

Constructing Labour Regionalism in Europe and the Americas, 1920s–1970s*

MAGALY RODRÍGUEZ GARCÍA

*Vrije Universiteit Brussel/Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)
Pleinlaan 2-5B 407d, 1050 Brussels, Belgium*

E-mail: mrodrigu@vub.ac.be

ABSTRACT: This article provides an analysis of the construction of labour regionalism between the 1920s and 1970s. By means of a comparative examination of the supranational labour structures in Europe and the Americas prior to World War II and of the decentralized structure of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), I attempt to defend the argument that regionalism was a labour leaders' construct that responded to three issues: the quest for power among the largest trade-union organizations within the international trade-union movement; mutual distrust between labour leaders of large, middle-sized, and small unions from different regions; and (real or imaginary) common interests among labour leaders from the same region. These push-and-pull factors led to the construction of regional labour identifications that emphasized "otherness" in the world of international labour. A regional labour identity was intended to supplement, not undermine, national identity. As such, this study fills a lacuna in the scholarly literature on international relations and labour internationalism, which has given only scant attention to the regional level of international labour organization.

This article provides a comparative analysis of the construction of regional identifications among labour circles prior to World War II, and to the formalization of the idea of regionalism within the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU¹) after 1949. A comprehensive analysis of the process of labour regionalism as well as of the organizational strategies involved in it will serve three interrelated purposes: to redress the lack of scholarly attention paid to pre-1970s regional labour organizations;

* This article has been improved tremendously by the comments and suggestions of two anonymous reviewers, as well as of the Editorial Committee of the *International Review of Social History*. Translations from French, Dutch, and Spanish are my own.

1. The ICFTU was founded in 1949 and dissolved in 2006 when it merged with the World Confederation of Labour to form the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC); <http://www.ituc-csi.org/>.

to focus on the relationship among labour leaders from different regions; and to analyse the motives of labour leaders in creating regional organizations. These objectives are relevant to the historiography of labour internationalism, in which many authors have tended to portray the organizations created in Europe and the Americas between the 1920s and the 1970s as largely insignificant and/or subordinated to US interests.

Although the dynamics of regionalism have been sufficiently analysed in studies of international relations, most studies deal with political, economic, or security issues and focus on state actors.² Ernst Haas's study of national and supranational political, economic, and social groups in relation to European integration concentrated on their reaction to the unification process and their impact on the workings of the first European institutions, and not on the development of regional ideas within non-governmental organizations.³ Recent studies that have included non-state actors in analyses of regionalism focus on issues other than labour. Other authors tend to follow the same functionalist logic as Haas, according to which the emergence of regional labour organizations is the result of the strengthening of regional integration in Europe; or the response of social movements opposed to neoliberal schemes of contemporary regional integration in the Americas.⁴

2. Soon after World War II, regionalism gave rise to an increase in scholarly attention. See Norman J. Padelford, "A Selected Bibliography on Regionalism and Regional Arrangements", *International Organization*, 10 (1956), pp. 575–603. Over the past three decades, the literature on "regionalism", "regional integration", "new regionalism", and so on, has increased even more.

3. Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950–1957* (London, 1958).

4. The literature on the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC, founded in 1973) is abundant. See, for example, Barbara Barnouin, *The European Labour Movement and European Integration* (London [etc.], 1986); B.C. Roberts and Bruno Liebhafberg, "The European Trade Union Confederation: Influence of Regionalism, Detente and Multinationals", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 14 (1976), pp. 261–273; John P. Windmuller, "European Regionalism: A New Factor in International Labour", *Industrial Relations Journal*, 7 (1976), pp. 36–48; *idem*, "European Regional Organizations", in Joan Campbell (ed.), *European Labor Unions* (Westport, CT, 1992), pp. 527–544. The European Trade Union Institute has produced an enormous number of studies on globalization, new regionalism, industrial relations, and the trade unions in Europe; see its publications list at <http://www.etui.org>. For the relationship between (new) regionalism and social movements in the Americas, see, among others, André C. Drainville, "Social Movements in the Americas: Regionalism from Below?", in Gordon Mace and Louis Bélanger (eds), *The Americas in Transition: The Contours of Regionalism* (London, 1999), pp. 219–237; Gordon Mace and Louis Bélanger, "Hemispheric Regionalism in Perspective", in *idem*, *The Americas in Transition*, pp. 1–16; Adelle Blackett, "Toward Social Regionalism in the Americas", *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal*, 23 (2002), pp. 901–966; Norman Caulfield, *NAFTA and Labor in North America* (Urbana, IL, 2010). For general overviews of regionalism in the Americas from the 1980s onward see: Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in the Americas", in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (New York, 1995), pp. 250–282; Heinz G. Prusse, *The New American Regionalism* (Cheltenham, 2004).

In this article, I argue that the idea of regionalism was already present among labour circles during the first half of the twentieth century, and that the ICFTU's regional organizations in Europe and the Americas – the European Regional Organization (ERO, founded in 1950 and dissolved in 1969) and the Inter-American Regional Workers' Organization (ORIT, founded in 1951⁵) – should be seen as the first attempts to institutionalize and strengthen it in the postwar period.

This article also shifts the focus of attention from the communist vs non-communist rivalry within the international trade-union movement to the ambiguous relationship – at once consensual and conflicting – among non-communist union leaders. Early in the twentieth century, regionalist ideas started to develop among national labour leaders from Europe and the Americas who stressed the “old and new world contrasts”.⁶ While European labour leaders such as Edo Fimmen depicted the United States as “the Land of the Almighty Dollar”, the President of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, described Europe as a region in which “the ever-present possibilities of war”, the “scores of languages”, and the maintenance of a caste system retarded human progress and were “a hindrance to economic and general intellectual development”.⁷ I argue that the negative and simplistic images of “the other” and the different trade-union “expression of continental aspirations and problems”⁸ led to tensions at the international level of organized labour and to the strengthening of regionalism.

Furthermore, this article explores the dynamics of labour regionalism and the degree of labour leaders' support for the institutionalization of the regional idea. Labour regionalism is seen as a process that involved not only the largest trade unions but also medium and small workers' organizations. As the ICFTU took shape, most of them started to see the benefits of a decentralized free trade-union movement. Close scrutiny of the relationship between labour leaders is meant to support the main argument of the article: labour regionalism is the result of a long history of disagreements and competition among the leaders of non-communist labour organizations from different continents, as well as of the identification of a (real or imagined) common history, culture, and interests that brought trade unionists of a given region into area-oriented units.

5. In March 2008, ORIT was replaced by the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA). TUCA is the International Trade Union Confederation's regional organization in the Americas and has its headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil; <http://www.csa-csi.org/>.

6. Samuel Gompers, *Labor in Europe and America* (New York [etc.], 1910), p. 274.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. viii–ix; Edo Fimmen, *Labour's Alternative: The United States of Europe or Europe Limited* (London, 1924), p. 127.

8. Stefan Nedzynski (on the regional character of the ICFTU), ICFTU Representatives' Conference, Brussels, 17–27 April 1963, p. 8; Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Archive of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions 1949–1993, folder 1181 [hereafter ICFTU archive].

Focus on labour leaders' discourse and concrete action for the creation of regional structures follows the idea that "region-building" was a top-down process in which rank-and-file members were only marginally, if at all, involved. As Ernst Haas noted in his study of European integration and the role played by non-state actors, the emphasis on elites "derives its justification from the bureaucratized nature of European organisations of long standing, in which basic decisions are made by the leadership, sometimes over the opposition and usually over the indifference of the general memberships".⁹ The impact of regional arrangements on regular workers from both regions cannot be analysed on the basis of the material used for this article (ICFTU documentation and secondary literature) and requires further research in national and local archives.

The article unfolds into three sections. The first provides an overview of regionalism in a theoretical and historical perspective and examines the first de facto examples of labour regionalism prior to the ICFTU foundation. In the second section, the motives of ICFTU members in establishing a regional machinery, as well as the nature and functioning of the regional organizations in Europe and the Americas, are further analysed. The third part explores the interplay between labour leaders from and within both regions, their motives in strengthening regional labour organizations, and their relationship to the ICFTU.

REGIONALISM AND ORGANIZED LABOUR (1920s–1940s)

"Regions" and "regionalism" are, as Andrew Hurrell compellingly argues, ambiguous terms.¹⁰ Geographical proximity and mutual interdependence have received particular attention,¹¹ but have not appeared satisfactory in defining either a region or regionalism. Geographical relationships and regional interdependence are, after all, determined by the way actors perceive and define them. As with the idea of the "nation" and notions of "nationalism", regions and regionalism are socially constructed.

Regionalism has also been interpreted in terms of the degree of historical, socio-economic, political, and organizational cohesiveness, and this has prevented conceptual clarity. For this reason, Hurrell proposes to avoid working with a single, overarching concept, and "to break up the notion of 'regionalism' into five different categories".¹² First, regionalization, which "refers to the growth of societal integration within a region and to

9. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, p. 17.

10. Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective", in Fawcett and Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics*, pp. 37–73, 38.

11. Joseph S. Nye (ed.), *International Regionalism: Readings* (Boston, MA, 1968), p. vii.

12. The following quotes and clarifications have been taken from Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective", pp. 38–44.

the often undirected processes of social and economic interaction”; second, regional awareness and identity, which emphasize discourses of regionalism; third, regional interstate cooperation, which involves the negotiation and eventual institutionalization of interstate agreements or construction of “regimes” (that is, regional cooperation based on looser structures); fourth, state-promoted regional integration, which refers to regional economic integration led by governments; and, fifth, regional cohesion, which “refers to the possibility that, at some point, a combination of these first four processes might lead to the emergence of a cohesive and consolidated regional unit”.

Gordon Mace and Louis Bélanger agree with Hurrell’s observations on the ambiguity of the terms “region” and “regionalism”, but also point to some recurrent themes that emerge from his categories. First, regionalism is a process that cannot be explained by the mere existence of formal institutions at the regional level. Second, regionalism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes geographical, political, social, cultural, and historic dimensions, and that cannot be described in purely economic terms. Third, regions and regionalism are not “natural”; they are social constructs and products of human agency, devoid of automaticity or deterministic forces.¹³

Although the first more or less successful integrationist projects took place in various regions of the world only after 1945, a sense of regional awareness and a few de facto regional groupings existed in Europe and the Americas as far back as the early nineteenth century. William Wallace argues that the idea of Europe as a “region” in the context of the Europe-centred world-order prior to World War I would have seemed anathema to European statesmen. He places the development of the consciousness of the distinctiveness of European regional interests in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, as the European détente reopened the question of Europe, but traces its roots to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Europe was defined in opposition to the non-European world.¹⁴ Even though not defined in terms of “regionalism” or “regional identity”, the idea of Europe implied a “shared perception of belonging to a particular community”,¹⁵ “enlightened” and distinct from other parts of the world.¹⁶

The universalism propagated by international labour organizations during the first half of the twentieth century was more an ideal than a reality.

13. Mace and Bélanger, “Hemispheric Regionalism in Perspective”, pp. 1–2.

14. William Wallace, “Regionalism in Europe: Model or Exception”, in Fawcett and Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics*, pp. 201–227, 203–206.

15. Hurrell, “Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective”, p. 41.

16. Anthony Pagden, “Introduction”, in *idem* (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–32, 3–14; Georges-Henri Soutou, “Was There a European Order in the Twentieth Century? From the Concert of Europe to the End of the Cold War”, *Contemporary European History*, 9 (2000), pp. 329–353, 330–333; Wallace, “Regionalism in Europe”, pp. 206–207.

They were effectively regional in scope and implicitly stressed the “sense of exceptionality”¹⁷ that drove Europeans (or their descendants in other parts of the world) to take the lead in international cooperative initiatives. As recognized by David Saposs, adviser in the postwar US Labor Division in Europe, the “sentiment favoring the existence of regional labor organizations was already felt after WWI”.¹⁸ During the 1920s, the first (tacitly) exclusionary labour organizations were created in Europe and the Americas.

Although the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) or the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) undertook efforts to organize outside Europe, they functioned primarily in and for Europe. For European labour leaders, ideological and organizational cohesion was more important than size, so they basically pushed the only non-European trade union present at the IFTU founding congress, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), away from the organization. Mutual distrust between the US and European labour leaders, which resulted from divergent accents on political and socio-economic issues and disagreement regarding the application of international trade unionism, rendered trade-union cooperation across the Atlantic difficult. As Geert Van Goethem points out, the IFTU leaders strove to preserve the unity within the federation, at the cost of political and geographical limitation. Non-European members within the IFTU were merely nominal.¹⁹

Within the IFTU and the ITSs, there were a few leaders harshly critical not only of the IFTU’s bureaucratic style but also of the ideological split of European trade unions. One of the most outspoken was Edo Fimmen, general secretary of the IFTU until 1923 and of the International Transport Workers’ Federation from 1919 until his death in 1942. As early as 1924, Fimmen had envisaged an international structure composed of regional organizations representing, on equal footing, workers from industrialized and non-industrialized countries.²⁰ In his publication *Labour’s Alternative: The United States of Europe*, Fimmen thought that “as far as the immediate future is concerned, the linking-up of the European trade unions that look towards Amsterdam with those that look towards Moscow for inspiration, is of far more importance than the adhesion of the extra-European organizations”.²¹ He and later supporters

17. Anthony Pagden, “Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent”, in *idem*, *The Idea of Europe*, pp. 33–54, 52.

18. David J. Saposs, Confidential Report, 26 December 1950, p. 1, ICFTU archive, folder 2563.

19. Geert Van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International: The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913–1945* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 23–29.

20. Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, “Regions and Regionalism in International Trade Unionism”, in Bart De Wilde (ed.), *The Past and Future of International Trade Unionism: International Conference Ghent (Belgium), May 19–20, 2000* (Ghent, 2001), pp. 189–197, 190.

21. Fimmen, *Labour’s Alternative*, p. 121.

of regionalism did not attempt to undermine universalist ideals or global institutions and seem to have viewed “regional arrangements [as] a natural outgrowth of international co-operation and desirable stepping-stones toward world organization”.²² Fimmen’s proposals seemed impractical at the time, but many of them would materialize in the immediate postwar period.²³

The Eurocentrism of many of these international initiatives, along with strong interest in the neighbouring countries, led to early attempts to strengthen the idea of regionalism in the Americas. As in Europe, regional awareness in the American continent rested on internal factors and on external considerations (regionalism defined against some external “other”²⁴). Historically, regionalism in the Americas has taken two different forms: hemispheric, inter- or pan-American regionalism, and sub-regional integration covering Latin American republics only. Both tendencies go back to the early nineteenth century and both stress a common (colonial) past, shared economic and cultural interests, similar political ideals, notions of a “special relationship”, and fear of an external threat.²⁵ For pan-Americanists, the threatening “other” was Europe, whereas for the supporters of Latin American unity the strongest fear was US pre-dominance in the region.²⁶

Regionalist ideas also circulated among labour circles.²⁷ While the IFTU and the ITSs were “purely European in scope”,²⁸ the American Federation of Labor chose to concentrate on its own backyard for the promotion of hemispheric solidarity and peace through trade-union cooperation and avoidance of class struggle. In 1918, the AFL spearheaded

22. Francis O. Wilcox, “Regionalism and the United Nations”, *International Organization*, 19 (1965), pp. 789–811, 789.

23. Patrick Pasture, “The Interwar Origins of International Labour’s European Commitment”, *Contemporary European History*, 10 (2001), pp. 221–237, also points to the regionalist sentiments of trade unions, which showed a keen interest in regional economic cooperation.

24. Hurrell, “Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective”, p. 41.

25. Samuel Guy Inman and Harold Eugene Davis, “Introduction: The Disunited States of America”, in *idem* (eds), *Inter-American Conferences 1826–1954: History and Problems* (Washington DC, 1965), pp. ix–x.

26. Gordon Mace, “The Origins, Nature, and Scope of the Hemispheric Project”, in *idem* and Bélanger, *The Americas in Transition*, pp. 19–36, 19, 24; Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* (Ithaca, NY, 1954), pp. 1–2, 5.

27. A first attempt to form a regional organization of workers was made in 1907, when the anarchist Federación Obrera Regional Argentina started a campaign to attract support from other trade unions of the region. The Argentinian plans failed because of rivalry among anarchists, socialists, and syndicalists, and, perhaps more importantly, because of the embryonic stage of Latin American trade unionism that made the formation of a regional organization in 1907 premature; Jon V. Kofas, *The Struggle for Legitimacy: Latin American Labor and the United States, 1930–1960* (Tempe, AZ, 1992), pp. 249–250.

28. Fimmen, *Labour’s Alternative*, p. 120.

the creation of the Pan-American Federation of Labor (PAFL), which served “to keep the IFTU out of the Western hemisphere by proclaiming a sort of ‘Monroe Doctrine of Labor’”.²⁹ The PAFL never succeeded in becoming a true hemispheric organization. The bulk of its members were small unions; the AFL and the Mexican Labour Confederation (CROM) were the only national trade unions represented in the PAFL. The federation was also home to hefty clashes between US labour leaders and Latin American delegates who opposed US foreign policy in the continent. However, the PAFL formed a precedent for the postwar international labour organizations, even though it had become a phantom organization by 1927.³⁰

The foundation of the leftist Latin American Trade Union Confederation in 1929 and of its reformist-populist successor, the Latin American Confederation of Workers (CTAL) in 1938, were also an expression of the Latin American preference for labour regionalism, as a stepping stone towards a world labour confederation.³¹ CTAL became a strong supporter of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU³²) but focused primarily on Latin American industrial development, independence from the US, and maintenance of Latin American labour unity. By the end of the 1940s, CTAL had lost much of its popularity, but the idea of creating a Latin American labour organization that would reflect the cultural heritage of the republics south of the United States did not completely die out and would re-emerge in the early 1960s.

However, inter-American cooperation started to sound more attractive to labour leaders, and as various CTAL affiliates grew disappointed with the confederation, they responded positively to the efforts of non-communist unions to create a new hemispheric organization. But these labour leaders did not wish to follow the isolationism of the PAFL. Motivated in great part by Cold War tensions, they wanted to contribute to

29. John P. Windmuller, *American Labor and the International Labor Movement, 1940 to 1953* (Ithaca, NY, 1954), p. 185. For the history of the PAFL, see Sinclair Snow, *The Pan-American Federation of Labor* (Durham, NC, 1964).

30. Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, pp. 251–255.

31. John P. Windmuller, *The International Trade Union Movement* (Deventer, 1980), pp. 132–134. See also Lourdes Quintanilla Obregón *et al.*, *Lombardismo y sindicatos en América Latina* (Mexico City, 1982); Daniela Spenser, “Vicente Lombardo Toledano envuelto en antagonismos internacionales”, *Revista Izquierdas*, 3:4 (2009), pp. 1–20; Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, pp. 249–306.

32. The WFTU was founded in 1945; it united communist and non-communist trade unions worldwide. Non-communist trade unions left the federation in 1949 and created the ICFTU. For an overview of its foundation and the conflict between communist and non-communist WFTU unions, see Anthony Carew, “A False Dawn: The World Federation of Trade Unions (1945–1949)”, in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, 2000), pp. 167–184.

the formation of a new but decentralized international labour organization that would rival the WFTU and CTAL on the one hand, and that would respond to the interests of non-communist labour leaders on the other.

In 1948, the AFL was one of the main forces behind the establishment of the Inter-American Confederation of Workers (CIT). Supported by conservative, centrist, and some non-communist leftist Latin American trade unions, the AFL succeeded in spreading its policy of regionalism. Through CIT, the US and Latin American unions were furthering the spirit of pan-Americanism and strengthening the PAFIL model of a moderate hemispheric labour movement. Even though Pan-Americanism implied a legitimization of US leadership in the continent, it was attractive to Latin Americans because it was seen as instrumental to their interests. While the universalism propagated by international organizations with headquarters in Europe departed from a series of principles and norms inspired by European experiences, Pan-Americanism responded (or was at least intended to respond) to the concrete needs of trade unions from North and Latin America.³³

These initiatives reflected the enthusiasm of an increasing number of labour leaders from the Americas who wished to formalize their ties at the regional level. Although Latin Americans and Europeans often coincided on their general socio-economic policy and on their criticism of US foreign policy, sentiments of distrust infected the Latin American-European relationship before and after the ICFTU's foundation. If Europeans tended to underestimate the Latin American capacity to act independently of the United States, Latin Americans were apt to believe that Europeans did not fully understand the complexity of the region, nor their motives for working closely with US labour leaders. For instance, Europeans interpreted the foundation of CIT in 1948 as a purely AFL initiative, in which Latin American input was negligible.³⁴

True, the AFL did take the lead in creating the inter-American organization, but, as Pedro Reiser argues in his study of the origins of the free labour movement in the Americas, US leaders would not have been able to achieve this goal without the support of non-communist Latin American unionists. Moreover, the CIT founding congress was home to disagreement between US and Latin American trade unionists about

33. For the relationship between Pan-Americanism and the universalism propagated by the International Labour Organization, see Norberto Osvaldo Ferreras, "La misión de Stephen Lawford Childs de 1934: la relación entre la OIT y el Cono Sur", in Fabián Herrera León and Patricio Herrera González (eds), *América Latina y la OIT. Redes, cooperación técnica e institucionalidad social (1919-1950)* (Ciudad de Morelia, forthcoming).

34. Anthony Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1949-1972)", in Van der Linden, *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, pp. 187-306, 222.

socio-economic issues such as the nationalization of key industries, agrarian reform, and aggressive anti-communism.³⁵ Latin American non-communist labour leaders did not conceal their opposition to US interventionism and were not willing to become “AFL agents” in the region. As Jon Kofas maintains, “a more accurate description would be *partners* acting principally for their own reasons against the Lombardist [CTAL] camp”, and in favour of a decentralized international structure.³⁶

INSTITUTIONALIZING REGIONALISM: ERO AND ORIT

When non-communist labour leaders from various parts of the world met in Europe in 1949 to discuss the best means of achieving democratic trade-union cooperation around the world, they all concurred that “centralized power contradicted the basic principles of their movement”.³⁷ They wished to work together for the foundation and maintenance of a stable international labour agency, but not to create a symbiotic relationship and thereby lose their own power over their separate regional organizations to a central authority. Akin to the development in the international political arena, where universalism started to make room for regionalism within a global system,³⁸ free trade-union leaders opted for a less centralized organizational structure.

On the one hand, the use of the word “confederation” underscored the distinctive character of the ICFTU vis-à-vis its main rival, the WFTU. “Confederation”, as opposed to “federation”, emphasized the loose and decentralized character of the new association, which ought to guarantee the sovereignty of the affiliated trade unions. On the other, the ICFTU’s preference for the principle of devolution reflected the tension between labour leaders from different parts of the world, who strongly disagreed on the policy towards communism and the function of free trade unions. The “incessant power struggle between the Americans and the Europeans

35. Pedro Reiser, *L’Organisation Régionale Interaméricaine des Travailleurs (ORIT) de la Confédération Internationale des Syndicats Libres (CISL) de 1951 à 1961* (Geneva, 1962), pp. 31–37. For an account of the US–Latin American contacts that led to the CIT’s foundation, see Serafino Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America* (New York, 1967), pp. 64–95.

36. Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, p. 305. For a similar conclusion, see Magaly Rodríguez García, *Liberal Workers of the World, Unite? The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America, 1949–1969* (Berne, 2010). The “Lombardist camp” refers to the CTAL leader, the Mexican Marxist, Vicente Lombardo Toledano.

37. Victor Silverman, *Imagining Internationalism in American and British Labor, 1939–1949* (Urbana, IL, 2000), p. 29.

38. Ernst B. Haas, “The Challenge of Regionalism”, *International Organization*, 12 (1958), pp. 440–458, 440; Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1–3; Wilcox, “Regionalism and the United Nations”, pp. 789–790.

for control”³⁹ of the international labour movement persisted during the 1950s and 1960s.

Moreover, feelings of distrust were fairly generalized and did not involve only the largest trade unions. Belgian trade unionists, for example, refused to participate “in an international movement dominated by America”.⁴⁰ The numerical majority of European unions, the appointment of European labour representatives to ICFTU leading posts, and the proximity of the ICFTU Brussels secretariat to European unions, were perceived by many non-European affiliates as European dominance of the international confederation.⁴¹ Their sentiments were strengthened by AFL leaders such as George Meany, who stated that “we begin with the premise that the ICFTU is run by the British”.⁴²

Large labour organizations agreed on the principle of regionalism, but European and US trade-union representatives disagreed on certain practical arrangements. US leaders wanted an immediate application of regionalism. They also insisted on the need to guarantee the autonomy of the regional organizations. Their intention was to transform the inter-American labour organization (CIT) into the ICFTU representative in the Americas and, above all, to keep the new organization “as close as possible to the United States”.⁴³ The British, on the other hand, called for a more careful undertaking: gradual establishment of regional structures and maintenance of a certain degree of control from the central body. Initially, the compromise reached seems to have favoured the British proposal. The adoption of regional structures would start with trade-union missions to various parts of the world to explore the possibility of cooperation before proceeding to create permanent regional bodies. Once established, the regional machinery was to have an experimental character and a high degree of autonomy, though it had to be accountable to the international headquarters in Brussels and, at the same time, guarantee the sovereignty of the affiliated organizations.⁴⁴

The confederation’s “decentralized centralization”⁴⁵ was based on three principles, which at first seem contradictory: first, national centres

39. Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, p. 365.

40. Verslag van de zitting van het Bureau van 15 februari 1949, Ghent, Amsab Institute of Social History, Archief van het Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond (144)/1944–1993 [hereafter ABVV archive], folder 284.

41. Carew, “Towards a Free Trade Union Centre”, pp. 224, 237, 239, 270, 339; Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, p. 345.

42. Quoted in Carew, “Towards a Free Trade Union Centre”, p. 241.

43. Romualdi (AFL, ORIT) to Oldenbroek (ICFTU), 20 April 1950, p. 3, ICFTU archive, folder 4971.

44. Carew, “Towards a Free Trade Union Centre”, pp. 191–193, 196; Reiser, *L’Organisation Régionale Interaméricaine*, pp. 182–183.

45. Saposs report, p. 3.

affiliated to the ICFTU and its regional structures would remain sovereign bodies; second, ICFTU regional organizations would have a relatively high degree of autonomy; and third, the ICFTU's authority would prevail at all times. The question was how to achieve the latter when the two lower levels (regional and national) were granted so much autonomy. The key answer to this question was "self-imposed discipline"⁴⁶ to guarantee the maintenance of international cooperation.

In the months following the foundation of the ICFTU, debates concentrated on the question of the scope of the regional machinery. Did advanced areas need regional organizations? European and US leaders acknowledged the acute need for international trade-union activities in regions such as Asia, Africa, and the Middle and Near East. They used precisely this argument to push ahead the idea of establishing regional organizations on both continents: by creating regional structures in Europe and the Americas, the ICFTU would be able to concentrate its efforts in underdeveloped areas. Moreover, they emphasized that the world consisted of areas with profound differences in terms of socio-economic structure and stages of development, political culture, and trade-union traditions. One could not expect to find a common solution for all. Hence the application of regionalism in all parts of the world would not only facilitate ICFTU involvement in global affairs, it would also make it more efficient and democratic.⁴⁷

Behind these noble arguments lay the latent mistrust between ICFTU affiliates. As in the Americas, European trade unions had associated in a regional organization shortly before the ICFTU was founded. The European Recovery Programme – Trade Union Advisory Committee was formed in March 1948 by a conference of all trade-union centres that participated in the Marshall Plan. The organization was composed of trade unions from seventeen European countries and from the US.⁴⁸ However, neither the European nor the US unions proposed transforming the Trade Union Committee into the ICFTU regional organization in Europe. The Europeans opposed this because it meant including US trade unions in a structure that was supposed to be solely European. For their part, US labour leaders grew disappointed with the work of the Trade Union

46. "International Trade Unionism: Report of the Preparatory International Trade Union Conference", Geneva, 25–26 June 1949 (ICFTU, 1949), p. 36.

47. *De la nécessité de procéder à une refonte de notre mouvement syndical international* (1950), ABVV archive, folder 1414; "European Trade Union Plan. A Branch of World Organization", *The Times*, 1 November 1950; "IVVV gaat regionale organisaties stichten. Bijeenkomst te Brussel", *Het Vrije Volk*, 2 November 1950, ICFTU archive, folder 1307; *Aspectos regionales de la CIOSL. Razón de ser de la estructura de su organización interamericana* (1951), ICFTU archive folder 4972.

48. "ERP Trade Union Advisory Committee – European Regional Conference", Brussels, 1–4 November 1950, pp. 1–2, ICFTU archive, folder 1307.

Committee and hoped to enhance their influence by means of a new European organization.⁴⁹

The request for a regional organization came from the Belgian affiliate. The Belgians and other trade unionists reasoned that Europe's "different nature" called for the establishment of a regional organization. Moreover, Europe was seen as best qualified to set an example for other areas of the world.⁵⁰ Other European trade-union centres agreed to the Belgian proposal, although not all of them were entirely convinced of its suitability. The Scandinavian trade unions questioned the need for an elaborate regional machinery for Europe. They preferred to retain the existent forms of loose sub-regional trade-union cooperation, and to create a special secretary at the ICFTU headquarters to handle European affairs.⁵¹ The British also seemed a bit hesitant about establishing a European organization. They feared that such a structure would become too independent and jeopardize the maintenance of contacts with other parts of the world. The emphasis on the experimental character of regionalism and the assurances of some form of ICFTU control over the regional structures persuaded the wavering trade unionists to create a regional organization for Europe. ICFTU general secretary Jacobus Oldenbroek convened a meeting of European labour leaders in Brussels, from 1–4 November 1950, where the immediate establishment of the European Regional Organization was unanimously adopted.⁵²

In the Americas too, there was general agreement among non-communist labour leaders on the "mutual interest to remain united".⁵³ They feared the advancement of communism and sought therefore to precipitate a split within the ranks of the leftist CTAL; they opposed centralism and European dominance of the international labour movement; and they sought to defend and to integrate organized labour in national and regional programmes for socio-economic development. Furthermore, Latin Americans felt great deference towards US democratic institutions

49. *Ibid.*; Patrick Pasture, "The Flight of the Robins: European Trade Unionism at the Beginnings of the European Integration Process", in De Wilde, *The Past and Future of International Trade Unionism*, pp. 80–103, 82.

50. Paul Finet (ABVV) to Oldenbroek (ICFTU), 6 April 1950; Oldenbroek to all affiliated European centres, 11 July 1950, ICFTU archive, folder 2569; ICFTU Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Consultative Council, Brussels, 3–4 July 1956, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 60; Saposs report, p. 1.

51. Eiler Jensen (Denmark) to Oldenbroek, 17 July 1950; H. Korte (the Netherlands) to Oldenbroek, 18 July 1950; Konrad Nordahl (Norway) to Oldenbroek, 11 August 1950, ICFTU archive, folder 2569.

52. ICFTU Executive Board, 9–11 November 1950, ICFTU archive, folder 1307; "ICFTU First European Regional Conference – General Secretary's Report", 1–4 November 1950; Saposs report, p. 2.

53. Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, p. 360.

and standard of living, and wanted to build a “modern” trade-union movement based on the principles of collective bargaining.⁵⁴ Latin Americans appreciated the AFL concession to respect their ties with political parties. Its representative in Latin America, Serafino Romualdi, knew that without political support his efforts to promote free trade unionism in Latin America would be futile.⁵⁵ Also of crucial importance to Latin Americans was the financial and technical aid offered by the US government and unions. All these considerations were far more important than any possible criticism Latin American leaders had of their northern neighbours.⁵⁶

Thus, when Romualdi suggested transforming the inter-American workers’ confederation into the ICFTU regional organization in the Americas, most Latin American unionists willingly agreed to the proposal. Oldenbroek convened a regional trade-union conference in Mexico City, from 8–12 January 1951, where the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) was born. Present at this conference were not only the CIT pillars (the Chilean, Cuban, Peruvian, and US unions), but also other important trade unions, such as the Confederation of Industrial Organizations, the Canadian Congress of Labour, and the Mexican Workers’ Confederation (CTM). The latter, which had been a member of the leftist CTAL before being purged of its radical elements in 1947–1948, was a politically important ally of the free trade-union movement.⁵⁷

During preparatory talks on the organization’s constitution, a debate arose over the relationship between ORIT and the ICFTU. Some advocated the establishment of an independent regional organization, but others preferred it to be a more direct branch of the ICFTU.⁵⁸ Most US and Latin American unionists opted for an autonomous organization,

54. *Ibid.*, p. 351; Luis Alberto Monge, *Mirando nuestra América* (Mexico City, 1953), p. 15; Ian Roxborough, “The Urban Working Class and Labour Movement in Latin America since 1930”, in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America – Latin America since 1930: Economy, Society and Politics*, VI, part 2 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 307–378, 333–334, 341.

55. Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons*, p. 42.

56. *Doce años de lucha por el Sindicalismo Libre en América Latina – notas polémicas en defensa de la O.R.I.T.* (Lima, 1960), pp. 11–13.

57. Romualdi to Oldenbroek, 20 April 1950; Romualdi to Oldenbroek, 18 May 1950; Romualdi to Oldenbroek, 20 May 1950, ICFTU archive, folder 4971; *El Sindicato Interamericano. 50 Años (1951–2001) de su Acción Social y Política* (Caracas, 2001), pp. 31–32; Rodney D. Anderson, “Mexico”, in Gerald Michael Greenfield and Sheldon L. Maram (eds), *Latin American Labor Organizations* (New York, 1987), pp. 511–548, 520; María Luisa Mussot López and Guadalupe González Cruz, “En la posguerra. Reestructuración de la CTM y formación de un nuevo proyecto”, in Javier Aguilar García (ed.), *Historia de la CTM 1936–1990* (Mexico City, 1990), pp. 187–226.

58. “ORIT – A Progress Report” (Confidential), Brussels, ICFTU, 1954, p. 1, ICFTU archive, folio 4973; “IVVV Congres te Mexico geëindigd”, *Volksgazet*, 16 January 1951; “Oprichting

while European ICFTU representatives wanted to create a closer link between ORIT and the central secretariat.⁵⁹ The Mexicans perceived the ICFTU as “imperious” and insisted that a genuine regional organization could not be expected to follow orders from an executive board in Brussels.⁶⁰ A compromise was finally reached. ORIT would have its own, financially independent, executive committee, but it had to coordinate its activities with the ICFTU. ORIT’s regional congress would appoint the regional secretary. The latter’s salary would be paid by ORIT and not by the ICFTU. These arrangements favoured those who wanted to create an organization sufficiently independent from the Brussels office.⁶¹

Yet the heterogeneous character of North and Latin American unions led to a founding congress which was far more acrimonious than ERO’s had been. Latin Americans complained about the list of invitees, which excluded important trade unions such as the Mexican CROM and the Argentinian General Workers’ Confederation. Disappointed Latin American unionists questioned the degree of autonomy that powerful trade unions were willing to grant to other national centres.⁶² Furthermore, Mexican labour leaders from the CTM felt betrayed because the conference participants had chosen Havana, Cuba, instead of Mexico City, as ORIT’s headquarters and elected the Cuban Francisco Aguirre as the organization’s general secretary.⁶³

Hence, the Mexicans left the congress and refused to join ORIT. Therefore, ORIT’s founding congress was perceived as a partial victory.⁶⁴ European and US unionists feared that the Mexicans would enhance their contacts with Peronist labour leaders, who were making plans to found a new Latin American labour organization.⁶⁵ After the congress, great

van een Regionaal Secretariaat van het IVVV”, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 1 February 1951; *El Sindicato Interamericano*, pp. 33–35, 39.

59. Robert J. Alexander to Romualdi, 2 September 1951, p. 3, ICFTU archive, folder 5167.

60. Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, p. 348.

61. “Inter-American Regional Organization (O.R.I.T.) of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.) – Constitution”, 1951, p. 4; “ORIT – A Progress Report”, ICFTU archive, folder 4999; I.W.F. Brandt and W.G. ’t Hart, “De internationale vrije vakbeweging (IVVV en ORIT) in Latijns Amerika van 1950 tot 1960” (Ph.D., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 58–59.

62. Velázquez (CTM) to Oldenbroek, 21 September 1950, George Meany Memorial Archives, RG 18-009 Serafino Romualdi Files [hereafter Meany archive – Romualdi files], series 3, folder 7/7; “Wrijvingen tussen Latijns – en Engelssprekende Amerikanen”, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 5 May 1951; Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons*, p. 116.

63. Reiser, *L’Organisation Régionale Interaméricaine*, p. 48; Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons*, pp. 117–118.

64. Hermes Horne (ICFTU) to Ernst Schwartz (CIO), 31 October 1952, ICFTU archive, folder 5167.

65. In the early 1950s, Argentinian and Mexican trade unions from CROM attempted to group Latin American unionists who followed the Peronist opposition to both communism



Figure 1. ORIT promotes itself centrally within the international labour movement (1951), ICFTU archive, file 4999. *Collection IISH*

efforts were made by the ICFTU, ORIT, and US leaders to convince the CTM to join the inter-American free trade-union movement.⁶⁶ The charm offensive culminated with an invitation for the Mexicans to attend ORIT's second congress in Rio de Janeiro, in December 1952. During this congress, it was decided to move the headquarters from Havana to Mexico City. This decision was a way to placate the Mexicans, but it was also the result of political factors. Apart from dissatisfaction with ORIT general secretary Francisco Aguirre, many delegates thought it inappropriate to maintain the regional secretariat's headquarters in a country ruled by a

and capitalism. They established the Agrupación de Trabajadores Latinoamericanos (ATLAS) in 1952, but the organization failed to survive the fall of Argentinian President Juan Domingo Perón in 1955. For the history of ATLAS, see Claudio Panella, *Perón y ATLAS: Historia de una central latinoamericana de trabajadores inspirada en los ideales del Justicialismo* (Buenos Aires, 1996).

66. Oldenbroek to Trifón Gómez, 9 September 1952, ICFTU archive, folder 5167; Oldenbroek to Romualdi, 7 October 1952; Oldenbroek to Fidel Velázquez, 20 November 1952; Alexander to Romualdi, 4, Meany archive – Romualdi files, series 3, folder 7/7.

military dictator, Fulgencio Batista, who had seized power unconstitutionally earlier that year. In May 1953, the CTM announced its support and willingness to join the free trade-union movement.⁶⁷

DEFENDING LABOUR REGIONALISM IN EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS

ERO and ORIT adopted divergent strategies to coincide with the political and socio-economic contexts of the areas they represented. The advanced legal and political system of high-income countries guaranteed the existence of relatively free labour organizations with sufficient human and financial resources to solve domestic issues. Therefore, ERO concentrated on issues that went beyond the realm of industrial relations or even the nation-state. ERO leaders chose a “top-top strategy”, which consisted mainly of gaining access to policy-making bodies at the national and supranational levels.⁶⁸ The objective of this strategy was threefold: firstly, to collect information on European socio-economic issues and to distribute it to ERO affiliates; secondly, to establish a close relationship with European intergovernmental organizations and to become involved in the decision-making and implementation of supranational projects; and thirdly, to guarantee the support of workers for European integration by “creating a powerful European public opinion”.⁶⁹

Although individual affiliates did not allow ERO to intervene in domestic affairs, there were a few cases in which the assistance of the regional organization was requested. Organizational activities and financial aid needed to be directed to national centres that encountered particular difficulties in the development of their trade-union movement – that is, trade unions from France, Italy, and Spain. French and Italian free trade unionists had to cope with strong communist labour movements, while the Spanish affiliate struggled against the Franco regime. For their part, ORIT leaders opted for a “top-down strategy” meant to support any local initiative that could be beneficial to the development of the free trade-union movement. Labour representation in intergovernmental organizations was, for the time being, of secondary importance to ORIT.

The different strategies of ERO and ORIT were reflected in their daily activities. ERO’s focus on European reconstruction and integration led to

67. Javier Aguilar García, “En un período de unidad monolítica. Consolidación del sindicalismo institucional. 1953–1957”, in *idem*, *Historia de la CTM*, p. 354; Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons*, p. 120.

68. Pasture, “The Flight of the Robins”, p. 90.

69. “Report on the European Regional Conference”, Lugano, 22–24 October 1952, p. 14, ICFTU archive, folder 1308.

the creation of special committees that dealt with economic and social affairs.⁷⁰ Across the Atlantic there were other priorities. Propaganda and trade-union education were among the highest concerns of ORIT, in particular of its US affiliates. Workers' education was perceived as an important instrument "to teach democratic ideology" to Latin American workers.⁷¹ To Latin American labour leaders the priorities were ORIT/US financial and technical support, strengthening of existing free trade unions, and defence of reform programmes such as those proposed by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America.⁷²

Many Latin Americans sought primarily to integrate in the inter-American trade-union movement to combat leftist and Catholic workers' organizations (for example in Chile and Ecuador), to support the free trade unionists' struggle against dictatorial regimes (in Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and elsewhere), and, in general, to contribute to the modernization of the labour movement.⁷³ A thorough analysis of the correspondence between Latin American and US labour leaders evidences a "complex history of conflicts, alliances and negotiations".⁷⁴ Latin American and US unionists were often receptive to each other's ideas and strategies. And when disagreement arose, the financial and diplomatic power of the US unions was not always sufficient to persuade Latin Americans to alter their points of view.

By the mid-1950s, many ICFTU and ORIT leaders realized that their organizing activities were not bearing fruit. The ICFTU's and ORIT's secretariats often blamed each other for this malfunctioning. For instance, the failure to capture Argentine unions following Perón's fall in 1955 was interpreted as ORIT's lack of efficiency by the ICFTU headquarters,

70. During the 1950s and 1960s, ERO created seven special committees, for economic issues, atomic energy, green pool, housing, education, youth, and reorganization of the European trade union structures; E. Tuskan, *Inventory of the Archives of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) 1949–1993* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 23–24; Pasture, "The Flight of the Robins", p. 83.

71. Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1972–1990s)", in Van der Linden, *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, p. 451.

72. ORIT was a fervent supporter of the Economic Commission for Latin America, which attributed Latin American underdevelopment to its dependency on a limited number of export products and the unequal terms of trade between raw material producers and industrially developed countries; ORIT EB, 31 January–2 February 1956, ICFTU archive, folder 4975a.

73. Rodríguez García, *Liberal Workers of the World*, pp. 113–126, 149–165; *idem*, "The AFL-CIO and ORIT in Latin America's Andean Region (1950s–1960s)", paper presented to the conference "The AFL-CIO and the International Cold War: Problems, Paradigms, and Pragmatic Responses", Ghent, 7–8 October 2011.

74. Angela Vergara, "Chilean Workers and the US Labor Movement: From Intervention to Solidarity, 1950s–1970s", paper presented to the conference "The AFL-CIO and the International Cold War", p. 5.

whereas the AFL-CIO and ORIT thought that the ICFTU's idea to immediately send a free trade-union mission to the country lacked tact and would be perceived as a "public show of paternalism".⁷⁵ To solve these problems and to extend the ICFTU's organizing activities in the world, the confederation appointed a director of organization in 1956, the Canadian Charles Millard.⁷⁶

Millard wanted to develop an effective organizing programme, which would be coordinated by him and an ORIT representative. Millard's proposed five-year plan for trade-union development aimed at the establishment of an information centre and an assessor's office, and at the creation of training schools in Paraguay and Peru. Full-time organizers would be appointed in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.⁷⁷ The ORIT secretariat welcomed Millard's programme, not only because it would give a much-needed boost to the Latin American free labour movement, but also because it meant a 20 per cent increase in its subvention. Yet ORIT was disturbed by the proposed establishment of an information centre, an advisory office, and training schools that would concentrate on a limited number of countries.⁷⁸

ORIT leaders such as Luis Alberto Monge – general secretary between 1952 and 1958 – opposed a scheme that would focus on South America because "this might cause the inter-American machinery to break down".⁷⁹ Indeed, both Oldenbroek and Millard wished to curtail the "AFL-CIO domination of ORIT"⁸⁰ by means of a restructuring of the regional organization and strengthened cooperation with International Trade Secretariats, which were headed mainly by Europeans.⁸¹ Monge emphasized that inter-American cooperation was based on mutual accord. He admitted that many Latin Americans often disagreed with the US leaders,

75. Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons*, p. 155; Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre", p. 225. Also, according to Romualdi, the ICFTU's refusal to follow the suggestions of ORIT and Argentinian leaders for an ICFTU-ORIT representative only served to delay the mission to the country; Romualdi to the members of the AFL-CIO Committee on International Affairs, 15 October 1956, pp. 2–4, ICFTU archive, folder 4975a.

76. Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre", pp. 248–250, 255–257. For Millard's appointment and career within the ICFTU, as well as his difficult relationship with US and British labour leaders, see Anthony Carew, "Charles Millard, A Canadian in the International Labour Movement: A Case Study of the ICFTU 1955–61", *Labour/Le Travail*, 37 (1996), pp. 121–148.

77. ORIT EC, 9–11 February 1957, pp. 14–15, ICFTU archive, folder 4975c; Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre", pp. 256–257.

78. Charles Millard, "Intensified Organisation and Training Programme in the Inter-American Region, to the 11th Meeting of ORIT Executive Committee, Mexico City, 9–11 February 1957", pp. 1–4, ICFTU archive, folder 4975b.

79. ORIT EC, 9–11 February 1957, p. 17.

80. Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre", p. 257.

81. Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", p. 415.

but insisted that the will for collaboration was stronger than the disagreements.⁸² He stressed that US material aid was welcome and vital for the development of the Latin American trade-union movement and that ORIT could not ignore the points of view held by the AFL-CIO, but he also insisted that “between this and believing that we in the ORIT are their spokesmen there is quite a difference”.⁸³

Leaders from both the ICFTU and the ITSs were strongly distrustful of the free trade-union movement in the Americas. Scepticism of the capacity of Latin Americans to take decisions independently of the US unions and suspicion of the AFL/AFL-CIO’s intentions affected their view of ORIT.⁸⁴ Attacks on individual leaders were not uncommon either.⁸⁵ To be sure, the US unions were not altogether satisfied with ORIT’s achievements, nor with many of its members who embraced some of the reformist principles that had been promoted by the leftist CTAL during the 1930s and 1940s. They were, however, in no position to abandon the inter-American organization and were confronted with the choice of supporting it or losing it to more radical elements within the hemispheric trade-union movement.⁸⁶ Hence, the frequent insinuations that the AFL-CIO imposed its will on the regional organization and the perceived ICFTU and ITS hostility towards ORIT leaders were interpreted as an

82. Monge to Claudio González, 15 May 1952; Monge to Romualdi, 27 June 1952, Kheel Center for Labor Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library, Serafino Romualdi Papers 1946–1966 [hereafter Romualdi papers], series IV, box 10, folder 10a; Monge to Jáuregui, 3 May 1957, Romualdi papers, folder 11.

83. Monge to Oldenbroek, 23 October 1957, p. 1, ICFTU archive, folder 1121c.

84. Carew, “Towards a Free Trade Union Centre”, p. 316. Hermes Horne, the ICFTU’s chief of relations with Latin America, depicted the region’s labour movement as “a young child” that needed effective guidance and control; Horne to Romualdi, 31 October 1952, ICFTU archive, folder 5447. Charles Millard too spoke of ORIT as “an adopted child that came into the international movement with all its defects”; “Discrepan en tácticas los organismos internacionales”, *Prensa Libre*, 1957, ICFTU archive, folder 4975d.

85. Contrary to the general appreciation of Augusto Malavé Villalba’s work in strengthening the free trade-union movement in the continent and his home country, Venezuela, the ICFTU general secretary Oldenbroek initially opposed his appointment as ICFTU-ORIT representative in Argentina, on the grounds that he was inefficient and a drunkard; Romualdi to the members of the AFL-CIO Committee on International Affairs, pp. 3–4. Arturo Jáuregui, ORIT’s general secretary between 1961 and 1974, was depicted as totally subordinated to the US unions and suspected of corruption; Fred Strauss to Omer Becu, 10 September 1964, ICFTU archive, folder 1123e.

86. Instead of withdrawing from ORIT (as it did from the ICFTU in 1969), the AFL-CIO decided to create a new organization, the American Institute for Free Labor Development, to preserve control of the trade-union movement in the region; Kofas, *Struggle for Legitimacy*, pp. 353, 368–370; Reiser, *L’Organisation Régionale Interaméricaine*, pp. 57–60. For the history of the AIFLD, see Hobart A. Spalding, “US Labor Intervention in Latin America: The Case of the American Institute for Free Labor Development”, in Roger Southall (ed.), *Trade Unions and the New Industrialization of the Third World* (London, 1988), pp. 259–286.

insult and symbolic of European paternalism. This posture not only offended the Latin American affiliates but possibly strengthened their ties to the US unions.

If inter-American labour organizations (CIT and ORIT) were initially created under US pressure to combat communist and other anti-US unions by means of a moderate labour movement, Latin American non-communist leaders soon acknowledged the opportunities hemispheric labour cooperation had to offer: economic resources and international support. Backed by its North American affiliates, ORIT protested against ICFTU “interference” in the region, which Monge insisted on calling “trade union colonialism”.⁸⁷ They stressed ORIT’s “maturity” and “different nature” to press for more autonomy within the international trade-union structure.⁸⁸ In spite of the recent (or incomplete) development of most Latin American unions into a modern labour movement, ORIT leaders reiterated that “in the Western Hemisphere union organization has been active for a long, long time”, and that “in fact, there was an inter-American organization many years before the ICFTU developed”.⁸⁹ The latter statement referred to CIT, founded just one year before the ICFTU. Hence as with nationalism, there was “a good deal of historical rediscovery, myth-making, and invented traditions”⁹⁰ within ORIT’s discourse in defence of labour regionalism.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, ORIT entered a critical period. The regional organization was threatened by, on the one hand, external forces which, strengthened by the 1959 events in Cuba, called for the creation of a new Latin American labour confederation; and on the other by internal conflicts involving Latin American, US, and European free trade-union leaders. Whereas ORIT general secretary Arturo Jáuregui was regarded as too “pro-Yankee” by the ICFTU, ITSs, and some Latin American leaders, he was heavily criticized by the new AFL-CIO leadership for being too political.⁹¹ In turn, Jáuregui complained of “US interference” in the Latin American labour movement. Following the Chilean military coup

87. Luis Alberto Monge, “Report of the Activities of the Inter-American Regional Organization – 1 April–31 December 1956”, ORIT, March 1957, pp. 13–14; Monge to Oldenbrook, 23 October 1957, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 4975a.

88. “Revised report of the special sub-committee of ORIT EB meeting in Mexico City, 14–16 February 1958”, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 4975d.

89. Memorandum on ORIT-ICFTU Relationships, ORIT secretariat to the ICFTU Consultative Committee, 25 June 1958, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 4975d.

90. Hurrell, “Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective”, p. 41.

91. In 1962, Romualdi resigned from his position as AFL-CIO Latin American representative and became director of the AIFLD. He was replaced by Andrew McClellan, who insisted on the necessity of creating an apolitical trade-union movement in Latin America; Robert J. Alexander, *International Labor Organizations and Organized Labor in Latin America and the Caribbean: A History* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2009), pp. 99, 149.

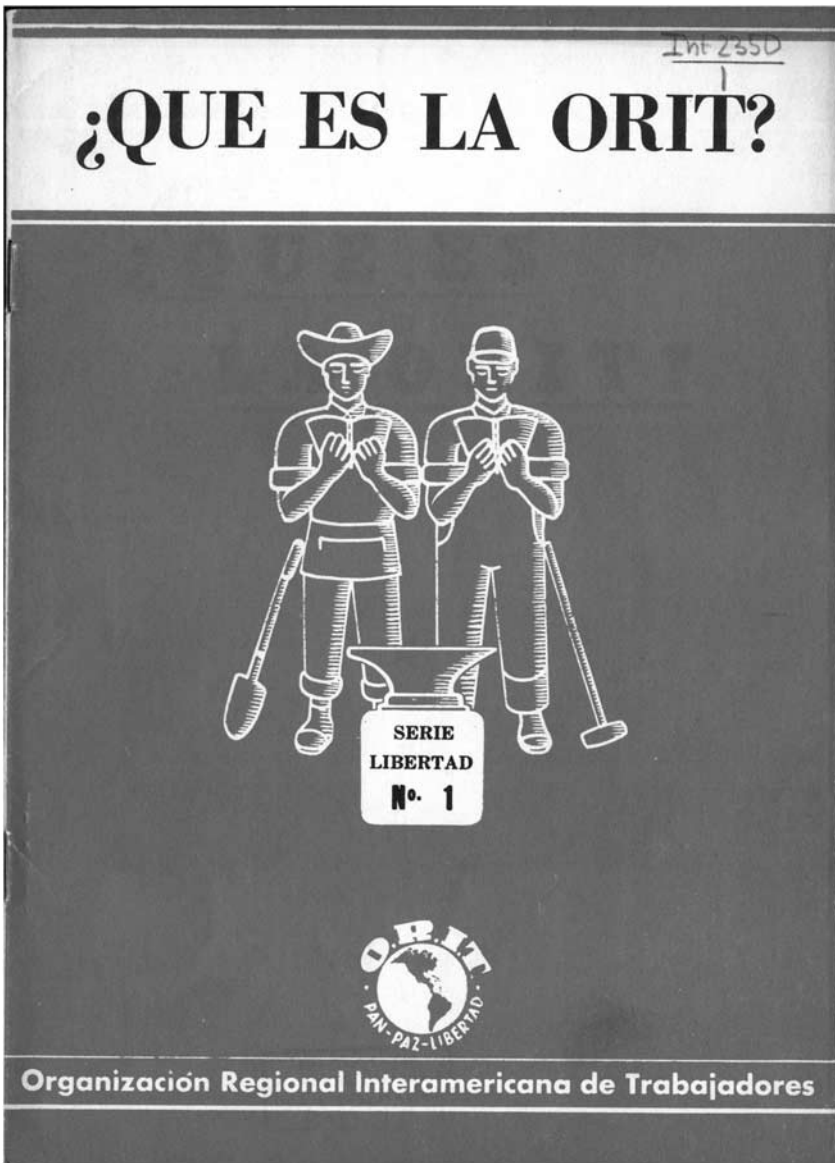


Figure 2. ORIT defends itself as a mature and independent organization (1954).
Collection IISH

in 1973, ORIT was heavily criticized by the ICFTU leadership for having reacted too mildly to the overthrow of Salvador Allende's government, whereas the regional organization (headed by the Paraguayan Julio

Etcheverry since 1974) protested against the ICFTU's favourable treatment of Chilean communist trade unionists.⁹²

This crisis strengthened elements within the Latin American free labour movement that called for a more vigorous regional organization. Supported by European leaders, ORIT increased its activities in defence of human and trade-union rights in various Latin American countries, often in cooperation with non-ORIT unions.⁹³ However, the "ideological turn",⁹⁴ as ORIT called it, did not undermine the inter-American character of the organization. On the contrary, as the official history of ORIT insisted, the organization's reorientation reinforced "the tradition of a political process that permits advances, reform and modernization, without loss of organic unity".⁹⁵ Hence, labour regionalism continued to be perceived as a viable tool for effective trade-union action in the continent. The latter was also true for European labour leaders.

As stated above, some European labour leaders were not convinced of the necessity of creating a regional structure in Europe. In the early 1950s, the hesitant position of some trade unionists towards the creation of ERO was reflected during the debates on labour representation in intergovernmental bodies and supranational structures. One of the main issues was who should represent labour at the Coal and Steel Community: ERO, the national trade-union confederations of the six ECSC countries (often referred to as "the Six"), or the miners' and metalworkers' unions?⁹⁶ Supporters of a strongly integrated Europe favoured the international trade-union organizations. Together with ICFTU and ERO leaders, they argued that the pooling of coal

92. Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", pp. 348–351, 450–453; Alexander, *International Labor Organizations*, p. 150. The ICFTU's support of left-wing Chilean exiles should be read in the context of détente from the late 1960s onward and the impressive European solidarity movement with Chile during the mid-1970s and 1980s.

93. Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", pp. 458–460; Vergara, "Chilean Workers and the US Labor Movement", pp. 28–29; Victoria Basualdo, "International Labor Organizations and the Impact on National Labor Movements: The Case of the ORIT and the ICFTU and Argentina from the Late 1940s to the Mid 1980s", paper presented to the European Social Science History Conference, Glasgow, 11–14 April 2012.

94. In my view, the ORIT's programme from the late 1970s onward does not represent a radical rupture with the past. This programme stressed that the regional organization had to move from its previous anti-communism and apolitical trade unionism, but ORIT was never focused on these only. During the 1950s and 1960s, anti-communism was one objective among many others, and, in practice, ORIT had never been apolitical. Two issues did change after the late 1970s: first, increased and more effective trade-union action; second, ORIT's rhetoric and view of the European trade-union movement. As Latin Americans realized that European unions could offer much help in the development of the region's trade-union movement, they exalted the principles of social democracy and made them their own. This view is, however, purely hypothetical and requires further comparative analysis of ORIT's discourse and action between the 1950s and 1960s and the following decades.

95. *El Sindicato Interamericano*, pp. 104–105.

96. Colin R. Beever, *European Unity and the Trade Union Movements* (Leiden, 1960), p. 107.

and steel production needed to be seen as an instrument for peace and as the first concrete step towards the unification of Europe, meant to serve the interests of all democratic workers. Hence they believed it suitable to have ERO “represent the common good” at the ECSC.⁹⁷

US labour leaders, along with many Austrians, British, and Scandinavians (all from non-ECSC countries), also favoured the international confederation and its regional organization as labour’s representatives at the ECSC. The official argument was that European integration concerned war and peace, and thus it needed to be discussed within ERO. But another, more strategic reason lay behind their support of ERO as representative of organized labour at the supranational level: the avoidance of isolation. A sub-regional scheme in which only the national trade-union confederations and miners’ and steelworkers’ unions of participating countries would be represented internationally meant that non-ECSC unions could be excluded.⁹⁸

Yet the miners’ and metalworkers’ delegates succeeded in securing their participation in the Schuman Plan. Their expertise in all aspects of coal and steel production and the direct relevance of the Plan to miners and metalworkers made it a logical choice to have them represent organized labour. Albeit reluctantly, the ICFTU and ERO accepted this logic and agreed to the creation of the so-called Committee of 21, composed of delegates of the national confederations of the six participating countries, of the national miners’ and metalworkers’ unions, and of their respective International Trade Secretariats.⁹⁹

During the second half of the 1950s, ERO was further weakened with the establishment of a new functional trade-union organization. After the Messina Conference of 1955, which would lead to the creation of the European Economic Community in 1958, the Committee of 21 maintained that it was up to the national sectoral unions to pursue negotiations with the governments and preparatory committees and sub-committees at the national level, and with the Common Market and Euratom authorities at the European level. Its argument was that the use of atomic power would mainly affect miners and metalworkers of the six ECSC countries.¹⁰⁰ ERO secretary Walter Schevenels argued that as the furthering of the integration process would affect the entire working class in Europe, ERO should be responsible for these matters.

97. Verslag van de zitting van het Bureau van 6 juni 1950, p. 4; Verslag van de zitting van het Bureau van 5 december 1950, pp. 3–4, ABVV archive, folder 285.

98. “Summary Report on the Third European Regional Conference”, Strasbourg, 3–5 November 1954, p. 5, ICFTU archive, folder 1309.

99. Pasture, “The Flight of the Robins”, pp. 84–85; Marguerite Bouvard, *Labor Movements in the Common Market Countries: The Growth of a European Pressure Group* (New York, 1972), pp. 45, 51; “Report on the European Regional Conference (1952)”, p. 11.

100. ERO EC, 31 July 1956, pp. 6–7, ICFTU archive, folder 1281a.

Various unions from non-participating countries supported Schevenels and attempted to strengthen his position with the argument that the rivalry between two European trade-union organizations would harm the prestige and efficiency of the labour movement. British representatives concluded that ERO was the most suitable structure to pursue general policy and tackle all issues concerning Europe.¹⁰¹ Thus, precisely those unionists who questioned the viability and desirability of European unification became the strongest defenders of ERO as the representative of a unified labour movement in Europe.¹⁰² Admittedly, their support stemmed from strategic reasoning (avoidance of isolation), but, then again, we should bear in mind that trade-union activity has seldom been altruistic and has often been guided by national considerations.

Leaders from other trade-union confederations also favoured the view that Common Market and Euratom issues could not be solved by taking only certain industries into account as these issues were of great importance to workers in all trades. Their motives were, however, different than those of Schevenels. Not ERO, but the national confederations of the Six were to take the lead in the matter of trade-union representation with the Common Market and Euratom.¹⁰³ In January 1958, trade-union delegates of six national labour confederations met in Düsseldorf to arrange the establishment of a new labour organization, the European Trade Union Secretariat (ETUS).

Schevenels opposed the creation of a separate organization, not only because it meant an undermining of ERO's capacity to represent labour at the European level, but also because ERO was not represented in important technical committees of the ECSC, Euratom, and the Common Market. ERO was allowed to send a delegate to the ETUS meetings, but it could no longer aspire to play a decisive role in the three communities. Nonetheless, there was a function that for the time being ERO alone could provide, namely to act as a permanent link between the "unions of the Six" and the remaining western European labour organizations. As the German Ludwig Rosenberg noted, ERO would then be responsible for the problems of "Greater Europe".¹⁰⁴ This role gained in importance when the British came up with an alternative form of European cooperation: the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), established in 1959 by seven non-Common Market countries (henceforth called "the Seven").¹⁰⁵

101. *Ibid.*; ERO EC, 19 July 1957, pp. 1–4, ICFTU archive, folder 1281b; Pasture, "The Flight of the Robins", p. 88.

102. "Fifth European Regional Conference", Brussels, 12–14 May 1958, p. 13.

103. ERO EC, 19 July 1957, p. 4.

104. ERO EC, 8 March 1958, pp. 3–4, ICFTU archive, folder 1281c.

105. John Gillingham, *European Integration, 1950–2003: Superstate or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 5, 36–37.

Refusing to become irrelevant to European national centres, Schevenels took the opportunity to define ERO's task as coordinator of trade-union action in order to prevent the splitting of Europe into two blocs. During the first half of the 1960s, Schevenels concentrated his efforts on maintaining contacts with the EEC and EFTA unions, a task meant to resolve existing differences and restore European unity. Other labour leaders also viewed ERO as an indispensable link between the unions of "the Six" and "the Seven".¹⁰⁶ All of them were aware of its deficiencies, but the majority still thought that ERO should "stay as a symbol of the unity of the European trade union movement".¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the "all-in-one" approach was supported not only by the British and ERO leaders but also by other union representatives, who had become disappointed in the ICFTU on the one hand and increasingly preoccupied with regional issues on the other.¹⁰⁸ They realized that the mushrooming of trade-union organizations and committees during the 1950s and 1960s had weakened the European trade-union movement and provided sufficient ammunition to governments wishing to deny labour the right to participate in policy-making at the European level.¹⁰⁹

These internal and external difficulties called for a careful inspection of ERO's function. The barrage of internal criticisms against ERO led to renewed discussions on the need for its reorganization or even on its possible dissolution. The latter option was strongly defended by the representatives of the Scandinavian unions, who saw no benefit in maintaining the European organization.¹¹⁰ In view of the refusal of most members to dissolve ERO, the Scandinavian leaders made a new suggestion, namely the establishment of a committee to review the scope, activities, and possible restructuring of the European organization. A so-called Committee of Four was created in 1966 and was composed of two members from ETUS and two trade-union representatives from EFTA countries. It proposed the

106. Schevenels to the national centres of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland, 22 May 1959, n.p., ICFTU archive, folder 1281c; ERO EC, 12 May 1960, p. 8, folder 1282a; ERO EC, 29 January 1960, p. 5, folder 1282a; Kjell Holler (LO Norway), "Danger of Schism in the European Trade Union Movement", 21 October 1958, Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History, Archive of the European Trade Union Confederation [hereafter ETUC archive], folder 90.

107. ERO EC, 12 May 1960, p. 6.

108. Gustave Dermine (ERO) to Fred Hayday (TUC), 25 May 1967; ETUS meeting of the Executive Committee, 20–21 October 1966, p. 1, ETUC archive, folder 94; Carew, "Towards a Free Trade Union Centre", pp. 337, 339.

109. By the end of the 1960s, there were seven trade-union structures active in Europe; ERO EC, 14 September 1960, pp. 4–5, ICFTU archive, folder 1282a; Pasture, "The Flight of the Robins", pp. 88–89; Windmuller, "European Regionalism", p. 40.

110. Statement of Four Presidents – Scandinavian national centres: Arne Geijer, Eiler Jensen, Konrad Nordahl, Heine Heinonen to ERO and ICFTU, 20 January 1960, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 1282a.

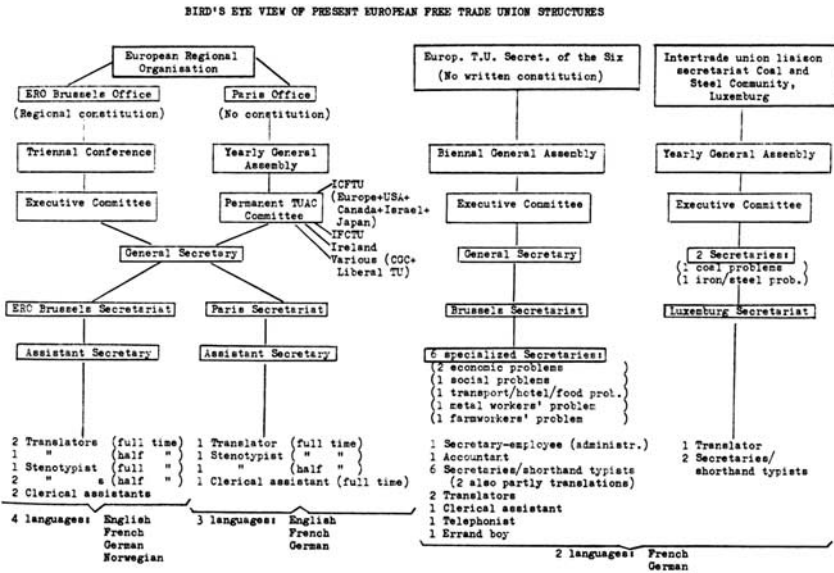


Figure 3. Report of the Committee of Four for the reorganization of the European Free Trade Union Structures, 1966, ICFTU archive, file 1306. *Collection IISH*

maintenance of ERO as an umbrella organization for the trade unions of the two blocs. However, the members of ETUS rejected this suggestion on the grounds that the problems confronting both economic regions in Europe were too different to allow one organization to deal with them. Furthermore, amalgamation with ERO meant integration into the ICFTU structure, whereas ETUS preferred autonomy and strengthening of the European trade-union arrangements.¹¹¹

Efforts to reorganize supranational structures reflected the wish of many labour leaders to have a regional organization that would undertake the wider aspects of trade-union work at the European level. Because of their functional nature and limited staff, ETUS and the Trade Union Committee for the EFTA countries (founded in 1968) could not assume this task.¹¹² But the creation of new sub-regional labour structures accelerated the dissolution of ERO, in December 1969.¹¹³ Yet the development of the

111. ETUS EC, 20–21 October 1966, pp. 4–10; ETUS EC, 21–22 June 1966, pp. 23–24, ETUC archive, folder 465.

112. ERO sub-committee of the Executive Committee, 24 October 1969, p. 2, ICFTU archive, folder 1283.

113. ERO EC, p. 5, January 1966; ERO EC, 20 April 1966; “Progress Report of the Committee of Four in Relation with the Reorganization of the ERO”, Brussels, 16 August 1966; ERO EC,

European integration process and the unity of the employers' sector at the European level made the harmonization of trade-union activity imperative.¹¹⁴

During the early 1970s, free trade unionists focused firstly on the restructuring and geographical scope of their labour structures, and secondly on the link with the ICFTU and the eventual ideological broadening of the European trade-union movement. There were divergent opinions on the necessity of creating an organization that would constitute a broad forum or that would function within the narrow framework of European institutions. Workers' organizations from the EFTA area, as well as Belgian and Italian unions, called for a broad organization that, like ERO, would include all trade unions from western Europe. Also, after the British entry into the EEC in 1973, the TUC called for a large European labour organization that would deal with general trade-union questions. For their part, the German unions strongly supported a functional, EEC-oriented organization, which meant excluding non-EEC countries. By November 1972, a decision was taken favouring the partisans of the "large solution". In February 1973, the European Trade Union Confederation was born, including trade unions from EEC and EFTA member states.¹¹⁵ A year later, Christian and communist-led unions were allowed to join the European confederation, proving, as John Windmuller put it, that "the principle of regional attachment prevailed over the principle of ideology".¹¹⁶

This wide form of labour regionalism in Europe implied detachment from the ICFTU. Europeans responded to the opposition of ICFTU leaders and non-European affiliates to the creation of an independent regional organization by emphasizing the "special circumstances" of Europe.¹¹⁷ Already in 1951, the ICFTU had acknowledged that "diversity is implicit in the concept of regionalism", and anticipated that its concrete application as an organic part of international organization could pose some problems. Therefore, the confederation insisted on the necessity of mutual trust and confidence for a successful reconciliation between regionalism and universalism.¹¹⁸ Non-European unions feared for the future existence of the ICFTU as the powerful European bloc would cut its formal link with the international organization. Valid as they were,

25 August 1966, ICFTU archive, folder 1282e; ERO EC, 1 March 1968; ERO EC, 17 September 1969, ICFTU archive, folder 1283.

114. ETUS EC, 20–21 October 1966, p. 6.

115. Barnouin, *The European Labour Movement*, pp. 12–18; Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", pp. 354–355, 370.

116. Windmuller, "European Regionalism", p. 44.

117. Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", p. 353.

118. "Report on Problems of Regional Organisation, Second World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions", Milan, 4–12 July 1951, p. 1, ETUC archive, folder 90.

these fears and accusations of “parochial regionalism” did not deter the Europeans from creating an autonomous regional organization, which will celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2013.

CONCLUSION

One of the purposes of the present study was to contribute to our knowledge of international trade-union organizations by focusing on an issue that has so far received little scholarly attention: the construction of labour regionalism. True, “the regional level has received some attention in recent years, mainly because of the impact of regional economic and political institutions like NAFTA”,¹¹⁹ but the early construction of labour regionalism has been either ignored or simplified in the scholarly literature. The strengthening of labour regionalism can be placed in the 1920s, when the first (tacitly) exclusionary federations were created in Europe and the Americas. The postwar period saw the institutionalization of regional ideas among labour circles, through the establishment of the ICFTU’s regional machinery. However, the importance of this development has often been neglected.

The history of ERO has been interpreted as an insignificant prelude to the “actual” process of European labour regionalism, starting at the end of the 1960s and culminating in 1973 with the foundation of the European Trade Union Confederation. Not ERO but smaller functional trade-union bodies created for limited tasks have been the focus of most analyses dealing with organized labour at the European level. In this study I have argued that ERO provided a suitable forum where issues of general interest to all European trade unionists could be discussed. Although it failed to respond to the concrete interests of its members, ERO proved useful as a clearing house and symbol of the unity of labour at European level.

Whereas ERO has been overshadowed by other European labour groupings, ORIT has received more attention from scholars. It has, however, often been portrayed as an entity that served US interests only. The political, financial, and numerical power of the US unions has been interpreted as a dominant factor that contributed to the subordination of the Latin American members within ORIT to the wishes of the US. Departing from a Cold War logic, in which world powers played a leading role in virtually all societal developments, the agency of Latin American free trade unions appears negligible. Without wishing to imply that US influence within ORIT was minor, I have tried to demonstrate that the relationship between Latin American, AFL/AFL-CIO, and ICFTU/ORIT leaders was far more complex than is often believed. Preference for regionalism responded to both US and Latin American interests.

119. Gumbrell-McCormick, “Regions and Regionalism”, p. 189.

This brings me to the second purpose of this article, which aimed at an alternative analysis of international free trade-union organizations. While many studies dealing with the history of the international labour movement during the second half of the twentieth century place the communist vs non-communist rivalry at the centre of the narrative, I have focused on the relationship between ICFTU non-communist members. Undoubtedly, the fight against communism played an important role in the creation of free trade-union organizations, but it was not, in my view, the main cause of the ICFTU's decentralized structure. Disagreement on policy and mutual suspicion of their intentions strengthened the construction of regional identities and stimulated labour cooperation at the regional level. Competition and mistrust between and within national unions also existed, but in the international arena many leaders tended to defend their arguments in terms of regional rather than national interest. The differentiation between "Europe" and "the Americas" was emphasized as early as the first half of the twentieth century. After World War II, free trade-union leaders exploited regionalism as an instrument to protect or promote regional interests, as well as a co-binding mechanism that allowed for permanent and mutual control.

A final point I wished to stress in this study was that all members of the ICFTU, and not only powerful unions, had an interest in the creation and maintenance of regional structures. The political, financial, and organizational strength of big unions such as the AFL/AFL-CIO and the TUC made their participation within the ICFTU and its regional organizations imperative. Small unions, however, were not passive actors; on the contrary, their interest in supranational labour organizations responded not only to the fear of being isolated, but also to their hope of being able to mould these organizations. Paradoxical as it might seem, the main advantage of small trade unions was their relative impotence in world politics. Labour leaders from big unions, with their close ties with governments and intelligence agencies, were always suspect. This situation provided sufficient clout to leaders of small trade unions to criticize, propose new actions, and demand assistance from the international and regional organizations.

Labour regionalism was appealing to most ICFTU members from Europe and the Americas because it seemed a more realistic response to the problems that had plagued trade unions since their inception. Area-oriented labour organizations became ever more appealing in the postwar period, as regional intergovernmental institutions or agreements were established in different parts of the world. They represented a "challenge to the competence and vitality of the ICFTU",¹²⁰ but not necessarily

120. Windmuller, "European Regionalism", p. 47.

a threat. For all their disagreements, free trade unionists were as one in wishing to preserve a decentralized structure, in which different levels – local, national, regional, and global – of labour organization would complement and strengthen each other. Paraphrasing Eric Hobsbawm, labour regionalism is not the absence of concern with national or international structures, but the overcoming of their limits.¹²¹

TRANSLATED ABSTRACTS FRENCH – GERMAN – SPANISH

Magaly Rodríguez García. *En construisant le régionalisme ouvrier en Europe et dans les Amériques, 1920–1970.*

Cet article présente une analyse de la construction du régionalisme ouvrier de 1920 à 1970. Par un examen comparatif des structures ouvrières supranationales en Europe et dans les Amériques avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et de la structure décentralisée de la Confédération internationale des syndicats libres (CISL), l'auteur tente de soutenir la thèse que le régionalisme fut une construction de dirigeants ouvriers pour répondre à trois situations: la quête du pouvoir parmi les principales organisations syndicales dans le mouvement syndical international; la méfiance réciproque entre les dirigeants ouvriers de grands, moyens et petits syndicats de différentes régions; et les intérêts communs (réels ou imaginaires) des dirigeants ouvriers d'une même région. Ces facteurs d'attraction et de répulsion incitèrent à construire des identifications ouvrières régionales qui soulignèrent "l'altérité" dans le monde ouvrier international. Une identité ouvrière régionale était censée compléter et non amoindrir l'identité nationale. En ce sens, cette étude comble une lacune dans la littérature de la recherche sur les relations internationales et l'internationalisme ouvrier, car elle s'est peu intéressée au niveau régional de l'organisation ouvrière internationale.

Traduction: *Christine Krätke-Plard*

Magaly Rodríguez García. *Die Herausbildung von gewerkschaftlichem Regionalismus in Europa und auf dem amerikanischen Doppelkontinent von den 1920er bis zu den 1970er Jahren.*

Der Beitrag analysiert die Herausbildung von gewerkschaftlichem Regionalismus zwischen den 1920er und 1970er Jahren. Mittels einer vergleichenden Untersuchung der supranationalen Gewerkschaftsstrukturen in Europa und auf dem amerikanischen Doppelkontinent vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und der dezentralen Struktur der International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) versucht die Autorin die These zu erhärten, dass Regionalismus eine Antwort der Gewerkschaftsführer auf drei Bedrohungen war: auf das Machtstreben der

121. Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Working-class Internationalism", in Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940* (Leiden [etc.], 1988), pp. 3–16, 7.

größten Gewerkschaftsorganisationen in der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung; auf gegenseitiges Misstrauen zwischen den Führern großer, mittelgroßer und kleiner Gewerkschaften aus verschiedenen Regionen; und auf (tatsächliche oder vermeintliche) gemeinschaftliche Interessen von Gewerkschaftsführern aus ein und derselben Region. Diese “Push”- und “Pull” faktoren führten zur Herausbildung regionaler Arbeiter-Identifikationen, die das “Anderssein” innerhalb der Welt der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung betonte. Eine regionale gewerkschaftliche Identität sollte die nationale Identität ergänzen, nicht untergraben. Somit schließt diese Studie eine Lücke in der Forschungsliteratur über internationale Beziehungen und Internationalismus innerhalb der Arbeiterbewegung, in der die regionale Ebene internationaler Arbeiterorganisationen bislang nur wenig beachtet worden ist.

Übersetzung: Max Henninger

Magaly Rodríguez García. *Construyendo el regionalismo obrero en Europa y América, 1920–1970*.

Este artículo ofrece un análisis de la construcción del regionalismo obrero entre las décadas de 1920 y 1970. Mediante un examen comparativo de las estructuras de trabajo supranacionales en Europa y en América antes de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y de la estructura descentralizada de la Confederación Internacional de Organizaciones Sindicales Libres (CIOSL-ICFTU), se intenta defender el argumento de que el regionalismo era una construcción de los líderes obreros que respondía a tres motivos: de un lado, la pugna por el poder entre las principales organizaciones sindicales en el seno del movimiento sindicalista internacional; de otro lado, la desconfianza mutua existente entre los líderes obreros de grandes, medianas y pequeñas organizaciones sindicales de diferentes regiones; y, por último, los intereses comunes (reales o imaginarios) entre los líderes sindicales de una misma región. Estos factores condujeron a la construcción de identidades laborales regionales que enfatizaban la “alteridad” en el mundo del trabajo internacional. Se intentó complementar, que no socavar, la identidad nacional con una identidad laboral regional. De esta forma, el estudio que presentamos supone rellenar una laguna en la literatura académica respecto a las relaciones internacionales y el internacionalismo obrero que tan sólo ha prestado una escasa atención al nivel regional de la organización laboral internacional.

Traducción: Vicent Sanz Rozalén