannover, 1965), 59.
13. Devinatz, "A Cold War Thaw," 345.
14. Steffi Marung, Uwe Müller, and Stefan Troebst, "Monolith or Experiment? The Bloc as a Spatial Format," in *Spatial Formats Under the Global Condition*, eds. Matthias Middell and Steffi Marung (Berlin, 2019), 275–309.
15. The contributions in the special issue *Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity* in *Journal of Social History* 53 (2019) skillfully capture the agency of African and Asian trade unionists during the early Cold War.
16. Opoku Agyeman, *The Failure of Grassroots Pan-Africanism: The Case of the All-African Trade Union Federation* (Lanham, 2003); Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Pan-African Trade Unionism: Unity and Discord," *Transafrican Journal of History* 15 (1986): 164–90; Geiss, *Gewerkschaften in Afrika*. For a more general

survey, see Gareth Curless, "Introduction: Trade unions in the global south from imperialism to the present day," *Labor History* 57 (2016): 1–19.

17. Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale"; Siracusano, "Trade Union Education."

18. Ilona Schleicher, "Elemente entwicklungspolitischer Zusammenarbeit in der Tätigkeit von FDGB und FDJ," in *Entwicklungspolitische Zusammenarbeit in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR*, ed. Hans-Jörg Bücking (Berlin, 1998): 111–38, 112.

19. George E. Lichtblau, "The World Federation of Trade Unions," *Social Research* 25 (1958): 1–36, 34.

20. "Manifest des IV. Weltgewerkschaftskongresses," in *Zwanzig Jahre Weltgewerkschaftsbund. Dokumente aus der Tätigkeit des Weltgewerkschaftsbundes. Band I. 1945 bis 1957* (Berlin, 1965).

21. Abt. IV to Warnke, "Erklärung des Präsidiums des FDGB-Bundesvorstandes zum Freiheitskampf der afrikanischen Völker und Gewerkschaften," Berlin, February 10, 1961, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (henceforth: SAPMO), DY 34/16600, 154.

22. *Ibid.*, 161–62.

23. *Ibid.*, 167.

24. Abt. IV, "Sekretariatsinformation," "Beratung am 13. und 14.9.1960 beim WGB in Prag über die Verstärkung der Tätigkeit des WGB und der Landesorganisationen nach Afrika," Berlin, September 20, 1960, SAPMO, DY 34/16600, 290.

25. Naaboroko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, "The Ghana Trades Union Congress and the Politics of International Labor Alliances, 1957–1971," *International Review of Social History* 62 (2017): 191–213; Gerard McCann, "Possibility and Peril: Trade Unionism, African Cold War, and the Global Strands of Kenyan Decolonization," *Journal of Social History* 53 (2019): 348–77; Harisch, "Nkrumahism, East Germany, J. A. Osei."

26. Our chronology here broadly, if imperfectly, applies to sub-Saharan Africa. For the rather different case of North Africa, see Billard A. Beling, "W.F.T.U. and Decolonisation: A Tunisian Case Study," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 2 (1964): 551–64.

27. Eric Angermann, "Ihr gehört auch zur Avantgarde. Afrikanische Gewerkschafter an der FDGB-Hochschule Fritz Heckert (1961–1963)," MA Thesis (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2018), 1.

28. Immanuel R. Harisch, "Mit gewerkschaftlichem Gruß! Afrikanische GewerkschafterInnen an der FDGB-Gewerkschaftshochschule Fritz Heckert in der DDR," *Stichproben. Vienna Journal of African Studies* 17 (2018): 77–109, 85–87. The courses from 1960 through 1967 were taught in German, with the exception of one course, which was conducted with the help of interpreters for English and French. As this experience was internally assessed as a disaster, German was kept as the language of instruction. See Angermann, "Ihr gehört auch zur Avantgarde," 37–46.

29. *Ibid.*, 31.

30. Harisch, "Mit gewerkschaftlichem Gruß," 88–89.

31. Representatives of Chinese and North Korean as well the Indonesian Central All-Indonesian Workers Organization (SOBSI) are also mentioned in some documents but not in the protocol of the meeting.

32. Abt. IV, "Sekretariatsinformation," "Beratung am 13. und 14.9.1960 ...," Berlin, September 20, 1960, SAPMO, DY 34/16600, 290.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Eric Burton, "Decolonization, the Cold War and Africans' Routes to Overseas Education, 1957–1965," *Journal of Global History* 15 (2020): 169–91; *idem.*, "Introduction: Journeys of Education and Struggle. African Mobility in Times of Decolonization and the Cold War," *Stichproben. Vienna Journal of African Studies* 18 (2018): 1–17.

35. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 436. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) faced similar problems in getting even "one foot in the door to Africa," according to Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization 1940–70* (New York, 2012), 160.

36. Transcript of speech by WFTU secretary Edvín Chleboun during the WFTU experience exchange on trade union education, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291. Regarding the WFTU's activities towards African women workers and female trade unionists, see Olga Gnydiuk's ongoing research on *Women's and Gender Politics of the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Trade Unions, 1945–1990s* (<https://zarah-ceu.org/team-members/>) as well as the current research of Johanna Wolf.

37. Andrés November, *L'évolution du mouvement syndical en Afrique occidentale* (Paris, 1965), 197.

38. Transcript of speech by WFTU secretary Edvín Chleboun during WFTU experience exchange on unionist education, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291. Gastaud's involvement in Congo-Brazzaville is mentioned in Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale," 669.

39. An important mediator between Africans and the WFTU, who also channeled scholarships for trade union education in the Eastern bloc, was the British communist T. F. McWhinnie in London. See, for instance, T. F. McWhinnie to Omari A. Madssi, September 1, 1961, SAPMO, DY 34/2504.
40. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 416, 419; Anne-Catherine Wagner, “The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in West Africa: The Difficulties of Constructing Trade Union Internationalism,” in *Trade Unions in West Africa*, ed. Craig Phelan (Oxford, 2011): 23–44, 28. See also Gédéon N’goran Bangali and Immanuel R. Harisch, “L’UGTAN, Une Expérience de Syndicalisme Révolutionnaire (1957–1961),” *Revue Ivoirienne d’Histoire* 38 (2021): 32–49.
41. Geiss, *Gewerkschaften in Afrika*, 85.
42. Transcript of speech by Borodin (Deputy Director of the Soviet Trade Union College) during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, 17–18 April 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291. On the lack—and “provocation”—of empirical evidence in Soviet African Studies, see Steffi Marung, “The Provocation of Empirical Evidence: Soviet African Studies Between Enthusiasm and Discomfort,” *African Identities* 16 (2018): 176–90.
43. The director of the Foreigners’ Institute at the “Fritz Heckert” trade union college in Bernau from 1961 to 1967, Heinz Deutschland, had studied History and Economics in Berlin and Moscow. He earned a doctorate in history in 1967, with a thesis on the African trade union movement before the Second World War, *Die Anfänge der afrikanischen Arbeiter- und Gewerkschaftsbewegung (1918–1945)*. Deutschland’s thesis was published in English as *Trailblazers. Struggles and Organizations of African Workers before 1945* (Berlin, 1970). Gerhard Powik, who followed Deutschland as the institute’s director, wrote his dissertation on Pan-African trade union unity entitled *Bedingungen und Entwicklungsetappen des Kampfes um die panafrikanische Gewerkschaftseinheit* (1965). The Bernau teacher Wilhelm Wilke wrote his dissertation on the struggles of West African trade unions against colonialism (1945–1957).
44. For the vibrant exchange of materials, see Harisch, “Nkrumahism, East Germany, J. A. Osei.”
45. Pascal Bianchini, *Suret-Canale. De la Résistance à L’Anticolonialisme* (Paris, 2013).
46. Matthias Middell, “Die Entwicklung der Area Studies in der DDR als Reaktion auf die Dekolonisierungsprozesse der 1950er/1960er Jahre,” in *Auf dem Weg zu einer transnationalen Geschichte des Kommunismus*, ed. idem. (Berlin, 2019), 223–54, 230. The quote on Suret-Canale’s impact is from: Interview by Immanuel R. Harisch with Heinz Deutschland, Berlin, September 2, 2018.
47. Transcript of speech by Jack Woddis during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.
48. The chapter *African Trade Unions Come to the Fore* devotes over one hundred pages to trade unions in Africa, see Jack Woddis, *Africa. The Lion Awakes* (London, 1961), 35–156.
49. Interview by Immanuel R. Harisch with Heinz Deutschland, Berlin, September 2, 2018.
50. Woddis, *Africa The Way Ahead* (London, 1963). The annex amounted to roughly 90 pages.
51. Blum, “Une Formation Syndicale,” 662.
52. This paragraph is based on the much more comprehensive accounts of Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford, 2002), 68, 98–9, 121–25; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 287–88, 408–24; Philippe Dewitte, “La CGT et les syndicats d’Afrique occidentale française (1945–1957),” *Le Mouvement Social* 117 (1981): 3–32. Paul Delanoue, “La CGT et les syndicats de l’Afrique noire de colonisation française, de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale aux indépendances,” *Le Mouvement Social* 122 (1983): 103–21.
53. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 224.
54. Diallo was born in Guinea and later moved to French Soudan (present day Mali) where he worked for the company *Poste-Télégraph-Téléphone*. He became a full-time trade unionist in 1947. In 1949, Diallo was appointed as one of the vice presidents of the WFTU, a post which he would hold until 1957. See Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 557–58; Anne-Catherine Wagner, “The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in West Africa: The Difficulties of Constructing Trade Union Internationalism,” in *Trade Unions in West Africa: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Craig Phelan (Bern, 2011), 23–44, 28.
55. This was mainly due to the influence of Félix Houphouët-Boigny. See Wagner, “The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in West Africa.”
56. Babacar Fall, “Le mouvement syndical en Afrique occidentale francophone. De la tutelle des centrales métropolitaines à celle des partis nationaux uniques, ou la difficile quête d’une personnalité (1900–1968),” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps* 84 (2006): 49–58, 55.

57. Richards, Yvette, "Labor's Gendered Misstep: The Women's Committee and African Women Workers, 1957–1968," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44 (2011): 415–42; idem., *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh, 2000), 222–45.
58. Transcript of speech by Maurice Gastaud (CGT/Director of trade union college in Conakry) during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.
59. Michel Dreyfus and Jean Magniadas, Entry on Maurice Gastaud in *Le Maitron*, June 10, 2009, last modification June 23, 2012, accessed on February 28, 2023, <https://maitron.fr/spip.php?article50660>.
60. Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale," 662.
61. Ibid., 671.
62. During the 1960s, female trade unionists were rare at trade union colleges regardless of ideological orientation. For the ICFTU's Kampala College, historian Yvette Richards has accounted for 26 female graduates out of 625 students between 1958 and 1968. In the ICFTU, a Women's Committee pushed for a better representation of women at labor colleges. See Richards, "Labor's Gendered Misstep," 429. We are not aware of a similar committee within the WFTU, though more research needs to be done in this direction (see also footnote 36).
63. Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale," 672. Translation of the authors.
64. Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale," 670.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., 677.
67. Ibid., 689–90.
68. SAPMO, DY 34/16598, Wilhelm Wilke, Bernau, December 1961, "Bericht über meinen Aufenthalt in Guinea (1. November – 13. Dezember 1961)."
69. Ibid., 349.
70. As a comparison with Blum's article reveals, many formulations appear in both Gastaud's letters as well as Wilke's reports from his Guinea travels.
71. Blum, "Une Formation Syndicale," 677. However, soon after his first teaching stint, Wilke was requested again by Gastaud to come to the Conakry College a second time, probably reflecting Gastaud's need for additional lecturers.
72. SAPMO, DY 34/3270, Wilhelm Wilke, Bernau, April 25, 1964, "Bericht über eine Aussprache mit dem Koll. Chleboun, Sekretär des WGB, am 23.4.1964 über meine Tätigkeit an der Gewerkschaftsschule in Guinea."
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. "Aktennotiz über die Aussprache des Kollegen Warnke mit dem Kollegen Gastaud über den Bau der Schule in Conakry," Berlin, February 2, 1961, SAPMO, DY 34/16600.
77. Bayreuter to Kaba Mamady, Berlin, December 11, 1965, SAPMO, DY 34/3270; Karl Kampfert, Bernau, December 14, 1964, "Bericht des Kollegen Professor Dr. Kampfert über seine Reise nach Guinea anlässlich der geplanten feierlichen Eröffnung und Übergabe der von uns geschenkten Gewerkschaftsschule in Conakry," ibid.
78. Ibid. The new party school "School for Party Officials of the PDG" (*Ecole des Cadres du Parti du P. D. G.*) was headed by Diallo Seydou who had been a crucial actor for the African Workers' University throughout its existence. See Bruno Frahm and Helmut Lehmann, "Bericht. Aufenthalt und Einschätzung der Ergebnisse der Maidelegation in Conakry (Guinea) vom 27.4 bis 11.5.1966," undated [May 1966], SAPMO, DY 34/7306.
79. For an account of the Bamako College in Mali see Siracusano, "Trade Union Education," 494–95.
80. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*. For a pioneering synthesis, see Ioan Davies, *African Trade Unions* (Harmondsworth, 1966). For a recent overview, see Bill Freund, "Trade Unions," in *General Labour History of Africa. Workers, Employers and Governments, 20th–21st Centuries*, eds. Stefano Bellucci and Andreas Eckert (Woodbridge, 2019), 523–52.
81. Abt. IV, "Sekretariatsinformation," "Beratung am 13. und 14.9.1960 ...," Berlin, September 20, 1960, SAPMO, DY 34/16600, 290.
82. Ibid., 291.
83. [Tehle to the staff of the trade union college in Bernau], "Vorbereitung und Durchführung eines Erfahrungsaustausches des WGB über die Ausbildung von Gewerkschaftskadern in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika," SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

84. Ibid.

85. This referred to the *cégétiste* Marillier, the former director of the international WFTU school in Budapest, whose name also appears on the list of attendees. See also November, *L'évolution du mouvement syndical*, 197.

86. Transcript Jo. 1/3, Koll. Prof. Dr. Kampfert, SAPMO, DY 34/3291. Translation of the authors.

87. Fakultät für Ausländerstudium an der Hochschule der deutschen Gewerkschaften Fritz Heckert, "Probleme des Inhalts der Ausbildung afrikanischer Gewerkschafter auf dem Erfahrungsaustausch des WGB am 17. und 18.4.1963," Bernau, June 20, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

88. Sven Fockstedt, "Outline of the Curriculum for the 3rd Course at the African Labour College, 1 March 1960 until 23 June 1960," ICFTU African Labour College, Kampala, November 21, 1959, ICFTU/ITUC Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1188.

89. The interpreter's transcript refers to a "Dr. Vanoul," which he might well be a misheard "Dr. Fanon"—Francophone names are often misspelled in the transcripts.

90. Transcript of speech by Gilbert Julis during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

91. Transcript of speech by Maurice Gastaud (CGT/Director of trade union college in Conakry) during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

92. As already mentioned above, the FDGB had shortly experimented with courses using interpreters but then returned to German as language of instruction.

93. Transcript of speech by Gilbert Julis during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

94. Transcript of speech by Jean Marillier during WFTU experience exchange, Bernau, April 17–18, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

95. Transcript Kr. 4/1, Koll. Chleboun, Bernau, June 20, 1963, SAPMO, DY 34/3291.

96. Bischoff, "Information über den gegenwärtigen Stand ...," undated [ca. 1980], SAPMO, DY 34/12243.

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