

**The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) 1945-1965:
an Organizational and Political Anatomy**

by

Harold Lewis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**University of Warwick
Department of Sociology**

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Abstract

The thesis is an analytical study of the structure and activities of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) from 1945 to 1965. It gives particular attention to the nature of the ITF's membership, especially its expansion to the United States and to the Third World; to the ITF's political stance in a period of enormous international tension; and to the inter-relationship of both those factors.

The ITF was founded in 1896 and there are few substantial transport workers' unions which are not yet affiliated. It has long been recognized as the most effective of all the international trade union organizations. The ITF made a significant contribution to the Allied war effort in the Second World War and its membership in every branch of the international transport industry took on great strategic importance during the Cold War.

The thesis is based on original research, making special use of the ITF's extensive archives at the Modern Records Centre of the University of Warwick. There is a close and critical focus on the ITF's political engagement, exemplified by its controversial part in countering communist influence in European ports in the early 1950s at the time of the introduction of the European Recovery Programme (the Marshall Plan). This discussion is, however, set in the context of the ITF's structures and its broader social and industrial concerns, such as the defence of trade union and civil rights and assistance to transport workers' unions in the newly de-colonized developing countries.

The conclusions draw out the main findings of the research and discuss the dearth of academic literature on the international trade union movement, and especially the almost total neglect of 'International Trade Secretariats', organizations such as the ITF which group together national trade unions in specific industries and services. On this basis, it surveys a poorly served theoretical field and outlines implications for future theoretical analysis.

Acknowledgments

Professor Brian Brivati of Kingston University thought that if I was determined to write something about the ITF, I might as well do it properly. That is why I came eventually to Warwick, where the Modern Records Centre (MRC) houses the ITF archives, and to its splendid Department of Sociology. The MRC itself has made a brilliant job of organizing and cataloguing the originally chaotic material and Christine Woodland and her unfailingly helpful and resourceful staff have literally made the thesis possible. If I name, with Christine, Joanne Burman, Richard Temple and Charles Fonge it is because they happen to have been my most frequent contacts, but everyone in the MRC has my deep gratitude. Professor Richard Hyman was first a joint supervisor but then moved to the London School of Economics. He has still, however, shown an interest in the work in progress which went far beyond what I had any right to expect. My warmest thanks also to Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, a fellow PhD student when we first met, working on a slightly different area of the same field. Her recent thesis proved a great help when I came to put the final touches to mine. Dr. Tony Carew of UMIST is a peerless authority on many facets of the international trade union movement's more mysterious, not to say spooky, engagements. I have plundered his work shamelessly in Chapter V, but he has also read many of the earlier drafts to my great advantage. I am deeply indebted to him. Dr. Bob Reinalda of the University of Nijmegen has also provided a rich mine of historical writing on the ITF which I have worked very gratefully and profitably. Two German academics, Dr Dieter Nelles

of Wuppertal University and Professor Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten of the University of Magdeburg, have been crucially helpful when badly needed, as was Ellen Babendreyer, a doctoral student at Duisburg. The thesis is, I stress, entirely unauthorized, done under my own steam with my own money. But thanks to my successor, David Cockroft, for his benign interest and to Desmond Reid, the ITF Administrative Secretary, Teresa Kennedy, his assistant, Joan Hannah, David's Personal Assistant, and especially to Jenny Hawke, the ITF's Librarian. The last and greatest thanks of all, family aside, must go to Dr Tony Elger, first my co-supervisor but left to watch over my project single-handed for the last three years or so. He has been a tremendous support throughout and I came long ago to see him first as a friend and then as an academic mentor. To Andrea, my most merciless critic, my undying gratitude for her tenacious and occasionally explosive interest in what was a truly stern test of our love and marriage. And the last thanks of all to Cobber, and now Rosa, for keeping me calm and making me laugh.

This thesis is dedicated to

Tasnor Ivan Bull (1932-2003)

in grateful remembrance of a remarkable

Socialist, internationalist, seaman, wharfie, agitator,

negotiator, leader, writer and, above all,

best friend

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	ITF Asian Advisory Committee
AATUF	All-African Trade Union Federation
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL and CIO, separately, pre-1955)
ARU	Australian Railways Union
BRAC	International Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks (USA and Canada)
BTB	<i>Belgische Transportarbeidersbond</i> (Belgium)
CBRT	Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and Other Transport Workers (<i>later</i> Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers)
CGT	<i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i> (France)
CMU	Canadian Maritime Union
CSU	Canadian Seamen's Union
CVC	ITF Central Vigilance Committee
<i>Domei</i>	see <i>Zenro</i>
<i>Doro</i>	National Railway Motive Power Union (Japan)
EB	ITF Executive Board
EC	ITF Executive Committee
FO	<i>Confédération Générale de Travail – Force Ouvrière</i> (France)
f-o-c	flags of convenience

FTUC	(AFL) Free Trade Union Committee
GC	ITF General Council
GdED	<i>Gewerkschaft der Eisenbahner Deutschlands (Germany)</i>
ICEF	International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFALPA	International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations
IFCCTE	International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees (<i>later known as FIET</i>)
IFPCS	International Federation of Public and Civil Service Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMMOA	International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association
ILWU	International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (North America)
IMF	International Metalworkers' Federation
ISF	ICFTU International Solidarity Fund
ITS	International Trade Secretariat
IUF	International Union of Food and Allied Workers
<i>Kaiin</i>	(All) Japan Seamen's Union
<i>Kokuro</i>	National Railway Workers' Union (Japan)
MC	ITF Management Committee
MRC	Modern Records Centre: University of Warwick

NBV	<i>Nederlandse Bond van Vervoerspersoneel</i> (Netherlands)
	[x]
NMU	National Maritime Union (USA)
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen (Great Britain)
NUS	National Union of Seamen (Great Britain)
ORIT	<i>Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores</i> (ICFTU)
OeTV	<i>Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, Transport u. Verkehr</i> (Germany)
PSI	Public Services International (formerly IFPCS)
PTTI	Post, Telegraph and Telephone International
RAC	ITF Regional Affairs Committee
RLEA	Railway Labor Executives' Association (USA)
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
RVC	ITF Regional Vigilance Committee
<i>Shitetsu</i>	General Federation of Private Railway Workers (Japan)
SEV	<i>Schweizerischer Eisenbahnerverband</i> (Switzerland)
<i>Sohyo</i>	General Council of Trade Unions of Japan
SIU	Seafarers' International Union (of North America)
SUA	Seamen's Union of Australia
TD	Trade Department (WFTU)
TGWU	Transport & General Workers' Union (Great Britain)
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (Great Britain)
TUC	Trades Union Congress (Great Britain)
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

WWF Waterside Workers' Federation (Australia)

Zenro All Japan Trade Union Congress (*Domei* from 1964)

Chapter I: Introduction

i. The aim

This thesis sets out to present an anatomy of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in the period from 1945 to 1965, that is a detailed analysis of its organization and structure, with particular reference to its politics in what was a period of unparalleled international tension and danger. It will be, as the dictionary would have it, 'an artificial separation of the parts ... in order to discover their position, structure and relations'¹ and will have as its general aim the shaping of an informed view of the form and nature of the ITF, of its political stance and of its development over the period. That view will then be the basis, in the final chapter's 'Conclusions', for some reflections which will concentrate on why and how the ITF changed as it did, on what arguments and forces drove the changes and on the successes and setbacks of the process. Finally, the writer will take a critical view, in the light of the ITF's history, of the theoretical treatment, such as it has been so far, of the international trade union movement and will suggest an agenda for any theoretician ready to do the essential empirical spade-work which has been so neglected in the past.

ii. The ITF in its international context

The ITF was founded in 1896, one of a number of international trade union organizations founded then or thereabouts, which became known as 'International

Trade Secretariats' (ITSs), a not very helpful description of international groupings of trade unions covering particular 'trades', that is industries or services: for example the metal or engineering industry, textiles,

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public services and, of course, transport. In the case of the ITF, as Chapter II will show, it was born out of the urgent and very practical need for international solidarity when port employers and shipowners in northern Europe set out to break a series of dockers' and seamen's strikes and to crush the unions which had organized them. Those were exceptional times and circumstances, however, and a more general, less dramatic case for international co-operation and alliances by unions in the same line of business will be made in Chapter VI.

The ITSs (which have recently and provisionally been re-designated as 'Global Union Federations') have always been autonomous organizations with their own rules, their own leaders and their own money. That autonomy was only once seriously threatened, with the creation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in 1945, but the threat was fought off (see Chapter V). For much of their existence they have chosen to associate and collaborate with international organizations made up of national trade union centres: with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) before the Second World War and, after the war and after the WFTU episode, with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The relationship between the ITSs and the ICFTU has sometimes prompted an analogy with that of a national union to its national centre but that would overstate it on at least two basic counts: firstly, the ICFTU has no authority of any kind in any area over an ITS; and,

secondly, the relationship does not involve the ITSs in any kind of financial obligation. The 'Milan Agreement', which set out the *modus vivendi* (see Chapter V), was a statement of voluntary intent, to which most (not quite all) of the ITSs sincerely

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and willingly subscribed. But the ITSs ceded not one jot of their autonomy and the ICFTU knew better than to ask any such thing of them.

There were in the period (and still are) clear affinities and common interests between these two wings of the international movement. The majority of the member-unions of the ITSs belonged to national centres which belonged to the ICFTU. It was something of a rhetorical cliché for them to refer to themselves as part of a 'family' and there was some truth to it, with the qualification that families do not always agree among themselves and differences have to be respected. The Milan Agreement rested on that basis when it committed the ITSs to respecting the ICFTU's position on world affairs in general, and the ICFTU to leaving the ITSs to look after their own particular territories. But this understanding was as far as the commitments went. The WFTU's bid to swallow the ITSs had choked, among other things, on the WFTU's insistence that the ITSs should be forbidden from considering anything outside their narrow 'trade' agendas. The authors of the Milan Agreement were careful not to make the same mistake.

The autonomy extended, as Chapter III shows, to the relationship among the ITSs themselves. The only form of association to which they all agreed was an 'ITS General Conference', made up of General Secretaries or their nominees and usually

no more than annual, where the one immutable and binding rule was that nothing agreed there could be binding on any participant. Attempts to take their

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collaboration further (Chapter III again) on regional activities eventually foundered acrimoniously.

iii. The importance of the ITF within the international movement

Ask any 'insider' what proportion of international trade union activity is accounted for by the ITSs and the answer will almost certainly be at least eighty per cent; if the question is refined and reduced to actions directly affecting the workplace, the estimate will be ninety per cent or even more. These are unscientific estimates to the last degree but it is unlikely that anyone with even the slightest first-hand knowledge of the international movement would find them unreasonable. And of the ITSs, the ITF has been seen as 'unique' in its ability 'to exert enormous economic power'. Northrup and Rowan's judgment² was applied to the particular case of the ITF's campaign against flags of convenience (f-o-c) but in a less spectacular way the ITF has had a real influence in securing many bread-and-butter improvements in the working conditions of transport workers through its sectional activities, which are all too briefly noted in this thesis for lack of space. It has the advantage, which no other ITS enjoys to anything like the same extent, of catering for an industry which has always been substantially international in its operations and, when not, has often followed international practices, using equipment and techniques – in ports, in the air, on the roads and railways and of course on ships – that vary little from one country to

another and are often subject to internationally approved and applied standards. In this respect, the ITF has operated largely in a 'globalized' environment since its foundation. The intense loyalty to the ITF which was so

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evident, for example, in the Congress discussions on 'integration' with the WFTU, owed much to the ITF's sectional activities, developed and embedded to an extent no other ITS could emulate and providing an earthy 'shop-floor' basis to affiliation, a reason to belong which did not rely on purely theoretical notions of international solidarity.

iv. The dearth of ITS literature

The nature of the ITSs – that is, their form and functions and their free-standing autonomy – is more often than not misunderstood and their importance under-appreciated. Given its vintage, the international trade union movement has in general attracted very little attention from writers or commentators of real quality and expertise, and the ITSs in particular have attracted less still. If they are noticed at all, it is common for them to be relegated literally to some kind of supplementary status, a list of their names and addresses, perhaps, or at most a page or two of their history and main concerns.³ Asked recently what had been written about them by independent authors or commentators (that is, excluding 'in-house' or celebratory publications), the answers from almost all the ITSs ranged from 'nothing' to 'next to nothing'.⁴ The only ITS which can show rather more than the latter is the ITF itself, but of the four substantial works to have been published, two of them – Dieter Nelles's *Widerstand und Internationale Solidarität* and *The International*

Transportworkers [sic] Federation 1914-1945: the Edo Fimmen Era, edited by Bob Reinalda – concentrate on the inter-war years and the Second World War experience. The third, which came to the writer's notice much too late to be paid proper respect here, is Sigrid

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Koch-Baumgarten's *Gewerkschaftsinternationalismus und die Herausforderung der Globalisierung: das Beispiel der Internationalen Transportarbeiterföderation*, a review of the ITF's activities from its foundation to the 1990s, which includes a surely peerless account of the reconstruction of the German trade unions after the war. The fourth, by Northrup and Rowan, is *The International Transport Workers' Federation and Flag of Convenience Shipping*, which is devoted exclusively to the ITF's campaign against flags-of-convenience (f-o-c). Produced in 1983 for the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, an anti-trade union institution in the eyes of the ITF's American affiliates at the time, its conclusion⁵ was that though the campaign had its problems, it was well established and could become a real challenge to the f-o-c shipowners.

That judgment was to prove correct (rewardingly so for its authors who in the years to come were to make many contributions as expert advisers to f-o-c shipowners in legal actions against the ITF), but as a tribute of a kind it was consistent with the authors' much briefer study of the ITF's activities in the 'Ocean Transport Industry', a chapter in their *Multinational Collective Bargaining Attempts* of 1979. The ITF was given respectful treatment, notably at odds with the withering attacks on the claims of other ITSs to successes in multinational bargaining. Their most memorable and

prime target was the ITS for factory and general workers, the ICEF, and its General Secretary, Charles Levinson, who had by then become something of a celebrity with his judgments and predictions of the economic consequences of the multinational era and the trade unions' multinational response. His impressively researched and persuasively argued

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International Trade Unionism of 1972 was for some time taken very seriously in the wider industrial and academic world. His novel views on 'inflation' in its economic sense had captured wide attention but there was more than a suspicion within the international movement, among his peers, that the greatest inflation might have been in his claims for the ICEF's – and his own – triumphs. Hard as it was to concede, Northrup and Rowan's dismissal of the ICEF's achievements in the glass and tyre industries could not simply be shrugged off.⁶

But whatever view is taken of Northrup's and Rowan's judgments and prejudices, there is no questioning the effort they devoted to their exercises. The book on the ITF's f-o-c campaign runs to some 250 thoroughly researched and referenced pages and their work on multinational bargaining to almost six hundred. This present thesis is an all too rare attempt to apply the same diligence to a critical and thematically focused study of a specific ITS. Perhaps the sheer number and variety of the ITSs has discouraged others. There were some seventeen ITSs for most of the thesis period and still ten, after various amalgamations, in 2003. At first sight, some of the smaller ITSs, with meagre resources and help – say, three or four people, or even fewer – may not look worth the effort. But the plantation and textile workers' ITSs,

say, have much to tell the world and there is a lot to learn from their struggles and experiences.

v. Texts and 'truth'

The ITF's archives in the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre (MRC) have been the indispensable resource in the creation of this thesis. The deposits include, firstly, *'Minutes and related papers'*, being the documents and reports of

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almost all the meetings convened by the ITF in the period and taking in the governing bodies (the Congress, the General Council, the Executive Committee/Board and the Management Committee), the industrial sections, and all manner of regional and *ad hoc* gatherings. There is a very big collection of *'ITF Correspondence and subject files'* which includes a wealth of files organized, sometimes idiosyncratically, by their originators in the ITF Secretariat according to meetings, topics or issues of the time and often containing an assortment of letters, notes, cuttings, and various publications. There is a near-complete collection of *'ITF Publications'*, consisting of the ITF's two regular periodicals, the fortnightly *Press Report* and the monthly *Journal*, together with the less regular regional publications, such as *Transporte* in Latin America; and the even more spasmodic sectional or specialist brochures or newsletters, such as *A Message to Flight Attendants* (1955) or *Air, Terre, Mer*, which publicized the work of the ITF's anti-communist 'Mediterranean Committee' in the early 1950s (see Chapter V).

The MRC also holds the papers of Paul Tofahrn, the Assistant General Secretary of the ITF from 1938 to January 1956, and there are some valuable, though very subjective and largely supplemental, records to be found there of his increasingly marginalized and embittered career in the ITF (see Chapter III). More important still, however, are the unpublished memoirs of A.E. ('Art') Lyon, who had a big say in the affiliation of the American railway 'brotherhoods' in the first place and became a very powerful member of the ITF's Executive Committee/Board until his retirement in 1962 (see Chapter IV). His unedited, uninhibited, unashamedly

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partisan but patently un-dissembling account of his first-hand experiences in the ITF is as 'primary' a source as any to be found, and an essential one. The unpublished memoirs of Stefan Nedzynski, former Assistant General Secretary of the ICFTU and then for many years General Secretary of the post and telegraph ITS, the PTTI, have been invaluable for his first-hand recollections and characterizations of Oldenbroek and Becu in their time at the ICFTU.⁷

It is the first section of the ITF archives, the *Minutes and related papers*, which provides the skeleton of the ITF's history of the period, an account of 'what happened', or rather – of which a little more below – what these documents record as having happened. The form of the governing bodies' documentation was consistent throughout the period. The agendas had a number of standing items, most of which derived from constitutional requirements. Every governing body meeting expected a 'Report on Activities' and a 'Financial Report' of some kind. The activities of the

industrial sections were normally reported, and certainly so when they had implications for the ITF as a whole (as was often the case, for example, with the flag-of-convenience campaign).

With only rare lapses, the documents conformed to a consistent 'house style', in the way they were numbered, headed, typed and laid out. The Constitution was generally silent throughout the period on the ITF's language requirements but the custom and practice, dating from the inter-war years and almost always observed, was for all governing body documents to be issued in English, French,

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German, Spanish and Swedish.⁸ From 1945, there was throughout the ITF an unspoken but unchallenged assumption by the members of the governing bodies that it was the English version of any published ITF document that was 'authentic', even when it might first have been drafted in, say, French or German.

The critical question is how much reliance can be placed on these documents. There is no comparable textual source against which to test them, nor, with the sole exception of the writer himself (of which more below), is there anyone left who worked for the ITF at a reasonably high level at any time during the period and who could add to or question or elucidate the textual evidence. How good a path is it to that elusive (illusory?) and unendingly contentious goal of historical 'truth'? It is not necessary to dip a nervous toe into the stormy waters of postmodernist and anti-postmodernist and post-postmodernist historical theories, but the empirical side to the thesis is essentially 'historical' and the writer ought to feel confident that he can

say, as one of the most distinguished of modern historians recommends, that 'it really happened... and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable though always less than final conclusions about what it meant.' ⁹

The key documents, the *Minutes and related papers*, were the work of a variety of hands but all were subject to and issued on the authority of the General Secretary, who was and remains constitutionally responsible for everything put out in the ITF's name. Great use has been made of the Congress *Reports on Activities* and the published *Proceedings* or minutes. The ten printed and bound

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volumes of these staple items for the ten Congresses within the period, some 3,000 pages in all, amount to an 'authorized version' of the ITF's history over the period. The Reports on Activities to Congress were heavily edited compilations of reports made to the other governing bodies, the Executive Committee/Board most of all. The approval of the Congress Report on Activities was a standing item of the Congress agenda and was often its centrepiece, with something for everyone to hang a speech on. The 'Proceedings' of a Congress were always written in the form of attributed and summarized accounts – usually in indirect speech – of everything said at the Congress plenary sessions. Until the 1965 Congress, the last of the period, the Proceedings were put together from daily Congress *Press Reports*, which gave Congress delegates the chance to see, and if necessary correct, what they were reported as having said the previous day. ¹⁰ This process of almost instant

validation or amendment greatly increases the likelihood that the Proceedings accurately record either what they said or what they *meant* to say.

Tofahrn drafted the Executive Committee and General Council minutes until 1955 ¹¹ and they too consisted largely of summaries of what the members said. They were made much more concise when he was relieved of any responsibility for them and though there was some inconsistency in its application, the new approach was to give priority to decisions, not to discussions, hours of which – especially on very sensitive or contentious matters – were habitually and, for historians, teasingly reduced to references to ‘a long discussion in which most members took part’. In their most austere form, even the decisions were

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recorded obliquely as agreement to act (or not) on proposals or recommendations, the substance of which had to be traced back to the relevant supporting document.

There was a case for the leaner style: the ‘executive’ was there primarily to decide on action and debate was simply the process. It was the final decision which had to be noted, not what happened on the way to it. More mundanely, every page that was drafted meant five in print and more work for overworked translators and typists, a real concern in a secretariat under constant pressure as the ITF expanded. The needs of future historians would not have occurred to anyone and would have ranked the lowest priority if they had.

The Executive Committee/Board minutes were drafted, then approved by the General Secretary, translated and sent out to the members as part of the documentation for the next meeting. They were rarely challenged seriously and there are reasons to regard them as being conscientiously objective. Firstly, as Chapter III will explain, the members of the Executive Committee/Board were, typically, senior trade unionists who would be quick to pick up, and would very likely resent, anything less than straight dealing in what was put to them. It would be foolish, and almost certainly counter-productive, for any General Secretary to take them lightly by misrepresenting what they said or had agreed on. Secondly, the 'long' minutes of the Tofahrn variety, which were the standard practice until 1955, are so exhaustive and so frank, even at moments of great tension such as in the discussions of his own position,¹² that it is hard to imagine

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that they were anything less than full and fair. Thérèse Asser, secretary to the General Secretary, Omer Becu, took over the minute-taking from Tofahrn for some three years and began at once to slim the minutes down. The writer is in a position to vouch for the objectivity of the minutes of all the Executive Committee/Board and Management Committee meetings from December 1958 onwards, excepting the very few (see Chapter III) from which the staff were excluded,¹³ because he wrote them. He was never put under any pressure to 'spin' them in any way and never asked by either of the General Secretaries for whom he worked, Omer Becu and Pieter de Vries, to make any significant changes in his drafts.

So much for the substance and nature of the bulk of the ITF archive material which underpins the thesis. It is very important, however, also to bear its provenance in mind. Since almost all the sources were created by and within the ITF Secretariat, they were bound willy-nilly to emanate from the ITF's London headquarters, for even in the very late years of the thesis period the regional offices were still too small to produce any substantial documentation on their own initiative and authority. As Chapters III and VI reveal and discuss, there were by then stirrings of regional demands for more say in the ITF's regional activities, especially in Asia, but ironically these were only recorded (though candidly enough) in reports of regional meetings which were drafted and distributed from headquarters.

Yet whilst the archive sources may have originated overwhelmingly from 'head

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office', it would be wrong to assume that they go together to make up a united and identifiable 'headquarters' approach or ethos. Indeed, it will soon be seen in Chapter III that there were deep political differences and fierce clashes of personality at the very top of the Secretariat. What can fairly be acknowledged, however, is that the documentation is 'internal' in the sense that it covers agendas and meets concerns which were seen as relevant, productive or problematic within the headquarters – 'headquarters', in this context, taking in not simply the Secretariat, but the governing bodies that watched over the ITF's general interests.

What the thesis does not pretend to rely on to anything remotely like the same extent are sources reflecting the 'external' world's views of the ITF, though it was certainly

an important enough organization to have engendered them. The ITF's leanings and activities were obviously of great and sometimes anxious interest to governments (it was the labour attachés' heyday) at times of high Cold War tension and much of their concern was documented. The writer's earlier work (see the Bibliography) on the schism within the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), for example, drew on British government archives. Carew's tireless and fertile cultivation of American union and CIA sources was essential for much of Chapter V. There are very substantial deposits of ITF and ITF-related material, some not replicated in the MRC, in Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam. ITF historians such as Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, Dieter Nelles and Bob Reinalda have made distinguished use of them. The ITF affiliates, the

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ICFTU and other ITs must also over the decades have generated and accumulated no end of correspondence germane to this thesis. Much of it may have been kept, certainly by the better resourced and organized unions, but even a tentative step towards tracking it down, sifting it and putting it to use was more than the writer could contemplate if the thesis was ever to see the light of day.

And so there is indeed another 'external' view of the ITF to be had and it would be a service to labour history and labour studies if someone were to research it more than has been possible in this thesis. But that is not in any way to apologize for the 'internal' emphasis of the present thesis. There has been a great wealth of internal

material to explore and interpret and if space and time limits have imposed a priority, then the inner workings and decisions had to be given it.

vi. The writer as an actor

In the interests of 'transparency' the writer needs now to make clear his personal interest in the thesis as part actor. He joined the ITF in April 1955 as a junior assistant in its research and publications department. He began by writing pieces for the ITF publications but by 1957 was also being used by Becu to draft letters and statements. He began to take the notes at Executive Committee meetings and draft the minutes in December 1958 and soon afterwards became the ITF's 'reporter-translator', drafting and editing much of the Executive Committee documentation. He became Personal Assistant to Pieter de Vries

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who succeeded Becu in 1960, a new and senior staff post which implied a trust and confidence that Becu had increasingly given him and De Vries extended much further, encouraging him to propose changes or initiatives in the ITF's policies and activities. He has therefore had a hand in some of the events and situations taken up in this thesis, in particular the radical changes in the ITF Constitution of 1962, many of which he conceived and drafted.

It is very important, however, not to exaggerate his influence during the period. He had none before 1960: Becu never asked his advice and would have had no reason to take it from anyone still very young and inexperienced. De Vries had a very

relaxed managerial style and was most relaxed of all with his Personal Assistant, giving him his head and encouraging him to speak his mind. But nothing was decided and nothing went to the governing bodies without De Vries's explicit approval (unlike Becu, he read the drafts of ITF documents carefully). Final approval may sometimes have been De Vries's *only* contribution, but it was the contribution which mattered most of all.

The writer's previous status does not, therefore, put him in the position of passing judgment on his own decisions, even in those last five years of the period when, within the secretariat, he was effectively (see Chapter III) second only to the General Secretary in the ITF's general administration. Where his service with the ITF has given him an advantage in writing the thesis is in knowing his way around the ITF's vast documentation, in having lived through some of the events and known some of the personalities who appear in the narrative (without ever

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relying wholly on his uncorroborated memory of them), and in being able to bring his eventual experience as General Secretary to bear on the many judgments and characterizations which follow and are his, unless attributed otherwise.

vii. The choice of period and some consequences

The period to be covered by the thesis, from 1945 to 1965, was arrived at from a number of considerations. The first was purely sequential. The ITF's earliest years, to the start of the First World War, have been researched to great effect by Ken Golding (see Chapter III). His draft history of that period remains, regrettably,

unpublished but the page proofs are in the MRC ¹⁴ and edited extracts have appeared in special editions of the *ITF Journal* on various anniversaries (see Chapter II). The 1920s and 1930s and the years of the Second World War have had most attention of all, particularly with regard to the ITF's anti-fascist activities and its collaboration with the Allied intelligence services (Chapter II once more). To the extent that the post-war period has had far less attention, Koch-Baumgarten honourably excepted,¹⁵ the year of 1945 was an obvious place to start, if only for chronological reasons.

The second consideration was thematic. The twin, inter-related themes of the thesis, the ITF's organization and its politics, could be explored most revealingly by concentrating on the immediate post-war years, when the ITF set its sights and aspirations on expanding from its historically euro-centric base at a time of unprecedented international tension. These were the years when patterns would be set and alignments made under great pressures of events and ideological

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confrontation. By the mid-1960s, the ITF was well on the road to a genuinely world-wide membership and the Cold War had largely congealed, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 perhaps the definitive proof that, when it came to it, the super-powers would rather not blow the world up, at least on purpose.

The third and essential consideration, when the period was to end, depended to some extent on the fourth, the mandatory word-limit. How much of substance could the thesis accommodate? If justice was to be done to a complex international

organization, twenty years looked to be the limit. Furthermore, 1965 had something else to commend it as the point of closure. The election of Hans Imhof as General Secretary at the 1965 Congress marked the end of a lineage which stretched back to Edo Fimmen's arrival at the ITF in 1919. All three of Imhof's post-war predecessors had known and worked with Fimmen and, different though they were in many ways from him and from each other, they acknowledged him as a great influence and inspiration. To a degree, and perhaps unconsciously, they looked on the ITF through his eyes. Imhof had neither the advantage nor handicap of historical baggage: he was determined to change almost everything in and about the ITF, but that is another matter for another time.

Two stylistic points arise from the choice of period. The first is that proper names have largely been kept as they were during the period. 'Rhodesia', for example, meant something then which is quite different from Zambia and Zimbabwe and so 'Rhodesia' it has to be. Secondly, no attempt has been made by the use

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of gender-neutral pronouns to pretend that the ITF was anything but almost exclusively male at every level other than the secretariat staff, and there women were confined to secretarial, translating or bookkeeping functions. No woman had ever become an 'officer' or been thought of as a candidate to be so. This state of affairs was as old as the ITF itself. A four-page chapter on 'ITF and Women during the Inter-war Period' in Reinalda's survey of that period was at least three and a half pages too long. Excruciating references to the part played by 'wives' and to the pioneer Charles Lindley's wife as a 'first lady of the ITF' are best forgotten, as are

occasional successes at spotting unidentified women in Congress photographs. ¹⁶ The cherished wives, perhaps? Or, much more likely, they were members of the staff, as several women who appear in post-war Congress photographs through to 1965 definitely were. The affiliates were no better than the ITF itself. The only female delegate to attend any of the Congresses in the period was Alida de Jager, Edo Fimmen's partner. She was a remarkable person in her own right, but her presence at the 1946 Congress, the first after the war, as the only delegate from Mexico, where Fimmen had died, was in every respect exceptional.

Two examples help to show that the ITF was no different in the immediate post-war years. Addressing the ITF's 1950 Congress, Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the British TGWU and by far the most powerful trade union leader of his day, spoke of one grave drawback to the great blessing of full employment:

'We have to do something we do not like doing ... except in the direst necessity, and that is to employ women in our transport industry. We

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had them during the war ... but now we believe ... that the women ought in some measure to go back to their homes ... we do not believe – as they do in some of the slave states of Europe – in making woman [sic] another breadwinner...' ¹⁷

The second example came in 1953 and in India, when Jo Soares, the ITF's Asian representative moved the ITF's regional office into the Bombay headquarters of the

Indian Seafarers' Federation, from where he reported that it had been necessary to 'discontinue the services' of Mrs Kandar, his assistant, because the Federation's General Secretary had banned the employment of women in the office. This was simply noted by the ITF 'to our great regret' (Mrs Kandar must have regretted it even more).¹⁸

viii. The structure of the thesis

Chapter II: The Historical Background sketches the ITF's history from its beginnings in 1896 to its emergence at the end of the Second World War in very good shape, the only international trade union organization in full working order.

Chapter III: Structures provides a context for what follows, laying out the main features of the Constitution, the terms of membership, the Secretariat, the regional organization (still largely embryonic), its very important sectional activities (largely and unfortunately sacrificed in the thesis to the exigencies of space) and the ITF's finance. Much of the section on the Secretariat is taken up by the General Secretaries of the day, whose strengths and weaknesses had a

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large, if not decisive, influence over the ITF's policies and activities.

Chapter IV: Membership traces the important changes in the complexion of the ITF's affiliated membership, in particular the entry of the American transport workers' unions and some of the very severe problems they were to cause. It also considers

the return of the German and Japanese unions and the loss of the most important unions in France and Italy for political reasons.

Chapter V: Politics looks at the development of the ITF's political stance following the abortive attempt by the WFTU to bury it within a 'Trade Department', the ITF's reaction to the Marshall Plan and then its anti-communist activities during the Cold War, in particular the activities of its Mediterranean Vigilance Committee and its leader, Pierre Ferri-Pisani.

Chapter VI: Conclusions considers what is to be learned from the thesis, in terms of its aims as set out in this introduction. It also considers once more the lack of empirical research into the ITUs, which make up by far the biggest sector of the international trade union movement. As a former practitioner, the writer offers some forthright criticism of attempts to theorize international trade unionism from an ideologically unfriendly stance or on too flimsy an empirical base, and suggests points for a more productive theoretical agenda.

Modern Records Centre (MRC) referencing:

The great majority of the endnote references in this thesis are to ITF documents held in the ITF archives at the MRC in the University of

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Warwick library. Almost all the documents cited are related to meetings of the ITF governing bodies, namely the Congress (Con.); General Council (GC); Executive Committee (EC) and (from 1962) Executive Board (EB); and

the Management Committee (MC). These documents are identified in the endnotes which follow each chapter by reference to the relevant meeting, for example 'Con. 62 ...', and can be readily found in the catalogue of MRC holdings under *Minutes and related papers*. ITF documents that do not relate to meetings are referenced with the full MRC catalogue number, for example in note 14 below.

Notes to Chapter I:

- ¹ *New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, 1993
- ² Northrup and Rowan (1), p1
- ³ Devin's *Syndicalisme: Dimensions Internationales*, for example.
- ⁴ The enquiry was made in April 2002, at the writer's request, by David Cockroft, General Secretary of the ITF.
- ⁵ Northrup and Rowan (1), p178
- ⁶ Northrup and Rowan (2), pp166-167, 309-310
- ⁷ The writer is very grateful to Dr. Anthony Carew for providing him with a copy, which will be passed on to the MRC.
- ⁸ Danish, the various forms of Norwegian, and Swedish are closely related and therefore understandable throughout Scandinavia. The ITF used Danish during the war years.
- ⁹ Evans, p253

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- ¹⁰ By 1965, the Congress had become so big and complex that the most

the secretariat had time for was a daily list of 'decisions'.

¹¹ He 'found himself replaced by a member of the staff' at the GC meeting in Helsinki in June 1955: Tofahrn's note (undated) in MRC 238/IT/25/5ii

¹² For example, the Minutes of the EC meetings on 14, 15 and 17 July 1952

¹³ These were the EC meetings during the 1960 Congress which discussed the General Secretaryship and some of the MC emergency meetings before that Congress concerning Becu's attempt to move the ITF to Brussels.

¹⁴ MRC 159/3/D/254-255

¹⁵ Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten's splendid work has gone almost unnoticed outside her native Germany. Published in Frankfurt in 1999 it was not reviewed in the *International Review of Social History* (Amsterdam) until August 2001.

¹⁶ Reinalda (1), Chapter 14, pp126-129

¹⁷ Con.50, *Proceedings*, p193

¹⁸ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, p71

Chapter II: The historical background

i. 1896 to 1916

The ITF had its origins in the great industrial unrest in the ports of northern Europe towards the end of the 19th century. The dockers had become conscious as never before of the degrading and exploitative nature of their working conditions. Strong, militant unions were formed and soon pressed hard their demands for rapid and substantial improvements. These moves were strongest of all in Great Britain but had their parallels elsewhere in Europe and especially in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands. The founding in London of the *International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers* in June 1896 was the direct consequence of the intervention of the British seamen's leader, Joseph Havelock Wilson, in support of striking dockers in Rotterdam. His success had inspired him to join with Tom Mann and Ben Tillett of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers Union in leading an organizing campaign throughout Great Britain but 'also upon the Continent, between the Elbe and Brest' of which the emergence of the new international was one outcome. ¹

The first leaflet issued by the new international's Central Council in September 1896 set out its claims and gave the flavour both of the times and of the federation's heady hopes: a 'steady general levelling-up' of pay in all the ports; 'a stop to this downwards tendency' (that is pay cuts) that were current for both seamen and dockers; a 'fighting machinery' combining all 'sectional organizations [unions]...to effectually cope with the organized employers'; and a general recognition that 'the workers have every right to share in the increased prosperity of the world'. ²

A dock strike in Hamburg in November 1896 earned financial support from the British

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unions and their efforts to stop the sending of blackleg labour (a commonplace tactic by port employers at the time) added greatly to the credibility of international solidarity. The strike also encouraged the founding in December 1896 of a Hamburg railwaymen's union. In Britain itself, Mann was promising the international's support to railwaymen who were threatening to strike against the London and North Western Railway.³ Shortly afterwards, Charles Lindley, a Swedish-born seaman who had sailed on British ships and was a leading activist in the British seamen's union, returned to Sweden to found what was to become the Swedish Transport Workers' Union. Here were clear pointers to wider horizons that prompted the decision of the international's conference in 1898 to change the organization's name to the '*International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)*'⁴ and so radically broaden its jurisdiction.⁵ Within four years, groups such as railwaymen and tramwaymen were heavily represented and the ITF ceased to be a preponderantly maritime organization.

That change in the sectional complexion of the ITF was instrumental in the shifting of national pre-eminence which, in terms of membership, passed from Great Britain to an Austro-German combination within which the railwaymen's unions were the largest contingents. That in turn prompted a reassessment of the ITF's tactics and administration. The German view was that the early emphasis on militancy needed to be tempered by the more mundane concerns of building the ITF's organizational,

administrative and financial bases. By 1903 the ITF had indeed run so short of funds that Tom Chambers, the British seamen's union official who succeeded Tom Mann

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as the ITF's President and factotum in 1901, worked from his (or his mother's) home, and did so sometimes without pay. In October 1904 the ITF secretariat, such as it was, was moved to Germany, first to Hamburg and then to Berlin. The new, more orderly and better resourced administration, overseen by a wholly German Central Council, must have been gratified to see the affiliated membership rise steeply from 150,000 at the most by 1905 to some 500,000 in 1907 and happier still to attract affiliates for the first time from Italy and the United States and to make contact with unions in Latin America. It must also have been pleased and relieved when the 'International Railwaymen's Study Committee', a relatively inactive but latent rival for an increasingly large section of the ITF's membership, decided in 1906 on dissolution and a transfer of its members and assets to the ITF.

A general economic downturn in 1908, with widespread unemployment in the transport industry, gave rise to demands from some of the maritime affiliates for more aggressive tactics but any possibility of defections on those grounds was headed off after a lively Congress in 1910 when the Central Council was opened up to include seafarers' representatives from France, Great Britain, Scandinavia and, very importantly, the USA. Their place in the ITF's vanguard restored, the seamen's unions, led by Havelock Wilson, laid plans for an 'international' seamen's strike (or, more modestly and accurately, a co-ordinated Belgian, British, Danish, Dutch and German strike) for higher wages and better working conditions. In the event, the

Germans felt unable to take part and the Danes did not need to, having won their demands beforehand. But in Britain the strike did indeed secure worthwhile

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advances and that success gave strong impetus to the efforts to bring together Britain's transport workers' unions. Though the German unions had withdrawn from the strike itself, they gave it their full and practical solidarity by boycotting strike-breaking ships and providing financial support. The relationship between the British and German affiliates became much closer and warmer as a result and the ITF's prestige was enhanced by the effective action it had organized to frustrate the shipowners' plans to introduce strike-breakers (the shipowners were already very well organized at international level).

A summary of the ITF's history published by the ITF as part of its centenary celebrations ⁶ has suggested that 'debates within the ITF [at its 1913 Congress] reflected the growing international tensions on the eve of the First World War' and cites attacks by the French delegates on the cautious, compromising and decidedly *unrevolutionary* Germanic leadership. That there were deep differences at that Congress between the French ('our unions are permeated by the revolutionary ideals of the French people...') and the Germans and Austrians ('you don't achieve very much by union leaders togging themselves up in red shirts and ties') ⁷ is a matter of record but the French were not alone in their unhappiness at the Germans' phlegmatic, not to say stolid, approach. The British may not have been nearly as coherently or consistently set in their ideological ways as the French but they had also been moved from time to time (as has been noted with regard to the 1910

Congress) to express a similar impatience. It was the Austrians, the Germans' allies, who nicknamed the leader of the German Railwaymen's Union and President of the

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ITF, Hermann Jochade, as 'the slow train' (*der Bummelzug*).⁸

But the suggestion that these differences had anything to do with 'growing international tensions' remains both unsubstantiated and, given the existence of profound ideological divisions from the earliest days of the international movement, very improbable.⁹ When those 'international tensions' overflowed in 1914 the ITF's internal politics were neither here nor there; it was simply engulfed. When the First World War came, the ITF's headquarters were in Germany and so beyond the reach of many important affiliates, not least the British and the French. Moving the office to Britain, as proposed by Robert Williams of the British National Transport Workers' Federation with French support, would have stood the problem on its head but not solved it. The Dutch suggested a move to the neutral Netherlands and when the Germans refused to go that far, a sub-secretariat was set up there to act as a postbox to facilitate contacts with the headquarters. There was never a realistic chance, however, of anything more than minimal and symbolic activities. Jochade himself joined the German army towards the end of 1915 and though ITF publications were occasionally issued from the Berlin office for some time afterwards, the ITF had ceased to function for all practical purposes by the end of 1916.

ii. Between the wars: 1919 to 1939

Within six months of the end of the war the ITF's affiliates in the neutral countries, led by the Dutch and Swedes, had brokered a conference in Amsterdam in April 1919 at which the British and the German affiliates would, so it was hoped and planned,

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make their peace and revive the ITF. Dramatic but documented accounts by Ernest Bevin of the British National Transport Workers' Federation and Johann Döring, the German dockers' leader, tell of the two delegations' chance encounter on a small bridge in Amsterdam as they made their ways to what was to be their first meeting since the war had begun. ¹⁰ The occasion is a much cherished part of the ITF's folklore. The reconciliation which began so emotionally that day was quickly formalized at the Amsterdam conference by decisions to 'reconstitute' the ITF and to transfer its headquarters to Amsterdam until a Congress could be held. A 'Provisional Executive Committee', nominated by the Dutch affiliates, met some two weeks later and persuaded Edo Fimmen, general secretary of the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions, to step in as the ITF's 'provisional secretary'. He quickly organized the first post-war Congress in Christiania (Oslo) in March 1920 and by the time it convened, the ITF's affiliated membership stood at more than three millions, far bigger than in 1914. ¹¹

The years between the two world wars have been described in ITF publications (and by many since) as the 'Fimmen era'.¹² It is wrong to personify the ITF's history in this period so sweepingly, for Fimmen neither instigated nor even personally approved of everything that the ITF did in those times. There is no denying, however, the enormous and pervasive influence exerted by that remarkable

personality from the day of his appointment, through his failing health from 1938 and almost to the moment of his death in Mexican exile in December 1942. By far too volatile and complex a man to be contained or categorized within any conventional

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political definition, he was in his own entirely individual, not to say idiosyncratic, way absolutely unbending and messianic in his conviction that capitalism was the workers' greatest enemy, that militarism and war were both capitalist causes and effects and that only by complete unity at international level could the trade union movement successfully 'take arms to defend the workers against all attacks of capitalistic society'.¹³

Under a very heavy bombardment, directed most fiercely by his countryman, Moltmaker, at the ITF's 1926 Congress in Paris, Fimmen recalled that when similar attacks had been made on him at the previous Congress he had 'claimed the right, outside the organization, to express my own opinions' and had begged the Congress to 'let me be myself, and try not to make a eunuch of me.' It was a response that very few trade union General Secretaries would have dared to make, for their customary claim (not always to be taken too literally) is that they are nothing more, day and night, than the unconditional servant and mouthpiece of their governing bodies. Fewer still would have survived by making such a defence as Fimmen's against an indictment of the nature and gravity of Moltmaker's. He had accused Fimmen of actively supporting communist groups within ITF affiliates which were advocating a kind of 'unity' that the leaderships of those unions could not accept. No General Secretary of the ITF had the right, he said, to interfere in his spare time in an

affiliate's internal affairs. How could such interference be 'outside the organization'?

The answers in any other case but Fimmen's would assuredly have been a very ominous 'no' but after blowing very strongly, the Paris storm blew itself

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out, to the relief of many at the Congress who thought it should be spending its time on other things. Fimmen, backed firmly by Ernest Bevin and the British affiliates, was re-elected together with the Assistant General Secretary, Nathan Nathans. ¹⁴

Koch-Baumgarten has very concisely but very persuasively reviewed Fimmen's prodigious strengths and weaknesses. ¹⁵ His commitment to the pursuit of his socialist Utopia, she concludes, 'radicalised' international trade union demands so as to initiate and sustain in particular the ITF's fight against fascism but by the same token he could be unrealistic in 'valuing political possibilities within the existing structures'. ¹⁶ Certainly for Fimmen the huge threats of war and of dictatorships were the great priority. His *Report on the International Situation* ¹⁷ to the ITF Congress in Vienna in October 1922 declared that 'a new world war is impending as a result of the rivalry in the Near East between two capitalist and imperialist countries, Great Britain and France'. Wildly wrong about that, he was all too right about Italy – 'now helpless in the grip of fascism' – and about Hungary where, despite a boycott operated by the ITF and the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) (Fimmen was then and for a little longer the secretary of both) 'the officers' camarilla ... is still a standing menace of murder and martyrdom to all and sundry in the ranks of the workers'. By then even Soviet Russia, which had once held such promise for him and other socialists of all kinds, had become 'a dictatorship

over the proletariat' in which 'the position of socialists and independent trade unionists ... is not any safer ... than it used to be when Czarism held sway.' (He was soon to seek understandings with the Soviet trade unions, however, and so

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badly upset the IFTU and many ITF affiliates.) He introduced and commended a resolution on 'Militarism and War' which 'pledges itself [i.e. the Congress] again [!] to use the whole industrial power of the transportworkers [sic], railwaymen and seamen to prevent a fresh war'.

Both the style and content of his report set a pattern for the next seventeen years of his office, a period which varied only in the ever widening extent and ever more depraved depths of the political and social horrors which he confronted and defied. Much of Central Europe had succumbed by the time he fell seriously ill in 1938. By 1939, the ITF had lost all its active affiliates in Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain. If there was indeed a 'Fimmen Era' it was of a nature that he would not have wished on anyone.

He will be remembered above all for his leadership of the ITF's campaign against 'fascism' of every kind, starting as early as the summer of 1920 with his attempt, as secretary of both the IFTU and the ITF, to organize an international boycott of the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime, headed by the self-appointed 'Regent', Admiral Horthy.¹⁸ The effort was as heroic, as principled and, ultimately, as unavailing as the various boycotts and other actions which he proposed and promoted against the even greater evils that followed. No aspect of the ITF's

activities (excepting, as always, flags-of-convenience) has been so assiduously researched as the ITF's support, in various forms, of 'resistance' to fascism and nazism and it naturally holds a very special interest for German writers such as

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Dieter Nelles.¹⁹ The ITF's publication *Fascism*, very much Fimmen's inspiration, appeared fortnightly and multilingually from 1936. It was, Nelles maintains, greatly esteemed by intelligence services at the time and by historians since.²⁰

The life of the ITF in the inter-war period was bound to be dominated by the huge political pressures and crises which threatened its survival and that of the trade union movement itself in much of Europe. It is surprising that any time at all was found for the more day-to-day problems in the various branches of the transport industry, but in fact the ITF's 'sectional' activities developed substantially in the inter-war years. They had been formally acknowledged in the new ITF Constitution adopted at the Christiania Congress in 1920 which envisaged three 'sectional departments': 'Transportworkers [sic] by water'; 'Railway staffs...and other passenger vehicle workers...'; and 'Dockers, waterside workers and other transportworkers [sic]...'.²¹ The 1922 Congress made room for sectional conferences for both the railwaymen and the dockers. The 1924 Congress included similar sessions and added a 'First International Motor Drivers Conference'.²² By 1932, six sections were operating (railwaymen, motor drivers, tramwaymen, seamen, dockers and inland waterways) and conferences of the larger sections were taking place between, and not solely within, the ITF Congresses.²³

The founding of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919 would certainly have contributed to the growing significance of this area of the ITF activities (but not so much as to be a touchstone of its 'success and failure', as one commentator

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thinks ²⁴). Here for the first time trade unions were to have a statutory *right*, not simply an opportunity, to take part in the setting and (or so it was hoped and intended) the implementation of international standards in the transport industry which in many ways had always been international in its scope and practices, and was rapidly becoming more so. Shipping was only the most obvious example of that trend and seafarers claimed a share in the ILO's early legislative efforts out of all proportion to the relatively small numbers of workers involved in comparison, say, with railwaymen. For the ITF's affiliates to make any concerted impression within the ILO, however, they had of course first to agree among themselves, at least in general terms, on what they should demand or could accept. Exhaustive efforts to arrive by consensus at joint programmes or positions – for example the 'International Programme for Motor Drivers' adopted in 1932 ²⁵ and the railwaymen's attempts in 1939 to decide what should go into the international regulation of their working hours ²⁶ – became a feature of the sections' work even when the international political situation was at its most unpromising.

iii. The Second World War: 1939-1945

Most of the ITF secretariat, with an ailing Fimmen still at its head, came to Great Britain when the ITF's headquarters were transferred from Amsterdam towards the end of August 1939, a matter of days before the Second World War began. (A small

office was also opened in Paris in September 1939 but was closed early in 1940, just before Paris fell.) Housed first in offices provided by the British National Union of Railwaymen near London, the secretariat was moved progressively into offices in

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London itself in 1942. Fimmen had been incapacitated by a stroke in November 1938 and though he made partial recoveries, the relapses always followed quickly. He put in appearances at the office until late 1941 but had then to admit defeat. Sent to Mexico, where the ITF had hoped he could convalesce, he died there in December 1942 at the age of sixty-one. J.H. (Jaap) Oldenbroek, the Assistant General Secretary since 1938, had functioned virtually as General Secretary throughout this period and the Management Committee confirmed him as Acting General Secretary and Paul Tofahrn as Acting Assistant General Secretary with effect from July 1943. (As Chapter III will reveal, the path to that decision was not as smooth as the formal reports have made it look.²⁷)

The ITF's participation in the Second World War was unequivocal, unlimited and absolutely unapologetic: 'It goes without saying that during this period [the war] the ITF had to devote itself preponderantly to supporting the war effort of the Allied nations and everything directly or indirectly connected therewith. Its task was to note and record the contributions made by organized transport labour ... to encourage the sabotage which everywhere harassed the enemy, ... to strengthen the morale of our own people and undermine that of the enemy...' ²⁸ Equally forthright, but at the same time cryptic, was the sentence in the half-page of the Report on Activities to

the first post-war Congress in Zürich in 1946 concerning *Relations with underground organizations*: 'The ITF has been associated with clandestine activities and has financed some of them.'²⁹

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The mechanics of the 'clandestine activities' have been dissected and assessed by any number of writers since the relevant records became available. They are of legitimate historical interest but it is the context, more than the content, which best explains and justifies the ITF's conduct. Here, the ITF declared, it was engaged in a fight to the death against 'the Nazi and Fascist régimes which had crushed the free labour movements within their own frontiers, which had persecuted, imprisoned and murdered so many of its [the ITF's] friends, and which aimed to enslave the workers of the world.'³⁰ Nothing less than total war could overcome such enemies.

The outcome of that war was, of course, a huge victory for the Allied cause on which the ITF had pinned all its hopes of survival, but the ITF had more particular reasons to be happy with the good condition in which it found itself at the war's end. Its membership, for example, had grown with thirty-two new affiliations from nineteen countries – something 'of which the ITF need not have been ashamed in normal times'.³¹ Furthermore the merchant marine officers' unions which for many years had had their own international organization, the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association (IMMOA) declared their readiness in December 1944 to become assimilated into the ITF's Seafarers' Section as soon as the constitutional arrangements could be made. The bringing together of officers' and ratings' unions,

of 'white collar' and 'blue-collar' seafarers, had great symbolic and practical significance. Symbolically, it illustrated how the war had shaken and reshaped some of the old class distinctions; practically, it reduced greatly the shipowners' ability to play one group off against the other.

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The ITF claimed that it had taken full advantage of the fact that the ILO, like the ITF, had continued to function during the war and pointed to its success in pressing the ILO to set up specific Industrial Committees, including one for inland transport. Its conclusion in 1946 was that 'there is today more occasion than ever to regard it [the ILO] as an instrument at the service of the industrial labour movement'.³²

But perhaps in the longer term the most significant gain of all for the ITF from its war-time commitments was the affiliation for the first time of an organization representing American railwaymen. American seafarers' and dockers' organizations had come and gone in the past, but though they were unions of substance in the USA they had rarely been more than a marginal presence within the ITF. The American railwaymen's unions were altogether bigger, weightier in almost every sense, serious, venerable organizations, at the heart of the American trade union movement (most of them were affiliated to the AFL). Never previously interested to any major or consistent degree in the international movement, the railway 'brotherhoods' were persuaded by their government to become so and thus serve the patriotic cause, taking the first step on a path to affiliation with the ITF (though it was far from straight, as Chapter IV will show).³³ The ITF had put itself in good standing with the American authorities at the height of the war when it set up an office in New York in

May 1941 to look after the interests of Allied merchant seafarers. The relationship had then flourished once the United States entered the war and the ITF began to assist the American intelligence services in their 'clandestine activities'.

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And so, in 1945, the ITF's future looked at first sight to be secure and, in any number of ways, very promising. There was, however, one great question which had already been the subject of intense discussion within the ITF and the wider international movement even before the war ended, namely what shape should the international trade union movement take after the war? Plans were being laid for a new, all-embracing world-wide federation. What would be the place of the ITF (or the other ITSs) in such a body? Would it survive as an autonomous entity? It was, in every sense, the first question to face the ITF in 1945. The putting of the question and the answer it was given are referred to in many places, but most of all in Chapter V.

Notes to Chapter II:

¹ Golding (1), p119

²...Golding (2), p32

³ *ibid.*, p33

⁴ The ITF is sometimes presented as ITWF. The 'W' ought to be there, but never has been, probably because someone (Charles Lindley?) thought that 'transport worker' was one word – as it indeed is in German and Swedish.

⁵ Golding (2), pp33-34

⁶ *Solidarity*, published by the ITF (see Bibliography) on its centenary

⁷ *Solidarity*, p37

⁸ *ibid.*, p36

⁹ See Nicholson, *The TUC Overseas*, p14 for a useful note on the syndicalist movement, pre-World War I.

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¹⁰ Golding (2), p40 and *Solidarity*, pp57-58

¹¹ Con.20, *Proceedings*, pp10-15

¹² For example, Koch-Baumgarten in Reinalda (1), p52

¹³ Con.22, *Report*, p82

¹⁴ Con.26, *Report*, pp73

¹⁵ Koch-Baumgarten, in Reinalda (1), pp52-67

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p67

¹⁷ Con.22, *Report*, pp73-83

¹⁸ Máté Molnár, in Reinalda (1), pp155-163

¹⁹ For example, Dieter Nelles in Reinalda(1), pp174-199

²⁰ *ibid.*, p199

²¹ Con.20, *Report*, pp43 et seq.

²² Con.24, *Report*, pp126-131

²³ Con.32, *RonA 1930-31*, pp78-121

²⁴ See Reinalda (1), pp130-151

²⁵ Con.32, *RonA 1930-31*, pp93-95

²⁶ Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p85

²⁷ Koch-Baumgarten, *op.cit.* pp66-67

²⁸ *ibid.* p65

²⁹ Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p4

³⁰ *ibid.* p58

³¹ *ibid.* pp3-4

³² *ibid.* p5

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³³ *ibid.* p6

³⁴ 'America(n)' means the United States of America (USA). 'North America' means the USA and Canada. When American unions have, or aspire to have membership outside the USA (almost always limited to Canada), they like to indicate it by having 'International' in their title. It is a confusing affectation and, unless specified otherwise, 'international' in this thesis has only its ordinary meaning.

Chapter III: Structures

i. Eligibility, objects and obligations

From its foundation the ITF was structured as a federation of unions, and *not* of individual transport workers. In the early, heady days of solidarity actions on the European waterfronts the workers were encouraged to proclaim their individual identification with the international cause by ‘at all times ... wear[ing] the Federation badge’¹ but membership of the ITF was limited to transport workers’ unions and has remained so, with one very conditional and restricted exception, which will be explained when this chapter deals with the industrial sections.

The first post-war Congress, in May 1946, reviewed the ITF Constitution² and defined the ITF (Rule II: ‘Composition’) as being open to ‘All trade unions and associations of trade unions catering for persons engaged, in any capacity, in any transport industry, whether publicly or privately owned or operated.’ They were required to ‘subscribe to the objects of the Federation’, to have a ‘constitution and practice [which] ensures democratic administration and conduct of [their] affairs’ and (rather pompously to modern ears) to ‘undertake to acquit themselves of the obligations deriving from affiliation.’

The ITF’s ‘objects’, set out in the Preamble to the Constitution,³ were to protect transport workers’ interests at national and international level against exploitation and

oppression by making 'international working class solidarity effective'. The ITF further required its affiliates to co-operate in establishing a 'world order'

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within which 'all peoples' would work 'in freedom and equality' towards the 'joint use of the world's resources'. The 'obligations' ⁴ made three major demands of affiliates: firstly, to pay the appropriate affiliation fee; secondly, 'to co-operate in the carrying out of the decisions of the governing and executive bodies'; and thirdly, 'to propagate among their members the principles, policy and decisions of the Federation and to report to their governing bodies on ... [its] ...activities.' Congress alone could set the 'standard rate' of affiliation fees ⁵ but affiliates 'in underdeveloped countries' could pay 'a lesser affiliation fee commensurate with the standard of living and the rate of wages prevailing in the country concerned'.

These constitutional provisions on eligibility, 'objects' and 'obligations' were essentially to hold good throughout the twenty years of the period, fleshed out from time to time, however, with specific conditions and declarations. In 1952, the ITF was to aim 'to embrace transport workers of all countries, irrespective of their colour, race and creed'. Furthermore, it 'stands for the defence of democracy and freedom and is opposed to totalitarianism and aggression in all their forms.' ⁶

ii. The governing bodies, the President and Vice President

The 1946 Constitution preserved the ITF's governing bodies as they had been for most of its history: a *Congress* every two years (two world wars and fascist disruption in the 1930s permitting), which was given 'supreme authority'; a *General Council (GC)*, which exercised that authority between Congresses; an

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Executive Committee (EC), which was to look after the 'general management' of the ITF, carry out the Congress and GC decisions and 'control' the Secretariat; and a *Management Committee (MC)*, charged with 'supervising' the Secretariat's handling of 'administrative, financial and staff matters'. Every affiliated organization was entitled to be represented at Congress by a delegation of one or more, with limits on the numbers set by the size of the affiliated membership. The GC was elected by the Congress from nominations by national and regional groups, with a general requirement that the membership should be representative of the ITF geographically and sectionally. The much smaller EC was elected by the whole Congress from among the members of the GC. The MC consisted of four nominees from the affiliates of the country where the ITF had its headquarters. ⁷

In its form, it was a structure made in the image of that of a typical west European union, ultimate power vested in a representative assembly and a clutch of executive and administrative bodies, elected by the membership directly or at the assembly and given specific powers and responsibilities. The structure held its general shape to the end of the period, but within it the particular forms and functions of the GC, EC

and MC, and their relative authority, were changed radically in 1962, when the frequency of the Congress became triennial.

The GC, once important in its own right, had by the mid 1950s become an

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expensive and largely superfluous adjunct of the EC, itself made up of leading GC members but meeting more often, more cheaply and, being far smaller, more productively. The GC's last meeting of any substance was in 1955 and a revision of the Constitution in 1956 removed a requirement that it should meet once a year. From then on it was required to meet only immediately after a Congress to elect the President and Vice President (see below) and to perform a few specific and rare (but important) functions, such as considering the expulsion of an affiliate or appeals against suspension.⁸

The EC had long been the most select and high-powered of the governing bodies, and the body on which the big national groupings of affiliates would think it was their absolute due to have a member. (The British affiliates' masochistic failure to achieve that in 1960 is discussed in Chapter IV.) The 1956 Congress agreed on the EC's recommendation to empower the elected members 'to co-opt up to four additional members, at their discretion, with the object of ensuring appropriate representation of geographical regions'.⁹ The 1960 Congress, preoccupied with the need to find a new General Secretary (see below), had great difficulty in deciding on an RLEA proposal

to allow countries with more than 500,000 affiliated members (the USA, Germany and Great Britain) to have two seats each on the EC and finally agreed instead to allow for a further four co-opted places. It was by any reckoning a bizarre response to the RLEA's proposal but the exhausted delegates were by then only one day from

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the end of a fractious and dispiriting Congress and were ready to vote for any consensus on offer, however far removed from the original proposition. ¹⁰

When the incoming EC met on 29 July 1960, immediately after the Congress, it again co-opted Nishimaki (Japan) for Asia and Curran of the American NMU for North America and brought in two newcomers, M. Hellal (Tunisia) for Africa and Herminio Alonso (Argentina) for Latin America. ¹¹ But those four were as far as it ever took co-optation and at its next meeting, in November 1960, the EC set up a 'special sub-committee ... to review the ITF Constitution', ¹² starting the progress towards what 'amounted almost to a complete re-writing of the ITF's Constitution'. ¹³

The Constitution adopted by the 1962 Congress on the EC's proposal brought particularly radical changes to the governing bodies. The General Council's main function in future was to be as a 'panel' or, in the American manner, a 'primary' electorate, for the new Executive *Board* (EB). Anyone wishing to stand for the EB had therefore to make sure of election to the GC first. Both the GC and EB were to be 'a reasonable reflection of the geographical and industrial composition of the

Federation' and would be elected from 'nominations' made by national or regional electoral groups (in the case of the EB, regional meant continental). Congress would decide, on the EB's recommendation, how many seats each group should have in order to provide the mandatory 'reasonable reflection'.

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Only two general limits were constitutionally applied: no more than one-half of the EB members were to be 'connected exclusively', with any one section and no organization could have more than one member of the EB. Effectively released from paying for GC meetings, which in future would be held only in conjunction with Congresses to which delegates paid their own way, the ITF could afford to expand the membership of the new EB from the EC's fifteen (four co-opted) to twenty-two. For the first time, the exceptionally large national memberships in Germany and Great Britain were allowed two seats (thus solving the British problem – see Chapter IV), and the four seats allocated to North America were divided two apiece between the USA and Canada, not quite the generous American gesture it might appear, since one of the seats was earmarked for the Canadian RLEA, representing the Canadian membership of the American 'international' railwaymen's unions.¹⁴

The Management Committee (MC) ceased to be reserved for the 'host country' and became a sub-committee of the EB from which it drew its nine members, both *ex officio* (the President, Vice President and General Secretary) and by nomination of the EB itself. The EB could delegate its 'functions and authority' to the MC 'as may

be necessary', but anxieties that the MC might be given more power than was good for such a small group were met by providing for the EB to meet twice a year, not the once that was first proposed. ¹⁵

The 1946 Congress was presided over by 'Ch. Lindley (President of the ITF)' but

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the Constitution it adopted mentioned no such office. The omission was repaired in 1948 with a new rule under which a President would be elected by the General Council 'from among the members of the Executive Committee'. The President's term ran from one Congress to the next, but he was eligible for re-election. The specific presidential duty was to preside over the governing bodies. A Vice President to act for the President 'in his absence' was added in 1952. ¹⁶

The President was the first among equals of the EC members, all of whom had to find time for international activities among their very heavy national commitments. A President's impact and influence (especially over the General Secretary) would depend very much on how much time and interest he could spare for the ITF business, but those who took the position during the period were always ready to make a special effort in that respect. For his part, a General Secretary would always hope for a supportive President and would not think it wise to fall out with him. There were no great tensions between the two in the ITF throughout the period, including Becu's time as President in harness with Oldenbroek as General Secretary, though

the partnership foundered (see below) when the Americans attempted to replicate it in the ICFTU.

iii. Degrees of equality: 'membership', 'paid-up membership', fees and rights

The effect of these provisions (which drew heavily on the ICFTU precedent) was to delegate the election of the Executive Board (and of the General Council

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before it) to the electoral groups. Formally, the Congress as a whole still had the last word and could reject any group 'nomination', but it was strictly a reserve power (and was never used). In an international organization that was rapidly and substantially moving beyond its traditional European homeland, it was a timely and calculated concession to its new, heterogeneous reality. But it also went some way to confronting issues of the definition of 'membership' which had very practical and (though rarely identified or conceded as such) distinctly moral implications.

At the 1950 Congress, the Credentials Committee reported 'some difficulty' in deciding the 'voting strength' of affiliates which were entitled to pay fees at less than the standard rate. There could be undesirable 'repercussions' and the constitution should be changed 'with a view to ensuring that voting rights are related in some way or other to the affiliation fees paid to the ITF.'¹⁷ The Credentials Committee's concern was added to the business of a Congress 'Rules and Elections Committee',

¹⁸ which lived on after the Congress and initiated the adoption by the 1952 Congress of a specific concept of 'paid-up' membership.

This was defined as the number of 'members for whom affiliation fees at the standard rate have been paid' and it would be the number determining an affiliate's entitlement to delegates and votes at an ITF Congress. If an affiliate

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paid 'only a part of the standard affiliation fees' then its entitlement would be reduced proportionately: an affiliate paying fees at, say, ten percent of the standard rate would have only ten percent of its votes. Introducing the proposal on behalf of the Executive Committee, Deakin was 'perfectly sure' that it was 'the very essence of democracy, that representation and voting should be on the basis of *effective* affiliation...' Congress agreed and nodded it through. ¹⁹

But some consciences were evidently troubled. The Credentials Committee at the next Congress, in 1954, still thought that the principle of reduced voting rights was fair but its 'rigid application' was 'incompatible with the principles of international solidarity' for regions suffering a 'low level of wages and working conditions'. The Executive Committee was recommended to 'reconsider' the rule and report back to the next Congress. ²⁰ When the Executive Committee came to do so in 1956 it could report only that it had tried and failed to find a 'practicable alternative'. It agreed unanimously to leave things as they were, but to continue the search for a 'realistic

solution'.²¹ The 'solution' was still to be found by the end of the period, eluding the authors of the otherwise radical revision of the constitution in 1962. They confirmed that 'paid-up membership' of an affiliate paying at a reduced rate would be its declared membership 'reduced to the extent that the rate of affiliation fees has been reduced'.²²

But if the formula was retained, its effects were at least mitigated by the changes

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made in the electoral processes in 1962. Co-option to the EC had been introduced in 1956 partly because affiliates in the 'under-developed' world (the Japanese always an exception on several counts) could never have mustered the Congress delegates or votes to come even close to a seat. In 1962 the new, delegated electoral procedure and the prerequisite of 'reasonable reflection' – which was not tied to 'paid-up' membership – gave Africa, Asia and Latin America two EB seats each, together some 27% of the twenty-two elected seats, almost exactly equal to the proportion of the total affiliated membership (again, *not* the 'paid-up' variety) that the three had registered in 1962 (see Table 1). There were more general aspects of this issue that raised difficult questions for the ITF and these will be picked up in Chapter VI.

iv. General Secretaries and (or versus?) Assistant General Secretaries

The ITF had a two-tier secretariat: its 'officers' were elected or appointed by a governing body to positions specified by the Constitution and its 'staff' (of which more in the next section) were appointed by the General Secretary (with the nominal and usually tacit approval of the Management Committee). Chief among the officers was (and still is) its General Secretary, elected by Congress for one Congress term and eligible for re-election. His sweeping responsibilities throughout the period, essentially unchanged from Fimmen's day, were summarized in the 1962 Constitution: 'the general administration of the Federation's affairs ... the implementation of decisions taken by the Federation's

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governing bodies' and anything else specified in the Constitution. He was a member *ex-officio* of the General Council, the Executive Committee/Board – to which he was formally answerable for his actions – and the Management Committee.²³ Ultimately, of course, he needed also to satisfy Congress if he wished to be re-elected.

The 1946 Constitution allowed for 'an Assistant General Secretary', elected by Congress, who would act 'generally' under the 'orders' of the EC and the General Secretary, whom he would assist 'as required'. The EC proposed to the 1952 Congress that the Assistant General Secretary should no longer be elected by Congress but should be appointed by the General Council. The proposal won a majority on a card vote but not the two-thirds margin required to carry a constitutional amendment.²⁴ In 1956 the EC decided that 'the resignation of the Assistant General

Secretary [Paul Tofahrn]... [gave] ... occasion to reconsider the matter'. The ITF 'may in future need a team of Assistant General Secretaries' and the EC's proposal to the 1956 Congress was that 'the Assistant General Secretary/Secretaries shall be appointed by the Executive Committee'.²⁵ It was approved with just one (anonymous) vote against.²⁶

The reference in 1956 to Tofahrn is an indication of the way the constitutional relationship between the General Secretary and the Assistant General Secretary had become personalized. The bitter debate at the 1952 Congress on the first

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attempt to change the relevant rule had already left no room for doubt about that. Deakin, proposing the amendment in the name of the EC, had tried to characterize the change as a practical measure 'to make the organization work', a simple tidying-up of status and responsibilities, but once it was on the Congress floor the proposal was seen almost exclusively as an attempt – welcome and urgent to some, authoritarian and undeserved to others – to relegate and, in his supporters' eyes, humiliate Tofahrn.²⁷

v. Jaap Oldenbroek

The tensions between the General Secretary, Omer Becu, and Tofahrn which were laid bare in that debate had been presaged many years earlier when Fimmen died. As Becu was to put it, his predecessor '[had] warned me [about Tofahrn] ... but I

decided to find out for myself.²⁸ That predecessor, 'Jaap' (Jacobus H.) Oldenbroek was born in Amsterdam in 1897, son of a Dutch trades unionist. He left school at fourteen to become an office boy and in 1915 went to work for the Dutch national centre, where Fimmen noticed his 'quick intelligence and linguistic abilities' and recruited him in 1921 to the ITF office in Amsterdam. In 1938 he became Assistant General Secretary and when Fimmen fell seriously ill soon afterwards he acted as General Secretary with the tacit (or, as Paul Tofahrn saw it, complicit) approval of the Management Committee. He was formally appointed Acting General Secretary by the Management Committee in May 1943, some five months after Fimmen died.²⁹ Koch-Baumgarten has drawn

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attention to the attempts by Tofahrn, then the Secretary to the Railwaymen's and 'Land Transport' Sections, and Max Zwalf, who was the ITF's research and publications specialist, to stave off Oldenbroek's appointment on the grounds that he 'lacked Fimmen's charisma and political and socialist vigour'.³⁰ But Tofahrn had to settle for second place as Acting Assistant General Secretary, for by the end of the war Oldenbroek's position was unassailable.³¹ The ITF emerged into peacetime stronger in almost every way than in 1939, and for that Oldenbroek could take the most credit. He had led the ITF's total commitment to the Allied war effort, whilst safeguarding its autonomy by refusing to take a penny from the Allied intelligence services, to whose operations the ITF had given invaluable help.³²

Oldenbroek was unanimously elected (effectively confirmed) as General Secretary by the 1946 Congress as General Secretary and Tofahrn, also unanimously, as Assistant General Secretary.³³ The Congress could never have guessed that Oldenbroek's General Secretaryship had only some three more years to run, that he would be pre-occupied for all three with the ITF's resistance to absorption within the WFTU (see **Chapter V**), and that his triumph in that struggle would bring about his departure.

There are no surviving witnesses of his time in the ITF and the written evidence, other than the official records, does not pretend to be objective. Tofahrn's

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contemporary view of him from 1941 through to Oldenbroek's departure in 1950 is spread thickly over countless private notes, memos and letters and is rarely less than hostile and contemptuous.³⁴ Thérèse Asser (see below), who had known Oldenbroek better and for longer than anyone in the ITF, paid tribute to him shortly after he died in 1970 but her contribution was positive and respectful, as the valedictory circumstances dictated, and concentrated very much on his pre-war career. She wrote of his 'remarkable intelligence ... marvellous memory ... strong personality'. The one reference to a possible shortcoming in his personality was oblique, to 'the softer side of his personality' which 'he used to cover up (especially in later years)'. Stefan Nedzynski, who worked under Oldenbroek at the ICFTU's Brussels headquarters for almost six years in the 1950s, was more blunt.

Oldenbroek, he writes, 'showed little heart and made few friends ... was respected but not loved'.³⁵

Oldenbroek seems never to have indicated at all precisely where he would place himself in the political spectrum. For what it is worth, Asser saw him as 'a convinced socialist'.³⁶ But writing in 1942, Tofahrn was sure that, given the chance, Oldenbroek would 'convert it [the ITF] into a business' which he would run 'not according to a class policy but according to the unprincipled methods and advertisement stunts of the commercial traveller'.³⁷

But however sour Tofahrn's view of Oldenbroek on almost every count, very few

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in the ITF seem to have shared it. If there was a crowning moment in Oldenbroek's career in the ITF, it was the defeat of the attempt to transform the autonomous ITF into a subsidiary arm of the WFTU (see **Chapter V**) and if he had stayed with the ITF, he would most probably have ended his working life there, much honoured and contented. But that triumph marked him out as the obvious, unrivalled candidate for the General Secretaryship of the new international for 'free' national centres. Fulsomely nominated by Deakin and seconded, with 'great pleasure', by George Meany, President of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Oldenbroek was unanimously elected General Secretary of the ICFTU on the first day (7 December 1949) of its First Congress, which was held in London.³⁸

As its meeting in October 1949, the EC 'encouraged Mr. Oldenbroek to accept nomination of the new Trade Union International and wished him success'.³⁹ Once that 'success' was achieved, Oldenbroek made it clear to Tofahrn, firstly, that the Executive Committee had the authority, and would use it, to appoint an Acting General Secretary of the ITF; and, secondly, that Tofahrn would not be their choice, because he was simply not up to the job. Tofahrn replied that, on the contrary, he would make a good General Secretary – but was ready to give way to Omer Becu, the ITF's President. It was his way to dignify what he already knew was to be yet another rebuff. Becu's succession as General Secretary was already as good as decided and he accepted it, 'as I accept the rain and the

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sunshine'. They had chosen Omer Becu and 'if as General Secretary he continues to be the good comrade he is as President, he will have in me a devoted assistant'.⁴⁰

Oldenbroek advised the Executive Committee meeting from 6 to 8 February 1950 that he intended to leave the ITF in one week's time. Becu left the chair, which Yates took over and confirmed that Becu was the Executive Committee's choice for Acting General Secretary. Tofahrn was asked by Yates to be 'big-hearted enough' not to stand against Becu at the 1950 Congress and to 'share the conviction that Mr. Becu's intellectual standing was so high that only ... [Oldenbroek] ... could equal it'. Becu made the appropriate humble but resolute pledges to do his best and Tofahrn,

tactfully swallowing Yates's extraordinary estimate of Becu's intellectual powers, welcomed his new boss and assured him of his determination to make their future co-operation work.⁴¹

Oldenbroek was gone almost as soon as the meeting ended. The ITF's records bear out time and again how skilled and persistent he was in debate and how indifferent he was, bolstered by what Lyon called his 'belief in his sublime authority',⁴² to the high status or reputation of anyone who disagreed with him. His unshakable self-confidence (or, to some on the receiving end, arrogance) meant that he bowed to no-one, seeing off the mighty Deakin in the ITF debates on the WFTU at the ITF's 1948 Congress.⁴³ Later, in the ICFTU, he would face

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down the apoplectic Meany, whose 'strident [anti-communist] rhetoric' Oldenbroek 'detested', with 'coolly reasoned, detailed arguments... [which] ... ensured that in the end decisions always went his and not Meany's way'.⁴⁴

It was the vengeful Meany, abetted for quite different reasons by the British TUC, who finally drove Oldenbroek from the ICFTU in 1960, a persecution and prosecution authoritatively described and discussed by Carew⁴⁵ and strictly relevant here only in its direct repercussions on the ITF, of which more very shortly. The last words on Oldenbroek have to be, first, that in Nedzynski's informed judgment his record as General Secretary of the ICFTU was 'truly great',⁴⁶ and secondly that he walked

away from the ICFTU in his early sixties with barely a backward glance. No recriminations, no memoirs and, most likely, not a scratch on his armour-plated self-confidence.

vi. Omer Becu

Omer Becu was born in 1900 in Ostende, Belgium, the son of a schoolteacher. He went to sea in 1919 as a radio operator and before long was a militant leader of the Belgian radio telegraphists' union. His entry into the international movement came in 1929 with his appointment as Assistant General Secretary of the International Merchant Marine Officers' Association (IMMOA), which led to his first encounter with Edo Fimmen, his 'spiritual father', at an ILO conference. He became General Secretary of the IMMOA in 1932 and guided it into ever

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closer collaboration with the ITF until 1946 when the IMMOA was happy to be absorbed within the ITF. By then Becu had narrowly escaped a prison term in 1936 for attempted gun-running to republican Spain and in 1940 he reached England from occupied Belgium. He managed the ITF New York office from 1941 to 1943 and was closely involved in the ITF's support for the Allied intelligence services during the war, returning to Belgium in late 1944 to help rebuild the Belgian transport workers' movement.⁴⁷ When he appeared at the ITF's Zürich Congress in 1946 it was as President of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union (BTB), to which the Belgian merchant marine officers now belonged. That Congress elected him to the Executive

Committee and when the President of the ITF, John Benstead of the British NUR, left his union and the ITF in September 1947, Becu succeeded him. ⁴⁸

Becu took an uncomplicated view of the trade union cause. Unions were there to protect what their members had and to get them more whenever they could. If that meant a fight, then fight with everything you had. He was a merchant navy officer (though radio operators were only just so), yet was never so happy as when he was addressing a mass meeting of Antwerp dockers, the core of the BTB and for him the salt of the earth. He would have called himself a 'socialist', by which he would have meant that he belonged to the Belgian Socialist Party, His reactions to people and issues were habitually instinctive, which is not to say that he had no moral and political principles, but that they were almost unconscious givens and in no need of intellectual examination or justification. ⁴⁹

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Nedzynski, reflecting on his service under Becu at the ICFTU in the 1960s and writing of 'a fine man and a good friend', commented on Becu's aversion to 'details' which made him a poor administrator. ⁵⁰ Becu's lack of interest in the nuts and bolts of administration was certainly very evident in his ITF days but he had the good sense to leave them to an able and dedicated staff. His indifference to detail, however, went beyond house-keeping. He had a General Secretary's responsibility for whatever documents went to the governing bodies but drafts were often approved unread and he sometimes failed to read the final versions too. It was never a great surprise to the staff when Becu spoke and argued at, say, the Executive Committee

against the sense, or even explicit recommendations, of a document he had put to it. From time to time members would let him know that they had noticed the inconsistency but he had a presence and force about him which brushed aside any such pedantry, or so it seemed at the time. ⁵¹

He was a favourite of the American affiliates, 'the great Belgian' to Lyon, ⁵² and to the seafarers' and dockers' affiliates he was their inspirational champion as they built their campaign against flags-of-convenience (see below). He was also committed to the ITF's regional ambitions, the first General Secretary ever to make an extended visit to Africa (see below). Altogether, he was just the man, the Americans decided, to be President of the ICFTU and to put some backbone into what they saw as Oldenbroek's over-cautious response to the Cold War.

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Carew describes how the ICFTU's rules were changed at the ICFTU's Congress in 1953 to facilitate Becu's election and how Oldenbroek then kept the new President 'at arm's length', failed to consult him or to inform him of what he was doing, and so disappointed the Americans' hope of 'cutting ...[him]... down to size'. Though re-elected in 1955, Becu tried to resign in August 1956, only to be prevailed upon by the ICFTU's Executive Board to bear his bruised feelings until the ICFTU Congress in July 1957. ⁵³

It was an experience which Carew believes 'cooled' Becu's once 'friendly' relationship with Oldenbroek ⁵⁴ but, if Tofahrn's notes are to be believed, the relationship had never been very close. Tofahrn recorded that at a private meeting in January 1950 Becu told him that he had never taken up offers to work at the ITF immediately after the war 'because, knowing Oldenbroek, I couldn't have worked with him.' ⁵⁵

They had, indeed, very different personalities and mindsets. Oldenbroek was rational, self-confident and self-possessed to a fault, or so (see above) the admiring but critical Nedzynski saw him (and Asser implied). In contrast, Becu's colleagues and staff within the ITF knew how highly strung he was, how quick to take offence, how ready to suspect disloyalty and how slow then to be dissuaded or reassured. They would also have seen how warm and generous he could be to those he liked and trusted and how he gave everything to his job, with a

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Belgian's appreciation of good food and drink but absolutely no interest in high-living on the ITF's account. His brittle temperament was perhaps the cause of the severe migraines which would leave him in his flat over the ITF offices for days on end, during which he could only be contacted through Thérèse Asser, his personal secretary.

By early 1959, Meany had made up his mind that Oldenbroek had to be ditched from the ICFTU and Becu was his man to replace him. Becu was not ready, however, to stand against Oldenbroek at the ICFTU's Congress in December 1959. Oldenbroek was therefore re-elected by default, but the Congress appointed a high-powered committee to consider re-organizing *inter alia* the 'structures' including the 'officers', in other words ways to get rid of Oldenbroek. They were given six months for the job and 'finally ascertained in May [1960] that Omer Becu was now willing to take the job'. An ICFTU Executive Board meeting at the end of June 1960 decided that the General Secretary's post should be 'declared vacant'. Over the protests of many members and to the distressed consciences of others, Oldenbroek's resignation was prised from him by an alliance of Meany and the ICFTU's President, Arne Geijer of the Swedish LO. Becu replaced him.⁵⁶

Within a very few years, Becu's move to the ICFTU was to prove a personal and professional calamity which Carew has traced and described with evident sympathy.

⁵⁷ But Becu's decline and eventual eclipse are not as relevant to this

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thesis as the messy mismanagement of his departure from the ITF and of the choice of his successor, which was to leave a mark on the life and direction of the ITF through to the 1965 Congress.

The ITF Executive Committee meeting in London on 5 and 6 April 1960 was given a document on the ICFTU's 'problems' arising from its Congress in December 1959,

the biggest being how to dig out the entrenched Oldenbroek. The Congress had asked a committee to come up with a solution and Yates opened the EC's discussion with a report on 'developments within the ICFTU which had indirectly involved [Becu]'. This coy minute was taken to mean that the ICFTU wished Becu to replace Oldenbroek and 'several members' then said that Becu should stay with the ITF. Becu responded that after listening to the members, he 'now felt free to say that he did not envisage leaving the ITF'.⁵⁸

That declaration, Becu was later to insist, had no bearing on his proposal to the same meeting, put perhaps an hour previously without prior notice and not even in writing, that the ITF headquarters should be moved to Brussels. He launched the idea on the back of a letter from the absent Art Lyon calling for the expansion of the ITF's regional activities, which would necessitate the recruitment of more staff. Becu argued that it would be easier to recruit the extra staff in Brussels and it was anyway 'increasingly desirable to be within easy reach of the ICFTU'. The EC, probably sensing that this might be the price of keeping him with the ITF, approved his proposal in principle but asked the Management Committee 'to

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consider the administrative implications'. If the MC found no 'insurmountable difficulties', the proposal would become a formal motion from the Executive Committee to the Congress in July 1960.⁵⁹

It is impossible to be sure why Becu sprang the proposition on the EC. He would have known that his staff argument was nonsense; the ITF had no recruitment problems. The need to be 'within easy reach' of the ICFTU was no more convincing. Brussels was only a couple of hours away by air and, even in those days, immediately accessible by telephone or cable. Could he possibly have been thinking of keeping everyone happy by heading both the ITF *and* the ICFTU from Brussels? (His great hero, Fimmen, had done something of the kind in Amsterdam in the early 1920s, but briefly and disastrously.)

The MC, at that point still made up exclusively of British ⁶⁰ nominees, Becu apart, then had a series of meetings at which the members gave Becu only very grudging ground, for example agreeing that they would not themselves speak against the proposal at the 1960 Congress, only a few weeks away, though the British unions might nevertheless oppose it. But the MC meeting on 24 June 1960 was told by Yates from the chair that it was 'generally known' that Becu was going to the ICFTU anyway, at which the MC decided it was now free openly to oppose the move to Brussels. ⁶¹ The EC too had had enough of it when it met immediately before the 1960 Congress. It decided to withdraw the proposal, thus

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confirming (but not admitting) that the idea had always been tied to Becu's future.⁶²

Becu's appointment to the ICFTU came barely two weeks before the ITF's 1960 Congress from 20 to 30 July in Berne. For the whole of the long first day of its pre-Congress meeting on 18 and 19 July, the EC wrestled with the problem of how Congress could be expected to replace a General Secretary at almost no notice at all. It decided finally, by seven to four, that the task would be beyond it. With the acquiescence of the four dissenters, it would unanimously recommend Congress, 'to waive its right ... to elect the General Secretary ... and instead authorize the new Executive Committee ... to be elected at Congress to appoint an Acting General Secretary ... [to serve until] ... the next Congress.'⁶³

Cousins, as President, put the proposal to Congress but it had almost no support. Greene, on behalf of the British delegation, sank it by insisting that Congress elect a General Secretary and that the ITF also needed an Assistant General Secretary who might be 'suitable to become General Secretary later'.⁶⁴ Congress agreed that the EC should think again,⁶⁵ which it then did late into the night of 22 July. It agreed that the Congress should after all elect a General Secretary and that the EC's recommendation 'should be a person willing to fill the post only for the period until the next Congress'. It also discussed the appointment of 'Assistant General Secretaries' [*sic*] but 'without ... coming to any

final conclusion'. A further late-night session, on 25 July, took a vote on the three potential candidates for the EC's nomination as General Secretary, which Pieter de Vries won by six votes to Lawrie White's four and Hans Imhof's one (more on White and Imhof below). It was then agreed that Congress should be advised to recommend the incoming EC to appoint Imhof and White as Assistant General Secretaries at its first meeting immediately after Congress.⁶⁶

The EC's package was not put to Congress by its spokesman, Fernand Laurent, until the morning of 29 July, the last session of a tired and fractious Congress already in a procedural mess over the bitter fight between Greene and Cousins for the British seat on the EC (see Chapter IV). The Scandinavian group wanted Congress to go straight into an election of a General Secretary and preferred Hans Imhof 'as a temporary caretaker' but time was fast running out and Cousins, from the chair, hurried the delegates along, adding that Imhof was in favour of the EC's recommendation. The EC's proposal, and with it the election of Pieter de Vries, was carried in a card vote easily enough by 3,492,400 to 575,200. A flurry of section and committee business was disposed of and Cousins closed Congress with some acid and defiant comments on the arrogant conduct of the American group (see Chapter IV). He forgot, as almost everyone else did, to mention Becu's departure or to thank him and wish him well.⁶⁷

vii. Pieter de Vries (and Hans Imhof)

Pieter de Vries had managed, in the last hour or so of the 1960 Congress, to say a few words: modest concern at his ability to measure up to the great demands of the job, an appeal to the staff for their support, and a promise to do his best.⁶⁸ He made no mention of any 'caretaker' status and in a sense he had no need to: the General Secretary's term ran constitutionally only from one Congress to the next. Nor did he refer to his age, which Johan Thore of the Swedish Seamen's Union had seized on ('should be enabled to enjoy his later years in peace') in the Congress debate on the General Secretaryship, only a few days after Cousins had publicly wished De Vries a happy sixty-third birthday on 25 July.⁶⁹ No-one is to know, of course, whether his age went for or against him. Thore implied that he was too old for the job, but others might have thought he had the stability and experience needed to tide the ITF over the disruption of Becu's hasty departure. Others still, might simply have been grateful for a 'caretaker', acknowledged or not as such, and for the opportunity to find someone of high calibre for the longer term.

De Vries had certainly been Becu's option for the General Secretaryship in the very limited choices and time left to him once he decided to go to the ICFTU. They were old comrades from the IMMOA days and when De Vries retired at sixty from the presidency of the Dutch Seafarers' and Fishermen's Federation, Becu had been happy to bring him to London as Director of Regional Affairs

(see below). It is very doubtful that he had anything else in mind for him at that point, but in the weeks leading up to the 1960 Congress Becu's nightmare was that Hans Imhof, the Section Secretary for the Railwaymen's and Road Transport Sections, would fall into the General Secretaryship for want of any credible alternative. Imhof will be discussed again below, but at this point it is enough to note that Becu seems to have taken against him from his arrival in late 1956 and had fought off ever more determined attempts by Imhof's supporters (all railwaymen) on the EC to have him promoted to Assistant General Secretary. The last occasion, in April 1960, had left Becu with the slim lead of six to four.⁷⁰

De Vries was not widely known beyond the Seafarers' Section, was no orator and was very unexciting in almost every way. But he had no enemies and was all Becu could offer as a stop-gap whilst those distrustful of Imhof looked for someone able to beat him the next time around. In retrospect, De Vries's election was Becu's last and, given the material, very considerable achievement at the ITF, but it came at a price, for De Vries was saddled with Imhof as one of two Assistant General Secretaries. (The other, Lawrence White, the Section Secretary responsible for the flag-of-convenience campaign, was of much less account – see below).

De Vries was to prove anything but the amiable pensioner happy to help the ITF out of its temporary difficulties, a persona he cultivated and exploited with great

intelligence to disarm and charm. He was a shrewd and steely operator of the General Secretary's authority and influence, from the outset winning (no doubt with Becu's help) Lyon's absolute support and eventually the general approval of Frank Cousins. Within the office he solved all his problems with Imhof and White by leaving them very free to do their sectional duties and by ensuring they had nothing whatever to do with anything else. They had the title and salary of an Assistant General Secretary but remained for all practical purposes Section Secretaries. The ITF Constitution was radically rethought and reshaped in De Vries's first term and neither of them was ever encouraged to offer a suggestion or opinion. The arrival of the Dutch dockers' leader, Reint Laan Jr, as Director of Regional Affairs in April 1961 – 'his salary and conditions being those of an Assistant General Secretary' – put another large and growing area of ITF activity beyond their intervention.⁷¹

There is no first-hand evidence that they ever complained about their treatment. They were apparently ready – Imhof in his mid-forties probably more so than White in his early sixties – to sit De Vries out. But according to Lyon, Imhof was far from acquiescent: 'troublesome and always complaining ... disloyal ... he should never be the General Secretary.' These judgments, delivered to the EC in November 1961, were backed by De Vries. It would indeed be a 'sad day' if Imhof succeeded him, disqualified as he was by 'poor judgment' and being 'easily impressed by weak arguments'. The meeting was made the occasion to

discuss how the 1962 Congress might go about electing a General Secretary and gave De Vries the cue to announce that he was ready to serve another term 'if that was generally, if not unanimously, acceptable' in the hope that a 'suitable successor' could be found in 'two or three years time'. Caught off-guard by this proposition, only Imhof's most committed supporters, Düby and Seibert of the Swiss and German railwaymen, gathered themselves in time to register their dissent to the 'conclusions' of the discussion which proposed the issuing of a circular from the EC to all the affiliates supporting a second term for De Vries.⁷²

Those conclusions were to be confirmed by the next EC meeting in April 1962 some three months before the 1962 Congress in Helsinki, and so they were, without any discussion, on the basis of a two-line reminder in a document devoted to Congress arrangements. The result was a statement in the EC's name pointing to De Vries's 'ability' and 'evident capacity' to carry on 'for a further period' which 'would also provide more opportunity to assess the qualities' of potential successors. He was willing to serve another term if that had 'the obvious consent of a considerable majority'.⁷³

It was a daring move on De Vries's part, a head start on the Imhof camp which had so consistently underestimated him. When Curran from the American NMU asked at the EC meeting immediately before the Congress whether the circular was meant to bind the EC members' organizations, he was assured by the

President, Roger Dekeyzer, that it could not do so and by De Vries that it was an 'expression of the EC's views ... not a recommendation'.⁷⁴ Düby and Seibert, outmanoeuvred and ambushed within the EC, cut their losses and reserved their forces and votes for the Congress itself, where Imhof had already been nominated by Alphonse Tonneaux, the Belgian railwaymen's leader. Tonneaux's first move was to try to add an age limit of sixty-five for the General Secretary to the proposals for constitutional amendments – 'nothing to do with personalities', of course – but that was defeated narrowly and De Vries survived to fight the election proper at the last session of the last day.⁷⁵

Dekeyzer opened the election by reading out the EC's statement, but he dropped the last sentence, which made De Vries's candidature conditional on 'the obvious consent of a considerable majority'. No-one questioned the omission, nor Dekeyzer's claim that the statement was indeed a 'recommendation'. Imhof formally accepted the Belgian railwaymen's nomination and Hogarth of the British seamen nominated White, who could have had no hope of winning but was not yet ready to be written off. At this point Reint Laan strode dramatically down the aisle, bent over Hussein of the Tanganyika Railway African Union and then pointed him to the platform, from where he nominated Laan. For Laan (of whom a little more below), his nomination was a way to get to the microphone for the one memorable speech in a very short debate. He denounced the repetition – 'a cause for shame' - of what he termed the 'circus' at the previous Congress. If the

EC statement were accepted 'the battle of succession would start up immediately' and the incoming EB should 'fix a date' for the end of De Vries's term. Whatever that meant, his contribution provoked some angry catcalls. ⁷⁶

De Vries scraped home by 1,622,600 to Imhof's 1,588,100. The vote of one relatively small affiliate could have overturned him and the 34,000 'abstentions' were only 500 shy of his winning margin. White attracted a hefty 523,800, but Laan's 26,600 was so low that even his former union could not have voted for him. De Vries acknowledged that he had not received the 'obvious consent' which he had seemed so recently to require, but re-election was a remarkable feat by any reckoning for the 'caretaker', and even more so because his biggest supporter, the American RLEA, had had serious internal problems which lost it some 390,000 votes from its strength just three years previously. He gave the Congress his 'solemn undertaking' that this really would be his last term but his declaration that he 'would do his utmost' to find a successor 'to whom the ITF could be safely entrusted' confirmed his unrelenting determination to block Imhof's way. ⁷⁷

The last 'term' on which he then set out, was a year longer as a result of the constitutional move to a triennial Congress, giving him three years to find the 'white knight' who would save the ITF from Imhof. Had he once believed that Laan might be his man? Surely the president of the Dutch NBV's dockers'

section would not have left Rotterdam, where he was leader of the dominant Labour Party on the city council, for anything less than a clear run at the top job? But whatever, if anything, De Vries had led Laan to expect, the two never got on. As Laan's performance at the 1962 Congress demonstrated, he was by then bitterly disappointed and no longer cared to conceal it.

De Vries, however, thought he had seen the ITF's salvation in Fernando Azaña, the director of the ITF's Latin American activities. Lyon had significantly mentioned his name when musing on 'young people' who might be General Secretary material at the EC in November 1961 and Azaña made a huge impact at the 1962 Congress.⁷⁸ But he fell spectacularly from grace early in 1964 (see below) and the best De Vries could do in the short time left to him was to make desultory overtures to Lester Zosel, the international representative of BRAC, a desperate last resort which came to nothing when Zosel withdrew his candidature 'for personal reasons', those being either that he knew he had no chance or, much less likely, that he knew he was unfit.⁷⁹ Imhof, meanwhile, bided his time, concerned firstly to retain the very substantial support base revealed in the 1962 vote and then to persuade those he had still to win over that they really had nothing to fear. He was elected unopposed and unanimously at the 1965 Congress on the EC's recommendation.⁸⁰

The thesis period effectively ends with the 1965 Congress for reasons explained

in the Introduction and a large measure of hindsight needs to be applied to the first four months or so of Imhof's tenure to the end of 1965 before they yield up evidence of the coming disaster he was to suffer (and the ITF escape). When the 1968 Congress declined to re-elect him, it vindicated the instincts and judgments of Becu and De Vries more quickly and fully than they could ever have anticipated.

viii. Tofahrn, Imhof and White

Paul Tofahrn has already featured in this chapter in the pages on Oldenbroek and Becu. Oldenbroek simply told Tofahrn he was not General Secretary material, swatted him aside and then paid him next to no mind. The altogether more insecure and explosive Becu saw Tofahrn as a threat to his own authority which he tried at the 1952 Congress to buttress by removing the Assistant General Secretary's privilege of election by Congress (see above). There was indeed more than procedure at issue in that proposal. Election by Congress *did* confer a symbolic status, as Tofahrn's supporters never denied, even when protesting that he had always acknowledged the General Secretary's precedence.

But, at bottom, the formalities of their relationship were incidental to their inflammatory incompatibility in almost every respect. For Tofahrn the final, decisive humiliation came in a clash, not over high policy or any matter of great

international importance but over airline tickets for their return to London from a General Council meeting in Helsinki in June 1955. Tofahrn's flight was via Amsterdam and Becu's via Copenhagen. Becu demanded that they exchange tickets. Tofahrn 'mildly' protested. Becu shouted back, 'You shut your trap and give me your ticket'. 'I did both', Tofahrn noted.

The Helsinki meeting had already upset him when, 'without a word ... before or after' he was replaced as the minute-taker by 'a member of the staff specially brought from London'. Two weeks after the ticket incident a meeting of the MC was held ('only three doors away') without any notification to him, though the rules provided for him to attend. Becu, he concluded, was determined 'to depose me in fact if not constitutionally'.⁸¹ The International Federation of Public and Civil Service Unions (soon to become the Public Services International (PSI) and referred to as such from now on) was in urgent need of a full-time General Secretary who would put new life and purpose into a rudderless and apathetic body. Kummernuss (see p158), a powerful influence in the PSI, gave Tofahrn his backing and he became General Secretary of the PSI in December 1955.⁸²

Tofahrn left the ITF some six months before the 1956 Congress. Becu somehow forgot a promise he had made to the Railwaymen's Section Conference held during the Congress that a tribute to Tofahrn's services would be paid before the full Congress in plenary session. When the time came, he did not mention

Tofahrn and Congress quickly moved on. ⁸³

It was an ungrateful end to a long and devoted career in the ITF. By then fifty-five, Tofahrn had been born in Malmédy, just the Belgian side of the frontier with Germany. His first jobs were on the German and Belgian railways and his first trade union positions (from 1921 to 1927) were with the largely autonomous railwaymen's section of the Belgian public service workers' federation (*Centrale Générale des Services Publics – CGSP*). He spent from 1928 to 1931 with the ITF in Amsterdam helping in the Railwaymen's Section and was elected its Section Secretary at the ITF's 1938 Congress. ⁸⁴

The Tofahrn papers ⁸⁵ are very revealing. He wrote compulsively: hundreds of pages, mostly handwritten, of diary entries, notes of meetings, impressions of people he had just met or of books he had just read, or of ideas (usually political or philosophical) which had just come to his mind or notice. He was born in Belgium's small German-speaking area but rarely wrote in German. During the war and well into the 1940s his private language of preference was clearly French but he was using English more and more by the 1950s, and wrote both with care and elegance.

Tofahrn and his friend Max Zwalf, the research officer (see below), were seen as the ITF's 'egg-heads'. That indeed was what Zwalf was paid to be. An

Assistant General Secretary was expected, however, to be more than that. For all his many outstanding intellectual qualities, he was widely seen as indecisive, as all talk and no action, and so aware of the many sides to most questions that he could never see which one to take. There is no way now to test these judgments, or prejudices, but the PSI was happy to have him, he served them well, retiring fulfilled as he would never have been if he had clung on in the ITF.

Tofahrn's functions as Section Secretary for the railwaymen and road transport workers were given to Hans Imhof by the EC immediately after the 1956 Congress. A former railwayman, he had been nominated by the Swiss Railwaymen's Federation (SEV), though his experience as a trade union official had been as Basle secretary for the Swiss Public Service Workers' Union (VPOD) for some nine years. German was his first language, his French was fluent and he had very good English.⁸⁶ The EC added a rider to his appointment. He was succeeding Tofahrn in his Section Secretary functions but no more: 'the question of the Assistant General Secretaryship will be reconsidered at a later date in the light of experience'.⁸⁷

That 'later date' came when the EC meeting in November 1959 considered a letter from the Railwaymen's Section Chairman, the Austrian Richard Freund, asking the EC, on behalf of the Railwaymen's Section Committee, to consider making Imhof an Assistant General Secretary. After a 'general discussion' it was

agreed to put the matter off until the next meeting, ⁸⁸ which took place in April 1960 and was the occasion for Becu's commitment to resist the ICFTU's overtures (see above). Perhaps it was the uncertainty which that discussion unexpectedly attached to the ITF's future leadership which made it much harder to resist the railwaymen's proposal and it was only by six votes to four that it was agreed after a 'considerable' discussion (of which not even a summary was put on record), to postpone 'further consideration of the appointment of one or more Assistant General Secretaries until after the 1960 Congress'. ⁸⁹

Imhof's progress from then on has already been sketched in the sections of this chapter on Becu and De Vries. There is no clue on paper to what Becu's objections to Imhof's advancement really were. Perhaps he simply saw him as another Tofahrn. Imhof's main promoters were indeed the European railwaymen's unions, which had historically formed a distinct and sometimes awkward bloc within the ITF and had stood by Tofahrn. Becu wanted Imhof to get on with his sectional duties and bother him only when necessary, but Freund's letter would have shattered any hope that Imhof had purely sectional ambitions. On a personal level, Becu and Imhof had little in common. Becu, a fine raconteur, loved to chew the fat, especially with his old seafarer chums (such as De Vries). Imhof socialized with members of the staff and was a generous host, but he had to work at personal relationships, whereas Becu managed them quite effortlessly with people he liked and trusted. ⁹⁰ Their working habits too

could not have been more different. Imhof relished the detail from which Becu recoiled and his reports were often so long that they created real capacity problems within the ITF's typing and translation services. The railwaymen in particular liked Imhof's methodical, exhaustive treatment of their often complicated but unexciting concerns.

As for De Vries, his opinion of Imhof would certainly have been influenced initially by Becu but by 1960 he had his own reason to thwart him when he emerged as a potential rival. He had more reason still in 1962 when, as an actual contender, Imhof ran him so close. The contrasts in their personalities were as marked as those between Becu and Imhof but of a different kind. Imhof was as intense as De Vries was relaxed, as dogmatic as De Vries was open-minded. But time was always on Imhof's side. De Vries's first impressions of him may have been second-hand but by the time he knew Imhof better, and had what he believed was some basis for his low regard of him, Imhof was the only candidate left.

De Vries retired with a sigh.

Whatever the now unanswerable questions about the Imhof episode, his politics cannot at that time have been a factor. He may have belonged to the Swiss Social Democratic Party and voted for it, as most leading officials of the mainstream Swiss

movement did, but he never seemed to be politically engaged, other than to be vigorously anti-communist. And even that conviction might have

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had a personal edge to it. He had left his position with the Basle district of the VPOD 'at his own request' in September 1953 and had been self-employed, mostly as a machine-tool salesman, until he joined the ITF almost three years later.⁹¹ The President of the VPOD at the time, and for many more years, was Max Arnold, a greatly respected figure and a phenomenon, being a Swiss Communist. It is possible that Imhof and Arnold had been on bad terms and that his departure from the VPOD had not been as voluntary as he claimed.

The last and least important of the Assistant General Secretaries was Lawrence White, who was seconded to the ITF in October 1952 from the British Navigators' and Engineer Officers' Union (NEOU) as a 'Special Officer' with responsibility for the conduct of the ITF's campaign against flags-of-convenience (f-o-c). That temporary arrangement lasted for almost seven years until August 1959 when the EC agreed that he should fill a vacancy as Section Secretary of the Civil Aviation Section, whilst keeping his Special Officer duties.⁹²

White had been to sea with the modest rank of radio officer but he had a very grand, senatorial manner, more the bearing of a ship's master, even an admiral. It often proved very effective when applied to f-o-c shipowners but was not always

appreciated by his colleagues. He knew very little about the ITF beyond his immediate responsibilities and showed little interest in it, an ignorance and indifference that he carried over to his position as an Assistant General

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Secretary when he became part of the 1960 Congress package deal (see above) on the General Secretaryship. He would have known that he had no serious chance of being elected General Secretary but also that he had enough support among the maritime unions never to make a fool of himself if he ran. It was his way of reminding the ITF, and General Secretaries particularly, that he was not to be taken lightly. He retired at sixty-five in 1966.

ix. Section Secretaries and 'staff'

The six persons who, with Oldenbroek and Tofahrn, made up the secretariat in 1945 had all come over to England from Amsterdam. *Max (Meyer) Zwalf*, the ITF's research officer, was brought to the ITF by Fimmen in 1931. A Dutch political economist and historian by training and vocation, he was firmly left-wing by conviction and a thinker, theoretician and writer of real depth and force. He died suddenly in November 1954 at the age of fifty-three.⁹³ *Thérèse Asser* joined the ITF in 1923 as a translator-interpreter. Her native Dutch was used less than her almost faultless English, French, German and Spanish, with less frequent call made on her very good Italian and Swedish. By 1950 she was the General Secretary's private and (very) confidential secretary, working often on her own initiative and acting as his

gate-keeper and secret-keeper. Until 1953, she was simultaneously the secretariat's travel arranger and 'bookkeeper'. Tiny, positively fragile and worn but ageless, she had the last word, if she wanted it, on just about every aspect of the ITF's headquarters' administration but

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assiduously avoided any intervention in policy issues, keeping her views (which she certainly had) strictly to herself. She retired in October 1959. *Lina Kant* had studied Arabic at university and came to the ITF from Germany in 1926 as an interpreter/translator. Very blunt, combative and quite fearless, she smuggled ITF anti-Nazi propaganda into Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. Legend had it that she hid the contraband in her underwear. The Nazi SS department devoted to researching and combating resistance paid her the tribute of inclusion in their 'Black Book', a list of British residents to be given priority in the rounding up and disposal of opponents when the Germans invaded Great Britain.⁹⁴ She ended her forty-two years with the ITF in 1968 as the 'chief shorthand-typist'.

These and the other members of the ex-Amsterdam group gave a homogeneity to the staff that was a source of great strength in the immediate post-war years. They had all been committed to the ITF's anti-Fascist campaign of the 1930s (several of them even earlier) and so had a heightened sense of what the war was about, of the rightness of the ITF's part in it and of the necessity for the ITF to play a leading part in building on the victory. They were also very conscious of their personal and

extraordinary good fortune at having escaped the horrors of Nazi occupation and at being able during the war to make their contributions in relative safety and comfort – and all the while paid respectably for their efforts.

The Czech *Vojcek (or Adalbert) Klatil* had come to the ITF in 1930 as a Slavonic language specialist and went on to retire in 1964 as office manager, as handy

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with a hammer or screwdriver as at organizing ITF Congresses. The Irish-Dutch *Robert (Bob) Santley* had the longest service of all, joining the ITF at the age of nineteen in 1924 and retiring at sixty-five in 1970. He had become Oldenbroek's personal assistant in 1939 and was subsequently a 'section assistant' to the maritime sections from 1946 until July 1958 when belated recognition came with his appointment as Section Secretary to the Seafarers' Section.⁹⁵ Modest, kind and gentle, with deep interests in chess, higher mathematics and the Roman Catholic church (which rebuffed him as a re-married divorcee until the last rites), he was an unlikely actor on the often rough and sometimes bloody stage of the ITF Seafarers' and Dockers' Sections. But he was liked and trusted by everyone, just the man to find that elusive consensus or a *modus vivendi* when things seemed likely to fall apart. He died in 1972.

The Amsterdam generation was bound over time to fade away and the ITF's staff numbers were set to grow as its membership and activities expanded. By the end of 1953, the ex-Amsterdamers accounted for just six of the twenty-four

staff.⁹⁶ The first senior newcomer was *Frédéric Strauss*, who arrived in October 1946 as Technical Officer for the Railwaymen's Section. He came with Oldenbroek's strong backing and joined him at the ICFTU in 1951. There is almost nothing in the ITF archives about the man or his antecedents but two members of the ICFTU staff in the early 1950s, John Vanderveken (later General Secretary) and André Dewil (later Head of Finance), remember him well as

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operating a reign of terror, Oldenbroek's 'eyes and ears ... unconditionally loyal to the boss and disloyal to all others' (Vanderveken) and a 'cursing, shouting bastard' (Dewil). Dewil understands that he had emigrated from Vienna to Britain before the war and had worked as a railway technician of some kind in Scotland. What no-one recalls is any claim to trade union experience or any evident interest in trade unionism as such. He gave Ken Golding (see below) to believe that he had been an officer in the British army, specializing in railway operations, but there is always the possibility that his original contact with Oldenbroek came through Oldenbroek's links with Allied intelligence. It is interesting that Becu, who had also been very active in those circles, used him as his personal representative at the outset of the Mediterranean Vigilance Committee activities (see Chapter V). No doubt to widespread delight, Strauss came to a bad end in 1965 when he was dismissed from the ICFTU as its Finance Control Officer after it was discovered that he was a founder and shareholder of a surveyor's firm which did work for the ICFTU. He

became a consultant of some kind and then disappeared as mysteriously as he arrived.⁹⁷

A second and much more positive arrival from the post-war generation was *Ken Golding*, who joined the ITF in 1948 at the age of twenty-four as a 'research assistant' to Zwalf. Like all but a tiny proportion of lower middle-class Englishmen of his generation, he had not been to university but he came with fluent Spanish, French and German. Within a very few years he added

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proficiency in just about every other language that was used to any extent in the ITF and a good knowledge of others (Finnish for example) which were very marginal indeed. He turned out documents, articles, speeches, memos and letters at dizzy speed, always lucidly and always on time. But his greatest asset was his quick mastery of almost any brief and he became the indispensable specialist in the unforeseen and the out of the ordinary, for example standing in at no notice at all as temporary secretary to the Civil Aviation Section, looking after Becu on the ITF's first exploratory sortie into Africa and effectively leading an on-the-spot enquiry into the scandalous goings-on in the ITF's Lima Office in 1964 (see below). He became the 'research and publications officer' in 1955, succeeding Zwalf, but was not given the formal status of an 'officer' until late 1960.⁹⁸ He left the ITF in 1967 to become the chief industrial officer of the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) but returned as head of publications in 1968. Perhaps the best measure of

the very high quality of his output is to be gained from his historical writings on the ITF's early years. They may lack some academic formality in referencing but in every other way are unrivalled. ⁹⁹

x. Regional organization

The early stages of the ITF's activities in the 'regions' – Africa, Asia and Latin America, or what was then known as the 'undeveloped' world – will be sketched in Chapter IV and again very briefly in Chapter V, with the observation that

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the scene of the most intense East-West international trade union rivalry moved in the early 1950s from Europe to the rapidly de-colonized 'regions'. The early perception among the ITSs of regional activities as being 'political', potentially vast in their demands on personnel and money and strictly long-term in their return in terms of affiliates (and fees), led them initially to look to the ICFTU for a lead.

Oldenbroek gave it within months of his election as the ICFTU's first General Secretary, reporting to the ITF Congress in July 1950 that the ICFTU already had a mission visiting Asia and was planning its first conference in 'the Americas'.¹⁰⁰ But building on the prospect of a concerted advance by the international movement into the 'undeveloped' world – deciding who should do what, who should pay and how much, the mechanics of 'co-ordination', the degree of autonomy of the various executants – proved to be a very long, difficult and often disputatious process, which

illustrates some of the general tensions and competing priorities inherent in the structure of the international trade union movement. (The relationship between the ICFTU and the ITSs and other aspects of the international movement's structures are also discussed in Chapter VI.)

Oldenbroek told an ICFTU-ITS meeting in October 1950 that the ITSs 'should contribute one third of the cost' of the ICFTU's work to develop a regional machinery and an ITS General Conference in December 1950 responded by

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recommending each ITS to contribute £1 to the ICFTU for every thousand of the ITS's affiliated membership. The ITF's GC reacted in October 1951 by appealing to its affiliates for voluntary contributions of that order, but also decided that only half should go to the ICFTU and half should be 'retained for the ITF's own very considerable work in this [regional] field'.¹⁰¹ Less than two years later, in July 1953, the GC decided that even a half was too much and on the EC's recommendation ceased payments to the ICFTU altogether. Harry Lundeberg of the American SIU strongly supported that move: the ITF 'was independent and should do its own work'.¹⁰² The two elements – of money and of what Lundeberg characterized as independence – were to be salient in all the false starts, fierce arguments, reconciliations, and any number of stalled initiatives which were to follow in the vain search for a tidy and workable co-ordination of the ICFTU's and the ITS's regional efforts.

When its regional activities started in earnest, in the early 1950s, the ITF relied at first for funds on voluntary contributions, the heaviest by far being from the RLEA. The 1958 Congress, however, adopted a new affiliation fee structure that would include substantial allocations to the Edo Fimmen Free Trade Union Fund (the 'Edo Fimmen Fund'), which the EC fixed in December 1958 at 25% of the annual affiliation fee income.¹⁰³ The allocation fell to 20% for 1962-64 when problems within the ITF's American affiliates (see Chapter IV) put the General Fund's income under unforeseen pressure, but the commitment to the

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ring-fencing of regional funds was maintained to the end of the period (and long after it).

Two further sources of funding emerged towards the end of the period. The introduction and extraordinary growth of the ICFTU's International Solidarity Fund (ISF) from 1956 to its peaks in 1963 (income of some £955,806) and 1964 (expenditure of some £882,163)¹⁰⁴ transformed the ITS-ICFTU relationship and helped provoke the controversies (see below) over the 'ITS Liaison Office' in Geneva. For the ITF, however, the ISF was a very congenial source of substantial funding. The ITF argued, and the ICFTU implicitly conceded, that since the ISF's money came from national centres which invariably included a strong contingent of transport workers' unions, the ITF had a claim to the ISF's support for its regional

projects. By the end of the period a second source of funding had emerged in the shape of assistance from national centres, the first benefit to the ITF being the £17,945 which came from Sweden over the period from 1962 to 1964 at the behest of its Swedish affiliates. None of that money was earmarked by the donors and the ITF was free to apply it as it thought best. The 'challenge of bilateralism', as Carew termed it, when national donors would expect to have the final say in how their money was used, had still to come.¹⁰⁵

The income, expenditure and sources of the ITF's regional activities funds are set out in Table 9.

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The ITF was to find that coming to an arrangement directly with the ICFTU over funding was far easier than agreeing with the other ITSs on how they all, as a body, should deal with the ICFTU on ISF funds and their distribution. The ITSs based in Geneva (the great majority) promoted the establishment of an 'ITS Liaison Committee' in 1961 which wanted the ISF to give the ITSs a bloc allocation and then leave them to divide it up among themselves at an ITS General Conference. An 'ITS Liaison Office' was set up to administer that and other co-ordination efforts.

Nedzynski recalls that the idea of a bloc allocation had once appealed to Becu as General Secretary of the ITF but, as General Secretary of the ICFTU, he yielded to Nedzynski's insistence that the ISF deal with applications from individual ITSs on their merits. Becu convinced himself that the Geneva group had broader intentions

to set up some kind of rival force to the ICFTU. True or not, Nedzynski's judgment is that the ICFTU's relations with the Geneva-based ITSs were 'poisoned' and De Vries backed Becu by persuading the ITF EC in April 1962 to withdraw all support from the ITS Liaison Committee. It was a heavy blow to the Geneva group and the ITS Liaison Office was eventually wound up in September 1965, having long lost any real influence or purpose.¹⁰⁶

For all the efforts directed to co-ordination and divisions of labour, the ITF in practice ploughed its own regional furrows. The 1956 Congress asked the EC to set up a special sub-committee 'to work out a basic programme of activities'

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and it did so in January 1957. What then became a 'standing' committee of the EC, was mandated to 'apply itself systematically to ... intensifying and extending the regional activities'. In December 1958, the EC designated it as the Regional Affairs Committee (RAC) and scheduled it to meet immediately before every EC meeting. Its 'main tasks' were to 'examine requests for [financial] assistance' and 'to direct the activities of the regional office and sub-offices', including 'the setting up [of] fully fledged regional organizations.'¹⁰⁷

That last objective was probably no more than warm words at the time, without much thought given either to its structural implications for the ITF as a whole or to what exactly was on offer. As will be seen below (p99), when it came to taking tentative

steps towards 'regional organization' in Asia, 'fully fledged' was not to be countenanced. Nor did the membership of the RAC in its early years signify any great faith in those who actually represented the regions. The likes of Lyon and Cousins gave the RAC a lot of weight, but it was not until late 1960 that the EC agreed to give the co-opted members of the EC from the regions (see above) the right to sit in on RAC meetings where they could observe, but not vote. By then, however, the RAC had only two years to run. The first full meeting of the new and far more representative Executive Board decided in November 1962 that the RAC was no longer needed.¹⁰⁸

The first 'Director of Regional Affairs', Ray Coutts, was appointed in September 1957 with a general brief to promote and look after the ITF's regional activities.

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Seconded from the American Train Dispatchers' Association (ATDA) and Lyon's nominee, he was recalled to the USA within months to take over his union when its President died suddenly.¹⁰⁹ His two successors, Pieter de Vries and Reint Laan Jr, have both been discussed above in other contexts and neither served for any length of time in this particular post. When De Vries became General Secretary he decided he would cover regional affairs himself.

The ITF's standard procedure, taking a lead from the ICFTU, was to establish a physical presence in a region by basing a representative there, usually backed by a very modest office. The first examples, however, had specific sectoral objectives.

George Reed of the British NUS arrived in Singapore in March 1948 to help Asian seafarers' unions secure recruitment and engagement systems that were clean of corruption. Seafarers' interests also prompted the opening of a Regional Information Office in Bombay early in 1949, directed part-time by D. Mungat, General Secretary of the MUI, the Indian seafaring officers' union. ¹¹⁰

The first attempt to establish a general regional presence followed a visit by Becu and the Spanish (exiled) member of the EC, Trifón Gómez, to Cuba in August 1951, when they arranged the opening of a 'Latin American Subsecretariat' in Havana early in 1952. The timing was not good. Very soon afterwards, the dictator, Fulgencio Batista, seized power and his regime quickly made the office's work impossible. The EC decided in February 1953 to close it. ¹¹¹

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As the funds increased and the organizational and political imperatives became more pressing, the ITF's regional effort became more strategic and lost its sectoral emphasis. It had a sad setback, however, in Latin America when Gómez collapsed and died in October 1955 a few days before the start of an ITF Latin American Conference in Mexico City. As the ITF's first regional representative, he had opened an ITF office there six months previously. Lorenzo Martinez, the ITF secretariat's Spanish translator/interpreter was left in Mexico City to direct the office 'temporarily' and the conference approved the setting up of a 'Regional Office Consultative Council'. ¹¹²

Meanwhile, the first ITF Asian Regional Conference had been held in Tokyo in April 1955, mustering representatives from twenty-six unions (mostly non-affiliates). The conference called for 'the establishment of an Asian office with a view to creating an Asian regional organization' and the EC approved the proposal within weeks, helped by an offer of furnished accommodation in the Tokyo headquarters of the Japanese National Railway Workers' Union (*Kokuro*). The ITF Asian Regional Office was opened in Tokyo in November 1955, in the charge of Joviano (Joe) Soares, a former official of the Indian MUJ who had succeeded Mungat at the ITF Bombay office. ¹¹³

Africa, where the ITF was most weakly represented, was the last of the regions to have attention. It began with a mission to West, Central and Southern Africa

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by Becu, with Ken Golding as his aide, early in 1957 – the first time an ITF General Secretary had made an official visit to the continent. The experience, particularly his first-hand encounters with Rhodesian and South African racism, clearly made a very deep impression on him. The EC approved the establishment of an ITF African Office in Lagos, under the 'honorary' direction of Michael Labinjo, the Nigerian who represented Africa as a co-opted member of the EC. It opened for business early in 1959. ¹¹⁴

And so by 1960, the ITF had bases in all three regions, albeit very small, commonly of just the one regional representative with minimal office help. The representatives' first duty was to seek out the transport workers' unions in their region and to make contact with as many of them as possible. Those that measured up generally to the ITF's ideas of what constituted a genuine and free union (many did not) would be offered its help and guidance if they wanted it. Though affiliation was not a priority, applications were welcomed. The regional offices and the representatives became part listening-stations, part clinics, part facilitators and part filters. By the end of the period they were increasingly engaged in devising and organizing trade union training programmes and seminars, nationally and regionally.

The location of the offices and the personnel were to change periodically as circumstances or convenience dictated. The Asian regional office was moved

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from Tokyo, expensive and geographically inconvenient, to Singapore in July 1959, leaving Tokyo with a purely Japanese Office. Soares, who had also directed the ICFTU's Singapore Office, left in 1963 and was succeeded by Donald U'ren, the General Secretary of the Railwaymen's Union of Malaya (RUM), at which point the regional office was taken to Kuala Lumpur.¹¹⁵

De Vries visited Lagos in November 1959 and 'investigated certain events involving Brother Labinjo and the Nigerian TUC'. The 'events' were never elucidated, but were serious enough for Labinjo to be asked to resign immediately as ITF representative and from the EC. It was not until February 1961 that a new representative was found in Emile Laflamme, a local official of the American sheet metal workers' union (which had members in the railroad workshops and belonged to the RLEA). Born and brought up in a small French-speaking community in New England, he was expected to cover the hitherto largely neglected Francophone Africa as well as 'West Africa'.¹¹⁶ A young African-American, Walter Townsend, a member of the American Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, was asked in September 1961 to carry out an 'extended tour' of East and Central Africa, Aden, Somalia and Liberia. His appointment as the ITF's representative for East and Central Africa was confirmed in July 1962 and he worked out of Nairobi without office help until he decided to return to the United States in May 1965.¹¹⁷

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Lorenzo Martinez endured his 'temporary' posting in Mexico City for four years, but it was literally a life-threatening place for a middle-aged man with a heart condition. Much loved and respected by his colleagues in the Secretariat, the Socialist veteran of the Spanish civil war returned to London at the end of 1959 and retired. He had been given some relief with the appointment in November 1958 of a young American, Bob Houke, as a representative in 'southern' Latin America, working from

Montevideo (but without an office). But Houke decided he did not want to succeed Martinez and gave notice of his resignation in August 1960. ¹¹⁸

De Vries proposed, and the MC agreed, that Francisco (Fernando) Azaña Zugazagoitia, the ITF's Spanish translator-interpreter should go to Lima, Peru, as the ITF's representative and set up a regional office there. When exactly Fernando Azaña came to the ITF remains, appropriately, a mystery. His appointment escapes mention (almost certainly a simple oversight) in the listings of the Secretariat in the Congress Reports on Activities and routine staff appointments were not always reported to the MC, though formally they should have been. However, he did not arrive before February 1959 (as will shortly be confirmed) and he is named as a member of the Secretariat team at the 1960 Congress. Even at the earlier end of that range, his time in London before his departure to Lima was short, but long enough for his colleagues to be won over by the warmth of his huge personality and to be astounded at the speed,

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accuracy and elegance of his translations. All that was first known of him was that he had been working as a translator for the British government's Central Office of Information but he soon filled in the background. He was a nephew of Manuel Azaña, the last President of the Spanish Republic, had escaped from Spain in 1939, had joined the South African Air Force and had become almost the personal pilot of the American 'Vinegar Joe' General Stillwell in the Burma campaign of 1942-43. He

always insisted he would spurn Spanish citizenship and never return to Spain until democracy was restored. His war service had earned him the right to live in Great Britain as a stateless person and to travel on a British Home Office travel document. He had earned his living as a test pilot of military aircraft for Latin American governments after the war until his girth (which was immense) made it impossible to squeeze him into cockpits. ¹¹⁹

Within three months of his arrival in Lima he had organized in March 1961 a very successful regional conference, hyperbolically reported one month later in the *ITF Journal*, together with an extraordinarily gushing 'Profile' ('...easy to use superlatives about Fernando, because so many of them are justified'). ¹²⁰

The Report on Activities to the 1962 Congress claimed 'an unprecedented expansion' in the ITF's Latin American activities and 'the greater part' of it was 'to be ascribed to [his] untiring efforts'. At the Congress itself, he spoke four times, extraordinary prominence for a member of the secretariat and even more extraordinary for his having actually moved an emergency resolution on behalf of

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the EC. He was a Congress hero, defying the *golpistas*, the Latin American military coup-makers, to do their worst. ¹²¹

De Vries had begun to think of him as a possible solution to his Imhof problem and the idea had already survived a serious and unexpected test. On

8 February 1962, the Argentinian Ambassador in London had a letter delivered by hand to De Vries, asking whether the ITF's Fernando Azaña was the same Fernando Azaña whom the embassy 'Office of the Air Attaché' had dismissed in February 1959 'for fraud and falsification'. The question, he explained, was relevant since the ITF was currently involved in an industrial action against an Argentinian ship. De Vries asked Azaña for his comments and, though it took him weeks to give them, they so satisfied De Vries that he wrote to the Ambassador on 10 April 1962 to say that he stood by him: Azaña may have been foolish but had been punished enough by the effect and shame of his dismissal. Azaña's defence is nowhere on record and it is impossible to judge whether it justified De Vries's response. No more was ever heard from the embassy. The military coup which deposed President Frondizi at the end of March 1962 would anyway have given them other priorities.¹²²

Azaña's Congress triumph would subsequently have turned De Vries's mind once more to Azaña's advancement, but the only written reference to the

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possibility came when it was again in doubt. If you want to reach 'the very top', De Vries wrote to Azaña on 1 August 1963, 'the point of no return [agreeing to run for General Secretary in 1965] is getting closer'. But if De Vries was to help him, he needed to know what was going on in Latin America and communications had almost completely broken down: one letter and six cables in three months, no report on

activities since December 1962 and no accounts for the first quarter of 1963. They would have to move the office if that was the only way to improve communications.¹²³

But communications did not improve at all and by the end of the year 'rumours of financial mismanagement' in Lima had reached De Vries, who put 'a list of questions' to Azaña. He was still waiting for an answer when, on 7 February 1964, Azaña was expelled from Peru on the general allegation of creating 'disruption'. De Vries hastily organized an ITF mission, consisting of Hans Düby, the ITF's Vice President; Rudy Faupl, the International Representative of the American Machinists (IAM) and a member of the ILO Governing Body; Herminio Alonso, the Argentinian member of the EB; and Ken Golding as secretary and interpreter. A first stop in Washington DC allowed for consultations with the American State Department and a meeting with the Peruvian ambassador, both confirming that the expulsion by the ruling junta was a political act (the ambassador thought it was 'probably' because Azaña was a 'communist'). Azaña, whom the mission met in Panama City, was convinced that his

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expulsion was in reprisal for his denunciation of the military coup which had annulled the result of the 1962 elections. (By 1964, Peru in fact had an elected President, Belaúnde Terry, but military influence could never be discounted.) The mission's general conclusion, confirmed by the Peruvian affiliates, was that there were no justifiable political reasons for Azaña's expulsion. But it also established that Azaña had indeed recklessly used and misappropriated ITF funds, dabbling in a variety of

private enterprises and indulgences (bull-fighting especially) at the ITF's expense or financed from loans taken on the strength of its name. It also discovered incidentally that he had travelled on a Spanish passport and was on good terms with the Spanish ambassador. ¹²⁴

Azaña resigned before De Vries could use the authority he had from the MC to dismiss him. He was not heard of again for several years until the ITF was advised that he had died in a run-down London hotel, where he had worked as the night manager. The Lima office was taken over by Joaquín (Jack) Otero, a young and very energetic Hispanic American, a member of the American railway clerks (BRAC) who had been working for the ITF in Brazil. He was confirmed as Azaña's successor by the EB in June 1964, but only after 'considerable discussion' in which Alonso was also proposed, presumably by the second Latin American member, Humberto Hernandez of Venezuela. Alonso and Hernandez would have accounted for the two votes against Otero and, though they did not say so, they would have shared the deep regret of most Latin American affiliates

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that the EB had not recognized that Azaña's fecklessness was a small price to pay for his inspirational leadership.¹²⁵

One general question remains in this inevitably concise review of regional structures, namely the progress made during the period towards the creation of the 'fully-fledged

regional organizations' envisaged by the EC in December 1958 (see p89). Two years later, the ITF's second Asian regional conference, held in Kuala Lumpur in November 1960, decided that 'creating consultative and advisory bodies at regional or sub-regional level' would be one way to 'intensify' the ITF's Asian activities and asked the EC 'urgently' to consider that step. The EC meeting in April 1961 saw the 'obvious merit' of asking for no more than an 'advisory' body, noting that the ICFTU had had 'considerable' problems setting the terms of reference of its regional bodies, with demands for regional autonomy from one side and the 'insistence' of the ICFTU governing bodies from the other on retaining their 'ultimate authority' over regional 'actions or decisions'. More positively, an 'Asian Advisory Committee (AAC)' could be seen as giving the Asian affiliates a say in the ITF's affairs that better reflected the significance of their actual, rather than 'paid-up' membership (see above). Here was a way to satisfy the Asian affiliates' desire for some kind of formal regional voice, whilst keeping the process under the control of the EC, which would appoint the AAC's six 'ordinary' members from among the Asian affiliates' nominations. Furthermore, the ITF's Asian representative would be the AAC's secretary and

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the Asian member of the EC would be a member of the AAC *ex officio*. The AAC's terms of reference would simply be 'to advise or make recommendations to the Executive Committee on any matters concerning the ITF's Asian affiliates, either individually or collectively'. ¹²⁶

The AAC met twice before the end of the period: in Tokyo in April 1962 and in Manila in February 1964. The Asian representatives at the ITF's 1965 Congress demanded a meeting with the Secretariat to discuss 'ways and means of making the Asian Advisory Committee a more effective body' but they are recorded only as having put forward nominations for consideration in the impending review of the membership. They were given no warning of what the new EB would have in mind in November 1965: that the Asian affiliates should make 'special payments' towards the expenses of the AAC's 'ordinary' members – and should make them retroactively towards the Manila meeting. It was an approach hard to square with the assurance circularized a few weeks previously to the Asian affiliates, few of which could afford to pay affiliation fees at the standard rate, that the ITF's 'aim' was 'to gradually increase its [the AAC's] importance to the point where it can become a true regional organization similar, for example, in function and scope to the regional organizations of the ICFTU'. Perhaps the assumption was that the Japanese would pick up the bill. The Asians at least had no reason to feel singled out for belt-tightening. The same EB meeting authorized the General Secretary to prepare the introduction of a Latin American advisory committee,

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one half of the costs of which were to be borne by the region's affiliates.¹²⁷

xi. Industrial Sections

The 1946 Constitution laid down (Rule XII (1)) that 'matters affecting the workers

of particular branches of transport shall be dealt with in the first instance by the industrial sections' and then named seven of them: seafarers, fishermen, inland navigation workers, 'waterside workers' (thereafter 'dockers'), railwaymen, road transport workers and 'civil aviation personnel'. The list held good to the end of the period, though the inclusion of a civil aviation section was premature, as it was not formally established until May 1949, and the seafarers and dockers produced an offspring, the 'Special Seafarers' Section', to cover flag-of-convenience (f-o-c) activities.

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Few changes of any substance were made in the constitutional treatment of the sections to the end of the period. They were always given great leeway in the way they managed themselves. Section conferences had to be convened during a Congress and those conferences could elect section chairmen, vice chairmen and section committees. They all did so, but constitutionally even those formalities were a 'may' not a 'shall'.¹²⁹ They could set up other committees or bodies as they felt fit and plan other conferences or meetings of all kinds, though meetings needed EC/EB approval because of their budgetary and staffing implications. The sections also had a very large measure of autonomy in

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deciding on their various activities and policies. They had specialized expertise and experience to meet specialized needs, whilst the ITF's general interests were met by the governing bodies. There were bound, however, to be areas and occasions

where or when both the sectional and general interests were in play. There could also be conflicts of policy among the sections themselves: for example, there might be disagreements over issues of general transport policy. Or sections could decide on actions, say, in the course of the seafarers' and dockers' campaign against flags-of-convenience, which carried great financial or legal consequences for the ITF. A provision of the revised Constitution of 1962 (Rule XV (5)) was intended to remove any doubt about who had the last word in such instances, prescribing that any section decision 'which affects, directly or indirectly, the affairs of the Federation as a whole or of any other section or sections shall be given effect only after endorsement by the Executive Board.'¹³⁰

The largest and busiest of the sections, such as the seafarers, dockers, railwaymen and civil aviation workers, were larger and busier than many an ITS of the period. For a large proportion of the affiliates, the section activities were their strongest reason for belonging to the ITF and the strongest justification of the expense of affiliation that they could make to their members. The issues discussed in the sections were of direct and often critical interest, to the rank-and-file. The Seafarers' Section was bound always to come first to mind in contemplating international action because it had always been the case, and was

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bound always to be so, that national unions of seafarers were impotent without strong international alliances. The flag-of-convenience phenomenon was only the

most spectacular instance of how international the shipping industry would always be. But even in sectors as nominally national as railways, the managerial policies, working practices and technological developments were remarkably uniform across frontiers and the railwaymen's unions needed to consult closely and often if they were not to be caught off their guard. In the ports, mechanization was being rapidly introduced and towards the end of the period widespread containerization, with its enormous potential impact on dockers' jobs, was close to general introduction. These were international innovations with international repercussions to which national dockers' unions had to present a united international front. If it did nothing else, the ITF provided the international machinery for the transport workers' unions to know exactly what was happening in their industry and how other unions were coping with identical challenges.

xii. Finance

The ITF's finances over the period were simply structured and transparent. A professionally audited Financial Report was attached to the Report on Activities made to each Congress. Financial reports were made meanwhile to each meeting of the EC/EB and to most MC meetings. Almost all the ITF's basic costs and activities were financed by affiliation fees. The standard rate of fee was fixed at each Congress in sterling pence per affiliated member, for example, 6d. per member as the period ended but rising to 8d. from January 1966.¹³¹

Notes to Chapter III

- ¹ The first leaflet ever issued by the ITF, September 1896. Reproduced in *Golding (2), In the Forefront of Trade Union History, 1896-1971*, p32.
- ² Con.46, *Proceedings*, pp235-237, 260-272
- ³ *ibid.*, p260
- ⁴ *ibid.*, pp261-262
- ⁵ *ibid.*, pp269-270
- ⁶ Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp311-312
- ⁷ Con.46, *Proceedings*, Rules IV, V, VI and VII, pp262-266
- ⁸ Duplicated copy of the *Constitution...as revised at the 24th Biennial Congress ... 18 to 26 July 1956*, (hereafter *1956 Constitution*), Rule VII(8)
- ⁹ *ibid.*, Rule VIII(5)
- ¹⁰ Con.60, *Proceedings*, pp152, p239-240, 244-245.
- ¹¹ EC 29 July 1960, *Minutes*, p1
- ¹² EC November 1960, *Minutes*, p3.
- ¹³ Con.62, *Proceedings*, pp159-161: 'Comments by the Executive Committee on *Its Proposed Texts*'.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp139-153, 242-266, 268
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp159, 246, 259
- ¹⁶ Con.46, *Proceedings*, p151; Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp221-222; and Con. 52, *Proceedings*, p317
- ¹⁷ Con.50, *Proceedings*, p221

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p261

¹⁹ Con.52, *Report on Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution*, p4

²⁰ Con.54, *Proceedings*, pp253-254

²¹ Con.56, *Proceedings*, pp159-160,266

²² Con.62, *Proceedings*, pp142,254

²³ *ibid.*, pp146 (Rule XI (5))

²⁴ Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp244-245.

²⁵ Con.56, *Proceedings*, p162

²⁶ *ibid.*, p272

²⁷ EC 17 July 1952, 'First drafts' of minutes of the 'Fourth Session'

(MRC 238/IT/8/1); Con.52, *Report on Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution*; Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp185-188

²⁸ EC 17 July 1952, 'First drafts' of minutes of the 'Fourth Session'

(MRC 238/IT/8/1)

²⁹ Con.48, *RonA 1938-46*, p18

³⁰ Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, in *Reinalda* (1), pp66-67.

³¹ Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p18

³² *Reinalda* (1), pp224-238

³³ Con.46, *Proceedings*, p239

³⁴ For example, Tofahrn, *The Problem of Leadership in the ITF*, undated,

(MRC 238/IT/4/6); Tofahrn *notes* on meeting with Oldenbroek,

17 November 1942, (MRC 238/P/4/122); and note on Oldenbroek's cabled

condolences to Fimmen's family (MRC 238/P/4/132).

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- ³⁵ Nedzynski, *My Days with International Trade Movement*, pp61-62
- ³⁶ Thérèse Asser, *J.H. Oldenbroek at the ITF – some reminiscences*,
ICFTU Free Labour World, July-August 1970, p19
- ³⁷ Tofahrn, *Memo to Marchbank*, op.cit.
- ³⁸ ICFTU First Congress, 7 to 9 December 1949, *Report*, pp177-178,
(MRC 159/5/2/189)
- ³⁹ EC October 1949, *Minutes*, p20
- ⁴⁰ Tofahrn *letter to Lindley*, 20 December 1949, (MRC 238/IT/6/3) and
notes (MRC 238/IT/6/2)
- ⁴¹ EC February 1950, *Minutes*, pp14-16
- ⁴² Lyon, pp44-46
- ⁴³ Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp229-238
- ⁴⁴ Nedzynski, p61
- ⁴⁵ Carew (1), pp264-270
- ⁴⁶ Nedzynski, p61
- ⁴⁷ Reinalda (1), p240.
- ⁴⁸ Con.46, *Proceedings*, pp143,176-177,240; Con.48, *RonA 1946-47*, p29;
and Con.50, *RonA, 1948-50*, p39
- ⁴⁹ See the writer's note, *Omer Becu (1902-1982)*, (MRC 159/X/11)
- ⁵⁰ Nedzynski, pp63-64
- ⁵¹ This paragraph relies very heavily on the writer's personal recollections.

⁵² Lyon, p90

⁵³ Con.58, *RonA 1956-57*, p119

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⁵⁴ Carew (1), pp242-243

⁵⁵ Tofahrn notes of meeting with Becu, 25 January 1950 (MRC 238/IT/6/2)

⁵⁶ Carew (1) 266-268

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp271-304

⁵⁸ EC April 1960, *Problems Arising from ICFTU Congress in Brussels, December 1959*, pp2-3; and *Minutes*, pp8-9

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp6-9

⁶⁰ Becu had suggested, in arguing for the Brussels move, that the MC could be made more 'representative' by having members from more than one country, giving him something to offer the existing British MC members after the move:
ibid., pp7-8

⁶¹ MC 3 June 1960, *Minutes* and MC 24 June 60, *Minutes*

⁶² EC 18-19 July 1960, *Minutes*, pp6-7

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp1-2

⁶⁴ Con.60, *Proceedings*, pp170-179

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p185

⁶⁶ EC 22 July 1960, *Minutes*, p1. The only record of the EC's night session on 25 July is Becu's handwritten minute (no staff were present) in the office file on the July EC meetings. Formal Minutes were later approved as Doc. 40 EC-7c at the EC meeting in November 1960 (EC November 1960,

Minutes, p1) but there is no copy of that document in the MRC's file.

⁶⁷ Con.60, *Proceedings*, pp251-256, 261-262

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 259-160

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⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp197, 252

⁷⁰ EC 26 July 56, *Minutes*; EC November 59, *RonA*, pp5-7 and *Minutes*, pp3-4;
EC April 1960, *Minutes*, p9

⁷¹ EC November 1960, *Minutes*, pp1-2, 9-10

⁷² The formal *Minutes*, p10, of the November 1961 EC meeting tersely record the reaching of unspecified conclusions to be confirmed at the next meeting. The citations and the proposal to circularize affiliates come from notes in the meeting file.

⁷³ EC April 1962, *1962 Congress*, p4; *Minutes*, p12 and appended *Statement*

⁷⁴ EC 23-24 July 1962, *Minutes*, pp1-2

⁷⁵ Con.62, *Proceedings*, pp261-263

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp282-283 and the writer's recollection

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p285

⁷⁸ see note 72 and Con.62, *Proceedings*, pp177,189,240,288

⁷⁹ Con.65, *Proceedings*, p306

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p306

⁸¹ Tofahrn, *notes* (MRC 238/IT/25/4)

⁸² Kummernuss to Tofahrn 17 October 1955 (MRC 238/1/2/11)

⁸³ Con.56, *Proceedings*, pp348-349

⁸⁴ Tofahrn's CV (MRC 238/I/2/10)

⁸⁵ MRC Mss 238/

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⁸⁶ EC 16-17 July 1956, *Nominations Received for the Secretaryship of the Railwaymen's and Road Transport Workers' Sections*, pp1-2; and
EC 26 July 1956, *Minutes*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ EC November 1959, *RonA*, pp5-7 and *Minutes*, pp3-4

⁸⁹ EC April 1960, *Minutes*, p9. The four against postponement were almost certainly the European railwaymen members: Düby, Seibert, Laurent, (France) and Matejcek (Austria).

⁹⁰ Nedzynski, p63

⁹¹ EC 26-17 July 1956, *Nominations Received for the Secretaryship of the Railwaymen's and Road Transport Workers' Sections*, pp1-2

⁹² EC August 1959, *Minutes*, p9

⁹³ See Mulder in Reinalda (1), pp241-242

⁹⁴ The entry reads *Kant, Lina 15.8.08 Pforzheim, Übersetzerin der ITF, London*. Oldenbroek and Walter Auerbach, editor of *Fascism* also appear. The Black Book can be seen in the Imperial War Museum, London, and is reproduced in Schellenberg, pp159-264

⁹⁵ Con.74, *RonA* 1971-73, p3

⁹⁶ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, pp21-22

⁹⁷ Letter from John Vanderveken to the writer of 10 April 2002 with attached note from André Dewil. The reference to Golding is the writer's recollection.

⁹⁸ Con.56, *RonA 1954-55*, pp20-21 and EC November 1960, *Minutes*, p11

⁹⁹ Much cited in Chapter II. See *Bibliography*

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¹⁰⁰ Con.50, *Proceedings*, p176

¹⁰¹ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51, Appendix II: Report on Regional Organization*, p128

¹⁰² GC July 1953, *Minutes*, pp9-11

¹⁰³ Con.58, *Proceedings*, pp239-240; EC December 1958, *Regional Activities*, p1; and EC December 1958, *Minutes*, p5

¹⁰⁴ Carew (1), pp252-253 and Table 4, p568

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp317-319

¹⁰⁶ Nedzynski, pp66-67; EC April 1962, *Minutes*, p8; EB May 1963, *RonA*, p9; *Year Book 1965*, p97

¹⁰⁷ Con.58, *RonA 1956-57*, pp59-60; Con.60, *RonA 1958-59*, pp11-12; EC April 1959, *Relations of Regional Affairs Committee with Management Committee and Executive Committee*, pp1-2; and EC April 1959, 'Decisions' (typescript), p5

¹⁰⁸ EC October 1949, *Minutes*, p8 and EB November 1962, *Minutes*, p10

¹⁰⁹ Con.58, *RonA 1956-57*, p60 and Con.60, *RonA 1958-59*, p13

¹¹⁰ Con.50, *RonA 1948-50*, pp43-45

¹¹¹ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, p69-70

¹¹² Con.56, *RonA* 1954-55, pp55-57

¹¹³ *ibid.*, pp51-54

¹¹⁴ Con.60, *RonA* 1958-59, p48 and EC November 1959, *Minutes*, pp1-2.

The mission is vividly described in Golding's article *Africa- still the dark continent*, *ITF Journal*, April 1957, pp63-71.

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¹¹⁵ EC April 1959, *Note of decisions*, p4; EC August 1959, *RonA*, p4;

EB November 62, *Minutes*, p2; MC March 63, *Regional Activities*, p4;

MC March 63, *Minutes*, p6; MC April 1964, *Minutes*, pp1-2;

EB June 1964, *Minutes*, pp2-3

¹¹⁶ Con.60, *RonA* 1958-59, p48; EC November 1959, *Minutes*, pp1-2; and

EC April 1961, *RonA*, p6

¹¹⁷ EC April 1962, *RonA*, p12; Con.62, *RonA* 1960-61, p46; EC July 1962,

RonA, p3 and *Minutes*, p4; and *Yearbook* 1965, p29

¹¹⁸ EC November 1960, *RonA*, pp11-12

¹¹⁹ Con.62, *RonA* 1960-61, p45 and the writer's personal recollections.

¹²⁰ *ITF Journal*. April 1961, pp77-78,93

¹²¹ Con.62, *RonA* 1960-61, p45 and *Proceedings*, pp177,189,240-241,288-289

¹²² Letters from De Vries to Azaña 8/2/62 and 19/3/62; De Vries to the

Argentinian Ambassador, 12/2/62 and 10/4/62 (to be lodged with the MRC)

¹²³ De Vries letter to Azãna, 1/8/63

¹²⁴ MC 7 April 1964, *Supplementary Report on Expulsion of Azaña from Peru* and

Minutes, pp5-6

¹²⁵ EB June 1964, *Minutes*, pp9-10 and Con.65, *RonA 1962-64*, pp89-90

¹²⁶ EC April 1961, *Expansion of ITF Activities in Asia*, pp2-3; *Report of Regional Affairs Committee*, p4; *Note of decisions*, p4

¹²⁷ EB November 1965, *Appointment of Asian Advisory Committee*, and attached *Circular of 28 September 1965*; *Minutes*, pp5,9

¹²⁸ Con.50, *RonA 1948-50*, p77

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¹²⁹ Con.62, *Proceedings*, Rule XV(2), p147

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p147

¹³¹ Con.65, *Proceedings*, p275

Chapter IV: Membership

i. More than European: enter the American railwaymen

Oldenbroek put a paper to the ITF Executive Committee in November 1944 on *The General Situation and the Future Programme and Policy of the ITF*.¹ The ITF, he observed, had 'never at any moment succeeded in becoming an organization world-wide in the real sense of the term ... the task has so far been beyond its powers'. But 'it would seem a justifiable assumption' that after the war 'there will be a forward surge in international trade union organization and that throughout the world trade unionism will gain in influence and power'. The ITF would have to concentrate its efforts 'to embrace the whole of the transport workers in its ranks'.² 'During the whole of its existence,' he continued, 'the international trade union movement has based its activity on European conceptions'.³ Oldenbroek saw that as a deterrent, for example to 'the American organizations' which 'would never be prepared to join the ITF if they were required to subscribe to socialist principles ... What matters is that the organizations affiliated with the ITF should be prepared to act together for the realization of a common programme, whilst retaining their autonomy...'.⁴

Oldenbroek's reference to the 'American' unions provides the best starting point for an examination of the particular elements and events which shaped the general post-war complexion of the ITF's membership, for none was more significant than the arrival of the Americans. On 1 January 1946 the ITF had only one affiliate in the USA, the Seafarers' International Union of North America (SIU), with a substantial,

but in ITF terms unremarkable, affiliated membership of 40,000. Its affiliation in 1942 had been the first and, for some six years, the only gain to be had from a sustained effort by the ITF to win a sizeable and committed American membership.⁵ The ITF had opened its New York office in May 1941 to provide trade union services and general welfare assistance to Allied merchant seafarers who found themselves in the USA. It was managed until the end of 1943 by an ITF envoy, Omer Becu, a former merchant marine radio officer and leader of the Belgian maritime officers' organization within the Belgian Transport Workers' Union. Both he and his cause soon won the SIU's moral and financial support ⁶and the SIU's affiliation was always a possibility. The USA's entry into the war in December 1941 made it a certainty.

But it was the affiliation of the American railwaymen's unions that Becu, with Oldenbroek's clear encouragement, made the ITF's principal aim when the New York office's brief was extended beyond simply seafarers' interests. The 'railroad brotherhoods', Becu wrote, were among the 'oldest and strongest' unions in the American movement, with a membership in the region of 420,000. All of them were autonomous but they negotiated jointly. Some of them, for example the powerful Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, were affiliated with the AFL, but the brotherhoods were a 'solid group in no way involved in the controversy between the AFL and CIO', the two competing national centres. ⁷ Almost all of them for almost all of the period (there were periodic comings and goings) belonged to the Railway Labor

Executives' Association (RLEA) with which Becu and Oldenbroek had first had a meeting when Oldenbroek visited the USA in October 1941 for an ILO International Labour Conference. The RLEA was in almost every way an unusual body (of which more below) but it was the nearest anything came to providing joint representation of the numerous craft unions in which American railwaymen were exclusively organized.

The official version of the events which later led to the 'effective', that is, real, affiliation of the RLEA in March 1947, as against its initially 'token' membership, is a tale of dogged persuasion, told over three pages of report to the ITF's Oslo Congress in July 1948.⁸ The RLEA, it explained, had been accepted as a 'token' affiliate 'at the end of 1945'⁹ on payment of a 'nominal' \$1,000.¹⁰ A meeting of the RLEA in September 1946 had received three ITF emissaries – Godart Joustra, President of the Netherlands Railwaymen's Union and a member of the ITF Executive Board; Paul Tofahrn, the ITF Assistant General Secretary; and Willy Dorchain, Becu's successor as Manager of the ITF's New York office – who had gone on to visit 'several organizations affiliated with the RLEA'. The outcome of all that activity (cause and effect are clearly assumed) was the RLEA's 'effective' entry.

Nothing in this account is untrue, but it is a very pallid and incomplete record of a much longer and more complicated process, largely driven by motives and

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interventions that Oldenbroek most certainly knew of but evidently thought it best to suppress from the public account (or indeed from reports to his own governing bodies).

There was, fortunately, one key actor who was uniquely placed to witness at first-hand, and later to record, what really happened. A.E. ('Art') Lyon, Vice Chairman of the RLEA at the time, remembered clearly ¹¹ the 'young lawyer from Oregon' who sought out some of the RLEA officers at one of their regular meetings in 'the winter of 1942-1943', identified himself as representing the government's Office of Strategic Services (OSS), later to become the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and asked their help for the war effort. He explained that 'the European counterparts of American labor organizations, especially those engaged in transportation and in such international commerce as still existed', would be valuable sources for intelligence gathering. The RLEA could help the OSS by finding 'suitably qualified persons from the ranks of its organizations who could be sent to several points in war-torn Europe, ostensibly as goodwill ambassadors but in reality as OSS observers, reporters or agents'. All the expenses would be met from anonymous deposits by the OSS into a special RLEA account. The RLEA's officers agreed 'off the record' (that is, secretly) to do their patriotic best. And so it was that Frank K. Switzer, a crew despatcher on the Wabash Railroad in Missouri went to London 'after three weeks of training' in May 1943 and 'got an office with the ITF'.¹² Switzer himself told Lyon many years

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later that his 'contacts' included 'of course' Oldenbroek (as well as King Haakon of Norway and Ernest Bevin) but he seems not to have explained their relationship in any detail.¹³ *Exactly* who knew what about Switzer's operations (or about a similar exercise in Stockholm from August 1943 to the end of the war carried out by a Swedish-born American railroad conductor from Montana, Victor Sjaholm¹⁴) it is impossible now to prove, but Lyon's surmise that Switzer's contacts knew what he was really up to, 'that he was, in reality, an agent for the US government',¹⁵ is almost certainly correct in the case of Ernest Bevin; is perhaps less certain in the case of King Haakon; but is *absolutely* correct, surely, in the case of Oldenbroek. By May 1943 the ITF secretariat was only a dozen strong, most of them housed in a London office which was too small to hide an unknown American at work in it. It is very unlikely anyway that the OSS, which valued Oldenbroek's and the ITF's co-operation highly, would have kept him completely in the dark – or that, if they had tried to, he would not very quickly have seen through the 'cover' (and connived at it). But, whether by ignorance or design, the only mention of Switzer in the ITF's public records is his attendance at an ITF Railwaymen's Conference in London on 28 and 29 September 1943 where, together with 'J.A. Phillips', he represented the RLEA.¹⁶ ('J.A. Phillips' was President of the Order of Conductors and a member of the small 'liaison committee' within the RLEA which had sanctioned collaboration with the OSS.)¹⁷

Switzer's assignment was brief. He was recalled in December 1943 and the RLEA was not asked to replace him. Lyon admits ruefully that the RLEA promptly 'closed the book' on international involvement and 'to a considerable degree we returned to the traditional indifference concerning world labor affairs which had prevailed before the war.'¹⁸

But for the intervention of George Harrison, International President of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks and a very powerful figure within the AFL, the 'indifference' would have been prolonged, for all the lobbying of Willy Dorchain, who had succeeded his compatriot, Becu, as head of the ITF New York office. He was, writes Lyon, 'familiar with what was going on in the European labor movement, especially with the efforts of international communism, with the help of the British Trades Union Congress and the foolish and status-seeking CIO, to dominate labor organizations in all parts of the world'.¹⁹ On Harrison's recommendation the RLEA gave the ITF a 'contribution' of \$1,000 to stiffen its resolve. The rigorously parsimonious Harrison ('as tight [with RLEA funds] as the paint on a billiard ball') was certainly not proposing *affiliation* which would have involved paying fees calculated on the RLEA's huge membership. 'General Secretary Jacobus H. Oldenbroek of the ITF and his Executive Committee', wrote Lyon, 'saw fit to record this \$1,000 per year contribution as a "token affiliation" of the RLEA. We thought of it as a donation to a

good cause and not in any way obligating us or giving us the benefits (if any) of affiliation.’²⁰

Oldenbroek made the most of the misapprehension. ‘In spite of its unusual name,’ he explained to the ITF Executive Committee meeting on 14 and 15 January 1946, ‘this organization [the RLEA] is a federation. Nevertheless, the autonomy of the component unions is complete...’ The Executive Committee was told that the ITF Management Committee had accepted this ‘application’ and ‘also the token payment...but expected to negotiate further about the amount ...for 1946.’ The Executive Committee then ‘confirmed’ the Management Committee’s decision.²¹ Asked by Charles Garcias, the left-wing leader of the French Road Transport Workers’ Union (*Fédération des Moyens de Transport*), whether the RLEA could attend and vote at the forthcoming Zürich Congress, Oldenbroek replied that it could attend and vote ‘in proportion’ to the \$1,000 it had paid.²²

Oldenbroek almost certainly knew that he was on the shakiest of constitutional ground but was spared any challenge from the likes of Garcias because the RLEA sent no-one to Zurich. There would anyway have been no problem if the RLEA had yielded to the desperate pleas of the AFL to a RLEA meeting in April 1946 to affiliate fully and formally in time to go to Zurich and help the ITF resist a ‘swing to the left’ and absorption ‘by the WFTU’. If affiliation fees were ‘the final element’, then

President Green and Secretary-Treasurer Meany of the AFL were ready to 'discuss' them.²³ But even the AFL's pressure and inducements were not enough. Nor were further visits to the USA from Oldenbroek himself soon after the Zürich Congress, followed by the Joustra, Tofahrn and Dorchain 'delegation' in September 1946, which was not at all as productive as the ITF reports implied.²⁴

Lyon declared it 'a failure'. The 'inept' Tofahrn was 'too much of a theorist and intellectual muddler' to deal with 'our pragmatic and hard-headed American trade union leaders' and 'his performance...had the result of delaying the RLEA's affiliation to the ITF for some six months'.²⁵ (Lyon's distaste for Tofahrn's manner and politics was, if anything, to grow with closer acquaintance.²⁶) As Lyon had shrewdly guessed, however, Oldenbroek had 'asked for and got a promise of [the AFL's] co-operation'.²⁷ The Cold War had begun and the game was now for far higher stakes. Even the austere Lyon describes with some feeling the stirring message brought to the RLEA meeting on 25 February 1947 by Mathew Woll, a Vice President of the AFL and head of its Free Trade Union Committee. The ITF had to be supported in standing up to 'bloody Joe Stalin's' plan to 'dominate or communize' Europe. Some of the ITF's affiliates were 'weak and indecisive' in the face of the threatened absorption of the ITF within the WFTU (see Chapter V) and 'it was vitally important for the American railwaymen's unions to get into the action and help see that such decision [on the ITF's autonomy] was on the side of freedom'.²⁸

The very next day the meeting decided to affiliate with the ITF for 705,882 members, 'taking advantage of an existing "non-European" per capita tax [affiliation fee] rate' and so paying some \$15,000 per year.²⁹ There was in fact no such thing as a "non-European" rate, only a lower rate of fee for 'organizations in underdeveloped countries...commensurate with the standard of living and rates of wages',³⁰ the latter measure being the very last thing Harrison would have had in mind. He explained to Dorchain instead how cut-price fees would ease the RLEA's path to the ITF.³¹ But the prize was anyway too big for the Executive Committee to haggle, the Constitution notwithstanding. It was decided even before the application arrived that it should be accepted "at half-rate", and so it was, with effect from 1 April 1947.³²

The profound and pervasive significance and consequences of the RLEA's affiliation will be apparent at many points in this thesis. The RLEA's protracted, wary (not to say suspicious), self-absorbed and unashamedly 'patriotic' approach to affiliation needs to be borne in mind when it comes later to judgments of the American railwaymen's motives and actions over the period. But two points need to be made here to put the many references to the RLEA and its representatives in context. The first concerns the very nature of the RLEA as an organization. It simply and comprehensively was *not*, in any sense, the 'federation' that Oldenbroek had led the EC to believe it was in January 1946 (see p119). In reality, as Lyon explained almost two years later,³³ the 'unusual name' described the RLEA very well. It consisted not

of the 'participating' unions (a revealingly vague status) but of their 'chief executive officers' (in the American tradition, 'Presidents', some prefixed Masonically as 'Grand'), of which he had previously been one himself. Perhaps aware that if he left it there the RLEA might seem no more than a club, he added that 'it was much more than a personal association of these individuals' because the executives acted with their unions' backing. With one qualification, the RLEA's agenda was whatever the executives wanted it to be and 'the twenty organizations³⁴ acted on many important matters' as 'a unit'. The one area which it never entered was collective bargaining. When it came to negotiations with the railroads, the brotherhoods did not look to the RLEA but formed their own 'co-operative groups or organizations'. In everyday reality the RLEA's preoccupation, and what its 'participating unions' would have seen as its real *raison d'être*, was what Lyon described as 'our relations with the Federal Government and its many agencies' and the 'numerous issues always before us requiring the services of attorneys'.³⁵ The most important of those 'relations' and 'issues' almost always involved the application or interpretation of the Railway Labor Act of 1934 or the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937, the two great legislative foundations on which American railwaymen and their unions had built a body of rights and benefits, well in advance of those applied to the great majority of American workers.³⁶ The RLEA 'participating unions' were 'craft' unions and proud of it, and hypersensitive defenders of their territory and autonomy.

By keeping the RLEA's budget and its staff to the bare minimum they made sure that the RLEA as an organization (if that is what it was) was never given the means to assert itself autonomously even if it had wished to. The Executive Secretary was its only full-time officer, helped by a typist and sometimes by a clerk borrowed from one of the unions.

The RLEA's structure (or lack of it) prompts the second general point to be made about its later rôle within the ITF, namely the degree to which its influence became personified for some twelve important years by Art Lyon. He had had to neglect 'vastly more important work', he wrote, in making 'more than thirty trips abroad' and the RLEA's failure to appoint an International Representative was 'one of the worst' of 'many major mistakes' the RLEA made in his time. ³⁷ They had had such an officer very briefly from November 1947 to June 1948 when Bert Jewell, a retired President of the AFL Railway Employees Department – liked, respected, very keen and (best of all?) ready to work just for his expenses – became the RLEA's member on the ITF Executive Committee. But his RLEA appointment was initially for six months only and in June 1948 the government made him a co-director (essentially the AFL's man) in the labour division of the Economic Co-operation Administration which oversaw the Marshall Plan (see Chapter V). An RLEA meeting shortly before the ITF's Oslo Congress in July 1948 'ordered' Lyon, by then Executive Secretary, to take over Jewell's functions in the ITF and he had them until he retired in 1962.

Lyon, as revealed in his memoirs, was a man of great diligence and deep seriousness. He disapproved scathingly of any kind of over-indulgence, especially when it involved breaches of his very tight moral boundaries. International activities may not have had priority in his idea of the Brotherhoods' agenda but they were far more than an opportunity to see and enjoy the world on Brotherhood expenses. He certainly had no wish to cut a dash on the international stage, for though his views on ITF business are often expressed vehemently in his memoirs, they were otherwise conveyed only in the small forum of the Executive Committee or in private exchanges with the ITF's General Secretary. He attended six consecutive ITF Congresses from 1948 to 1958 but spoke only once, at Stuttgart in 1950, and then only to thank the German hosts for their hospitality.³⁸ Public, on-the-record, statements from the RLEA were rare and were often left to Harrison, who was added to the RLEA delegation (or added himself?) if the business was thought to be worthy of his sonorous gravitas.³⁹

Very few of even the leading lights of the ITF would have been aware of these realities of the RLEA's nature and operations. To the wider ITF world the technicalities were incidental: the RLEA was indeed for all practical purposes a 'federation', as Oldenbroek had first presented it. The 'agreed' initial membership of 705,882 was, Lyon conceded, 'much too low'; the true total membership 'was approximately a million and a quarter in 1947'.⁴⁰ By 1952 the total membership

(including 95,000 now identified as Canadian) rose to 928,777. In 1956 the RLEA became the first ITF affiliate ever to exceed one million members. In 1958 it reached a peak of 1,146,500 (125,000 in Canada). And then, in 1960, came a collapse to 744,500, the loss being entirely from the United States membership (reduced from 1,007,800 to 619,500).⁴¹

It was the first proof the ITF was to have of the RLEA's inherent fragility. Its existence had always depended on constitutional informality, on a consensus among 'chiefs' with very few enforceable procedures and obligations. That informality came at the high price of vulnerability to internal, often personal and destructive tensions when the chiefs fell out.⁴²

ii. The American delinquents: the ILA, the Teamsters and ALPA

The *International Longshoremen's Association (ILA)* was to provide the ITF's initiation into the seamier areas of American trade union life. The ILA had twice belonged to the ITF for brief and unremarkable spells before the Second World War. Its heart and its headquarters were in New York and its greatest stronghold was in that city's turbulent port. At one time it had organized dockers on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, but in the 1930s it had lost its membership on the Pacific coast to the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), a surely unique example of an American union as far to the left as the ILA was to the right

(and associated with the WFTU throughout the period, of which more below). Yet even a truncated ILA was a very powerful force, the exclusive union for dockers in the Atlantic and Gulf ports and with a strong membership on the east coast of Canada.

The membership of 75,000 for which the ILA affiliated in May 1950 was almost certainly well short of the real number but the ILA was a large and affluent affiliate of the AFL and the ITF would have taken it at its word. More importantly, there is no record of the ITF's knowing or worrying about the investigations, starting in 1948, of the *New York Sun's* Malcolm Johnson into the ILA's involvement in gangsterism on the New York waterfront. The AFL itself was slow off the mark but Johnson and others were exploring some very rich ground and in January 1953 the AFL Executive Council felt bound to take the unprecedented step of ordering the ILA to remove all officials who were corrupt or had criminal records. When the ILA refused to comply (other considerations aside, the order would probably have emptied many of its offices) the AFL Convention later in the year effectively expelled the ILA and set up a rival dockers' union, the 'International Brotherhood of Longshoremen (IBL)'.⁴³ The President of the SIU, Paul Hall, no stranger himself to the more violent side of American industrial relations (see below), was deputed by the AFL to give the IBL (often literally) some muscle. ⁴⁴ The approach of its London Congress in July 1954 and the prospect of a by now embarrassing ILA presence there prodded the ITF

Executive Committee at its meeting on 14 and 15 July 1954, immediately before the Congress, into a suspension of the ILA's affiliation because it had failed the test of 'democratic conduct of its affairs' required by Rule V (3) of the ITF Constitution. ⁴⁵ (In 1954 a classic film, *On the Waterfront*, provided a more dramatic indictment.)

In the event, the ILA's departure was quite short-lived. By 1955 the IBL was claiming it had won over a majority of the ILA's members ⁴⁶ but the truth was that the great majority of the ILA's members remained loyal to it and the removal of the most notoriously corrupt of its leaders, headed by its President Joseph P. Ryan, blunted any urge to replace the union itself. The new President, Thomas ('Teddy') W. Gleason, made conciliatory approaches to the ITF as an observer at its 1958 Congress in Amsterdam and succeeded in rehabilitating the ILA within the AFL-CIO (as it had then become) in September 1959. By then he had negotiated a cease-fire with Hall and as part of the peace treaty the IBL (and Hall) saved some face by agreeing to 'merge' with the ILA. The ITF Executive Committee agreed in November 1959 that the ILA could be re-affiliated. ⁴⁷

Whatever was gained in membership and fees from the ILA's return had been offset exponentially some seven months previously with the departure of the *International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)* or, as it was known throughout the USA and beyond, the '*Teamsters*'. The Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting from

27 to 29 April 1959 record that the meeting considered a letter from the IBT announcing that it did not intend to pay any further affiliation fees 'until its difficulties with the AFL-CIO were resolved'. The Executive Committee 'accepted [the letter] as a notice of withdrawal by the IBT from membership [of the ITF]'.⁴⁸ The ILA had come back with 80,000 members; the Teamsters had gone with the 500,000 on which it had last paid fees. (It had offered a very tempting 1,444,577 – so precise! – with effect from January 1959.⁴⁹)

There are other links that could have been made between the ILA and the IBT. When the AFL failed to wrest the dockers away from the ILA in December 1953, the Teamsters had suggested that they should be given jurisdiction in the ports. The AFL saw the danger (if not the irony) of the offer and set up the IBL instead. By early in 1956, the AFL-CIO, anxious to cleanse the movement before the United States Congress decided on further anti-trade union measures, was ordering the Teamsters to 'sever' its unspecified but inevitably suspect 'financial relations' with the ILA.⁵⁰ But a much bigger chase was already on and in January 1957 the Senate gave Senator John L. McClellan the chairmanship of a special committee to investigate corruption in American industrial relations. The Senator and the committee's chief counsel, Robert Kennedy, had reputations to make and there could be no more dramatic way to make them than to flush out and slay that overweening monster of the labour movement, the Teamsters. The IBT was by far the biggest union in North America

and like most American unions (the railway brotherhoods were a notable exception), it recognized no bounds to its potential jurisdiction. It was a constant and voracious raider of other unions' territories, but to the general public the Teamsters meant truck drivers: stereotypically, the tough pilots of the huge road rigs which criss-crossed the country and had become the nation's primary carrier, but the drivers of almost everything else too. Robert Kennedy knew how the American people saw them and how, on the back of that perception, to raise the stakes:

'At birth, it is a Teamster who drives the ambulance to the hospital. At death, a Teamster who drives the hearse to the grave. Between birth and death, it is the Teamsters who ... perform many other essential services...[The Teamsters] are completely under the control and domination of corrupt officials at the top...' ⁵¹

His prime target by then was James Hoffa, the former Teamsters' Vice President who, late in 1957, had succeeded Dave Beck, the union's President since 1952. Beck had been the Senate Committee's and Kennedy's first big prize. Forced from office in November 1957 under a barrage of accusations that he had misappropriated hundreds of thousands of dollars of Teamsters money for his own use and comfort, Beck was found guilty of embezzlement in December 1957 and, all appeals exhausted, began a five-year term in prison in 1962. ⁵²

It was Beck, not Hoffa, who featured in the ITF's involvement in the Teamsters *imbroglio*. Beck had attended the ITF Congresses in 1954 and 1956. He said not a word at either, but his views on the ITF and the American labour movement's mission in world affairs were set down in a Teamsters pamphlet, *Beck Reports on Europe*, in 1954.⁵³ He was given a real opportunity to make his international mark when he became one of four 'co-opted' members of the ITF Executive Committee in January 1957 (see Chapter III) but McClellan and Kennedy pursued him so persistently that he could attend only the one EC meeting, in June 1957. His decision 'not [to] seek re-election to office in his union' was noted in the report to the Amsterdam Congress in 1958.⁵⁴

His departure did not end the ITF's problem. The Teamsters' convention in the autumn of 1957 elected Hoffa - already marked out as *the* Teamster villain - as Beck's successor and in doing so theatrically snubbed the AFL-CIO Executive Council which had shortly beforehand ordered the Teamsters (and two other unions that were under suspicion) to clean up their house or face expulsion. A few weeks later, in December 1957, the AFL-CIO convention voted by five to one to expel the Teamsters.⁵⁵

Despite the excitement in the USA, the Teamsters question was not so much as mentioned in the ITF Executive Committee or Management Committee agendas of

1958 until the imminent arrival of a six-man delegation to the 1958 Congress, led by the influential Secretary-Treasurer, Harold J. Gibbons, gave the ITF's exposed situation some urgency. Often portrayed as an 'intellectual' or the Teamster's 'respectable face', Gibbons perhaps had something to do behind the scenes with an extraordinary 'Statement' adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee meeting on 21 and 22 July, immediately before the Congress.

It was, in fact, a *non*-Statement in the sense that it is headed 'Not for Publication' and is to be found only in the Executive Committee minutes. It left it to the 'incoming' Executive Committee, yet to be elected at the Congress, to form an 'independent opinion' of the 'continued eligibility' of the Teamsters' affiliation. Any discussion of the Teamsters case should be 'excluded' from the Congress floor, if possible by agreement, but otherwise by an appropriate ruling from the President or the Standing Orders Committee. Gibbons would have savoured the 'Statement' all the more for its having been made in response to a cable from the President of the AFL-CIO confirming that the Teamsters had been expelled from the AFL-CIO and that 'consequently unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO could not be associated in any organizational relationship with the [Teamsters]'. The Executive Committee members would also have seen a copy of a statement from the AFL-CIO on 'Relations with ITs' which recognized the ITs' autonomy but urged them 'to act

speedily to rid themselves of these [Teamster] anti-union elements'.⁵⁶

After more or less standing up to the AFL-CIO, however, the Executive Committee agreed that 'no further payments should be accepted [from the Teamsters]... pending the inquiry to be made' and that 'the IBT should not be eligible for a seat on the General Council...until their status had been cleared up'.⁵⁷ The incoming Executive Committee evidently⁵⁸ agreed immediately after the Congress that an ITF delegation made up of the (newly elected) President, Frank Cousins, the Chairman of the Management Committee, Tom Yates, and the General Secretary, Omer Becu, should visit the USA 'to study the present position of the Teamsters within the American trade union movement and to have preliminary discussions on the union's future relationship with the ITF'. The mission was carried out from 30 October to 5 November 1958⁵⁹ and its members made their 'verbal' [*sic*] reports to the Executive Committee meeting in December 1958. It was a poorly attended meeting with only eight members present and with four apologies for absence, most notably from Lyon. It was agreed that the mission fell short of the status of the 'investigative body' originally envisaged (apparently) by the Executive Committee and that the reports made at the meeting were therefore no more than 'preliminary'. Discussion was put off until the next meeting, when it was hoped 'all members would be present'.⁶⁰

Why did the ITF find it so hard to decide what to do about the Teamsters? It was not a matter of asserting its autonomy: the AFL-CIO had explicitly recognized it. Money, even the big money the Teamsters were paying,⁶¹ can have played no part: the EC's decision to accept no Teamster fees from mid-1958 was calculated to prove that the ITF's reputation was not open to offers. Were there constitutional inhibitions? The ILA case did not amount to a convincing precedent. The corruption within the ILA, so the argument had run, had meant that its members had to grease the palms of ILA officials in order to get work. No real internal 'democracy' was possible within such a system. Was the undoubted corruption within the Teamsters of that kind or degree? While many of the very top people at the Teamsters' headquarters were guilty of the grandest of grand larcenies, thousands of Teamster officials and activists in the 'locals', where most of the work and the bargaining were done, were pillars of their communities, as 'ethical' and 'democratic' as any to be found in the USA. If the Teamsters' bosses had stolen the union's money, then surely it was for the courts, not for the AFL-CIO and certainly *not* for the ITF, to deal with them? As for the Teamsters' members, the great majority had remained genuinely and voluntarily loyal to a union which they believed had delivered them just about the best pay, benefits and job security that a blue-collar worker could wish for. What provision *exactly* in the ITF Constitution had the Teamsters violated?

Did Frank Cousins take that sceptical approach? General Secretary of the biggest union in Great Britain, Vice President of the ITF in 1956 and 1957 and its President

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since the Amsterdam Congress in 1958, he was (and very much liked to be seen as) an unapologetic champion of the left.⁶² He would have had no time for the AFL-CIO and its unions which, as a species, he would have regarded as being politically and morally impoverished. Of the ITF's three investigators, Cousins looks the most likely to have wondered whether the Teamsters were a sacrificial offering to the anti-union forces in Congress and whether other AFL-CIO affiliates were really that much 'cleaner'. Had he dared (no-one ever doubted his courage) to float those questions out loud during his encounter with the equally forthright George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO? It would have been a very dramatic event.

As General Secretary, Becu may also have wondered about the constitutional position, but not for long, because Meany and Hall would have told him, in very short words that allowed no misunderstanding, that the ITF's hesitations were intolerable. Everything had by then come down to a matter of *credibility*. Who was to have it, the AFL-CIO or the Teamsters? How could the ITF allow the Teamsters to flaunt at international level the trade union credentials of which a massive majority of the American movement had stripped them? The Teamsters would not have disagreed with that assessment of the stakes but would have been much more relaxed about the outcome. If the ITF was ready to take their bait – the fees were petty cash to the

Teamsters – all well and good; if not, *tant pis!* International standing mattered far less to the Teamsters than it did to the AFL-CIO. The Teamsters' anticlimactic letter

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of withdrawal from the ITF amounted to their recognition that if it came to a showdown the ITF would not dare risk the disaffection, under AFL-CIO pressure, of the rest of its American membership. There was still just enough time for the Teamsters to leave the ITF before they were shown the door. And so they did.

As if the problems with the ILA and the Teamsters were not troublesome enough, the ITF Executive Committee had to find time, between contemplating the return of the one and the departure of the other, to suspend the American Air Line Pilots' Association (ALPA) and to recommend its expulsion to the General Council. These sanctions, the heaviest in the ITF's armoury, were imposed 'unanimously' at the EC meeting in December 1958 because ALPA 'had not given any assurances regarding its acceptance of the ITF [cockpit] crew complement policies ... which it had consistently and flagrantly violated...' ⁶³ There was no comparison here with the ILA and the Teamsters cases, nothing to do with corruption or racketeering or with anything more 'unethical' than 'violation' of the Civil Aviation Section's policy on the composition of the crew in the cockpit of the new generation of jet airliners.

ALPA unsuccessfully appealed to the General Council against its suspension on

29 July 1960, immediately after the Berne Congress, and was expelled.⁶⁴ The ITF thus threw out the biggest and richest airline pilots' union in the world and one of its older American affiliates (from 1949). ALPA had also been one of the very few

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pilots' organizations (they tended not to call themselves 'unions') to have associated itself internationally with other (inferior?) categories. Almost all ALPA's peers preferred to keep their own company within the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), in which ALPA was also the biggest member and a dominant influence.

iii. The SIU saga: Hal Banks, Paul Hall, Ed Wilson and many more

The ITF's next confrontation with an American affiliate, the last in the period and by far the most serious of all, began on 18 August 1960 when De Vries cabled the President of the Seafarers' International Union of North America (SIU), Paul Hall, and the President of the SIU's Canadian District, Hal Banks, 'expressing ...[the ITF's]... concern at press reports that the Canadian District had promised financial and moral support to a group of British seamen who had taken unofficial strike action.' Banks responded at once: the Canadian District was indeed 'giving financial and moral support to leaders and members of the National Union of Seamen [NUS] reform committee' and 'they are using our facilities'. He was convinced that the strike was 'supported by [a] majority of members of [the NUS]'. De Vries reacted to this broadside in a cable the next day (19 August 1960) to Hall, with a copy to Banks,

pointing out that the Canadian District was part of the ITF by virtue of the SIU's affiliation and its actions were an 'unwarranted interference in internal domestic dispute of non-Canadian union'. Hall was urged to use his influence 'to dissuade

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Banks from present action'. Hall waited four days before advising De Vries that the Canadian District was 'completely autonomous'. De Vries should therefore have a meeting with Banks in Montreal 'to settle the issue' and Hall would be ready to sit in on it. The Canadian District's 'autonomy' within the SIU was neither here nor there, De Vries, replied. Hall was President of the affiliated organization and the 'man we must approach'. Further exchanges included a proposal from Hall for a meeting, if not in New York then in 'London, Liverpool or any other British port', comprising NUS officers and Banks – and such British seamen as cared to come. The proposal came on the day (20 September 1960) that the British *Daily Telegraph* carried Banks's declaration that the Canadian SIU would continue its support for the unofficial strikers because British seamen were badly served by an 'undemocratic' union. Yates 'is not a bad old guy, but he earned a knighthood and now he has to justify it by looking after the interests of the British shipowners.' ⁶⁵

The Management Committee was advised of all these exchanges at its meeting on 29 September 1960 ⁶⁶ and, in what it probably regarded as very conciliatory response, invited Hall to a meeting early in October with the NUS, the Chairman of the Seafarers' Section (Doug Tennant of the British Merchant Navy and Airline

Officers' Association – MNAOA), and De Vries. The ITF President (Roger Dekeyzer) was to take the chair. But Hall, who had been elected Vice Chairman of the ITF Seafarers' Section only some two months previously, was never likely to accept an

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invitation which so pointedly omitted Banks or to accept an agenda which had as 'the only issue' the question of whether the Canadian District's actions constituted 'interference' in the NUS's 'domestic affairs'.⁶⁷ The ITF was *not* ready, as Banks so insistently was, to discuss the *causes* of the unofficial strike and the meeting was therefore still-born. Banks's account to the *Daily Telegraph* of the cause of the unofficial NUS dispute was essentially a fair, if colourful, summary: the dissidents wanted the NUS rank-and-file to be served by elected 'shipboard representatives' (shop stewards) and to have the final say in collective bargaining. They were also demanding fair and open union elections. Yates was resisting their demands and the ITF was taking the position that the NUS's internal affairs were neither the ITF's business, nor that of any affiliate but the NUS itself. As will become evident, the longer the SIU affair lasted, the farther it moved on from its NUS and Canadian District beginnings, but two points can be made about those early days.

Firstly, the Canadian District's attachment to the democratic process was to seem more and more cynical as time went by. Other, much more self-serving motives may have applied. Yates's successor as General Secretary of the NUS, Jim Scott, later alleged that the Canadian SIU's real motive was 'to use the 1960 strike...to

force the Canadian Pacific [shipping company] to use the Canadian rather than British flagged ships, thus creating more jobs for Canadian seamen'.⁶⁸

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Secondly, perhaps the SIU should have asked the ITF formally why it had declined jurisdiction so readily. The NUS dissidents' case was that their union was a fundamentally undemocratic organization. The ITF had quickly put the ILA to a 'democratic' test and, less directly and perhaps less convincingly, had only narrowly escaped having to make a similar judgment of the Teamsters. The NUS case differed from those, of course, in some very important respects: the national centre, the British TUC, was sternly supportive of Sir Tom whose very knighthood celebrated his term as Chairman of the TUC General Council; and neither the ILA nor the Teamsters had been able to call on anyone as influential within the ITF as Yates to protect their interests. He was a very substantial fixture indeed within the ITF: Chairman, seemingly in perpetuity, of the ITF Management Committee and so a member *ex officio* of the Executive Committee, sometime Chairman of the Seafarers' Section, and (though surely of no significance) the ITF's landlord. Yet, whatever the strength of his standing within the ITF, thousands of NUS members were in open and very effective rebellion against what they judged to be a denial of democracy within their own union. It was not just the SIU among the ITF affiliates that challenged the NUS's democratic credentials or marvelled at the very impressive life-style that its top officials somehow managed to enjoy. Some might simply have envied Sir Tom

his splendid Bentley limousine and chauffeur but many others would like to have known how he, or the union, came to afford them.

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Ought not the ITF to have looked at the NUS dissidents' demands and grievances with the same stern eye to the ITF's very clear constitutional requirements that had been cast on the ILA? Instead, the Executive Committee decided in November 1960 to convey to the SIU its 'deep concern' at the Canadian District's conduct and to seek recommendations from an emergency Conference of the ITF Seafarers' Section on what to do next.⁶⁹ Looking to the Seafarers' Section for guidance made no constitutional sense, for the SIU's actions were culpable (or not) regardless of the sectional context, but under great pressure the Executive Committee was probably desperate, firstly to buy some time and, secondly, to spread the responsibility for what were bound to be hotly contested judgments. Some members (Yates for example?)⁷⁰ may also have calculated that notwithstanding Hall's fearsome reputation (and Section Vice-Chairmanship), the Section Conference would rally round the NUS and stiffen the Executive Committee's resolve.

Any such 'hawks' would have been very pleased with the recommendations agreed 'unanimously' by the Seafarers' Section at a conference in Antwerp on 26 January 1961. (At the last minute, the SIU had pleaded urgent business in New York and were not represented.) The report records rather sanctimoniously the conference's

anxiety to give the SIU time to mend its ways before the Executive Committee next met, in April 1961. The SIU could find salvation by ceasing immediately to

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misbehave, by pledging its good and constitutional behaviour in the future and by 'express[ing] and publish[ing] apologies for its breach of good trade union practice'.⁷¹

The Executive Committee meeting in Tel Aviv in April 1961 'agreed to suspend the SIU' and to send a delegation (the General Secretary, the Chairman of the Management Committee and Lyon) to 'North America ... to explain the Executive Committee's decision ... [and] also explore various possibilities of solving present difficulties'.⁷² The subsequent and very terse references to the suspension in the Report on Activities to the Helsinki Congress in 1962⁷³ do not reveal what consideration the Executive Committee gave to the conditions the Seafarers' Section attached to the SIU's rehabilitation or whether they were ever formally passed on to the SIU. (Hall's reaction to the demand for a public apology would have been interesting.)

The ITF's troubles with the SIU were to last for more than four years and fell into two distinct phases. The first was a period of both deep mutual hostility and, off-stage, stuttering moves towards reconciliation. The Executive Committee's plan for a delegation to 'North America' was almost immediately aborted. Lyon, who had not

been at the Tel Aviv meeting, thought it had been 'presumptuous' to have nominated him to the delegation without his permission and he was certainly not ready to 'explain' a decision which he would not have voted for. The place reserved for 'the Chairman of the Management Committee' would have been filled by Yates and he

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was sensible enough to realize how prejudicial his presence would be. The first reaction from the United States came within days of the suspension when on 21 April 1961 three affiliates – the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP), the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA) and the ILA (embracing its old enemy) – cabled their 'withdrawal' from the ITF because of its 'precipitous' [*sic*] action. De Vries, the sole survivor of the delegation as the Executive Committee had originally conceived it, was already in the USA for 'valuable' but entirely unsuccessful talks. On his return he informed the three unions that 'withdrawal' required one year's notice and so, like it or not, their affiliation (and fees) had still twelve months to run. (The MMP decided in September 1961 to rescind its notice.)⁷⁴

There were many false starts and dead ends in the negotiations over the following two years on a settlement. A constant and difficult factor was the SIU's determination to give no comfort to its great rival in the American maritime industry, the National Maritime Union (NMU). That rivalry, both organizationally and personally, was rooted in history and it had its quieter moments, but at this period it

was made all the more intense by a political gulf (the SIU on the right and the NMU to the left) which put any compromise or even a truce beyond reach.⁷⁵ There was also the aggravating factor of the presence of the NMU's President, Joe Curran, on the ITF Executive Committee, to which he had been co-opted on the proposal of

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Paul Hall in a very rare moment of collaboration. Curran had nonetheless voted for the SIU's suspension. His high-minded disavowal, subsequently, of any but the purest motive, namely the defence of the ITF's Constitution,⁷⁶ would only have stiffened Hall's resolve, as his authorized spokesman Ed Wilson later put it, 'not [to] sign anything which implied an admission of the SIU's guilt'.⁷⁷ Wilson's formal position at that time was European Representative of the 'International Division' of the AFL-CIO Maritime Trades Department (MTD), the MTD being one of a number of AFL-CIO departments which served a similar purpose to that of the ITF's sections but were much more loosely structured and defined. Paul Hall was its President and its member-unions, all from the former AFL, invariably followed his lead. (Maritime unions of the former CIO, led by the NMU, had a rival co-ordinating body of their own.)

The "International Division" had been created at the MTD Annual Convention in December 1961 and in January 1962 it was given a three-man Executive Committee, comprising Teddy Gleason of the ILA, Ray McKay of the marine engineers (MEBA), and – just in case the ITF had missed the point – Hal Banks of the SIU's Canadian District. De Vries promptly enlisted Omer Becu's support, as General Secretary of

the ICFTU, in protesting to George Meany at this 'prospect of competition for the support and loyalty of maritime workers' unions at international level' and they together met Meany, Hall 'and a number of other American friends' in the USA.

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But the meetings came to nothing and, meanwhile, the International Division began to woo the ITF's affiliates in Latin America by offering 'pacts' or 'mutual assistance agreements', taking the line that the ITF was more interested in looking after its European affiliates than those in the developing world.⁷⁸

The ITF now had two issues to tackle, the NUS and SIU affair and the MTD's international enterprise, but Becu and Wilson had been working on a joint statement as a basis for reconciliation. A late telephone call from Becu to the Executive Committee meeting in April 1962 reported that Hall was ready to sign the statement and that Meany had ruled that the MTD 'would have no reason to conduct international activities' if the SIU, ILA and MEBA resumed their ITF affiliations.⁷⁹ The draft statement itself lacked any specific commitments but spent the warmest of words on the 'friendly and constructive conversations' concerning 'regrettable differences' and the need for 'world-wide unity' to meet the 'challenge of international communism'.⁸⁰ It was enough to induce the Executive Committee to agree that the General Secretary should be authorized to lift the SIU's suspension provided the SIU 'declared its readiness to observe the ITF's Constitution' and the MTD 'ceased its activities outside the United States.'⁸¹

The peace effort foundered on the first of those conditions. Hall insisted that a declaration of good constitutional behaviour in future would be seized on (by the

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NMU, presumably) as an implicit confession of past misbehaviour.

Meanwhile, the MTD's trawl for 'mutual aid' partners in Latin America netted only a very small catch – an 'irresistible opportunity to acquire American money', was the unashamed explanation of the Chilean maritime confederation's leader.⁸² More bizarrely, Ed Wilson offered an MTD 'pact' to a bemused Philipp Seibert, President of the German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) and a member of the Executive Committee.⁸³ Hall would have known, moreover, that support within the USA for his international venture was dissolving. George Harrison, standing in for the retired Lyon at the ITF Executive Committee meeting in July 1962, made it clear, with all the authority appropriate to his eminence within the RLEA and the AFL-CIO, that the MTD 'had no right' to function outside the USA.⁸⁴

Hall tried to smuggle Wilson into the 1962 Congress as an accredited adviser to the delegation from the Trinidad Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union (SWWTU) but the Congress Credentials Committee was of the 'opinion' that Wilson was really there for the SIU, which as a suspended affiliate, had no right to representation. George Munroe of the SWTTU revealed that his union had been

'affiliated' with the SIU since October 1961 (it had 'not cost a penny') and contested the ruling, which was constitutionally very unsound, but Congress endorsed the Credentials Committee's judgment and the SWTTU delegation walked out. ⁸⁵

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That was the last direct contact that anyone in the ITF had with Wilson.

Masquerading as an adviser to an ITF affiliate from Trinidad was perhaps the most unusual and innocent of all the deceptions deployed in the long career of this maverick CIA agent whose subsequent freelance activities earned him an epic notoriety.

Hall then decided to use the SIU's membership of the RLEA (a constitutional complication overlooked throughout the dispute!) as a channel for re-opening peace talks. Donald Beattie, who had succeeded Lyon as Executive Secretary of the RLEA and as a member of the ITF Executive Board, signalled to De Vries in February 1963 that the SIU and its allies were ready to talk. De Vries met them in Washington DC on 27 April 1963 and two days later was handed a joint letter from Hall, Mackay and William Bradley of the ILA in which they withdrew their 'resignation' from the ITF and so would again 'assume all of the rights, privileges and obligations [of affiliation]... as well as accepting the responsibilities set forth in the constitution'. He was also given a copy of a letter from Hall to Peter McGavin, Executive Secretary of the MTD, advising him that a settlement with the ITF was in the offing and that he should be ready for a cessation of hostilities. ⁸⁶

The Executive Board meeting in Oslo from 6 to 8 May 1963 decided after a long and anxious discussion (a) to lift the SIU's suspension; (b) formally to note that the SIU,

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ILA and MEBA had cancelled their notice of withdrawal; and (c) 'to state that in lifting the suspension of the [SIU] the Executive Board had in no way expressed approval of the action of any organization in Canada, and that the ITF would continue to support any efforts to unify the Canadian seafarers' movement and solve those difficulties which at present divide it.'⁸⁷

The second phase of the ITF's troubles with the SIU then began. The only member to record his dissociation from the decision was a bitter and incredulous Bill Smith of the Canadian CBRT, for the ITF's fraught relationship with the SIU had already entered a second phase, set once more in Canada. What had made Smith so angry was the readiness of the ITF, as Smith saw it, to welcome the SIU back without calling Hall to account for the conduct of Hal Banks, the boss of its Canadian District.

Born in California and one of Hall's most trusted muscle-men, Banks had been drafted into Canada in 1949 at the invitation of the Liberal government and the leaders of the Canadian wings of the AFL's 'international' unions to promote the hitherto vestigial Canadian District of the SIU as a rival to the 'communist' Canadian Seaman's Union (CSU). Banks's goons had been a significant force in the breaking

of the CSU's strike in 1949 (see Chapter V) and the subsequent destruction of the CSU itself. ⁸⁸ Banks thus became the dominant trade union figure in the Canadian shipping industry, to the great pleasure and relief of the government, shipowners and

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more than a few Canadian trade union leaders. He then exploited his position over the years so outrageously that by mid-1962 the Canadian government was forced to set up an inquiry, the 'Norris Commission', into his activities. It issued its report in July 1963 and its chairman, Judge Norris spoke plainly:

'Banks is capable, decisive, egocentric, intolerant and ruthless. He is the stuff of the Capones and Hoffas...a bully, cruel, dishonest, greedy, power-hungry, contemptuous of the law. In his mouth, the use of the word "democracy" is sheer blasphemy...'⁸⁹

The Banks story is told vividly by Peter Edwards in his *Waterfront Warlord: the Life and Violent Times of Hal C. Banks*, a tale of 'sweetheart' deals with the shipowners; 'do not ship' lists (i.e. blacklisting) of dissident members; brutal beatings and the systematic terrorising of more serious opponents; and massive theft of union funds to finance Banks's high living.

Edwards limits his ITF references to the 1960 ITF Congress when Banks ordered the beating up of Don Secord, the CBRT's National Secretary, because the CBRT had 'used the occasion' to denounce Banks as a thug. Secord gave Edwards that story

some twenty-six years after the event ⁹⁰ and though the assault did not happen, the story was certainly plausible. There is no record, however, in the 1960 Congress *Proceedings* of any denunciation of Banks (or of any other speech) by Secord. ⁹¹

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Though the Norris findings came some two months after the lifting of the SIU's suspension, the indictment was so sweeping and unequivocal as to give the Executive Board good and urgent reason to reopen the SIU case. De Vries's alternative suggestion, tacitly accepted at its May meeting, that the Board could ask the Seafarers' and Dockers' Sections to look at anything arising from the Norris report, ⁹² was to prove a bad idea.

Breaches of the Constitution were a matter for the judgment of the Executive Board, not for any ITF section, but, entitled to it or not, the Seafarers' Section was only too happy to accept the Norris Report business when the Executive Board handed it on. The seafarers' first, not very grateful, step was to adopt a resolution at a Section Conference in November 1963 calling on the Executive Board to 're-examine' its decision to lift the SIU's suspension 'with a view to expelling' it instead. ⁹³

The resolution had been moved by the Canadian Maritime Union (CMU), which had been created under the aegis of the Canadian Labour Congress to provide Canadian seamen with a clean union and had been accepted rather nervously into affiliation at the Executive Board meeting in November 1962 on the 'understanding' that If the

Canadian SIU was ever rehabilitated in Canada, then every effort would be made to merge the CMU and the Canadian SIU. ⁹⁴ That rider (in practice unenforceable) reflected an anxiety on the part of the American members of the EB and of

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one of the two Canadian EB members, Frank Hall (no relation!) of the Canadian division of the 'international' railway clerks' union (BRAC), not to upset Paul Hall more than was absolutely necessary. De Vries would have shared that concern, but Bill Smith, the other Canadian member, was determined that the application should go through and there were no constitutional grounds to refuse it.

The Executive Board gave the Seafarers' Section resolution a very cool reception at its meeting in June 1964. The power to expel lay with the General Council and the EB agreed without any discussion of substance to pass the seafarers' resolution on to the General Council. ⁹⁵ It then decided in November 1964 that the GC should meet 'early' in the course of the 1965 Congress so as still to leave time for any appeal before Congress adjourned. ⁹⁶

That last dispensation clearly anticipated a disputatious session, but much had happened by the time the General Council met on 30 July 1965 to take the heat and urgency from the situation. The trustees imposed by the Canadian government on the Canadian SIU in the aftermath of the Norris Report dismissed Banks from office in March 1964 and on 1 May 1964 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for

ordering 'a manifest act of gangsterism', namely the brutal beating up in August 1957 of Henry Walsh, an organizer of the Canadian ships' officers' union, the Canadian Merchant Service Guild. Released two weeks later on bail, pending an appeal,

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and with a string of other indictments awaiting a hearing, Banks fled to the United States. He found sanctuary there until he died in 1985, thanks to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who in 1968 overruled a move to extradite him to Canada. Rusk might just have had in mind the importance to the Democrat Party of the AFL-CIO's support, the heavy influence of Paul Hall within the AFL-CIO and the size and generosity of the SIU's 'political education' fund. Any number of Canadian politicians and shipowners would have been relieved to know that they would not be asked to explain their past dealings with Banks. Their relief would have been nothing compared to that of many Canadian trade union leaders, including Frank Hall, who had been an important 'matchmaker' in the introduction of the SIU into Canada in the late 1940s, a rôle he was 'deeply [to] regret' when 'he lived in fear that the man he helped bring to Canada would leave him dead in a ditch'.⁹⁷ By the time the General Council met, therefore, Banks had long gone from both the SIU and Canada. He was succeeded in 1964 by 'Red' McLaughlin (who preferred 'Leonard' to 'Red' when he became an ILO official some years later). Judge Norris had found McLaughlin 'devious' and 'unscrupulous' and '[an] entirely untruthful witness' but he had been elected 'on a reform platform' and had set out to make himself and the Canadian District acceptable to the mainstream movement.⁹⁸

If minutes of the General Council meeting on Friday, 30 July 1965 were taken, no copy exists and no reference has ever been made to them. The official *Proceedings*

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of the 1965 Congress in Copenhagen confirm (p315) that the General Council met that day to consider the Seafarers' Section's 'resolution' but say nothing about what happened there. There is, however, a cross-reference to p263 which covers the last moments of the plenary session on the morning of 2 August. It records De Vries as having passed on fraternal greetings from the Trawler and Line Fishermen's Union of South Africa and the same paragraph continues:

'He went on to tell delegates that seafarers' delegations from a number of countries (United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Greece, United States, Italy and Japan) were of the opinion that the [Seafarers' Section] resolution ...recommending the expulsion of the Seafarers' International Union of North America should not be pressed. It was felt that there was now no need to call a further meeting of the General Council.'

De Vries was followed by Paul Hall, who 'expressed gratitude to the General Secretary and all organizations from the Seafarers' Section for withdrawing their resolution.' ⁹⁹

And that is all there is to be found in the official record. If anyone took notes, no-one seems ever to have written them up. Perhaps it was decided that De Vries's

announcement said all that anyone needed to know. The writer was present at the meeting and remembers that the motion to expel the SIU was moved by Bill Hogarth, General Secretary of the British NUS, and seconded by Don Secord of the

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CBRT. Paul Hall, in the SIU's defence, made no attempt to justify or excuse Banks's conduct but asked the General Council to understand that Banks had been his *friend* and that he, Paul Hall of Inglebrook, Alabama, lived his life by the principles of those parts (the Southern accent seemed much stronger than usual) which put loyalty to friends beyond price. He was begging his audience to allow his conscience to rest easy and not to insist that he disown his friend, but to take on trust his and the SIU's deep attachment to the ITF and its great cause. It was an enormously effective performance and he clearly worked great rhetorical magic on the GC members, very few of whom were from seafarers' unions and as engaged with the issue as the seafarers were. When Hall finished, Hogarth and company knew their cause was lost. No-one called for a vote and the session did not end as much as fade away.

iv. The more positive side to the American entry

The ILA, the Teamsters and, above all, the SIU gave the ITF leadership much grief and there must at the time have been more than one 'old' affiliate which wondered why the ITF should have brought so much trouble on its own head. Some mention has therefore to be made of the affiliation of a number of American organizations which gave the ITF absolutely *no* trouble of any kind and, better still, made some

contribution beyond simply paying up. The International Association of Machinists (IAM) affiliated in 1950 on behalf of its large membership in the airlines' ground maintenance facilities (its railway membership was regarded as covered by

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the IAM's membership of the RLEA). Formerly a pillar of the old AFL, it was one of the AFL-CIO's biggest affiliates and close to its 'establishment' (the IAM's very radical political stance was still to come). Another veteran of the AFL, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU),¹⁰⁰ affiliated in 1961. The first of the former CIO unions to affiliate (Curran's NMU did not arrive until 1955) was the Transport Workers' Union (TWU) in December 1953. Headed at that time by a famous Irish-American personality, Mike Quill, the TWU's substantial membership had spread from its original base in the New York Subway to other urban transport companies and to the airlines, organizing both ground and cabin staff. It was to become a forceful and positive influence in the Civil Aviation Section.

v. Rehabilitation: the Germans

Within weeks of the end of the war in Europe, Hans Jahn had re-established the ITF's presence in Germany. He was one of a tiny group of German trade unionists whose long record of active resistance to the Nazis had won the confidence of the Allied civil and military authorities (though their confidence might have been qualified if they had known of his anti-Semitic instincts¹⁰¹). He had already worked his way through Italy, in the wake of the Allied forces on an ITF mission to promote the

restoration of transport workers' unions. Once a locomotive engineer and official of the pre-war German Railwaymen's Union (*Einheitsverband der Eisenbahner Deutschlands*) he had worked with the ITF from September 1933, first from Holland

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and then from Luxembourg, organizing opposition groups among German railwaymen. He had made his perilous way to Great Britain in October 1940 and from there became a key figure in the attempts by the ITF and the Allied intelligence agencies to sabotage German railway operations. (His wife, also active in the resistance, was captured in Luxembourg when it was overrun and spent much of the war in a concentration camp.)¹⁰² Though seen even by some of his own union in 1950 as 'the paid agent of a foreign power',¹⁰³ Jahn was clearly a very experienced and skilful organizer. As the 'accredited liaison officer of the ITF' and with its 'material, moral and political support' he could take much of the credit for the establishment within the first twelve months of peace of thirteen assorted transport workers' unions in the British, American and French zones. (The Soviet zone was already out of bounds to the ITF and remained so.) The ITF itself claimed that it had 'in many cases [been] instrumental in establishing good relations between the trade unions and the occupation authorities'.¹⁰⁴ The constructive nature of those relations is borne out by the report of the visit of an ITF delegation to Germany in February 1947 to study the state of the port and shipping industries. For example, the delegation was able during its short stay to 'dispel' the authorities' 'apprehension' at the reception British seafarers and dockers might give German seafarers if they were

to sail once more into British ports. Four ships crewed by Germans sailed to Britain within days. The delegation had been prompted partly by the fear felt by ITF Seafarers' and Dockers' Section Conferences of unfair competition within Europe

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from their far 'cheaper' German counterparts. The evidence the delegation found of an emerging trade union movement was clearly comforting.¹⁰⁵

When the ITF Congress convened in July 1948, the President, Omer Becu, was very happy to welcome German affiliates back to an ITF Congress 'for the first time since 1932'. He saw the German trade union movement as 'one of the forces working for a Germany prosperous and in harmony with the rest of the world'. His welcome came, however, after some sombre reflections, all the more relevant because the Congress met at the height of the Berlin crisis, on the need for 'a truly democratic regime' in Germany as 'an essential condition for the achievement of European co-operation and avoidance of another world war'.¹⁰⁶

The two German affiliates whose applications had been accepted by the Executive Committee in April 1948 were the German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) (*Gewerkschaft der Eisenbahner Deutschlands*) and the Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) (*Gewerkschaft öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr*), with hefty memberships of 404,000 and 70,000 respectively.¹⁰⁷ Their path to the ITF

had had to be cleared of two potential obstructions, the first – and less serious – being none of their doing and the second being entirely so.

The first and very transient problem had arisen when the WFTU circularized ITSs 'requiring [them]', as Oldenbroek reported to the Executive Committee in

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March 1947, 'not to admit any German trade unions'. The Executive Committee endorsed John Benstead's reaction: the ITF was 'free to decide [such things] irrespective of any decision by the WFTU' and it was in the interest of 'democratic forces in Germany' for the ITF 'not to leave the question in suspense'¹⁰⁸. The Executive Committee had indeed committed itself in August 1946 to the re-admission of German unions provided they were free of any Nazi associations, were democratically structured and were more than 'local or small-scale organizations'.¹⁰⁹

The last of these conditions reflected the largely spontaneous nature of the German trade union renaissance, for though old hands such as Jahn would have remembered well the union structures as they had been in 1933, there was as yet no particular structure to which any of the new trade unions were expected to conform. Their early efforts could not help but be 'local or small-scale' because unions in the British and American zones were not allowed to operate even on a zonal basis until mid-1946 and, with the exception of railwaymen, that restriction still applied within the French zone at the end of 1947. But administrative, economic and political realities were steadily pushing the western occupying powers together, just one relevant

instance of which was the merging of the railway operations in the British and American zones in October 1946, bringing together a workforce of some 410,000.

The second and much more serious complication came when the German unions themselves regained a large measure of control over their trade union structures

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but found themselves in very deep and increasingly bitter disagreement about what shape those structures should take. In discussions in London in February 1948 with Jahn ('Chief of the Committee for the Amalgamation of the Railwaymen's Unions'), Heinrich Malina ('President of the OeTV of the British Zone') and Adolf Kummernuss ('President of the Hamburg District of the OeTV and the OeTV's International Representative'), the 'ITF Secretaries' (Oldenbroek and Tofahrn?) thought Germany was big enough to accommodate three transport unions. It is likely, though not recorded, that they were thinking of one each for railwaymen; other land transport workers; and maritime workers. Malina and Kummernuss (but 'the latter less emphatically') disagreed. ¹¹⁰

At the beginning of 1948 the OeTV claimed some 100,000 members among the 230,000 railwaymen in the British zone and had 'successfully opposed the affiliation of the Railwaymen's Union to the Trade Union Confederation of the British Zone'.¹¹¹ But Jahn would have disputed the OeTV's claim and it was debatable enough for the ITF to suggest that their railway members' organizational preferences should be confirmed in a secret ballot. ¹¹² In the American zone, now part of the Anglo-

American 'Bizoner', the railwaymen had their own organization, which merged with the railwaymen's union in the British zone at the end of March 1948 to create the GdED.¹¹³ The GdED position on the structural issue was unambiguous: the state railway (*Deutsche Bundesbahn* as it was soon to become) was one 'industry' and

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the rest of 'transport' another. Malina, on the contrary, maintained that the OeTV railway membership was 'practically unanimous' in wanting 'closer integration with public authority workers'. All 'state' employees should be in one 'departmentalized union' and 'state' should be defined very broadly, taking in local and national government and any services they controlled or funded.¹¹⁴ He was inclined to pin much of responsibility for the railwaymen's separatist convictions on Hans Jahn personally. Jahn had been elected to the Executive Committee and General Council of the newly formed national centre, the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)*, on behalf of the OeTV. He resigned those positions on becoming the first President of the GdED and a week after the ITF Oslo Congress in July 1948, a very bitter Malina was reported to have dubbed the GdED a 'yellow' (*gelb*, i.e. 'outlaw') organization. A nervous DGB, anxious not to upset over 400,000 railwaymen who had decided, freely and emphatically, that they wanted a union to themselves, denied that the word 'yellow' had passed anyone's lips, at least within the DGB.¹¹⁵

But Adolf Kummernuss had by then succeeded Malina as the OeTV's President. Kummernuss had worked with Jahn in the earliest days of the anti-Nazi resistance, was caught by the Gestapo in 1935 and survived a brutal imprisonment.¹¹⁶ Old

comradships, however, were not as much help in reducing the mutual tensions as a recognition of the hard facts. (Malina, after all, had also been active in the resistance and, like Jahn, had been an official in the pre-war railwaymen's union, the *Einheitsverband!*)¹¹⁷ Kummernuss knew that the GdED was there to stay and

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that Malina's cause, however principled, was hopeless. And so the OeTV and the GdED learned to live together within the ITF, never very warmly, usually quite warily and sometimes very frostily but always stopping short of overt hostility. The GdED may have been outnumbered by the OeTV within the DGB, but it had the edge within the ITF and the OeTV itself consolidated the GdED's lead by deciding with effect from 1951 to transfer some 80,000 members in municipal public transport undertakings to another ITS, the International Federation of Unions of Employees in Public and Civil Services (later the 'Public Services International (PSI)'), on the grounds that the municipal transport workers' ultimate bargaining partners were public authorities, not transport operators.

For the GdED, its problem with the OeTV was not the concept of 'industrial unionism', which it positively championed, but its application. Germany's railways, in the form of *Deutsche Bundesbahn*, a state monopoly, indeed came to look much more like an homogeneous 'industry' than the OeTV's 'public services and transport' (*öffentliche Dienste, Transport u. Verkehr*¹¹⁸) package. In the first two or three years of post-war devastation, almost all transport in Germany was 'publicly' owned and

administered, but it was not long before private transport enterprises re-emerged in shipping, the ports, inland navigation and road haulage. Within ten years, the OeTV was much closer to being a 'general' union than the GdED. In reality, neither industrial unionism nor the DGB has ever gone unchallenged. The OeTV has

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constantly had to fight off (not always successfully) many incursions from the *Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft (DAG)*, which represented 'white-collar' or 'salaried' workers, irrespective of their 'industry' and the DAG was soon to give the OeTV some stern competition among, for example, merchant marine officers and airline staff. The GdED faced similar competition from the *Deutsche Beamtenbund*, 'Beamten' being established civil servants, which a high proportion of German railwaymen actually were, and had also to try to keep its locomotive drivers out of a craft union, the *Deutsche Lokomotiv Verband*.

vi ...and the Japanese

Japan was rebuilt after its surrender as a parliamentary democracy, but in the early post war years ultimate power remained with the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), effectively the administration of General Douglas MacArthur. He had few progressive inclinations himself, but the American officials and experts in his administration had rather more. The policy planning department of the SCAP's Labor Division, for example, was eager to apply the requirement of the 'United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan' that 'encouragement shall be given and favor

shown to the development of organizations in labor, industry and agriculture, organized on a democratic basis'.¹¹⁹ A 'Trade Union Law', the first of its kind and drafted by a tripartite group which included an All-Japan Seamen's Union (*Kaiin*) representative (see below), was passed by the Diet in December 1945. It

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guaranteed workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively, sought to secure trade union independence, exempted unions from liability for damages arising from reasonable actions in disputes and set the ground rules for collective bargaining. This basic law was then supplemented over the following two years by laws setting down the bargaining procedures and specifying minimum standards.¹²⁰ The legislation was echoed in the new Japanese constitution itself, drafted by the SCAP and accepted by the Diet in November 1946: the Japanese people had the right to 'minimum standards of wholesome and cultural living' (Article 25) and workers the explicit right 'to organize and to bargain and act collectively' (Article 28).¹²¹

The labour legislation and the seemingly benign political climate gave a great incentive to trade union organization. In the seven months or so from December 1945 to July 1946 trade union membership grew tenfold, from 379,631 to 3,813,665, and belonging to a trade union had been made 'respectable'.¹²² The unions were quick to put their new freedom to use, first within the private sector but then, more militantly still, within the public sector (including notably the railwaymen). Two groups of unions, embryonic 'national centres', had been formed in the summer of

1946: what Price sees as the 'heterogeneous but left-leaning' *Sambetsu* (Harari prefers 'communist-dominated' ¹²³) and the 'more conservative' *Sodomei*, which supported the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP). They jointly demanded substantial wage increases from the conservative Yoshida government late in 1946 for some

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2.6 million government employees. The government rejected the demands and the unions therefore decided on a general strike to begin on 1 February 1947.

MacArthur's emissary ordered the unions to retreat on 22 January but only the *Sodomei* faction did so. MacArthur formally banned the strike on 31 January, had the strike leaders marched off to radio studios and only released them from 'what was effectively military custody' when they broadcast a total surrender, which ironically 'came to symbolize labor's high tide mark'. ¹²⁴

Domestically and internationally the climate had become cold and hostile. The only occupying power that mattered, the United States, was in the legislative hands of conservative Republicans, whose approval of the Taft-Hartley Act in June 1947 should have told the Japanese unions what to expect from their ultimate masters.

The one left-of-centre government Japan was to have in the period, a coalition of the JSP and the 'Democratic Party' (a moderate conservative group), lasted only some nine months and was followed by an administration led by the leader of the Democratic Party which lasted two months fewer but long enough, in the summer of 1948, to bow to the SCAP's 'suggestions' that the 'general welfare' of the country

justified a restriction of the trade union rights so imprudently given to public employees. By October 1948 the formidable and durable Yoshida was again Prime Minister, more than ready to put legislative muscle on the SCAP's 'suggestions'.

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The restrictive legislation which followed had the effect, Harari explains, of fragmenting the Japanese workforce into three clear sectors. The private sector was still covered by the basic labour laws; government employees were removed from them altogether and had to rely on 'independent' arbitration of their claims; and public service workers such as those of the state-owned Japan National Railways (JNR) were brought under a new 'Public Corporation and National Enterprise Labour Relations Law (PCNELRL)'.¹²⁵

The unity with which the Japanese unions had planned their general strike was not to be revived, or even seriously attempted, during the period. *Sambetsu* quickly disintegrated after the strike was aborted in a tide of recriminations which led in July 1947 to the founding of a 'Democratization League' (*Mindo*) to represent a substantial body of trade union members and activists who attributed the February events to the Communist faction's insistence on political rather than 'economic' priorities. A new national centre, the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (*Sohyo*) was founded in July 1950 and promised briefly to be more genuinely inclusive than any of its forerunners until a group of unions, *Kaiin* very prominent

among them, decided that *Sohyo* had also become too left-wing and confrontational. *Kaiin* disaffiliated from *Sohyo* in 1953 and with some like-minded unions, such as the textile workers, founded a smaller, but still substantial centre, the All Japan Trade Union Congress (*Zenro*). In 1964 *Zenro* joined with constituents of the small but

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resilient *Sodomei*, also long disaffected from *Sohyo*, to create *Domei*.¹²⁶

By the end of the period, all the major Japanese unions belonged either to the left-wing *Sohyo* or the centre-moderate left, *Domei*. The political alignment of the *Sohyo* unions was typically with the JSP, which was itself to the left of the Socialist International spectrum, but all the *Sohyo* unions also had Japanese Communist Party (JCP) factions of varying, and sometimes critically significant, size. The typical *Domei* unions chose to be much more politically reticent, stressing their representational and bargaining functions and rejecting with special vehemence the JCP or JSP 'fellow traveller' activists who, they alleged, placed politics above the members' practical interests. These political characterizations will serve the purpose of this chapter, with two riders: firstly, that whilst all the *Sohyo* unions were on the left, some were much more to the left than others;¹²⁷ secondly, that *Domei's* 'apolitical' stance was disingenuous and remained so until it eventually promoted the 'Democratic Socialist Party'.

The progress and problems of the post-war Japanese movement, and its deep political divisions, form an essential backdrop to any consideration of the nature and contribution of the ITF's Japanese membership over the period, all the more so because the ITF's earliest affiliations included champions of each camp: the Japan National Railway Workers' Union (*Kokuro*) of *Sohyo* and *Kaiin* of *Zenro/Domei*.

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The ITF's first contact with Japan, however, had come soon after the war when it tracked down *Kaiin*'s former General Secretary, M. Yonekubo. *Kaiin* had affiliated in 1929, unique in Japan both in its strength – 92,521 members by 1932¹²⁸ – and in its international commitment. Its brave and lonely opposition to Japan's militaristic governments in the 1930s had provoked decrees ordering its disaffiliation from the ITF and, finally, its dissolution. Japanese unions had to wait on permission from 'the US authorities' before they could affiliate internationally and the first batch, consisting of *Kaiin*, *Kokuro*, the Municipal Transport Workers (*Toshiko*), the General Federation of Taxi Workers Unions and the Japanese Travel Bureau Workers' Union were affiliated in December 1949.¹²⁹

Despite their often fierce political disagreements, the Japanese affiliates were always ready to make the compromises and accommodations needed for them to function as a national group within the ITF system. Their implicit approach was that if the ITF's policies were more than a union could stomach, then it should leave, as the General Federation of Private Railway Workers (*Shitetsu*) did in July 1953,¹³⁰ but for

so long as a union remained affiliated it was obliged to co-exist with its compatriots and not to export Japanese domestic quarrels. The arrival of the Japanese affiliates accounts almost entirely for the steep rise in the ITF's Asia/Pacific membership (see Table 1) in 1950. *Kaiin* (which covered the large and growing Japanese deep-sea fishing fleet as well as the merchant marine) arrived with 145,229 members

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and *Kokuro* brought 450,000. *Toshiko* had a substantial 30,000 and the taxi and travel bureau workers helped push the total to 631,587. Though both the big affiliates trimmed their memberships to 100,000 (*Kaiin*) and 386,967 (*Kokuro*) for 1951, the arrival that year of *Shitetsu*'s 100,000 brought the total to 622,567 – giving the Japanese a substantial (but short-lived) majority (some 90,000) over the German affiliation.¹³¹

By the end of 1964 the *Kokuro* membership had been hammered down to 270,000 after taking heavy membership casualties in its war with the JNR management and the government over the repressive measures in the Public Corporations and National Enterprise Labour Relations Law (PCNELRL), of which more below. The ITF's loss had been partly compensated by the affiliation of the locomotivemen's union, the National Railway Motive Power Union (*Doro*),¹³² in July 1958 and the All Japan Express Workers' Union (*Zennittsu*) in August 1963. *Kaiin* had also recovered to 120,000. The Japanese total membership of 503,000 was by then established as

the fourth strongest, nationally, in the ITF, exceeded only by the Americans (1,024,900), the British (911,500) and the Germans (541,500).

The PCNELRL, which was passed in November 1948,¹³³ denied public corporation employees (most importantly the railwaymen and postal workers) the right to strike; heavily qualified the collective bargaining process by requiring the Diet's specific

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approval for the funding of any settlement; and restricted the holding of union membership and office to corporation employees. *Kokuro's* (and, to a lesser extent, *Doro's*) struggle against these restrictions was enormously costly and, by the end of the period, still indecisive. *Kokuro* would call strikes to win the right to strike; the management would impose sanctions of varying severity, from dismissal to the withholding of pay increments, on thousands of strikers; and at vast cost to the union treasury, *Kokuro* would indemnify its members against any losses arising from their support of the strikes. At international level, the ITF joined with the ICFTU and other ITs (notably the postal workers' PTTI) in putting the Japanese government under embarrassing pressure within the ILO on the related issue of its failure to ratify the basic ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association.¹³⁴

vii. France and Italy: large losses and smaller gains

The ITF admitted in the Report on Activities to the 1948 Congress that 'the uncertain position at the end of the war' had made it impossible to give 'a true picture of the

membership of the ITF at January 1, 1946',¹³⁵ hence the presentation of the membership data in the report to the 1946 Congress under various headings in an attempt to indicate (or guess at) how 'effective' (i.e. real) an affiliation was.¹³⁶

Some of the entries were patently and optimistically speculative. In the group of 'Affiliations between 1940 and 1946', for example, under *Czechoslovakia* the

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'Transport Workers' Section of Trade Union Centre' appears on the strength of a claim to be the 'successor' to the ITF's two Czechoslovak affiliates 'before Munich'.¹³⁷ The 'Nominal affiliations (effective before the war)' group included the *French dockers'* and railwaymen's unions; two affiliates from *Hungary* (the tramwaymen's union and the dockers' and road transport workers' union); two from *Poland* (the railwaymen and the transport workers and seamen); one from *Romania* (dockers and road transport workers); and three from *Yugoslavia* (tramwaymen, railwaymen and seamen). None of these 'affiliations' ever became 'effective' within the period, in the great majority of cases for political reasons that will be discussed in Chapter V and which were exemplified by the ITF's refusal to become a department of the WFTU.¹³⁸

Thus, the two French unions which *did* resume their affiliation after liberation, the road transport workers' and seafarers' unions (*Fédération Nationale des Moyens de Transports* and *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Maritimes*), had both left the ITF

by the end of 1947. The road transport workers' union was expelled by the ITF General Council in November 1947 after informing the ITF that it had 'decided to suspend payment of affiliation fees to the ITF until its [the ITF's] integration in the WFTU was settled.' The seafarers' union was more constitutionally scrupulous: its congress decided in September 1947 to withdraw the union from the ITF 'after meeting its obligations' and to call on the WFTU to set about establishing an 'International Trade Department' for transport workers. ¹³⁹

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Mussolini had ensured that the ITF had no formal Italian affiliations between the world wars, other than of small, clandestine, courageous, but largely token, anti-fascist groups. ¹⁴⁰ The ITF set out to make good that weakness even before the Allied forces had reached Rome. Pier Paolo Fano, an Italian trade unionist in British exile, arrived in Bari in southeast Italy as the ITF's representative in December 1943 to find that a veteran of the pre-fascist railwaymen's union was already organizing effectively, as were other activists in the liberated areas. Within a few weeks an inaugural railwaymen's congress had met and agreed the rules for a revived and free railwaymen's union, which by August 1944 had 50,000 members, some 70% of the potential. The ITF also helped set up a tramwaymen's union, a dockers' union and, working from Naples, a seafarers' union. Most unexpected of all was the founding in Rome towards the end of 1944 of an Air Transport Workers' Trade Union (*Sindacato Gente dell'Aria*), one of the first of its kind. ¹⁴¹

Accompanied by Becu (who soon claimed much of the credit ¹⁴²) and encouraged and advised at one period by Hans Jahn, Fano also presided over the committee which organized the national congress that 'resurrected' the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) as a national centre in 1944. The ITF intended him to run the Italian Office which the Management Committee agreed in October 1944 to set up in Rome but Fano joined the ILO at the end of 1945 and the office was entrusted to another former exile and veteran trades unionist, Giuseppe Sardelli.

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The total Italian membership for 1946 was reported to the 1948 Congress as an impressive 200,000 for the three unions which made membership returns for that year: railwaymen (140,000), tramwaymen (50,000) and civil aviation workers (10,000). No returns were submitted, however, by the seafarers and the dockers and none was made by any of the unions for 1947. For 1948 the Secretariat signalled that all the Italian memberships were 'estimates', ¹⁴³ or rather wishful thinking in the face of the reality that the Italian unions had, by the end of 1947, gone the way of the French, and for identical reasons. The Report on Activities to the 1948 Congress contained both a specific and a general forewarning. A short note on the Italian Dockers' Federation reported that 'it declined to pay affiliation fees on the ground [sic] that it did not yet consider itself as affiliated'. Sardelli reported to the ITF in September 1947 that the CGIL 'had given orders' to the tramwaymen's union 'to cease paying affiliation fees to the ITF' and that 'Communist influence in the CGIL ...[was]...very strong.' ¹⁴⁴ There were no Italian delegates at the 1948 Congress, just

two 'guests', one of whom had attended the 1946 Congress as the tramwaymen's delegate. Pier Paolo Fano, now representing the ILO, perhaps remembered uncomfortably the part that he (and through him the ITF) had played in the re-birth of the CGIL,¹⁴⁵ for it was that 'Communist-dominated' centre which early in 1948 ordered its affiliates to end 'any official relations' with the ITF or its Italian representative.¹⁴⁶

The same ideological strains which had underlain the departure of the French and

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Italian transport unions from the ITF had proved every bit as unsupportable domestically. The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) encouraged and financially supported anti-communist groups (see Chapter V) which broke away from their unions – and thus from the French (CGT) and the Italian (CGIL) national centres – in the course of 1947 and 1948. In France, they first banded together as a *Force Ouvrière* or 'workers' force' faction within the CGT, taking a name once attached to a workers' group in the war-time resistance, and they then institutionalized their disaffection in December 1947 by founding an alternative national centre, the *Confédération Générale du Travail - Force Ouvrière (CGT-FO)*, soon known simply as '*Force Ouvrière (FO)*'.¹⁴⁷

A group of 'non-Communists' among the CGT railwaymen ('non-' and 'anti-' were not always synonymous) had preceded the emergence of the FO faction and founded an 'autonomous' union which applied for affiliation with the ITF in December 1947. But

by then the FO had been transformed into a national centre and had set about establishing various transport workers' unions. The ITF Management Committee decided to send a mission comprising Becu, Ehlers (a French member of the General Council) and Tofahrn to Paris and Dunkirk in January 1948 and its report led the MC to grant £2,000 to help the FO transport workers' unions on their way. In March 1948 the autonomous railwaymen's union was merged with an FO railwaymen's group to become the FO railwaymen's union and in that same period

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FO unions were formed for seamen (ratings), merchant marine officers, dockers, road transport workers, and workers in nationalized enterprises (primarily civil aviation employees).¹⁴⁸ All but the merchant marine officers (who followed in July 1948) were accepted by the EC in April 1948. By January 1950 the total French membership, all of it attached to the FO, stood at 72,600. It was more than negligible but far too small realistically to challenge the CGT transport unions which, in the railways and ports especially, still represented the great majority.

The CGT unions were not the FO's only competition. A 'Christian' (essentially Roman Catholic) national centre, the CFTC (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens*), had a small but determined following among transport workers, with a railwaymen's union which complicated an organizational scenario already crowded by the existence of many 'autonomous' unions, most of them of the 'craft' variety (including, inevitably, one for footplate staff). Most were small and of

little more than nuisance value but the *Fédération des syndicats d'ingénieurs, cadres, techniciens et agents de maîtrise des chemins de fer de France*, representing the 'white-collar' technical and supervisory staff on the state railways was a more substantial and influential body altogether. Known within the ITF (and henceforth here) as the 'Cadres', it had been founded in 1920 and had twice belonged to, and twice left, the CGT, its departure from which in 1948 had signalled its rejection of the CGT's Communist leadership. On that, at least, it saw eye to eye

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with the FO, but the Cadres prized their 'craft' (or class?) roots and were wary of the FO railwaymen's union, which claimed jurisdiction for all sections and grades. The Cadres were too well entrenched and too well endowed for the FO union to be any kind of challenge and its affiliation was agreed by the EC in August 1959, with a pious and constitutionally unenforceable note in the relevant minute instructing the General Secretary to 'point to the importance of its [i.e. the Cadres'] consulting with fellow ITF affiliates [i.e. the FO railwaymen's union] on industrial matters and action'.¹⁴⁹ The Cadres, with their 15,820 members, were the first substantial manifestation within the ITF of the FO's less than exclusive claim to the non-Communist transport workers' allegiance. By the end of the period, the autonomous group had been strengthened by affiliations from small but powerful unions organizing civil aviation flying staff, for example, radio officers, cabin crew and (a rare capture) pilots, all categories where the FO (or the other national centres) had little or no membership.¹⁵⁰

The Italian return to the ITF was more halting and less tidy than the French. After the CGIL effectively cut the Italian affiliates off from the ITF, Sardelli, the ITF representative, was reported to have worked with 'other representatives of the anti-Communist minority [sic] ... with a view to eventually recapturing control of the unions'. 'Other groups', however, were working closely 'with different political parties – Social Democratic, Republican and Roman Catholic', an approach which the ITF disliked. It had instead 'constantly urged ... that an endeavour should be made to

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organize on an exclusively trade union basis'.¹⁵¹ But the ITF's aversion to what it saw as destructively divisive politicking was never likely to carry much weight in the far wider context of Italian domestic politics and cold war tensions (see Chapter V) and, to thicken the political stew, the anti-Communist forces were divided among themselves. In October 1948 the Christian Democrats ('Roman Catholics' as the ITF reports described them at the time) formed what became the *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL)*. In June 1949, the Social Democrats and Republicans formed an 'Italian Federation of Labour' which later became the *Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL)*. These developments (much simplified in the telling here!) necessitated building up 'new trade unions from scratch', but three of them were affiliated by early 1950¹⁵² and affiliates from both the CISL and the UIL camps arrived over the following years. By January 1965 the ITF had twelve Italian affiliates with a declared membership of some 135,600.¹⁵³ But, as in France, the far left, represented in Italy by the CGIL, dominated key sectors such as the railways and the ports. And though

the CISL (the larger of the two) and the UIL unions claimed substantial memberships, they were almost all poor enough to pay their affiliation fees at a reduced rate (and sometimes in arrears at that).

viii. First steps into the 'regions'

The ITF's expansion into North America had been seen as welcoming home some close relatives who had been keeping their distance until the family changed some

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of its off-putting ways (most of them political). What was still known to the general public in the 1950s as the 'underdeveloped' world, and to the 'free' international movement as the 'regions', was much more vast and difficult territory for the ITF, taking in most of Africa, Asia (excepting China, which was never a serious prospect) and Latin America. The few unions known to the ITF in the regions and the tiny number of them that had ever been affiliated (usually fleetingly) were characteristically very frail, very unrepresentative and often politically beleaguered. They operated for the most part in colonial or, as the period progressed, newly ex-colonial societies and in predominantly agricultural economies. The practicalities of the ITF's venture into the regions are described in Chapter III, and the motives and principles driving it are discussed in Chapters V and VI.

The overall numbers are set out in Tables 1 to 4 and 7. Tables 5 and 6 are relevant in respect of Japan. Table 3 conveys the extent of the geographical redistribution of

the ITF's total membership from 1946, when the regions accounted for only 6.82% of the whole, to 1964 when they amounted to 26.83%. The regional growth looks even more striking in terms of the absolute number (Table 2) and the regional distribution (Table 4) of affiliated organizations. The three regions together could only muster seventeen affiliates in 1946 but by 1964 had 177, more than ten times as many and making up almost 57% of the affiliated organizations worldwide. These examples illustrate, however, a less robust characteristic of regional affiliation which is

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illustrated in Table 7: the average membership in 1964 of each African affiliate (2,700), of each Latin American (4,400), and even of each Asian (19,000 including the Japanese and 8,700 without them) fell well short of the European 21,000 and even shorter of the North American 66,100. ¹⁵⁴

The biggest national group of affiliates in *Africa* never exceeded Ghana's 38,800 for 1958, the year when Kenya's reached a peak of 30,300. The Ghanaian unions departed soon afterwards under pressure from their government, the leader of the 'Pan-African' movement which wanted all African institutions to give their first loyalty to purely African international bodies. The ICFTU bore the brunt of the effect on African participation in the international trade union movement, whilst the ITSs on the whole retained their memberships. For quite different reasons, the ITF's Kenyan membership had slipped to 23,600 by 1964, just exceeding Nigeria's 22,000.

'Rhodesia' was a consistent presence throughout, rising from 8,800 in 1956 to 19,000 in 1964, which gave it third place.

The Japanese membership was by far the biggest in the *Asia* region. But the Indian representation was also very heavy, matching any but the largest in Europe, though for much of the period it consisted almost entirely of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF). The official reporting of the AIRF membership was sometimes inconsistent – in the 1948 Congress report '475,000' for 1947 became just a question mark in the report to the 1950 Congress ¹⁵⁵ – but the often extreme variations in the

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membership the AIRF declared to the ITF had more to do with what it could afford for affiliation fees than with counting heads. Its membership was never less than huge and always greater than it could afford to pay for. The ITF's affiliations from Pakistan (which had taken over a sizeable part of the Indian sub-continental railway system) were nominally strong for much of the 1950s, peaking at 142,000 in 1956, but the two organizations which made up almost all the declared membership, the Pakistan Transport Workers' Federation and the East Pakistan Railway Employees' League, were unstable and destitute. The first affiliation from the Philippines came in 1958 and towards the end of the period the affiliations from the Republic of Korea, amounting to a membership of 70,600 in 1964, were a growing force. The ITF's most miserable performance was in the two countries, Australia and New Zealand, where traditional links and almost generic affinities ought to have brightened the ITF's prospect no end. But the biggest of the Australian unions – and especially the

dockers' and seamen's unions – were Communist-led and gave their loyalties to the WFTU. The position in New Zealand was only a little less unfriendly.

The raw statistics of the ITF's *Latin American* experience (Tables 1 and 2) show a steep rise in the number of affiliates from 1954 onwards but a markedly less steady progress in the affiliated membership over the same term – 121,000 in 1954, 439,000 in 1958, slumping to 164,000 in 1960, but back to 438,000 in 1964. The very volatile state of the Argentinian movement and of the ITF's relationship with it

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(see Chapter V) has a big bearing on the bumpy membership progress:

Argentina contributed 107,000 of the Latin American total of 123,000 for 1948 but it did not feature at all from 1950 to 1955. By 1956 it was back to 84,000, dropped to 20,000 in 1960 but had reached 124,000 by 1964. Pre-Castro Cuba entered the ITF in 1949 with some 58,000 but was effectively lost when Castro came to power in January 1959. Brazil arrived in mid-1956 with 192,000 members of the inland transport workers' confederation (*Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Transportes Terrestres*), but in 1958 the membership sank to a more affordable 50,000. For some years Mexico was represented only by a small tramwaymen's union (*Alianza de Tranviarios de México*)¹⁵⁶ but was bolstered in 1956 by the 50,000 members of the busmen's union (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Auto-Transportes y Anexos*). The biggest prize, the national railwaymen's union, was still to be won when the period ended. Venezuela had been closed to the ITF before the

overthrow of the Jiménez dictatorship in 1958 but by 1964 it was contributing 67,000 members. Chile had been a substantial presence from the mid-1950s and in 1964 had 52,700 members, with particular strength in the maritime sector.

ix. The British or the dis-United Kingdom

In 1946 the British membership of 963,000 was 51% of the declared total of 1,891,000 (see Tables 1 and 6). In 1945 British affiliates had paid some 54% of the total affiliation fees collected for that year.¹⁵⁷ The National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Transport & General Workers' Union (TGWU) were among the

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largest of the ITF's affiliates throughout the period, though the NUR membership dropped from a peak of 434,009 in 1948 to 266,303 in 1965, as what was then known as 'automation' cut deeply into railway jobs. The TGWU declared 250,000 members for 1946 and 350,000 with effect from 1959. The white-collar Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) – known as the 'Railway Clerks' Association' until the late 1940s – and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) were substantial affiliates throughout, even though ASLEF lost almost half its membership (from 90,361 in 1948 to 45,561 in 1965) as steam traction disappeared and firemen were phased out. The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers' Union (USDAW) contributed 40,000 road transport members, most of whom worked for the British Co-operative retail movement. The National Union of Seamen (NUS), a founder-member of the ITF, declared 55,000 for 1946 and 60,000 from 1950.¹⁵⁸ The Navigators' and Engineer Officers' Union (NEOU) affiliated in

1946, following the voluntary dissolution of the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association (IMMOA).¹⁵⁹ It became the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association (MNAOA) in 1956 following a merger with an independent marine engineers' union. (The 'Airline' in the new title recognized the growing importance of its flight engineer membership.)

The British affiliation lost only a little weight over the period, despite the many pressures on jobs and manning levels, particularly on the labour-intensive railways.

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The 963,000 of 1946 had reduced to 912,000 in 1964 but the British still accounted for over 18% of a total to which 312 organizations were by then contributing. They were outnumbered by the USA from 1952 onwards but the British were only 113,000 short by 1964 (see Table 5) and there was a steadiness and solidity to the British membership that the Americans, for reasons that have already been explored, never attained.

The size alone of the British contributions of members and of money was enough to secure respect and due influence for the British affiliates, as did the less tangible factors of the British movement's historical prestige, the basing of the ITF's headquarters in London and, almost certainly, Britain's war record. There was no British General Secretary during the period (though Lyon ¹⁶⁰ thought Oldenbroek was as 'British' as he was Dutch) and only one Assistant General Secretary (Lawrence

White) but there were three British Presidents: Benstead, Deakin and Cousins, the last for two terms (1958-1960 and 1962-1964). The British claimed most of the chairmanships in the maritime and civil aviation sections for much of the period, though the inland transport sections tended, probably by tacit agreement, to be left largely to the Central Europeans. The written proceedings of the ITF Congresses in the period record a prominent British participation in all the debates of any significance, as Chapter V will confirm. But, more impressionistically, those pages often give off a distinct sense of British self-importance, of an assumption

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by British speakers, perhaps unconsciously, that Congress needed always to know what the British thought before it could come to a sensible conclusion about anything. But in fact there was rarely any such a thing as a *British* view. For almost all the period, the largest two British members, the TGWU and the NUR, were on very cool terms at best and at worst were at each other's throats as a great gulf opened between their political stances, at least at leadership level, from 1947 onwards. It was made all the harder for the non-British affiliates to understand their positions when both of them did an about-face in a matter of months in 1956-57.

John Marchbank, General Secretary of the NUR and Vice President of the ITF died suddenly shortly before the ITF's Zürich Congress in May 1946. He was succeeded in the NUR by John Benstead who was appointed immediately after the 1946 Congress as President of the ITF, a very rapid promotion which had almost certainly

been intended for Marchbank. Benstead left the NUR and the ITF in September 1947 to become a member of the British Transport Commission, the body given overall control of the nationalized transport industry. Howell writes that Jim Figgins, who succeeded Benstead, was 'widely seen as close to the CP'.¹⁶¹ Lyon was typically blunter: Figgins was a 'vile British Communist ... the only communist on the Executive Committee'¹⁶² and was happy to see him go when the 'British affiliates were persuaded under pressure to remove him' at the 1950 Congress in favour of Deakin.¹⁶³ Figgins's personal standing was further diminished during the 1952

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Congress when the Railwaymen's Section Conference removed him from its Section Committee to make way for Bill Webber, who was about to become General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) and stood aggressively on the right of the Labour Party.¹⁶⁴ Figgins retired from the NUR in 1953 to be succeeded by Jim Campbell under whom Howell describes the NUR as still 'left of centre on many issues'.¹⁶⁵ Campbell, however, was perceptibly edging away from Figgins's position towards the mainstream when in November 1957, by cruel irony, he was killed in a road accident in the course of an official visit to the Soviet Union. The election some weeks later of Sidney Greene as his successor brought an abrupt end to the NUR's left-wing orientation, for Greene was (and the members would have known it) 'firmly on the right'.¹⁶⁶

Arthur Deakin, became the *de facto* General Secretary of the TGWU when Ernest Bevin joined the British coalition government in 1940 and was still its General Secretary when he died suddenly on 1 May 1955. Always a powerful figure in the ITF, as any leader of the TGWU would be, he had become Vice President in 1952, Acting President from 1 January 1954 and President from July 1954. As a militant leader of the right within the British TUC and the Labour Party, he had also had an agonized and inglorious spell as President of the WFTU (see Chapter V). The election of his successor was already in progress at the time of his death and produced a predictable winner, the Assistant General Secretary, A.E. 'Jock' Tiffin,

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who had made a Deakinesque speech at the ITF's 1954 Congress on a document concerning 'The Fight for Democracy and Peace' when, with Deakin looking on from the presidential chair, he had made Jim Campbell a special target.¹⁶⁷ It will never be known, however, how faithful Tiffin would have been to Deakin's memory over time, for he died in late December 1955. Meanwhile, Frank Cousins, who as National Secretary of the union's Road Transport Group had run a respectable third to Tiffin in the General Secretary election, had been appointed as Assistant General Secretary. Goodman has written that Cousins would have had 'virtually no chance' of becoming Assistant General Secretary 'had Deakin lived to preside over his succession'¹⁶⁸ but Cousins won the election (unusually, in those days, a ballot of the membership) by a massive majority from the highest turn-out in the union's history.¹⁶⁹

Cousins had been an active member of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section Committee but Deakin had been careful not to let him near an ITF Congress. The ITF's Vienna Congress in July 1956 was the first Cousins had attended, as he was quick to tell the delegates, and it was one of his first appearances anywhere as General Secretary. Newcomer though he was, he was elected Vice President of the ITF by the General Council. Nothing he said in Vienna, where his contributions were uncharacteristically low-key, signalled his performance at the British TUC less than two months later when he proposed the total rejection of the

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Conservative government's policy of wage restraint, leaving 'old guards ... in disarray and old alliances shattered'.¹⁷⁰

It is impossible to know whether the course of the long and costly London bus strike from 5 May to 21 June 1958 would have taken a different course if Campbell, politically close to Cousins, had not died in December 1957. By Nina Fishman's careful account it is very unlikely. What Goodman termed Cousins's 'ingenuously sanguine' expectation of support from the railwaymen 'at least the underground drivers'¹⁷¹ was indeed misplaced, for in May, with the busmen's strike in its second week, the government sanctioned a settlement of the railway unions' own claims that was too generous to be refused and it was extended to the London Underground workers on 20 May. Sidney Greene, who was now leading the negotiations for the

NUR would have thought it madness not to take the money. The 'moderate majority' within the TUC shared the resentment felt by the 'old guards' at Cousins's presumption in presenting the strike as a common cause and the Minister of Labour, Iain Macleod, was advised that they 'wanted Cousins taken down a peg'.¹⁷²

The strike ended messily, angrily and with little to show for the busmen's loyal and heavy sacrifices. The divisions among its British affiliates over the strike meant that it was reported only very briefly in ITF documents and that the TGWU made no attempt to seek the ITF's formal support. Like the TUC, however, the ITF saw no problems

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with financial aid and it agreed in May 1958 to advance £5,000 (a lot of money to the ITF, almost 10% of its affiliation fee income for 1958¹⁷³) in the hope that 'a selected number of affiliates' would 'help finance the donation'¹⁷⁴ which they 'largely' did.¹⁷⁵ Cousins never referred to the strike during the ITF Congress in Amsterdam in July 1958 and immediately the Congress ended the General Council elected him as President in succession to Hans Jahn.

Within the TGWU and the NUR, as personified by Cousins and Greene, the mutual resentment stoked by the busmen's strike clearly underlay a very public and destructive clash at the ITF's 1960 Congress in Berne, which was bound to be a tense event because of deep divisions over the succession to Becu who was about to leave for the ICFTU (see Chapter III). Cousins coped well in the chair but when it

came to the election of the Executive Committee for the coming term he was challenged by Greene for the British seat. The Constitution at the time allowed for only one elected seat per country and neither Greene nor Cousins would withdraw. A vote of the whole Congress was taken to choose the British candidate and Greene, obviously backed by the American RLEA's million and more votes, won comfortably by 2,111,000 to 1,787,600. But his win produced too many railwayman candidates and Greene lost out to Frank Hall of the Canadian RLEA in a further vote. It was an outcome that the American delegates – all at sea procedurally in the absence of a sick Lyon – had not foreseen and Ed Hickey, the labour lawyer on the RLEA

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delegation, challenged the result by arguing that some of the winners had achieved only 'pluralities' and not the 'majorities' demanded by the Constitution. Cousins, still in the chair and in no mood to facilitate Sid Greene's resurrection, dismissed Hickey's submission and the delegates – probably unsure (were Cousins and the interpreters any surer?) what a 'plurality' was – supported his ruling.¹⁷⁶ The two British contenders were left with entirely negative consolations: for Greene that he had toppled Cousins from the Presidency and the EC; and for Cousins that Greene failed at the last to win a seat himself.

When he came to the President's customary closing speech,¹⁷⁷ Cousins disposed quickly of the usual thank-yous and directed an oratorical salvo at the RLEA. 'If the RLEA wanted a President of the ITF who would look at their card vote before taking

a decision, they had done right in voting him out of office'.¹⁷⁸ He also regretted that 'the American State Department should have thought fit to interfere in the work of the Congress', a charge he did not elaborate, but was possibly a general swipe at the RLEA's ring-masters, as he saw them.¹⁷⁹

Cousins had already made it clear that he would not join the Executive Committee as a 'co-opted' member and Greene never so much as mentioned the possibility. And so the next two years passed without a formal British presence on the Executive Committee, although the new General Secretary, Pieter de Vries, went out of his way

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to keep in close touch with both Cousins and Greene and consulted them on anything important. Meanwhile, he laid the ground for a radical shaking up of the Constitution (see Chapter III) which meant that both Greene and Cousins could occupy the two more or less reserved British seats on the new Executive Board which was elected at the 1962 Congress, where the General Council also restored Cousins to the Presidency which he then held until he joined the Labour Government in October 1964.

x. Summary

The emphasis in this chapter has been on those factors and developments in the spread and nature of the ITF's membership over the period which had political significance and consequences, though they may not always have been obvious or

explicitly acknowledged. Oldenbroek, for example, first set out to argue that the ITF had to set politics (that is, its traditional social-democratic stance) to one side if the Americans were ever to join, but, clever and clear thinker that he was, he would have known that any such abnegation would in itself be a political act. In the event, it was politics, that is the need to save the ITF from the communists, that brought the American railwaymen in. The space devoted to the American affiliates reflects their sheer numbers and impact, and even the more sleazy side to the nature and practices of unions such as the ILA and the Teamsters has political point for what it says about their basic ethos, their ultra 'economism', and the ideologically bereft

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expectations of their members. No wonder the ITF's governing bodies, still in 'traditional' hands, were for much of the time at a loss to take in and react to American trade union bosses like the ILA's Ryan and the Teamsters' Beck (small-time huckster though he was, compared with Hoffa). As for the SIU affair, its initial spat with the British NUS had enough political significance to send the CIA high-flyer, Ed Wilson, to the SIU's aid and the appalling Banks was imported into Canada as a political weapon in the destruction of the CSU which, for political reasons of its own, was probably set to self-destruct anyway. The political aspects of the other cases given prominence here are self-evident and many of them will be revisited and taken further in the next chapter. One final and general point has to be made in order to restore any balance that may have been lost in the process of selection and space restraints. The 'membership' narrative of this chapter highlights many features that

constituted problems or even crises. They were too important to be ignored or understated but they were in no way typical. The great majority of the affiliates turned up, spoke up and paid up, and if the mark of their 'normality' is the absence of a mention here, they may regard it as a compliment.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹ Con.46, *RonA 1938-1946*, pp107-118

² *ibid.* p112

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³ *ibid.*, p112. This comes under a 'Not only European' sub-heading – with an explanation (or confession) that 'European' had too often meant 'German' in respect of 'organic structure, methods of work and trade union ideology'.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp112/113

⁵ If the SIU had members in Canada at that time, it did not declare them.

⁶ Becu found the attitude of the National Maritime Union (NMU), which belonged to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), as obstructive as the SIU had been 'helpful'. MC 1 February 1944, *Report on Activities of ITF New York Office*, p6

⁷ *ibid.*, p8. The railwaymen's unions were 'in no way involved', as Becu put it, because the railway 'brotherhoods' had no CIO rivals.

⁸ Con.1948, *RonA 1946-47*, pp6-9

⁹ At the January 1946 meeting of the EC.

¹⁰ The RLEA's 'token affiliation' was entered as 1,000,000 members.[!]

Con.46, *RonA 1938-1946*, p15

¹¹ Lyon, pp 14-20

¹² Reinalda (1), p231

¹³ Lyon, p17

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp18-19

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp16-17

¹⁶ *RonA 1938-1946*, p86

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¹⁷ He was 'probably' in London on 'liaison committee' business: Lyon, p15

¹⁸ Lyon assumed that Switzer had been 'successful' and that the OSS had then made other arrangements. Sjaholm stayed in Sweden until the end of the war, getting on well with the Swedish railwaymen but apparently having nothing directly to do with the ITF. *ibid.*, pp18-20

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p98. 'What was going on' was the founding of the WFTU.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p99

²¹ EC 14-15 January 1946, *Applications for Affiliation and Minutes*

²² EC 14-15 January 1946, *Minutes*, p12. The \$1,000 (about £250) would have bought the RLEA four delegates and some 23,450 votes.

²³ Lyon, pp100-101

²⁴ Con.48, *RonA 1946-47*, pp6-9

²⁵ Lyon, p106

²⁶ *ibid.*, p106 ‘Some years later he described himself to me as an “international socialist”’.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p103

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp107-109

²⁹ *ibid.* pp109-110

³⁰ Rule XIV, para. 4, of the Constitution. Con. 1946, Annex IV to the *Proceedings*, pp260-272

³¹ EC 22-23 March 1947, *Applications for Affiliation*.

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³² EC 22-23 March 1947, *Minutes*, pp6-8

³³ *ITF Journal*, October-December 1947, Vol.VII, No.5/6, p91 (MRC 159/4/77)

³⁴ There were, at that time, twenty-two unions organizing American railwaymen, either exclusively or partly. Two of them, both important, were not part of the RLEA: the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE).

³⁵ *ITF Journal* op.cit.

³⁶ These treasures of the New Deal also gave the Brotherhoods protection from the anti-labour Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

³⁷ See Lyon's chapter, *The RLEA International Representative*, pp111-125

³⁸ Con. 21-29 July 1950, *Proceedings*, p318

³⁹ His two big speeches to the ITF Congress 1948 give the typical flavour,

Con. 1948, *Proceedings*, pp 172 and 243

⁴⁰ Lyon, p110

⁴¹ There was indeed such a thing as the 'Canadian' RLEA (CRLEA), made up of the 'chiefs' of the brotherhoods' Canadian structures, but the affiliation fees for both the CRLEA and the RLEA were paid from Washington DC.

⁴² The RLEA finally broke up early in 1970. A 'Congress of Railway Unions (CRU)' took over the ITF affiliation at a greatly reduced membership of 451,000.

⁴³ Rayback, pp419-420.

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⁴⁴ Hall died in June 1980, aged 65. His obituary in the SIU's *Seafarers Log* records 'the ugly knife scars' he carried from his early days as an organizer and – probably a reference to his battles with the ILA or the Teamsters – the 'two assassination attempts by organized crime for his work in trying to rid the waterfront of racketeers': www.seafarers.org/phc/phremem.html

⁴⁵ Con.1956, *RonA 1954-1955*, p26

⁴⁶ Rayback, p420

⁴⁷ EC November 1959, *Applications for Affiliation*, pp 1-2 and *Minutes*, p5

⁴⁸ EC April 1959, *Minutes*, p8. Becu's letter to Gibbons of 4 May 1959 (MRC 159/3/0/114) advises him that the Teamsters' affiliation was 'considered as suspended'. The minuted 'notice of withdrawal' would have taken one year (with fees paid) to take effect.

⁴⁹ The 500,000 is given in Con.1958, *RonA 1956-1957*, p31. The 1,444,577 was the membership returned for 1 January 1969: EC April 1959, *Financial Report 1958 and Budget 1959*, p1.

⁵⁰ Rayback pp420 and 432. Those ILA/Teamster links were nothing in comparison with the 'Alliance of Certain Racketeer and Communist-dominated Unions in the Field of Transportation as a Threat to National Security' considered by a Senate Sub- committee in a report issued in December 1958. The 'alliance' consisted of the ILA and Teamsters (racketeers) and the NMU and ILWU (Communists). The report (p1) cites Robert Kennedy as confiding to the *Readers Digest* in October 1958 that there really was a 'planned alliance' of these organizations.

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⁵¹ *Look* magazine, 2 September 1958

⁵² He was released on parole in 1964 and was given a 'full and unconditional' pardon by President Ford in 1975, perhaps in recognition of the Teamsters' enthusiastic and dollar-rich support of the Republican Party. He died in 1993.

⁵³ MRC 159/5/3/1227

⁵⁴ Con.1958, *RonA 1956-1957*, p20. When the report to the Berne Congress in 1960 was obliged to refer back to the vacancy Beck had caused, it could not bring itself to name him! He was an anonymous 'co-opted member' at the first mention and 'the person concerned' at the second. See Con.60, *RonA 1958-1959*, p18

⁵⁵ Rayback, pp432-435. The Teamsters' convention 'expunged the findings of the AFL-CIO Ethical Practices Committee from the record...'

⁵⁶ EC 21-22 July 1958, *Minutes*, pp1-2. A copy of the AFL-CIO statement *Relations*

with ITS is filed with the meeting documents.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ 'Evidently' because there is no record of any such decision in the minutes of the short meeting of the 'new' Executive Committee on 31 July 1958.

⁵⁹ EC December 1958 *RonA*, p1

⁶⁰ EC December 1958, *Minutes*, p5

⁶¹ The 1,444,477 members – an extra 944,577 - offered by the Teamsters with effect from 1959 would have brought in £30,095 - an extra £19,679, or an increase of 36% on the £82,656 the ITF eventually collected in affiliation fees for 1959.

Con.60, Financial Report for 1958 and 1959, p128

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⁶² Robert Taylor describes him as 'an old-style authoritarian socialist' and 'as much an autocrat as Deakin' in *The Labour Party – a Centenary History*, pp210-211.

⁶³ EC December 1958, *Minutes*, p5

⁶⁴ *Con.1962, RonA 1960-1961*, p12

⁶⁵ Daily Telegraph, 20 September 1960.

⁶⁶ MC September 1960, *Appendix to the RonA*

⁶⁷ MC September 1960, *Minutes*, p1

⁶⁸ Marsh and Ryan, n50, p295.

⁶⁹ EC November 1960, *Minutes*, p6

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p1. Yates is recorded as missing the first day of the meeting but this item was probably not reached until the second.

⁷¹ MC February 1961, *RonA*, pp1-2 and annexed *Extract from Proceedings of*

Seafarers' Section Conference, Antwerp, 26 January 1961.

⁷² EC April 1961, *Summary of Decisions*, p1

⁷³ Con.1962, *RonA 1960-61*, pp19,59,and 61

⁷⁴ EC November 1961, *RonA*, p2 and *Minutes*, pp1-2.

⁷⁵ Almost any contemporary issue of the SIU's *Seafarers Log* or the NMU's *Pilot* will have lurid examples of the mutual and savage hostility.

⁷⁶ EC July 1962, *Minutes*, p4.

⁷⁷ EC April 1962, *Minutes*, p4

⁷⁸ EC April 1962, *RonA*, pp2-3

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⁷⁹ EC April 1962, *Minutes*, p4

⁸⁰ The Minutes imply that the *Draft Statement as Amended in Talks Between Wilson and Becu* was distributed at the meeting. The '9462' at the foot of the page presumably stands for 9 April 1962.

⁸¹ EC April 1962, *Minutes*, p5

⁸² EC 23-24 July 1962, *Minutes*, p3

⁸³ *ibid.*, p2

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p3

⁸⁵ Con.1962, *Proceedings*, pp201,202,291-292

⁸⁶ EB May1963, *Supplementary Report of Activities*, pp1-3

⁸⁷ EB May 1963, *Minutes*, pp5-8

⁸⁸ Lipton, pp276-284

⁸⁹ Cited in Edwards, pp132-133

⁹⁰ Edwards, p187

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p83-85. Paul Hall, on the other hand, spoke more than once to the plenary sessions and, as the newly elected Section Vice Chairman, actually presented the seafarers' report to the Congress, opening with a tribute to the retiring Sir Thomas Yates. Banks was present as a member of the SIU delegation but was entered under 'United States'. Con. 1960, *Proceedings*, pp173,182,231, 235,240,243, 248,251,255,256-259,306.

⁹² EB May 1963, Minutes, p7

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⁹³ Con.65, *RonA 1962-64*, p45

⁹⁴ EB November 1962, *Minutes*, p5

⁹⁵ EB June 1964, *Minutes*, p2

⁹⁶ EB November 1964, *Minutes*, p6.

⁹⁷ Edwards, pp18,138,140-141,150-153

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, pp139-140

⁹⁹ MRC 159/1/1/144

¹⁰⁰ The ATU affiliated as the 'Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America' before its name was docked.

¹⁰¹ Hans Jahn's *Tagebuch und Notizen über die Flucht nach London* is a log that he kept of his hazardous escape to London through Vichy France, Spain and Portugal from May to October 1940. It has lain largely unnoticed in the archives of

the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in Bonn (classified as ITF-Bestand/Mappe118) but was brought to the writer's notice by Ellen Babendreyer, a research student at Duisburg University, who was disturbed to find a number of anti-Semitic entries. The Jewish refugees he encountered were 'unbearable' (*unerträglich*), 'bragged about their money' (*pochen auf Geld*), 'pulled long faces' (*machen lange Gesichte*) when made to declare their money. A former socialist lawyer, 'very rich and a Jew' (*schwer reich und Jude*) gives Jahn some small change and is rewarded with a sneer – 'very Jewish' (*ganz Juda!*). The log was never intended for publication, which gives these banal but bitter entries an uninhibited spontaneity and conviction and makes them all the more shocking.

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¹⁰² For Jahn's pre-war activities, see Dieter Nelles in Reinalda, pp176-178, 180-181,190-195,197,198. For Friedel Jahn, *ibid.*, pp180 and 197. For his wartime work, see Reinalda in Reinalda, pp228, 234-236.

¹⁰³ Letter from Jahn to Adolf Kummernuss, 24/8/50 (MRC 159/3/D/98)

¹⁰⁴ Con.1948, *RonA 1946-47*, pp10-11

¹⁰⁵ The *Report of Delegation to Germany* (MRC 159/4/479), issued in June 1947 was addressed to the MC, the EC and affiliates. Many of the Western occupying administrators, even those still in uniform, were 'civilians' at heart and saw free trade unions as vital for the new Germany.

¹⁰⁶ Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp160-161

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p144

¹⁰⁸ EC March 1947, *Minutes*, p11

¹⁰⁹ Con.48, *RonA 1946-47*, p11

¹¹⁰ *Report of Delegation to Germany*, op.cit., p18 and EC April 1948, *Report of Secretariat*, p5

¹¹¹ MC May 1948, *Report*, p2

¹¹² EC 18 July 1948, *Secretariat's Report*, p6

¹¹³ The railwaymen's union in the French zone merged with the GdED in June 1949:
EC October 1949, *Secretariat's Report*, p3

¹¹⁴ EC April 1948, *Report of Secretariat*, p5

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¹¹⁵ *Der Telegraf*, Berlin, of 1 August 1948 quoted Malina as 'dubbing the GdED a yellow organization' ('eine "gelbe Organ" bezeichnet'). The DGB's official publication, *Der Bund*, of 14 August 1948 (p8) denied that any such accusation had been made at its General Council (*Beirat*) meeting in July. ('..von einer "gelben Organ" ist ...kein Wort gesprochen').

¹¹⁶ Nelles in Reinalda, pp177-178

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p181

¹¹⁸ *Verkehr* means more than *Transport*, adding notions of 'communication' and 'traffic' (not to mention sexual intercourse), but in this context the 'transport' suffices.

¹¹⁹ Harari, p53

¹²⁰ Price, pp40-41

¹²¹ Cited in a statement by Japanese delegates to the ITF Railwaymen's Section

Conference, Utrecht, August 1951 (MRC 159/5/3/643)

¹²² Harari, pp55-56

¹²³ *ibid.*, p61

¹²⁴ Unless noted otherwise, this paragraph borrows from Price, pp48-50

¹²⁵ Harari, pp66-67

¹²⁶ *Sohyo's* own account of the demise of *Sambetsu*, the founding of *Sohyo* and the founding of *Zenro/Domei* in Chapter 3 of *This Is Sohyo* is clearly meant to be dispassionate and objective, an intention perhaps easier to honour when writing in 1978, some twenty-five years after the events. Williamson's summary, pp12-15, makes significant use of it.

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¹²⁷ See Carew (1), pp216-219, for an indication of *Sohyo's* relations with the ICFTU.

¹²⁸ Con.32, *RonA* 1930-31, p16

¹²⁹ Con.50, *RonA* 1948-50, p14

¹³⁰ Con 54, *RonA* 1952-53, pp29,35

¹³¹ Con 52, *RonA* 1950-51, p18

¹³² The union was accepted as the 'Japanese Union of Locomotive Engineers (*Kiro*)' but took the more 'modern' name given here soon afterwards. Its existence as a 'craft' union was unwelcome in principle to *Kokuro*, but both unions had much the same militant political stance which facilitated their close co-operation.

¹³³ The SCAP pressure and the government response are covered in Harari, pp62-66

¹³⁴ Con.65, *RonA* 1962-64, pp47-50

¹³⁵ Con,48, *RonA* 1946-47, p5

¹³⁶ Con.46, *RonA 1938-1946*, pp12-16

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp 9,14,16

¹³⁸ Con.48, *RonA 1946-47*, pp101-112. This report covers France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Romanian and Yugoslavian 'nominal' affiliates disappeared without trace.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, pp102-107

¹⁴⁰ Con.32, *RonA 1930-31*, pp 65-68

¹⁴¹ Con 46, *RonA 1938-46*, pp 31-33

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¹⁴² *ibid.*, pp32-33. Reinalda, pp 234-235, recounts Becu's version of his own dashing, if brief mission, to Italy in January 1944 and his claim to almost single-handed success in founding the railwaymen's union. Becu gave a more measured account in the ITF Journal, January/February 1944, pp5-7 (*The Resurrection of the Trade Union Movement in Italy*) (MRC 159/4/76) but made only a passing reference to Fano. To complete the inconsistencies, Becu's rôle goes completely unmentioned in the Report on Activities to the 1946 Congress.

¹⁴³ Con 48, *Ron A 1946-47*, p22

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp17 and 112

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p147

¹⁴⁶ Con.50, *RonA 1948-50*, p17

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp10-12. The founders obviously attached great symbolic importance to

retaining the 'CGT' part of the name but there was never a hope of wresting it from the CGT itself.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p11

¹⁴⁹ EC April 1959, *Applications for Affiliation*, p3 and *Decisions*, p3; EC April 1959, *Minutes*, p4

¹⁵⁰ Con.65, *RonA 1962-64*, p27

¹⁵¹ Con 50, *RonA 1948-50*, pp17-18

¹⁵² *ibid.*, pp17-18,30,64-65

¹⁵³ Con 65, *RonA 1962-65*, p32

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¹⁵⁴ All the tables are based on the data to be found in the Reports on Activities to the Congresses of the period. Every report has a chapter on 'Membership'.

¹⁵⁵ Con 48, *RonA 1946-47*, p22; Con 50, *RonA 1948-50*, p30

¹⁵⁶ Represented at the 1946 ITF Congress by Alida de Jaeger, Fimmen's partner:
Con.46, Proceedings, p144

¹⁵⁷ Con.46, *RonA 1938-46/Financial Report*, pp133-134,136

¹⁵⁸ The NUS membership was much higher than it declared: 61,453 in 1946, peaking at 97,517 in 1957 and 67,036 in 1965: Marsh, p307.

¹⁵⁹ Most serving British masters belonged to the Mercantile Marine Service Association (MMSA), which never joined the ITF.

¹⁶⁰ Lyon, pp44-45

¹⁶¹ David Howell, in Campbell et al, Chapter 4, p138

¹⁶² Lyon, pp50,175

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p184. Lyon's information about 'pressure' probably came from Deakin himself with whom Lyon had by then developed 'a good relationship and friendship'.

¹⁶⁴ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, p106

¹⁶⁵ Howell, p131

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p131

¹⁶⁷ Con.54, *Proceedings*, pp283-285

¹⁶⁸ Goodman, *Brother Frank*, p22

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¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p23. The turn-out was 46%. Cousins won by 503,560 to 77,916.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p41

¹⁷¹ Fishman, citing Goodman, n60/p290,

¹⁷² *ibid.*, n67/p280, citing Goodman

¹⁷³ Con.60, *Financial Report 1958-59*, p128

¹⁷⁴ EC July 58, *RonA*, p13

¹⁷⁵ Con.60, *RonA 1958-59*, pp37-38

¹⁷⁶ Con.60, *Proceedings*, pp248-251

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp261-262

¹⁷⁸ The size of Greene's vote proves that the RLEA voted for him in the British 'primary'. Aside from any railway tribalism, they much preferred him and his politics.

¹⁷⁹ It might just, however, have referred to a complaint by Joe Curran of the American National Maritime Union about an American embassy reception to which his delegation – Democrat and leftish by American standards – was not invited. Con.60, *Proceedings*, pp253-254

Chapter V: Politics

i. The ideological inheritance

Edo Fimmen was quite certain what unions were really for. It was not the 'everyday' struggles to defend workers' standards. They were a necessary but secondary chore. The 'ultimate purpose' of trade unions was 'the destruction of capitalism, the world revolution, the inauguration of socialism'.¹ The aims could only be achieved, however, by action at international level, for capital had broken national boundaries and restraints and the unions had to follow suit if they were to confront the 'associated capitalists of various lands'² successfully. It would be a 'crime' for workers to fight sectoral battles for better wages or conditions when the 'very life' of the movement was endangered.³ 'International direct action' was 'indispensable' and the workers' first step had to be to 'unite under International Trade Secretariats' which had themselves to form links with each other.⁴ A 'general staff' (Fimmen took the class 'war' literally) would have to 'survey the whole fighting field' and decisions on actions and means would have to be taken by a supranational 'supreme authority' made up of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), of which the Soviet Russian trade unions were the only substantial constituent.⁵ The ITSs should become 'organizationally associated' with the IFTU which would thus have two constituents, the national centres and the ITSs. This change in the form of the IFTU would avoid the need to create 'yet another' international organization.⁶

Writing in 1924, he was sure that even revolutionary Russia could not escape capitalist exploitation, and for that 'practical reason' alone, the ITSs needed

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contacts with their Russian 'comrades'.⁷ His enthusiasm for that kind of 'unity' had already cost him the secretaryship of the IFTU in 1923 and it was certainly not shared by all the ITF's affiliates. He had to assure some very hostile critics at the 1926 Congress that he would 'submit' to the ITF EC's decisions but still asserted his right to a mind of his own: 'try not to make a eunuch of me', he pleaded.⁸ The ITF's relations with the IFTU were never afterwards to be more than coolly formal and spasmodic attempts to agree on a new structure for the IFTU in which the national centres and the ITSs would share power always foundered on the central question of the size of the shares.⁹

But whatever the misgivings within the ITF about the nature and extent of 'unity', Fimmen's general thesis that capitalist exploitation was the ultimate evil was invoked in its response to the Munich Agreement, which the ITF Congress in November 1938 denounced as 'tending to perpetuate the domination of the capitalists and employers over the working class' and '[paving] the way for new conflicts'.¹⁰ By 1939, however, neither of the two steps he had identified as prerequisites for the defeat of capitalism had been taken. The ITF had not broken out of its eurocentric confines (see Chapter IV); and the IFTU and the RILU were farther than ever from 'unity'.

Throughout the 1930s, the Russian unions had not shown the slightest interest in a friendly relationship with the ITF, let alone in affiliation, and from 1932 when

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Ernest Bevin was still calling for an understanding of the Soviet Union's 'superhuman effort to rebuild a state on socialistic lines',¹¹ the ITF's own expectations of any rapprochement steadily faded away. When on 30 November 1939, 'to the dismay and horror of the civilised world the Soviet Union brutally attacked her little neighbour of Finland',¹² the ITF produced a film supporting the Finns against the 'unholy alliance between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia'¹³ and contributed to a 'Finnish Relief Fund' sponsored by the British TUC and Labour Party.¹⁴ When Russia became an 'Ally' (and Finland an 'enemy'¹⁵) the all-consuming priorities of survival and then victory seemed to demand a new effort to build bridges. A Soviet Union representative, Mikhail Tarasov of the railwaymen's union, addressed the ITF International Railwaymen's Conference in London in September 1943. The symbolic significance of the event was qualified by his failure in a very long speech, devoted to the heroism of Soviet railwaymen and the successful practice of 'Socialist emulation', to offer any prospect of a relationship with the ITF in future.¹⁶

ii. Broader horizons

Torstoff might or might not be right – there is no way now to count the heads – that only a 'small minority' in the ITF supported Fimmen's 'political leanings,'¹⁷ but by the end of the war Fimmen had gone and his very individual Marxist-syndicalist concept

of the ITF's rôle and purpose had died with him. There is nothing in the documents or the proceedings of the ITF's first post-war

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Congress, in May 1946, that remotely echoes his revolutionary convictions. The Introduction to the Report on Activities to that Congress gave rhetoric ('slogans ... flaming manifestoes') short shrift. The ITF had 'to enter an age of practical achievement' and 'make our contribution towards bringing about ... peace and prosperity ...' ¹⁸ The sweep and vagueness of such a mission and the reticence about means and ends were understandable in the context of a very general report to a Congress but they also reflected the substance and tenor of a document which Oldenbroek had put to the EC in November 1944. ¹⁹ The EC had approved his ideas for 'The Future Programme and Policy of the ITF' in which he came down emphatically in favour of the maximum tolerance and diversity within the ITF and of widening the ITF's membership and influence. His specific application of this ecumenical approach to the case of the American transport unions has already been noted and discussed in Chapter IV. The one essential commitment required of ITF members was their observance of 'the principles of free trade unionism', that is that unions must be free from 'outside control' of any kind. The programme, for both the ITF and the international trade union movement as a whole, would be to 'support the forces – governments or political parties – which defend the interests of the workers'. It would also 'advocate ... the liberation of all oppressed peoples, the ensurance [sic] of peace and the destruction of militarism'. ²⁰

The ITF's 'objects' as set out in the new Constitution adopted at that Congress were just as broad and rhetorical: 'the struggle against economic exploitation

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and political oppression' was to be supported 'thus to make working class solidarity effective' and the wider goal was 'a world order' in which everyone would associate 'in freedom and equality for the promotion of the common welfare by the joint use of the world's resources'.²¹ A resolution on *Full Employment and Social Security* might have been expected to generate an ideological exchange but it was adopted unanimously on the recommendation of a Congress committee. The mover and the only speaker, Vercruyce of the Belgian tramwaymen, saw 'the present economic system' as the source of 'over-production' and so, inevitably, of 'the exploitation of labour'. Neither Vercruyce nor the resolution, however, pursued any critical analysis of the 'system' itself but concentrated on two specific measures, the maintenance of full employment and the application of social security schemes, as the means of protecting workers against the system's effects.²²

For all the ideological fuzziness of the ITF's constitutional 'objects', they are as good a guide as is to be had to the ITF's political stance in those early formative post-war years and it was never refined or further defined in any systematic, analytical way to the end of the period. After all, if Oldenbroek was right, fuzziness was a positive, liberating virtue, opening up unions and whole countries to the ITF that would otherwise feel alienated. But he would have known and, consciously or not, affiliates

would have recognized, that the trade union 'principles' accepted by the EC in 1944 and the simple, even simplistic,

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constitutional 'objects' adopted in 1946 stood or fell on a profound political assumption: that governments would at the very least allow (or, better, would actively encourage) their trade unions to play an active part in public and political life. Unions could only survive, as the Nazi experience had so recently proved, within a benign political system. If the most favoured model among the affiliates had a social-democrat-cum-Labour Party look to it, and if it was commonly assumed by insiders and observers alike that at some point the ITF had actually embraced a doctrine of that kind, then that was surely self-evident, given the nature of the ITF's predominantly European mainstream at that time.

But in fact the embrace was never formally made and the ITF never explicitly and authoritatively located itself anywhere on the political spectrum. Most of its European affiliates supported political parties within the Socialist International and over the years many of their leaders became very high-ranking political figures, Ernest Bevin a celebrated example. In the American tradition, the United States affiliates operated politically on the principle of 'reward your friends and punish your enemies': most of the friends were progressive Democrats and almost all the enemies were Republicans or southern Democrats. In practice, it was generally true that many ITF's affiliates, especially the smaller 'craft' organizations, spent little of their time on

'politics' and limited their political involvement to whatever was necessary for the pursuit of their industrial or professional agendas, especially in areas such as standard setting or regulation.

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iii. Surviving the WFTU and co-habitation with the ICFTU

The first and by far the most testing of the post-war challenges faced by the ITF came with the founding in 1945 of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The WFTU, initially the brainchild of the British TUC, had the enthusiastic backing of the Soviet Union's All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU) and the American Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). It was to be, so its supporters claimed, a truly world-wide trade union force, based on the affiliation of all the national centres of any importance. Its industrial arm would be its 'Trade Departments' (TDs) which would come largely pre-fabricated by the 'integration' of the International Trade Secretariats (ITs). The jurisdiction of the TDs would be strictly limited to the concerns of their specific 'trades'; they would be expressly barred from considering or taking a position on anything of general interest. The WFTU governing bodies would decide and finance their budgets and would have the final say in appointments to the Trade Departments' secretariats.²³ The WFTU and the ITs shadow-boxed and dug their trenches ('negotiations' in the true sense of give-and-take never happened) for four years from the founding of the WFTU to the schism in January 1949.

The ITF and Oldenbroek personally led the ITSS' resistance (despite the passing awkwardness of having the President of the WFTU, Arthur Deakin, on the ITF Executive Committee) and there is an air of inevitability about the outcome in the subsequent telling. ²⁴ The general view is that the communist and

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non-communist forces were doomed to divorce. As Carew put it, 'between the Leninist model of trade unionism as adapted to Stalinist totalitarianism and the model of unionism practised under capitalism there was little common ground'. ²⁵ There were many occasions and issues which validated that judgment as the Cold War deepened. But Cold War or not, the very narrow but absolutely critical point of departure for the ITF was the threat to its survival as an autonomous organization: self-standing, financially independent and answerable only to its member-organizations. The WFTU insistence on Trade Departments may have been 'Leninist-Stalinist' (though it was probably the British TUC that thought them up!) and there were countless 'political' issues, current or brewing, over which the ITF and the communist faction of the WFTU were bound to clash, but even if that had not been so, the one issue of 'autonomy', seen by the ITF as being as central to its own legitimacy as to that of any of its affiliates, would have been reason enough for the ITF to reject the TD project root and branch.

Yates's 'promise' to the 1948 Congress that if the ITF was 'submerged' in the WFTU then the seafarers would found a 'separate Seafarers' International' ²⁶ was not

bluster but his hypothesis was procedurally premature. It would have taken a decision by a 'three-quarters' majority of the affiliated membership to 'dissolve' the ITF and by 1948 it would have been hard to find an affiliate ready even to put the motion. The importance that the ITF's affiliates attached to the ITF's survival has eluded some commentators,²⁷ but the most cursory dip into

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the records²⁸ of the debates on the WFTU issue at the 1946, 1948 and 1950 Congresses, which not all of them have made, ought to have convinced them of it. There might have been a 'cloak-and-dagger' air to some of Oldenbroek's activities as leader of the ITS resistance, and especially to his dealings with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), but he had declared his determination to defend the ITF's independence from the outset. Single-minded and relentless as he was, Oldenbroek would have used the AFL every bit as much as it thought it was using him.

The schism within the WFTU meant that Yates and the seafarers were never put to the trouble of fulfilling his 'promise'. But the ITF and the other ITSs had then to decide the nature and the mechanics of their relationship with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which the 'free' national centres founded in December 1949. Oldenbroek's translation to the General Secretaryship of ICFTU (see Chapter III) did not itself guarantee a smooth ride – he had new masters to satisfy – but almost his last words to the ITF EC, literally within hours of

the formal end to his ITF General Secretaryship, were that the relationship between the ICFTU and the ITSs should be 'an association on a footing of equality'.²⁹

That basic principle underlay the subsequent discussions on the practical form of the relationship. Agreement on mutual but purely consultative representation at ICFTU and ITS Congresses, and on collective (but still consultative) ITS

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representation on the ICFTU's main governing bodies, had been reached readily enough for the ITF Congress in July 1950 to express its appreciation of the ICFTU's 'speed, goodwill and ... constructive spirit'.³⁰ Those understandings were approved by the ICFTU's Second World Congress in Milan in July 1951 and recognized that the ICFTU and the ITSs were part of the same international movement, each having autonomous roles but observing an implicit division of labour which 'implies the adoption by the ITS of the general policy of the ICFTU'.³¹ The ITS-ICFTU modus vivendi, arrived at so quickly and undramatically, came later to be known rather grandly as the 'Milan Agreement' and Carew points out that 'significantly' it was never 'ratified' by some ITSs.³² But formal 'ratification' by the ITSs seems never to have been considered or asked for, at least within the ITF. It took the Milan Agreement so much for granted that no reference was made to it either in Becu's very brief report to the EC on the Milan Congress (where he had not spoken) or in a substantial document to the ITF's 1952 Congress on Relations with the ICFTU.³³

In the event, the ITF had no serious dispute with the ICFTU over the period. (There were some subsequently: the ITSs' implicit 'adoption' of the ICFTU's 'general' policy went very much to the 'general' and left ample room for conflict on the particulars.) There was anyway a natural, to a large degree genetic, inclination towards a positive relationship: most of the ITF affiliates belonged to national centres that were part of the ICFTU and the 'family' ties were close.

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This did not ensure an identity of view by any means – the TUC had clearly not welcomed, at least initially, the enthusiasm with which most British unions had supported their ITSs in their confrontation with the WFTU – but there was undoubtedly a community of shared principles and instincts among the great majority of unions, the 'free' national centres, the ITSs and the ICFTU. This generalized harmony of political interests and outlook came to them easily and largely unconsciously and, in this less than rigorous ideological environment, was rarely theorized.

iv. The Marshall Plan

The Marshall Plan, more properly the European Recovery Programme (ERP), was a four-year programme of some \$17 billion of American economic aid to the European participating nations. Proposed by the United States Secretary of State, George E. Marshall, in June 1947 and enacted by the United States Congress twelve months later, the original proposal allowed, sincerely or not, for the possibility of the Soviet

Union's participation, but the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, rejected the project out of hand, denouncing it as an American imperialist plot to subjugate Europe. The ERP's first Administrator, Paul Hoffman, who would certainly have known what it was really about, wrote in 1951, when the Cold War no longer gave him reason to be coy, that the ERP had been the economic manifestation of what was at bottom an ideological battle, 'a contest between the American assembly line and the communist party line'.³⁴

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The ITF was happy to claim in a report to its 1948 Congress that it was the first international trade union organization to respond formally to the ERP proposal. A meeting of the General Council in November 1947 welcomed the project, offered the ITF's co-operation and decided that the ITF should convene a conference on the ERP for all the ITF affiliates in the countries most involved.³⁵ But by the time the ITF conference gathered in April 1948 in Luxembourg, the western European national centres had met a month previously in London, exasperated at the months of resistance by the Russian AACCTU, abetted by the WFTU's General Secretary, Louis Saillant, to the demands from the British TUC and the American CIO that the WFTU take a position on the ERP. 'Taken together with the support of the Christian trade unions', Carew writes, 'the conference provided a solid enough demonstration of western European labour's approval of the Marshall Plan'. It also established a Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to participate in the programme's implementation.³⁶

The attendance at the ITF's Luxembourg conference a few weeks later (6 to 8 April 1948) was notable for the presence of a heavy contingent from the USA. The American unions were represented by Bert Jewell of the RLEA and Irving Brown, at that time the European representative of the AFL's Free Trade Union Committee, but there was also a group of observers from 'United States government departments', identified only by their names, not their functions, in the conference documentation.³⁷ They (and Brown) would have applauded

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Jewell's wholehearted commendation of the ERP which embodied, he claimed, all the principles advocated by the American trade union movement during the consultations on its formulation. They had insisted that the ERP should contribute to the strengthening of free trade unions, which should be given a rôle in the project's administration and implementation. The ERP plan, Jewell insisted, would be a 'powerful' contribution to world peace, 'unless Russia wills otherwise'.³⁸ Jim Figgins of the British NUR seized a rare moment of freedom from Deakin's baleful presence (he had a genuine prior commitment) to explain that though 'the aims and objects of the Plan ... are sincere and honest', it was basically flawed. It did not provide a way 'to overcome the formidable tariff barriers of the USA' and Europe's economic salvation lay in its 'progressively increasing trade between ... eastern and western Europe', which was why the British government favoured 'balanced' and 'expanded' trade with the USSR.³⁹ (A little more than a year later he was much more robust:

'the Marshall Plan was at best an intelligent means adopted by the capitalist class to safeguard US interests'.⁴⁰⁾ But the general political tide within the ITF swept away even Figgins's uncharacteristically moderate reservations. The ITF's ERP conference gave the project its approval and expressed its appreciation 'of the open-handedness with which the US government had offered help under the ERP'.⁴¹⁾

Omer Becu was equally unequivocal in his Presidential Address to the ITF's 1948 Congress. The ERP was 'an attempt, inspired by generosity and

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enlightenment, to prevent the ruin of Europe'. The ITF was 'not only prepared to play any part assigned to it ...[but]... will also fight uncompromisingly the forces which still strive to sabotage it.' Later in the Congress proceedings, Reint Laan Sr of the Dutch transport workers was ready to put a figure on the good the ERP had already done: 'If we had not received this help in April [1948] ... the standard of living of the Dutch people would have been twenty-five per cent lower'. He rejected communist accusations that 'we are placing ourselves at the service of American imperialism ... we have the fate of Czechoslovakia and the death of Masaryk as a warning of what would happen if the workers were to listen to them [the communists]'.⁴²⁾

Such stout defences of the motivation and effect of the ERP and such a forthright

denunciation of its communist opponents would have been music to the ears of two Congress guests, Clinton Golden and Bert Jewell, the joint chief Labour Advisers to the Economic Co-operation Administration (ECA), which administered the ERP. Golden came from the Steelworkers' Union (CIO), in his young days a 'radical' socialist, a former railway fireman, union organizer, labour educator, an intellectual eminence and, towards the end of his career, a Harvard academic. Jewell, the first American to serve on the ITF Executive Committee and briefly the International Representative of the RLEA (see Chapter IV), now appeared at the Congress as an important American public servant, the AFL's nominee and its counterweight to Golden.⁴³

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That both of them felt the need to address an ITF Congress was almost surely a sign of the ITF's importance to the ERP and not simply the result of the understanding between their not very fraternal patrons, the CIO and AFL, that everything Golden and Jewell did officially had to be done jointly.⁴⁴ By their own account, they were men of high status within the ECA structure. In Golden's words, 'organized labour ... has a co-equal position with other groups'. Conscious, perhaps, that many in his audience might be unaware how capitalism had moved on, he explained that despite the 'past great sins against humanity committed in its name', capitalism in the USA had become 'democratic' and 'capable of progressive change in the direction of industrial democracy which European labour seeks to achieve'. He endorsed the welcome that Oldenbroek had recently given to the ERP's stress on

economic planning: 'properly planned' economic expansion was not incompatible with maintaining and strengthening 'democratic institutions'. He knew 'of nothing within the ECA which will militate against such a programme'.⁴⁵

How convincing the audience found Golden's thoughts on capitalism's American mutation cannot be known, but almost everything else about his presentation was sure to play well with the great majority of the European delegations at whom it was aimed. An assured and respected place for the trade union movement at the heart of policy-making and decision-taking, an assertion of the necessity for economic planning, a declaration of faith in the synergy of economic

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growth and strong democracies – very few of his listeners would have hesitated to embrace the ERP on that prospectus.

Golden's choice of the relatively higher, more theoretical ground had been preceded by Bert Jewell's briefer and more homely contribution. He stressed his family ties (very recent in fact) to 'the greatest international labour organization in the world today', whose members held the future in their hands, for 'as the transport workers go, so the world goes'. Most of the audience would have recognized the all-American hyperbole as a friendly act and would have liked the peroration, with its assurance that the ECA saw labour as 'human beings' not as a 'commodity'. They were unlikely to have been bothered by, or perhaps to have noticed, his care always

to specify that when the ECA referred to any kind of rôle for 'labour' he meant 'non-communist labour organizations' or 'non-communist European trade union leaders'.

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There is no call here to consider at length whether the ERP produced the benefits for European workers that Golden and Jewell demanded of it. The significance for the ITF of the ERP issue lay in the obligation it placed on the ITF to decide where it intended to locate itself politically as the Cold War tensions deepened. Having borrowed so profitably from Carew, however, it is only right to note that he has tracked the American unions' growing dismay at the ERP's failure to justify the support they had given it. He concludes generally that the

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effect of the ERP was to tame the European unions. The ECA's priorities of 'sound money' and 'productivity', and the 'Marshall Plan's values ... provided a congenial environment in which deradicalising pressures could operate on the [European] labour movement in the 1950s'.⁴⁷

v. The ITF and the Cold War

To the WFTU loyalists, the ITF's support for the ERP would simply have confirmed their conviction that the 'Yellow' ITF was the home of 'infamous traitors of the working class... venal lackeys of the warmongers ... nothing more than fascist beasts'. In the specific matter of western arms shipments the ITF was 'helping the

Anglo-American rulers ... to brutally murder innocent women, children and old people'.⁴⁸

That particular outburst had come from the General Secretary of the WFTU's Land and Air Transport Workers' Trade Department in September 1950 and was prompted presumably by the ITF's reaction to the Korean War, which began on 26 June 1950 shortly before the ITF's 1950 Congress. The Congress Resolutions Committee (on which Irving Brown⁴⁹ represented the RLEA) produced a draft resolution on 'the War in Korea'. Presented to Congress by Ferri-Pisani of the French Seamen's Federation FO (of whom much more below), it pledged 'aid and support to the troops now fighting for freedom and democracy'; called upon 'the members of the ITF to do everything in their power to ensure the shipment

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and delivery of arms to the fighting front'; and condemned the 'discreditable efforts of the Cominform and the WFTU' to 'sabotage' the United Nations war effort.⁵⁰

Niilo Wälläri of the Finnish Seamen's Union, a militant anti-communist but conscious of his country's imposed neutrality, was concerned that the ITF was becoming 'entangled' in 'power politics' and he was supported from another anti-communist source, the French FO railwaymen's Bodeau,⁵¹ who thought that 'the best way to fight Communism is to raise standards in the backward countries'. In contrast to the principled reservations from the right, the one contribution from

the left, from Jim Figgins of the British NUR, was very formal and procedural: the war had begun too recently for affiliates to have the time to form considered judgments and the NUR's Annual Conference 'just before ... this Congress' had taken no decisions on Korea. The NUR would abstain.

Deakin had no time for either principled or procedural shilly-shallying. How could the ITF 'have no point of view to put' on 'tremendous issues' like the Korean war? As a member of the TUC General Council he thought he could speak for the British movement 'collectively'. Would Figgins say that the ITF 'must stand passively by' if Great Britain were attacked? 'International Communism has been seeking to enslave the free peoples of the world' and 'it is no use talking about democracy unless you are prepared to do something to keep it'. He carried the day. The 'general principle' of the first draft was approved there and then

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with eighteen abstentions and a final version, slightly amended to meet some Swedish textual quibbles and Wälläri's concerns, was adopted very comfortably, with only two against and twenty-two abstentions.⁵²

Deakin's uninhibited assertion that the ITF had a positive duty to declare its position on 'tremendous issues' may have been accepted in that instance, but the ITF was usually concerned to find an industrial aspect to political events and crises which touched on trade union principles and workers' rights. For example, Hans Jahn described to the ITF's 1954 Congress how in June 1953 a protest by a small group of

East Berlin building workers against 'increased output demands' had grown overnight to become a mass movement 'for freedom and democracy'. Warming to his theme (perhaps too enthusiastically for complete coherence), he speculated on the political path to be taken by the vast populations of Asia: 'are these thousands of millions of men [sic] in the east Communist by conviction?

I say they ... are Communists by hunger'.⁵³ A resolution at the ITF's 1956 Congress on 'Solidarity with the workers of Poznan', which compared the Polish workers' demonstrations in June 1956 to the similar events in East Germany three years previously, declared that Polish and East German workers had 'neither bread nor freedom' and 'as everyone knows' the two are 'inseparable'.⁵⁴

The Suez crisis was gathering pace as the ITF's 1956 Congress convened and on its last day, 26 July, President Nasser of Egypt placed the Canal Zone under his government's control. The news seems not to have reached the Congress

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hall before a discussion of the Suez crisis which first considered a draft resolution from the Finnish Seamen's Union (Wälläri was evidently no longer worried about Russian sensitivities) condemning communist arms shipments to the Middle East as 'a danger to peace'. Ze'ev Barash of the Israeli Seamen's Union and John Hawk of the American SIU combined incongruously to persuade 'an overwhelming majority' not to proceed with the Finnish anti-communist motion but instead to demand an end to the Egyptian blockade of Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal on the grounds that the action violated the international principle of freedom of navigation.⁵⁵

In contrast to the ITF's response to the Korean War, the ITF's reaction to Suez was unexpectedly muted and by reducing its concern to the one principle of maritime law, it came uncomfortably close to bathos.⁵⁶ The spontaneous and unanimous reaction to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956 was of a wholly different order. The Hungarian revolutionaries' cause was embraced by ITF dockers' unions within hours of the arrival of the Russian tanks on 4 November. Russian cargoes were boycotted the next day in the main Dutch and Belgian ports and Becu moved quickly to convene an emergency conference of the seafarers' and dockers' unions on 8 and 9 November to discuss whether a 'full-scale' boycott of Soviet shipping was feasible. Executive Committee members were asked to attend if they could and eight did so.

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Becu's account of what happened next is unmistakably bitter.⁵⁷ The conference unanimously called upon the ICFTU 'to undertake an international boycott of Russian goods and services'. The ITF dockers and seafarers were ready to take their full part in the action and they called upon other transport workers also 'to play their respective parts'.⁵⁸ The appeal to the ICFTU had been encouraged by Becu's report to the conference on discussions he had already had with Oldenbroek and with Walter Schevenels, the General Secretary of the ICFTU's European Regional Organization (ERO), who had advised him that as soon as the ITF decided on a

boycott 'they would call on their constituent national trade union centres to back it up with all the means at their disposal', a necessary and welcome commitment to the ITF's maritime unions, whose members' pay and possibly jobs could be at risk.

The almost instantaneous response to the ITF's call was an emergency conference of European trade union representatives, convened jointly by the ICFTU, the ERO and the ITF in Hamburg on 15 November 1956. It was agreed there that 'the free Labour Movement should give further practical and organized expression' to its 'indignation and horror' at the Soviet invasion and a twelve-man committee then asked European affiliates of the ICFTU for their comments on a list of proposals, including a boycott of Soviet goods and services 'for a limited period'. Only eight of the ICFTU's European affiliates replied at all and of those only three favoured a boycott, one of them conditionally. The proposal for a boycott died at that point: 'rejection, almost by default', as Becu saw it.

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In a rueful look back at what he clearly thought was a shaming failure of the international movement's nerve and resolve, Becu had a few uncharacteristically philosophical reflections on trade union action for political purposes. 'Was it perhaps wrong to support the underground fight against Mussolini, the struggle of the Spanish workers against Franco ... the trade unionists of Hungary ... under almost identical circumstances in 1920?' Hungarian workers themselves had appealed 'to the world's dockers and seafarers to refuse to handle goods for Russia' and had 'believed that the world's trade unionists would help them'. The whole issue of

international solidarity and of international boycott actions specifically is discussed further in the last pages of Chapter VI.

The great crises such as the Korean War and the Hungarian uprising were untypical dramas, however, in a Cold War which proceeded routinely by the relentless building of military and political alliances which were always presented as purely defensive reactions to the constant threat of aggression from the other side. For the ITF, with its Second World War experience still fresh in the collective memory, the combining of military strength and democratic virtue, on which the West claimed to depend for its survival, would have been both familiar and entirely justified.

And so, no sooner had the 1950 Congress decided the ITF's position on the Korean War, than it moved on to a resolution on the 'Transport of Arms'.

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The ITF, it declared, 'endorses the "Atlantic Pact" as 'a defensive alliance of the peoples of Western Europe and North America', the declared aims of which 'are the very expression of the beliefs and the will of the peoples'. The ITF would 'frustrate Communist endeavours to sabotage the fulfilment of the Pact' and the resolution specifically approved the action the ITF had already taken to meet that threat by setting up 'Vigilance Committees' (of which much more below). Meanwhile, Congress 'calls upon the members of the ITF to continue the carrying and handling of all [Western] arms and ammunition'. The resolution was carried without debate,

with two votes against and four abstentions (none identified).⁵⁹ A further 'Resolution on Dictatorships' reminded 'the democratic governments of their moral duty to limit their dealings with all dictatorial regimes to what is strictly unavoidable'. Was that a warning against the Western governments' getting too close to, say, Franco's Spain? If so, it was a pity it was not more explicit.⁶⁰

The 1950 Congress set a pattern of intense ideological breast-beating for the following two Congresses. In the very last hour of the 1952 Congress, for example, a draft resolution on 'Countries behind the Iron Curtain' was moved by Metslov of the exiled Estonian Seamen's Union. It condemned 'the evil of Communist domination and tyranny' in 'Eastern and Central Europe', and proposed that the Congress 'pledges its full moral and material support to the fighters for freedom' in those countries. It was again Wälläri, from the Finnish Seamen's Union just across the water, who objected that countries such as

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Lithuania, Rumania and Bulgaria had had Fascist regimes before the war and the resolution could be taken as support for like-minded groups seeking a return to power. Wälläri's declaration and his union's abstention were noted and the resolution carried 'nem.con.'.⁶¹

That such an unqualified and open-ended commitment ('full moral and material support') should be taken on so airily, without a passing thought, Wälläri honourably

excepted, perhaps simply shows how serious resolution fatigue can be. Two days previously the Congress had debated a draft resolution on Transport in War and Peace devoted to the essential rôle of transport workers and the transport industries in the struggle for 'lasting peace', the prospects for which were 'endangered by dictatorial powers', and in 'the achievement of social justice through the appropriate institutions of the United Nations'.⁶² There was no mistaking its tenor or its targets, even if the language was rambling or even at times incoherent, and it made Figgins very angry.⁶³ The Korean War 'was being fought in American interests and ... when the third world war did develop he hoped the Americans would be able to take what was coming to them, as they were the instigators of it ... America ... had no alternative, if it wished to preserve capitalism, but to prepare for war and to wage war'. Battling on over 'interruptions', he reported that an NUR delegation had attended 'the great demonstration for peace in the [Moscow] Red Square on 7 November [1951]' and had seen the great strides made in the Soviet economy since the war. At that

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rate 'in about five or six years it [the Soviet Union] would have a higher standard of living than any other country in the world'. Percy Morris of the British TSSA⁶⁴ was sure Figgins 'would be put to death' if he made that kind of speech behind the Iron Curtain against Russia. It was 'an insult to their [the Congress's] intelligence' and completely unrepresentative of British trade union and Labour Party opinion which was one of gratitude to the American people for their 'help'. Jahn said workers in the

West had 'many a bone to pick with the capitalist system' but at least they had the right to strike. Anyone who struck in Soviet Russia 'would be shot'.⁶⁵ The resolution was then adopted nem.con. Deakin wanted the Congress record to show (as it eventually did) that 'Figgins had not been supported by his own delegation'.⁶⁶

The high political temperature that was such a feature of the 1952 Congress was higher still in 1954. A special place was found on the Congress agenda for The Transport Workers' Organizations in the fight for Democracy and Peace, backed by a document⁶⁷ which set out to demonstrate that 'organized transport labour' had both a general and a particular 'function' in 'the prevention of war and the defence of democracy'. Communism was 'the gravest threat to the peace of the world and the freedom of the peoples'. The 'maritime and waterside industries and transport generally' were 'of strategic significance' in Communist 'plans'. A lull at that time in the communists' attempts at 'stirring up trouble' in ships and ports was tactical. Meanwhile, 'the most effective answer to the challenge of

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Communist aggression and intrigue' was 'to pursue energetically ... the social interests of the workers ... Discontent and unrest are the most fertile soil for Communist intrigue'. Just as the ITF had confronted dictatorships in the past, it had to be ready 'to take its stand for right against wrong' in the face of the Communist threat. The report singled out for extended reference the topical issue of the European Defence Community – 'another bulwark of Democracy ... in process of

erection' – under which West Germany could be re-armed. 'German rearmament cannot be delayed indefinitely ... today it is the friends of Democracy who are predominant in Western Germany'. Towards the end of the report, delegates were reminded that 'dictatorships in countries like Spain and Portugal, Argentina and other Latin American republics may not be as efficient as the Soviet prototype, but they are ... equally as obnoxious'. The emphasis was soon back, however, on the 'Soviet-occupied countries' where 'the spirit of resistance is by no means dead'. The ITF and its unions had 'various channels' through which they could 'keep in touch with the underground movements' and so, as 'one of our first duties ... keep alive the flame of resistance where it still burns'.

The debate began with a call from Benghozzia of the Tunisian railwaymen to remember that 'colonial oppression' presented dangers as great as those of Fascism and Communism but any chance (or hope) that the discussion might be broadened out in that direction was lost when he sat down.⁶⁸ For the rest of the

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session, it was largely devoted to the issue of German rearmament and dominated by the British delegates – Campbell of the NUR from the left and Haworth, Webber (both from the TSSA) and Deakin (speaking from the Presidential chair) from the right – perhaps relishing another round of a very rough argument that they had been having among themselves in Britain. The contributions of Jahn and Kummernuss, men closer to the frontline than the British delegates, were given scant consideration

or even respect. When Kummernuss asked 'are we to call upon these young [German] men, who have passed through National Socialism and the war, and who have become opponents of war, are we to call upon them to support war?', Deakin's impatience (again from the chair) was magisterial: 'Our German friends have got to face up to this. You cannot sit on the fence and ask the rest of the world to defend democracy in Germany...' ⁶⁹ The report was finally approved on a card vote by 1,677,193 to a puzzlingly small 357,403 against, which was lower than the NUR's affiliated membership of 360,071. Perhaps Campbell's impassioned peroration ('for God's sake don't let us say we are in favour of a third world war') had been softly translated into one of the abstentions, which together added up to a significant 526,668 ⁷⁰ and were perhaps a warning to the ITF leadership against imposing similar agenda items and reports on future Congresses.

The 1954 debate was indeed the last of its kind in the period. No general political resolution of any kind was produced by the next four Congresses and when Joe Curran of the American NMU proposed in September 1962

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that the ITF seafarers' and dockers' unions should consider 'a boycott against Cuba', De Vries replied with a catalogue of all the technical difficulties and advised him that since 'the question was a purely political one ...[it was] ... more within the province of the ICFTU'. The ITF's EB 'endorsed the General Secretary's action' in November 1962 and hoped that with the 'verified removal of the threat to the peace of the world' (the Cuban missile crisis having been settled just beforehand) there would be no

'limitations' on 'the freedom of lawful navigation'. That rebuff was underlined brusquely when Curran tried again in August 1963, on behalf of both the NMU and the ILA, to interest the maritime sections in taking action against Cuba. A Seafarers' Section Conference 'noted' his proposals but decided 'not to take any action on them'.⁷¹

vi. Political fall-out

The ITF's loss of Communist-led affiliates in France and Italy to the WFTU's new TDs has been described in Chapter IV. Only the Finnish Transport Workers' Union and the New Zealand Waterside Workers' Union followed suit and both were formally expelled by the 1950 Congress.⁷² Politically motivated disaffiliations were generally rare, but two later cases require reference here.

The first, and in its ramifications by far the less serious, concerned the Japanese Federation of Private Railway Workers' Unions (Shitetsu), which withdrew from the ITF in July 1953 after its Annual Convention had reproached the ICFTU for

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'supporting' the 'rearmament' of Japan. The ITF was evidently found guilty of the same offence 'by implication only', as the ITF's report⁷³ put it. But the report also recognized that the 'background' was 'clearly political' and there was no denying that if the Shitetsu Convention had disliked the ICFTU's politics, it would have found the ITF's equally unappealing. The ICFTU's and the ITF's support for the 'United

Nations' in the Korean War would certainly have been a big factor in Shitetsu's departure.

The second case, the expulsion of the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU) by the ITF's 1950 Congress, ⁷⁴ meant the loss of 6,000 members from a declining Canadian merchant marine but Tofahrn insisted it was a necessary sacrifice to principle when he came to support the relevant motion on behalf of the EC. He alleged that the CSU, like the Finnish transport workers and New Zealand dockers, had 'joined' the WFTU. The motion in fact stopped well short of that, instead accusing the CSU of having 'conferred secretly' with the WFTU. Those secret contacts had allegedly concerned the Canadian seamen's strike in 1949 (see below) but the general indictment was that the leaders of the CSU 'are the lackeys' of 'an outside power' (presumably the Soviet Union) at whose behest the Communist leaders of the CSU had begun and conducted the strike. The CSU was not therefore a 'free' union in the sense of the ITF's Constitution.

The consequences of the CSU's strike in terms of the imposition of the Canadian

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SIU and the gangster Hal Banks on Canadian seamen have been discussed in Chapter IV but for some ten weeks in the summer of 1949 the immediate consequences were also seriously felt in Great Britain as British dockers took 'unofficial' action in support of the CSU.

The strike began in April 1949 after the shipowners had decided to cut wages and end the CSU's control of recruitment and engagement through its 'hiring hall'. A violent clash in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in late April 1949, when armed SIU 'goons' shot a number of CSU pickets, and the government's subsequent refusal to have the matter examined by parliament have been cited by Lipton in support of his finding of 'collaboration between shipowners, government and SIU'.⁷⁵ By May 1949 striking CSU crews 'had tied up Canadian shipping at ports in Great Britain, Western Europe, Latin America, Africa and New Zealand'.⁷⁶

But in Canada itself, the Canadian 'international' unions, under pressure from their American headquarters, demanded and achieved the suspension of the CSU from its national centre, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), in July 1949⁷⁷ on the grounds that its strike was harming members of other TLC unions and was part of a global communist conspiracy. Two months later, the TLC Convention adopted a motion barring any 'known communist' from holding office in TLC bodies either nationally or provincially.⁷⁸

For some labour historians and commentators such as Lipton and for some

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surviving CSU activist veterans, the CSU strike was a classic defence of union rights and of the members' wages and conditions which was caught up in Cold War paranoia, wilfully misrepresented and then betrayed.⁷⁹ But the allegations that the

CSU was indeed communist-controlled and that its strike was designed to serve the communist cause are not easily waved away. In an article, *Death of a Union*, published in *Macleans* magazine in December 1950 and reprinted immediately in the *ITF Journal*,⁸⁰ T.G. (Gerry) McManus, Secretary-Treasurer of the CSU until 1 July 1950 and a member of the Canadian Communist Party from its foundation in 1936 describes how he went to work for the CSU on the party's instructions in 1945 and how party officials organized and ensured the party's control of union elections and policy. He alleged that the 1949 strike was called 'at the secret request of the British Communist Party to create an artificial strike issue for the workers of London'. Harry Davis, the CSU's Communist President, had then visited Europe for two meetings, with 'executive members' of the WFTU and with 'the dock workers' fraction of the British Communist Party', and had returned to tell his comrades 'exultantly' that 'We can strike the world!' Davis appointed his brother as the CSU representative in London and he then instigated the British dockers' 'solidarity' action which began in support of the CSU strikers on two Canadian Pacific vessels when their ships docked in London and triggered similar actions in the major British ports.

It is not necessary to believe McManus in every particular or to be sure of his

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motives (or, indeed, to respect him when he wants his readers to know that the 'real name' of the Davis family was 'Popovich'⁸¹), but there is some authority in his account of how the communist group manipulated the CSU's electoral processes: no

ballot rigging, no corruption, but dedicated, disciplined, single-minded planning and organizing. The party was also tactically astute: 'often the party will lay down objectives ... and prescribe courses of action which are perfectly sound and valid'.⁸² Abella effectively endorses McManus's central charge against the party when he concludes that although the communists 'provided first-rate leadership' in the CSU (and in some other important unions), 'unbending loyalty to communist policy destroyed their [the communists'] credibility with most Canadian trade unionists'.⁸³

Nowhere was 'solidarity' with the CSU anything like as extensive or as lengthy as in Great Britain.⁸⁴ A Canadian vessel was first 'blackened' in support of the CSU at the end of March 1949 and the last boycott was lifted towards the end of July. On 29 June the dispute seemed finally to have ended when the CSU, by then fatally weakened, came to a face-saving settlement with the Canadian owners, but the CSU then claimed that the owners were not implementing the agreement in good faith and the strikes which had developed from the 'blacking' boycotts in Avonmouth, Bristol and Liverpool spread within the London docks as the port employers imposed what to the strike leaders was nothing less than a lock-out, by insisting that if 'blackened' ships were not worked, then all work would stop in the docks concerned.

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The government declared a formal State of Emergency on 11 July 1949 but one week later, with some 7,000 troops at work on strikebound ships, the number of strikers in London had grown to 15,000. On 21 July Harry Davis, President of the CSU, arrived in London and after intensive meetings with the leaders of the National

Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (NASD) and the small but strategically important Watermen, Lightermen, Tugmen and Bargemen's Union (WLTBU) announced on 22 July that the CSU was ending its strike in Great Britain in return for a promise from the owners that the strikers would not be victimized. (It was McManus who informed the Canadian government of the decision.) The strikers then voted to return to work. ⁸⁵

As the dispute developed, the British Labour government's concern had deepened and by the end it was close to desperation. On 11 June 1949, an exasperated Minister of Labour, George Isaacs, declared as a 'plain fact' that British dockers were being 'used' by communists who were out 'to dislocate our trade and thus retard our economy'. ⁸⁶ The Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, speaking on the eve of the State of Emergency saw the strikes as 'a challenge to the whole authority of the State'. To the Attorney-General, Sir Hartley Shawcross, the unofficial strikes were the means by which the communists were out to 'destroy Social Democracy, our way of life'. Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health, spoke of 'malignant forces' and the 'two dangers of Fascism and Communism'. ⁸⁷

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The government's plight would have weighed heavily on Deakin personally. His union had apparently lost control or even respect. The Bristol dockers, for example, had refused early in June to give so much as a hearing to Arthur Bird, the TGWU's National Docks Secretary. ⁸⁸ The union's position in London was complicated by the

substantial presence of the NASD (which never showed any interest in joining the ITF) and Deakin was obliged on 20 June to offer a humiliating defence of his union by announcing that the dockers holding the two Canadian ships in London did not belong to the TGWU. And so it was that the TGWU, the giant of the British movement, led by a household name and a real power in the land, was seen for much of the time as marginalized and irrelevant. Most wounding of all was the fact that the strike movement was headed by TGWU activists in open defiance of all their union's instructions and appeals.

With the London strikes still unresolved, the TGWU's conference (Biennial Delegates' Meeting) in July 1949 decided by 426 to 208 that no member of the Communist Party (or 'the Fascist Party' [sic]) could hold any office in the union.⁸⁹ A union enquiry came up with names of the leading TGWU activists who had defied the union's authority and had colluded with 'known Communists' in promoting the strikes. A further enquiry looked into the special case of the London actions and three culprits were eventually expelled, four were barred from holding union office and one was 'warned'.⁹⁰

The ITF did not feature prominently in the reporting or public discussion of the

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British dock strikes in 1949, though Isaacs made much in one of his statements of the ITF's judgment – coming from 'the most responsible' international organization – that the Canadian ships were not truly 'black'.⁹¹ Yet the ITF had been keeping a

close and apprehensive watch on the Canadian situation throughout and its European affiliates in particular were shocked by the TGWU's disarray. What hope for them if the mightiest of British unions could be reduced to apparent impotence in an industry where the fabled Bevin had once been idolized? How could they best defend themselves against such forces?

The CSU leadership seemed set on confirming their worst fears and suspicions. When Harry Davis arrived in London at the climax of the July strike he came directly from a conference of the WFTU's maritime Trade Department in Marseilles which had resolved to give 'immediate and effective' support to the CSU 'and London dockers'.⁹²

vii. 'Vigilance Committees'

No ITF meeting seems ever to have found the time or the inclination during or after the CSU strike to consider dispassionately its various causes and motivations. No-one in the ITF therefore appears to have recognized that it was entirely possible to justify the strike by reference to the most fundamental of 'free' trade union principles and that that justification should weigh no less heavily in determining the ITF's position, for all the efforts of the CSU's communist

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leadership to exploit the strike for their political ends. But with the enemy at the gate there was no mood for that kind of complication. The seemingly unanimous

perception of the ITF's EC and of its seafarer and docker affiliates was that the CSU strike and the 'solidarity' actions were part of some great communist design. An ITF Joint Dockers' and Seafarers' Conference ITF met in Rotterdam in August 1949 and decided to recognize the Canadian District of the SIU as being the 'most representative of the seamen of Canada' and 'the ITF [seamen's] affiliate in Canada.' A resolution asserted that 'Communist and crypto-Communist organizations' were out 'to frustrate economic recovery' and to subvert free unions so as 'to sacrifice [their] members' interests to the designs of Soviet foreign policy.' Workers were urged 'to meet the challenge by waging an offensive [sic] campaign against the Communist menace wherever it shows itself.' The ITF EC should do everything that was 'necessary to conduct and coordinate the anti-Communist campaign on the national and international planes.' ⁹³

The resolution was backed by further recommendations on the form and mechanics of the 'campaign' and was put to the EC meeting in October 1949, where the initial reaction was to see the 'task' as one for the 'new' international, the ICFTU, which was about to be founded. The communist attack, it was argued, might be concentrated first on the 'waterfront industry' but its target was the free trade union movement as a whole. Pending the enlistment of the ICFTU

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and the other ITs, however, it was agreed that the ITF should 'make a start with the counter-attack' by establishing a 'Vigilance Committee' of six members, two each

from the Seafarers', Dockers' and Inland Navigation Sections, under the chairmanship of Tom Yates, Chairman of the Management Committee.⁹⁴ The first requirement was regular information on relevant activities and developments 'in as many ports ... as possible', but particularly in 'danger areas' such as 'France, Italy, North Africa, Australia, New Zealand, US West Coast and the whole of South East Asia'. A 'close watch' was to be kept on the WFTU and its maritime Trade Department. Communist propaganda had to be countered and the free unions' message spread among seafarers and dockers. The EC asked dockers' unions to make donations of 3d (old) pence per member to help meet the costs of the campaign.⁹⁵

The first meeting of the Central Vigilance Committee (CVC) was held in London on 23 and 24 January 1950, with Yates presiding over Haugen (Norway) and Ferri-Pisani (France) for seafarers; Bird (Great Britain) and Dekeyzer (Belgium) for dockers; and Hildebrand (Germany) and Smeding (Netherlands) for the inland navigation workers.⁹⁶ Given its global mandate, it was a surprisingly small group from a very restricted catchment area and at first sight its decision to sponsor three Regional Vigilance Committees (RVCs) did little to broaden its presence, for two of the RVCs were northern European: one for Scandinavia and the Baltic and the other for the North Sea and the Atlantic. The third was to be

for the 'Mediterranean', an area of particular concern to Ferri-Pisani who had pressed at the Rotterdam seafarers' and dockers' conference for an ITF office to cover the 'Western Mediterranean'.⁹⁷

The first CVC meeting produced a long resolution denouncing the communists' policies and intentions in general but specifically highlighting their plan to interfere with Atlantic Pact shipments by 'all possible means' which could include 'violence and sabotage in order to intimidate the workers.' The Atlantic Pact was an 'instrument' for the defence of democracy and the CVC called upon ITF affiliates to oppose in every way they could 'the political campaign which has been launched against Western Europe by the Cominform.' The ITF EC in February 1950 endorsed the resolution unanimously and the message was pressed home with red-blooded enthusiasm by Yates in the *ITF Journal*.⁹⁸

The meeting showed evident satisfaction at the 'energetic action' being taken 'in the different countries ... to purge the unions of communist influence', which was believed mostly to be 'negligible', though 'care would have to be taken to deal with ... attempts to exploit misguided feelings of solidarity and pacifism.' How that 'purge' could be undertaken was the subject of some agonized discussion at the second meeting of the CVC in Sorrento (Italy) on 2 and 3 September 1950. Smeding referred to a dispute in Rotterdam and Amsterdam when the communists had exploited a grievance over the use of casual labour at higher

pay than regular dockers. His union had quickly arranged a return to work and the employers had then dismissed seventy to one hundred 'communist ringleaders' who, he reported, 'would no longer be given any work in the ports'. Bird referred to the TGWU's recently imposed ban on communist office-holders and to the expulsion of some communists from his union. Those expelled were still, however, working at the docks despite its being a condition of port employment that workers belong to a union. Depriving them of their livelihood might gain them sympathy, given the 'well known loyalty of dockers'. He hoped that more and more of their workmates would refuse to work with non-union labour. Ferri-Pisani said the communists were fought in three ways in France: firstly, by anti-communists' refusal to take part in communist-led strikes, so that it was the communists who were dismissed when the employers fired the leaders; secondly, by the action of the authorities in 'directing' labour and firing those that disobeyed; and lastly, by creating 'vigilance squads ready to resist violence with violence'. The third of Ferri-Pisani's choices will be picked up below in the context of the Mediterranean RVC's activities and his personal rôle in the whole operation, but the general discussion was felt to have been useful by Smeding who had most wanted it. He acknowledged that 'the sacking of trouble makers from work in the docks was indeed a difficult matter ... One should, however, wait for the right opportunity and, when this presented itself, go ahead without hesitation.' Ferri-Pisani thought that Smeding's conclusion should be commended to the ITF EC and sent on by the EC to ITF affiliates.⁹⁹

The EC never took that last suggestion up and so no-one can be sure how it would have been received. In retrospect, the most charitable gloss to be placed on those extraordinary CVC exchanges is that they demonstrated to what extreme lengths some ITF unions were ready to go under pressure.

The most important specific decision taken in Sorrento, however, was to authorize Ferri-Pisani, 'as chief of the Mediterranean area' (RVC chairmen were designated as 'chiefs!') to establish a Mediterranean RVC. For the rest, the most striking feature of the discussions was the very tense concern with secrecy and discretion. Even the members of the RVCs were not wholly to be trusted, for the 'regional chiefs' were 'to bear full responsibility' for their reports to the chairman of the CVC and to the ITF secretariat. They were to be under 'no obligation to submit them to the members of the regional committee'. 'The main importance was that information should be communicated with a maximum of speed and secrecy.' Bird made a special point of the need for all documents sent to the CVC to be marked 'PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL. Not to be communicated to any unauthorized person or body, in part or whole'. CVC meetings would be held 'at the discretion of its chairman and of the ITF Secretariat' and, at Ferri-Pisani's suggestion, it was agreed that the CVC 'should as a rule meet at ITF Headquarters or in another large town, in order to attract as little attention as possible.' ¹⁰⁰

There was no need, in the event, to spend much time on security precautions, for the CVC was only ever to meet once more. Becu's notice to the members convening the meeting in London on 17 and 18 August 1951 pointed out that it was almost a year since the Sorrento meeting and that there was need to review what affiliates had been doing meanwhile. The 'widespread publicity' given to the establishment of the CVC and the RVCs had had 'a salutary effect ... particularly in the Mediterranean region.' Nevertheless the communists were still a threat and 'reliable sources' warned of 'a fresh offensive' concentrated on 'Northern France and the North Sea coast'.¹⁰¹ If minutes were taken of the August 1951 CVC meeting, no copy seems to have survived. The only account of the proceedings is a brief and teasingly uninformative item in the general report on activities to the EC meeting in October 1951 which does not even record the attendance. The CVC, it reports, had 'decided to continue its activity' and had instructed the RVCs 'accordingly' because there was 'every likelihood' of renewed communist attempts to hold up arms shipments. Was the 'activity' too secret to be mentioned in even the most general terms?

Perhaps, and more likely, it meant no more than 'existence' but that raises another difficulty, for two of the three RVCs – those for the Scandinavian/Baltic and North Sea/Atlantic regions – had no real past or present existence to 'continue'. There is no record of an RVC meeting of either. Haugen's written report from the Scandinavian/Baltic region, made to the Secretariat some four

months previously, was distributed to the Sorrento CVC meeting and earned the meeting's 'appreciation', but the minutes do not say what was in it. As for the North Sea/Atlantic, Daems, standing in for the absent 'chief', Dekeyzer, reported at Sorrento on a turbulent summer of 1950 in the port of Antwerp when the communists had organized an unofficial strike on the back of a general strike, supported by the Belgian Transport Workers' Union (BTB), to force the abdication of King Leopold. Smeding, as already noted, reported on problems, by then resolved, in the Netherlands and Bird reported on communist agitation in the British docks. None of these experiences had been reported to their RVC because Dekeyzer had found it impossible to bring it to life. As the RVC chief, he had asked the British, French, Dutch and German members for information on communist subversive activities and only the Dutch had responded. Ferri-Pisani had undertaken to organize a gathering of the French members and to advise Dekeyzer of the arrangements, but Dekeyzer heard nothing further from him. 'I suppose', wrote Dekeyzer, 'they [the French] forward the ITF and our friend Irving Brown all information....' ¹⁰²

viii. The Mediterranean Committee: Ferri-Pisani, the Americans, and Marseilles

The ITF was prudently modest in claiming no more than a 'salutary' effect for the Vigilance Committee project as a whole. It would have been difficult to talk up the CVC's achievements and impossible to explain the point of the phantom RVCs in the north. But it had no such inhibitions about the Mediterranean

region and above all about Marseilles, where the ITF's EC and General Council met in October 1951. 'Comparatively recently,' the 1952 Congress was informed, 'this seaport was a Communist stronghold, but thanks especially to the work of the Mediterranean Vigilance Committee the Communists' reign of terror is over and Marseilles is today safe for free trade unionism.' ¹⁰³

The triumph, if it had been one, would have been remarkable, given such ostensibly puny resources. In the early 1950s, the great majority of the ITF's affiliates in the region ¹⁰⁴ were small or impoverished or, like its French Force Ouvrière maritime unions, both. The Italian maritime affiliates had more members but were just as insolvent and very given to quarrelling among themselves. In Greece, the Panhellenic Seafarers' Federation (PNO) had affiliated with the ITF in 1948 after displacing the left-wing Federation of Greek Maritime Unions during the Greek civil war. It was a zealous supporter of the ITF's anti-communist efforts, but to the extent that the Mediterranean committee was charged with countering internal subversion or disruption, the PNO had no need of it within the anti-communist, sternly policed Greek environment.

The weakness of the affiliates could well have been one reason for the delay in establishing the Mediterranean RVC. A second would be that the region did not have priority. The prime targets for subversion were in the north, the giant deep-sea ports – Antwerp, Hamburg, London, Rotterdam – that would handle the

great majority of Marshall Aid, Atlantic Pact and, soon, Korean War shipments. But despite the lesser (Antwerp and Rotterdam) and greater (London) alarms and disruptions in the north, the civil and military cargoes had still moved and the communist threat had been seen off. And so the CVC's attention was turned in a circular of 5 August 1950 to the Mediterranean 'where Communist influence is still very strong'. A meeting of the CVC in southern Italy (Sorrento) would 'give special support to the anti-communist campaign in the Mediterranean region.' CVC business was to take the first day and the next two would be left for the members to 'meet representatives from ... France, Italy and Greece, and discuss with them the details of the campaign to be undertaken in that [Mediterranean] region.'¹⁰⁵ A few days later, a further circular invited 'affiliated seafarers' and dockers' unions in the Mediterranean areas [sic]¹⁰⁶ to attend what had now become a 'conference' on 3 and 4 September 1950 in nearby Naples to assess communist influence 'in the merchant fleets and the ports of the Mediterranean Basin'; to obtain 'some idea' of communist activity directed against Atlantic Treaty 'war material'; and to consider how to 'combat communist influence and to strengthen the [Mediterranean] free and democratic trade union movement'. These topics made up a 'CONFIDENTIAL' agenda for what was finally entitled Conference of unions of dockers, seafarers and allied trades in the Mediterranean area.¹⁰⁷

Fred Strauss, the ITF's 'Technical Officer' (see Chapter III), stood in for the 'unavoidably' absent Becu and his Confidential Report on Italian Trip, ¹⁰⁸ written

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immediately after the events, provides an incomparably rich and revealing insight into a morass of personal and organizational relationships – never trusting, always fragile and often hostile, working by dubious means to different ends and never within the ITF's control – which bedevilled and ultimately vitiated the whole Mediterranean exercise.

Strauss arrived in Rome on 1 September to be told at the airport by a 'Commander' Mucci of the Italian seafarers' federation that Romagnoli, his union's leader, was ill and that the Mediterranean 'conference' had been cancelled. The CVC members would instead meet 'representatives of the Italian dockers and seafarers' in Naples on 4 September. The decision to cancel the conference had been taken by Ferri-Pisani and Canini of the CISL national centre (see Chapter IV) after consulting Colonel Lane, the American Labour Attaché. Mucci explained that the Colonel and Irving Brown effectively controlled the Italian non-communist maritime unions, which the two of them had 'formed and maintained' (but not, he complained, 'on a sufficiently large scale').

Ferri-Pisani repeated this explanation of the realities of Italian trade union life to Strauss the following morning in Sorrento and said it applied to the French as much

as the Italians. Anti-communist maritime unions in both countries had functioned from the beginning 'by the grace of the AFL'. Ferri-Pisani's

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recollection was that the idea of holding a meeting of the CVC in Italy, to be followed by a 'big conference of Italian seafarers' and dockers' representatives', had first been agreed at a meeting in Marseilles of Becu, Tennant, Brown and Ferri-Pisani. Becu and Romagnoli had confirmed the arrangement during the ITF's Congress in July 1950, but once back in Italy, Romagnoli worried about the costs and who would meet them. He went to Canini who went to Brown who gave the project his 'approval'. Canini himself then started to organize the conference, effectively taking over from Romagnoli, whose illness Ferri-Pisani believed was not real but 'convenient'. A clearly dumbfounded Strauss and Ferri-Pisani spent a CVC tea-break the next morning with Irving Brown, who had arrived from Naples and was 'to say the least ... in a very bad temper'. He said that the ITF has acted in bad faith because it had been agreed in Marseilles that the Naples 'show' should be 'big' – the Italians 'loved showmanship' – and he was very upset that the American organizations had not been allowed to send delegates to the Mediterranean conference. He had the funds to cover 'all vigilance activities and ... if the ITF did not want to come in, the Americans would proceed on their own'.

When the three resumed their encounter over lunch, it was Ferri-Pisani who followed up Brown's attack against Becu's rejection of American participation at the Mediterranean conference and said he would raise the issue at the next EC

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meeting. (There is no record of his ever having done so.) Later that afternoon, Brown asked Bird and Stan James (Assistant General Secretary of the British NUS and representing the absent Yates) if they would 'shake hands' with 'trustworthy' dockers and seafarers' representatives at their union offices in Naples and talk to them about their industrial problems and 'free trade unionism in general'. They agreed on condition that there should be no 'publicity' that would allow the CVC members' 'movements ...[to]... be traced.'

They might have regretted their ready acquiescence the next day when Strauss read out to the CVC a cable from Romagnoli's sick bed, sending his 'best wishes' but adding that 'contrary to my precise instructions various dockers and seafarers have been invited who are not qualified to attend', a cryptic warning that Bird and James (wondering perhaps whether Yates had been wiser than he knew in staying away?) were quick to pick up. But Bird agreed 'in order to assist Brown' to speak 'as a British docker' to his Italian counterparts and James, Daems and Smeding also agreed to participate on that basis, that is, as individuals speaking neither for their organizations nor the CVC. Ferri-Pisani contacted Brown (Strauss noted that they

were in 'constant' touch with each other) and reported back that Brown was 'highly satisfied'.

When the CVC members arrived in Naples the next day for the informal meeting with their Italian colleagues they found that the meeting was to be held in the city

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council chamber, guarded by five armed police and already set up with arc lights, cameras and recording equipment. Brown was nowhere to be found but Colonel Lane was present 'with five more Americans' and was told by Strauss that the British refused to speak. Brown eventually appeared and 'after a conversation with Ferri-Pisani' agreed that the CVC members (Ferri-Pisani excepted) would not be filmed or recorded, but the speeches to be given by Ferri-Pisani, Canini and a distinguished visitor, Giulio Pastore, the President of the CISL, would be given the 'fullest publicity'. And so, somehow, the demands both for discretion (to protect the CVC members) and publicity (Brown's 'show') were met.

Pierre Ferri-Pisani is central to any account of the ITF's Mediterranean activities. He was born in 1901 into the Corsican community of Marseilles and from the early 1920s until 1940 he was deeply involved in the riotous, corrupt, occasionally murderous (and always tribal) political and trade union life of the city and port.¹⁰⁹ He was a union and Socialist Party (SFIO) activist from a precociously early age and briefly associated in the 1920s with Simon Sabiani, the Corsican community's

political chieftain and later fascist collaborator. But he soon returned to the CGT and SFIO mainstream and in 1927 he became General Secretary of the Marseilles seamen's union, part of the national seafarers' federation (Fédération Nationale des Syndicats Maritimes) which was affiliated with the ITF. (In 1933 he wrote a manual on how to organize and represent seamen, in which he found substantial and appreciative room for the ITF's

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maritime activities.)¹¹⁰ He was a very substantial figure in the Marseilles political hot-house, serving as a city councillor and deputy mayor in the 1930s.

After the surrender of France in 1940, he became a 'courageous and important' member of the resistance, was arrested by the Gestapo in March 1943 and interned in Buchenwald concentration camp, from which he arrived back in Marseilles in June 1945 'in a pitiable state'.¹¹¹ He was shocked to find that the regional SFIO party was to be led into the national elections in October by Gaston Defferre, who was determined to rid the local party of its 'dissolute pre-war habits' and 'old guard', of whom Ferri-Pisani was proudly one. Ferri-Pisani headed a dissident SFIO list in the October 1945 National Assembly elections and went down heavily (75,371 to 17,325), clearing the way for Defferre's 'cleansing' (épuration) of Marseilles politics.

There is no mention of the SFIO in the pen-picture which introduced Ferri-Pisani to the readers of the ITF Journal following his election to the EC in 1950.¹¹³ The 1945 experience must have hurt him deeply and his trade union career suffered a comparable blow with the emerging communist ascendancy in the CGT seamen's federation, confirmed internationally by its withdrawal from the ITF in September 1947 (see Chapter IV). But a new lease of life arrived when he became General Secretary of the FO seamen's federation. He defeated Lafond of the FO railwaymen when the 1950 Congress had to choose between the two

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French candidates for the French seat on the General Council (a foretaste here of animosities to come) and so automatically secured a French seat on the EC which had been empty since the CGT unions' disaffiliation. His victory over the candidate of a union with an affiliated membership ten times bigger than the seamen's 5,000 indicates what a personal mark he had made on his Congress début, confirmed by his having shortly beforehand acted as spokesman for the Resolutions Committee in moving the draft resolution on the Korean War.

The Mediterranean RVC was Ferri-Pisani's brainchild and instrument. He was its only authorized spokesman. He was always given, and never declined, personal credit for its 'successes'. He took criticism very personally and his responses were always in very personal terms. What is known of him, however, is sketchy and it is hard to arrive with any confidence at a real understanding of the man or his

motivations. One thing, however, that can be said of him for sure is that he arrived at the ITF in 1949 as a political and industrial veteran, a graduate and survivor of some very hard schools. No lightweight would have given Sabiani and Defferre such problems (or have qualified for Buchenwald).

As the CIA's involvement in international labour affairs has been exposed over the years, notably by Carew,¹¹⁴ in all its often comic, often nasty and consistently inept dimensions, anyone as prominently associated with Brown as Ferri-Pisani was likely to be given rough justice. One writer has dismissed him, some fifty

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years on, as 'a drug smuggler connected with Marseilles crime lord Antoine Guerini', whom Brown had hired with CIA money to help set up a 'compatible left' union in Marseilles and 'to shellack striking Communist dock workers'.¹¹⁵ It is a lazy, sensationalist characterization. Ferri-Pisani would have known the Guerinis very well as one of the select gangster families who provided 'specialized services for politicians' in return for protection. Every politician had needed his gangster accessories.¹¹⁶ It was the Marseilles way. But any drug-smuggling know-how would not have interested Brown a fraction as much as Ferri-Pisani's years of political, maritime and trade union experience, intimate knowledge of a strategic waterfront, and his fanatically focused hatred of the communist 'enemy' which came close in intensity to Brown's own. There is a Manichean, avenging zeal to Ferri-Pisani's writing and it even survives the flattening effect of reported speech in

the ITF records of his speeches. No wonder Brown was so very proud of his acquisition, making much of Ferri-Pisani's anti-Nazi and Buchenwald survivor credentials and showing him off to the AFL President George Meany. ¹¹⁷

Two general points need to be made before going on to considering the Mediterranean RVC's activities. The first is that no minutes exist of its two meetings, in Marseilles in January 1951 and Salonika in June 1951, so there are no formal records of who attended and what was said. ¹¹⁸ The Mediterranean RVC's own printed organ, *Air, Terre, Mer*, appeared in French (clearly the original), with English and Italian translations, more or less monthly from

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May 1951 to November 1953 and published the texts of the meetings' resolutions which were invariably described as unanimous. ¹¹⁹ ITF governing body documents (see below) add little or nothing to the very thin record of the proceedings.

The second difficulty arises from the ITF's concern for security. Becu was convinced of the need to 'keep the adversary in ignorance' in the Mediterranean. The maximum publicity was very desirable but activities had also to be 'confidential'.¹²⁰ What he did not acknowledge, but would have known very well, was that when security had priority, it was not only 'the adversary' whose 'ignorance' had to be ensured. The affiliates and the governing bodies were far too big and too variegated to be entrusted with anything remotely confidential. The most that could be expected of

them was that they should give the leaders of the Vigilance Committee operation the same unquestioning trust as was given to the ITF leadership when it collaborated with the Allied intelligence services in the Second World War.

But Becu was also insisting that the 'confidential' work had to be balanced by activities that would attract public attention and the resolutions adopted by the first Mediterranean RVC in Marseilles from 10 to 14 January 1951 were clearly intended for that. They did not, however, please the Management Committee, which discussed them before the EC met from 29 to 31 January and was

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concerned that 'a regional committee had gone so far beyond its terms of reference' by adopting resolutions of such an 'obviously political' nature. It recommended the EC 'to consider steps' to prevent any recurrence.¹²¹

The resolutions were certainly uninhibited. One on the War in Indochina, declared the war to be 'part of the vast plan of the imperialists in the Kremlin to conquer the world ... congratulates France on having met the desire for sovereignty' and 'assures the Franco-Vietnamese troops ... of its [the committee's] support'. A typically rhetorical resolution on Objects and Means seemed to be proposing some kind of purge (among affiliates?) by insisting that it was essential 'to distinguish clearly between organizations genuinely and practically averse to Sovietism [sic] and those who, despite appearances, in reality promote Soviet policy.'

The EC confirmed that the CVC and RVCs were 'action committees', not policy-making bodies but its discussions – Ferri-Pisani, as always, the exception – were marked by an almost nervous anxiety to stress the procedural and not the substantial nature of the MC's reservations. There was no question of a 'condemnation', said Deakin, and Haugen congratulated Ferri-Pisani on the RVC's work. Lyon found nothing wrong with the substance of the resolutions and 'results' mattered more than 'methods'.

The 'results' that Lyon had welcomed had been claimed in Ferri-Pisani's opening

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statement: the Marseilles RVC meeting had changed 'the whole atmosphere' by convincing the communists that the RVC was a 'serious menace' to their domination of Marseilles which they had secured by violent suppression of their opponents. 'Free' unions (he did not specify which) were now winning heavily in union representation elections. The ITF unions had decided in Marseilles to establish an RVC in their region and to pay for it. The RVC 'had the right to use the powers laid down in their own rules' and if they were to fight the communists – 'physically if necessary' – the RVCs had to be given the competence to act in whatever ways their constituent unions decided. This implicit declaration of independence was underlined in a second contribution. His committee was 'the Mediterranean Committee of the ITF' [emphasis added], but the title did not commit the ITF to the committee's decisions. The French national vigilance committee was known as a

'Study Association' and made no mention of the ITF in its statements. He would 'bear in mind' the EC's procedural concerns but the Mediterranean unions would hold to their 'unorthodox line'.¹²²

Becu, as Ferri-Pisani had been quick to point out, had been invited to the Marseilles meeting, but had not attended, thus foregoing the chance to iron out any procedural problems on the spot. But, like Lyon, Becu was happy to concentrate on 'results' and described Ferri-Pisani's work in France (presumably his anti-communist activities) as the 'inspiration' for the establishment of the Vigilance Committee operation. A 'similar campaign', he thought, would have

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improved matters in the Belgian and Dutch ports. He then made his plea for secrecy and declared that RVCs had the right to decide on actions and methods 'within the regional confines'. 'Political' resolutions from a RVC, however, should come to the EC by way of the CVC. Gomez then proposed, and the EC decided, that the MC and Ferri-Pisani had both been right: it endorsed the MC's view that it was not for the CVC and RVCs to make ITF policy; and it expressed 'satisfaction' at the 'results' of the Marseilles RVC meeting.

The Mediterranean RVC met again, from 15 to 20 June 1951, in Salonika, Greece, only five months after its inauguration in Marseilles. A supplement to the ITF Press Report of 16 July 1951, headed 'Safeguarding Democracy – the third meeting of the

Mediterranean Vigilance Committee' ¹²³ – was given over to the meeting and is apparently the only record of sorts to be issued from the ITF headquarters. It was very short of details of the attendance (they are not to be found anywhere), describing instead 'delegations of Greek railwaymen, seafarers and dockers ... French seafarers, dockers and civil aviation workers ... seafarers and dockers from Trieste ... Maltese seafarers ... dockers from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco'. It does not mention any Italian presence. Makris, General Secretary of the deeply anti-communist Greek national centre, the GSEE, addressed the meeting and Greek dignitaries from the unions and government were plentiful and prominent. Becu was careful to attend for at least the first two days, before 'other commitments' took him back to London and he delivered a

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very fiery message. Transport workers who valued democracy were 'no longer' prepared 'to allow themselves to be intimidated ... by acts of [communist] terror and violence' and 'peace-loving folk [sic] as they are', they would pay the communists back in their own coin. ¹²⁴

The 'discussion' was opened by Ferri-Pisani, who 'emphasized ... that free and independent trade unionism can only function effectively if communism ... is annihilated.' The 'general discussion' which followed 'lasted several hours', none of which is captured, beyond the Press Report's assurance of the gathering's

desire for 'the success of the [RVC's] undertaking'.¹²⁵ The meeting welcomed the very first edition of *Air, Terre, Mer* and adopted a number of resolutions, the texts of the three 'most important' being added to the Press Report supplement.

One, cryptically headed 'Measures for defence', deplored the lack of due diligence by some leading bureaucrats in rooting out communists from public services. 'All brave men who love freedom' would support administrators who dismissed 'Communist saboteurs'. A second resolution on the 'General action of the Mediterranean committee' noted that since the last meeting in Marseilles 'the Communists have been unable to prevent the unloading of arms' but nevertheless appealed to the RVC's members for 'intensified vigilance and action.' A third, entitled 'Appeal for the unity of all democrats', asked for 'all men of good will' to unite in a campaign 'in which all ideological differences will be

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consciously thrust aside' against the 'many-sided advance of Sovietism.'

The Press Report made no reference to three other resolutions which clearly broke the bounds of the committee's competence - and regional bounds, too, in the first and second cases. The resolution on Conditions of life in the USSR listed the various horrors which made 'Soviet society ... synonymous with slavery, misery and extreme oppression' and declared that workers should give first priority to resisting 'Stalinist domination'. The second, on Far Eastern Problems, welcomed the United

Nations intervention in Korea and identified 'the same aggressor' (the USSR) at work in 'Korea, Burma and Malaya ...'. As for China, 'negotiations with the Mao Tse Tung Government are unthinkable without ... [the] ... participation of Chiang Kai Shek'. The resolution on the Atlantic Pact demanded the 'immediate inclusion of Greece and Turkey'. ¹²⁶

By skirting this contentious territory, the Press Report put a very positive face on the Mediterranean RVC's activities – strongly based, already halting the communist advance, every prospect of a successful counterattack if it kept up the momentum. But the formal report on the Salonika meeting to the EC in October 1951 was preoccupied with a fierce attack on the Mediterranean RVC, the Salonika meeting and Ferri-Pisani himself from Fernand Laurent, General Secretary of the French FO railwaymen's union, by far the largest of the ITF's French affiliates. ¹²⁷ In a letter of 8 August 1951, ¹²⁸ he referred to an exchange of

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letters with Becu some weeks previously (no copies appear to have survived), in which, Laurent believed, it had been made clear that the Mediterranean RVC was both subordinate and answerable to the CVC, which in turn owed its existence to the ITF Executive Committee. As an affiliate, the FO railwaymen were therefore entitled to take a view of the Mediterranean RVC's activities. This they had done in a long resolution ¹²⁹ which in its first broad assault 'denounces and deprecates the activities, essentially political in character ...[of]... the Mediterranean Committee,

calculated as they are to create a supra-national union organ acting outside and beyond the control of national or international trade union organizations...’ The resolution then ‘dissociated’ the FO railwaymen from the very three resolutions which the Press Report had presciently chosen not to publicize.

But the FO railwaymen’s most bitter denunciation was reserved for what the resolution termed as the tendency ‘on the pretext of anti-Stalinism ... to re-introduce into the trade union movement men ...[who had collaborated with] ... the Hitler regime and its tools in France’. Laurent’s covering letter justified that accusation by reference to a laudatory article, *At Salonika with the Mediterranean Committee*, in the June 1951 issue of the *Revue Syndicaliste* by a certain Raymond Froideval, ‘an ex-trade union leader’ and a ‘notorious pro-Nazi’. The *Revue Syndicaliste*, he alleged, was controlled by a group who ‘had been barred for life from the trade union movement on account of their activities and

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behaviour during the German occupation.’ The FO railwaymen had brought the article to the attention of the FO, whose General Secretary, Robert Bothereau, had written to Ferri-Pisani on 7 August 1951. His letter, markedly more restrained than the railwaymen’s representations, conveyed ‘the surprise’ of his Confederal Executive Committee and asked Ferri-Pisani what he intended to do about the ‘anomalous position’ of Froideval as one of the Mediterranean Committee’s ‘collaborators’. ¹³⁰ (Was the double entendre intended?)

The long 'extracts' given to the EC from Ferri-Pisani's letter to Bothereau of 23 August 1951 dealt exclusively with the issue of Froideval.¹³¹ The essence of Ferri-Pisani's defence was that Froideval had been judged and sentenced by the communist-dominated CGT and had never been allowed to defend himself. In any case the 'sanction' which barred Froideval from holding office in the CGT did not extend to 'his engagement as a paid employee ... of a trade union organization.' He 'did not ... approve of Froideval's attitude during the occupation' – his own line had 'meant ... prison and Buchenwald' – but that was a separate issue.

Ferri-Pisani's disapproval of Froideval's 'attitude' during the war was withdrawn when he was the first to speak at the EC meeting. Instead, he denounced the accusations against Froideval as 'calumnious'. An investigation after the war had shown that Froideval had helped the resistance movement and he had been

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cleared of all charges. Nevertheless, Ferri-Pisani had already offered to put the matter to 'impartial arbitration' and the proposal was gratefully taken up by EC members who felt themselves in no position to come to any judgment but were nevertheless concerned that, as Bratschi put it from the chair, 'anyone working for the ITF must be beyond reproach'. Lyon thought Ferri-Pisani 'should be free to choose the staff he needs' and Becu said the EC 'should not forbid [the CVC or RVCs] from calling on people whose cooperation was needed.' The EC decided to

accept Bratschi's proposal that the FO railwaymen should be asked to accept arbitration of the Froideval affair.¹³²

Ferri-Pisani had less success in the matter of the 'political' resolutions, which the FO railwaymen had disowned and he himself had not so far defended. Gomez said that the 'Far East' and the 'Atlantic Pact' were none of the Mediterranean RVC's business. Bratschi thought it should be told that political questions were outside its competence. Deakin declared his 'respect' and 'admiration' for the committee's work and thought the ITF was indebted to Ferri-Pisani. But he found the Far East resolution especially unpalatable. Chiang Kai Shek was 'rotten to the core'.¹³³ Lyon agreed generally that the RVC could not decide the ITF's political position but, predictably, could see nothing substantially wrong with its resolution on the USSR. It seemed to him that the FO railwaymen were 'following the communist line' (the first and last time an FO organization was accused of any such thing?). Ferri-Pisani acknowledged the criticisms and

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pleaded over-enthusiasm on the part of the Salonika participants, all passionate devotees of the democratic cause and very hard to convince that the free speech they cherished should not be spent on any and every issue they thought important.

Laurent was not easily mollified. He took the FO railwaymen's accusations against the Mediterranean RVC to the floor of the ITF Congress in July 1952.¹³⁴

He started by stressing that his union had been founded by former members of the CGT railwaymen's union six months before the birth of the FO. The specific charges against the Mediterranean RVC were those his union had put to the EC: a preoccupation with 'political' resolutions beyond the RVC's competence and sometimes of objectionable content (for example, the Chiang Kai-Shek reference), an indifference to the EC's admonitions, and the employment of someone [Froideval] who had 'supported the Vichy regime and preached the advantages of compulsory work in Germany.' But he also alleged that the Mediterranean RVC was a cause of deep dissension within the FO dockers' federation (see below). He put the basic question of 'whether the Vigilance Committees were justifying their existence' and speculated about the funding of the Mediterranean RVC. The ITF Financial Report revealed that the ITF was not paying for it, so its resources were not under the ITF's control. The RVC's members were few, yet it could finance two offices, one in Paris and the other in Rome, and publish *Air, Terre, Mer*, which was considerably larger than the

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ITF Journal. 'Far from operating under the auspices of the ITF,' he said, 'it was really an autonomous body.'

The first to defend the Mediterranean RVC was Pierre Felce of the FO road transport workers' union (Fédération Nationale FO des Transports), a union of few members (some 7,000) and smaller influence. Felce, whose high regard for his own

speeches was always manifest as he made them, defended Froideval, saying that criticism of the FO was no great crime. More interestingly, he defended 'help from the international working class movement' to the RVC and claimed that the FO railwaymen had sought and received help 'from the same organization' (to which he put no name).¹³⁵ The Mediterranean RVC had prevented the Communists from organizing strikes even in ports which they 'traditionally controlled'. That last claim was amplified by the two delegates from the Italian dockers' union (Federazione Nazionale Lavoratori Portuali). Maffei said the Communists had been 'defeated' in Leghorn (Livorno) where, Giornello explained, 'for over a year nobody could work in the port if he did not have a Communist card'. Similar success had been achieved in 'Trieste, Marseilles, Palermo, Taranto, Genoa, Bari and Algiers' by 'presenting a united front in the Mediterranean, using the Communists' own weapons.' As for the funds, the 'simple' answer was that 'they came from other workers and trade unions'.

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On the last point, Ferri-Pisani was not at all as forthcoming with Congress as he

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had been with Strauss in Sorrento: no blunt statement of the obvious, that French and Italian activities and loyalties were bound to follow the American money. Instead he explained that the Mediterranean Committee was 'dependent on the Central Vigilance Committee' and was therefore under the control of the ITF leadership. It would be 'disarmingly childish' to try to distinguish between 'a political committee

...[and] ... a committee of action' because 'some kind of propaganda ... had to precede organizational action'. The Communists who controlled Mediterranean ports by 'terrorism' and the 'secret agents of the Cominform' could not be beaten 'without promising protection to the one [good] side and reprisals to the other ... the Mediterranean seacoast was the one place where the Communists ... had not tried to declare a political strike'. But 'they [the RVC] had entered upon a new stage of difficult underground action and ... the Mediterranean Vigilance Committee was more necessary than ever'.¹³⁷

Much of Becu's 'reply' was spent on Laurent's indictment, which 'to a great extent' had been 'groundless'. The EC had not been concerned so much with the 'actual terms' of the RVC's resolutions as with the fact that a small number of affiliates could be assumed to speak for the ITF as a whole. Ferri-Pisani had understood that concern. By far the most interesting of Becu's comments, however, went to the matter of funding. The Financial Report for 1950-51 revealed the existence of a Vigilance Committee Fund set up by the EC and fed by contributions from 'different affiliated organizations'. Some £890 had been

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spent on Central Vigilance Committee travel but 'none of the affiliated organizations which had something directly to do with the Vigilance Committees had asked for financial help; they had provided the finance themselves. There was nothing wrong

in that ... the ITF could not be expected to ask them where their money came from. That would be interference with the financial autonomy of a national organization.' ¹³⁸

ix Which piper and what tune? The ITF, the AFL and the CIA

Not one voice was raised at the 1952 Congress to support Laurent's attack on the Mediterranean RVC and, implicitly, on the whole VC operation. But, more significantly, only Becu of the heavyweights took the floor to rebut it. For the rest, it was Ferri-Pisani's friends who rallied to him, recognizing, as he did himself, ¹³⁹ that he was Laurent's main target. Perhaps the bigger and older hands sensed that there was more to Laurent's case than the debate conveyed and perhaps, despite the 'security' blanket, they sniffed something not quite right and running out of control.

The fervour of the Mediterranean Committee's supporters, however, was undiminished. They cannot have guessed – and Becu gave not the faintest hint of it – that the whole Vigilance Committee operation was on its last legs. The debate at the 1952 Congress was the first and the last time that the Vigilance Committee project was ever openly and critically discussed within the ITF. The

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Road Transport Workers' Section was due to discuss participation in the VCs at a section conference in April 1952 but seems to have forgotten to do so. ¹⁴⁰ The EC reports for 1952 and 1953 make no mention of a Vigilance Committee meeting of any kind and the main body of the Report on Activities for 1952-53 to the 1954 Congress

is equally barren. It is left to a very determined reader to find the paragraph in an appendix to that Congress document which explains that 'the network of so-called vigilance committees' was a 'structure [that] is still in existence today' and 'must be kept ready to bring into action again as soon as Communist tactics change.' That day never came and the 'structure' died in its mothballs, never again to be mentioned in a governing body document. ¹⁴¹

It was a very muted, slightly shame-faced, end to an initiative which has often since attracted the attention of historians and commentators. Lorwin, for example, noted that the ITF, 'the strongest of the democratic international trade secretariats', had 'created a Mediterranean department, headed by the dynamic Marseille FO dock workers' leader, Ferri-Pisani' to counter the CGT and WFTU plans to sabotage transport 'in the event of overt [East-West] hostilities'. ¹⁴² Lorwin assumes, typically and understandably, that the VC action was purely 'Mediterranean'. Nothing happened elsewhere to undermine that assumption and there was a general haziness, even and especially within the ITF's governing bodies, about the mechanics and constitutional status of the Vigilance Committee project. The leading actors, such as Becu, Ferri-Pisani and Irving Brown, offered

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their own understandings (Brown's strictly by implication only) from time to time but those were for the most part inconsistent and irreconcilable, and sometimes disingenuous. The discussion at the EC meeting in January 1951 of the

Mediterranean RVC's 'political' resolutions (see above) was an early example of the EC's readiness to fudge the basic question of the authority and competence of the Vigilance Committees. The issue could have been settled there and then if the EC had decided and minuted an unequivocal and general assertion of its authority but the opportunity was lost. Or was it consciously declined? Both Becu and Ferri-Pisani would have had their own reasons for leaving the Mediterranean RVC largely to its own devices. Ferri-Pisani would not have wanted his style cramped by rigorous reporting and accounting requirements. Becu could well have thought it wiser not to insist on giving the EC (and himself) total responsibility for the actions and behaviour of a body which would probably do things that he would never be told of, or want officially to know.

If anything, the Sorrento experience a few months later would have brought home to him the fragility of the ITF's (and his own) grip on the Mediterranean operation. Brown's threat to go ahead without the ITF if it failed to accommodate his wishes was so much bluster; for the ITF's *imprimatur* gave the Mediterranean operations a semblance of industrial credibility. But if the French and Italian unions had become dependent for their very existence on American money, then the ITF, which had nothing like comparable funds to offer, would have either to

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close the operation down or find a way to live with the American money and presence and hope for the best.

It was ironically (or simply inconsistently) Ferri-Pisani, previously the strong defender of his RVC members' autonomy, who had chosen at the 1952 Congress (see above) to stress without qualification the ITF governing bodies' responsibility for the activities of the VC and the RVCs. Laurent and any other critics, he implied, should take on the ITF's 'top responsible officers' not the honest infantry, who were doing their heroic best at the battle front. Becu's contribution on that occasion was plainly mendacious when he denied all knowledge of or interest in the French unions' finances. He knew exactly where the French (and Italian) maritime unions were getting their money and must have known long before Ferri-Pisani and Brown confirmed it to Strauss in Sorrento. But it simply was not done in those highly charged times to make any concession to the enemy, even when the 'secrets' were as open as the FO's dependence on Brown's largesse. Laurent himself stopped short of naming the unnameable and the angry responses from his French comrades were vehemently discreet (or discreetly vehement). At this distance, it is possible to speculate that it would have been much healthier, and need not have been embarrassing or damaging, to have the issue of funding out on the Congress floor. The inevitable linkages between money, loyalty and responsibility were so obvious that any discussion about who actually was in charge of ITF operations in the Mediterranean was

bound to go for nothing if the ITF leadership pretended not to notice the American money flowing to the French and Italians.

Some forty-six years later, Carew could tell the extraordinary story of the poisonous, back-stabbing and mutually suspicious and contemptuous relationship between Brown and his boss Jay Lovestone, Executive Secretary of the AFL Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC), on the one hand, and their CIA paymasters on the other.

¹⁴³ The cloak-and-dagger codes (US\$ 1,000 was a 'volume' or 'book', CIA funds were the 'library', George Meany 'the plumber' ¹⁴⁴) give a juvenile air to a partnership made always difficult and eventually impossible by a great clash of incompatible organizational cultures and

personalities. At bottom, the FTUC wanted the CIA to pay up for its projects and then mind its own business. The CIA's 'Fizzers' (Lovestone's derisive term for the CIA's Ivy League officials) treated the FTUC as 'whores to be used and directed by politically incompetent dilettantes.' ¹⁴⁵ Tom Braden, the CIA official who later cut back the FTUC's funding, saw the problem very differently. The CIA was 'handing over enormous sums of money to Lovestone and Brown ... and never got any accounting from them'. It would sometimes open the FTUC's mail in the hope of finding out what exactly its money was buying. ¹⁴⁶ Lovestone 'went through the motions' of indulging the CIA's 'book-keeping psychology' but Brown would spend before he had the money, entries were 'juggled around' and he once borrowed money privately in the expectation that official funds would be forthcoming. ¹⁴⁷

Not all of the CIA funds in fact went through the FTUC, which makes it all the more difficult to attach any precise figures to this circus. 'Many of Irving Brown's activities in France' were financed directly by the CIA ¹⁴⁸ and there is no way to be sure what they cost them. And from 1949 the CIA was conducting its own operation in Italy, under the direction of Colonel Lane, the American Labor Attaché whose identity and presence had puzzled Strauss in Sorrento. The FTUC was 'appalled' and morally affronted by the 'corrupting influence' of 'the huge amounts of money showered on the Italian labor movement'. Worse still – and a 'major grievance' for the FTUC – the CIA was pretending that its Italian action had the FTUC's approval.¹⁴⁹

Despite the scarcity and inherent uncertainty of the specifics, Carew has winkled out more than enough of them to confirm once and for all that the CIA financed the Mediterranean RVC. Brown opened a 'Zurich bank account' in Ferri-Pisani's name 'to which funds were periodically credited' ¹⁵⁰ and though no date has been put on that move, it is clear from the Sorrento episode that Brown was already the committee's main, probably sole, provider by mid-1950. Carew has found a report on transactions in March 1953 by a certain Leon Dale, a CIA official who had been posted to Brown's Paris office to keep an eye on the finances. Dale handed out US\$6,000 on Brown's behalf to a 'representative' of Ferri-Pisani, who simultaneously put in a request for US\$3,000 - 4,000 more. ¹⁵¹ By the beginning of 1953, Brown's CIA budget included the 'Italian Section' of

the Mediterranean RVC, later described as 'Italian port workers', who were subsidized at a handsome US\$4,000 per month until the middle of that year when a reduction to US\$2,500 per month caused Giornelli, the 'Mediterranean Section secretary' to protest to Brown, cryptically, that he was now in 'serious trouble, like you and Ferri'.¹⁵² In 1954 the CIA's annual contribution to the FTUC fell to US\$53,789, continuing a steep decline since the peak of US\$172,882 in 1950. Brown's own budget, for which there are no figures, was cut at the same time, leading him 'to report that the Mediterranean Committee was in danger of going under.'¹⁵³ The merger in 1955 of the AFL with the CIO, which strongly disliked the FTUC type of operation and its leading lights (feelings which Lovestone and Brown enthusiastically reciprocated), hastened the process. The FTUC was buried 'as a functioning organization' in December 1957, its CIA relationship having died long before,¹⁵⁴ but Carew cautions that Lovestone's and Brown's personal associations with the CIA probably lived on. For example, he cites one incident which is particularly ironical in the light of the stand Laurent took against Ferri-Pisani's operations. In the 'late 1960s' the FO railwaymen's union wrote to George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO, to complain that Brown had cut off its monthly subsidy. Meany's secretary gave the letter straight to Brown, who 'accepted it without a word'.

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The precise amounts provided by Brown to ITF affiliates will never be known but they were certainly substantial enough to be absolutely indispensable to the

French and Italian maritime unions. Meetings of the ITF's EC and General Council at the end of June 1953 had on their agendas consideration of financial assistance to France and Italy. Ferri-Pisani reported beforehand that 'thanks to the help of the American Federation of Labor, we [referring here to an 'inter-federation' of the FO seamen's, officers' and dockers' federations] are able to maintain a few paid officials ... in the chief ports', but income from trade union dues was too small for any port branch (syndicat) to employ even one official. ¹⁵⁶ He told the EC meeting that 'the three French organizations of seafarers, transport workers, and dockers were each receiving 150,000 French francs a month in assistance from the American Federation of Labor.' ¹⁵⁷ In the case of Ferri-Pisani's seamen's union, the AFL's 150,000 francs was the equivalent of the full monthly dues from 1,000 members. ¹⁵⁸ (It was probably worth far more. It is very doubtful whether all the 7,650 members affiliated to the ITF in 1953 ¹⁵⁹ paid their dues or even existed.) The same sum would have been worth a little more to the dockers' union and a lot more to the 'transport workers' (presumably Felce's union), whose dues were lower. It is not clear whether the money came from the CIA via the FTUC, or from Brown's own CIA budget, or was not CIA money at all, but the second hypothesis is the strongest.

As for the ITF's direct investment, Becu's insistence (see pp266-67) at the 1952 Congress that the ITF had indeed helped finance the 'Vigilance' campaign carried the risk that his audience might actually turn to the table in the

Financial Report that he was citing ¹⁶⁰ and then ask why both the income and the expenditure of £860 (no great sum even then) were so modest for a campaign of such supposedly wide and profound importance. The EC's suggestion in October 1949 that dockers' unions should voluntarily put three 'old' pence (3d) per member into the fund had produced by December 1951 a very disappointing £650 in all from just four affiliates. By the ITF Congress in July 1952, the biggest contributor had been, and was to remain, the American SIU, whose anti-communist zeal had overridden the EC's decision to exempt seafarers' unions from the appeal. Without the SIU's £2,143 and without the £1,000 from the ITF General Fund as a 'start-up' transfer, the fund might have looked very sickly, but in the event it could almost have managed without either, for expenditure ended with the £860 spent in 1950-51. The balance of £2,991 in the fund on 1 January 1952 had grown to £3,245 by 31 December 1953. ¹⁶¹ The fund was wound up with effect from the end of 1955 and the balance transferred to the Edo Fimmen Free Trade Union Fund which financed the ITF's regional activities. ¹⁶²

x. Reflections on the 'Vigilance' exercise. And what really happened in Marseilles?

The contemporary rhetoric may have been overheated and the threat overplayed, but there were real grounds for the fear and expectation of Communist-led disruption in the western maritime industries which prompted the introduction of the Vigilance Committee operation. It was a reaction to the declarations at the WFTU's 1949 Congress in Milan (its first since the departure

of almost all its non-communist affiliates) which 'denounced the evil consequences of the Marshall Plan and its counterpart, the Atlantic Pact', and condemned 'the colonial wars against Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaya, Southern Korea and Greece'. The Congress had 'called on the trade unions of the whole world to give their fraternal assistance to the colonial peoples fighting for their liberty and national independence.' The actions in Marseilles against the 'filthy war' in Viet Nam earned special mention and French dockers in the 'Atlantic and Channel ports' were praised for their decision 'not to load or unload war material coming from the USA' once they recognized that 'the campaign against the war in Viet Nam necessarily led to action against preparations for the imperialist and [anti-]Soviet war'. The ITF - 'valets' of 'reaction' and 'splitters' – was denounced for creating Vigilance Committees 'whose avowed aim is to supply strike-breakers and spies to the [Marshall Plan] governments and police'. The ITF had 'placed itself in the service of the warmongers'.¹⁶³

These tirades and exhortations prompt three immediate reflections. Firstly, it was the WFTU that opened hostilities by calling for action at the workplace for purely political ends. The ITF's declared support for the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Pact and its determination to frustrate any communist attacks on those measures were a defensive reaction. Secondly, and contrarily, the ITF was hardly the organization to complain about the use of industrial muscle for political purposes. The WFTU had been quick to recall the efforts made by Ernest Bevin,

Edo Fimmen and the ITF Congress in 1920 to prevent the shipments of arms to Poland for use against the Soviet Union. And the ITF's anti-Fascist campaigns between the world wars had been profoundly and proudly political.¹⁶⁴ Thirdly, the WFTU's threats could not be taken lightly. The communist-led maritime unions of France and Italy dwarfed their 'free' rivals and were potentially capable of paralysing the major ports. Elsewhere in western Europe, trouble in the Belgian, Dutch and, most gravely of all, British ports showed how even strongly anti-communist union leaderships could lose control.

Yet however credible and imminent the threat, it was never translated into anything of remotely significant impact on the WFTU's main targets: the Viet Nam war, other colonial conflicts, the Marshall Plan and the 'Atlantic Pact' (NATO). Of the three regions devised by the ITF and established by the CVC, the only excitement in the 'Scandinavian/Baltic' region came with a rumour in January 1950 that arms shipments might be stopped in Copenhagen. They never were.¹⁶⁵ Dekeyzer's efforts to find out what was going on in his 'North Sea/Atlantic' region (see p245) were abortive because there was really nothing serious to report. The WFTU's faith in the intentions of the French dockers in the 'Atlantic and Channel ports' proved to be totally misplaced. 'They are calmly loading arms in Le Havre,' a militant Communist docker gloomily observed, 'but perhaps it's not dockers doing it.'

¹⁶⁶ Yet dockers they were. Ferri-Pisani's failure to help Dekeyzer's research into the

French situation may have been unfraternal but perhaps he simply had nothing to report.

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Ferri-Pisani was only really concerned anyway with the Mediterranean and, above all, Marseilles. It was in Marseilles that he and his foot-soldiers claimed to have engaged the enemy and proved that, even in their stronghold, the communists could be beaten. The claim was never put to any test within the ITF. No-one seems ever to have asked who had done what and when. No-one questioned that the communists had been defeated, but no-one explained what positive gains had followed for 'free' trade unionism. The ITF would, of course, have been predisposed to accept triumphs gratefully and not to be too fastidious in assembling the evidence and corroboration. Furthermore, Ferri-Pisani had consciously cultivated an almost romantic air of 'secrecy' and a sense of physical danger into the Marseilles operations which discouraged curiosity.

Ferri-Pisani, Brown, the FTUC and the CIA would all have had substantial vested interests in the ITF's readiness to take Ferri-Pisani at his word. There were personal reputations and careers, not say many thousands of dollars, riding on his claim to have won the port of Marseilles for democracy. Many years later, in 1967, Lovestone saw Ferri-Pisani's work in Marseilles as 'one of the brightest episodes in the history of our effort to help European labor'.¹⁶⁷ But, more than fifty years on, it must now be time to ask whether there really was a battle at all and, if so, who fought it and who won?

Unfortunately, there are no answers to be found in the ITF archives. Nowhere is there even the most passing mention of any specific action directed or supported

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by the Mediterranean RVC in Marseilles. The only report the writer has found of an action which can be attributed directly to Ferri-Pisani, comes from the communist side and took place in March 1951. The CGT dockers' union had imposed an overtime ban but as the dockers walked off a ship at the end of their normal shift a gang of 'scabs' (*jaunes*) appeared, led by August Marcily, one of Ferri-Pisani's henchmen (*un homme de main*) who had been engaged as a strike-breaker in 1950 and 'had just founded the FO dockers' union'. One of the scabs used his gun as they tried to board the ship, wounding five dockers. The police arrived, arrested the scabs and they did not come back. The incident provoked a 24-hour strike 'by all the unions in Marseilles' and was 'a major political mistake on Marcily's part and that of his sleeping partners (*commanditaires*).'¹⁶⁸

The author of that account, Alfred Pacini, was a staunch Communist, who regarded the CGT dockers' strike in Marseilles from 10 March to 17 April 1950 (a very long strike by French standards) as ranking among the 'finest actions' in the history of the French working-class movement, despite its having achieved a very euphemistic 'nothing much'.¹⁶⁹ The strike was 'political' in that the union was demanding an end to the employers' sanctions against dockers who refused to handle arms for Indo-China but it was also seeking wage increases. The

reaction of the employers was to enlist agents-provocateurs, the public authorities, and the para-military riot police (CRS) in a ruthless deployment of

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strike-breakers. 'The Africans came ashore ... and were engaged immediately ... There were independent unions led by scoundrels (*canailles*) who would recruit [scabs] and take them in vans to the quayside ...with the aim of having everyone work in the port except the dockers.' ¹⁷⁰

Pacini's account of the crushing of the Marseilles dockers' strike and of the aftermath – 'the union is in a bad way, dockers are hesitating to renew their membership ... constant blackmail on the quays' ¹⁷¹ – may have been bitterly partisan but he was to be borne out by Jensen in much cooler, academic terms some fourteen years later. He writes that early in 1950 the Marseilles port employers had grown weary of a succession of politically motivated strikes and 'decided to break it'. Whereas in previous strikes the government had limited the use of troops to the handling of military cargoes, the employers decided in March and April 1950 that they could be confident of the full backing of the guardians of public order. They therefore took the offensive by recruiting and training an alternative workforce (Pacini's *jaunes*). Once the call for recruits went out 'it proved easy to break the strike'. ¹⁷² Jensen puts no numbers to it, but Pacini claims that the number of 'casuals' (*occasionels*) grew from some 486 at the beginning of the strike in March 1950 to 3,773 one month later. ¹⁷³ The port employers consolidated their total victory in the 1950 strike when they

decided to repudiate all existing collective agreements and to cease formally to recognize any union. They later reached an 'understanding' (*Protocole d'accord*) with the

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'independent' union (*Syndicat indépendant des ports et docks*) and with the foremen's union but the port of Marseilles was kept free of any real union influence well into the 1960s. ¹⁷⁴

The ITF's affiliate, the FO dockers' federation (*Fédération Nationale des Ports et Docks-FO*), fails to rank a reference in Jensen's account, but it reported to the ITF EC in July 1953 that it had an equal share with the CGT and the independent dockers' unions of the workers' seats on a statutory joint committee (Bureau Central de Main-d'oeuvre) in Marseilles. But it had only one 'paid official' there, as against the CGT union's three -- and he was probably shared with the FO seafarers' unions (see p274).¹⁷⁵ It fared even worse in other ports. It had no presence at all on the joint committees in the important Channel ports of Le Havre, Dunkirk, Boulogne and Rouen where the CGT had a total monopoly. It offered the ITF in 1953 a round '5,000' for its membership out of an estimated total of 'about 38,000' trade union members in the ports industry, of which 'about 25,000' belonged to the CGT dockers' union. ¹⁷⁶ Its affiliated membership peaked at 6,200 from 1957 to 1961 and fell back to 5,500 in 1964. ¹⁷⁷

On paper, its membership had in fact more than doubled over the period that the Mediterranean RVC was purportedly facing down the CGT in Marseilles ¹⁷⁸ but if the RVC was ever inclined to seek credit for that, not everyone in the union was ready to give it. When its General Secretary died early in 1952 he was

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succeeded at a union congress in May 1952 by a candidate, Boucher, who won by associating his rival, Piquemal, with certain 'extra-trade union committees', which the delegates would have readily decoded as bodies such as Ferri-Pisani's 'Study Association' (see p257) or the Mediterranean RVC itself. Piquemal was not ready to accept second place and his supporters made him General Secretary of a new dockers' union which they founded one month later. The new union claimed affiliation with the FO, which settled the dispute by convening a third congress in November 1952 where Piquemal was confirmed as General Secretary of the FO dockers' union, the *Fédération des Ports et Docks et Assimilés*.

¹⁷⁹ Any French dockers who were looking for an effective 'free' alternative to the CGT dockers' union could hardly have been impressed.

It is very unlikely that anything approaching the whole truth of the great confrontation in the port of Marseilles in 1950 will ever be known, but a few salient facts seem to be uncontested. The CGT dockers' union in Marseilles was indeed dominated by communist militants, like Pacini, who really did see it as their ideological duty to boycott ships with cargoes to which they had political objections. Their intentions

were not the paranoid imaginings of NATO, the Pentagon or the ITF and the AFL, but were loudly and unapologetically declared. They were urged on by their WFTU Trade Department which is on record as demanding similar actions throughout western Europe. When the union's actions in Marseilles developed into a general dock strike, the port employers, backed

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and protected by security forces of every kind, crushed the action by flooding the port with casual and totally compliant labour. When the strike collapsed, the employers made sure the port was free of any effective union presence for at least a decade.

Here, undoubtedly, was an important victory over a communist-led union and western governments, concerned only with their political and strategic imperatives, must have been very pleased and relieved. The ITF chose to present the communists' defeat as a victory for the ITF's Vigilance campaign, won by Ferri-Pisani's troops whose heroic feats, necessarily largely clandestine and therefore unsung, had made the port secure for the 'free' trade union movement. Laurent, however, had known better and so, surely, had Becu. Any effective trade union presence and influence of any kind was eliminated for years and the FO dockers' union was among the very weakest of the crippled remnants. By its own reckoning, it ranked far behind the emasculated CGT union and Jensen did not think it worth one mention. There was some negative comfort to be scraped together for the ITF from the Marseilles episode: the communists' attempts to disrupt arms and aid shipments

were defeated and their power in the port broken. Brown and Lovestone might have settled for that, but the ITF must surely have hoped for very much more. The final word could perhaps be left to Gaston Defferre, by the early 1950s politically impregnable in Marseilles and a rising national star of the Socialist Party. Brown and his friends,

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he wrote, had no credit among honest anti-communist trade unionists. Ferri-Pisani, Marcily and Irving Brown were spending all their time in night-clubs and their Mediterranean Committee was a joke (*plaisanterie*).¹⁸⁰

If the only real victors in Marseilles were the port employers, did the Vigilance Committee exercise have anything better to claim elsewhere? At the ITF's 1952 Congress, Giornelli of the ITF's Italian dockers' union named ships which the communists had been prevented from stopping and specified the new members (a few hundred) that his union had won over.¹⁸¹ But in Italy, as in France, it was the weakness of the communists when put to the test, not the strength of the 'free' unions, which decided matters. There were never enough Italian dockers so committed to the cause as to do more than stop the occasional ship for a symbolic day or two, their inhibitions backed by the very practical consideration that in the major ports the workers, CGIL members not least, operated as cooperatives and had a strong financial interest in maximizing their ports' business.

By 1952, the two wings of the international movement were anyway coming to accept that quick victories were not to be had in Europe and their rivalry was soon to be located more and more in the 'under-developed' and increasingly de-colonized parts of the world. Giornelli's brown envelopes were getting slimmer and fewer and even Ferri-Pisani was losing heart. When the ITF EC came in

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June 1953 to consider requests for help from their 'free' French and Italian affiliates, Ferri-Pisani was quick to say that no amount of ITF assistance could produce 'any substantial short-term results'.¹⁸² The last issue of his *Air, Terre, Mer* appeared at the end of 1953.

He had left both his union and the ITF by the time of the 1954 ITF Congress, where the French seat on the Executive Committee went to Laurent, his most tenacious critic. He was never seen again within the ITF, nor heard of until 23 October 1963 when *Le Monde* reported that he had been found dead in his Marseilles home. He had ceased all his (unspecified) 'activities' several months earlier because of poor health and on 21 October put a gun to his head.

xi. The enemies to the right: Spain and Argentina – and Greece

Franco's Spain had survived the war and served for some time as one of the few targets that the WFTU and the 'free' movement shared. But even that consensus was strained when it came to practical measures. The ITF's 1946 Congress adopted

a resolution moved by the Executive Committee welcoming the WFTU's decision to ask national centres to press their governments to break off diplomatic relations with Franco but the ITF went further by asking its affiliates to lobby for the action to be extended to 'economic' relations. The ITF's French seamen's and transport workers' federations had proposed an amendment 'inviting' all the affiliates to boycott Spanish goods and cargoes 'immediately'.

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Trifón Gómez, once leader of the Spanish railwaymen's union and now a member of the Republican government in exile, introduced the EC's motion to Congress and, with some 'embarrassment', persuaded the Congress to 'prefer a moderate resolution' because the affiliates were simply not in the position to carry off a successful boycott.¹⁸³ Gómez would have been aware of a discussion at an ITF Management Committee meeting only two months previously (on 11 March 1946) when Oldenbroek had reported a letter from Garcias of the French transport workers' federation (see Chapter IV) asking, on behalf of the French affiliates, for the ITF to cut off traffic to and from Spain. That much was minuted,¹⁸⁴ but Oldenbroek would almost certainly have reported also on a visit on 6 March 1946 from Walter Schevenels, briefly and very unhappily one of the WFTU's two Assistant General Secretaries. Schevenels had wanted to know what the chances were of the ITF's asking its affiliates 'to stop shipments to and from Spain'. Any such boycott would require the ITF's cooperation but the French CGT had already decided to 'stop all transport to and from Spain' and had the 'solid backing' of its transport worker

members. Oldenbroek, referring clearly to the WFTU leadership's insistence that WFTU 'Trade Departments' would have to stick closely to their industrial business, wondered tongue in cheek whether the ITF might 'expose itself to reprisals' if it took action on 'a general political issue'. 'At this point', the note observes, 'it was clear that Schevenels did not wish to prolong the discussion.'¹⁸⁵ What Oldenbroek did not tell Schevenels was that the British affiliates were not ready for a boycott of Spain and that

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without them there was no hope that a boycott could be effective. A discussion at the MC a few days after the exchange with Schevenels confirmed their lack of enthusiasm: Deakin was sure the British TUC would not do more than endorse the call for an end to diplomatic relations; Marchbank said there would have to be consultations to see what support a boycott would have; and Jarman, for the seamen's union, thought the proposal 'precipitate'.¹⁸⁶ Their reaction was a recognition that it was beyond the ITF or any other part of the international movement to do Franco significant damage without the active backing of the war-weary western governments, which showed no such inclination in 1946. The last hopes of their putting any real pressure on Franco (or Salazar¹⁸⁷) died as the Cold War intensified and Spain, its dictator notwithstanding, offered the western powers strategic assets that they found irresistible. The ITF's frustration was expressed bitterly in an ITF Journal article in 1953 which denounced the death in custody of Tomás Centeno, a UGT activist, as an illustration of the enduring brutality

of the Franco regime. The article featured a cartoon by a celebrated British political cartoonist, Vicky, in which Franco's study bears two posters: 'Come to Sunny Spain' and 'Bases to Let'.¹⁸⁸ The one positive action the ITF could and did take was to help keep alive the Socialist (UGT) transport workers' union in its French exile with modest financial help against the day (which came, of course, many years later) when it could resume its place in a free Spain.

The other threat from the right to preoccupy the ITF in the early post-war years

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had come in 1946 from *Argentina*, with the election to the presidency (by a huge majority, it must be said) of General Juan Peron. 'Peronismo' owed more to Mussolini than to Peron himself and Peron acknowledged the debt by neutering the trade unions with fascist single-mindedness. The national centre, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*, was soon brought under his party's total control and all the country's unions were then bullied to join the centre and to accept its authority. By early 1950 the ITF's railwaymen's and tramwaymen's unions had succumbed and the locomotivemen's union, *La Fraternidad*, a venerable and famously upright organization, was finally battered into submission in May 1951 by an armed mob after it refused to back the Peronists' election campaign. The ITF's seafarers' and dockers' affiliate, the *Confederación General de Gremios Marítimos y Afines* (CGGMA) stood firm under a sustained attack from the national centre on its leadership and bargaining rights until May 1950 when it called its 12,000 members out on strike to defend their union's rights. At the CGGMA's urgent request, Becu set

out for Argentina, having secured authority also to represent the ICFTU, in the hope of interceding with its Minister of Labour. But he got no farther than Montevideo where he waited some five days towards the end of June 1950 for a visa to enter Argentina. When he was finally denied it, he arranged immediately from Montevideo for an appeal to be made to the ITF's seafarers' and dockers' unions to undertake solidarity action against Argentinian ships. ¹⁸⁹

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The appeal came at a difficult time for the European dockers' leaders. Great Britain was still coping with rationing and needed Argentinian beef, a consideration Deakin denied – 'it is not a question of getting Argentinian meat' – when explaining to the ITF Congress in July 1950 why the TGWU had abstained from voting at a Dockers' Section meeting for a resolution supporting Becu's appeal. The 'practical difficulties' in British ports, he said, 'make strike action impossible', meaning that with the 1949 strikes such a recent nightmare, the TGWU did not dare to start any strike for fear of losing control of it. The Belgians and the Dutch were also concerned that their communist elements might take advantage of any solidarity actions to cause mischief. The German OeTV was under legal restraints on solidarity actions and had a general concern that any industrial action might harm economic recovery. But the OeTV nevertheless took action to turn away Argentinian ships and the employers promptly sued them. One ship, turned away unworked by the Hamburg dockers and diverted to Antwerp, was boycotted there. ¹⁹⁰ But the strike was already fading fast

and was ended on 4 August 1950 after seventy-eight days. The CGGMA's members were drafted into a new organization 'set up on a luxurious scale by the [Argentinian] CGT and the Government'. The ITF's verdict was that 'totalitarianism has won another victory' ¹⁹¹ and it did not win back any Argentinian affiliates until Peron was deposed in 1955.

Franco and Peron were of a familiar fascist type. *Greece* presented different and

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less straightforward challenges. ¹⁹² The vicious civil war, which began with the end of the German occupation, reached a new intensity with attacks by Communist guerrillas on the right-wing government which had been elected in August 1946. First the British and then the American governments intervened to support the government side, which set to work to suppress communists and communist influences wherever they were found or suspected. Mass arrests of communist trades unionists early in July 1947 swept up leaders of the Federation of Greek Maritime Unions (FGMU) and resulted in the imposition of an anti-communist leadership on the railwaymen's federation. The ITF was moved to write to the Greek Ambassador in London on 17 July 'voicing our suspicion that the political troubles served as a cloak ... to destroy the trade unions' and it cabled the Greek Prime Minister soon afterwards 'protesting against this flagrant attack on the freedom of association'. In September 1947 the government withdrew official recognition from the FGMU and gave exclusive recognition, over the ITF's 'fruitless' protest, to the

anti-communist Panhellenic Seafarers' Federation (PNO). Neither the FGMU nor the PNO was affiliated to the ITF at the time, though both were seeking its recognition. The FGMU had, however, been founded in Great Britain during the war by Greek refugee seafarers and its communist leader, Tony Ambatielos, who commanded great respect, was arrested in 1947 and put on trial for aiding the 'rebels'. The ITF's cautious response was to insist on his being given a fair trial ¹⁹³ but he was tried with one of his FGMU colleagues, Bekakos, before a military court. Both were found guilty

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in November 1948 of high treason and sentenced to death. The ITF, 'knowing something of Greek methods', had already warned that death sentences would mean that the ITF 'could not entertain ... any relations with non-Communist unions in Greece'.¹⁹⁴ The executions were deferred and in May 1951 the ITF learned that the sentences had been commuted to life imprisonment. ¹⁹⁵ The PNO eventually became the most active of the Greek affiliates, especially in the Seafarers' Section where it had big and sometimes questionable interests to protect. The Greek affiliates had few allies within the ITF mainstream. There was a lingering suspicion that their leaderships depended more on the trust their government placed in them than on their members' support.

xii. Summary

The ITF's affiliates are, or aspire to become, unions of the kind variously characterized as 'conventional' or 'traditional' or, as they increasingly liked to be known from the late 1940s, 'free'. The defining belief of this kind of union is one of trade union autonomy, that a 'free' trade union is ultimately accountable to its membership, not to other institutions or agencies, and particularly not to governments or political parties. In the real world, that autonomy must of course compete with other autonomies, public and private, always contending with them and sometimes clashing. Agreements, alliances and accommodations therefore have to be made, typically with political parties and governments, but 'free' unions make them of their own volition, within their own rules. 'Free'

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trade unionism can only exist at all, however, in a compatible political environment which, at the very least, tolerates and protects what the ILO came in 1948 to describe as 'freedom of association' and 'the right to organize and bargain collectively'.¹⁹⁶

The ITF had never published anything approaching a political manifesto, but building inductively and inferentially on the concept and corollaries of 'autonomy', the ITF's 'politics' arrive unsurprisingly at something more or less left-of-centre, home ground for, say, the British Labour Party (of that period), European 'Social Democrats' and many American Democrats (particularly, in the period, former 'New Dealers'). It was therefore inevitable that the ITF should first resist the attempt to smother it within a

WFTU 'Trade Department' and should then enthusiastically support the western stand in the Cold War, emphasizing constantly the inherent incompatibility of communism and 'free' trades unionism. Its cause was not helped along the way, however, by a number of weaknesses and failings: its rhetoric was often overwrought; some of its affiliates were very flawed representatives of free trade union strength and virtue; and some of its actions, for example during the Vigilance Committee enterprise, had distinctly disreputable moments.

By the early 1950s, and particularly after Stalin's death in March 1953, the WFTU bloc knew that whatever mischief its supporters made, it could not do serious and

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lasting damage either to the 'free' unions or the capitalist world. The 'free' international movement, for its part, knew that the workers in the communist bloc had similarly scant chance of asserting themselves in the face of the communist regimes' overwhelming firepower, witness the suppression of the uprisings in East Germany, Poland and, above all, Hungary. And so, after a relatively short period of fierce confrontation the two sides settled down to a stalemate, unacknowledged to the extent that neither conceded any ideological ground, but evident in their mutual impotence when it came to making substantial inroads into the other's territory. Virgin territory looked more promising and by the end of the period the developing world had become the main ideological arena, in a bid to win the allegiance of the new or revitalized unions which appeared with the great waves of decolonization.

By the end of the period and within its own sphere of influence and operations, the ITF was working in a congenial political climate. The new post-war political order had accepted the two fundamental principles which underpinned the ITF's *raison d'être*: that trade unions were, or should be, an essential feature of modern civil society; and that the brave new world would look more and more to international cooperation and government. One consequence of what, on both accounts, was a transformation of the pre-war world was the creation of a host of international governmental and industrial organizations dealing with transport matters, in which the ITF's active participation was never refused and was often positively solicited.

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Notes to Chapter V:

¹ Fimmen,, p123

² *ibid.*, p109

³ *ibid.*, p111

⁴ *ibid.*, p112

⁵ *ibid.*, pp107, 117,118

⁶ *ibid.*, p118

⁷ *ibid.*, pp120-121

⁸ Con.26, *Minutes*, pp75-76. See also Chapter II.

⁹ See Geert van Goethem in Reinalda, pp106-116.

- ¹⁰ Con.38, Document on '*Resolutions adopted...*'
- ¹¹ Con.32, *Proceedings*, pp239-240
- ¹² Citrine, p5
- ¹³ *Finland: a Tragedy of the North*, (MRC 159/12/16-17) and
Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p36
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, p37
- ¹⁵ The ITF kept in touch, however, with the Finnish Seamen's Union, which was
'secretly contributing to the Allied war effort'. Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p53.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp85-87 and '*addresses, minutes of the International Railwaymen's
Conference, London, 9/1943*' (MRC 159/1/9/20)
- ¹⁷ Reiner Tosstorff in Reinalda, p104

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- ¹⁸ Con.46, *RonA 1938-46*, p2
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp107-118
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, pp12-14
- ²² Con.46, *Proceedings*, pp233-235
- ²³ The WFTU offered the ITSs some largely cosmetic concessions late in the
day but none on the limiting of the TD agendas to 'trade' matters. The ITSs
did not take the offer seriously and nor, probably, did the WFTU. See note ²⁸.
- ²⁴ See Allen, Carew (1) and (2), Koch-Baumgarten and Lewis. Macshane
claims too much credit for the International Metal Workers' Federation (IMF)
and its General Secretary, Konrad Ilg. No-one else gives them more than the

very passing mention they deserve.

²⁵ Carew (2), p335

²⁶ Con.48, *Proceedings*, p324

²⁷ For example, Weiler, pp93-96 passim, relies too much on the hearsay and axe-grinding of 'confidential' sources.

²⁸ Con.46, *Proceedings*; Con.48, *Proceedings* and *RonA 1946-47*, pp93-112; Con.50, *Proceedings*.

²⁹ EC February 1950, *Minutes*, Doc.13 EC-9, p14. The same minutes also record Oldenbroek's having said that ITs should remain independent 'for perhaps a very long time'. De Vries took him up on that qualification at the 1950 Congress. Oldenbroek replied that the ITs' independence was simply no longer on anyone's agenda. Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp249-250.

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³⁰ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51, Appendix I: Report on Relations with the ICFTU*, p124

³¹ *Report of the Second World Congress of the ICFTU*, Milan, 4-12 July 1951, p40, (MRC 159/5/2/194)

³² Carew (1), p211

³³ EC October 51, *RonA January-August 1951*, Section 10 on 'International Trade Union Relations'; and Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp124-127

³⁴ Carew (4), p8

³⁵ Con.50, *RonA 1948-1950*, pp100-101

³⁶ Carew (4), pp74-77

- ³⁷ *Proceedings of the Conference on the European Recovery Programme*, Luxembourg, 6-8 April 1948, pp30-32 (MRC 159/1/12/10)
- ³⁸ *ibid.*, pp84-86
- ³⁹ *ibid.*, 74-76
- ⁴⁰ EC May 1950, *Minutes*, Doc. 14 EC-13, p9
- ⁴¹ Con.50, *RonA 1948-1950*, p100
- ⁴² Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp162 and 175
- ⁴³ Carew (4), pp49-50, 84-85
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p85
- ⁴⁵ Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp214-216
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp211-213
- ⁴⁷ Carew (4), Chapter 8 and p249
- ⁴⁸ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, pp116-117

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- ⁴⁹ Con.56, *Proceedings*, pp368-369
- ⁵⁰ Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp262-267 (presentation and discussion of the first draft) and pp278-279 (final draft, discussion and adoption).
- ⁵¹ There might well have been personal or organizational antagonisms at play. The FO railwaymen deeply distrusted Ferri-Pisani and his politics, as will be evident later from the account of the Vigilance Committee activities.
- ⁵² The 'for' votes seem not to have been counted, but the reports of the Credentials Committee indicate there were at least 190 delegates at the

Congress by the time this business was done. Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp218,243,277

⁵³ Con.54, *Proceedings*, pp276-277

⁵⁴ Con.56, *Proceedings*, pp368-369

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp361-363

⁵⁶ The Suez crisis was actually re-visited in November 1956 when a special conference to consider the Soviet invasion of Hungary took the opportunity to welcome the Suez cease-fire and the withdrawal of the British, French and Israeli forces. Becu, *A Call to Boycott*, in *ITF Journal*, February 1957, p21.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp21-25,31

⁵⁸ The resolution was supported by the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section Conference the following week. *Ibid.*, p22

⁵⁹ Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp267-268

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp271-272

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⁶¹ Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp298-299

⁶² *ibid.*, pp250-251

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp251-253

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p253

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p254

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p255

⁶⁷ Con.54, *Proceedings: Report on Transport Workers' Organizations in the Fight*

of Democracy and Peace, pp140-144

⁶⁸ Con.54, *Proceedings*, pp273-285

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp278-279

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp282,285

⁷¹ Con.65, *RonA* 1962-64, p199

⁷² Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp280-282

⁷³ Con.54, *RonA* 1952-1953, p29

⁷⁴ Con.50, *Proceedings*, p279-280,272

⁷⁵ Lipton, pp281

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p281

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p282

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp283-284. The writer has recently (September 2002) been contacted by a Canadian group planning a film on the CSU's 'heroic struggle'.

⁷⁹ Based on the writer's recollection of conversations with Canadian veterans, such as the late Tom McGrath, a former Vice President of the CBRT.

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⁸⁰ *ITF Journal*, November-December 1950, pp1-4

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p4

⁸² *ibid.*, p2

⁸³ Abella, pp23-24

⁸⁴ *The Times* for June and July 1949 is the source for the general narrative.

⁸⁵ *The Times*, 22 and 23 June 1949

- ⁸⁶ *The Times* , 13 June 1949
- ⁸⁷ *The Times*, 9 and 11 July 1949
- ⁸⁸ *The Times*, 8 June 1949
- ⁸⁹ *Minutes of the TGWU Biennial Delegates' Meeting, 11-15 July 1949*, p9
(MRC 126/TG/1/4/13)
- ⁹⁰ *Minutes of the TGWU GEC*, March 1950, pp156-160 and
Appendix III, pp 64-67 (MRC 126/TG/1/1/28)
- ⁹¹ *The Times*, 14 July 1949
- ⁹² *The Times*, 20 July 1949
- ⁹³ *Con.50, RonA 1948-50*, pp52-53,75-76
- ⁹⁴ It is not clear who coined the name, but it came uncomfortably close to
'vigilante'. Deliberately so?
- ⁹⁵ *Note of the Secretariat to the Vigilance Committee*, 23-24 January 1950
(MRC 159/1/18). Seafarers' unions were not asked to contribute because they
were already paying towards ITF activities in Asia
- ⁹⁶ EC February 1950, *Report on the Meeting of the ITF Vigilance Committee*

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- ⁹⁷ VC January 1950, *Note of the Secretariat*, op.cit., p2
- ⁹⁸ EC February 50, *Annex to Report on the Meeting of the ITF Vigilance
Committee*, op.cit.; EC February 50, *Minutes*, p12; and *ITF Journal*,
January-February 1950, pp1-2
- ⁹⁹ The references and citations concerning the Sorrento CVC meeting are drawn

from the 'Private and Confidential' *Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Vigilance Committee*, Sorrento, 2-3 September 1950, pp2,3,6-8 (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, pp9-10

¹⁰¹ Circular 'to the members of the Central Vigilance Committee' of 27 July 1951 (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰² *Report of the Regional Vigilance Committee*, dated 31 July 1951, signed by R. Dekeyzer in Antwerp (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰³ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, pp70-71

¹⁰⁴ The active 'Mediterranean' unions were all European.

¹⁰⁵ Copy of circular *To the members of the ITF Central Vigilance Committee*, dated 5 August 1950 (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰⁶ Copy of *Circular No.39 of 10 August 1950* (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰⁷ Typed carbon copy (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁰⁸ This document (MRC 159/1/18) provides the narrative and citations for the following five paragraphs.

¹⁰⁹ Diligently and vividly captured in Jankowski's *Communism and Collaboration: Simon Sabiani and Politics in Marseille, 1919-1944*, and the main source for this account of Ferri-Pisani's Marseilles activities before 1945.

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¹¹⁰ P. Ferri-Pisani, *Sur le syndicalisme maritime*, Marseilles, 1933 (MRC 159/5/3/353)

¹¹¹ *ITF Journal*, July-October 1950

¹¹² This account of the 1945 election relies on Colette Ysmal, pp11-13

¹¹³ *ITF Journal*, July-October 1950

¹¹⁴ Notably in his *The American Labor Movement in Fizzland: the Free Trade Union Committee and the CIA*.

¹¹⁵ Valentine, pp 61-64

¹¹⁶ Jankowski, p12

¹¹⁷ Telephone conversation with John Vanderveken, former General Secretary of the ICFTU, 20 March 2002; photo of Ferri-Pisani, Brown and Meany, *CovertAction Quarterly*, No.67, Spring-Summer 1999., p62

¹¹⁸ The Salonika meeting was misleadingly described as the 'third' in the Supplement to *ITF Press Report* of 16 July 1951(MRC 159/4/116-325), presumably regarding the *ad hoc* Sorrento gathering as the first.

¹¹⁹ MRC 159/4/411-413

¹²⁰ EC January 1951, *Minutes*, Doc. 16 EC-14, pp19-25

¹²¹ *ibid.*, *Vigilance Committees*

¹²² EC January 1951, *Minutes*, pp19-25

¹²³ See note ¹¹⁸ above

¹²⁴ EC October 1951, *The Mediterranean Vigilance Committee*

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¹²⁵ The generally unidiomatic English of the article makes it read like a poor translation of a probably French original.

¹²⁶ EC October 1951, *The Mediterranean Vigilance Committee*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, comprising a covering document with Annexes (a) to (e)

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, Annex (a)

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, Annex (b)

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, Annex (c)

¹³¹ *ibid.*, Annex (d). There is no copy of the complete letter in the ITF archives.

¹³² EC October 1951, *Minutes*, pp7-II. (There is no English version in the ITF archives. Citations are the writer's translations from the French version.)

¹³³ In the French Minutes: '*pourri jusqu'à la moelle*'

¹³⁴ Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp200-201

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, pp207-208

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, pp208-210

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp212-214

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, pp231-234 and *Financial Report*, Table 6 (wrongly given as Table 10 on p233), p160

¹³⁹ There are several points in his speech where he acknowledges his personal responsibility and vulnerability.

¹⁴⁰ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, p109 and Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, 115-119

¹⁴¹ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53, Appendix III: Report on Transport Workers' Organizations in the Fight for Democracy and Peace*, pp140-141

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¹⁴² Val R. Lorwin, p136

¹⁴³ Carew (4), see note ¹¹⁴

- ¹⁴⁴ Carew (4), pp26 (n8) and 31 (n27)
- ¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp25, 32-33,34
- ¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p28
- ¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p28
- ¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p27
- ¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp28-29. Brown estimated in December 1950 that the CIA was spending fifteen times more in Italy than in France, p30 (n25)
- ¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p27
- ¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p39. He also handed over US\$5,000 to Bothereau, General Secretary of the FO.
- ¹⁵² *ibid.*, p39
- ¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p40
- ¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp39-40
- ¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p40
- ¹⁵⁶ EC June 1953, *Help for French Affiliated Organizations, Annex 3*, pp2-3
- ¹⁵⁷ EC June 1953, *Minutes*, p5
- ¹⁵⁸ EC June 1953, *Help for French Affiliated Organizations*, op.cit., p1
- ¹⁵⁹ Con.54, *RonA 1952-53*, p33
- ¹⁶⁰ Con.52, *Financial Report 1951-52*, Table 6, p160
- ¹⁶¹ Con.54, *Financial Report 1952-53*, Table 10 p188

¹⁶³ All the citations and paraphrases concerning the WFTU in this paragraph are taken from or based on an extract from the January-February 1950 issue of the WFTU *Monthly Review*, signed by A Fressinet, General Secretary of the WFTU's Seamen's and Dockers' Trade Union International (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp4-6

¹⁶⁵ ITF Press Communiqué, 25 January 1950 (MRC 159/1/18)

¹⁶⁶ Pacini, p79

¹⁶⁷ Lovestone to Bergeron, 2 May 1967, Box 1, File 17 (Bergeron), Lovestone Collection, Kheel Center, Cornell University (with thanks to Anthony Carew).

¹⁶⁸ Pacini, pp94-95

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp73 and 86

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p81

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p89

¹⁷² Jensen, p264

¹⁷³ Pacini, p92

¹⁷⁴ Jensen, *op.cit.*, pp264-265

¹⁷⁵ EC June 1953, *Help for French Affiliated Organizations*, *op.cit.*, Annex 1, p2.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp1-2

¹⁷⁷ Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, p25; Con.58, *RonA 1956-57*, p32;
Con.62, *RonA 1960-61*, p25; Con.65, *RonA 1962-64*, p29

¹⁷⁸ From 2,000 in 1950 to 5,000 in 1951. Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, p25

¹⁷⁹ EC February 1953, *RonA*, p2

¹⁸⁰ Pacini, pp94-95

¹⁸¹ Con.52, *Proceedings*, pp209-210

¹⁸² EC June 1953, *Minutes*, p6.

¹⁸³ Con.46, *Proceedings*, pp2118-223

¹⁸⁴ MC 11 March 1946, *Minutes*, p1

¹⁸⁵ Typed note, signed by Oldenbroek and filed with the *Minutes* (n¹⁸⁴ above).

¹⁸⁶ MC 11 March 1946, *Minutes*, p1

¹⁸⁷ Portugal seems largely to have been overlooked in the ITF, though throughout the thirty-six years (1932-1968) of Salazar's dictatorship he was no kinder to democracy and trade unions than his friend Franco. Two differences may account for the negligence: Salazar did not seize power in a horrific civil war; and if there were ever any serious Portuguese transport workers' unions, they never belonged to the ITF.

¹⁸⁸ *ITF Journal*, May 1953, pp65-66

¹⁸⁹ Con.52, *RonA* 1950-51, pp47-52; and EC January 1951, *RonA*, pp6-9

¹⁹⁰ Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp302-306

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, pp51-52

¹⁹² Con.48, *RonA* 1946-47, pp43-46, unless other attributed.

¹⁹³ EC April 1948, *RonA*, p2

¹⁹⁴ Con.50, *RonA* 1948-50, pp15-16

¹⁹⁵ EC January 1951, *RonA*, p4

¹⁹⁶ From the titles of the ILO's fundamental Conventions 87 and 98

Chapter VI: Conclusions

i. Coming to terms with the newcomers

The Introduction promised at the outset that this final chapter would offer 'some reflections' on 'why and how the ITF changed as it did over the period, on what arguments and forces drove the changes and on the successes and setbacks of the process.' Perhaps the first reflection should be that despite Oldenbroek's urgent appeals for the ITF to extend its reach beyond its traditional European heartland, the first post-war Congress decided in 1946 on a 'new' constitutional structure which was much the same as the old, pre-war model. The Congress itself would have looked much like those of the inter-war years before the disruptions of fascist depredations and a world war brought normal ITF business to a halt, with many familiar faces representing long-standing affiliates (the Italians were already back and even the Germans were poised to return). Starting up again from where they had left off might have looked no more than sensible to an assembly drawn from that same, very tight corner of the world. All but five of the 151 representatives from affiliated unions could comfortably have come to the 1946 Congress venue of Zürich by train. ¹

Yet, as Chapter IV has shown, the European hold on the ITF was soon to be loosened with the first tentative, but soon massive, entry of the American railwaymen, the RLEA, followed soon afterwards by reinforcements from other

American unions. Anxious to reel the RLEA in on almost any terms, the EC was ready, at Oldenbroek's urging, to cut some constitutional corners. The

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RLEA was welcomed for a very 'token' payment and the ITF was rewarded before long with a growing flow of RLEA dollars. That kind of return was never in prospect when it came to offering concessions on affiliation fees to the transport unions of the 'undeveloped' world, an altogether more problematic exercise, as the passages in Chapter III on the introduction of the concept of 'paid-up' membership make uncomfortably clear. By way of illustration of the outcome in brutal practice at the 1952 Congress, the Swedish Railwaymen's Union could claim the 67,913 votes it had bought at the 'standard rate', whereas the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) – absent anyway because it could not raise the fare – would have disposed of a nett 30,000 votes, being ten per cent of the 300,000 of its (at least) one million members on which it could afford to pay fees at all – and those at ten per cent of the standard rate. On that reckoning, one Swede would have been valued at about fifteen Indians.²

The Swedes, every one of them most likely decent and progressive, would have been mortified if it had been put that way and the Indians were not there to say how they saw it. But that is what the arithmetic of 'paid-up membership' meant. Deakin's claims, on the EC's behalf, that 'paid-up membership' was a way of defining 'effective' affiliation and was essentially democratic (see Chapter III) were too

meaningless even to qualify as euphemisms. How was it, then, that the affiliates, when gathered at an ITF Congress, could commit themselves, without one word of dissent, to a measure they would never have dared to suggest at home?

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It was commonplace in the European and North American trade union movements to relate union dues to earnings without any consequences for voting rights. A range from fifteen to one in the level of earnings was probably unusual within a national union, but an international organization ought to have been able to cope with it between developed and Third World countries. In terms of real money, the AIRF's contribution to the ITF, even at ten percent of the standard rate and on only one third or so of its actual membership, would have meant a far greater effort than was asked of any of the Europeans.

The basic illogicality and plain inequity of the ITF's rule could hardly have escaped anyone who gave it a thought and Chapter III mentions a troubled conscience or two. But paid-up membership endured nonetheless, betraying a deep ambivalence in the ITF's management of its progress towards a truly international status. On the one hand, there was an apparently genuine and strong wish of the 'old' affiliates to embrace the wider and largely underprivileged world; on the other, they were clearly, if largely implicitly, concerned that the newcomers could not be relied on to share their traditional values and scruples. Past practice had been to accept whatever membership an affiliate declared. Some would give a number precise to the last member and others would round it up to the nearest hundred or even thousand, but,

however arrived at, the number was what the affiliates said it was. Yet that trust was not to be extended to concessionary payers for fear of 'repercussions', that is, getting votes on the cheap.

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What was it about the poorer affiliates that might tempt them to do such a thing? Quick and harsh judgments are perhaps too easily made almost sixty years on. Very few of the ITF's old guard in those early post-war years will have been more than vaguely aware that anything like trade unions were to be found outside Europe, North America and the British white or white-dominated dominions. Fewer still would have any real knowledge or first-hand experience of them.³

The doubts, the defensiveness, the wariness implicit in the ITF's very qualified welcome to the regional arrivals were certainly founded to some degree on that generalized ignorance and inexperience. But there was also, clearly, a disjunction between principles and practice. The concepts of universality, of self-determination, of the rejection of racial and all other prejudices, of equality in every sense – these were readily written into the Preamble of the Constitution, but when it came to their specific application in the operative rules, they were diluted in their definition and hedged about with qualifications.

There was, it has been noted (Chapter III), a not very sustained effort to find a formula which would produce a fee structure that had some regard to an affiliate's ability to pay, a recognition that for an African union the ITF affiliation fee at standard

rate might easily come to more than its total income, whilst for many of the ITF's European and North American affiliates it was petty cash.⁴ But the search was abandoned and so it followed that even if a typical regional affiliate could pay its delegation's way to Congress, it would have only devalued

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votes at its disposal when it got there, certainly not enough to make any impact on the governing body elections. That much was acknowledged by the decision in 1956 to introduce regional EC members by way of co-option (Chapter III). The good intentions are not in doubt, but the ambivalence persisted. The appointments were a matter entirely for the EC: whether to make them and, if so, who should have them. In the event, the EC consulted the regional affiliates before making its choices but the integrity of the process was not enhanced by exploiting it as an opportunity to give the Americans an extra seat. And it said little for the confidence the EC had in its choices that they were not allowed even to attend meetings of the EC's Regional Affairs Committee (RAC) until November 1960, some four years after the RAC's establishment.⁵

It has to be said, nevertheless, that in terms of their affiliated membership (see Tables 1 and 3), the regional unions did well out of the decision of the 1962 Congress to allow for the election of six regional members – two each from the three regions – onto the new-style Executive Board. Africa was treated very generously and Latin America, too, did well. The exceptionally heavy Japanese affiliation, over

half the region's total, gave Asia at least a case for one seat more (see Tables 3 and 6), but there were no complaints from the Japanese themselves. The size and complexion of the 1962 EB were certainly a very far cry from those of the EC of 1946, when six of the seven members (the exiled Spaniard, Trifón Gómez, the exception) came from central and northern

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Europe. It was also a significant and welcome departure from the patronising resort to co-option that the regional members of the EB (like the Europeans and North Americans) were effectively elected by their own electoral groups. On reflection, however, it is disappointing that the 1962 Congress did not seize an obvious opportunity to look again at the concept of 'paid-up' membership. Nor was it raised at the last Congress of the period, in 1965. ⁶

The measures taken on fees and votes were essentially discriminatory from the outset, punishing the Third World affiliates for their inevitably frail financial situation by depriving them of full and unconditional membership. The most disturbing aspect of the whole episode is the absence of any authoritative and convincing attempt to justify these penalties and that failure invites speculation about how deeply the ITF's commitment to fight racial discrimination really ran. Was it really no more than lip service? There was none of the overt racist paranoia of an earlier ITF generation when faced with the 'Yellow Peril' (see below), and if there was what would today be described as 'racism' at work in the post-war ITF, there is no evidence of it. There is

certainly, however, a sense in those few discussions that are on record of an underlying and nervous apprehension about the kind of people and organizations that the drive into the regions would bring into the ITF. There is also on the part of the established affiliates an undoubted if implicit assumption of superiority. It was never expressed – and almost certainly was never seen – as that of a master over a

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servant, but as that of master's relationship to his apprentice. It was an assumption which, it should be noted, the regional affiliates themselves often connived at or positively induced with their tendency to stress how much they looked to, indeed depended on, the support of their elders and mentors in the ITF. (The incremental mutation of the relationship from that of master and apprentice to one of donor and client, a long story, was barely under way by the end of the period.)

What part, if any, racial prejudices may have played, consciously or not, in the development of the 'paid-up membership' issue could best be left to social historians, not to say psychologists. They might or might not find this final point instructive. Most of the French and all the Italian affiliates, established out of the post-war splits in their national movements (see Chapter IV), were as weak, relatively, as any in the Third World. They paid their ITF fees at very low rates and were penalized for it. Yet the European affiliates always ensured that the French had a seat on the EC, at the ITF's top table. Was this in recognition of the historical contribution its French affiliates had made to the ITF (the Italians could not claim anything like it) or simply a

matter of European solidarity? On either or any other count it was a helping hand that none of the non-European affiliates of comparable indigence could have expected.

ii. The drive to the regions: 'self-interest' and political necessity

There was something of the same kind of hierarchical cast of mind that informed

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the early debates within the ITF on regional activities, with repeated appeals to 'enlightened self-interest': that is, it served the interests of the strong affiliates to look after the poor and the weak of the world's transport workers. Here was an 'enlightened' version of the proposition that had driven the ITF's efforts to tackle the perceived problem of the Yellow Peril, the introduction of 'Asiatic' seamen on European ships before and immediately after the First World War.⁷ By 1948, the offensive language and overt prejudices of the pre-war days had long been abandoned, but in his address to the 1948 Congress on 'Regional Organization', Tofahrn still put great stress on the 'strategic reasons' for the ITF's vigorous engagement with the wider world, that is the need for 'world scale' action to ensure that there were no 'unfavourable repercussions' from the exploitation of workers 'in any country with which we have economic relations'. Only then did he add that '*noblesse oblige!*' (sic), and that the ITF had also to 'teach ... the weak trade unions in the backward countries' how to 'emancipate their members from ignorance and servitude'.⁸ (No-one seems ever to have envisaged the possibility that at some times and in some circumstances it might *not* seem to be in an affiliate's interests, or in the

ITF's, to help a regional affiliate. They were no more guaranteed to be virtuous than their European brothers and sisters.)

The Americans also had self-interest in mind, but not at all of the kind that Tofahrn was expounding. The RLEA's priority was, as always, political, that is the strategic necessity to counter communist influence wherever and whenever it was to be found. When the main theatre of the Cold War moved in the 1950s

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from Europe to the developing, decolonized world, the Americans pressed the ITF to strengthen and accelerate what had until then been a patchy and largely sectoral effort. In those early days, the Americans probably saw the main aim as being to get to the virgin territory first, claiming it ahead of the enemy. By the end of the period, in the brief 'hearts and minds' years of the Kennedy era, their aim was more positive and coherent: to help regional transport workers to organize free trade unions, through which they could win a better life for themselves and so resist communist temptation. These aims were in themselves unobjectionable to the European mainstream and to the ITF leadership which had long seen it as a moral imperative to take the ITF beyond its tight traditional boundaries. Where the Americans made a crucial difference was in easing greatly the old constraints of money (see Table 9) and people (see Chapter III). They wrote the cheques and found the help – Laflamme and Townsend in Africa, Houke and Otero in Latin America – but the ITF was left free enough to keep its distance, after some early collaboration, from the American movement's own regional operations such as the American Institute for

Free Labor Development (AIFLD), set up in 1961 as a joint enterprise of the AFL-CIO and American multinationals to further the cause of free trade unionism in Latin America.⁹ Indeed, the Monroe Doctrine was relaxed to allow the Spanish Azaña to direct the ITF's Latin American operation and he made it a point of principle to have as little as possible to do with the ICFTU's 'Inter-American' regional organization, ORIT, which the AFL-CIO dominated and largely paid for.

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iii. Changing and challenging structures

All these anxieties and assumptions surely explain, to some degree, the EC's, and later the EB's, concern over the status of the Asian Advisory Committee (AAC), the ITF's first and very cautious venture into the building of regional structures. As Chapter III makes clear, what pleased the EC most about the AAC was what it did *not* ask for, that is the power to take decisions of any kind. The EC's almost indecent relief that the AAC seemed to renounce any ambition to do more than discuss and recommend comes off the page. Perhaps the EB's subsequent action in asking the Asians to pay towards the AAC's cost was a pre-emptive move, making it clear that any second thoughts would come at a cost.

There were, of course, serious structural and constitutional issues to be faced as the ITF went through what for any international organization was a very rapid transformation. There had been no call in 1945 for anything more than the London

headquarters. Even the one-man New York office was unnecessary once the war ended and the merchant seamen were again free to contact their own unions. A handful of Europeans composed a perfectly adequate Executive Committee. Within twenty years, almost half the members-unions came from beyond Europe, the EC had become an Executive Board and tripled in size, and any thought that the ITF membership could be serviced from London alone had long been abandoned.

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But though the ITF's regional offices, however modest, provided an administrative regional network, the AAC was the only regional organization that was up and running, with a similar 'advisory' body for Latin America in prospect. The 'fully-fledged' regional organizations once briefly envisaged (see Chapter III) were put on hold until two critical questions of competence and of finance could be settled: who was to have the final say on what the ITF should do in the regions and who would be answerable for the money spent on it? The Constitution had always been unambiguous: the General Secretary was to keep the ITF's books and administer the ITF's finances under the control of the Executive Committee/Board. ¹⁰ How could 'fully-fledged' regional organizations be accommodated within such a centralized financial regime? If the regional affiliates funded the operations themselves, would that settle the issue of competence, namely that they could do what they liked in their region if they paid for it? Almost certainly not, by any reading of the Constitution, but it was a purely hypothetical question because only the Asians could aspire to self-sufficiency, and then only if the Japanese picked up almost all the bill. The Africans

and the Latin Americans had no money to speak of. (An 'Inter-American', rather than Latin American structure might have brought in extra American money, but even that incentive would not have been enough to win the ITF's Latin Americans over to replicating the ICFTU-ORIT experience.)

But if regional organizations were to depend on the ITF for their funds, as seemed inevitable for the foreseeable future, how much freedom could they

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reasonably expect to be given? In its general sense, the question was very familiar at national trade union level: just another example of the on-going tussle between the centre and the branches, commonly expressed in terms of pipers and tunes, or of 'bureaucracy' versus 'democracy'. In the particular sense of the ITF's situation, however, fundamental questions of purpose and principle were in play. Was the ITF out simply to build an empire or were the regions to have the self-determination which the ITF had endorsed in its constitution? Must self-determination within the regions (but still within the terms of the ITF Constitution) be self-sufficient? If so, for as long as self-sufficiency remained beyond the bounds of possibility, the whole regional exercise was no more than cynical window-dressing. Yet without control from the centre, what assurance could there be for the affiliates who put up the money that it would be used to proper and good effect? The Azaña embarrassment had developed under the nose of headquarters. How much bigger would it have been and how much longer would it have lasted if he had not had London to account to? If the better-off affiliates were to be expected to pay extra

contributions or, towards the end of the period, to agree that a large slice of their fees should be ring-fenced for the regions, they were likely to expect assurances that the governing bodies could apply financial controls whenever they needed to.

All these questions loomed by the end of the period, as they were bound to once the ITF began to grow out of its traditional boundaries, but they were never

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confronted, then or later, as presenting a strategic choice, to be decided in terms of principle and applied consistently in the course of the ITF's regional development. The ITF rarely approached problems in the abstract. The question was treated as being specific to the AAC and there was neither the time nor the call to think beyond that. As has been noted, the EC and, subsequently, the EB, decided effectively to re-affirm their constitutional prerogatives and there the matter rested to the end of the period. This typically *ad hoc* approach had its advantages, above all of flexibility in that every decision could be changed if circumstances seemed to demand it. And at no time in the period (or since) was there anyone (other than Tofahrn?) in a leading role who saw much value or point in anything but 'practical' questions and answers. Any structural strains produced by the ITF's regional expansion would be fixed once they became a problem and if the result was inconsistency from one region to the other, then that simply and aptly reflected the difference between them. The weakness of that approach was its failure to make any kind of statement about the kind of organization the ITF wished to be when its global aspirations were finally

achieved. As it was, the regions continued to be thrown the occasional bone of competence or responsibility when they made enough of a nuisance of themselves to need some comfort. There was never the slightest inclination within the Secretariat or the governing bodies to promote a consensual and principled settlement which would strike a balance of rights and responsibilities between the centre and the regions.

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The Secretariat and those playing any kind of leading role in the ITF would have regarded any such effort as an airy-fairy indulgence, but in its absence the *ad hoc* approach left no transparent criteria of fair dealing and equity. Well before the end of the period, the Japanese were privately musing¹¹ whether the Executive Board and the General Secretary might not have found the whole issue of regional organization much easier if it involved only Europeans. They had noticed that in 1958 Becu and the EC had stitched together an arrangement with the ITF affiliates in the European Economic Community (EEC) to service their particular needs and that the ITF was paying a substantial contribution towards the costs.¹²

iv. General Secretaries and the personality factor

A large part of Chapter III is given over to the General Secretaries of the period. A former ITS General Secretary,¹³ reducing Weber and Michels to their essentials, was given to describing himself and his job as 'the guy with the files'. If 'files' stands for the headquarters apparatus and the secretariat, then the ITF's General Secretary

met the job description as the full-time head of a very centralized bureaucracy (regional offices at the time were rarely more than two persons strong). He had constitutional authority over the ITF's officers and staff and was ultimately responsible for what they produced. By contrast, the members of the governing bodies, most importantly of the EC/EB, had no ITF 'files' other than those the General Secretary provided and most of them had to

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make a real effort to find enough time for the ITF in their overcrowded diaries. This relationship of full-time professionals and 'lay' governing bodies was the norm at national trade union level, but there was an extra exotic dimension to international activities: places, situations, issues well beyond the acquaintance and experience of national leaders, however eminent, and often presented in languages which they did not understand until the Secretariat translated them. In the best of ITF General Secretary-governing body relationships, the General Secretary's superiority in these respects was not only acknowledged but was positively expected of him as essential to a high quality of judgment and advice. It was what he was paid for. But if he had advantages, they did not mean that he could ever be sure of having his own way. His lay members and ultimate masters, certainly at EC/EB level, were usually themselves General Secretaries or something of the kind, well practised in the tricks of the General Secretary trade, quick both to see where they were being steered and to decide whether they wished to go there. International issues might often be very far removed from their daily experience and concerns, but coming cold to situations

or problems, making sense of them and then reaching reasonable judgments was part of any competent union leader's repertoire. Furthermore, most of the ITF's leading lights were never solely dependent on the ITF's General Secretary for information and advice on international affairs. They would most likely have access to international specialists in their national centres and could exchange international experiences with other national unions.

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Above all, governing body members were not to be taken lightly and never for granted, not because of tender egos (though these were not unknown), but because the relationship depended almost totally on the trust that they felt they could place in a General Secretary whom they would encounter face to face perhaps no more than twice a year. They needed to be sure that he always dealt with them truthfully and frankly and would consult them on anything that they really needed to know and decide on. All being well, they were happy, indeed expected, that he should do his chief executive job without troubling them unnecessarily. If all was not well, and the trust and confidence were not there, his job would become impossible. Once the governing bodies called in the myriad reserve powers they had under the Constitution, demanding prior consultation and approval for everything that they would otherwise happily have left to the General Secretary against endorsement some time later, questioning everything they were told and every penny spent, he – and the ITF with him – would cease effectively to function. Oldenbroek, Becu and De Vries had their critics and their crises but they never lost the governing bodies' trust

and respect. Imhof was to squander both in his one and only term and was voted out of office at the 1968 Congress. ¹⁴

The General Secretaries were chief executive officers and at the same time members of the GC, the EC/EB and the MC. Their position was inherently strengthened by their having been elected by Congress and Becu therefore had reason to argue that the General Secretary alone should have that distinction if

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his primacy was to be, and be seen to be, beyond all question. But the issue seems never to have crossed Oldenbroek's mind, nor Becu's when he was first elected General Secretary 'amid a burst of applause' and 'in agreement with our friend Tofahrn' at the 1950 Congress. Tofahrn was re-elected as Assistant General Secretary 'amid applause' (no 'burst!') soon afterwards. ¹⁵ When it came to Tofahrn (or anything else), Oldenbroek's hide was as thick as Becu's was ultra sensitive. Oldenbroek would never dignify Tofahrn's standing by acknowledging him as a problem. But within two years of his election, Becu had made Tofahrn *the* problem and if he could not dismiss him he was determined to diminish him to the point of humiliation or drive him to resignation. The more honest of the speakers on both sides at the 1952 Congress acknowledged as much. The argument was not about the ITF's rules, any more than the Belgian railwaymen's attempt in 1962 to introduce a compulsory retirement age of sixty-five for the General Secretary was entirely unrelated to that fact that De Vries had just reached it.

There is enough evidence in Chapter III of how very different the three General Secretaries of the period were in character and temperament (Imhof's four months hardly qualify), but they also had much in common. They were born within five years of each other – De Vries in 1897, Oldenbroek in 1898 and Becu in 1902 – and had all come under Fimmen's spell (though De Vries at more of a distance), forming incidentally a Dutch/Fleming linguistic and cultural quartet.

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Another link came through the Seafarers' Section, for which Fimmen had given Oldenbroek responsibilities, though he (like Fimmen) had never gone to sea professionally; Becu and De Vries had both been merchant marine officers by trade. Most relevantly of all, they knew almost everything there was to know about each other's strengths and weaknesses, convictions and aversions, personal traits and foibles. The line of succession within the ITF ran a fortuitous and even bitter course – Oldenbroek was head-hunted away, Becu was first his successor and then his nemesis, De Vries was first elected because he was not someone else (Imhof) – but still they made up a dynasty of sorts. Imhof's arrival marked its end, and to the extent that the heavy brigade of European railwaymen would have thought the General Secretaryship was no more than their belated due, the break was calculated. Yet if De Vries had been ten years younger, or if (by no means too fanciful a speculation) Azāna had not meanwhile disgraced himself, it might have been a very different outcome.

It is impossible to estimate precisely how much of an influence the personalities of the three General Secretaries had on the ITF's activities and policies over the period, beyond that it would have been less than decisive but much more than incidental. Their pivotal position within both the Secretariat and the governing bodies, proposing and – to the extent of their having a vote - disposing, and their functions as treasurers, spokesmen, defenders, initiators gave them a privileged prominence in the ITF's life and each exploited it in his own way. Of the three,

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Oldenbroek was surely the most formidable and accomplished. The *Proceedings* of the 1946 and 1948 Congresses are summaries in the third person, yet give a taste of his debating skills, of the way his arguments were organized so that one thing just had to follow from another, and they even allow a glimpse of the patronizing, sometimes wounding, way he had of handling those who were foolish enough not to agree with him. (No-one was so big as to escape, as Deakin could have confirmed.) In the end, his aloof ways cost him dear. When he needed powerful friends most in order to resist the outrageous Meany and his bully-boys, he found he had none. But as to the main question here, his part in the shaping of the ITF in the post-war era, there is no doubt that his leadership in resisting the ITF's assimilation within the WFTU was by far his most important and enduring contribution.

Ironically, it was the contribution which ensured his departure to the ICFTU and Becu's succession. Becu was so different in almost every way. Marshalling

arguments was not his biggest strength and running an office ranked very low among his interests. What he had (and Oldenbroek would have been happy to disown) was an entirely genuine emotional commitment, fuelled by his gut reactions. This was what charged his drive for an international boycott in support of the Hungarian resistance in 1956 and so embittered him when the ICFTU affiliates failed to respond. It was also the kind of fervour that Oldenbroek so distrusted and Meany was so desperately looking for. And so Becu too left for

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the ICFTU, the second General Secretary of the ITF to be seen as the answer to the ICFTU's prayer, summoned to save it from the first. Becu's ten years as ITF General Secretary began as the Cold War intensified and much of the ITF's Vigilance Committee operation, which takes up much of Chapter V, was his responsibility. If he had not been aware before the Strauss memo how deeply Brown and the CIA were involved and how much Ferri-Pisani was their man, he certainly knew after it. The guess (it cannot be more than that) is that he had had throughout a very good idea of their involvement (he was very experienced by then in the ways of intelligence services) and was ready to turn a blind eye to it. A man of action himself, he would have approved of a tough, if necessary violent, confrontation with the CGT in Marseilles and probably believed much of Ferri-Pisani's claim to have won the port for the democratic cause. But the Strauss memo is also important for revealing how angry Brown was that Becu could not deliver the wholesale, unconditional co-operation that Brown thought he had initially offered. (Had Brown recalled that

disenchantment and impressed it upon Meany some nine years later, he might have saved Becu for the ITF and Becu himself from a wretched end at the ICFTU.) If Becu had personal doubts about the controversial turn the Vigilance Committee project had taken and about Ferri-Pisani personally, he never made any real concessions to their critics in the EC or at Congress. What would have disturbed him (and any General Secretary), however, was his realization that the Mediterranean operation was entirely out of his control. When the CIA cut off the Mediterranean RVC's funding, part of him at least must have been very relieved.

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Towards the end of the 1950s, post-Hungary and post-Suez, Becu promoted the expansion of the ITF's regional activities vigorously and imaginatively. The mission to Africa (Chapter III) took the ITF for the first time to the frontline of the struggle against racism and gave an overdue urgency to the ITF's perception of its corrosive effect on trade union rights and practices. This personal commitment to regional activities, his fiery defence of what he saw as free trade union principles and his strong leadership in the ITF's most spectacular sectional success, the flag-of-convenience campaign, had helped make him unassailable as General Secretary by 1960. Barring major catastrophes, he could be sure of re-election through to retirement in some seven years. It was entirely his choice, certainly not the ITF's, that he went to the ICFTU in 1960 with inconsiderate haste, as many affiliates saw it, leaving them no time before the 1960 Congress to think about the succession.

As Chapter III seeks to convey, there was much more to Pieter de Vries than the rather desperate stop-gap and stop-Imhof choice that even his supporters tended to see. Constitutions develop more and more barnacles over time and by 1962 the structure and functions of the governing bodies in particular were becoming less and less serviceable for an organization which was changing rapidly and profoundly in almost every way. Never free throughout his first term from the great pressures of the SIU affair (see Chapter IV), he did the ITF a real service by persuading the 1962 Congress to change fundamentally the way the

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organization was governed and administered. He could never, however, carry the weight within the EB of a Becu, and even less of an Oldenbroek. The self-effacing manner which disarmed his detractors, at least to the point where they sat out his second term without apparent resentment, was hardly inspirational and there was absolutely nothing to be done about his age. If the issue here is the ability and personality of the General Secretary as factors in the ITF's organizational and political development, then the conclusion has to be that De Vries must have an honourable but distant third place.

v. The American factor

The arrival and subsequent experience of a heavy American presence accounts for much of Chapter IV. The beginning seemed auspicious with the prize capture of the solid citizens of the RLEA, personified by the puritanically upright Art Lyon. The last

years of the period brought the worst of the American experience, the long confrontation which began with Hal Banks and his Canadian SIU mobsters and then took in their American godfather, Paul Hall. It was Hall, with his great network of union and political intimates, many owing him favours for past services or fat cheques, who was the greater threat. He had the attentive ear of Meany and access to the very top of government, to such as Secretary for Labor Willard Wirtz and even Secretary of State Dean Rusk.¹⁶ It was Hall who enlisted the aid of the CIA and so advanced the career of its tyro agent, Ed Wilson, out to make a name and a fortune for himself and already out of control. The ITF had

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been deeply embarrassed to have to live for some time in the reflected ignominy of the ILA and Teamsters scandals, but both cases were essentially domestic. Neither of those delinquents had set out, as Hall had, to challenge the ITF to the point of setting up an alternative international and then encouraging ITF affiliates to defect to it.¹⁷ There was no chance that it would do the ITF fatal damage, and Hall would have known it, but it served to remind the ITF that he had the money and the contacts to give the ITF serious problems.

There were several reasons why Hall eventually decided to make peace, not least that the fugitive Banks had become a total liability, but one pressing reason was certainly that the SIU's suspension left its detested rival, the NMU, as the only ITF affiliate to speak for American seafarer ratings within the maritime sections. The SIU

could not afford to give the NMU exclusive influence over the development and application of ITF flag-of-convenience policy at a time when droves of American shipowners were 'flagging out'.

The SIU's recognition of the value, indeed the necessity, of its active involvement in sectional activities was matched by that of the American civil aviation affiliates. The airline pilots (ALPA), as Chapter IV has shown, were thrown out for their pains, losing a bitter fight with the American flight engineers – a battle between two American affiliates with international consequences for cockpit job security throughout the industry. The intensity of the American involvement in this

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sectional issue was in striking contrast with Lyon's view (the only RLEA view that mattered for most of the period), that the American railwaymen belonged to the ITF purely as a matter of political and patriotic necessity. The RLEA's first dealings with the ITF had been solicited by the American intelligence services and its formal affiliation had been at the strenuous bidding of the AFL, egged on by the American government. The whole point of its affiliation had been to bolster the ITF's resistance to the WFTU's embrace and subsequently, and more broadly, to back the ITF's promotion of the 'free' trade union cause.

Anything else, including the ITF Railwaymen's Section activities, was of very marginal account. The RLEA could 'seldom' be prevailed on to provide a presence

at section conferences because, wrote Lyon, 'we found little on the agendas ... which we considered important to us'. He blamed the 'bureaucratic' Tofahrn for not giving them more interesting topics, but in truth he believed the American railwaymen's working and living conditions were in every respect so much in advance of those anywhere else that they had nothing to learn or to gain from the ITF.¹⁸ Their own industrial world was a very safe and benign place to be and if they had problems, the RLEA unions could handle them. It was the rest of the world, and far more than the railwaymen's part of it, which was dangerous and required their engagement.

vi. The membership and politics nexus

The American factor was far from the only ingredient in the interplay between the

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development of the ITF's membership and the shaping of its political stance and policies. It was bound, however, to make itself felt by its sheer weight of numbers, that is in votes, seats on important committees and affiliation fees. Tables 1 and 3 give the measure of the significant realignment of regional influence over the period, with the Europeans declining from their near monopoly in 1946 to something under one-half of the membership by 1964 and the North Americans (of which the 'national' Canadian tendency was a very small part) going, over the same period, from next to nothing to almost one-quarter.

But the numbers need qualification. The configuration of the new EB in 1962 came very close to the regional complexion of the ITF, departing most in its generosity to

the regions but departing also to the extent that the Europeans got slightly more than one half of the seats – twelve of twenty-two – for slightly less than one half of the membership. The North Americans doubled their representation from two seats (one elected and one co-opted) to four, which was very near what they were due on their membership. The European monopoly at Executive Committee/Board level, which was total in 1946, had thus been reduced to a two-seat majority of elected members sixteen years later, with the independent *ex officio* vote of the General Secretary to be reckoned with. Moreover, the chance that the Europeans would act *en bloc* on anything was never better than remote.

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Such a sea change must surely have meant something significant in terms of relative influence but how it was exercised and in what directions would need much more consideration and space than is possible here, certainly not in the intriguing but very demanding forms proposed by Cox and Jacobson.¹⁹ There is room here only to bear them in mind in offering some comments and conjectures on the American affiliates' contribution to the ITF's 'politics', the area where, given the Cold War ambience of the times, they might be expected to have made the most mark.

Placing them on the American political spectrum would have put most of the RLEA's member-unions firmly in the 'liberal' Democrat camp, typically latter-day New Dealers, with Hubert Humphrey a special favourite towards the end of the period.

Any Western European trade unionists who happened on, say, a railway 'clerks' (BRAC) convention would have found most of the slogans and posters politically agreeable, for example supporting public health schemes, championing civil rights, and denouncing anti-union legislation in the 'right to work' (predominantly Dixiecrat) states. The SIU, perhaps surprisingly, was a very big donor to the Democrat Party and endorsed enough good 'liberal' causes, despite Hall's Southern roots, for the unquestionably progressive Vice President Mondale to attend his funeral in 1980.²⁰ Furthermore, both the BRAC and the SIU came from the more conservative AFL wing of the AFL-CIO, whereas another of the ITF's affiliates, the National Maritime Union (NMU), of much more radical

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origins, was unashamedly and provocatively left-wing. The only affiliates which could really be placed to the right of centre were the two ITF miscreants, the super-patriotic ILA ('I Love America') and the Teamsters, who had been stalked and finally cornered by Robert Kennedy on his way up the Democrat ladder. The Americans were not, therefore, so ideologically alien that they could not be accommodated in the political range occupied by the ITF's Europeans, in which 'moderates' of the social democrat kind predominated.

The differences lay more in their mindsets and historical experiences. Very few of the ITF's Americans gave a thought to international affairs and when they did the natural reaction was to take their government's side. Almost all the Americans who

were active in the ITF had a deeply patriotic attachment to their country and its way of life and were instinctively resolved to confound America's enemies. If their government identified the Soviet Union and communism generally as clear and present threats to the USA and to democracy everywhere, then these became enemies to be resisted and defeated. That was all they needed to know and all that they needed to say in defence of their case.

In what they might have thought was their more worldly and sophisticated way, the European affiliates tended to dissociate themselves from the Americans' approach as uncomfortably crude and fundamentalist. Few Americans, they would note, had ever met a real-life communist or were ever likely to, a chastity

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the AFL-CIO sought to enforce by proscribing any contact with communists or communist-controlled organizations.²¹ Unlike the Americans, all of the European affiliates would have had communists or their sympathisers among their members and many of them would have had communist officials, especially at branch or shop steward levels. With the unlikely exception, however, of Max Arnold, President of the Swiss public service workers, none of the affiliates was led by an avowed communist (though his ideological enemies were convinced that Jim Figgins of the British NUR was a communist in every way short of carrying a party card). As for contacts and visits, the Austrian and Finnish unions, conscious of their countries' delicately structured 'neutrality', had practical and necessary reasons to be on speaking terms

with their Eastern Bloc counterparts. The ITF's Scandinavians had influential coordinating bodies of their own where they could decide policy on such matters and by and large took a pragmatic view of contacts, making them as close or as distant as served their own interests best. For the French FO and Italian CISL and UIL affiliates, their existence itself was a political statement and they took a consistently hard line against fraternization of any kind with communists.

But whatever the differences between the Americans and the variegated Europeans, and however different the tone, from the frothing stridency of Ferri-Pisani to Oldenbroek's clinical calm, they all agreed that the ITF and they themselves would not survive as autonomous organizations under communist

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rule or domination. It was literally seen as a life-or-death option and the Europeans would have come to that conclusion with or without the American presence. As Chapter V makes clear, the big debates within the ITF on the great political issues of the 1940s and 1950s – the Korean War, the Marshall Plan, German re-armament – were fought out overwhelmingly by Europeans (with a British civil war as a side-show). The American affiliates' contributions were relatively few and, in terms of the outcome, superfluous.

Similarly, the American transport unions – the RLEA above all – might have been persuaded or cajoled into affiliation by their government and the AFL so as to save

the ITF from falling into the WFTU's trap, but in truth there never was any danger that the ITF would do so, once the WFTU laid down the rules it wished to see imposed on its Trade Departments. Everyone of any influence in the ITF (including, in his heart of hearts and despite his special pleading, Deakin himself) recognized that, as they stood, those rules amounted to an ITS suicide note and there was never any prospect of the ITSs' being able to negotiate them away. For what the WFTU demanded was a total surrender of the ITF's autonomy and acceptance of a (literally) Stalinist *dirigisme*, derived from another political world altogether from one in which the ITF's kind of trade unionism could survive, let alone flourish.

As for the more sinister aspect of the American experience, Chapter V has

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attempted to put the Mediterranean Vigilance Committee adventure and the tragicomic tale of Ferri-Pisani into its true, much diminished proportions. It was a very short and totally unproductive episode which is not to the ITF's credit. Some general comments on Becu's likely complicity have already been made but, whatever those general considerations, he must surely have realized from very early in the enterprise that Ferri-Pisani was a highly unstable and unpredictable fanatic, almost certainly scarred by his Buchenwald experience and embittered by what he would have seen as the SFIO's treachery in Marseilles. As the ITF's flag-bearer he was at best a standing embarrassment and at worst a disaster, given to almost deranged rants. But having endorsed him unreservedly at Congress and made

excuses for him in the EC, Becu could hardly have closed the circus down without calling his own judgment into serious question. If anyone knows what happened to Ferri-Pisani between his sudden disappearance from the scene and his suicide, the story seems never to have been written and the writer's efforts to enlist the help of the FO in his researches have gone unanswered and unacknowledged. If anyone in the FO has heard of him, it is probably as someone best forgotten.

vii. The theoretical wasteland

Gumbrell-McCormick has devoted some very productive pages to 'Theoretical perspectives on international trade unionism',²² laying out the areas that call for attention; defining and specifying the different types and characteristics of

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international trade union organizations; and pointing to some potential empirical and theoretical pitfalls. Her contribution is particularly noteworthy, however, for what is not there. Having described the basic ingredients, she has clearly found very few writers – and it would certainly not have been for her want of trying – who have attempted the recipe.

Fimmen, for example, would probably have regarded his *Labour's Alternative* as the most practical and *untheoretical* of works and his basic prescription still has its supporters almost eighty years later. His belief that the chance of a better world rested largely in the hands of the international trade union movement is argued with

such urgency and conviction that it is easy for any reader predisposed to agree with him to forget that it was written an age and a world away from modern economic and political realities. Lorwin's *Labor and Internationalism* came only five years later. Of course both might well have revealed any number of durable truths, but it was for others to move the theorizing on into the post-war era and beyond. But by 1999, Harvie Ramsay, was still *In Search of International Union Theory* and no nearer one than a table of 'schools of thought' (on which a little more below).²³

Nothing, however, conveys better how poverty-stricken the theoretical offerings are than the long run enjoyed by John Logue's 'extremely influential'²⁴ *Towards a theory of trade union internationalism*. If you are at the bottom of the barrel, then

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there is no choice but to scrape it. With not much more than 20,000 words to spend, Logue first cuts the dialectical corners with a dogmatic definition – 'democratic' trade unions 'will pursue the short-term economic interest of their members'²⁵ – from which he moves to the dogmatic 'basic hypothesis' that unions will only be active internationally if it is cost-effective, that is 'a more rational means to members' goals than national activity'.²⁶ If unions persist in international activities, in defiance of Logue's idea of rationality, it is because such activities are 'BY THE ELITE, FOR THE ELITE' (his upper case) and, applying his second 'hypothesis', the union leaders see them as an opportunity for 'elite junketeering'.²⁷

Olson is the inspiration for Logue's big idea, that economics, not ideology, drives 'labor internationalism' ²⁸ but he lacks his master's sleight of argumentation. His crude, unsupported and unsupportable premise that unions are bound by their very 'democratic' nature to opt for 'short-term' benefits is probably good reason to stop at page ten, but many commentators have ploughed on to no good purpose that this writer can recognize. Logue actually concedes on that page that 'short-term' is his own 'possible exception' to what 'most people' would say a trade union was interested in, but everything that follows is built on his 'exception'. Furthermore, his 'junketeering' thesis is very crude stuff, not in the same class as Olson's slippery and sinister concept of 'coercion' (small wonder Olson could thank Hayek for a German translation and foreword ²⁹).

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Kelly concludes that 'if most people behaved as Olson suggests then the world of industrial relations would bear no resemblance to the one that actually exists' ³⁰ but whatever Olson's failings, Logue's world is less worldly still. His almost perverse irrelevance is most strikingly illustrated when he laboriously devises a theoretical example to support an Olsonian argument involving the 'collective good', the cost of providing it and of carrying along 'free riders'. The example concerns a group of shipowners plagued by pirates and the exercise is to calculate at what point it would pay the biggest of the shipowners to put an end to the piracy. Having done the sum, Logue finds an example of 'international trade union activity' where a union did something of the kind (the Copenhagen Glove Makers in the 19th century!) because

the 'benefits' justified it. ³¹ Why did he not stay at sea, substituting seafarers' unions for shipowners and tell us whether they would have gone through the same cost-benefit analysis? If he really thought they would have done so, and his example had no point otherwise, what value did he think the unions would have put on the 'benefits'? How much for a member's life, for example? The conclusion, as with Kelly on Olson, is that Logue is 'radically wrong on fundamentals ... has no concept of group identity as a way of understanding the regulation of people's behaviour in group and inter-group contexts ... [and inhabits a] ... strange and impoverished social world'. ³²

Perhaps Logue himself is as much at a loss to explain his 'influence' as this writer.

(No-one ever seems to have thought it worth turning his typescript into

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print.) Perhaps his tone as much as his substance makes his essay especially attractive to those theorists who have little or no time for conventional trade unionism. The 'junketeering' argument would go down very well, fitting neatly into the conviction that any shopfloor activist's progression from overalls to the union official's suit and tie is always downhill, a slippery slope to betrayal and, more than likely, to moral disintegration, of which junketeering is a symptom. The narrower problem that Logue has set them (or ought to have) is to know what was so special about junketeering in the course of international trade union activity as to elevate it to a motivation. Junkets are, after all, commonplace almost everywhere. Governments

and businesses often see them as essential tools. They are certainly to be found in academia, possibly even at the University of Gothenburg. The one 'international' junketeer that Logue put a name to, Hans Ericsson of the Swedish Transport Workers' Union, ³³ was indeed a member of the ITF Executive Board, though it is doubtful if Logue knew that and the reference had nothing to do with the ITF. More relevantly, Ericsson's most sustained and notorious junketing was concentrated on Stockholm. If the issue were worth the effort, which it is not, it would be easy to demonstrate that belonging to an international trade union organization such as the ITF in fact seriously reduces the scope and excuses for free-lance international junketing. The most routine ITF section conference would provide more international connections than any number of overseas trips.

The writer has a distinct sense, however, that there is something more at play

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in Logue's thesis (and in Olson's?) than the rationality on which he claims to rely. There is a revealing vehemence, for example, to his condemnation of what he terms 'parasitic elite internationalism', exemplified contemptibly by 'taking your pretty secretary (or for that matter, your plain wife)' on expenses-paid trips.³⁴ Was the very evident repugnance moral or political? Did Logue (who will be left to rest at the end of this paragraph) have some cause, consciously or not, to hold trade union representatives in such very low regard? Whatever the reason, it does not seem to extend to any antipathy to trade unionism as such and he accepts, for all his 'short-

term' nonsense, that the purpose of trade unions is to look after members' material interests and that they are fitted and entitled to do so.

Of course that view begs a great number of questions, which have preoccupied a host of theorists for well over a century. The writer came very late to just a tiny portion of their vast output, having spent most of his working life as a professional trade union bureaucrat unaware that the very idea of trade unionism, as he knew it, was challenged in so many ways, often root-and-branch, and most persuasively of all by Marxists of various kinds.³⁵ The discovery of these sometimes head-on assaults on his idea of conventional wisdom (broadly that trade unions are a good and progressive thing) has certainly been stimulating and every practising trade unionist would gain from periodically looking afresh at what he or she is doing, and asking to what purpose. But

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almost all the general theories on trade unions, approving or not, are based on national examples and experiences. They have a vicarious application to international trade unionism to the extent that the ITSs and the ICFTU are composed of national unions and centres, but the international trade union movement is more than the sum of its parts and has something of a life of its own (a thought that might be enough to fuel another thesis altogether, built indispensably on Cox's *The Anatomy of Influence* and his theoretical beneficiaries.³⁶) These distinctions

between the national and the international varieties of trade union organization will be developed in the following section but the concluding reflections will generally be of a broader nature in the hope that they help others to secure a defensible theoretical foothold on what seems so far to have been a very elusive field. The confines of the thesis period will be breached in the process and the reflections are inevitably very summary and exploratory, but they start from the relatively unusual and privileged vantage-point of a former (and unashamed) full-time practitioner in the international trade union movement, who can still see the issues from the inside.

viii. Defining and assessing the international trade union movement: its limitations, critics and the ideological divide

A theory of international trade unionism must be exactly that: it must be about *trade unions*. For this writer, 'trade unions' are what common usage and at least one century and a half of existence make them, namely groups of workers who

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combine in an organization to promote and defend the interests that they have in common as workers for the same employer, or within the same industry or service. It is a definition of the kind offered by Colin Crouch and, like his, it does not need 'a mass of ifs and buts and qualifications'.³⁷ The taxonomy really must be rigorous if an international trade union theory is to have any point. Trade unions are a discrete species. There is nothing to gain and everything to confuse by bundling them together with other organizations and then theorizing generically about

'workers' organizations' or 'working-class movements' or, worst of all, 'social movements'. Some of the things that unions do for some of their time are bound to conform to any or all of those characterizations but trade unions are ultimately defined by their industrial rôle and purpose. Everything else about them, politically or socially or culturally, has to be subordinate and relevant to their industrial priorities.

Born and for the most part living within national boundaries, most trade unions in the developed countries and many in the Third World have felt the need for a means by which they can express and assert themselves at international level. Over time, they have created international trade union organizations like the ITF in order to meet that need. There are certainly some special features of the international trade union organizations which differentiate them from their national counterparts and Gumbrell-McCormick is right to warn against taking analogies with national structures too far.³⁸ But the differences are not so great

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as to deracinate the internationals. They are in all essentials international manifestations of the trade unions or centres which make up their memberships. Dan Gallin, an international trade union practitioner of the writer's vintage, would like the ICFTU to 'reinvent' itself as an 'organization of the world working class' and is sorry that 'there is no indication so far that this is about to happen'.³⁹ He seems not to have recognized that the ICFTU's affiliates, all of them trade union organizations, will have to reinvent themselves first, so his disappointment is likely to endure.

There is, however, a strong and committed school of writers, who would not dispute so much the definition of trade unions as their adequacy or even relevance in the contemporary world. Robin Cohen, for example, would not waste his efforts on theorizing international trade unions when the real demand is to theorize 'international labour' ⁴⁰ and Peter Waterman, more broad-brush still, sweeps up 'internationalisms' of all kinds ('Socialist and Proletarian', 'New Labour', 'Waterfront') and then goes 'beyond' them to envisage 'New' brands. ⁴¹ The stimulus for much of the new thinking (though no longer so new, as the self-deprecatory Waterman would no doubt ruefully concede) has come very much from globalization and the ever-widening and varying sources of labour exploited by international capital, above all in the developing world.

Cohen argues passionately that globalization is creating and shaping a new working class of which the traditional industrial relations concepts take no

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account and its problems and needs therefore require an entirely fresh approach. He sees the recognition by Sturmfels and Scoville that collective bargaining has its limits in the Third World as 'an extraordinary display of self-immolation'. 'Why,' he asks, is the 'naked emperor' of the 'industrial relations tradition' of trade unionism 'still wheeled out for display'? That is a 'world where "labour" normally means a middle-aged, male trade union bureaucrat'. A 'politically inert' attitude to industrial relations would no longer do and workers had to 'transcend a defensive economic posture'.

⁴² Olle and Schoeller, often called up by fellow radical spirits to bring some heavy theoretical artillery to bear, never fail to deliver it: the choice for trade union 'internationalisation' is either to accept 'conscious competition' – after all, 'trade unionism always contains the germs of nationalistic and racialist behaviour' – or to pursue 'the politicisation of trade union activity ... with the perspective of developing the power of the proletariat'. ⁴³ Peter Waterman is just as convinced that the working class will never achieve its salvation through traditional trade unionism, but tries to look on the brighter side. After a thoroughly disillusioning spell in the service of the Stalinist WFTU, he has spent almost all his academic life searching for effective alternatives to the trade union internationalism of the ICFTU and the ITSs. In the late stages of that largely disappointing quest, he was gratified by ITF support for victimized Liverpool dockers in the mid-1990s and found it 'reassuring' to see 'internationalist potential in the old trade unions', but he was still not sure that the ITF had indeed 'turned some kind of international corner'.⁴⁴

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It is not always clear to someone (say, the writer) coming relatively innocently to the theoretical cockpit, whether the 'new' factor of globalization is central to the critique of conventional trade unionism or whether it simply goes to confirm what the critics have always known. But common sense says that if Cohen's 'middle-aged, male trade union bureaucrat' was certain to fail the 'new' working class, he was unlikely to have done any better for the 'old' one. Those who think that trade unions, as defined here, are by their ideological nature doomed to disappoint the aspirations

of the world's workers have long written them off as at best marginal and, more likely, entirely negative forces. As has already been noted, none of the many Marxist tendencies has ever expected very much from them: the broader-minded might see them as transitionally useful, whilst keepers of the true and only faith see them as virtual, at best unwitting, traitors. What the special challenges of globalization seem to have done is to put new life into the search by every variety of trade union sceptic for ways to mobilize the working class effectively, and in the Third World particularly, something they are convinced the conventional trade unions could never do.

It is in many ways a very old debate with very new dimensions. The key coordinates for anyone looking to locate sceptical theorists on the ideological map without too much of a slog through their works are 'elite' and 'bureaucracy/bureaucratic'. The first stands for union officials and governing bodies; the second for rules and due process and is commonly contrasted with

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'democracy/democratic'. Few sceptics can get by for very long without these passwords and they are usually presented as being self-explanatory, that is that whatever the rank-and-file or shop stewards do is 'democratic' and whatever full-time officials do is 'bureaucratic' and so, by definition, 'undemocratic'. Those axioms are among a number of related assumptions which Kelly – no member of the trade union establishment – shows to be far from safe.⁴⁵ But such prejudices, if that is what they

are, have long and strong roots and the sceptical case for the prosecution certainly seems currently to hold the academic field.

Perhaps the international trade union movement itself thinks it has more useful things to do than to mount a theoretical defence and is happy to leave the facts on the ground to speak for themselves: the ITSs and the ICFTU survive (with the ITF, for one, stronger than ever) and the sceptics are still unable to point to anything remotely like an effective 'new' workers' international movement of the all-purpose, class-conscious kind which Cohen so eloquently hoped for.⁴⁶ The relative states of the old and would-be new orders are (unconsciously) epitomized by two chores which Waterman had still to do when he wrote a Preface to the paperback version of one of his recent books. Firstly, he confessed that he was in a state of shock at having received a 'serious and courteous' letter from Bill Jordan, then General Secretary of the ICFTU, and had still to work out his reply. Waterman believes that the ICFTU is 'still profoundly fixated on a set of institutions, procedures and principles ... from a capitalist era

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now passing'. His other task was to respond to a statement from the Zapatistas, the Mexican revolutionary movement. His difficulty with the Zapatistas was that he was not at all sure who had written the statement and on whose authority – and did they mean it anyway?⁴⁷

Is any constructive dialogue between the sceptics and the traditionalists at all possible? Waterman would clearly *like* to think so, but if his judgment of the ICFTU (above) is any guide, his 'maximum pessimism of the intellect' will always win over his 'maximum optimism of the will'.⁴⁸ Cohen's vehement scorn for the 'industrial relations tradition' seems brutally to rule out any compromise with those operating in 'the largely phoney world of work-place collective bargaining',⁴⁹ but he is only saying in his honestly robust way what many sceptics of the same mind would put more abstractly. They write off trade unions and, with them, the collective bargaining which has been the trade union movement's prime *raison d'être* these many past decades.

On the other side of the ideological divide, within the international trade union movement itself, there is nowadays a widespread recognition of the sort of shortcomings which Sturmtahl and Scoville identified and of which Cohen made so much, namely that there are areas beyond the traditional movement's reach and rôle. If anything, the weaknesses are more serious than Sturmtahl and Scoville or even Cohen seems to think, and go to the very structure of the

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international movement and to its internal dynamics. To that extent, they long predate 'globalization' and have been at least latent since the ITSs and the ICFTU first took an interest in the Third World. The problem can be illustrated by the case of the political upheaval in the former British East Africa early in 1964 when the ITF

backed its Tanganyikan railwaymen's union in a wage dispute. The outcome was the arrest of the union's leader, the suppression of the union and a train of events involving an abortive military coup (to which the railwaymen's and other unions' leaders were alleged to be party); the imposition of a national centre under the control of the government party; and finally the merging of Tanganyika with Zanzibar to create Tanzania. The point is not that the railwaymen's action caused the whole process or that the ITF's support was instrumental in it. There were obviously much greater forces at work. It is certainly not that the President Nyerere's government was justified in eliminating a vigorous and largely independent trade union movement. What does strike the writer in retrospect is that the ITF was constitutionally unable to respond at all to Nyerere's position that of Tanganyika's twelve million people, the 12,000 railwaymen amounted to a tiny, affluent and privileged special interest which should count its blessings and accept that the government had far more needy citizens to which it should devote its sparse resources. Nowhere in the ITF's account of these events,⁵⁰ is the government's case as much as mentioned. The story was simply one of Nyerere's determination to eliminate any opposition and of the ITF's principled if unavailing support for its affiliate. The attention here,

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however, is not directed to the merits of the case but to the ITF's obligation to back its affiliates, which, short of corruption, crime or breach of the ITF Constitution, is assumed to be more or less total. It is what the affiliates regard as 'international

solidarity', a reciprocal obligation between the ITF and its affiliates to rally round in the time of need, without any great finesse or qualification. In the 'old' world, where the social, political and economic parameters were familiar but often unfriendly, that kind of solidarity was to be valued. In the 'new' Third World it could often be – and in Tanganyika certainly was – disastrously insensitive and counter-productive. It could well be that the government had no interest in a dialogue and was set on its course regardless, but the ITF was really no less unbending. Its perceived and unconditional commitment to its affiliate meant it could not take, and would not think of taking, even the smallest step towards an understanding of the other side.

How the ITF and the rest of the international movement can overcome these inhibitions so as to adapt more flexibly to the special conditions and needs of the Third World should be high among its priorities (see below). In other respects, the movement is much more ready nowadays to collaborate with social movements of all kinds for common causes, as visits to the ITF's website ⁵¹ will confirm. But like the rest of the international trade union movement, the ITF remains stubbornly attached to the notion that workers need to be collectively represented and their interests have to be collectively defended and advanced at

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their workplaces. Waterman may see (above) 'a capitalist era now passing' but where exactly has the employer-worker relationship been so changed in the 'new' era that workers can now do without the kind of services trade unions provide? Do

any of the sceptics have a clear idea where the new kind of working-class representation is to come from and in what form? Trade unions, be they ever so 'bureaucratic' and their leaderships ever so 'elitist', are an open book: the rules are the members' property and theirs to change, the leaderships have to justify themselves or give way to others. And if, from time to time, the rules are abused and the leaderships are corrupted, then it is for the members to find the remedies. An idealistic view of their virtues? Of course, but not so unrealistic as to invalidate the trade union movement, nationally or internationally, as a positive force in the pursuit of social justice and even less to ditch the model that works, however imperfectly, before anything better is even in prospect.

ix. International trade union theory: a practitioner's ideas for an agenda

If the international trade union movement is ever to be seriously theorized then the academics have to put in the empirical effort. The Introduction has drawn attention to the threadbare state of academic literature on the ITSs in particular (the ITF perhaps the only exception). Given the dominant part played by ITSs in anything passing for international trade union activity, the neglect is bad enough, but it is aggravated by the very poor quality of much of the little there is. Wrong

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names, wrong times, wrong places – the practitioner soon loses count and respect. Some of the howlers are quite depressing. How could Ramsay write of 'the affiliation of ITSs to [the] ICFTU'?⁵² Just a slip of the keyboard, or had he really so

misunderstood over all those years the relationship between the ITSs and the ICFTU? Did he not know that Charles Levinson, about whose views he had just written at length, had always set his face, and the ICEF's, against *any* collaboration with the ICFTU and consistently took his boycott to the literally physical lengths of refusing to attend any meeting where the ICFTU was represented? The ITF never went nearly so far but when it needed to assert itself, it did so, for example over the state of emergency declared in India during a railwaymen's strike in the 1970s and in fraternally advising the ICFTU to mind its own business when its Singapore affiliate attacked the ITF's flag-of-convenience campaign in the 1980s. To the writer's knowledge, the IUF's relations with the ICFTU were often fraught and the IMF refused for years to have anything to do with the ICFTU's efforts to co-ordinate ICFTU and ITS activities in South Africa. For so long as the ITSs remain in every sense autonomous and notwithstanding their 'blood' ties to the ICFTU, any theory that fails to have regard to their discrete form and functions – and to the ITSs' predominance in terms of activities at ground level – will serve no purpose.

The next step would be to look critically at what the ITSs do and how they do it. First must come the unexciting but what Gumbrell-McCormick rightly terms the

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'all-important' functions of 'information and representation'.⁵³ The sceptical literature, with more momentous tasks in mind, hardly mentions them, yet for many ITF

affiliates they are justification enough for the affiliation fee. They are the basic ingredients of the ITF's sectional activities, the issues of collective bargaining, working practices or health and safety which are of immediate, practical importance to their members. That side of international trade union life is too important to go unnoticed, but it is uncontroversial, mundane raw material for the potential theoretician who will find it more promising to examine how ITSs cope with the less congenial occasions when affiliates' interests clash. In the international transport industry, long globalized, work is constantly transferred from one affiliate's jurisdiction to another's, setting the gain of one union against another's loss. Winners and losers often look to the ITF to broker some kind of agreed settlement, both sides looking over their shoulders at how the outcome will be seen at home. Other ITSs must sometimes be placed in a similar firing line and there is a need for some sustained research into how these situations are dealt with within the international movement.

Perhaps the next question would be to ask what are the effects and implications of the way the ITSs are structured? They are made up of national unions which have chosen to join an international organization, in a few cases as a matter of international solidarity and in a few cases in the expectation of some tangible return for their members, but in most cases, and in varying degrees, for both

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ideological and material reasons. The affiliates of the ITF on the one hand and the ITF itself on the other are parties to a contract of which the central and essential

principle is mutual support. The Tangayikan experience was an example of the lengths to which that principle can be taken and, subject to the usual exclusions (corruption, crime etc.), it is traditionally unconditional. Affiliation and its cost have to be justified to the membership and the international engagement cannot be seen to stray too far from the membership's domestic concerns nor seriously damage their interests. But international organizations cannot operate to any purpose without having delegated rights to take a view and to act in their own name. Where do the ITSs and their affiliates set the limits to those rights? Could they be extended, for instance, so as to make it possible for the ITSs to operate more productively in the Third World?

Finally, and most importantly, is the issue of the 'capacity to act', as Gumbrell-McCormick's subtitle has it, a quality which has been put to the test countless times in the ITF from its foundation, whether in specific industrial circumstances, for example in its flag-of-convenience campaign, or more generally, as when Becu demanded an international boycott in protest against the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956. Within the international movement, the ideal form of 'international solidarity' is widely represented by international boycott action of the kind carried out periodically by the ITF. The most impressive example, during the period was a four-day boycott, from 30 November to 4 December 1958 of flag-of-convenience vessels which were not covered by collective

agreements acceptable to the ITF. Well over two hundred vessels were caught around the world and many more forced to delay their arrival until the action ended.

⁵⁴ It was the kind of pressure which many other ITs and the ICFTU would have liked very much to have in their armoury, but the ITF alone had the capability to carry out boycotts of its own instigation and by its own direct actions. Understandably and excusably, the rest of the international movement would often call on the ITF to apply its muscle to their causes. What they often failed to understand, never having been obliged to, was that every ITF boycott action required a real-life transport worker, usually a docker, to tell his employer that he was going to break his contract of employment by refusing to do his job and, furthermore, would break it in the course of a dispute or for a cause which, most likely, his employer could do nothing to resolve or even influence. In cases where the law was very benign on industrial action (as in Great Britain during the period) and where the union was strong enough to have the employer's indulgence, such actions could be taken with near impunity and at no cost. Where the law was very restrictive on industrial action, particularly in 'secondary' actions (as in the Republic of Germany), the worker's union could be at risk of heavy punitive damages and in many other countries the worker's job, his career and his family's welfare could be at stake. The ITF carried out many international boycotts of greater or lesser significance during and after the period, but none of them was a simple matter of stopping ships or aircraft simply by sending a circular or making a telephone call. Practical international solidarity is the

sternest test of how much the affiliates and their members are prepared to contribute to the international cause and anyone able to theorize effectively on how to structure the movement and shape the actions themselves so as to extract the strongest possible response would do the international trade movement the greatest of all services.

Notes to Chapter VI

- ¹ Con.46, *Proceedings*, pp143-145,191. The exceptions were one each from Canada, China and Mexico (Fimmen's companion), and two from Egypt. The American SIU was represented by Becu, as proxy.
- ² Con.52, *RonA 1950-51*, pp17,20
- ³ Though officials of the British TUC had had extensive and often close relations with unions in the British colonies over the years. See Nicholson's *The TUC Overseas*.
- ⁴ The writer recalls that a representative of the American Machinists (IAM) once calculated that the IAM's skilled mechanics paid more in union dues than their African counterparts earned.
- ⁵ EC November 1960, *Minutes*, p8
- ⁶ It was not amended at all until 1971 when the Congress authorized the EB to double the entitlements of concessionary payers, i.e. 10% of the fees would produce 20% in votes and delegates and 50% or more would give full rights:
Con.71, *Proceedings*, pp175-178, 227

- ⁷ Reinalda (1), pp124-125
- ⁸ Con.48, *Proceedings*, pp219-220
- ⁹ Carew (1), pp294-295
- ¹⁰ Typically Rule XVIII, 'Finance and Auditing' of the 1962 Constitution, Con.62, *Proceedings*, pp148-149
- ¹¹ The writer's recollection of discussions with Japanese representatives and staff members of the Tokyo Office.
- ¹² Explained in Con.60, *RonA 1958-59*, pp105-107
- ¹³ Herman Rebhan, for many years General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF).
- ¹⁴ He was defeated by Charles Blyth, one of the two Assistant General Secretaries, who was supported by the other, the writer. ITS (and ICFTU) General Secretaries have often been discreetly bought out or 'retired' but the ITF seems unique in having rejected an incumbent after open debate and a Congress ballot.
- ¹⁵ Con.50, *Proceedings*, pp283-284
- ¹⁶ Edwards, *Waterfront Warlord*, pp150-153,155
- ¹⁷ There was, however, an ironic precedent. The forerunners of the British NUS and the American SIU had set up a rival seamen's international before the First World War: Hartmut Rübner, *The International Seamen's Organizations after the First World War War*, in Reinalda (1), Chapter 9.
- ¹⁸ Lyon, pp 88-89

- ¹⁹ Their questions, all germane to the ITF, include: Is there a dominant influence? How extensive is the influence of the chief executive and the bureaucracy? Does the kind of influence vary with the kind of decision? What is the norm, consensus or conflict? How firm are the alignments?
Cox and Jacobson, *The Anatomy of Influence*, p35
- ²⁰ *Paul Hall Remembered*, Paul Hall Center, www.seafarers.org/phc
- ²¹ The NMU sent a delegation to the Soviet Union in 1960. Nevertheless, its President, Joe Curran, once very left-wing like many CIO pioneers, felt it prudent to take a strongly anti-communist line at the ITF's 1960 Congress.
- ²² Gumbrell-McCormick, pp7-30
- ²³ Ramsay, p216
- ²⁴ Gumbrell-McCormick, p14
- ²⁵ Logue, p10
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, p20
- ²⁷ *ibid.*, pp27-29
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, back cover
- ²⁹ Olson, pviii
- ³⁰ Kelly, p81
- ³¹ Logue, pp41-43
- ³² Kelly, pp80,81
- ³³ Logue, n40 on p62

³⁴ *ibid.*, p29

³⁵ Hyman's *Industrial Relations: a Marxist Introduction* is a stimulating start.

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³⁶ For example, see Reinalda (2) on the ILO.

³⁷ Crouch, p13

³⁸ Gumbrell-McCormick, pp8-20 especially

³⁹ Gallin, p239. A Fimmen disciple, he thinks the ITSs should affiliate with the ICFTU on the same terms as the national centres, so putting an end to 'ICFTU/ITS turf battles' and preventing the ICFTU from being able 'to divide the ITSs': (p241) The writer is not convinced of his reasons or his solutions, but the long-term shape of the international movement is certainly up for discussion.

⁴⁰ Cohen, p3

⁴¹ Waterman (1), the title and contents

⁴² *ibid.*, pp4,6

⁴³ Olle and Schoeller, p43

⁴⁴ Waterman (1), pp250-251

⁴⁵ Kelly (2), Chapter 7, pp147-183

⁴⁶ Cohen, p23

⁴⁷ Waterman, pp xi,xx,xxiv

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p xvii,xviii

⁴⁹ Cohen, p4

⁵⁰ Con.65, *RonA 1962-64*, pp66-68

⁵¹ The site, www.itf.org.uk, is open to all without registration or password.

⁵² Ramsay, p200

⁵³ Gumbrell-McCormick, p29

⁵⁴ Con.1960, *RonA* 1958-59, pp63-64

Tables

1. *Affiliated membership*
2. *Number of affiliated organizations*
3. *Affiliated membership – regional distribution*
4. *Affiliated organizations – regional distribution*
5. *Affiliated membership – the ‘Big Four’*
6. *The ‘Big Four’ as a proportion (%) of the affiliated membership*
7. *Average memberships of affiliated organizations*
8. *Attendance at ITF Congresses: 1946-1965*
9. *ITF Regional activities income and expenditure*

Sources: All the tables have been compiled from the Reports on Activities and the Financial Reports made to each Congress during the period

Table 3: Affiliated membership - regional distribution (%)

	<i>1946</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1964</i>
Africa	0.26	0.63	1.95
Asia/Pacific	2.59	20.39	17.11
Europe/Middle East	89.43	46.82	48.62
Latin America/Caribbean	3.97	3.58	8.69
North America	3.75	28.58	23.63
Total	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 4: Affiliated organizations - regional distribution (%)

	<i>1946</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1964</i>
Africa	4.2	9.9	11.5
Asia/Pacific	11.7	12.1	13.5
Europe/Middle East	73.3	58.8	37.5
Latin America/Caribbean	6.6	11.4	31.7
North America	4.2	7.8	5.8
Total	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5: Affiliated membership - the 'Big Four' (in 000s to the nearest 1,000)

	<i>1946</i>	<i>1948</i>	<i>1950</i>	<i>1952</i>	<i>1954</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1958</i>	<i>1960</i>	<i>1962</i>	<i>1964</i>
Germany	-	-	637	534	541	541	552	555	548	542
Great Britain	963	963	940	966	908	892	889	966	932	912
Japan	-	-	632	623	493	503	484	419	493	503
USA	35	767	822	1,026	1,105	1,280	1,760	1,322	1,041	1,025

Table 6: the 'Big Four' as a proportion (%) of the affiliated membership (see Table 1)

	1946	1948	1950	1952	1954	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964
Germany	-	-	14.6	11.7	11.8	11.0	9.6	10.7	10.9	10.8
Great Britain	50.9	27.9	21.6	21.1	19.7	18.1	15.5	18.7	18.5	18.1
Japan	-	-	14.5	13.8	10.7	10.2	8.4	8.1	9.8	10.1
USA	1.9	22.2	18.8	22.4	24.0	26.0	30.7	25.5	20.6	20.4
									Total	59.4

Note: The 1958 figure for the USA membership was inflated briefly in 1957 with an increase to 500,000 in the Teamsters affiliation. See Chapter III.

Without that distortion the 1958 entries would be (%): Germany, 10.6; Great Britain, 17.0; Japan, 8.0; and USA, 24.1.

Table 7: Average memberships of affiliated unions (000s) - 1948-1964

	1948	1952	1956	1960	1964
Africa	2.3	3.3	2.2	2.6	2.7
Asia/Pacific	62.9	71.7	58.2	31.2	19.0
Latin America	10.3	9.3	11.0	4.4	4.4
	<i>compared with</i>				
Europe	27.8	30.0	27.7	26.2	21.0
North America	159.0	114.5	127.7	87.1	66.1

Without the Japanese membership, the Asia/Pacific figures would be:

	n/a	47.6	38.4	21.0	8.7
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Table 8: Attendance at ITF Congresses: 1946-1965

	1946	1950	1954	1958	1962	1965
Countries	20	21	29	40	45	39
Organizations	39	65	83	110	130	129
Delegates and advisers	151	212	231	285	301	312
Total voting strength	1,659,928	3,831,779	2,561,264	5,000,000	3,784,200	3,802,500

Note: The total voting strength figure for 1958 is clearly suspect. Probably linked to the US Teamsters' presence.

Sources: reports of the Credentials Committees in Congress Proceedings 1946-1965

Table 9: ITF regional activities income and expenditure (£ sterling)

	<u>1948- 49</u>	<u>1950- 51</u>	<u>1952- 53</u>	<u>1954- 55</u>	<u>1956- 57</u>	<u>1958- 59</u>	<u>1960- 61</u>	<u>1962-63</u>
Income	5,751	1,028	10,638	18,041	34,621	48,777	96,377	122,509
<i>of which:</i>								
Special contributions	4,975	606	10,402	14,344	31,506	25,113	26,624	50,831
General fund	776	422	236	452	2,000	3,000	-	-
Affiliation fees	-	-	-	-	-	20,664	42,914	36,656
ICFTU-ISF grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,750	35,022
Other	-	-	-	3,245	1,115	-	3,089	-
Expenditure	5,253	1,670	9,648	18,439	32,232	55,874	86,961	121,543
<i>of which:</i>								
Africa	-	-	695	1,771	3,475	7,379	16,672	27,179
Asia/Pacific	5,253	836	8,439	7,698	11,004	13,293	19,083	24,495
Latin America	-	834	514	8,970	14,996	21,485	41,803	60,806
Europe	-	-	-	-	1,200	9,100	1,784	2,239
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	1,557	-	-	-
Headquarters	-	-	-	-	-	4,617	7,619	6,824

**Table 10: American RLEA voluntary contributions to ITF regional activities
(£s)**

	<u>1952-53</u>	<u>1954-55</u>	<u>1956-57</u>	<u>1958-59</u>	<u>1960-61</u>	<u>1962-64</u>
RLEA	3,139	8,400	15,092	11,142	7,857	22,718
Total	10,402	14,344	31,506	25,113	26,624	77,017

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