

Chapter 4

The African Labour College and East African Trade Unionism

Between June and September 1959, Pauline Clerk from Ghana joined 34 other students from across Africa at the second residential course at the African Labour College (ALC) in Kampala. East Africans were well represented: one Zanzibari, two Ugandans, six Tanganyikans, and four Kenyans.¹ Like her fellow students, Clerk was a senior trade union official: she was both the national organiser for the Broadcasting Workers' Union in Ghana and the national women's organiser for the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC).²

The African Labour College was run by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Founded in 1949 as an anti-communist breakaway from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the ICFTU represented itself publicly as a (qualified) supporter of anti-colonialism.³ The African Labour College (ALC) was established and then deliberately located in Kampala at the heart of decolonizing Africa to give expression to such sentiments. But it was also located in the city to in order benefit from the vitality of intellectual and political life centred on the Makerere campus.⁴ The ALC is therefore illustrative of the way in which the key ideas and debates within intellectual culture discussed throughout this book seeped into wider political discourse. This is not surprising. After all, in Chapter one the determination of Neogy, Ngũgĩ, and their contemporaries to engage with society at large was established. And the trade unions were a particularly effective and obvious route towards such engagement. Not only was the labour movement the largest form of mass participation in public debate besides nationalist politics, but its leaders and institutions played a key role in the networks discussed throughout this book. This was most obviously personified by Mboya, who in addition to his trade union and political leadership was also a patron of the arts, most notably Es'kia Mphahlele's Chemchemi Cultural Centre and

1 International Institute of Social History (IISH), papers of the ICFTU 4021b, ICFTU African Labour College, "Second Course," 1959.

2 UKNA CO 859/1208, Fockstedt, "Principal's Report on Second Course – 1st June to 25th September 1959" no date but 1959, 3.

3 IISH ICFTU 4479b, ICFTU, "The ICFTU's Uncompromising Fight for Economic and Social Development and Self-Determination," 29 March 1956, 2.

4 IISH ICFTU 3981, Lewis, "Some Considerations of the ICFTU African Labour College," December 1958, 8.

Elimo Njau's Paa ya Paa art gallery.⁵ Other trade union leaders also engaged with similar activities. In June 1960, for example, Clement Kanama and Rashidi Kawawa were invited to Philadelphia to attend the annual conference of the CIA-backed American Society of African Culture.⁶ Moreover, the labour movement was the subject of one of the first seminars held at the EAISCA, and the focus of books from the EAPH and articles in *East Africa Journal*.⁷ In other words, the trade unions were an integral part of the East African cultural and political landscape. The labour movement was, moreover, a setting in which intellectual culture was put into dialogue with popular politics, and one of the primary arenas in which being East African was practiced.

Outwardly, the College appeared to be an example of “anti-imperial spaces” created by the labour movement across the globe where late-colonial subjects and then citizens of new independent states accessed education, inspiration and networks of similarly minded individuals.⁸ But Pauline Clerk's experiences in Kampala ran contrary to this mission. Travelling from independent Ghana to late-colonial East Africa, Clerk felt she had stepped back in time. Ghana had been independent for a little over two years, but this was a long enough period for Clerk to be shocked by the realities of life for Uganda's African population under colonial rule. As she wrote in the GTUC's newspaper, *The Ghanaian Worker*, after her return home, “As you walk the streets of Ghana, free and alive, think of those who are not allowed this feeling, are forbidden in the so-called white areas, are unable to walk into any shop they wish to buy things.” To Clerk, the racism that influenced every aspect of working lives in East Africa meant the region was indistinguishable from apartheid South Africa. “I must now step out into the streets of Accra and in its bustling

5 For Mboya's correspondence with Mphahlele, see HIA TM/28/9. For his correspondence with Njau see HIA TM/28/10.

6 UKNA FO 141/17773, Commissioner of Police to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Security & Immigration, 20 May 1960.

7 For a communique from the seminar, see “East African Labour Policies,” *East Africa Journal* 1, no. 7 (1964). For examples of other labour-related publications see Michael Kamaliza, “Tanganyika's View of Labour's Role,” *East Africa Journal* 1, no. 7 (1964); Clement Lubembe, “Trade Unions and Nation Building,” *East Africa Journal* 1, no. 2 (1964); Roger Scott, “Labour Legislation and the Federation Issue,” *East Africa Journal* 1, no. 7 (1964); Scott, *Development of Trade Unionism*; Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement*.

8 JoAnn McGregor, “Locating Exile: Decolonization, Anti-Imperial Spaces and Zimbabwean Students in Britain, 1965–1980,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 57 (2017).

happiness try and lose for a few minutes the stench of South, Central and East Africa,” she concluded.⁹

Clerk’s sense of the distinctiveness of East Africa and her unease in Kampala was compounded by the international and Pan-African politics of the labour movement. By the time of Clerk’s arrival in Kampala, this political context meant Clerk’s home organisation, the Ghana Trade Union Congress, was at odds with her ICFTU hosts at the African Labour College and many of her East African counterparts. Through the influence of the Kenyan trade unionist and politician Tom Mboya and his range of international connections, the East African labour movement of the late 1950s had come to occupy a very different position within transnational debates about labour and its place within the processes of decolonisation than did Clerk and the GTUC.

With the space for more radical forms of labour activism restricted by the colonial regimes in the region, the East African labour movement, for a brief period in the late 1950s and early 1960s, appeared to its members and foreign observers to be characterised by a distinctive combination of policy positions.¹⁰ First, while overtly anti-colonial, under Mboya’s influence East Africa’s main trade union federations were for a short but critical period tied to global anti-communist networks. Second, inspired by European social democracy, the East African labour movement in this period encouraged significant improvements to the living standards of its members while seeking to maintain positive working relationships with employers. As such, under Mboya’s leadership the East African labour movement occupied a distinctive position on the ideological spectrum of political actors engaged with decolonization, the Cold War, and late colonial and early post-colonial development policies.¹¹ This set it against unions from other parts of the continent, most notably Ghana. These differences played out in arguments about the region’s place with a Ghana-led initiative to create an All-African Trade Union Federation. As the example of Clerk suggests, education and training establishments were key to the emergence of this brand of East Africa labour regionalism.

9 UKNA CO 859/1560, Pauline Clerk, “Brutality Their Pay, Misery Their Recreation,” *The Ghanaian Worker*, 5 December 1959, 2.

10 For general, contemporary accounts of trade unions and their wider significance in this period, see William Friedland, *Vuta Kamba: The Development of Trade Unions in Tanganyika* (Stanford CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1969); Roger Scott, *The Development of Trade Unionism in Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966); Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya’s Trade Union Movement, to 1952* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).

11 Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza, “Pan-African Trade Unionism: Unity and Discord,” *Transafrican Journal of History* 15 (1986); Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza, “Trade Union Imperialism: American Labour, the ICFTU and the Kenyan Labour Movement,” *Social and Economic Studies* 36, no. 2 (1987).

Ideas of the Afro-Asian world; the Third World; global socialism; anti-communism; Pan-Africanism; and the residual British world all came to the fore in the Eastern African labour movement in the 1950s and 1960s through the participation of trade unionists in various educational programmes and the political debates about them.¹² This is not surprising. Labour organisations were influential participants in decolonization across the globe in this period, as a recent body of scholarship has clearly demonstrated.¹³ Rachel Leow's work is particularly influential on this chapter. As she shows, the classroom of training institutions and what she terms the "pedagogical work" of trade unions in this period provide revealing insight into the intersection of the politics of decolonisation and the Cold War. Trade union educational programmes were the locations in which grassroots trade unionists confronted nationalism, communism, and anti-communism, as well as their respective international champions.¹⁴ This chapter follows Leow by considering the importance of labour training and education to the creation of a distinctive conception of East Africa in the age of decolonisation.

12 Immanuel Harisch and Eric Burton, "The Missing Link? Western Communists as Mediators Between the East German FDGB, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and African Trade Unions in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 103, no. 1 (2023); Yvette Richards, "African and African-American Labor Leaders in the Struggle over International Affiliation," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998); Carolien Stolte, "Introduction: Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019).

13 Mathilde von Bülow, "Irving Brown and ICFTU Labor Diplomacy during Algeria's Struggle for Independence," in *American Labor's Global Ambassadors: The International History of the AFL-CIO During the Cold War*, ed. Robert Anthony Waters and Geert van Goethem (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Gareth Curless, "'The People Need Civil Liberties': Trade Unions and Contested Decolonisation in Singapore," *Labor History* 57, no. 1 (2016); Gareth Curless, "The Triumph of the State: Singapore's Dockworkers and the Limits of Global History, c.1920–1965," *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 4 (2017); Harisch and Burton, "Missing Link."; Leslie James, "'Essential Things Such as Typewriters': Development Discourse, Trade Union Expertise, and the Dialogues of Decolonization Between the Caribbean and West Africa," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019); Rachel Leow, "Asian Lessons in the Cold War Classroom: Trade Union Networks and the Multidirectional Pedagogies of the Cold War in Asia," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019); Su Lin Lewis, "'We Are Not Copyists': Socialist Networks and Non-Alignment from Below in A. Philip Randolph's Asian Journey," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019); Spencer Mawby, "Workers in the Vanguard: The 1960 Industrial Relations Ordinance and the Struggle for Independence in Aden," *Labor History* 57, no. 1 (2016).

14 Leow, "Asian Lessons." The importance of pedagogy in African trade unionism is further developed in Immanuel Harisch, "Great Hopes, False Promises. African Trade Unions in the World of Organized Labor. Institutions, Networks, and Mobilities during the Cold War 1950s and 1960s" (PhD thesis, University of Vienna, 2023).

The chapter has four parts. It first considers the ways in which the East African labour movement was initially shaped by late colonialism. Moderate trade unionism was undoubtedly a colonial project. Moreover, metropolitan officials initially saw strictly controlled international connections through the ICFTU and its provision of training opportunities as a way in which the activity of trade unions in East Africa and elsewhere could be contained to the workplace rather than a broader field of political action. However, this alliance between local and global labour took the role of the trade unionism and regional activism far beyond the scope imagined for East Africans by the colonial authorities. In the second part of the chapter, we will see how African agency and international support made regionalism and trade unionism credible anti-colonial projects. In the third section we turn to the educational efforts of the ICFTU and AFL-CIO, which put East African trade unionists into regular contact with one another and allowed for the consolidation of regional distinctiveness. This took place in locations such as the ALC. However, the use of education as a way of consolidating the alignment of the labour movement with the ICFTU and the American labour movement, and the rejection of Pan-African integration were by no means unanimously supported among trade union activists. In the final section of the chapter, we will see how rows over the international alignment of the region's trade unions were of fundamental importance to factionalism among trade unionists and subsequent efforts by East Africa's new rulers to curtail the power of the labour movement.

Labour, Late Colonialism, and The Cold War

Up to and immediately after the Second World War, various European colonies across the globe were shaken by strikes and other forms of protest by urban workers. In much of colonial Africa, striking workers angered by low wages, poor housing, and insecure forms of employment forced their rulers to reassess the social foundations of colonial society. In a reversal of previous policies, urbanisation was recognised (belatedly) by colonial rulers as a reality rather a temporary condition. They thus set about constructing new forms of control over urban subjects. Moderate trade unions operating on terms set by the colonial state appeared to European officials to be one way that could be achieved.¹⁵ At the same time more radical forms of labour activism were to be crushed, as the example of Uganda illustrates. The first trade union there, the Uganda African Drivers Associ-

¹⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18–9.

ation and Trade Union (UADATU), pre-dated post-war efforts by colonial governments to found and control a moderate labour movement. Formed in 1939, the UADATU was linked to Bugandan nationalism and anti-colonial protests throughout its lifespan. In response, its leaders were first deported by the colonial authorities and then the organisation itself was closed in 1949.¹⁶ In its place emerged a different, state-sanctioned, moderate brand of trade unionism. Between 1948 and 1955, a wide range of new trade unions serving the agricultural, education, transport, and public sector were established, most significantly the Uganda Railway African Union (URAU). By the close of 1960, nearly 20,000 workers were members of 33 different trade unions, of which URAU was the largest with 5,000 members.¹⁷ A similar account can be provided for Kenya and Tanzania too.

In its efforts to promote moderate trade unionism in East Africa and elsewhere around the imperial world, the British government assumed it would have an ally in the new ICFTU. After all, as Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd wrote in June 1957, the anti-communist ICFTU was “a friendly and well-disposed organisation . . .”¹⁸ That confidence was based on the presumed influence of the British Trades Union Congress (the TUC) on the ICFTU. The TUC had been instrumental in the split of the ICFTU from the WFTU in 1949. Since its foundation in 1945, British and other Western labour federations had criticised the WFTU for being beholden to communist influence. Unable to enact internal reform of the WFTU, the TUC and other Western-aligned federations instead founded the ICFTU.¹⁹ Alongside its antipathy to Communism and support for the founding of the ICFTU, the TUC’s other key post-war global stance was its support for British colonial labour policy. The TUC was an active partner of the Colonial Office in the latter’s efforts to promote stable industrial relations in East Africa.²⁰ Moreover, the TUC had no appetite for encouraging colonial trade unions to become a platform for wider political agendas, particularly anti-colonialism.²¹ As it transpired, however, the TUC struggled to exert any control over the ICFTU’s activities towards East Africa.

16 UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, “Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959),” no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 4–5.

17 UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, “Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959),” no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 4–5.

18 UKNA CO 822/1625, Lennox-Boyd to Twining, 26 June 1957.

19 Anthony Carew, “Conflict Within the ICFTU: Anti-Communism and Anti-Colonialism in the 1950s,” *International Review of Social History* 41, no. 1 (1996).

20 Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza, “Colonialism and Internationalism: The Case of the British and Kenyan Labour Movement,” *Ufahamu* 14, no. 1 (1984).

21 IISH ICFTU 4476, TUC, “Kenya Trade Unions and Mau Mau,” 30 December 1954.

These activities gathered pace following a tour of the region in 1951 by an ICFTU delegation. In its report, the delegation recommended to the organisation's secretariat in Brussels that a representative be appointed to the British colonies of East and Northeast Africa.²²

Two developments mitigated against the TUC dictating the terms of the ICFTU's engagement with East Africa trade unionists. The first was factionalism within the ICFTU following the merger in 1955 of the two American labour federations, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Under its moniker of the AFL-CIO, the newly combined giant federation immediately became the main financial contributor to the ICFTU. In stark contrast to the TUC, the AFL-CIO's president George Meaney and his colleagues were convinced that colonialism provided the perfect conditions for communism to bloom among colonial subjects.²³ As part of its wider anti-communist support of American Cold War foreign policy, the AFL-CIO adopted an avowed anti-colonial stance towards African trade unions and expected the ICFTU to do the same. Even as Lennox-Boyd waxed lyrical about the alignment of the ICFTU's views of the Cold War with British foreign policy, he warned governors of British colonies across the continent that "In relation to Africa, the activities of the ICFTU must be watched carefully."²⁴

More important still for the involvement of the ICFTU in East Africa than the AFL-CIO was the agency of Kenyan labour leaders, most notably Tom Mboya.²⁵ Mboya and other moderate Kenyan trade unionists recognised that the ICFTU represented a possible solution to the predicament they found themselves in with the onset of the State of Emergency in October 1952. Declared by the British authorities to deal with the Mau Mau insurgency, the State of Emergency also provided an opportunity for the security forces to mount a crackdown on radical trade unionists. For nearly two decades previously, activists like Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai, Chege Kibachia, and Bildad Kaggia had been at the forefront of both the labour movement and anti-colonial politics. Having organised the 1947 Mombasa dock strike, in 1949 Singh, Kubai, Kibachia, and Kaggia formed the East Afri-

22 Wisconsin Historical Society, President's Office Files, William Green Papers, 1934–1952, Series II, File C of U.S. Mss. 117A, American Federation of Labor Records (accessed via <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=002038-015-0817>), ICFTU Emergency Committee, "Report of the Delegation to Egypt, the Sudan and East Africa," 25 February 1952, 14–16.

23 University of Maryland Special Collections (UMD), papers of the AFL-CIO Record Group (RG) 98–5/1/6, interview with Irving Brown, conducted by Frank Sullivan, October 1979, 5.

24 UKNA CO 822/1625, Lennox-Boyd to Twining, 26 June 1957.

25 Gerard McCann, "Possibility and Peril: Trade Unionism, African Cold War, and the Global Strands of Kenyan Decolonisation," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 2 (2019).

can Trade Union Congress (EATUC). The EATUC refused to comply with the colonial government's efforts to limit the scope of its activities, most notably the requirement for any trade union to disavow itself of any involvement in politics. Following a general strike in Nairobi in 1950 and in the context of increasing militancy in the city, Singh was arrested and the EATUC disbanded.²⁶ When the Emergency began two years later, radical trade unionists were among the first targets for arrest and detention.²⁷ Kubai and Kaggia were captured during the first wave of arrests following the declaration of the State of Emergency in October 1952. Over the following eighteen months, the radical leadership of the trade union movement was detained or imprisoned as part of the British counterinsurgency campaign.²⁸

The more moderate Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions (the KFRTU) attempted to fill the vacuum left by the disbandment of the EATUC and arrest of its leaders. Registered with the government less than a month after the start of the Emergency, the KFRTU had no qualms about accepting the conditions of registration rejected by the EATUC.²⁹ Led initially by Aggrey Minya, Tom Mboya rapidly assumed control of the KFRTU.³⁰ Nevertheless, the moderate KFRTU also found itself caught up in the Emergency. With the colonial authorities demonstrating their characteristic unwillingness to distinguish between actual militant supporters of the insurgency and the wider African population of Kenya, the entire labour movement was subjected to great pressure from the authorities. This included the arrest of nearly 40 moderate trade union leaders during one security operation in April 1954.³¹ The ICFTU was one of the few avenues by which the KFRTU could attempt to publicise the plight of moderate trade unionists. Once in office as general secretary of what was to become the Kenya Federation of Labour (KFL), Mboya intensified the relationship with the ICFTU. He pleaded with the ICFTU to "save the situation by taking a strong stand against the way the Emergency is being handled in Kenya today."³² Mboya's plea was received with interest. The ICFTU sup-

26 McCann, "Possibility and Peril," 353–6; Zarina Patel, *Unquiet: The Life and Times of Makhan Singh* (Nairobi: Zand Graphics, 2006).

27 Frank Furedi, "The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics," *Journal of African History* 14, no. 2 (1973): 284.

28 Kenya National Archives (KNA) HAKI/24/4, Kenya Intelligence Committee, "Trade Union Activities in the Last Year," May 1955, 1–2.

29 IISH ICFTU 4479a, KFRTU, "Application for Affiliation," 12 November 1952.

30 David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 21; Zeleza, "Trade Union Imperialism," 155–6.

31 Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963), 37–8.

32 IISH ICFTU 4479c, Mboya, "Memorandum to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions," July 1954, 2.

ported the KFRTU's efforts to force the government to reopen the cases of detained trade unionists. By mid-September 1954, seven of the 39 trade union officials arrested during Operation Anvil had been released.³³ Further support swiftly followed from the ICFTU for the KFL, under Mboya's leadership.

Mboya had an important ally in Jim Bury, the inaugural ICFTU representative in East Africa who took up his post in 1954. Bury worked from a joint ICFTU and KFL office funded by the ICFTU.³⁴ Bury organised training sessions, toured the country to advise unions on basic organisation and management, and attended a host of conferences and meetings arranged by the KFL's affiliates to explain the role of the ICFTU.³⁵ Money followed as the KFL was entrusted with the effective organisation of the Kenyan labour movement so as to avoid its re-radicalisation. ICFTU funds quickly became essential to the survival and then revival of the labour movement.³⁶ The funds also supported striking dockworkers in Mombasa in 1955.³⁷ The relationship between the ICFTU and the KFL served both parties well. The ICFTU's support meant the KFL could become "the voice of the African people, in the absence of any other African organizations to speak for them."³⁸ This in turn gave the ICFTU the credibility to gain a vital foothold in East Africa.³⁹

Buoyed by his success in Kenya, Mboya encouraged the formation of the Uganda Trade Union Congress (UTUC) in 1955 by persuading the individual trade unions to affiliate to the national centre, which in turn received and distributed funds from the ICFTU.⁴⁰ He did much the same in Tanganyika. There too, the post-war period witnessed a surge in trade union activity, with a small number of locally focused unions formed in the early 1950s. These unions were brought together under the umbrella of the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL) in 1955, following a visit by Mboya to Tanganyika in his capacity as regional representative of the ICFTU.⁴¹

33 Anthony Clayton and Donald Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya 1895–1963* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 389–90; Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, 32–3.

34 IISH ICFTU 4479a, KFRTU, "Minutes of the General Council," 18 September 1954, 2.

35 IISH ICFTU 4479a, KFRTU, "Newsletter No.8," 13 April 1955.

36 IISH ICFTU 4476, Newman to Oldenbroek, 27 August 1956.

37 KNA HAKI/24/4, Kenya Intelligence Committee, "Trade Union Activities in the Last Year," May 1955, 2.

38 Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 35.

39 McCann, "Possibility and Peril."

40 UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, "Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959)," no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 12.

41 UKNA CO 822/1625, Marsh to Greenhough, 15 October 1957; William Friedland, *Vuta Kamba: The Development of Trade Unions in Tanganyika* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), 21–2.

At first, Mboya hoped his efforts towards encouraging moderate trade unionism in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika would result in pan-East African labour organisations, either at the individual trade union level or a regional federation. He raised these ideas in some of his very first trips abroad in 1954, first with the colonial authorities in Tanganyika and again in London with the Colonial Office. He was rebuffed by both.⁴²

In truth, the idea of single unions operating across Eastern Africa or a federated regional body had little appeal to other trade union leaders or members. There were, as representatives of the KFL, TFL, and UTUC agreed at their first ever formal meeting in September 1956, more urgent priorities.⁴³ Examples of co-ordinated regional industrial action were spectacular, such as the 1959 and 1960 strikes by railway unions, but extremely rare.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Mboya had helped forge a distinctive East African labour movement by the mid-1950s. As acting regional representative in 1955 and then again from December 1956 to mid-1958, Mboya was the public face of the ICFTU across the region.⁴⁵ Although he then stepped back from operational duties as his political career in Kenya took off, Mboya remained an important voice for and within the ICFTU as chairman of its Area Committee for East, Central and South Africa. Mboya took his role with the ICFTU seriously, pushing for ever greater budgets so as to enable him to meet his promises to his Ugandan and Tanganyikan colleagues to visit, run training courses, and advocate for their interests with colonial governments in the region and with the British authorities in London.⁴⁶ UTUC and TFL leaders in turn became key allies for Mboya and the KFL on the international stage, supporting for example Mboya's push for an African regional committee within the structures of the ICFTU.⁴⁷

Internally, the three organisations had much in common too. They shared a moderate stance towards government and employers, organisational structures, and a dependency on external support. Low levels of formal employment and low wages limited the viability of small, occupation- or location-specific trade unions. Instead, the Eastern African labour movement was built upon large, amal-

42 Hoover Institute Archives (Hereafter HIA), papers of Tom Mboya (TM) 38/4, Gottfurcht to Mpangala, 2 August 1956.

43 IISH ICFTU 4479d, Newman, "Report on the Inaugural Meeting of Representatives of the Kenya Federation of Labour, Tanganyika Federation of Labour and the Uganda Trade Union Congress," 19 September 1956.

44 David Hyde, "The East African Railway Strike, 1959–60: Labour's Challenge of Inter-Territorialism," *Labor History* 57, no. 1 (2016).

45 IISH ICFTU 4479b, Bury, "Talks with Mr. Oldenbroek," 1 June 1955.

46 IISH ICFTU 4479c, Mboya to Oldenbroek, 6 July 1955.

47 UKNA CO 822/1623, extract from Tanganyika Intelligence Report, December 1959.

gamated unions which spanned entire sectors of the economy.⁴⁸ Furthermore, those individual unions were, in this model, to be led and supported by strong, national centres to a far greater extent than was the case in, say, Britain. Because of the same basic economic realities, the national centres were, in turn, to be closely integrated into the ICFTU, which was to provide much of the day-to-day funding required for the survival of the labour movement. Dependence on the ICFTU's finances was absolute. In Tanganyika, for example, the trade unions were in a parlous state in 1957: "all were bankrupt" reported Albert Hammerton, an ICFTU official, as he settled their debts.⁴⁹

The relationship of East African labour leaders with the ICFTU was not solely about money, nor was it always cordial. Indeed, at the Arusha meeting of the three federations held in 1958, the general secretaries of the TFL, UTUC, and KFL each expressed their frustration about their lack of influence over the ICFTU's decision-making relating to Africa.⁵⁰ But at this stage, all three federations recognised that the benefits of ICFTU affiliation outweighed any discontent with the international body. This was for several reasons. One was the opportunity ICFTU affiliation presented East African trade unionists to build regional and international networks. The ICFTU, particularly after the formation of its Eastern, Southern, and Central Africa committee, provided ample opportunity for the consolidation of ties between the East African leaders. Moreover, the leaders themselves took the initiative to try wherever possible to combine their own federation's conferences with ICFTU events, in turn helping to strengthen their regional networks and to encourage the design and delivery of coordinated policies and practices at territorial and regional level. The ICFTU's regional conference in July 1958 was, for example, adjourned for a day to allow its delegates to join a TFL general meeting held in the same venue to take place.⁵¹ But it was the opportunities for training that was the most attractive aspect of the ICFTU's support for the Mboya-led East African labour movement.

Education

Labour leaders – not least because of personal experience – knew all too well that a lack of investment by colonial governments in education meant that they

⁴⁸ Friedland, *Vuta*, 46.

⁴⁹ IISH ICFTU 4608, Hammerton to Krane, 19 February 1957. See also UKNA CO 859/762, "Extract from the Tanganyikan Intelligence Report," October 1956.

⁵⁰ UMD AFL-CIO RG 18–7/8/24/7, "Report of the General Secretaries Conference," 15 February 1958.

⁵¹ UKNA CO 822/1623, extract from the Tanganyika Intelligence Report, July 1958.

lacked the skills and knowledge necessary to organise and manage the trade union movement. Moreover, colonial-sanctioned trade union training programmes were marked, first, by their narrow focus on pay and conditions and, second, by their insistence on being delivered in-country. This was a none-too-subtle effort by British officials to try to restrict the global networks of labour activists and to limit the range of trade union activity to the workplace rather than wider politics.⁵² Kenya's minister for labour, John Stow, told the delegates at the first government-run residential trade union training course in 1954 that the colonial authorities envisaged such training opportunities as a method by which the labour movement could be depoliticised ahead of a post-Emergency era in which "sound trade unions will play their part."⁵³ The British authorities begrudgingly permitted East Africans to attend overseas training operated by the ICFTU from that point. For example, from December 1954 the ICFTU and University College of Gold Coast provided courses for trade union officials, including those from East Africa.⁵⁴ But viewed from both East Africa and the United States, such programmes were unambitious and too limited in scale. In an effort to resist this narrowing of labour activism, East Africa's trade unionists attempted to take every possible opportunity to put pressure on the colonial authorities to ease restrictions on the opportunities of labour leaders to take up training opportunities offered abroad. The TFL, for instance, resolved in 1956 to insist upon government provision of both local educational opportunities as well as further assistance to enable trade unionists to take up training outside of the country.⁵⁵ The TFL and other labour organisations appealed to external supporters to "help in the war that we, the people of Africa, have waged against poverty, disease and ignorance."⁵⁶

For their part, the ICFTU and AFL-CIO were similarly concerned about education and trade union leadership in East Africa, albeit for different reasons than those motivating Mboya and his peers. First, the provision of educational opportunities was an extension of the Cold War competition with the WFTU for the alle-

52 KNA ABK/19/5, Colonial Office, "Conference of Heads of Labour Departments: Trade Union Education and Training," August 1951, 1.

53 KNA ABK/8/297, *East African Standard*, "Kenya Eager for Sound Trade Unions," 16 November 1954. See also KNA ABK/8/297, "Address by Minister of Education, Labour and Lands to the Trade Union Officials at Opening of Study Course in Jeannes School," 6 September 1954.

54 IISH ICFTU 4023, Mwilu, "The Role of the African Labour College in Labour Education," no date but 1968, 2.

55 HIA TM/38/4, Gottfurcht to Mpangala, 2 August 1956.

56 UKNA FCO 141/17773, Kawawa "Speech Given by [sic] the DGB Congress, Stuttgart, Germany," 10 September 1959, enclosed with Director of Special Branch to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Security and Immigration, 21 September 1959.

giances of trade unionists across the decolonizing world. Put simply, the ICFTU and AFL-CIO had to keep up with initiatives such as the WFTU's training courses for African and Asian trade unionists held in Romania, Hungary, and the Soviet Union in 1958–61, and plans to open institutes in Budapest, Brazzaville, and Conakry.⁵⁷ Both the ICFTU and AFL-CIO were sensitive to any hint of efforts by the WFTU or Communist states to, in the words of the American labour and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph, lure "African native leaders into the camp of the Kremlin."⁵⁸ But there was a deeper logic – one incidentally shared with the WFTU – to the interventions in trade union education made by the ICFTU and AFL-CIO. As Leslie James argues, much of the ICFTU's efforts to shore up trade unions across the decolonizing world "hinged upon discursive efficiency, mechanically and systematically applied using modern technology."⁵⁹ Training by the ICFTU and AFL-CIO (or the WFTU for that matter) was not primarily ideological or political but rather intended to boost the administrative effectiveness and organisational capacity of local trade unions typically led by poorly educated officials. "The African peoples need information and light and help from the free trade movement, especially our AFL-CIO," Randolph argued.⁶⁰ Effectively organised and well-funded trade unions could, from this perspective, repel the influence of Communist and WFTU activity. By implication, however, chaotic and impoverished labour movements were highly vulnerable.

The resulting investment in education and training by the ICFTU and AFL-CIO was very welcome in East Africa. Initially, the most eye-catching educational provision by the ICFTU – or at least that enabled by the engagement of African labour leaders with the ICFTU's networks – was the opportunity for individuals to take up training opportunities outside the region. Mboya's travels to the ICFTU Labour College in India and then Oxford are the best-known examples of these initiatives.⁶¹ But Mboya was not the only trade unionist to exploit such opportunities. His TFL counterpart Rashidi Kawawa used a visit to Britain in 1956 to attend a study conference to make a stopover in Brussels to meet with ICFTU officials. This led to the first opportunities for Tanganyikan trade union leaders to participate in international events. Kawawa subsequently secured a handful of scholarships for a trade union course in Japan and a technical college in Scotland. Maynard Mapangala, Kawawa's assistant secretary at the TFL, was selected to travel

⁵⁷ Leow, "Asian Lessons," 432–3.

⁵⁸ Amistad Research Center (ARC), papers of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) 9/6, Randolph to Meany, 8 June 1956.

⁵⁹ James, "Essential Things," 392.

⁶⁰ UMD AFL-CIO RG1–27/9/2/54/12, Randolph to Meany, 6 February 1956.

⁶¹ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 56–7.

to Mexico for a seminar funded by the ICFTU.⁶² Similar opportunities also arose for UTUC's leaders.⁶³

Various schemes supported by the ICFTU, and AFL-CIO were soon in operation in East Africa and beyond. Within the region, the ICFTU's representative in Kenya in 1954 and 1955, Jim Bury, organised a series of training courses held over weekends in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kericho and Eldoret. The emphasis in each course were the local challenges trade unionists faced when trying to organise in the area. But the courses also provided an opportunity for the KFL to distribute educational pamphlets provided by the ICFTU college in Calcutta, show films, and play recordings of American protest songs.⁶⁴ This programme – delivered in-country and seen by the labour office in Nairobi as a moderating influence on Kenya's trade unionists during the Emergency – had the blessing of the colonial authorities.⁶⁵ The activities of the AFL-CIO were another matter.

Announced in the 1957, the AFL-CIO's American Trade Union Scholarship Program proved to be the first major flashpoint in the arguments between, on one side, the TUC and the Colonial Office and, on the other, the AFL-CIO and the East African labour leaders.⁶⁶ The American scheme was designed "for bringing African workers to the United States for training in workers' education courses in the schools, colleges and universities for trade union leadership in Africa."⁶⁷ The programme was underpinned by "the belief that free democratic trade unionism is a bulwark against Communism and a peaceful method of raising the standard of living of workers in any democratic country."⁶⁸ The scholarship included the condition that recipients would return back to their home countries and be involved in the organisation of trade union activities. The AFL-CIO paid for their salaries for one year after their return.⁶⁹ That the programme was led by Maida Springer

⁶² UKNA CO 859/762, Twining to Lennox-Boyd, 7 September 1956.

⁶³ UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, "Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959)," no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 12.

⁶⁴ IISH ICFTU 4479c, KFL, "Newsletter No.16," 9 August 1955; Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour*, 382.

⁶⁵ IISH ICFTU 4475, Bury to Oldenbroek, undated but March 1954.

⁶⁶ Anthony Carew, "Charles Millard, A Canadian in the International Labour Movement: A Case Study of the ICFTU 1955–61," *Labour* 37 (1996): 134–5.

⁶⁷ UMD AFL-CIO RG18-7/8/24/7, AFL-CIO, "Plan for Training African Workers for Leadership of African Trade Unions" undated but 1957.

⁶⁸ UMD AFL-CIO RG18-7/8/24/7, Brown to Anon., undated but September or October 1957.

⁶⁹ UMD AFL-CIO RG1-27/9/2/54/12, Springer to Schnitzler, 3 March 1959; Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 130–4.

was an additional source of concern to both the TUC and the colonial authorities in East Africa. Born in Panama, Springer was one of a few prominent African American trade unionists within the upper echelons of the AFL-CIO and its most prominent champion of closer ties to African labour organisations.⁷⁰ Even before helping establish the AFL-CIO's scholarship programme, Springer had strong links to Kenyan and Tanganyikan trade union leaders.⁷¹ She cemented this relationship by hosting Mboya on his 1956 tour of the United States.⁷² When she set out to East Africa in October 1957 to recruit the first cohort of scholars, the British government was, the Colonial Office conceded, "seriously worried over the Maida Springer business."⁷³ Indeed, such was the ferocity of British opposition to the AFL-CIO programme and the threat it posed to the unity of the ICFTU, the American organisation quickly but begrudgingly suspended its new initiative. As it did, however, the AFL-CIO extracted the commitment from the ICFTU that the Brussels-based body would adopt a more overtly anti-colonial line in its future policies towards Africa.⁷⁴

There were two immediate outcomes of the deal struck by the ICFTU with the AFL-CIO in return for the closure of the American scholarship programme. One, which is beyond the purview of this book, was the foundation by the AFL-CIO and the Israeli labour federation, the Histadrut, of the Afro-Asian Institute for Labour Studies and Cooperation (AAILSC). Including training courses run by the Histadrut before the opening of the AAILSC, 1,116 African and Asian trade unionists and cooperative leaders were trained in Israel in the ten years from 1958.⁷⁵ Of greater relevance for our purposes, however, was the foundation of the ALC in Kampala, the second of the AFL-CIO's responses to the cessation of its scholarship programme.⁷⁶

70 Richards, *Maida Springer*; Yvette Richards, *Conversations with Maida Springer: A Personal History of Labor, Race, and International Relations* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).

71 UMD AFL-CIO RG1-25, reel 3, Africa Misc. folder, Springer to Meany, 7 December 1955; UKNA CO 822/1625, "Tanganyika Intelligence Summary for January 1957"; Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 162–3.

72 ARC, papers of Maida Springer Kemp (MSK) 1/15, Mboya to Springer, 13 October 1956.

73 UKNA CO 859/1133, Anon., "Brief for the Secretary of State's Meeting with Sir Vincent Tewson: Mrs Maida Springer," 22 November 1957.

74 Richards, *Maida Springer*, 144–55.

75 UKNA LAB/13/2006, Skinner to Oates, 7 February 1967.

76 Carew, "Millard," 136–41.

The African Labour College

With the begrudging agreement of colonial government in place, the African Labour College opened in Kampala in 1958. Sven Fockstedt, the Swedish founding principal, neatly summarised the purpose of the College as “an international training institute, trying, within a limit of [four] months, to give our students the basic tools for effective organising and building of free and democratic trade unions and at the same time to give our students an idea of the economic, social and political problems facing Africa and her emerging working class today.”⁷⁷ Graduates of the College should, Fockstedt believed, return “to their local communities as better union administrators, better negotiators, and better organizers.”⁷⁸ It was focused on Anglophone Africa; a similar venture eventually opened in Abidjan for Francophone labour leaders.

The ALC’s foundation was illustrative of the balance of power in a decolonizing, Cold War world. The TUC was side-lined in the discussions about the establishment of the ALC.⁷⁹ Nor were the British authorities in London and Entebbe included in the planning process.⁸⁰ However, the authorities in Entebbe could not be ignored entirely; after all, the basic operational requirements of the ALC, for example entry visas for non-Ugandan faculty and students, required a degree of cooperation between the government and the ICFTU. An agreement was therefore struck between the colonial government and the ICFTU by which the latter promised that the ALC’s staff and students would not be involved in local trade union activities or Ugandan politics. Moreover, the colonial government reserved the right to refuse entry or deport any individual that it feared would represent what its officials believed constituted a threat to security.⁸¹

Predictably, most of the scrutiny applied to the ALC by the authorities under this provision was directed towards the activities of the ALC’s Black faculty. Initially, the most notable of these faculty members were the African American George McCray and Kenyan Joseph Odero-Jowi. “We would like to see both of these people go,” wrote Uganda’s labour minister in 1960, “but it is difficult to pin anything specific on them.”⁸² McCray’s unapologetic support for African national-

⁷⁷ IISH ICFTU 4019, Fockstedt to Millard, 1 October 1959.

⁷⁸ IISH ICFTU 4021a, Fockstedt, “Report for the First Course at ICFTU African Labour College, Kampala,” 4 March 1959, 8.

⁷⁹ Carew, “Millard,” 136–41.

⁸⁰ UKNA CO 859/1560, Anon., “Brief for the Secretary of State’s Visit to Uganda: ICFTU Labour College, Kampala,” no date but 1959.

⁸¹ UKNA CO 859/1560, Cartland to Webber, 15 January 1960.

⁸² UKNA CO 859/1560, Cartland to Webber, 15 January 1960.

ism was a major source of concern.⁸³ In the words of one Colonial Office civil servant, McCray had a “blatantly racialist outlook” and “leanings towards “anti-imperialist politics.””⁸⁴ Odero-Jowi’s involvement in an arbitration case on behalf of an Ugandan union provoked particularly fierce British criticism.⁸⁵ But with the march of decolonization accompanied by an Africanisation of the ALC’s faculty, by April 1964 the entire teaching staff was Black. Indeed, except for McCray, all were by then from the continent. G.O. Mettle (Sierra Leone) and Wogu Ananaba (Nigeria) joined the Ugandans George Muwonge and Francis Luyimbazi on the faculty.⁸⁶

Students were drawn from across Anglophone Africa from the outset. Of the 33 students in the first intake there were 4 from each of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika: but also 4 from both Ghana and Nigeria too. The remainder of the students were from Gambia, Aden, Mauritius, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Somalia, and Sierra Leone.⁸⁷ Although Kenyan and Tanzanian disaffiliation from the ICFTU (see below) later halted recruitment from both countries, the ALC had a significant impact on the labour movement in East Africa: 61 Kenyans; 42 Tanzanians; and 124 Ugandans participated in the residential courses run at the institution.⁸⁸ By the time of the eighteenth and final intake at the ALC in 1968, it had trained 665 African students in total. Among them were some of the most prominent leaders of the labour movement in East Africa; Clement Lubembe and John Reich from Kenya and Uganda respectively were, for example, part of the cohort in residence between June and September 1959.⁸⁹ Students were selected by the ALC’s staff from a pool nominated by the applicants’ own trade unions or national federations. However, standing within territorial labour federations or links to international trade secretariats counted for a great deal during the final

⁸³ Yvette Richards, “The Activism of George McCray: Confluence and Conflict of Pan-Africanism and Transnational Labor Solidarity,” in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement*, ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁸⁴ UKNA CO 859/1560, Anon., “Brief for the Secretary of State’s Visit to Uganda: ICFTU Labour College, Kampala,” no date but 1959.

⁸⁵ IISH ICFTU 3981, Millard to Marsh, 18 September 1959.

⁸⁶ IISH ICFTU 3990, ICFTU African Labour College, “List of Lecturers from November 1958 to October 1964,” 1964.

⁸⁷ IISH ICFTU 3981, ITS Liaison Committee, “ICFTU Labour College in Kampala,” 5 January 1959 [note paper incorrectly dated 1958].

⁸⁸ IISH ICFTU 4014, ICFTU African Labour College, “Distribution of Students by County 1st to 18th International Courses,” no date but 1968.

⁸⁹ UKNA CO 859/1208, *The African Labour Organizer*, “Students Attending Labour College June–Sept. 1959,” July 1959, 5.

deliberations of applications at the ALC.⁹⁰ Funding for their scholarships was provided by the AFL-CIO and various other Western affiliates of the ICFTU.⁹¹ Participants spanned the labour movement, as the example of the second residential course held in 1959 illustrates. The East Africans in attendance came from unions representing postal, industrial, transport, distribution, agricultural, and civil service workers.⁹² In terms of gender, however, the student intake to the ALC was anything but diverse. Just two of the 35 students in one early intake were women.⁹³

For many of the students, the ALC represented the pinnacle of their education. Of 81 past and present students surveyed in 1962, fifteen had not attended secondary school and just twelve had any sort of previous post-secondary education.⁹⁴ While they took great pride in their selection, it is not surprising that many students struggled with the curriculum.⁹⁵ The residential courses were attended by roughly 30 students at a time. These were taught intensively. Classes were spread across three sessions per day from Monday to Friday, as well as a half day on Saturday.⁹⁶ Developed initially in Brussels, in the early years of the ALC the subjects and teaching matter proved challenging to students lacking fluency in English or familiarity with the contexts referred to in the course literature. Lewis estimated two thirds of the first intake in 1958 struggled with even the most basic material provided to the ALC by the ICFTU. Students took on impromptu translation duties for one another to try and help their colleagues cope with the requirements of the course.⁹⁷ The ALC's library holdings were similarly

90 UKNA CO 859/1208, Fockstedt, "Principal's Report on Second Course – 1st June to 25th September 1959" no date but 1959, 4.

91 IISH ICFTU 3981, International Solidarity Fund Committee, "Kampala College Progress Report," 22 June 1959.

92 UKNA CO 859/1208, Fockstedt, "Principal's Report on Second Course – 1st June to 25th September 1959" no date but 1959, 1–3.

93 UKNA CO 859/1208, *The African Labour Organizer*, "Progress at the Labour College," July 1959, 1. For an analysis of women trade unionists and gender dynamics at the ALC see Harisch "Great Hopes, False Promises," 90–94; Immanuel Harisch, "La formation des syndicalistes africaines au sein des mouvements syndicaux inter/nationaux: Une histoire sous contrainte," *Revue d'histoire contemporaine de l'Afrique*, no. 6–7 (2024): 57–76.

94 IISH ICFTU 3982, ICFTU International Solidarity Fund Committee, "ICFTU African Labour College," papers for January 1963 meeting, 2–3.

95 IISH ICFTU 3983, Mwilu, "ICFTU African Labour College – 5th Course: Economics and Social Studies," no date but 1962.

96 IISH ICFTU 4021a, ICFTU Africa Labour College, "Time-Table," 1958.

97 IISH ICFTU 3981 Lewis, "Some Considerations of the ICFTU African Labour College," December 1958, 4.

orientated. Many of the books and other materials were donated by Western governments and trade union organisations.⁹⁸ The library held precious little about Africa (or the socialist world) and almost nothing authored by Africans. It did, however, contain a comprehensive collection of official publications from the ICFTU, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁹⁹

As principal, Odero-Jowi did a great deal to try and reorientate the curriculum towards the needs and interests of the African student body. His classes and assignments emphasised the application of what was taught in the classroom to the conditions and issues faced by the students in their home countries. He made more use of African-focused reading material, particularly the documents produced by the ICFTU's African representatives. The result was a nuanced and broad curriculum. During its latter years, students left the ALC with a familiarity with the impact of social trends on the labour situation in a range of African countries, a knowledge of various international organisations involved in labour issues in Africa, and a detailed grasp of the ICFTU's conceptualisation of the global economy and politics in the age of the Cold War. But they also had a practical understanding of basic organisation and management of trade union activity.¹⁰⁰

Similar themes dominated the ALC's extra-mural programme. Given far less publicity at the time than the residential courses, the extra-mural programme arguably had a greater impact on trade unionists across East Africa. Delivering short training courses at locations across the region, the extra-mural programme allowed the ALC – and by extension, the ICFTU – to expand its reach beyond trade union leaders to local, branch-level labour activists. The extra-mural programme meant the ALC had “an immediate influence on the course and conduct of union affairs.” At its peak between August 1961 and July 1962, the ALC was able to reach more than 500 trade union officials, mostly at the branch level. Although active in eight Anglophone countries, the extra-mural programme spent most of its time and attention on East Africa, with training delivered in towns and cities across the three territories.¹⁰¹

98 IISH ICFTU 4021b, Fockstedt, “ICFTU African Labour College: Principal's Report on Second Course – 1st June to 25th September 1959,” 1959, 10.

99 IISH ICFTU 4018, ICFTU ALC, “Library Register,” no date but 1968; UKNA FCO 141/18437, Anon., “Trade Union Training – ICFTU College – Kampala,” no date, enclosure to Governor of Uganda to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 February 1962.

100 IISH ICFTU 3983, Odero-Jowi, “ICFTU African Labour College Essay Assignments,” no date; ICFTU African Labour College, “Syllabuses for the Four Months Course,” no date.

101 IISH ICFTU 4021d, McCray to Odero-Jowi, no date but 1962.

The 12-day long course delivered by the ICFTU in Tanga in mainland Tanzania in July 1963 was typical of the extra-mural programme. The course was run for 34 officials in plantation workers' unions from across East Africa. It was led by George McCray and Wogu Ananaba, soon to be principal of the college, in conjunction with the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers.¹⁰² Much of the emphasis was on practical questions of union organisation, which as we have already seen was commonly thought within the ICFTU and its leading international members to be the most effective barrier against African unions being attracted by agents of communist influence. But the course also included a significant effort to explicitly engage the delegates with the key political challenges confronting their own countries and the international labour movement. Delegates were encouraged to think about the "The meaning of Free Trade Unionism and the role of the Free Trade Unions in Africa." Similarly, they were invited to consider how best to develop "an African Personality which would serve more effectively the interests of the Nation and of the workers." The course – held after Tanganyika's independence – emphasised the need for unions to work in cooperation with government and political parties, and to embrace a wide role within efforts towards social and economic development rather than a narrow focus on wages and conditions in particular workplaces.¹⁰³

Whether as participants in the extra-mural programme offered in locations across East Africa or the longer, residential course run from Kampala, for most of the participants the ALC provided a unique opportunity to develop skills and acquire knowledge that could not be accessed in any other way. Mbwana Mhando from Tanganyika, a member of the inaugural residential cohort, attributed the group discussions between students from across the continent for his increased knowledge of trade unionism and improved ability "to think immediately . . ."¹⁰⁴ The residential programme gave participants a rare chance to gain the qualifications and recognition necessary for career advancement. With the growth of the trade unions over the 1950s, a career within the labour movement was now a viable option for appropriately credentialed leaders. As Gideon Mutiso wrote, "As a labour leader, it has widened my trade union knowledge. It has taught me the essential things which a labour leader ought to know, and has given me the necessary material which I am proud of because I am determined to make Trade

¹⁰² James, "Essential Things."

¹⁰³ KNA ABK/10/3, McCray & Ananaba, "Report on the East African Plantation Workers' Seminar at Tanga, Tanganyika," 15–27 July 1963. See also IISH ICFTU 4021d, McCray, "The African Labour College – Extra-Mural Department: Teaching Guide No.2," no date.

¹⁰⁴ IISH ICFTU 4021a, "Answers Submitted by Students at the First Course on the Following Question Raised by the College," enclosure to Fockstedt to Hammerton, 2 July 1959.

Unionism as my profession.”¹⁰⁵ Completion of the ALC course was typically followed by swift promotion within the labour movement in their home country. Only 9% of participants in the first three courses returned to take up the same post that they had held before leaving for Kampala. The others were either promoted to higher office within the labour movement or used the ALC as a platform to launch new careers in politics or government.¹⁰⁶

The ALC's graduates acquired more from their experience in Kampala than just the bureaucratic and technical skills needed to run a modern trade union. Like Mutiso and Mhando, Isaac Rwakira, the treasurer of Uganda's Railway African Union, was part of the first residential cohort at the ALC. And like his Kenyan and Tanzanian counterparts, he recognised that his knowledge of trade unionism and ability to provide leadership had improved because of his experiences in Kampala. But Rwakira also recognised that his levels of political engagement had also increased while at the ALC. He was, he testified, “a very strong political minded boy now . . .”¹⁰⁷ It is to politics, therefore, that we will now turn.

Pan-Africanism and Regional Labour Politics

One of the primary aims of the ALC was to foster “a sense of solidarity and communion between trade unionists from various parts of the African continent.” However, as the ALC's first principal acknowledged, this was hard to achieve in practice.¹⁰⁸ The ALC consolidated regional bonds rather than continental Pan-African ties. Participants in the courses run at the ALC tended to divide themselves in and out of the classroom according to their region of origin and reflecting the splits within the Pan-African labour movement that became readily apparent shortly after the institute opened. The differences between the West and East African students were pronounced.¹⁰⁹ As Odera-Jowi reported of the third intake,

105 IISH ICFTU 4021a, “Answers Submitted by Students at the First Course on the Following Question Raised by the College,” enclosure to Fockstedt to Hammerton, 2 July 1959.

106 IISH ICFTU 3982, ICFTU International Solidarity Fund Committee, “ICFTU African Labour College,” papers for January 1963 meeting, 2.

107 IISH ICFTU 4021a, “Answers Submitted by Students at the First Course on the Following Question Raised by the College,” enclosure to Fockstedt to Hammerton, 2 July 1959.

108 UKNA CO 859/1208, Fockstedt, “Principal's Report on Second Course – 1st June to 25th September 1959” no date but 1959, 8.

109 IISH ICFTU 3981, Lewis, “Some Considerations of the ICFTU African Labour College,” December 1958, 6.

After a period of [three] weeks a definite grouping of the students in West and East had taken place with a more or less critical and hostile attitude towards each other. Students from the West felt themselves superior to students from East and Central Africa and sometimes took the opportunity to demonstrate their superiority in class and elsewhere.¹¹⁰

The ALC clearly reinforced the position of East Africans towards the ICFTU in the context of the arguments around disaffiliation and consolidated the position of moderate trade unionists in their struggles for influence with their more radical compatriots. Washington Malemo, a Kenyan student at the ALC, was one such figure. Studying at the ALC at the height of both battles between radical and moderate trade unionists at home and the disputes with the Pan-African labour movement about the ICFTU, Malemo's time in Kampala only served to confirm his views on such questions. As Malemo wrote, "one wonders at seeing some African countries, which have attained their ultimate goal peacefully, leaning to the East where you find the worst form of imperialism called Communism."¹¹¹

Malemo's criticism was targeted at Ghana, where the GTUC had undergone a dramatic shift in its international alignment over the previous three years. Like Mboya, the KFL and their colleagues in Uganda and Tanganyika, Ghanaian labour leaders had initially been strong allies of the ICFTU. Indeed, Ghana hosted the ICFTU's inaugural African regional conference in January 1957 with the overwhelming support of both Kwame Nkrumah and the general secretary of the GTUC, John Tettegah.¹¹² Alliances between, on one hand, African political and labour leaders and, on the other, the ICFTU, were (with some exceptions) part of the mainstream of anti-colonial politics across much of the continent. As the leaders of each of the East African labour federations met in February 1958, therefore, their ties to the ICFTU seemed uncontroversial. Although the leaders of the KFL, TFL, and UTUC recognised the risks to their agency and sovereignty created by extreme dependence on the funds of any external partner, they did not need to consider whether the ICFTU itself was a neo-colonial organisation.¹¹³ By the end of the year, however, they were given pause for thought.

The trigger was the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in December 1958, at which trade unionists constituted a significant proportion of the delegates.

110 IISH ICFTU 4021b, Fockstedt, "ICFTU African Labour College: Report on the Third Course – March to June 1960," 3 July 1960, 4.

111 IISH ICFTU 3982, Washington Malemo, "Mr Tettegah and AATUF," *Labour College News*, December 1961, 3.

112 IISH ICFTU 3888, ICFTU African Regional Conference, "First Report of the Steering Committee," 15 January 1957.

113 UMD AFL-CIO RG18-7/8/24/7, "Report of the General Secretaries Conference," 15 February 1958.

Over a series of meetings held alongside the formal proceedings, the trade union representatives from across the continent agreed to create the All-African Trade Union Federation (AATUF), a new Pan-African labour body. But the delegates were divided on a proposal from Guinea, Egypt, and Nigeria that membership by national federations of the AATUF would require disaffiliation from the ICFTU.¹¹⁴ Led by Mboya, the East Africans mounted a defence of continued ICFTU affiliation. In doing so, they were at first supported by the GTUC. Mboya's argument for not requiring members of the new AATUF to renounce ties to the ICFTU was simple: African trade unions could not afford to reject offers of assistance for anti-colonial activities from whatever source they came.¹¹⁵ Trade union leaders left Accra with the matter left undecided.

Within weeks, however, the question of ICFTU affiliation was brought to the fore again. Guinea's president, Sékou Touré, had long been suspicious of the ICFTU because of the role of the French government in the Brussels-based organisation's formation.¹¹⁶ At the Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire (UGTAN) conference in Conakry in early 1959, Touré encouraged its members to push ahead with the formation of the AATUF and to insist on ICFTU disaffiliation as a requirement for membership.¹¹⁷ With 200,000 members, mainly from Guinea and Senegal, UGTAN was among the most important African trade union bodies. Touré encouraged the delegates at the UGTAN conference to liberate "themselves from the metropolitan trade-union structures to which they had been previously affiliated in order to create their own unity."¹¹⁸ John Tettegah, the GTUC leader, attended the Conakry meeting as an observer and was persuaded by Touré's argument. The GTUC formally disaffiliated from the ICFTU later in the year.¹¹⁹ At this critical juncture, the KFL, TFL, and UTUC chose to maintain their support for

114 IISH ICFTU/3875, "Extract from Report of Trade Unionist A," appendix to Meany to Oldenbroek, 13 February 1959.

115 IISH ICFTU/3875, "Extract from Report of Trade Unionist B," appendix to Meany to Oldenbroek, 13 February 1959; Dawson, "All-African People's Conference," 16 December 1958.

116 Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonisation in Guinea, 1946–1958* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 61–2.

117 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 408–24; Schmidt, *Cold War*, 117–8.

118 Cooper, *Decolonization*, 441; Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Unity* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 189.

119 HIA TM/19/4, Oldenbroek to Mboya, 10 April 1959; Dawson to Millard, 6 April 1959; Millard to Mboya, 10 April 1959; Robert Anthony Waters, "Kwame Nkrumah and the All-African Trade Union Federation: Labour and the Emancipation of Africa," in *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects*, ed. Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Richards, *Maida Springer*, 195–7.

the ICFTU. Distinctive East and West African blocs were readily apparent to all involved.

Springer, an astute and knowledgeable observer, explained the split in the Pan-African labour movement with reference to the respective trajectories of decolonisation and the very different understandings in play about the threats posed by neo-imperialism to different parts of the continent. In West Africa, particularly once independence was secured, the debates about neo-imperialism and American influence were about foreign investment (or lack thereof) and military and strategic relationships between the region's states and Western powers.¹²⁰ Of particular concern was the issue of French nuclear testing in the Sahara and its effects on neighbouring states.¹²¹ To Nkrumah and his supporters, such episodes were really about efforts by the American-led Western alliance to retain a foothold on the continent and hence constrain the sovereignty of the new independent states. In East Africa – at least as far as Mboya and his supporters believed – fears of hidden American influences seemed remote and abstract when compared to the much more imminent threat of continued settler domination. Moreover, Mboya was unconvinced that Nkrumah's approach and ideas were as relevant in the context of the settler colonies as they had been in West Africa. To Mboya it seemed that the non-violent West African experience of the path to independence was vastly different from the violent context of the struggle for freedom in East Africa.¹²² As Mboya put it during a speech to African trade union leaders in September 1961, "Nobody in Africa can teach Kenya people how to fight for freedom, because on the contrary, we have shown the whole of Africa that we can fight and die for freedom. Eight years of our history are a testimony to this."¹²³ This view was manifested in the stance taken by the East African trade union federations in the dispute over the AATUF and affiliation to the ICFTU. It was well understood among the students at the ALC. "Kenya's problems are quite different from Ghana's, politically, socially and economically," wrote Washington Malemo.¹²⁴

In the two years after the AAPC, the East Africans kept up their public support for the right of African national federations to maintain their affiliation to

¹²⁰ UMD AFL-CIO/RG18-3/2/69/39, Springer to Ross, 25 April 1960.

¹²¹ Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction: Nuclear Power in Africa after Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 19–48.

¹²² HIA TM/18/5, Mboya to Springer, 4 October 1959.

¹²³ ARC MSK/2/1, "Speech made by Brother Tom Mboya on 6th September 1961."

¹²⁴ IISH ICFTU 3982, Washington Malemo, "Mr Tettegah and AATUF," *Labour College News*, December 1961, 3.

the ICFTU while also joining the AATUF.¹²⁵ Mboya did much by way of shuttle diplomacy to maintain consensus among the East African organisations.¹²⁶ The shared experiences at the ALC among trade union leaders and the consolidation there of a common sense of regional community doubtless assisted Mboya's efforts to maintain East African unity on this issue. The dispute reached a climax in May 1961 as African trade union leaders gathered in Casablanca to attempt to resolve the question of international affiliation. With the conference's decision to form an AATUF that required member federations to drop any international affiliations, the effort by East African labour leaders to defend their links to the ICFTU while also remaining part of the Pan-African mainstream finally failed.¹²⁷ The TFL and UTUC joined Mboya's KFL in leaving the conference floor before the crucial vote on the AATUF was taken.¹²⁸ Although an ICFTU-aligned, rival Pan-African body, the African Trade Union Confederation, was formed in the aftermath of the Casablanca conference, for the reasons set out below East African engagement with it was minimal.¹²⁹

Just as the AATUF debate pushed the East Africans to the periphery of Pan-African labour politics, so it also broke the dominance of the Mboya-inspired financial model for the region's labour movement. In Ghana, the Nkrumah government and GTUC became ever more ardent in their opposition to the ICFTU in the period following their own decision to disaffiliate from the international organisation. Tettegah eventually threatened "total war" on national bodies like the KFL, TFL, and UTUC who maintained their connections to the ICFTU: "We shall isolate them and enter their countries, break them and form AATUF unions there."¹³⁰ Invitations to attend conferences and other forms of funding were offered as inducements to potential dissident members of the East African labour movement to break with their ICFTU-aligned leaders. As Mboya recognised, this was a deliberate effort by the Ghanaians to create an alternative international

¹²⁵ Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour*, 436–7; Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, 160–3 & 86–7; McCann, "Possibility and Peril," 357–67; Alan Rake, *Tom Mboya: Young Man of Africa* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 186–98; Richards, *Maida Springer*, 176–214; Richards, *Conversations*, 206–28; Zeleza, "Pan-African."

¹²⁶ UKNA CO 822/1623, extract from Tanganyika Intelligence Report, December 1959.

¹²⁷ Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, 186–7.

¹²⁸ UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, "Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959)," no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 15.

¹²⁹ The best account of this debate remains Zeleza, "Pan-African."

¹³⁰ Quoted in HIA TM/20/1, ICFTU East, Central, and Southern Africa Committee, "Item 3: Tettegah's Total War," papers for committee meeting, 4–6 September 1961. See also Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour*, 437.

platform for the East African labour movement.¹³¹ At the same time, other sources of funding from communist states were becoming available. When in London in January 1960 for the first round of constitutional negotiations, Oginga Odinga accepted an invitation to travel from the British capital to East Germany; the first step in the establishment of his own transnational network of funders that was deliberately constructed in order to rival Mboya's.¹³²

These new opportunities for mobility and training were met with enthusiasm by sections of the East African labour movement that had long felt unease with the direction of the Mboya-led model. East African delegates were, for instance, among the five or six hundred in Cairo at the 1957 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference who passed a resolution that called for the creation of an Afro-Asian labour organisation.¹³³ Financed through either Ghana or the Communist powers, these connections to the socialist world intensified in the years following the AAPC. The Moscow Peace Congress in July 1962, for instance, allowed Jumah Boy, leader of the dockworker's union in Mombasa, to meet with Rwegasira of the TFL and Muhammad Mfaume Omar and Khamis Masud of the Zanzibar and Pemba Federation of Labour.¹³⁴

Faced with these competing external forces, the labour movement in each of the three territories was pulled apart. In Tanganyika in 1961, the TFL's leadership abandoned its earlier support for the ICFTU position and announced its aspiration to join the AATUF.¹³⁵ But not all the TFL's members agreed with this stance. In Uganda, the UTUC had long been courted by aspiring allies. In March 1959, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions invited a UTUC delegation to Beijing. After consulting with the ICFTU, UTUC's leadership declined the invitation.¹³⁶ But in the context of the battle over the AATUF and international affiliation, such invitations became more frequent and harder to ignore. John Reich, vice president of UTUC from 1959, was a central figure in this phase. Well-known for his limited patience for staid orthodoxy and the hitherto moderation of the Ugandan labour movement, Reich was greatly impressed by the promise of the AATUF after visiting

131 HIA, Jay Lovestone papers (JL) 551/6, KFL, "Mr Mboya Replies to *Ghana Times*," 27 January 1960, 2.

132 UKNA FCO 141/7140, Special Branch, "The Communist Offensive Against Kenya: A Review of the Period December 1957–October 1962," 29 November 1962, 4–8.

133 IISH ICFTU 3884, ICFTU, "The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference," 3 February 1958, 2.

134 IISH ICFTU 1892, ICFTU, "List of Delegates to the Moscow Peace Congress from African Trade Unions," July 1962.

135 UKNA CO 822/2673, "Extract of Tanganyika Intelligence Report," February 1961.

136 UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, "Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959)," no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 10.

Accra in November 1959 to attend a preparatory meeting for the new Pan-African body. Reich returned with a promise of funding from the Chinese embassy in Ghana if UTUC disaffiliated from the ICFTU and joined the AATUF.¹³⁷ Humphrey Luande, UTUC's president and railway union leader, disagreed. When Reich and his colleague, Angelina Banyanga, attended a further meeting of the AATUF in Accra in December, they were expelled from the UTUC on their return. Reich established the Uganda Federation of Labour (UFL) in March 1961 as a rival to the UTUC.¹³⁸ Through the AATUF, Reich connected the UFL to both the GTUC – most notably through Jacob Ferguson, the labour attaché at the Ghanaian embassy in Khartoum – and the East German labour movement.¹³⁹ The UFL maintained its connections to the AATUF, for instance by hosting a delegation in 1962.¹⁴⁰

A similar sequence of events occurred in Kenya too. Frustrated by the KFL's stance on the ICFTU and AATUF, in November 1959 Tettegah set about identifying and supporting Mboya's domestic opponents within the labour movement and in wider politics. Tettegah invited Oginga Odinga to Accra to attend a meeting of the working group attempting to establish the AATUF.¹⁴¹ Similar invitations were issued to Mboya's critics within the labour movement.¹⁴² The KFL responded bitterly, expelling its members who travelled to Accra and denouncing Ghana for practising "Black African Imperialism."¹⁴³ The GTUC was unrepentant and increased its financial support to the new Trades Union Congress (TUCK), formed by Mboya's chief rival within the KFL, Arthur Ochwada. This was a deliberate effort by the Ghanaians to create an alternative international platform for the Kenyan labour movement outside of the KFL's orbit.¹⁴⁴ Mboya was furious, accusing Nkrumah of having a "desire to dominate over Africa . . ."¹⁴⁵ Ghanaian efforts to

¹³⁷ UKNA FCO 141/18437, extract of Uganda Intelligence summary, June 1960.

¹³⁸ UKNA FCO 141/18437, Security Liaison Officer, "Subversion in the Trade Union Movement in Uganda (1950–1959)," no date but sent under cover of Security Liaison Officer to Le Poidevin, 15 August 1961, 6–7.

¹³⁹ UKNA FCO 141/18437, Le Poidevin to Security Liaison Officer, no date but August or September 1961.

¹⁴⁰ IISH ICFTU 3992, Nakibinge to Becu, 30 October 1962.

¹⁴¹ IISH ICFTU 3890, ICFTU Executive Board, "Second African Regional Conference," paper for meeting of 30 November to 2 December 1959, 3. See also Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1967), 165–6.

¹⁴² HIA TM/17/5, Tettegah to Mboya, 14 December 1960; IISH ICFTU/3910, De Jong to Savage, 2 March 1961.

¹⁴³ IISH ICFTU 4480c, Kibisu, "Press Release," 3 January 1961.

¹⁴⁴ HIA JL/551/6, KFL, "Mr Mboya Replies to *Ghana Times*," 27 January 1960, 2.

¹⁴⁵ ARC ACOA/89/13, Mboya to Houser, 25 November 1959.

undermine Mboya and the KFL continued regardless.¹⁴⁶ Mboya's model of a unified East African labour movement that had found expression at the ALC was in tatters.

Labour and Independence

As independence approached across East Africa, workers sought to match political progress with the improvements to pay and conditions that befitted the country's turn away from the economic structures of settler colonialism. Employers were hesitant in their response, with predictable results. The Kenyan example is illustrative of the situation. By mid-1962 the country was caught up in what the *Nation* newspaper called "strike fever."¹⁴⁷ There were nearly 100 strikes in the first six months of the year.¹⁴⁸ Industrial action by disgruntled workers reached every part of the economy, from agriculture to printing. Foreign assistance was vital to the success of the strikes as few trade unions had sufficient cash reserves to support striking workers for any significant period.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the climate of conflict was exacerbated by the tensions within the union movement that had their origins in the disputes over the ICFTU and AATUF.¹⁵⁰

The nationalist leadership of the three territories looked on aghast at the factionalism within the labour movement, at the foreign funding of strikes, and the scale of industrial action. At a KANU rally in 1962, Kenyatta denounced labour leaders as "insects." Kenyatta was concerned with the access of trade unions to sources of funding outside of the control of government and ruling party.¹⁵¹ But Kenyatta and his counterparts in Uganda and Tanganyika were no less concerned by the fact that late colonial trade unions in East Africa were marked by "a spirit of militancy, independence, and conflict, and fitted with the ethos of political self-development that developed concurrently; after independence, this spirit clashed

¹⁴⁶ IISH ICFTU 3850, Brown to Becu, 30 January 1961; IISH ICFTU 3948, ICFTU, "All African Trade Union Conference, Casablanca, 25–31 May 1961," June 1961, 1–2; IISH ICFTU 4481, Mboya to Becu, 8 March 1962.

¹⁴⁷ *Sunday Nation*, "Mboya Clears Up the Strike Fever," 10 June 1962, 1. See also Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour*, 437; Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya*, 199–201.

¹⁴⁸ IISH ICFTU 4477e, cutting of *East Africa and Rhodesia*, "Thousands on Strike in Kenya," 14 June 1962.

¹⁴⁹ See for example, IISH ICFTU 4495, Tofahrn to Becu, 11 April 1962; UMD AFL-CIO/RG18-4/2/28/1, Karebe to Tofahrn, 17 January 1962.

¹⁵⁰ IISH ICFTU 4477e, cutting of *The Reporter*, "More Labour Unrest," 23 June 1962.

¹⁵¹ *East African Standard*, "Union Leaders Call for Explanation by Mr. Kenyatta," 16 August 1962, 5.

increasingly with the orientations of the new African government.”¹⁵² For East Africa’s first independent governments, the solution to the disruption of strike action, factionalism, and the flows of foreign money was greater state control of the labour movement.¹⁵³

Many of the region’s trade unionists instinctively agreed with such sentiments. Most understood independence to be a form of freedom achieved through government, rather than in opposition to it.¹⁵⁴ As Mboya wrote shortly after *uhuru*, “The nationalist government of an independent African state is the father in a family of which one of the elder sons is the trade union movement.”¹⁵⁵ McCray noted that many (but not all) labour leaders accepted the need for restrictions on the freedoms of the trade unions as long as it was “matched by equal sacrifices from management and government as an employer and so long as reasonable methods are provided for discussion and equitable adjustment of differences.”¹⁵⁶ Bringing the trade unions under the greater control of the state provided critics of ICFTU affiliation further material with which to pursue their campaign to see East Africa’s labour federations break ties with the global body. With trade unions operating under the purview of the state rather than acting as independent organisations, the ICFTU’s critics argued that it was the government’s responsibility to ensure that labour federations acted like other state-run bodies and adhered to the principles of non-aligned foreign policy under which all three territories became independent.¹⁵⁷

This process of increased state control of the labour movement tied to a reduction in international engagement and the breakdown of any regional cohesion was first evident in Tanganyika. This is not surprising given in 1961 the TFL was the first of the national federations to give serious consideration to disaffiliation from the ICFTU. As Nyerere later claimed, “reform of the labour movement” was necessary to make it “appropriate for the conditions of Tanzania . . .”¹⁵⁸ This first entailed a fierce response to efforts by the TFL to maintain its ability to criticise

152 Friedland, *Vuta*, 1.

153 IISH ICFTU 4480d, Kamaliza, Mboya & Obama, “Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Labour in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika,” 20 August 1962.

154 Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 148.

155 Tom Mboya, “Trade Unions and Development,” *Venture*, 16, 1 (1964), 13.

156 IISH ICFTU 3949, McCray, “Memorandum on the Conference of the East, Central and Southern Africa Area Committee, 19–21 October 1962,” 1.

157 Ochola Ogaye Mak’Anyengo, “Ideas Remain,” letter to editor, *Daily Nation*, 13 August 1964, 6.

158 Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Development / Uhuru na Maendeleo* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1973), 274.

government policy.¹⁵⁹ The TFL was particularly critical of plans by the government to halt the Africanisation of public services.¹⁶⁰ Throughout 1963, Nyerere clashed with the TFL's leadership over government policy, the issue of the autonomy of the labour movement, and the connections between the trade unions and a nascent opposition to TANU.¹⁶¹ TFL president, Victor Mkello, and fellow union leader Christopher Tumbo were the public faces of defiance from within the labour movement, which culminated in a rejection by the TFL of the government's proposal to dissolve the body and absorb it into the Ministry of Labour.¹⁶²

Matters came to a head over the tumultuous few days in January 1964 which witnessed army mutinies across East Africa and the revolution in Zanzibar. The Tanganyikan government claimed that trade union leaders were linked to the army mutiny and involved in plotting a further coup attempt planned for 27 January.¹⁶³ Around 200 trade union officials were arrested, encompassing both the national and branch level of the labour movement. Among them were Mkello and various other senior figures.¹⁶⁴ Tumbo was arrested while in exile in Kenya a few weeks later and extradited to Tanganyika, where he went into detention.¹⁶⁵ Some of his colleagues remained in detention until July 1966 and even after their release were subjected to various restrictions on their movement and ability to find employment.¹⁶⁶ The TFL was immediately dissolved in the aftermath of the mutiny and the National Union of Tanganyika Workers (NUTA) created by the government to take its place. Michael Kamaliza was appointed as both the minister of labour and NUTA's general secretary. Nyerere was unrepentant.¹⁶⁷ With its dis-

159 IISH ICFTU 4605, Bavin, "Report on Mission to Kenya to Investigate Recent Events in Tanganyika February 2nd Thur 9th 1964," 17 February 1964, 6–7.

160 IISH ICFTU 4605, Tandau, "Memorandum of TFL Presented to His Excellency the President of the Republic on His Circular," no date but January 1964.

161 IISH ICFTU 4605, Townsend, "Report on the Arrests of Tanganyika Trade Union Leaders," 12 February 1964, 5.

162 IISH ICFTU 4606, ICFTU Executive Board, papers for meeting 1–3 February 1966, "Trade Union Situation: Tanzania: Detained Trade Union Officials and NUTA Policies," January 1966.

163 IISH ICFTU 4605, Wicken to Beck, 26 February 1964.

164 IISH ICFTU 4605, Townsend, "Report on the Arrests of Tanganyika Trade Union Leaders," 12 February 1964, 1.

165 IISH ICFTU 4605, Townsend, "Report on the Arrests of Tanganyika Trade Union Leaders," 12 February 1964, 5.

166 IISH ICFTU 4606, de Jonge to Tofharn, 23 December 1966.

167 IISH ICFTU 4609, cutting of *The People*, "Nyerere Clears His Country's Stand Over Strikes," 3 April 1965, 9.

solution, the TFL's affiliation to the ICFTU lapsed and NUTA instead affiliated itself immediately to the AATUF.¹⁶⁸

The Kenyan government followed its Tanzanian counterpart. Under significant pressure from a government anxious to exert control over any potential source of dissent and disunity, in November 1964 the KFL disaffiliated itself from the ICFTU.¹⁶⁹ When this failed to bring labour factionalism to a halt, in 1965 the government dissolved the KFL and replaced it with the government-sanctioned Central Organisation of Trade Unions (Kenya) (COTU). All existing affiliations between labour organisations in Kenya and international organisations were immediately voided and could not be re-established without the explicit permission of the government.¹⁷⁰ This absolute ban on international affiliations imposed by the government remained in place until 1968, when unions were able to affiliate with organisations overseas but only with explicit permission from the authorities.¹⁷¹ By 1971, with the trade unions no longer a political threat, ICFTU activities had resumed in Kenya, with the country hosting residential training programmes offered by the organisation.¹⁷²

As in Kenya and what became Tanzania, Ugandan independence in October 1962 occurred in the context of a wave of strikes. The new government blamed nefarious external agents for the industrial unrest, with a particular focus on the ICFTU given the presence of the ALC. The College was put on notice within months of independence. In a press conference in April 1963, Obote publicly criticised the ALC, identifying it as one of the sources of suspected foreign support for labour unrest, which was – Obote claimed – intended to destabilise the independent government. “The College is supposed to be there to teach leaders of the movement. If there are too many strikes the Government is entitled to say that the College is not doing its job properly or is actually engineering strikes.”¹⁷³ Obote must have had in mind the fact that John Reich was an alumnus of the College, so casting doubt on the ICFTU's claims of the college supporting the growth of moderate trade unionism.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the ALC's connections to the Ugandan trade union movement had

168 IISH ICFTU 4606, ICFTU Executive Board, papers for meeting 1–3 February 1966, “Trade Union Situation: Tanzania: Detained Trade Union Officials and NUTA Policies,” January 1966.

169 IISH ICFTU 4478c, cutting of *East African Standard*, “Friendly Ties Not Severed by KFL,” 16 November 1964.

170 Republic of Kenya, *The Policy on Trade Union Organization in Kenya*, (Nairobi: 1965).

171 KNA ACW/2/8, minutes of Committee of Officials Appointed to Look into COTU Affairs, 12 July 1968.

172 IISH ICFTU 4633, Pedersen to Olowo, 15 June 1971.

173 IISH ICFTU 3982, ICFTU Executive Board meeting papers, “Agenda Item 5: ICFTU African Labour College, Kampala (Uganda),” 30 November – 3 December 1964, 3.

174 IISH ICFTU 4021b, ICFTU African Labour College, “Second Course,” 1959.

grown closer, with William Nakibinge, UTUC's general secretary, briefly also holding a teaching role.¹⁷⁵ Nakibinge notably dissented from greater government interference in the labour movement, likening Ghana's state control over trade unions to communism.¹⁷⁶

Over the next five years, the disputes among the trade unions continued, with a succession of efforts made by critics of the UTUC to form a rival organisation. Attacks by UTUC's opponents typically included reference to the neo-colonial influence of the ICFTU. Launching the new Federation of Uganda Trade Unions (FUTU) in 1964, Eliab Kibuka described the ICFTU as "the most venomous agent of colonial subjugation and suppression."¹⁷⁷ He and Reich affiliated FUTU with the AATUF.¹⁷⁸ The FUTU thus enjoyed some financial support from the WFTU.¹⁷⁹ FUTU's different set of global connections provided it with an international platform to rival that of UTUC. For example, Kibuka used a visit to Yugoslavia in May 1965 to use UTUC's links to the ICFTU as evidence of the former's disinterest "in the Uganda people's struggle for economic development and consolidation of national independence."¹⁸⁰

As Obote's politics shifted left, so government accusations of ICFTU nefariousness increased in frequency and ferocity. Any hint of involvement by ALC staff members in the internal labour politics of Uganda produced an immediate and severe public criticism from the government.¹⁸¹ At first, the Ugandan authorities shied away from closing down the ALC. In 1964, George Magezi, then the minister of labour and housing, told parliament that a banning order was unnecessary as he expected the ALC to "die a natural death" once the KFL and TFL disaffiliated from the ICFTU.¹⁸² At the same time, the government insisted upon closer scrutiny of the appointment processes for staff, effectively preventing any new appointments of non-Ugandan tutors, and oversight of the award of scholarships to stu-

175 IISH ICFTU 3992, Nakibinge to Becu, 30 October 1962.

176 UKNA FCO 141/18437, Tomley-Evans to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, 21 April 1962.

177 IISH ICFTU 4619, cutting of *Daily Nation*, "Free Uganda Workers from Imperialists," 30 September 1964.

178 IISH ICFTU 4014, ICFTU, "Development of Trade Unions in Uganda," no date but 1968, 2–3.

179 IISH ICFTU 4027, Kanyago to Bavin, 21 August 1965.

180 IISH ICFTU 4619, ICFTU, "Information from Communist Sources: Ugandan Anti-ICFTU Statement in 'Rad,'" 1 June 1965.

181 IISH ICFTU 4013, Anon., "Events Leading up to 1965 Mission and Report on the Results of that Mission," no date but 1967.

182 IISH ICFTU 4014, cutting of *Uganda Argus*, "Government Views on the Press," 11 December 1964.

dents.¹⁸³ Eventually, with no sign of labour politics abating and a reformulation by Kibuka of the ICFTU's capacity for foreign subversion, the government finally closed the ALC in 1968.¹⁸⁴ In the short-term, the ALC's activities were shifted to temporary venues in Ethiopia.¹⁸⁵ A nineteenth and final residential course was run there, but without any Kenya, Ugandan, or Tanzanian students.¹⁸⁶ By the end of 1968, the African Labour College was permanently closed and the premises seized by the government.¹⁸⁷ Final confirmation of the government's requirement for the Ugandan labour movement to fully disaffiliate from the ICFTU was made in 1970.¹⁸⁸

ICFTU interest in Uganda was temporarily raised after Idi Amin's successful coup initially seemed to open up the possibility of a resumption of international trade union activity.¹⁸⁹ But with the nature of Amin's rule all too quickly apparent, ICFTU activities were postponed "until the political situation has clarified itself."¹⁹⁰ If any prospect remained of a speedy return to Uganda for the ICFTU, it was destroyed by the murder in August 1973 of William Nakibinge, the former UTUC general secretary and ALC faculty member who later served as mayor of Kampala. Just weeks before his death, he had been falsely accused of theft from the sugar factory where he worked as a senior manager and paraded on television in handcuffs. Although that charge was dropped, the Amin regime enacted its punishment through extra-judicial means.¹⁹¹

It would be a mistake to read Nakibinge's fate as symbolic of that of trade unionism across East Africa after independence. As the example of Kenya demonstrates, trade unions continued to be important actors within post-colonial politics and society. Unions operating wholly or mainly in the formal sector in Kenya, for instance, were still successfully able to lobby government for wage rises after independence.¹⁹² Union membership, most notably among women, continued to

183 IISH ICFTU 3996, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Labour to General Secretary, 27 February 1965; Mwilu to Becu, 15 July 1965.

184 IISH ICFTU 4012, Lubowa, "The Commission of Enquiry Act: A Commission," 27 April 1968.

185 IISH ICFTU 4012, Buiter to Ananaba, 16 August 1968.

186 IISH ICFTU 4021c, Otieno & Muwonge to Paladino, 8 January 1969.

187 IISH ICFTU 4012, Bataringaya to Ananaba, 27 August 1968.

188 IISH ICFTU 4622, cutting of *Uganda Argus*, "Verdict on the Labour Congress Inquiry," 23 April 1970.

189 IISH ICFTU 4633, Senkezi to Minister of Labour, 19 October 1971.

190 IISH ICFTU 4633, Pedersen to Bavin, 18 August 1972.

191 IISH ICFTU 4622, Kanyago to Maier, 12 September 1973.

192 Gavin Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of African Petit-Bourgeoisie* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 392.

rise over the first two decades after COTU's formation. Individual unions became financially more secure.¹⁹³

Moreover, trade unions continued to be connected to international bodies. Although notable by their absence from Tanzania and Uganda, the AFL-CIO's African-American Labor Center's field staff continued to work in Nairobi long after the formation of COTU, while in 1966 the headquarters of AATUF moved from Accra to Dar es Salaam.¹⁹⁴ The rows between the ICFTU and WFTU continued to rumble on.¹⁹⁵

And (occasionally) the labour movements of the three territories of East Africa continued to meet and discuss issues of common concern. The three, government-sanctioned trade union federations came together in Kampala in late September 1967, for example, and agreed to work cooperatively, with a specific focus on the regional impacts on workers of East African economic and political integration. Less explicit was a hope on the part of the Ugandan and Kenyan participants that such a body could intercede with the Tanzanian government to encourage a change of policy towards trade unions in the latter territory. The question of international affiliation was not addressed during the meeting.¹⁹⁶

But as the narrow frame of the discussions in September 1967 suggests, the transnational engagements of the latter half of the 1960s were significantly more constrained than had been the case a decade earlier. Tightly controlled by the new national governments and harnessed to their respective state-building agendas, the potential for these limited engagements between East African trade unions with international actors and among themselves to be the platform for re-imagined ideas of political community was vanishingly small.

193 Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The Labour System in Independent Kenya," in *An Economic History of Kenya*, ed. William Ochieng' and Robert Maxon (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1992), 358–66.

194 IISH ICFTU 3852, Anon., "Address List of AALC Field Staff," 27 June 1973; HIA, Paul Lubeck papers, box 4, file 17, cutting of *African Labour News*, "New Asylum for AATUF," January 1967, 3. Eventually in 1973, the AATUF and its rival, the African Trade Union Congress, merged under the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity to form the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity.

195 Romano Manywoba, general secretary of Uganda's National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers, spent three weeks in Egypt at a seminar organised by the UAR Federation of Labour. The seminar was, he claimed, a cover for a WFTU-led effort to encourage the remaining ICFTU affiliates to break all ties with the ICFTU and to take over its facilities. IISH ICFTU 4625, Manywoba to Bavin, 19 June 1967.

196 IISH ICFTU 4621, Kailembo, "Brief Report on the Meeting of the Three East African National Centres 29–30 September 1967," 3 November 1967.

Conclusion

Writing from a time in which trade unions have declined in stature and influence globally, it is easy to overlook the role which the labour movement played in reclaiming the category of East Africa in the late colonial period.¹⁹⁷ As we have seen in this chapter, for the leaders of East Africa's trade unions, men like Tom Mboya, Rashidi Kawawa and others, working across East Africa's borders was a normal part of labour movement work. But they also, as we have seen, represented East Africa outside the region's borders. The East Africa they spoke for was not the East Africa which Pauline Clerk encountered on the streets of Kampala, but an East Africa in which they were working to dismantle colonial power structures and create new possibilities in their place. But which new possibilities?

For a brief moment in the later 1950s and early 1960s, the labour movement was a crucial space in which rival visions of an independent East Africa played out. As was the case with other institutions we have explored in this book, late colonial regimes across the region in the 1940s and into the 1950s succeeded in containing the more radical labour politics seen elsewhere in the decolonizing world at that time. In this context, Tom Mboya developed a distinctive form of anti-colonial labour activism which was both anti-communist and in dialogue with European traditions of social democracy. But the opening up of the late 1950s prompted the appearance of rival, more radical modes of labour organising. As new independent states took power across the region between 1961 and 1964, trade unions increasingly came to be seen as a threat to be contained, rather than allies, their transnational connections sources of suspicion rather than relationships to be encouraged and cultivated.

¹⁹⁷ And the role of trade unions in policy debates about the future. Whether discussing foreign policy, development, or African socialism, trade unions at first occupied a central role within these debates rather than being an aside. Erisa Kironde, "Towards a Definition of Foreign Policy," *Transition* 5 (1962); Mark Sansumwa, "Foreign Investment and the Dilemma of African Socialism," *Transition* 18 (1965).